

New direction approved

“Our new plan will steer us towards a vision of enhancing society through improved animal health and welfare.”

Three-year Strategic Plan now in place

We have got a new direction – one which, over the next three years, will bring us closer to our vision of enhancing society through improved animal health and welfare.

The new direction is outlined in our three-year Strategic Plan, which was approved by Council at its November meeting.

The Plan is founded on feedback from the profession and the public about what we do well and where we could do better, and an analysis of how other leading regulators operate. It will take the College on a journey towards becoming a first-rate regulator.

It includes some ambitious targets, all centred on the purpose of setting, upholding and advancing veterinary standards.

For example, we aim to introduce a service charter – for the public and the profession – of rights, expectations and responsibilities for every function within the College.

Among 35 actions, clustered under five themes, we also commit to: developing our

communications with the profession and the public in plain English; improving the advice line for the public and the profession; reducing the time it takes for a complaint to be concluded in a fair and transparent manner; establishing statutory powers to conduct language testing for those from the EU for whom English is not their first language; and, costing and designing a trial for a new consumer dispute resolution service. See page 14 for more detail on the new Strategic Plan.

Charting a new course

One of the objectives in the Plan, under the theme of 'Identity', is to create a revised Royal Charter to confirm our roles and responsibilities.

Confusion over the identity of the College has been a perennial issue. We are the only regulatory body that is also a Royal College, and, for many years, this has been seen as problematic and leading to a lack of focus.

Through the development of a new draft Charter – the first in nearly 50 years – we are now seeking instead to embrace the unique possibilities that such a combined underpinning gives us, and secure the foundation for activities such as the regulation of veterinary nurses, and the development of the Practice Standards Scheme. See page 16 for more detail on the draft Charter.

The new draft Charter will be available for your comments soon – keep an eye on the veterinary media and our website, and sign up to RCVS e-News for the latest on the consultation (www.rcvs.org.uk/enews).



In this issue: new Strategic Plan, draft new Charter, survey coming soon, convictions disclosure, Councils nomination time, Queen's Medal, Christmas donation, Find a Vet data refresh, 24/7 update, fitness to practise, fewer fines, PSS surgeries, antibiotic usage, working party updates, visitation news, meetings and events, PI and DC reports, Library latest, EBVM event.

Badger culls and veterinary conduct

We would like to clarify the issue

We would like to respond to recent press coverage and correspondence regarding the role of the Chief Veterinary Officer and his colleagues in the pilot badger culls, which aim to reduce the incidence of bovine tuberculosis.

The publically available information about the two culls indicates that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will test its assumptions about the “effectiveness (in terms of badger removal), humaneness and safety of culling” and that the culling will be “closely monitored... and the monitoring overseen by an independent panel of experts, who have advised on the appropriate methods of monitoring effectiveness and humaneness.”

On this basis, while some may not agree with the culls, or the manner in which they are conducted, provided that any veterinary surgeon involved – whether in terms of devising the cull strategy or working on the ground – has acted reasonably, he or she should be able to comply with the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*, which sets out the five principles of practice as:

1. Professional competence
2. Honesty and integrity
3. Independence and impartiality
4. Client confidentiality and trust
5. Professional accountability

We would also like to point out that all veterinary surgeons practising in the UK are members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, but that the views of individual members do not necessarily reflect those of the College and that we have not, in fact, taken a view on the effectiveness of the cull as it is outside our remit to do so.



People like you

Nominations now open for Council and VN Council – watch the videos



The role of RCVS Council and VN Council is not to represent the veterinary professions, but it is vital that those who sit on the Councils are representative of them. So, as the nominations period opens once again for candidates to stand for election, we would encourage you to seriously consider putting your name forward.

To help you find out more about what's involved, we have produced a couple of short videos – one for each Council – featuring some existing Council members (such as Amanda Boag, pictured) discussing the reasons why they decided

to stand and how they have found the experience.

These videos – available on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos – are part of our ongoing efforts to encourage greater diversity on Council (first reported in these pages in June), which you can read more about on page 13.

With the nominations deadline not until 31 January, you have plenty of time to think about it and find two people to support your nomination. Details about how to stand in either election are available at www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil14 and www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil14 respectively.

Your to do list...

- **VNs: pay your fees by 31 December**
- **Ensure your practice sends back its Find a Vet form (page 8)**
- **Vets: set up a direct debit now for your March retention fees**
- **Vets: if you have a criminal conviction, you can disclose it voluntarily now (page 4)**
- **Ensure we have your correct email address (page 8)**
- **Seek nomination, or nominate someone, for Council or VN Council (page 2)**
- **Vets: seek nomination, or nominate someone, for the new Queen's Medal (page 5)**
- **Read our new Strategic plan (page 14)**
- **Respond in our Charter consultation (page 16)**
- **Come and see us at the London Vet Show – and book a PSS Surgery (page 10)**
- **Watch the CEO's post-Council update**
- **PSS practices: download our waiting-room presentation (page 10)**
- **Sign up to the free Professional Development Record (page 19)**
- **Watch out for the Survey of the Professions in January (page 3)**
- **Sign up to the EBVM Network (page 27)**

What's happening out there?

Survey coming soon

Every four years we carry out the Survey of the Professions, to gain a snapshot of the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions. The data we gather helps us develop policy, answer questions from the media and other stakeholders, and better understand trends and developments.

It's incredibly useful information, but only if as many of you as possible give your time generously, and complete it.

The next survey is due in early 2014 and we will be asking questions about how vets and VNs are using their qualifications, how they carry out their CPD, what kind of practices they work in and their views on the profession, amongst other things.

We will also be carrying out a survey of practices to ask about how 24/7 is handled, the use of specialists and paraprofessionals, practice ownership and workforce numbers.

This time the surveys will only be carried out online, in order to save money. To make sure you can have your say, please ensure that we have your correct email address (and one that is unique to you) by visiting the log-in area of the website or contacting our Registration Department on 020 7202 0707 or membership@rcvs.org.uk.

As usual, the surveys will be completely confidential, and will be carried out on our behalf by the Institute for Employment Studies.

Paying a living wage

Living Wage accreditation

We have been accredited by the Living Wage Foundation as one of 216 employers with premises in London providing the capital's living wage for all its staff and contractors.

We were officially recognised as an accredited employer earlier this month, when Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, held an event to announce that the living wage rate for London was to increase by 25p an hour to £8.80.

Also attending the event was the College's CEO Nick Stace who tweeted about his pride at being one of the 432 employers across the UK dedicated to paying the living wage to its staff. We also ensure that all of our external contractors – such as cleaning and catering – pay its staff the living wage.

For more information on the scheme, please visit www.livingwage.org.uk.



Commitment to transparency and fairness

Post-Council update

Nick Stace, Chief Executive

The College has come a long way in 14 months, and it's a good time to take stock of what progress has been made, and where we go next. In fact, we now have a clear roadmap for the next three years, as Council approved the 2014-16 Strategic Plan at its meeting on 7 November.

Strategic direction

This plan has its foundations in the evidence base we built during the First Rate Regulator research project, and also from feedback gathered at Regional Question Time meetings and when I have been out and about talking to vets and nurses (I've been to practices from Fife to Sussex, and most places in between, although I am yet to make it to the South West – if you have time to show me round, please let me know on nick@rcvs.org.uk).

We have also been listening to the public – and realising how the regulatory language that we use is not terribly clear to them.

The Strategic Plan represents a good deal of work from Council members, the Operational Board and staff, and provides us with a clear vision and purpose: to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, so as to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare.

Core to us achieving our ambition is a strong service agenda – and I am particularly passionate about this. You can read more on page 14 – and the full Plan is online at www.rcvs.org.uk/strategy.

Charting new territories

In setting, upholding and advancing standards, we are working not only to meet our legislative responsibilities – which are largely around 'setting and upholding' – but are also guided by our Charter, which is under review. It's nearly 50 years since our Charter was last considered and Professor Stephen May was making no overstatement when he introduced the draft new Charter to Council by saying it was an 'historic' moment. The new proposals aim to give improved clarity to our objectives, and underpin the activities we carry out to advance standards, such as the Practice Standards Scheme, regulation of veterinary nurses, and postgraduate education. You can read more about the proposals on page 16.

Transparently fair

Also at its November meeting, Council reaffirmed its commitment to a transparent and fair disciplinary system. This might seem a strange thing to have happened – surely our system is transparent and fair? The debate was actually stimulated by a motion to Council and the discussion reflected the fact that we have listened to the disquiet amongst members about a recent disciplinary case.

The discussion provided the opportunity to reflect on the positive changes that have taken place in the disciplinary process over the last few years – for example, new guidance and manuals, improved training, the introduction of the Health and Performance Protocols and, most recently, the move towards a fully independent disciplinary mechanism. Council had also heard earlier in the meeting from the Chairman of the Standards Committee, Clare Tapsfield-Wright, that a Select-Committee-style meeting will be held to gather evidence on the current state of 24-hour emergency cover, what the profession can provide and what the public desires.

Council was unanimous in its support of the transparency and fairness of the system and I think this reflects that while we are not deaf to concerns, we have to accept that not all disciplinary decisions will be popular. While no system is perfect, what we have is robust, fair and, if we achieve one of the ambitions of our Strategic Plan, will soon be much more prompt in its delivery of resolution.

Watch my post-Council videos at www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos, read my blog at www.nickstaceblogs.org, or follow me on [@nickstacetweets](https://twitter.com/nickstacetweets).

Once more with conviction

Voluntary disclosures now accepted

We are now accepting disclosures from veterinary surgeons about any criminal cautions, convictions or adverse findings they may have against them, as part of a voluntary period before the requirement to disclose commences in 2014.

The requirement that veterinary surgeons notify us about criminal convictions on registration, and on an annual basis as part of their registration renewal each March, was introduced as part of the *Code of Professional Conduct* in 2012. However, we have allowed a bedding-in period for the *Code* before enforcing the requirement.

From 2014, new registrants will disclose any criminal convictions that may affect registration.

Veterinary surgeons already on the Register are required to disclose criminal convictions that have occurred since April 2006. Fixed-penalty motoring offences are excluded.

The veterinary profession has fallen under the Notifiable Occupations Scheme since April 2006,

which means serious convictions are already passed to the College from the police.

“We hope, through this new requirement, to increase the public’s confidence in the veterinary profession.”

If a veterinary surgeon declares a criminal conviction, this will be considered by the Registrar, and, possibly, referred to the Preliminary Investigation Committee. In some cases, the matter will be referred on to the Disciplinary Committee to decide if the caution or conviction affects the veterinary surgeon’s fitness to practise, if so, the usual sanctions of removal or suspension from the Register apply.

“We hope, through this new requirement, to increase the public’s confidence in the veterinary profession, and to safeguard animal health and welfare,” says Eleanor Ferguson, Head of



Professional Conduct. “The move brings the veterinary profession into line with many others – including registered veterinary nurses, who have made such a disclosure since their Register was introduced, in 2007.”

We have launched a dedicated advice line to assist affected veterinary surgeons, on 07818 113 056, open Monday to Friday, 11am-4pm. Callers will speak to our solicitors, who can advise on the process and the possible outcomes of disclosure. Alternatively, veterinary surgeons can contact disclosure@rcvs.org.uk.

Detailed information regarding the requirement, and a declaration form, can be found on www.rcvs.org.uk/convictions.

Man’s best and most helpful friend

President’s Christmas Box supports people with disabilities and their canine assistants

The charity Canine Partners has been chosen as this year’s beneficiary of the RCVS President’s Christmas Box. Canine Partners is a registered charity that assists people with disabilities to enjoy a greater independence and quality of life through the provision of specially trained dogs, whose well-being is a key consideration.

The dogs are trained at the charity’s West Sussex Training Centre and can assist in a variety of practical tasks, including opening and closing doors and cupboards; retrieving items; pressing buttons and switches; unloading washing machines; and, raising the alarm in case of emergency.

Many of those who benefit from the assistance dogs are members of HM Armed Forces and veterans with physical disabilities, and the charity works closely with the Forces charity Help for Heroes, which has funded several partnerships of injured ex-servicemen and women with canine assistants.

RCVS President Colonel Neil Smith says: “I was keen that the RCVS supported a charity that helps people by enhancing their lives through animals. Canine Partners selects and trains dogs to provide direct and very practical help to people with disabilities. You only have to read their case studies to understand what a huge positive impact these dogs are making on many aspects of people’s lives.”

Canine Partners’ Chief Executive, Andy Cook, has meanwhile spoken of how grateful the charity is for the donation. He said: “We are very grateful and absolutely delighted to receive such a generous donation. Canine Partners relies on donations and gifts as we receive no government funding. We are proud that the RCVS has chosen to support us in

this way. This money will go towards transforming the lives of people with disabilities.”

The President’s Christmas Box is a donation to charity that has been made every year since 2010, in lieu of sending RCVS Christmas cards. Previous recipients have been SPANA, Hounds for Heroes and the Veterinary Benevolent Fund.



The Queen's Medal: recognising outstanding achievement

New award launched at House of Lords

There is a new opportunity to recognise outstanding contributions to the profession: the Queen's Medal.

Launching the new honour at an event in the House of Lords on 12 November, President Neil Smith said: "It is a great privilege to launch this historic and inspiring new honour during my presidency. The Queen's Medal will be the most prestigious honour that the RCVS can bestow upon a veterinary surgeon and will be reserved for those whose distinguished careers and outstanding lifetime achievements deserve wider recognition."

The honour was created following a review of our honours system, which demonstrated the need for a new aspirational award.

We wrote to the Cabinet Office last year, together with letters of support from Peers and MPs, to request permission to name this new honour after Her Majesty the Queen.

"We are honoured that Her Majesty has supported the proposal and allowed the College to name the award after her, and express our sincere thanks to those Parliamentarians who supported our endeavour," added Neil.

The launch event was attended by Parliamentarians and representatives of the profession, who were

asked to assist the College in ensuring that it receives a strong portfolio of nominations for the honour, so that the first Medal may be awarded to a deserving candidate. The first RCVS Queen's Medal will be presented at RCVS Day in July 2014.

"We are honoured that Her Majesty has supported the proposal and allowed the College to name the award after her."

Speaking at the reception, Lord Mackay of Clashfern said: "I am delighted to be hosting the launch of the RCVS Queen's Medal. Having watched my own daughter train and practise as a veterinary surgeon, I am fully aware of both the great efforts involved and the very important contribution that veterinary surgeons make to society."

The nomination forms for the Queen's Medal can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/Queensmedal, and we would urge members of the profession to consider making a nomination.

The deadline for nominations is 15 January 2014.



Neil Smith, Ruth Mackay and Lord Mackay

Heads up on new team members



New Heads appointed

We are delighted to announce the appointment of new Heads of Veterinary Nursing and Education.

Julie Dugmore (pictured right) took up the post of Head of Veterinary Nursing on 1 October, to replace Libby Earle, who took early retirement in April. Julie, a registered veterinary nurse, joined the College in December 2002, initially as an External Verifier, later becoming VN Quality Manager.

Meanwhile, Christine Warman (pictured left) joined the team as Head of Education on 1 November. Christine has a wealth of experience in the education sector, having established her own consultancy in 2000 to provide a range of project management and qualification development and quality assurance services. Prior to this, she worked for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority coordinating the occupational standards programme and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, as Development Co-ordinator. In 2006, Christine provided project management services and developed research funding proposals for the RCVS 'Gateway to the Professions' careers project.

The role of Head of Education became vacant when Freda Andrews was promoted to the new role of Director of Education. Freda now oversees both the Education and Veterinary Nursing Departments.

"I was delighted to welcome Julie and Christine to their new posts," said Freda. "Their combined experience will give us a strong foundation for the ongoing development of the education and training functions within the College, for both veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons."

CPD Cards are dead, long live the PDR!

We will not be issuing every veterinary surgeon and registered veterinary nurse with hard copy CPD Cards this year, but instead encourage you to use the free online Professional Development Record (see page 19 for details). For those wedded to paper, PDF versions of the Cards will be available for you to download from www.rcvs.org.uk/CPD in the New Year.

Know your Code

Delegating companion animal vaccination to VNs

Code of Professional
Conduct for
Veterinary Surgeons

We quite often get asked to provide a definitive list of procedures that can legally be delegated to listed and registered veterinary nurses and supervised enrolled student veterinary nurses under Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Because the delegation of veterinary procedures, even minor medical ones, involves consideration of all the circumstances and not just the procedure itself, it would be almost impossible to list all those that are allowed.

However, chapter 18 of the supporting guidance to the Code does provide broad advice on what to think about before delegating procedures, including the level of supervision required for student veterinary nurses. We also receive regular

enquiries about whether veterinary surgeons may direct listed, registered or student veterinary nurses to vaccinate companion animals. This is covered in chapter 18, which says:

18.10 To give a first vaccination with a POM-V medicine, the animal must be under care of the prescribing veterinary surgeon (see the supporting guidance on the meaning of 'under his care' [www.rcvs.org.uk/vetmeds]) and the veterinary surgeon must carry out a clinical assessment (see the supporting guidance on the meaning of 'clinical assessment') and then the veterinary surgeon may administer, or under his or her direction, a registered or listed veterinary nurse or student veterinary nurse may administer (see paragraph 18.5). If the veterinary surgeon is to certify the vaccination, the certification rules apply (see the supporting guidance on certification [www.rcvs.org.uk/certification]) and generally he or she must do it him or herself or witness it done.

18.11 The subsequent vaccination some two weeks or so later (close in time to the first vaccination) is

usually authorised by the veterinary surgeon at the time of the first vaccination (directed by the veterinary surgeon when the animal is under his or her care and when the clinical assessment is carried out), and therefore the administration of this second vaccination and all dealings may be through a registered or listed veterinary nurse or student veterinary nurse at the practice, provided the veterinary surgeon is not intending to certify this vaccination. Nevertheless, it is helpful for a veterinary surgeon to be on the premises at the time the vaccine is administered to the animal, to be able to assist in the event of the animal suffering an adverse reaction.

18.12 For booster or subsequent vaccinations not close in time to the first vaccination, the advice is the same as for the first vaccination (see paragraph 18.10).

For more information, see www.rcvs.org.uk/delegation or contact the RCVS Professional Conduct Department on 020 7202 0789 / profcon@rcvs.org.uk.

Setting student standards

Student Charter to address standards of professional behaviour at vet schools

Earlier this year, RCVS Council approved the formation of a Working Party to produce, in conjunction with the UK veterinary schools, a Student Charter based on broad fitness to practise principles, which would be common to all UK veterinary schools.

Like qualified professionals, veterinary students have particular privileges and responsibilities, which are very different from many other students. Certain standards of professional behaviour are expected and veterinary schools are responsible for ensuring that their students practise the standards expected of them. Although veterinary students are legally restricted on the clinical work they can do, this work should always be performed responsibly and professionally.

There is already some commonality between the veterinary schools' understanding of the thresholds, however, each has its own distinct guidelines and procedures for dealing with individual fitness to practise cases. The aim of the Student Charter is therefore to provide guidance on the types of professional behaviour expected of students to ensure their fitness to practise (with reference to the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct), alongside specific advice to veterinary schools on how to develop consistent procedures. The guidance is also intended to consider topics

such as fitness to practise thresholds, with non-exhaustive examples and outcomes, dealing with health concerns and student support, investigations and decision-making procedures.

"The aim of the Student Charter is to provide guidance on the types of professional behaviour expected of students to ensure their fitness to practise."

The introduction of a Student Charter will bring us into line with other healthcare regulators. The General Medical Council, for example, has developed its own cohesive guidance for universities and medical students relating to professional behaviour and fitness to practise. To ensure that our guidance is appropriate and workable, the Working Party includes representatives from each of the seven UK veterinary schools, as well the Association of Veterinary Students (AVS).

Having met for the first time on 8 October, the Working Party is currently developing its guidance, which will be submitted to our Standards Committee for approval in due course. Similar guidance for student veterinary nurses will also be considered.





Off the wall

No complaints on meds poster

In RCVS News March 2013 we reported that, following discussions with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), veterinary practices no longer had to display a poster in their waiting rooms listing their top ten medicines and their costs.

It was agreed that this change would be implemented for a six-month period, during which time we would monitor the situation. Provided there was no appreciable level of complaint from the public either to us or the OFT, the change would become permanent.

We had a meeting with the OFT in October to compare results and confirmed that, over the past six months, we had not received any complaints from members of either the public or the profession. Similarly, the OFT confirmed that it had received no complaints from the public. As a result, the OFT has agreed that the change can be made permanent and our Standards Committee will be asked to endorse the decision next January.

OFT restructuring

The OFT also reported some recent changes to the structure of the organisation. The UK now has a new unified competition body – the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) – which launched in October 2013 in shadow form and will go live in April 2014.

The CMA will amalgamate the Competition Commission with the competition and certain consumer functions of the OFT in order to promote competition, both within and outside the UK, for the benefit of consumers.

However, the OFT reports that its enforcement and monitoring functions will not change and the CMA will deal with queries from the public relating to prescription fees and charges.



What role does the profession play in AMR control?

18 November is European Antibiotic Awareness Day. Nigel Gibbens, Chief Veterinary Officer, urges the veterinary profession to be responsible gatekeepers to veterinary antibiotics.

As veterinary professionals, you will be aware that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has become an issue of public health concern and an important threat to the future of healthcare – both medical and veterinary. There is a well-established consensus that AMR needs to be tackled at both national and European levels¹; the recently published UK AMR 'One Health'² strategy sets out the UK priorities and objectives for tackling this issue over the next five years.

Antimicrobial resistance is an inherent risk associated with the use of antimicrobials in any species. It is now widely accepted that antibiotic treatment of animals contributes to the development of resistant organisms in the treated animals. Similarly, use of antibiotics in humans contributes to the development of resistant organisms in humans.

There are differing opinions on the extent to which the use of antibiotics in veterinary medicine is a factor in the development of resistance in pathogens that cause disease in humans, but this risk must be taken seriously. An extensive and complex body of research has, and is currently, being undertaken to examine the significance of the different pathways of transmission of resistance between humans, animals and the environment. While it is clear that there is not yet a consensus on this issue, there is agreement that responsible use of antibiotics is essential across all sectors.

Gatekeepers

Veterinary surgeons currently hold the unique position of 'gatekeepers' to veterinary antibiotics – and so play a vital role in ensuring that these medicines are only used where necessary, and that the right drug and dose-rate are selected – not just to treat each patient, but also to minimise any development of resistance. All veterinary surgeons, across all sectors of the profession, must take responsibility for both their own prescribing and for the education of their clients – whether pet owners or professional animal keepers – to ensure compliance with dosing directions. If we do not rise to this challenge, then it becomes increasingly likely that legislative controls will be implemented that reduce the freedom of prescribing that we currently enjoy.

Veterinary and industry bodies, including the RCVS, the British Veterinary Association and the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA), are working together to provide vets with detailed guidance and educational materials on responsible prescribing. The RCVS has recently revised its *Code of Professional Conduct* and supporting guidance to include a requirement to demonstrate responsible use. Defra, with veterinary and industry leaders, is also working in collaboration with the medical profession to increase the focus on this issue.

European Antibiotic Awareness Day, which takes place each year on 18 November, is an initiative to emphasise the critical importance of responsible antibiotic prescribing across all sectors. You can find out more about activities linked to this event, and get involved, via the BVA (www.bva.co.uk) or the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (www.vmd.defra.gov.uk).

I finish on a note of caution – at present we are fortunate; the level of treatment failure due to antibiotic resistance in veterinary medicine in the UK is relatively low. To avoid escalation of resistance, with the concurrent inevitable impact on the health and welfare of our patients, we all need to look to our day-to-day prescribing and take responsibility for effective antibiotic stewardship.

¹ Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer: www.dh.gov.uk/health/2013/03/cmo-vol2/; and http://ec.europa.eu/health/antimicrobial_resistance/policy/index_en.htm

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-5-year-antimicrobial-resistance-strategy-2013-to-2018

Fewer fines, less fuss

Extra efforts reap rewards

The number of penalties that we have handed out for the late payment of registration fees has been reduced once again this year.

In order to renew their place on the Register, all practising veterinary surgeons should have paid their renewal fee by 31 March 2013. However, the fee could still be paid up until the 31 May, subject to a £35 late-payment penalty.

This year, the number of late-payment penalties was 1,837 - a decrease from last year's figure of 1,957. In 2011, there were 2,200 such penalties.

The Registration Department made extra efforts this year to remind all veterinary surgeons on the Register that their fees were due and to contact any people who encountered difficulties with their payment method.

Nicola South, Customer Experience Manager, comments: "We are glad to see yet another reduction in late-payment penalties this year as it demonstrates that more people are aware of the deadline. We are continuing to look at ways of improving the registration process, including sending out the renewal notice earlier in the year, and hope to reduce late payments once again in 2014."



Graduation with bells on

VN registration ceremonies

Over 250 veterinary nurses have graduated this year, and members of RCVS Council, VN Council and the VN team have attended the ceremonies – many of which have been held in beautiful cathedrals – where graduates received their degrees and Certificates in Veterinary Nursing.

At each event, an RCVS representative has led the graduates as they made their solemn declarations, and Victoria Hedges, RCVS Awarding Institution Quality Manager, recently led the declaration with graduates from the University of the West of England/Hartpury College. Eighteen students graduated at the event, held in Gloucester Cathedral.

At a similar event, VNC Vice-Chairman Liz Branscombe (pictured, with Craig McDonald, winner of the Plowman Trophy for outstanding overall achievement) led the declaration of graduates from the University of Portsmouth at Winchester Cathedral, in front of an audience of 800 students, friends and family. Portsmouth's VN Course Tutor, Mandy Tamba, felt that the event had been a huge success, with Liz's attendance making it extra special.

Vocational registration

The next RCVS admissions ceremony for nurses achieving their Level 3 Diplomas in Veterinary Nursing will be held at Belgravia House on 15 January. Nurses eligible to attend will receive their invitations, along with their registration documents, over the next few weeks.



Can't Find a Vet?

Update your details, or you may be lost

Our online Find a Vet search tool (www.findavet.org.uk) receives around 9,000 hits per month, and there's an app in the pipeline – but will your practice still be listed in the New Year?

We are currently updating the data we hold on Find a Vet and each of the 5,000 practice premises currently listed has been sent a form to update and return to us, by 13 December.

We will make efforts to contact non-responding practices but, ultimately, we may remove those who have not replied, as we need to ensure data held on Find a Vet is accurate.

So, to make sure you benefit from being listed in one of the leading online veterinary practice databases, please ensure you return your form – and also please keep us posted about future changes to your practice and its employees.



If you have any questions, please contact the Registration Department on 020 7202 0767 or findavet@rcvs.org.uk.

Better online services heading your way...

But we need your email address

We would like to be able to communicate with vets and VNs more quickly and more cost-effectively, and also to offer a better range of online services around managing your registration. But to do that we need your email address, please!

We do not have up-to-date email addresses for everyone, and many of those we do have are not unique. Sadly, 'info@anypractice.co.uk', when used by everyone from the receptionist to the senior partner, is not very useful when trying to send you a personal fee or deadline reminder.

In addition, our Survey of the Professions 2014 is only being carried out online, so to ensure you have chance to have your say, please make sure we hold your email address.

To see which information we hold about you, use the log in area on the website (for which you will need your log in number) or contact the Registration Department on 020 7202 0707 or membership@rcvs.org.uk.

New procedures for overseas-qualified VNs

VN Council requests full procedural review

We receive around 100 applications per year from overseas-qualified veterinary nurses who wish to register in the UK. The VN Department reviews these applications, and, where necessary, they are sent to an external assessor to compare the applicant's qualification with our own Occupational Standards.

Many of these applications are received from a small number of countries – especially Australia, South Africa and New Zealand – which have a similar veterinary nursing approach to ours. Historically, we have often regarded VNs from these countries as holding qualifications that are broadly 'equivalent' to our own UK VN awards.

“VN Council decided... to initiate a wholesale review of the College's procedures for admitting overseas veterinary nurses, with a view to broadly harmonising them with the procedures for veterinary surgeons.”

Other applications are received from nationals of member states of the European Union who have the right to live and work here. Special rules apply to some of these applicants due to European Directives on professional registration, or due to the ACOVENE scheme, which seeks to harmonise VN assessment in some member states.

Review of equivalence

Early in 2013, we undertook a detailed review of some of the overseas qualifications that we had traditionally regarded as equivalent to our own.

It was concluded that while these qualifications tended to have a high level of theoretical content, they did not always have the same rigour in the area of practical training and assessment.

In order to address this gap, in February 2013 the VN Council determined that the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) – the formal practical examination for UK student veterinary nurses – should be used as a 'pre-registration' examination for any overseas applicant who does not have the right to automatic registration.

Additional training or assessment, such as completion of the Nursing Progress Log or theory examinations, can also be added where an overseas qualification is deficient when compared to our own. This will enable us to ensure that all overseas veterinary nurses meet our Day One Standards before their names are added to the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses.

Having ensured that Day One Standards are being met, VN Council decided at its October meeting to initiate a wholesale review of the College's procedures for admitting overseas veterinary nurses, with a view to broadly harmonising them with the procedures for veterinary surgeons. The VN Department has been tasked to research and consider various options, including providing access to RCVS theory examinations overseas, and approving overseas qualifications or institutions.

The Department will also give consideration to existing approved awarding bodies who may wish to deliver their qualification or assessments abroad, and to improving support to overseas-qualified veterinary nurses required to undertake adaptive training in the UK. Their conclusions will be presented to VN Council for consideration in February 2014.



Registers to buy

Copies of the *RCVS Register of Members 2013* will be available to buy from the end of November, at £25 for members and £40 for non-members. Please note that Registers no longer include phone numbers. For the most up-to-date information about who is registered, please consult our online Check the Registers tool (www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/check-the-register-list).

Renew online

Last year, over 3,500 vets took the easy route and renewed their registration online. Were you one of them?

The renewal notices will be going out in February 2014 and fees are due by the end of March. Even if you take the sensible option and use a direct debit, you will still need to confirm your Register details, your CPD compliance and, new for this year, that you have no criminal convictions.

You can do this by means of a form that we will send you – but it's quicker to do it online – look out for instructions heading your way.

Be direct

Attention vets: your retention fees will be due on 31 March. Why not set up a direct debit now, as a fuss-free way to pay? This can be done using the direct debit mandate in the *Pocket Guide to Renewing your Registration* that we sent you last year, or by downloading the form: www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/fees/how-to-pay.

VN fees, please

Attention VNs: please ensure you have renewed your registration and paid your fee by 31 December, or your name will be removed from the Register/List. If you have any questions, please contact the Registration Department, on 020 7202 0707.

Diploma deadlines

The deadline for entry to the RCVS Diploma examinations is 1 March 2014. The written examinations will be held on Tuesday 8 July 2014. For more information, contact education@rcvs.org.uk.

“We couldn’t believe our luck”

Take advantage of our free PSS Surgeries



Are you facing a Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) inspection, or thinking of joining the Scheme? Maybe you just want better to understand how to practise to Core standards, as per the Code. Help is at hand.

Every few months we hold PSS Surgeries with one of our inspectors. Practices are able to book free 45-minute sessions to ask questions, bring documents for discussion and seek reassurance on any particular points that are worrying them.

We have been running them for many years now and feedback has always been good – but don't just take our word for it. Here is Sue Brincat, Practice Manager at Anton Vets, who attended our session at Milford Hall Hotel in Salisbury in October:

“When the PSS Surgery at Salisbury was advertised, we could not believe our luck. We had applied for accreditation only a couple of weeks before and help was being offered practically on our doorstep. With such a mammoth task of gathering together evidence, a bit of guidance in the right direction would be very welcome.

“Having waded through the enormously helpful PSS Manual several times, we were still unsure on a few points, so the boss and I turned up on the appointed day with two large files with stickers attached to our query items, with such questions as ‘what else should we be doing’ and ‘should we have this or that document’.

“Ean Garner-Richardson [PSS Inspector] was very welcoming and knowledgeable and we found his guidance useful from his own practice experience as well as his point of view as an inspector.

“One of the standards we were not sure we were satisfying sufficiently was number 2.1 ‘monitoring and discussing the clinical outcome of cases and acting on the results’. Ean gave us some excellent suggestions, and we now have a very useful Client Incident Form to help us examine our practice in all

areas of our work. Ean also gave us some general guidance on presentation of our documentation.

“We came away feeling there was still a lot of work to be done, but we were now confident in knowing what it was, and how we should approach it. I would recommend the PSS Surgery to anyone considering applying for accreditation, and especially for those involved in producing their portfolio of evidence.”

Our next surgeries

Your next chances to book a free, 45-minute surgery with an inspector are:

- 21-22 November 2013, London Vet Show, Olympia – book ASAP!
- 23 January 2014, York, venue TBC (day-time of evening Regional Question Time)
- 3-6 April 2014, BSAVA Congress, Birmingham
- 22 May 2014, North Wales, venue TBC (day-time of evening Regional Question Time)

To book, or for more information, please contact Fiona Harcourt, on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773.

Introducing Norm the Nervous

Free slideshow available for display in accredited practice waiting rooms

Achieving RCVS accreditation is not easy – we know that – and neither is gaining recognition from your clients for all the effort you have put in to becoming accredited!

So, to help raise awareness of the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme in general, and your accreditation in particular, we have produced a free waiting room slideshow for you to display to your clients.

The slideshow takes a light-hearted look at visiting the vets, through the eyes of Norm the Nervous Norfolk Terrier and friends, and gets across some key messages about the Scheme, the work involved and the benefits it brings for both clients and patients alike.

It's available in a variety of formats (PowerPoint slideshow, jpg images and wmv video) and in three different screen sizes (4:3, 16:9 and 16:10 ratios) for any RCVS-accredited practice. If you would like to make sure your clients know about your hard-won accreditation, get in touch and we'll send you link to download the slideshow for free (pss@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0767).

Don't forget, you can also order other promotional material, including enamel lapel badges, bookmarks and wall plaques via www.rcvs.org.uk/psspromotion.



Professor the Lord Trees

Science Advisory Panel Chairman

Professor the Lord Trees graduated from Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in 1969 and enjoyed a distinguished academic career at the University of Liverpool's Faculty of Veterinary Science.

He was appointed a Crossbench member of the House of Lords in 2012. Lord Trees has been a member of RCVS Council since 2001, originally as an appointed representative of the University of Liverpool and, since 2011, an elected member. He now chairs the Science Advisory Panel, which will be meeting for the first time in January 2014. Here are some of Lord Trees' reflections on how he believes the Panel will operate and what its remit will be.

What will the Science Advisory Panel do?

The role of the Science Advisory Panel will be to provide the RCVS with evidence-based advice on aspects of professional conduct, veterinary education, practice, science and research relevant to the remit and mission of the College. The majority of this work will be pro-active and will reflect the College's strategic plan, anticipated issues of concern or topical interests. One of the challenges that the College has had, and which will indeed face this Panel, is in reactively responding to requests for comment on consultations that are relevant to the College's activity. This will be a matter that the Panel will need to discuss and consider carefully in its initial meetings.

How will the Panel decide its focus?

The Panel will meet for the first time in January and its focus will be a major item for discussion. I anticipate that the Panel will work rather like a Parliamentary expert committee in that it will be project driven. The selection of projects for attention will be a matter both for the Panel to identify, but also for other RCVS committees and departments to propose.

What do you think will make the Science Advisory Panel's work useful?

The Panel will comprise people with expertise across a range of veterinary fields. For the most part, I imagine it will not in itself produce reports; rather, having identified projects as described above, it will oversee the production of expert-authored reports. So the Panel will identify one or more appropriate experts who will be commissioned to produce an evidence-based authoritative report on a given subject to a specific deadline. The Panel's role will be to identify authors, and commission and then review the reports prior to submission to the College. In this way, we intend that the College will be provided with authoritative evidence to support its actions.



New modules for a new approach

PSS review continues apace

Progress continues to be made on the ongoing review of the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), which aims to ensure that the initiative better meets the needs of both the public and the profession.

In June this year, Council agreed to a new modular framework for the PSS which would give it a greater amount of flexibility and allow practices signed up to the Scheme to focus on the areas which are important and relevant to them.

Since the framework was approved, the process of drafting 20 modules for the Scheme, covering many different aspects of clinical practice, has begun. These modules cover topics such as staff management, emergency and critical care, clinical governance, medical records, nursing, surgery, dentistry, diagnostic imaging and out-of-hours care. Accompanying the shift to the modular approach will be an overhaul of the current IT system for the PSS, as well as a new training regime for PSS inspectors to ensure that the process is consistent and focused on inspecting behaviours and outcomes.

The modules will be going to the Practice Standards Group (PSG) for consideration on 26 November 2013 and will be progressed following the PSG's approval. The PSG is the steering committee for the Scheme, comprising representatives from all of the major veterinary and veterinary nursing organisations in the UK and chaired by RCVS Vice-President Jacqui Molyneux. The new Scheme is expected to be launched in 2015.

If your practice is RCVS-accredited and you want to stay in touch with all the latest changes to the Scheme, sign up to our free and dedicated e-newsletter, *The Practice Standard* by emailing pss@rcvs.org.uk.



The three surviving members of the group that founded the BSAVA (from left): Bruce Vivash Jones, Brian Singleton and Nick Henderson, together with the bust of Cecil Erskine 'Woody' Woodrow.

Marking a milestone in the history of the profession

CE Woodrow bust presented to College

Following a small but significant ceremony at Belgravia House on 27 August, the College added a handsome bronze bust of CE Woodrow to its collection of memorabilia, as veterinary historian Bruce Vivash Jones explains.

This newly-acquired bronze bust is significant because it not only commemorates a man – CE Woodrow – the first President of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), but also the discipline of small animal medicine and practice, now the dominant sector of clinical veterinary work.

The development of the discipline of small animal medicine followed the end of the Second World War, arising from social change and the rapid increase in urban dog and cat populations, which created a demand for veterinary services – from a graduate population educated with little emphasis on companion animals.

There was a practitioner demand for information and training, which produced a true revolution born in the grassroots of the profession. A group of practitioners, coalesced by the actions of Brian Singleton, who in turn had been stimulated to act by Dr WR Wooldridge (who both went on to become Presidents of the RCVS), resulted in an

initial meeting in 1956. A steering group was established, with CE Woodrow as interim Chairman.

This resulted in the formation of the BSAVA on 7 March 1957; Woodrow was elected President and there were 88 paid-up members. The choice of Woodrow was excellent: he had gravitas and a calm authority, which was needed to control some of the early enthusiasts. He oversaw the establishment of the BSAVA structure that was to concentrate on further education and training. From that initial meeting has grown an association with over 9,000 members (of all categories), holding ever larger annual congresses, with continuing education as the dominant theme.

Cecil Erskine Woodrow, who always preferred to be known as 'Woody', qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 1927, being the Fitzwygram Scholar of that year. He worked with small animals before building his own practice in West London, prior to the Second World War. He was also a keen boating man, with expertise in navigation: on the outbreak of war his services were needed by the

Thames Patrol and in the war years he piloted cargo vessels along the Channel coast and the Thames estuary.

Post-war, in 1946, Woodrow established what became one of the most successful practices in London's West End, in later years being joined in partnership by Brian Singleton. This period coincided with the national upsurge in interest in small animal medicine and surgery. Woodrow's serious, but pleasant, personality attracted clients – he was a good diagnostician and spoke with conviction.

Woody Woodrow made a major contribution to the profession as both a competent practitioner and in leading the emergent BSAVA. He was presented with their Blaine Award in 1963.

He was also knowledgeable in astronavigation (writing a book on the subject and also being the first to write on the use of the pocket calculator as an aid to navigation); additionally, he possessed a fund of information on electronics, beekeeping and watermills (of which he owned a fine example).

It was a fitting and lasting tribute that BSAVA not only named its headquarters building after him, with his bust in bronze in the lobby, but has also presented a copy of this to the Royal College, marking a milestone in the history of the profession.

Encouraging greater diversity on Council

We act to encourage more nominations for Council and VN Council

With the deadline for RCVS Council election nominations looming, the College has been acting on suggestions and ideas put forward on how to encourage a wider range of people to stand for Council.

In the last edition of *RCVS News* we highlighted the fact that, for the first time in over a decade, no women stood for election to RCVS Council. Decisions made by Council have a great impact on veterinary practice and so it should reflect the profession at large.

A small Working Group of women who felt strongly about the issue, chaired by RCVS Council member Amanda Boag, was convened in June this year to look at how participation could be widened – not only to women but also younger members of the profession and those actively engaged in clinical practice.

Suggestions made by this Working Party included setting up a mentoring system for prospective candidates and new Council members, inviting prospective Council members to the RCVS to discuss the role in more detail and making some of the practical information about being a member of Council – such as financial compensation and time commitment – clearer.

Introductory videos

Now two videos have been produced which clearly set out some of the practicalities of serving on Council and VN Council respectively, how it fits around family and professional life, and the difference that membership can make in terms of regulating the respective professions and safeguarding the health and welfare of animals. The videos also hear from Council members about what benefits being on Council can bring.



Amanda Boag relaxing with her family

Amanda Boag was elected to RCVS Council in 2012 while on maternity leave and speaks on the video about how she balances her responsibilities. She says: "It is a bit of a juggle but I think that any working parents, and especially working mums, know it's always a question of juggling different priorities, but I think that we manage well – it is just about planning and organisation.

“Women now form over 50 per cent of the practising profession and I think they are still under-represented on Council.”

"Being a Council member has been very career-broadening, you get to meet a whole variety of people involved in different areas of the profession. I think the profession is hugely diverse and it's fantastic to get to meet people who care about the profession but have very different backgrounds and very different job roles.

"It's very important that there is a wide variation of voices that are able to be heard at Council level. Women now form over 50 per cent of the practising profession and I think they are still under-represented on Council and some of it, as with many areas of life, is about confidence and encouraging all the younger women out there who are veterinary surgeons to have that confidence to put themselves forward."

The video also makes clear that candidates do not have to be based near London and that reasonable expenses are paid, including for overnight accommodation, if necessary, and that any loss of earnings are reimbursed by the College – whether that's to an employer, or a Council member directly, if they are self-employed.

A guiding hand

A mentoring system for candidates and prospective candidates has also been instituted after it was enthusiastically received by current members of Council. One of those who supported bringing in a mentoring system was Elizabeth Figg, a veterinary nurse and elected member of the VN Council.

She comments: "The VN Council members are welcoming, however, it is hard to get to grips with everything quickly. Support and advice on how to put forward a subject for discussion at a meeting and time-frames involved would be helpful. Before starting on Council I was unaware of how long it takes for procedures to be changed or the steps involved, such as acts having to be heard in Parliament."



Elizabeth Figg (photo courtesy of Burlison Photography)

We have also organised one of our regular 'Meet the RCVS Days' for Tuesday 10 December, aimed specifically at candidates for next year's RCVS and VN Council elections. Those attending will have the opportunity to meet staff and Council members and better acquaint themselves with the workings of the College.

How to stand for election

The elections for RCVS and VN Council will open in March next year, and close on 30 April. Successful candidates are appointed for a four-year term of office.

If you are interested in standing as a Council member in next year's election you first need to secure nomination from two veterinary surgeons who are members of the RCVS but not current Council members. Candidates for VN Council need to secure nomination from two registered VNs who are not VNC members.

You and your proposers will then need to fill out paperwork to be submitted to the RCVS by **5pm on Friday 31 January 2014**.

For more information on how to stand as a candidate for Council, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil14.

How to take a stand

To find out more about standing for either Council, you can:

- Watch the videos on our YouTube channel – www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos
- Attend 'Meet the RCVS Day' on Tuesday 10 December: contact Fiona Harcourt, Communications Officer, on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk
- Contact us on 020 7222 2001 to arrange to speak to a current Council member

Three-year goals announced

New RCVS Strategic Plan approved

At its November meeting, RCVS Council approved a new Strategic Plan designed to provide us with a framework for continuing to deliver an effective regulatory environment, while stretching ourselves to do better, and become a 'first-rate regulator'.

In late 2012, we launched the First Rate Regulator (FRR) initiative to gather an objective evidence base as to what we did well and where we needed to make improvements. The initiative gathered valuable evidence from 4,897 veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and practice managers and 265 members of the public, as well as desk-based research to examine how other veterinary, healthcare and professional regulators operate.

The FRR research has helped us to build upon the good work that we do and the reforms that have been undertaken, and has highlighted those areas where we need to make a change.

Much of the Strategic Plan 2014-16 comes directly from the FRR recommendations, as Chief Executive Nick Stace explains: "Since joining the

RCVS in September 2012, I have led a relentless drive to assess where our strengths lie and where we need to improve, and to develop a programme of change that will allow us to work at the forefront of regulatory best practice," he says.

"After almost a year's hard work, and with considerable reform already under the belt, I am delighted that Council has approved an ambitious three-year strategic plan that provides us with a clear framework to become a first-rate regulator, and a vision that will help us to improve the service that we provide to the public and the profession."

Why a Strategic Plan?

Strategic plans are a vital component of any successful organisation, they assist in communicating purpose and goals, and ensure that everything the organisation does contributes to achieving its stated ambitions. They also provide a clear road-map as to where an organisation is, where it is going and how it will get there, thus allowing an organisation to deploy

the necessary resources and undertake actions to achieve its vision.

Strategic Plan 2014-16

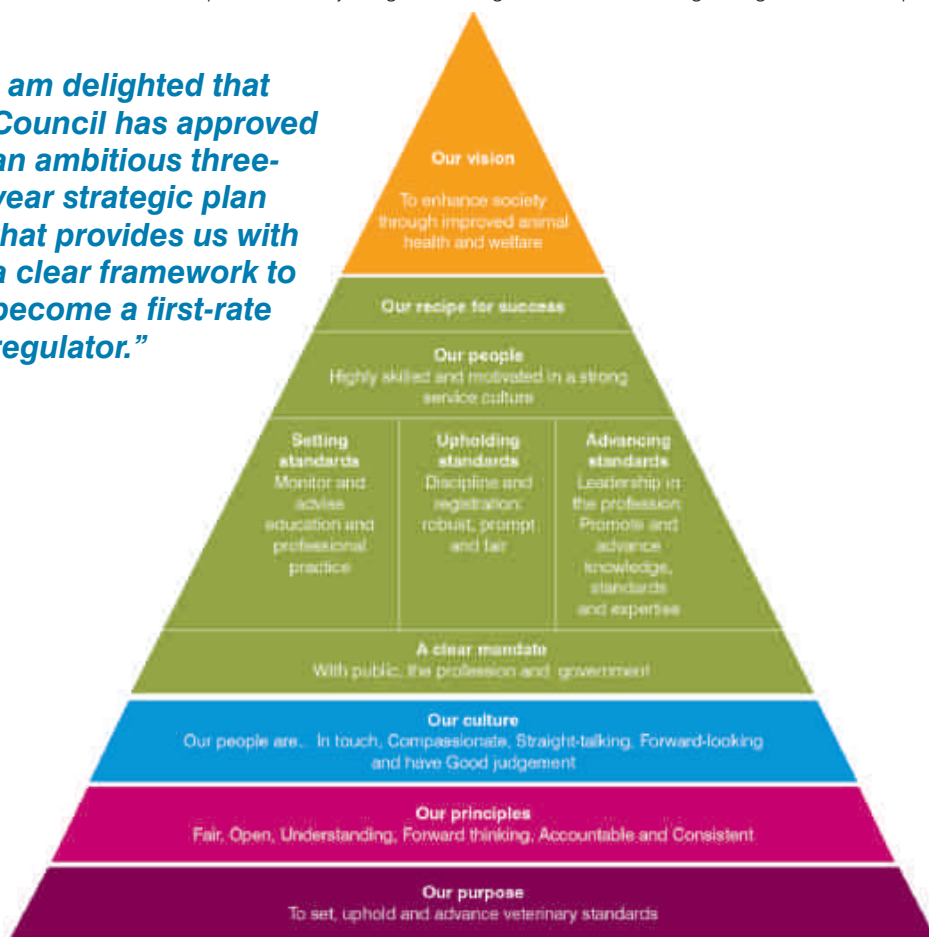
The first section of our new Strategic Plan presents a framework that establishes our purpose, articulates the principles that help us create the right culture, outlines what we need to do to achieve our strategic goals and delivers a vision that provides us with focus and direction.

The FRR research highlighted that there was significant confusion as to our purpose and that this has served to undermine the confidence of the profession and the public in our ability to discharge our regulatory duties.

By clearly articulating our purpose and vision – 'To set, uphold and advance veterinary standards' so as 'to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare' – we will restore focus to our work and thus help to restore the confidence of the public and profession.

"Improving our core functions will involve reviewing the complaints procedure and improving communications."

"I am delighted that Council has approved an ambitious three-year strategic plan that provides us with a clear framework to become a first-rate regulator."



Our strategic focus

Following directly from the FRR research, the second part of the plan concentrates on our strategic focus and highlights five areas where we intend to develop plans for improvement, presenting our ambitions in these areas.

Our ambitions

Identity: the RCVS is clear about its role, is in the driving seat of reform and continuous improvement, and is seen as a modern and progressive organisation.

Service: the RCVS will be known for its excellent staff who will go the extra mile to meet the needs of the public and profession, constantly seeking to reduce anxiety through clearer information and advice, and relentless in their delivery of robust, prompt and, above all, fair and transparent processes.

Advancing standards: the RCVS will advance professional standards while remaining mindful of the costs.

Improving core functions: we will do a first-rate job of ensuring proper standards of education, maintaining the Register and managing a robust, prompt and fair disciplinary process for veterinary surgeons and nurses.



Strengthen the foundations: the RCVS will have highly engaged and skilled staff focused on providing a high standard of service, supported by a stable, secure and suitable IT infrastructure and building facilities that fit the demands for continuous improvements to our service standards.

Achieving our ambitions
 Read in isolation, our stated ambitions could arguably be exactly what the public and the profession should expect of the College. The Strategic Plan goes further, and details what we will do in order to meet these ambitions. It is here where we really seek to stretch ourselves and propose bold plans for improvement.

“In terms of ‘Strengthening our foundations’, we intend to increase staff training and support, and to further improve the IT infrastructure.”

Under our ‘Service’ ambitions, for example, we outline major plans to significantly reduce the time complaints take to get to a Disciplinary Hearing and to develop a pilot consumer resolution service. Both of these plans come directly from the FRR

initiative research and the frustration felt at the length of time it took for complaints to either be closed or go to a hearing, and the limited remit we have to take complaints forward to a satisfactory resolution. One veterinary surgeon interviewed, for example, described the disciplinary process as “two years of hell... far too long”.

Work to ‘Advance standards’ will include the major reform of the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) to ensure that is relevant, meaningful and valuable to the public and profession. Compliance with continuing professional development requirements will be tightened, and we will investigate the options for the introduction of re-accreditation for veterinary surgeons. We will also support RCVS Knowledge in its work to develop the Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM) Network.

‘Improving our core functions’ will involve reviewing the complaints procedure and improving communications with the public and veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, so as to address a real and reoccurring concern raised by those who had been through the system: that they do not understand the various processes.

We will also seek to review and modernise regulations around registration and to push to

establish power to test the English language ability of EU applicants.

In terms of ‘Strengthening our foundations’, we intend to increase staff training and support, and to further improve the IT infrastructure. This is in response to the findings of the 2012 staff engagement survey, and the FRR research, which revealed that, when contacting us, the public and profession found staff to be polite and professional, but considered that they did not always have the relevant knowledge or information to assist.

Where is the Plan?

“I strongly encourage the profession to visit the RCVS website and view the Strategic Plan and the ambitious targets we have set for the reform of the RCVS,” says Nick Stace.

“I would again like to thank all those members of the veterinary team who took part in the FRR research for their invaluable input, which has formed the basis of the plan. I would also like to thank Council and staff for their hard work and commitment to the process of reform. In the next *RCVS News*, I look forward to updating the profession on our progress in implementing the Plan.”

To read the Strategic Plan in full, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/strategy.

First new Royal Charter for nearly 50 years

Consultation period opening soon

At its November meeting, Council agreed to proposals for a draft new Charter that will now go out to consultation with the profession and the public. It's the first new Charter since 1967 and its consideration by Council – even in draft form – was an historic moment, according to Professor Stephen May, who chaired the Legislation Working Party (LWP) that developed it.

While the RCVS is a single body, we regulate the veterinary profession using powers given to us by legislation and Royal Charter. In recent years, our work has focused on the legislation under which we operate and the development of the Legislative Reform Order (LRO) to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) so as to reconstitute our disciplinary committees separately from our Council. Ensuring that the Charter is up-to-date, however, is just as important.

Council agreeing to launch a formal consultation on proposals for a new Charter represents the culmination of a year's work by the LWP, which was tasked with reviewing the Charter and identifying areas where it is outdated.

Why a new Charter?

The Royal Charter gives us powers to employ staff, spend money, create Fellows and honorary associates, and award diplomas and certificates. The Charter also provides the basis for other activities we undertake to support our regulatory activities, but which are not covered directly by the VSA.

One of the biggest deficiencies of the current Charter is that it does not include a statement of objects, explaining our purpose. This may appear to be a minor omission, but, in the absence of any statement of objects, it is sometimes unclear how the regulatory functions performed under the Act relate to the other activities that we carry out under the Charter.

A further omission is that the current Charter does not clearly recognise the College as the regulator of veterinary nurses, despite the fact that we award the Certificate in Veterinary Nursing to qualified veterinary nurses, keep a List of those who hold the Certificate and hold a Register of Veterinary Nurses who have agreed that their professional conduct should be subject to supervision.

The inclusion of objects would shore up the foundation of key existing Charter activities that complement regulation, such as the regulation of veterinary nurses, the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) and the recognition of RCVS Specialists, and allow for their further development.

Following the work of the LWP, specialist legal firm Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP was recruited to turn

the Working Party's recommendations into a new draft Charter. The key changes that the proposed Charter brings relate to the objects of the College, veterinary nurses and associates.

Objects of the College

The proposed Charter sets out the objects of the RCVS as to 'set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine in the public interest'. The public interest includes protecting and promoting the health and welfare of animals.

"The proposed new Charter represents an historic opportunity to affirm our role, and to provide a modern framework for our future regulation."

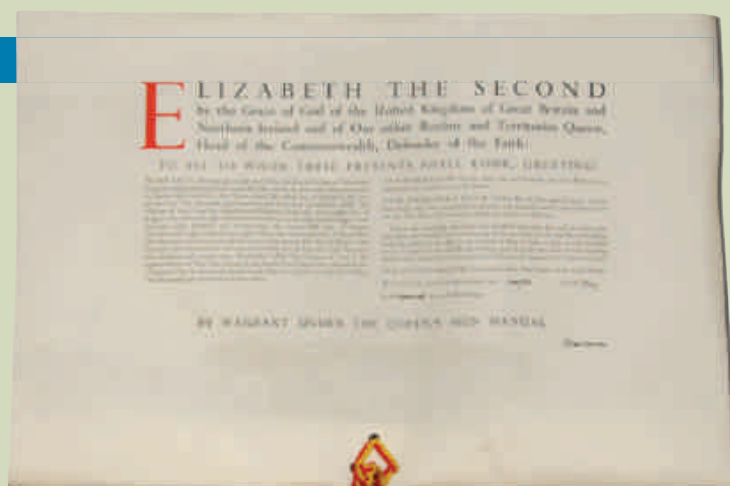
Veterinary nurses

Perhaps the most important change relates to the regulation of veterinary nurses. The Charter will strengthen the regulatory framework for veterinary nurses and should give the profession, and the public, confidence that all veterinary nurses are properly trained, work to the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct* and are accountable for their actions. It will do this by effectively turning the current List of Veterinary Nurses into the Register. This would mean that any VN removed or suspended from the Register for serious professional misconduct would not be permitted to undertake Schedule 3 activities. At present there are about 1,000 listed nurses who will be affected by this change and, if they wish to continue practising, they will effectively be moved from the current List to the Register.

The draft Charter will also give registered veterinary nurses the formal status of associates of the College, but they will continue to be known as registered veterinary nurses and to use the postnominals 'RVN'. In addition to the reforms in the Charter, the RCVS will continue to lobby strongly for legislation to protect the title 'veterinary nurse'.

Associates

The Charter will also provide us with the ability to make bye-laws to create new classes of associate



in the future. There are no proposals at present to recognise further classes of associate, but one possibility would be to offer that status to student veterinary surgeons and student veterinary nurses.

What does getting a new Charter involve?

In order to obtain a new Charter we will put a formal petition to the Privy Council Office, supported by a resolution at our AGM, otherwise known as RCVS Day. The petition will be considered at a meeting of the Privy Council, advertised in the *London Gazette*, and then, all being well, approved at a second meeting. The new Charter will come into force once it has received the Royal Seal.

The consultation process

We are keen to hear the views of the profession and the public and will invite comments via a formal consultation process on our website shortly. It is hoped that the outcome of the consultation will be reported to the March 2014 meeting of Council.

Assuming support for the Charter and the approval of Council, a resolution can then be passed at the AGM on 11 July 2014 and a petition can go to the Privy Council shortly afterwards. The new Charter could be sealed and in operation by as early as March 2015.

"The proposed new Charter represents an historic opportunity to affirm our role, and to provide a modern framework for our future regulation," says Professor Stephen May. "I call on veterinary surgeons and nurses, together with other interested stakeholders, to read the consultation documents and support our proposals."

Stat's the way to do it!

Successful statutory membership exam candidates welcomed

At a special registration ceremony at Belgravia House in August, RCVS President Neil Smith welcomed to the Register eight veterinary surgeons who had passed the RCVS Statutory Examination for Membership this year, having previously qualified from universities outside the UK.

The President conducted the short ceremony and presented certificates of membership to the new members of the College, in the presence of their friends and families.

“Candidates often have a wide variety of backgrounds and experience, and this year was no exception, with candidates from as far afield as Brazil, India and Nigeria.”

“You have every reason to be very proud of your achievement; you don't need me to tell you that passing our statutory exam is not easy!” Neil told

the registrants, adding: “It has required a huge amount of work, and I am sure it has not been a smooth pathway for all of you. But, it is also something that you have not done alone, but with support from your family, friends and teachers, as well as other vets and nurses.”

The statutory exam is set to enable any veterinary surgeon with a qualification not currently recognised by the RCVS to be able to practise in the UK. Candidates often have a wide variety of backgrounds and experience, and this year was no exception, with candidates from as far afield as Brazil, India and Nigeria.

Khadije Hette MRCVS, a 2003 graduate of the Sao Paulo State University, only came to the UK whilst travelling, but after falling in love with London, decided to stay and sit the RCVS exam.

“The mental pressure was the hardest part of the exam, and at times I felt like giving up,” said Khadije, adding: “It's been a year-and-a-half of study and part-time work, so I was delighted to pass first time, but if it wasn't for the support of my friends and family, I wouldn't have done it.”



Final Vectar conference

Successful final event in Helsinki

The final conference for the Vectar project – which aimed to develop a tool similar to the UK's Nursing Progress Log for use across Europe – was held at the Amiedu School, Helsinki, Finland, at the end of August.

The two-day conference went well, with all participating partners attending, and day two welcoming external delegates who were keen to learn more about the tool that had been developed by the project – the Clinical Training and Assessment Record (CTAR) – and the accompanying clinical coaching package.

“From the first day of the event the success of the partnership was evident, in terms of how far we had come, the close links that had been forged between the different faculties, the development of the CTAR tool for the standardisation of VN education and the fact that we had all worked together to achieve a common goal in advancing veterinary nurse training,” says Head of Veterinary Nursing, Julie Dugmore.

Many of the partners indicated their intention to continue with the CTAR and clinical coaching package with future cohorts of students once the project concludes.

For those of you who couldn't make the conference and are interested in the products we have developed, presentations and video footage will be available on www.vectar.org soon.

Benefits of the Vectar project noted by delegates included:

1. Clear guidance given regarding the training requirements while on placement
2. Enables closer supervision of students while on placement
3. Cost effective
4. Promotes VN uniformity and standardisation of training
5. The fact that the number of prospective students ensures sustainability

Party updates

Meetings of Day One Competences and Fellowship Working Parties

Following this year's consultation on Day One Competences – as reported in the June edition of RCVS News – the Working Party, chaired by RCVS Council member David Catlow, is in the process of preparing a revised draft of these competences, to make sure they remain valid and up-to-date.

The consultation exercise, conducted with both vets and non-vets, demonstrated that the competences were broadly relevant to graduates but recognised that there needed to be some minor improvements and additional guidance.

At its most recent meeting, on 31 October, the Working Party continued to work on draft revisions and is expecting to produce a final version for consideration by the Education Committee in February 2014.

Day One Competences are the minimum essential competences that we expect all veterinary students to have met when they graduate, to ensure that they are safe to practise on day one in whichever area of the profession they start to work. The competences are supplemented by the clinical and practical skills list contained in the Student Experience Log – see page 19.

New paths to Fellowships

Also meeting on 31 October was the Fellowship Working Party, chaired by Professor Gary England, which agreed to a wider consultation with the profession regarding additional routes to the RCVS Fellowship in order to make it achievable to a greater number of practising clinicians and Specialists.

The eight-week consultation is expected to take place early next year, with the results and recommendations being reported back to the Education Committee later in 2014.

Cattle class

New BCVA practical courses

The British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) has launched a series of practical courses to support those working towards the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP).

The one-and-a-half-day practical courses are part of BCVA's new Development CPD programme, and support the recently-accredited bovine CertAVP C modules: C-C.4 bovine nutrition, husbandry and lactogenesis; C-C.5 bovine reproduction; C-C.6 bovine mastitis and lameness; and, C-C.7 youngstock rearing and infectious disease. The courses are also designed to offer stand-alone CPD.

"The new courses respond to feedback from our members who asked for increased practical teaching to supplement the CertAVP cattle modules," says Laura Randall (pictured), who chairs the BCVA Education Committee.

"The learning outcomes for the practical courses are fully aligned with the CertAVP, and a panel of RCVS Recognised Specialists has contributed to both the development and ongoing support of the courses, to ensure the CPD is of the highest quality.

"A collaborative approach to developing these courses has been taken; educational institutions with specific interest and expertise in relevant subject areas will be delivering the courses, and the mastitis and lameness courses will count towards training for delivery of the DairyCo Mastitis Control Plan (DMCP) and the Healthy Feet mentor training," adds Laura.

These Certificate-level courses complement the foundation courses that the BCVA already runs to support those on the Professional Development Phase, and the masterclasses for those working towards, or at, Diploma level.

The courses are available to both BCVA members and non-members. For more information, visit www.bcva.eu, or call 01452 725735.



Advanced go-ahead

RCVS Council approves development of 'middle tier' accreditation for vets

The proposed Advanced Practitioner status for veterinary surgeons was approved in principle by RCVS Council at its November meeting.

When implemented, Advanced Practitioner status will form a 'middle tier' between a qualified veterinary surgeon and those who have earned RCVS Specialist status.

Speaking at Council, Professor Stephen May (pictured), who chaired the Working Party that developed Advanced Practitioner status, said it would be "a recognition of the evolution of an individual veterinary surgeon's expertise".

In order to apply for the accreditation, veterinary surgeons will have to have been in practice for at least five years since graduation and have an up-to-date record of CPD.

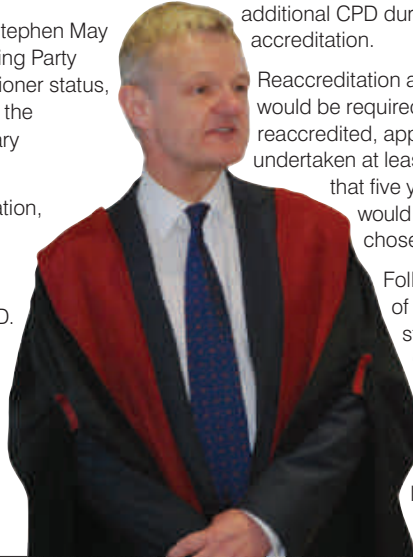
Applicants will need to hold one of a number of prerequisite postgraduate clinical qualifications, such as the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) in a given designation, and provide

evidence of professional development as an advanced practitioner. This would include achievement of the 'A' module from the CertAVP, or other equivalent qualification or module.

There will be an initial three-year window whereby applicants with older RCVS Certificates, or other clinical qualifications without the professional development component, could undertake additional CPD during their first period of accreditation.

Reaccreditation as an Advanced Practitioner would be required every five years, and to be reaccredited, applicants would need to have undertaken at least 250 hours of CPD during that five years, of which 125 hours would need to be in the applicant's chosen designated field.

Following Council's approval of Advanced Practitioner status, the Education Committee will now draw up detailed guidelines for applicants and develop an online application system, with a view to launching the accreditation by the end of 2014.



Visitations: global approach

Update on our vet school accreditation

As the statutory regulator for the profession, we undertake visitations to veterinary schools in order to monitor the standard of the degrees offered and make sure that they meet both our criteria and UK and European legislative requirements.

This year saw the first joint international visitation of a UK veterinary school by the RCVS, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) and the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE).

Representatives of all four organisations carried out the visitation at the University of Glasgow, along with an observer from the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC), from 21 to 26 April. The visiting group was co-chaired by RCVS Council member Lynne Hill and the University of Michigan's Dr Frederik Derksen, from the AVMA's Council on Education. Professor Stephen May, from the Royal Veterinary College, and Jill Nute, also attended on behalf of the RCVS. The degree course was approved and the next visitation will take place in seven years' time, subject to receipt of satisfactory annual monitoring reports.

This year has also seen the publication of a report into a visitation to the University of Liverpool, which

took place from 19 to 23 November 2012 and was undertaken in conjunction with EAEVE. The visitation was co-chaired by current RCVS Vice-President Professor Stuart Reid, from the Royal Veterinary College, and Professor Charles Press of the University of Oslo in Norway. The degree course was approved on the recommendation that a re-visit should take place in three years' time, rather than the standard seven, in order to evaluate the implementation of the University's new curriculum and the impact of its Faculty reorganisation.

The international focus will continue into next year with a meeting of the International Accreditors Working Group – including representatives of AVMA, AVBC, EAEVE and SAVC – at the RCVS in January, to discuss lessons learned from recent joint visits.

A re-visit to the University of Nottingham, to follow up on its first full approval visit in 2011, will take place on 20 and 21 March 2014, chaired by Professor Stephen May.

A joint visitation between the RCVS and EAEVE to the University of Bristol will take place from 23 to 28 November 2014. This will be chaired by Professor Susan Dawson, from the University of Liverpool.

The cap doesn't fit

We explain why we can't cap student numbers

Since the University of Surrey announced in autumn 2012 that it was opening a new veterinary school, the profession has been a-buzz with opinion about what this might mean for the quality of future graduates and the job market.

We have been asked to lobby government to put a cap on the number of veterinary schools in the UK. We can't do this, and have recently clarified our role with regard to new UK veterinary schools, by stressing that we have no mandate to control student or graduate numbers.

We remain committed to setting, upholding and advancing the standards that any new UK veterinary degrees would need to meet in order to be approved by the Privy Council, but we have no role in capping student numbers.

Furthermore, the free market and mobility of workers in the EU makes any control at the level of a sovereign state effectively meaningless with respect to workforce management. However, we are committed to ensuring that standards are maintained, and, to this end, we work with bodies such as the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), which evaluates veterinary degrees across Europe (see www.eavee.org/evaluation/establishments-status for a list of those vet schools which have passed EAEVE's evaluation, worth bearing in mind when you are interviewing European graduates).

Job market

We also seek to support healthy debate through providing information on the state of the profession – a good example of which is the survey that we recently commissioned from the Institute for Employment Studies on job availability for veterinary graduates over the last five years.

The headline results from that survey were released in the summer, and showed that increasing graduate numbers over the last five years have so far appeared to have had little impact on veterinary job prospects, with 94% of graduate respondents seeking a role in clinical practice obtaining work within six months of starting to look.

The RCVS Survey of Recent Graduates also shows that, of the 43% of veterinary surgeons who graduated in the last five years who responded:

- The average time taken to complete the Professional Development Phase is 16.3 months
- 76% of new graduates started seeking work as soon as they graduated
- The average time taken for these graduates to find their first veterinary position was 2.7 months
- 92% of first roles were in clinical practice, of which 53% were in small animal practice, 27% mixed, 10% farm animal and 9% equine
- 58% of first clinical roles were within RCVS-accredited practices, although only 16% sought this
- Only 34% felt this first role met all of their needs;

the most commonly-cited, as well as the most importantly-rated, reason for dissatisfaction with first jobs was 'I did not receive enough professional support from my employers and colleagues'

- 55% of first jobs were in the graduate's preferred location
- Of the 43% who had already left their first jobs, the most commonly-cited reason was 'poor management'
- For 13% of graduate respondents, their first role came to an end because it was a temporary position. This figure ranged from 9% in 2009 to 21% in 2012.

The answers were analysed by year of graduation, vet school, age and gender, and the full report is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/publications.



A life-long learning record

Student Experience Log launched for veterinary undergraduates

Our online Professional Development Record (PDR) now covers all stages of a veterinary surgeon's professional life – from the first year at university onwards – with the launch of the Student Experience Log (SEL) section.

The SEL went live in September and is now the first component of a three-part life-long learning record that includes the Professional Development Phase (PDP) section for recent veterinary graduates and the continuing professional development (CPD) record.

Already, four of the seven UK veterinary schools have begun using the SEL, allowing their students to record their practical and clinical skills experience while on placements and rotations. The system allows students to see clearly how they are progressing, identify areas they need to work on and log notes and comments on their placements and internal rotations. Vet school tutors are able to enter feedback on each student's record, and students can use the system as a platform to request feedback from placement providers.

As of 30 September 2014, the old PDP website will be phased out and any veterinary surgeons who graduated before 2012 but who have not completed their PDP by this date will have to transfer their records to the new site. From that date onwards, they will no longer be able to add further notes or case numbers to the old site.

We strongly recommend that any vets who graduated before 2012 and who have not completed the PDP do so within the next six months. If any such vets feel they need more time to complete the PDP, they should contact the Education Department to arrange to transfer the information across to the new website.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Platt, PDP Education Officer, on pdp@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0736.

CPD Record Cards

We will no longer be sending out hard copies of the CPD Record Card although veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who still want to record their professional development via this

method, will shortly be able to download and print the Card from our website.

“We would strongly encourage vets and VNs to sign up to the online PDR where they can upload and keep CPD-related information.”

However, we would strongly encourage vets and VNs to sign up to the online PDR where they can upload and keep CPD-related information. The website also contains a section for recording professional development plans linked to a calendar, and allows professionals to share their pages, for example, with managers or Practice Standards Scheme inspectors. Vets, please visit www.rcvs-pdr.org.uk to register; for VNs, it's www.vnpdr.org.uk

If you choose to join the PDR you will be in good company, as more than 5,100 veterinary surgeons and 2,800 veterinary nurses are now signed up.

CPD for overseas graduates

Additional course dates available

The next of our CPD events for overseas graduates, organised with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS), will take place on 27-28 November.

The course is specifically designed for overseas graduates practising, or considering practising, in the UK.

Day one of the course covers an overview of the UK veterinary profession; what it means to be a professional, developing skills and maintaining professional standards; identifying the right job and making it yours; the support available when problems occur; how to avoid pitfalls in practice; and, tips from an overseas vet who has succeeded.

The second day is a masterclass in communications, using role-play, led by the VDS. The two days can be taken independently.

For more information on the events, which are held at the BVA in London, please visit www.bva.co.uk.

Congress competition: Core confusion

VNs unclear over requirement

Our Code of Professional Conduct competition at the recent British Veterinary Nursing Association Congress (Telford, 11-12 October) highlighted a misunderstanding about the Code.

The results showed that many VNs were unclear on the question 'Does the Code require all practices to join the Practice Standards Scheme at Core level?' – with the majority thinking that it did. In fact, the Code requires VNs and vets to practise to the equivalent of Core standards, although the practice itself does not need to be accredited.

The competition was entered by 125 nurses but only 46% answered all three questions correctly. All those who did were entered into a prize draw, and Joanne Paterson was the lucky winner of £50 of iTunes vouchers: "I was really happy and surprised to learn that I had won. I very much look forward to spending my vouchers!" said Joanne, from Aldershot in Hampshire.

The competition aimed to promote the free new RCVS Code app, which can be downloaded for Apple and Android devices (www.rcvs.org.uk/codeapp).

Salisbury RQTweet

Guests and twitter followers had their questions answered



Badgers and bTB, 24-7, paraprofessionals, new veterinary schools, English language testing and bee medicine. These were just some of the topics covered at our

Regional Question Time (RQT) meeting in Salisbury, on 23 October.

Around 50 vets, VNs and other members of the practice team attended the meeting, posing questions to a panel made up of the President Neil Smith, Vice-President Stuart Reid, CEO Nick Stace,

VNC member Andrea Jeffery and Head of Professional Conduct Eleanor Ferguson.

For those who couldn't make it, we summarised the Q&A on our Twitter account (@RCVS_UK) using the hashtag #RCVSrqt. See the box for a summary of the night in tweets...

Our next RQT takes place on 23 January in York. Those living within reasonable travelling distance will be sent an invitation, but all are welcome – contact Fiona Harcourt for more information, on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk – or join us via twitter on the night!

#RCVSrqt @RCVS_UK 23 Oct

The team's in #Salisbury this evening for our Regional Question Time meeting. Should be a lively debate, which you can follow via #RCVSrqt

President introducing the panel at Salisbury. Hopefully folk have questions at the ready! #RCVSrqt

Q: who regulates paraprofessionals if exemption orders passed? A: Not sure yet... Straw poll: most believe there's a role for RCVS #RCVSrqt

Q: new grads finding it harder to get jobs. With new vet schools, will this get worse? #RCVSrqt

A: actually a recent survey of new grads shows 94% have jobs within 6 months of starting to look. #RCVSrqt

Vice-President: bigger issue is that 40 of the 110 EU vet schools have failed EAEVE visitation or not been visited #RCVSrqt

College agrees we should work with BVA to ensure info about EAEVE accreditation is better known to employers #RCVSrqt

Q: docs can be English language tested. Why can't RCVS do this? A: we are lobbying; but it is a professional requirement in Code. #RCVSrqt

President Neil Smith and CEO Nick Stace taking questions from the floor #RCVSrqt pic.twitter.com/IDDLI3WHFq

Q: are vets in govt involved w badger cull in breach of Code? Lively debate. Issues inc 'under his care' & individual responsibility #RCVSrqt

Q: I'm only practice doing own 24/7 within 20 miles. Get everyone else's emergencies. Do I have to treat? #RCVSrqt

A: Prez - you can suggest they go to own vet first. Or you could ask them to transfer to you. Document your decisions. #RCVSrqt

Q: I will be in trouble if I don't c another practice's OOH case but the other practice, sending folk a long way away, is fine? #RCVSrqt

A: if you don't feel the other practice is abiding by spirit of the Code, then please let us know #RCVSrqt

President stresses that what constitutes an emergency is up to the vet, not the client. If in doubt, document your decision. #RCVSrqt

CEO: first rate regulator project showed we need to be stronger & clearer with advice. We're looking into this with more resources #RCVSrqt

CEO: we recognise stress of complaint 4 vet/VN & complainant. Looking to reduce time taken to deal, while remaining fair & robust. #RCVSrqt

Q: is there enough bee expertise in the profession? A: Prof Stuart Reid – 2 vet schools now running courses in bee medicine. #RCVSrqt

Stuart Reid asks how can we communicate better with vets/VNs? Some like RCVS News, some want shorter info & more case studies. #RCVSrqt

Prez wrapping up: thanks 4 coming, contributing & taking time 2 listen. We're trying 2 move forward & there's lots going on! #RCVSrqt

Many thanks to all the vets, VNs & practice managers who came to our meeting in #Salisbury last night #RCVSrqt <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rcvs/10456731835>

Congress round up

Where to find us this winter

If you are heading to the London Vet Show (Olympia, 21-22 November), come and visit our stand (number E84) to find out how to download our free new Code app. It means you can access the full Code, and all 27 chapters of supporting guidance, even when you are offline – and it has a very handy search tool, to help you track down the guidance you need, when you need it.

If you need some controversy in your life, pop over to the BVA Contentious Issues session to hear CEO Nick Stace talking on the topic 'Trust me, I'm a vet' (Friday 22 November, 9.30am).

If Practice Standards is your interest, then you can book a free 45-minute appointment with one of our Scheme inspectors – contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk asap.

Newport bound

Meanwhile, if you are due to attend the joint Veterinary Practice Management Association/Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons Congress (30 January to 1 February, Celtic Manor, Newport), then come and chat to the team about any issues you are facing that relate to registration, regulation and education.

We will have a member of the Practice Standards team on hand, and Pam Mosedale, member of the Practice Standards Group, will give a presentation entitled 'PSS – what will it look like in 2015?' updating you on the ongoing review and how it will affect practices (Saturday 1 February, 9am).

We hope to see you at one of these events.

Digits meet digital

Share Jones lecture slides now available

The 21st RCVS Share Jones Lecture was given by Professor Dr Christoph Mülling at the British Cattle Veterinary Association Congress on Saturday 19 October, at the Majestic Hotel in Harrogate, and the presentation is now available online.

Professor of Veterinary Anatomy at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Leipzig, Professor Dr Mülling gave a fascinating lecture entitled "These digits are made for walking: comparing and contrasting the structure, function and challenges of the bovine claw and equine hoof."

His particular emphasis was on the consequences on the feet of the environmental stresses under which we put cattle and horses. For example, in modern husbandry systems dairy cattle are standing for long periods on hard ground, when they are anatomically more suited to moving about on soft variable ground. This causes sustained pressure that weakens the claw structure and can



leave it prone to the development of claw lesions and subsequent lameness.

Meanwhile, horses involved in racing and other sports face vertical deceleration of up to minus 500G, and high frequency vibrations, with major implications for both hooves and legs.

Professor Dr Mülling illustrated his talk with virtual 3-D anatomical models of cattle and horse feet, which he described as "digits meeting digital". He explained how techniques such as high speed videographic and fluoroscopic motion analysis could help the veterinary profession to better understand what is happening within the feet of cattle and horses, and how prevention and treatment of ailments could be improved.

Globally, there are 12 billion dairy cattle digits, with approximately 20% suffering problems at any one time, and a further 220 million horse hooves: "Clearly, the welfare and economic benefits of study in this area, to the animals, veterinary surgeons and society at large, are highly relevant," concluded Professor Dr Mülling.

This was the first time that a Share Jones lecture had been held at a Congress and the talk was attended by many experts in the field. Professor Dr Mülling's presentation can now be viewed online at <http://bit.ly/195rIC0> and the three-dimensional anatomical models can be found at www.hoofexplorer.com.



Professor Dr Christoph Mülling receives the Share Jones scroll from President Neil Smith

Feeling social?

RCVS homepage to receive makeover



The old adage 'Different strokes for different folks' never rang truer than when considering how people prefer to receive our news and information.

Whether it's face to face at our Regional Question Time meetings, hard copy publications like the newsletter you're currently devouring, e-newsletters in your inbox, tweet updates on your phone, or video messages on your tablet, we're endeavouring to provide a communications channel for everyone.

To reflect this, our homepage is in the process of a makeover to better display all the different ways you can keep up to date and stay in touch. Perhaps most importantly, more of the interesting stuff will move higher up the page, so you can see at a glance everything that's available, without having to scroll as much on smaller screens.

In addition:

- there will be a dedicated latest news panel, with additional links to access our news archive, e-newsletter and RSS newsfeed;
- notices, reminders and announcements will be more visible in a new scrolling ticker tape;
- a central panel will list the top ten most popular pages on the site to help you navigate quickly to where you most often need to go;
- a social media panel will enable you to toggle between the very latest content across our different social media channels, such as Twitter, YouTube and Flickr (LinkedIn and Facebook are in the pipeline);
- a new 'Meet the team' panel will feature a different member of Council or senior staff each time you visit/refresh, so you can find out more about them; and,
- the CEO's blog (www.nickstaceblogs.com) will have its own corner, updated with each new post.

These changes will be rolled out this autumn both on the main RCVS website and, similarly, on the RCVS Knowledge homepage. Do let us know what you think, and what else you might like to see.

An app for that!

Do you have the Code app yet?

Do you ever need to check the Code but don't have it to hand? Need to look up something in the supporting guidance, but aren't online?

Then our free Code app is for you.

The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct app allows owners of Android and iOS devices to access the Codes for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, together with 27 chapters of supporting guidance.

Once the app is installed, both the Codes and the supporting guidance will be accessible, even when you don't have a network connection. So it should now be a lot easier to keep the Code on hand, even when you are out and about. If the Code is updated, the latest version will be available to download next time you are online.

The app also offers a keyword search of the whole Code and supporting guidance, links to other sources of information and contact details for further advice over the phone or email.

The chapters of supporting guidance cover issues such as:

- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief
- Veterinary medicines
- Clinical governance
- Fair trading requirements
- Client confidentiality
- Whistle-blowing

To join the 600 people who have installed the app on their Android devices, visit Google Play (<http://bit.ly/19YLPak>) and look out for the shield icon.

For iOS users, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/codeapp.

If you still like to peruse a paper copy, website users can now compile a single PDF of the Code and supporting guidance via www.rcvs.org.uk/code, which is stamped with the date on which it is made.



Report to Council November 2013

PI Committee Chairman Jerry Davies

Since the last Report to Council there have been six Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings including an additional meeting in September due to the number of ongoing and new cases to be considered. The newly appointed veterinary surgeon and lay members took up their appointments at RCVS Day in July.

During this period, the PIC considered 77 new complaints, of which nine were closed; 24 were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon; four complaints were held open; 19 were referred to the veterinary investigators for visits and interviews; 15 were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; six were adjourned for further investigations by the Professional Conduct Department; and, one was referred to the Disciplinary Committee. In addition, the PIC is investigating 51 ongoing complaints.

Health Protocol and Performance Protocol

There are 13 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health / Performance Protocols, of whom six remain under long-term health and performance management.

Professional Conduct Department

Since the last Council report (22 May to 14 October 2013), the total number of complaints registered by the Professional Conduct Department was 300 (the total number of complaints registered between the same dates in 2012 was 317).

Veterinary Investigators

During the period 22 May to 14 October 2013, the four Veterinary Investigators and the Senior Case Manager carried out 28 announced visits, four unannounced visits, and one health-related visit. During these visits, complainants, veterinary staff, third-party witnesses and the respondent veterinary surgeons were interviewed.

Assistance with criminal investigations

Since the last Council meeting, and following RCVS assistance, the police have arrested and charged one unqualified person purporting to be a veterinary surgeon and another unqualified person has been convicted on five counts of fraud by misrepresentation. The Senior Case Manager is currently liaising with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Investigation Service and four regional police forces. One case involves the alleged fraudulent supply of medicines to a bogus veterinary practice; one case involves the alleged theft of drugs from a veterinary practice; and, two cases involve unqualified persons allegedly practising veterinary surgery.

The full report is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/pic.

Silke Lindridge

Inquiry concerning: allegations of failures to euthanise animals, dishonesty, administering expired medicines and failure to provide clinical information

DC decision: accepted respondent's undertakings to request removal from Register and never apply for restoration to it

Registration status: name voluntarily removed from Register on 17 September 2013

On 21 October 2013, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) agreed to adjourn multiple charges against Silke Lindridge, a County Durham-based veterinary surgeon, following her undertakings, first, to request removal from the RCVS Register and, second, never to apply to be restored to it.

At the hearing Ms Lindridge was charged with disgraceful conduct in a professional respect in regard to four separate allegations, spanning the period of June 2011 to September 2012 whilst in practice at the Safe Hands Veterinary Group.

Two of the allegations related to failures to euthanase or arrange the euthanasia of a cat and

a dog and being dishonest and/or misleading about these failures, with their respective owners. The other two allegations related to administering a vaccine (Fevaxyn) which was more than two years past its expiry date to a cat, and failure to provide or take adequate steps to provide promptly all the relevant clinical information to a veterinary practice taking over the responsibility for the treatment of a Labrador Cross.

“The undertakings offered by the respondent go beyond any sanction that this Committee could impose at the conclusion of a contested hearing.”

However, before the DC had heard evidence in respect of these charges, Mrs Lindridge, who did not attend the hearing, had lodged her application for adjournment on the basis that she would request that the Registrar remove her name from the Register with immediate effect and undertake never to apply to be restored to it.

The DC made no enquiry into the facts of the four charges and emphasised that they had neither been proved against, nor admitted by, the respondent.

The respondent informed the RCVS that she had no wish to return to the practice of veterinary surgery in this country. Should she subsequently apply to be restored to the Register, the DC would resume its consideration of the charges, along with the breach of her undertaking.

The DC was advised that the views of the animal owners involved had been sought and that all had agreed with the proposed course of action.

Speaking on behalf of the DC, its Chairman, Professor Peter Lees, said: “Having considered the information before it, the Committee has decided it would not be in the public interest to... proceed to a full hearing. It is satisfied that the undertakings offered by the Respondent [Mrs Lindridge] protect the welfare of animals and uphold the reputation of the profession.”

Professor Lees added: “The undertakings offered by the respondent to request the Registrar to remove her name from the Register with immediate effect and never to make an application for restoration to the Register, go beyond any sanction that this Committee could impose at the conclusion of a contested hearing... It does not consider that it would be proportionate for either party to incur the substantial costs of a contested hearing.”

Francisco da Cruz

Inquiry concerning: conviction of five counts of fraud; fictitious claims for veterinary treatment

DC decision: remove name from Register

Registration status: name removed from Register on 30 August 2013

On 24 July 2013 the Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that Francisco da Cruz, a veterinary surgeon who formerly practised in Norwich, should be removed from the Register, having found him unfit to practise veterinary surgery following his Crown Court conviction for fraud.

During the one-day hearing, the DC heard how Mr da Cruz had abused his position whilst practising at Hellesdon Vets, his then workplace in Norwich, by defrauding insurance companies of around £10,000 with fictitious claims for veterinary treatment on non-existent pets.

Following an investigation by the City of London Police's Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department (IFED), Mr da Cruz was convicted on five counts of fraud by false representation on 21 February 2013 at the Old Bailey in London, and later sentenced to eight months' imprisonment (suspended for two years) and 200 hours of unpaid community work; he was also ordered to pay just over £10,000 in compensation and costs.

Although Mr da Cruz had left the UK for Brazil shortly after his sentencing and was therefore not present at the hearing, the DC was satisfied that he was deliberately evading the disciplinary proceedings, rather than being genuinely unable to participate in them, so the hearing proceeded in his absence.

“It found that the five counts of fraud were deliberate crimes of dishonesty, committed over a significant period of time and for significant financial gain.”

First accepting the copy certificate of conviction against Mr da Cruz as true, the DC then had no hesitation in concluding that these convictions rendered him unfit to practise as a member of the veterinary profession. It found that the five counts of fraud were deliberate crimes of dishonesty, committed over a significant period of time and for significant financial gain. He had abused his position as a veterinary surgeon and abused the trust which the insurers placed in him as a professional.

Chairing and speaking on behalf of the DC, Professor Peter Lees, said: “The Committee has no real confidence that there is no significant risk of repeat behaviour from the Respondent. His

conduct subsequent to the criminal proceedings gives it no confidence that he has reformed himself to the extent that he will, in the foreseeable future, be fit to return to practise. So far from satisfactorily completing his criminal sentence, it appears that the Respondent has deliberately gone abroad to avoid doing so.”

Bearing in mind that the purpose of any sanction it imposed was not to punish Mr da Cruz, but to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper standards of conduct within it, the DC concluded that the convictions were too serious to allow any sanction other than removal from the Register.



Munhuwepasi Chikosi

Inquiry concerning: unreasonable delay attending seriously injured dog, causing unnecessary suffering

DC decision: remove name from Register

Registration status: name removed from Register on 25 July 2013

On 8 June 2013, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) struck off Munhuwepasi Chikosi from the Register for delaying attending a dog that had been run over at a farm and causing her to suffer unnecessarily.

Following a two-day hearing, the DC found Mr Chikosi guilty of unreasonably delaying attending Mitzi, a fourteen-and-a-half-year-old Labrador cross, and of unnecessarily causing her to remain in pain and suffering for at least an hour.

On 9 September 2011, Mr Chikosi had been working as a locum veterinary surgeon at the Vets Now out-of-hours emergency service in Barton-le-Clay, Bedford, when Mitzi's owner telephoned him to say that his dog was severely injured and to request a home visit for the purpose of euthanasia.

At Mr Chikosi's request, the owner attempted to bring Mitzi into the practice using a blanket. However, it was not possible to get Mitzi into a Land Rover, and she uncharacteristically bit the owner's son, so her owner called the practice again.

Mr Chikosi repeated the request to bring the dog in, saying that he was unable to leave the practice because he was looking after other animals, but that he could possibly organise another veterinary surgeon to visit "probably within the next hour or two".

The DC considered Mr Chikosi's actions in context of the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct 2011*, which listed a number of factors for veterinary surgeons to consider when deciding whether to attend an animal away from the practice premises.

These included the likely treatment needed, the possibility of the animal being safely conveyed to the veterinary surgery, the health status of the

animal and ability of the owner to manage the animal's pain until veterinary attention could be sought during normal hours, and travelling time for the veterinary surgeon.

However, the DC found Mr Chikosi had made no enquiries to determine whether Mitzi was in a fit condition to be moved, and offered no advice as to how her condition could be alleviated whilst waiting for the home visit. Further, his advice that Mitzi should be moved on a blanket was wrong, as she may have had an injured back. [NB The RCVS President, speaking on behalf of the Operational Board, has since stated that it is acceptable, in most cases, to transport an injured dog with the aid of a blanket – see box.]

"[Mr Chikosi's] failure to attend a seriously injured dog promptly in the circumstances described falls far short of the conduct to be expected of a reasonably competent veterinary surgeon."

The DC concluded that, from the outset, Mr Chikosi took the stance that he was unable to leave the practice because he was the only veterinary surgeon present. However, the DC noted, from the information available, that there were only three in-patients, no critical cases and a qualified veterinary nurse was present. It found there was no good reason why he should not have attended the farm, which was only 10 to 15 minutes' drive away.

The DC said that, by the time Mitzi's owner called a second time, it was clear that the out-of-hours service was experiencing difficulty finding a second veterinary surgeon but, instead of going to the farm himself, Mr Chikosi waited another hour until the second veterinary surgeon arrived at the out-of-hours service.

Professor Peter Lees, chairing and speaking on behalf of the DC, said: "[Mitzi's owner] had

recognised the severity of the injuries and the need for euthanasia as soon as was practicable.

[Mr Chikosi's] failure to attend a seriously injured dog promptly in the circumstances described falls far short of the conduct to be expected of a reasonably competent veterinary surgeon."

He directed that Mr Chikosi's name be struck off the Register.

Operational Board decision

The veterinary profession's reaction to the outcome of the disciplinary hearing into Mr M Chikosi was discussed by the Operational Board at its first meeting, on 26 July 2013.

The hearing had found Munhuwepasi Chikosi guilty of unreasonably delaying attending a dog that had been run over at a farm, and of unnecessarily causing her to remain in pain and suffering for at least an hour.

The DC had directed that Mr Chikosi's name be removed from the Register for serious professional misconduct; the appeal window now being closed and no appeal having been made, this was done on 25 July 2013.

Speaking on behalf of the Board, President Neil Smith said: "We fully support the decision taken by the independent Disciplinary Committee with regard to the Chikosi hearing, with one comment requiring clarification: the issue of whether a blanket can be used to move an injured dog. We consider that it is acceptable, in most cases, to transport an injured dog with the aid of a blanket.

"The profession should be reassured that our Standards Committee [the new name for Advisory Committee] will consider the general issues raised by the Chikosi hearing at its next meeting. This will not be a review of the decision, but form part of the routine consideration of DC hearings made by the Standards Committee to see if they raise issues that require additional guidance and advice."

[First published on RCVS website on 30 July 2013]

Geoffrey Oliver

Inquiry concerning: allegations of inadequate treatment of dogs; inadequate record-keeping; failures to deal honestly/properly with clients; and, failure to heed advice of Preliminary Investigation Committee

DC decision: accepted respondent's undertakings to request removal from Register and never apply for restoration to it

Registration status: name voluntarily removed from Register on 17 September 2013

On 16 September 2013, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) agreed to adjourn multiple charges against Geoffrey Oliver, an Essex-based veterinary surgeon who qualified in 1969, following his undertakings first to request removal from the RCVS Register and second never apply to be restored to it.

At yesterday's hearing, which had originally been listed for seven days, Mr Oliver, 68, was charged with serious professional misconduct over allegations of his inadequate treatment of two dogs and a cat (belonging to three different clients) between 2010 and 2012; inadequate record keeping; failures to deal honestly or properly with his clients; and, failure to heed advice from the RCVS Preliminary Investigation Committee about the importance of proper

communication between veterinary surgeons and their clients.

However, before the DC heard evidence on any aspect of these charges, Mr Oliver lodged his application for adjournment. The DC therefore made no findings on the charges, and emphasised they had neither been proved against, nor admitted by, him.

The DC noted that there had been no adverse findings against Mr Oliver during his professional career, that his practice was now closed and that he had no intention of returning to practise in the future. Should he subsequently apply to be restored to the Register, the DC would resume its consideration of the charges, along with his breach of the undertaking.

Inquiry concerning: falsification of clinical records

DC decision: suspend name from the Register for six months

Registration status: name suspended from Register between 12 November 2013 and 10 May 2014

On 1 October 2013, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) suspended Nicola Ersilova, a London-based veterinary surgeon, from the Register for six months, having found that her falsification of clinical records amounted to serious professional misconduct.

At the two-day hearing, Dr Ersilova was charged with, and admitted to, three separate incidences of false and dishonest clinical record keeping following her treatment of a collapsed cat, whilst working at Vets Now in Thamesmead, London.

The DC heard how Dr Ersilova had suspected that her client's cat had been poisoned, so administered fluids and treated her with Lidocaine. A lay colleague, who was assisting with the treatment, subsequently observed Dr Ersilova standing staring at the cat, which had stopped breathing, then leaving the room to go and speak to the owner.

The lay colleague's evidence confirmed to the DC that the cat's heart was still beating at this point, and that Dr Ersilova was then heard telling the owner that the cat had died while being treated. The lay colleague later discovered that Dr Ersilova had listed calcium gluconate on the owner's bill and not Lidocaine and, when she questioned the entry, Dr Ersilova told her she was worried about getting into trouble if she had listed Lidocaine.

Whilst reporting these irregularities to the senior veterinary surgeon at Vets Now, the lay colleague noticed that Dr Ersilova had also written "CPR unsuccessful" in the notes, although she was

certain CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) had not been attempted.

During a subsequent Vets Now investigation, Dr Ersilova admitted adding this false information concerning Lidocaine, calcium gluconate and CPR, saying during interview that she was aware it was serious professional misconduct and that she was prepared to take the consequences. Vets Now reported the matter to the RCVS.

The DC considered that all evidence before it fully supported the charges against Dr Ersilova, that her conduct was clearly dishonest, and that her actions were inexcusable, especially for someone as experienced as she was. It stated that a veterinary surgeon's duty to make only truthful and accurate records was so manifest and well known to veterinary surgeons that there could be no real excuse to make such false, misleading and dishonest entries.

"Both the public and other members of the profession must be entitled to rely on the truthfulness of what a veterinary surgeon has written in the clinical records of any animal [they have] treated."

The DC highlighted the comment by Dr Ersilova that she knew she had done something wrong but did not expect her colleague to report her, as providing no explanation, or excuse, for doing something which she knew to be wrong.

A number of submissions were made to the DC in mitigation, including that Dr Ersilova had admitted her dishonesty to both her employers and the DC; had an otherwise unblemished record over 22 years of practice; had received no immediate financial gain by her actions; and, did not cause any animal suffering.

Accepting these submissions, the DC nevertheless felt it needed to balance them against other factors.

Dr Ersilova's decision to falsify the records was premeditated and had not been taken without an opportunity for full reflection. There were numerous entries in the RCVS *Code of Professional Conduct* that highlighted the importance of professional integrity and accuracy, and, given the importance which the *Code* attached to the duty of veterinary surgeons to be truthful and honest in all their dealings with their clients, the DC found Dr Ersilova's conduct to be "most reprehensible".

Speaking on behalf of the DC, its Vice-Chairman, Professor Sheila Crispin, said: "It is of great importance that the public should be able to retain confidence in the honesty and integrity of members of the profession. Both the public and other members of the profession must be entitled to rely on the truthfulness of what a veterinary surgeon has written in the clinical records of any animal [they have] treated.

"It is [our] decision that the sanction of suspension adequately reflects the seriousness of the [Dr Ersilova's] conduct. The sanction imposed is... the most appropriate to inform the profession how seriously such dishonest conduct will be taken, because such conduct clearly brings the profession into disrepute and... cannot and will not be tolerated."

The DC then concluded that the least period of suspension that could be justified was one of six months.



[cont/d from page 24] The DC was advised that none of the complainants in the case – which could have incurred considerable time and costs – dissented from the proposed course of action.

"The DC was advised that none of the complainants in the case – which could have incurred considerable time and costs – dissented from the proposed course of action."

Speaking on behalf of the DC, its Chairman, Professor Peter Lees, said: "The Committee has

concluded that no useful purpose would be served were it to insist on a full hearing [and it] would be a disproportionate waste of... resources [to do so]. The Committee is satisfied that [granting the adjournment application] protects the welfare of animals and... is in the public interest."

The DC then accepted Mr Oliver's undertakings, including the removal of his name from the Register, with immediate effect.

"So that he is in no doubt about the matter, the Committee reminds [Mr Oliver] that, when referring clients of his former practice elsewhere, he should be careful to avoid giving them any advice about the diagnosis or treatment of their animals," said Professor Lees.

Full details of disciplinary hearings are available at www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary.

Sally-Ann Roberts

Inquiry concerning: dishonest actions with employer, client and a pet database company

RVNDC decision: suspend name from the VN Register for two months

Registration status: name suspended from VN Register on 22 August 2013 and restored on 23 October 2013

On 16 July 2013, the Registered Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee (RVNDC) suspended from the VN Register Sally-Ann Roberts, a Northants-based registered veterinary nurse, who admitted to acting dishonestly with her employer, a client and a pet database company by taking home a patient that was supposed to have been euthanised.

During the two-day hearing, the RVNDC heard how Ms Roberts, formerly of the Best Friends Veterinary Group in Thrapston, had deliberately gone against the wishes of the owners of a 14-year-old Maine Coon cat called Jason that he be euthanised, rather than treated further, and instead had taken the cat home with her for "intensive nursing".

Jason had subsequently escaped from Ms Roberts' residence, leading her to fabricate a story, first to the pet database company, and then to Jason's owners and her employer, that he had escaped from the practice, before being returned by a member of the public two days later and then euthanised as originally requested.

Ms Roberts acted with her veterinary surgeon colleague Przemyslaw Bogdanowicz, who chose not to euthanise Jason and who, for his part, received a three-month suspension from the RCVS Disciplinary Committee in December 2012.

"The Committee has concluded that the Respondent has shown insight into the seriousness of her misconduct and that there is no significant risk of repeat behaviour."

She repeated the false account on a number of occasions, both orally and in written statements, and also forged the signature of Jason's owner on official documentation in order to substantiate her story. Only when Ms Roberts was interviewed for a second time by her then employer's area manager, did she finally admit to what had actually happened.

Shortly afterwards, Ms Roberts was suspended from the practice and, following an internal disciplinary hearing a few days later, was dismissed by them for gross misconduct, along with Mr Bogdanowicz. There was no evidence available as to what ultimately happened to Jason.

Explaining her actions to the RVNDC, Ms Roberts said she was upset that Jason's owners wanted him to be euthanised and felt that he could recover if given some love and attention. She had asked Mr Bogdanowicz to discuss this possibility with Jason's owners, but he had refused, agreeing

instead that she could continue Jason's treatment at her home.

After Jason escaped, Ms Roberts said she was "devastated" and had "panicked", inventing the story of Jason's escape to cover her actions, which she now acknowledged were "wrong" and "stupid", and which she "bitterly regretted". Ms Roberts expressed sorrow and remorse for her behaviour, which she said would never occur again, and stated that being a veterinary nurse was everything to her.

In view of the admitted facts, the RVNDC judged that Ms Roberts' dishonesty and breach of client trust, as well as the distinct risk of injury to which she exposed Jason, amounted to serious professional misconduct.

In deciding on an appropriate sanction, the RVNDC balanced a number of aggravating factors (in particular, the forged signature) against Ms Roberts' "strong mitigation", which included her admitting the entirety of the charges against her, her medical and personal problems at the time, the insight she had shown into the effects of her actions on Jason's owners and her previous unblemished career.

Professor Peter Lees, chairing and speaking on behalf of the RVNDC, said: "The Committee has concluded that the Respondent has shown insight into the seriousness of her misconduct and that there is no significant risk of repeat behaviour."

"In light of the Respondent's admission, her insight, her remorse and the high regard in which she is held by her professional colleagues, it is the Committee's view that the sanction of two months' suspension is appropriate and proportionate."

RVN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE



Report to VN Council October 2013

RVN PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill

Since the last Report to VN Council there have been three Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVNPIC) meetings.

New complaints received

During this period (7 May to 8 October 2013), there have been 13 new complaints received against registered veterinary nurses (RVNs). Of these, three have been closed because there was no potential for serious professional misconduct identified; three are currently under 'Assessment' (consideration of whether there is 'potential' for a case against the RVN); three are under 'Enquiries' (investigation); two are being considered by the Case Examiners; and, two were referred to the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee for consideration.

New complaints considered by RVNPIC

During the same period, six new complaints have been considered by the RVNPIC. Of these, two are undergoing further investigations;

one was considered under the RCVS Health Protocol; two were closed with advice to the RVN; and, one was closed.

Ongoing investigations

The RVNPIC is currently investigating one ongoing complaint, which has been referred to the police and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Investigation Service.

Bogus registered veterinary nurse (Conviction)

In the last report (RCVS News, June 2013), it was reported that the Senior Case Manager was liaising with the police regarding alleged cases of fraudulent representation (purporting to be an RVN). On 5 July 2013 at Chelmsford Magistrates' Court, a woman pleaded guilty to five counts of fraud by representation. She received a 12-month community order with 150 hours of unpaid work.

The full report is available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

A world of knowledge in a single network



News of our first International EBVM Conference

In July this year, we changed our name from the RCVS Charitable Trust to RCVS Knowledge, and promised three core offerings: the Historical Collection; the Library and Information Service; and, the Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM) Project. All these projects are underpinned by our grants and awards programme and aim to support the past, present and future of the veterinary profession.

In September 2013 we sent an open invite to the veterinary profession to join an international EBVM Network. The Network's aim is to develop the practice and science of EBVM through the worldwide collaboration of veterinary professionals at all stages of their careers. The response was hugely enthusiastic, and a wide variety of veterinary professionals from around the globe have signed up to this pioneering movement.

Gill Monsell, a partner at Acorn House Veterinary Surgery, responded: "As a full-time small animal vet with many years' experience, I feel that it is high time for us to share our accumulated data and validate the procedures that we have used for so long. The EBVM Network will encourage vets in clinical practice to input and access information across the whole profession. This will enable us to feel confident that we are using the best current practice in the treatment of our patients."

Jelena Suran at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Zagreb in Croatia, said:

"I admire the vision behind the EBVM Network. As a veterinary scientist, I have always wondered why there is no equivalent of the Cochrane Collaboration for veterinary medicine. This is truly a great start to a noteworthy initiative!"

See the box for how to join the Network.

"The EBVM Network will encourage vets in clinical practice to input and access information across the whole profession."

Ground-breaking Conference

Our first International EBVM Network Conference will take place from 23 to 24 October 2014, at the Beaumont Estate in Windsor. The Conference will be suited to the entire veterinary profession, no matter how fluent in EBVM, including veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses, technicians and those who support their activity: insurers, publishers and CPD providers.

The event's agenda will be driven by network members and attendance will offer an opportunity to learn from leaders in the field, with speakers carefully selected to deliver useful, practical and inspirational content, providing delegates with at least 12 hours of valuable CPD. In addition to the dynamic content, the Conference will provide an opportunity for the early adopters of EBVM to meet and share information on emerging issues and practical solutions.

On Target

In October 2013, our first round of Target Grants was launched. Target Grants are aimed at tackling knowledge gaps or other challenges to the EBVM Network. The first round offered nine grants of £5,000 each to capture and interpret practice data that illustrated the type and frequency of veterinary consultations in first-opinion practice. Research activities and delivery of hard data should be available in time for the first International EBVM Conference.

How to get involved

- Sign up to the EBVM Network by emailing ebvm@rcvsknowledge.org
- Attend the first International EBVM Conference: put 23-24 October 2014 in your diary
- Register your interest for the Conference at <http://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk>
- Watch out for calls for abstracts for speakers and poster presentations for the Conference
- Follow us on Twitter (@RCVSKnowledge), Facebook (www.facebook.com/RCVSKnowledge) and LinkedIn to stay up to date with EBVM developments

A legacy of learning

Donation made in vet's memory funds Library refurbishment

RCVS Knowledge's Library and Information Service has received a brand new look, thanks to a donation made in memory of an RCVS Fellow from Singapore.

Dr May Lim, who died in August 2010, graduated from the University of Cambridge's Veterinary School in 1965, and was awarded an RCVS Fellowship in 1987 for work in the field of diagnostic virology, epidemiology and disease control. An anonymous donation was made in her memory in 2012, to be used to make improvements to the Library.

This donation has now been put to good use in improving how the Library space is used, with the installation of new visitor computers for accessing electronic resources and mobile bookshelves for printed materials. The moveable shelves will mean that space can also be created for special events, such as lectures, seminars and workshops.

Clare Boulton (pictured), Head of RCVS Knowledge's Library and Information Service, says: "The Library is already a vital resource and source of information on animal health and veterinary science, and this very kind donation has allowed us to make it just that little bit more accessible to those who wish to use it. The fact that the space can now also be used for events, in which veterinary knowledge can be shared amongst peers, is also very welcome."

"The space can now also be used for events, in which veterinary knowledge can be shared amongst peers."

For more information about the Library, visit its blog (rcvsknowledgelibraryblog.org) which features regularly updated highlights from the Library and historical archive.



RCVS News at a glance...

Too busy to read the lot? Start here for important dates for your diary and story summaries, so you can decide what might be worth reading in full.

1 One direction magic

Three-year strategic plan to steer us in right direction.

2 Badgers and behaviour

Statement on veterinary involvement in the badger cull.

Your College needs you

Councils elections nominations open.

What a to do!

Handy list of things you need to do.

3 Own up, own up

Voluntary disclosure of convictions now accepted.

Christmas canine companions

President's yuletide donation to go to Canine Partners.

4 Keep pace with Stace

CEO's post-Council update on strategy, Charter and disciplinary system.

Serving up a survey

Look out for the next Survey of the Professions – coming soon.

5 Two heads better than one?

Introducing our new Heads of Education and Veterinary Nursing.

Fit for a queen?

RCVS Queen's Medal launched to recognise outstanding achievement.

6 Know your Code

When to delegate vaccinations to VNs.

Students behaving badly

Working Party to address standards of professional behaviour at vet schools.

7 Poster's past it

OFT's top-ten meds poster no longer required.

Resistance is futile

CVO Nigel Gibbens discusses the profession's role in AMR.

8 Success by degrees

Over 250 VNs have graduated this year.

Don't be shy

Please send us your email address so we can keep you up to date.

9 Overseas over here

New registration procedures for overseas-qualified VNs.

10 Piece of PSS

Free Practice Standards surgeries at the London Vet Show.

11 Norm conquest

Let Norm the Norfolk terrier promote your PSS accreditation.

Modular approach

New PSS modules taking shape.

Trees tops science

Sandy Trees explains his role as chairman of our Science Advisory Panel.

12 Great busted

Bronze of Cecil 'Woody' Woodrow commemorates small animal medicine.

13 Council encouragement

We look to increase diversity of Council members.

14 The rule of three

New Strategic Plan focuses on the next three years.

16 Charting success

First new Royal Charter for almost 50 years.

17 Stat analysis

We speak to this year's successful statutory exam candidates.

Vector logs off

Successful final conference for Vector project.

18 Bovine learning

BCVA launches new practical courses for CertAVP.

Middle class

New Advanced Practitioner status approved.

19 Student numbers

We explain why we can't cap them.

Life-long learning

Student experience log launched for undergrads.

20 All of a twitter

Tweet updates from our latest Regional Question Time meeting.

21 Digital digits

Share Jones lecture now available online.

Pimp my website

More engaging homepage on its way.

22 Apt app

Have you tried our new app for the Codes of Conduct yet?

PIC report

Read the latest preliminary investigation statistics.

23 DC hearings

Silke Lindridge voluntarily removed and undertakes not to re-apply; Francisco da Cruz removed following fraud convictions; Munhuwepasi Chikosi removed for unreasonable delay attending seriously injured dog; Geoffrey Oliver voluntarily removed and undertakes not to re-apply; Nicola Ersilova suspended for falsification of clinical records; and, Sally-Ann Roberts suspended from VN Register for dishonest actions.

26 RVNPIC report

Read the latest preliminary investigation statistics.

27 Where's your evidence?

RCVS Knowledge hosts first International EBVM Conference.

2013: a space legacy

Generous donation funds Library refurbishment.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2013

21–22 November

Join us at the LVS

27–28 November

Overseas graduate CPD

10 December

Meet the RCVS Day for prospective Councils candidates

13 December

Deadline for Find a Vet entry update

25–27 December

College closed

31 December

VN fees due

2014

1 January

College closed

15 January

Deadline for Queen's Medal nominations

23 January

Regional Question Time in York

30 January

Join us at VPMA/SPVS Congress

31 January

Councils nominations deadline

1 March

Diploma exam entry deadline

6 March

RCVS Council



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RCVS SETTING VETERINARY STANDARDS