

# RCVS REVIEW

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS: PART 1

2011

Another year,  
carefully handled



# RCVS REVIEW 2011

1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011

Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II



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## Disciplinary System

We work to legislation from the 1960s, but try hard to ensure that we meet public expectations of a modern regulatory body, as outlined by David Pittaway QC, who leads our team of Legal Assessors.



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## Registration

Born in one country, educated in a second, wish to practise in a third? Sounds complex, but it's all in a day's work for our Registration Department, as new member Shay Shelly Eisenberg recounts.



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## RCVS Charitable Trust

The Trust's blue-sky grants help to enable ground-breaking research that will benefit animal health and welfare. And, as grant-holder Janet Patterson Kane recounts, this can sometimes have implications for human health, too.

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First impressions count, but research suggested our logo didn't help the public, or the profession, properly understand our role. Consultant Kevin Bolton explains what we learnt and what we did next.

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The University of Nottingham's veterinary degree looks set to be the first in the UK to receive approval in over 50 years. Katie Fitzgerald describes life as a pioneering student.

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### Veterinary Nursing

Veterinary nursing has come a long way, and we're celebrating its first 50 years. Gail Lawson, one of the early VNs to qualify, reflects on a career choice that has been both rewarding and varied.

# Actions and reactions

If you have ever found that a job was not quite the same when you got into it as when you read the advert or went for interview, it may come as no surprise to find that a President of the College can feel much the same when heading towards the end of their year in office. "Events dear boy, events," was Harold Macmillan's response when asked by a journalist what was most likely to blow governments off course, and this strikes a chord.

As a one-year President, you inherit projects that are just coming to a conclusion, foster those that were started before your time but are unlikely to be finished during your time and, if time and energy allows, start some for those who follow to finish or continue.

This year has been no exception.

The Lower Ground Floor building programme and the installation of the new database, and with it the new website and

rebranding exercise, have all been completed, but not without considerable expenditure of time and mental anguish by all involved. The new Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing has started to bed in and, by the time this appears in print, the degree awarded by the new veterinary school at Nottingham should be signed off as 'fit for purpose' by the College, and then soon after by the Privy Council.

***"The most joyous part of the presidency is the admission ceremonies at the universities and at the College."***

The most joyous part of the presidency is the admission ceremonies at the universities and at the College, when students become veterinary surgeons or registered veterinary nurses. By comparison, some of the most harrowing times are spent reading the evidence presented to the Preliminary Investigation Committees, by which complaints against veterinary surgeons (and now registered veterinary nurses) are considered. It is a matter of good public policy that the Health Protocol has been adopted this year, so that some of the sad cases where there is clear evidence that colleagues are in need of medical help can be assisted, while still protecting the public good and animal welfare.

The new Code of Professional Conduct is currently out for consultation and it is hoped that this shorter and more simple document, backed up by detailed guidance and advice notes, will provide the public and the profession with a clearer understanding of commitments and expectations on both sides. This document incorporates the most recent Opinion from leading Counsel as to what should be expected of a modern regulator,

whilst still coping with the strictures of a 45-year-old Act of Parliament.

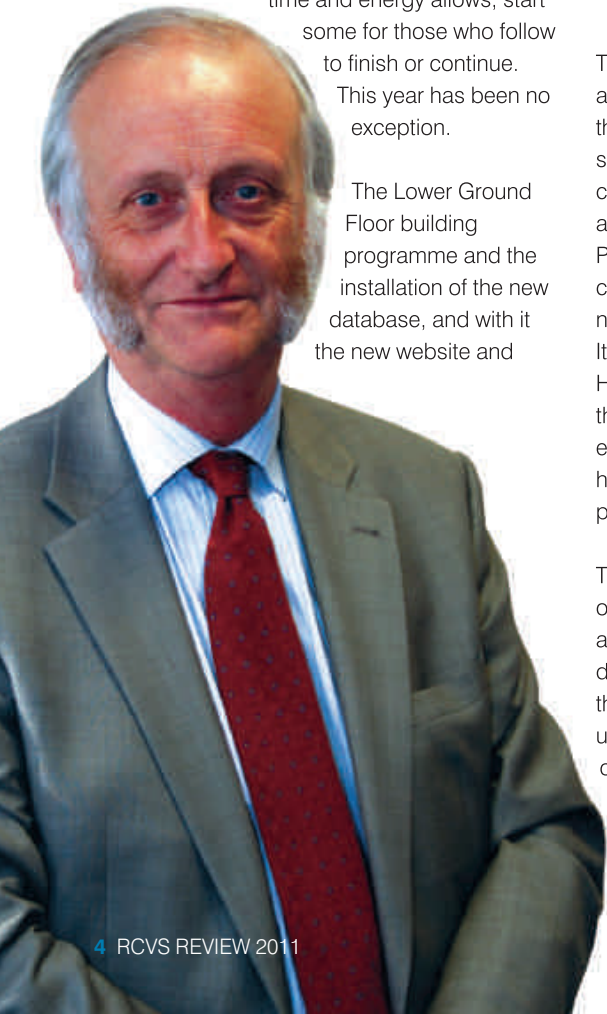
So, what of external events? This year has at least not been one where there was a major outbreak of exotic disease. The old chestnut of TB is still with us, although a government announcement as to future policy draws ever closer. TB remains a shadow hanging over all who care for animals and are involved in disease control, and it has held back progress in the control of endemic disease in this country for far too long. The problems associated with global warming, the increasing need for food production and security, and the freedom of movement of people and animals, have all been the subject of meetings and discussions this year. The increasing concerns over microbiological agent resistance, whether antibiotic or anthelmintic, have been matched by concerns regarding increased demands for wider availability and distribution.

Finally, to the challenge that was thrown down by the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food, Jim Paice MP, in September 2010: "I therefore encourage the RCVS to develop detailed plans for a regime for veterinary services that would replace the current Act [VSA 1966]."

Well, Minister, it is started, but it will be for the Presidents who follow to take it forward.



**Peter Jinman**  
President



# Setting standards

Looking back over the past 12 months, there has been an interesting mix of traditional activities and innovation.

Recognising veterinary qualifications to ensure that those entering the Register have the requisite knowledge and skill to practise veterinary surgery in the UK is a long-standing function, with origins in the first Royal Charter of 1844. The need to ensure that the new qualification to be awarded by the University of Nottingham for the first time in 2011 meets not just UK but EU requirements is just as important now as it ever was. By including a student in the visitor team for the first time, and by featuring the perspective of a student in this year's *RCVS Review*, we acknowledge the role students now play in the development of higher education (page 14).

***“In setting standards for professional conduct, we must move with the times.”***

The essential role of a regulator, and a Royal College, is to set standards: to ensure that practitioners are safe and competent, and that patients and clients can entrust lives to their hands. The new corporate image, which now makes clear that the business of the RCVS is ‘setting veterinary standards,’ may therefore be a statement of the obvious but, as is explained by the consultants who helped us to come up with the new image, the process is much more complex than just devising a new logo. Lengthy descriptions are relatively easy; reducing them to the bare memorable essentials is more difficult, particularly for an organisation that has many ‘audiences,’ with varying expectations of

what the RCVS does (page 12). Research has provided an evidence base for the new look and although, as is typical in these situations, it has not met with universal acclaim, the real test will be whether those who have dealings with the College are clearer about our role as a result.

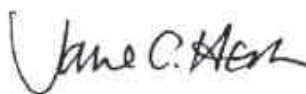
In setting standards for professional conduct, we must move with the times. Despite being hidebound by a statutory framework that is now 45 years old, we continue to look for ways to respond to modern situations. The Health Protocol and other changes to the disciplinary procedures (page 6) are examples of how our role as a regulator is being significantly adapted to meet the 21st century expectation that professional people should be ‘fit to practise’.

This year has also seen the final part of the voluntary scheme for regulating veterinary nurses put in place. The new registered status is now fully supported by the accountability of a disciplinary process. The real celebration of this year, however, is the 50th anniversary of the veterinary nurse qualification (see page 16). The juxtaposition of these two milestones serves to highlight how far nursing has developed, with the RCVS maintaining the backbone of the profession through setting standards for training, ongoing education and, now, professional conduct.

Registrations have an increasing potential for complexity, with applicants coming from virtually every EU member state, as well as many other points on the globe, and holding a variety of different qualifications, which may or may not be directly recognised by the College. The account of a recently-registered member (page 8) highlights some of the permutations and problems.

The RCVS Charitable Trust continues to do its bit to facilitate innovation by providing grants to those able and willing to develop the science, to set the standards for the future, as epitomised by the grant-holder featured on page 10.

And, finally, my review would not be complete without a big thank you to all my colleagues. It has been a particularly tough year: putting in place a new database, website and corporate branding has been challenging, alongside everything else.



**Jane C Hern**  
Registrar



# Ensuring fair play

**The vast majority of veterinary interactions with animals and the public have a positive outcome, but a handful of complaints each year end up being considered by the Disciplinary Committee. A team of four Legal Assessors is there to ensure these are dealt with fairly. David Pittaway QC from Hailsham Chambers, who leads the team, outlines recent changes that have been introduced to safeguard the integrity of the process.**

My father is a veterinary surgeon and so I was delighted when the opportunity arose for our two professional paths to meet. As a younger man he was actively involved in the profession, serving as a Council member of both the British Veterinary Association and, also, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, giving its first paper at its first annual conference. It is a privilege for me to be involved with the RCVS and play a role in ensuring that the standards for the profession are being met.

The Disciplinary Committee comprises both veterinary surgeons and lay people – all Council members. Its composition, remit and sanctions, which are all laid down in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, are no longer appropriate in the modern regulatory environment of shared regulation. A Legislative Reform Order in the pipeline seeks to separate the Committee membership from Council, which will help to deliver independence of process. In the meantime, it is the role of the Legal Assessors to support the Committee and ensure that registrants, complainants and witnesses are dealt with fairly, consistently and in accordance with the procedure.

Over recent years, changes have been introduced to assist with this objective. There is now a comprehensive training programme for all Committee members, and additional training for

those in the chair. A Disciplinary Manual and Guidance have been prepared by the Professional Conduct Department, with some input from me, to see that all those involved with the process know exactly what is expected of them. We have also put in place indicative sanction guidelines: although all cases are treated individually, it is helpful for there to be some clear identification of what has happened in previous similar cases, in order to measure expectations.

I am involved with several other healthcare regulatory bodies, primarily as a QC working with registrants. This gives me an overview of best practice and I am pleased to say that although when I first became involved with the profession ten years or so ago, I thought the procedures were old-fashioned, the College's disciplinary system is now in good heart. The increasing involvement of lay people has helped both in the conduct of the hearings and in public perception of its independence.

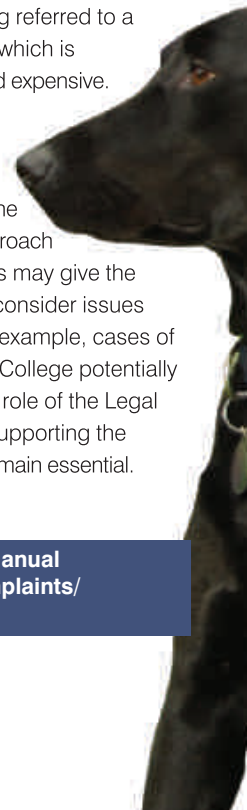
That's not to say more couldn't be done, but recent steps have brought the College more into line with public expectations of a modern regulator. This was backed up by an audit carried out by external solicitors last summer, which was supportive of the process. We are not standing still, however, and have just launched a consultation on changes to the

Case Management procedure, which will provide that information is made available to Committee members in a timely fashion. This should speed up the hearing of cases.

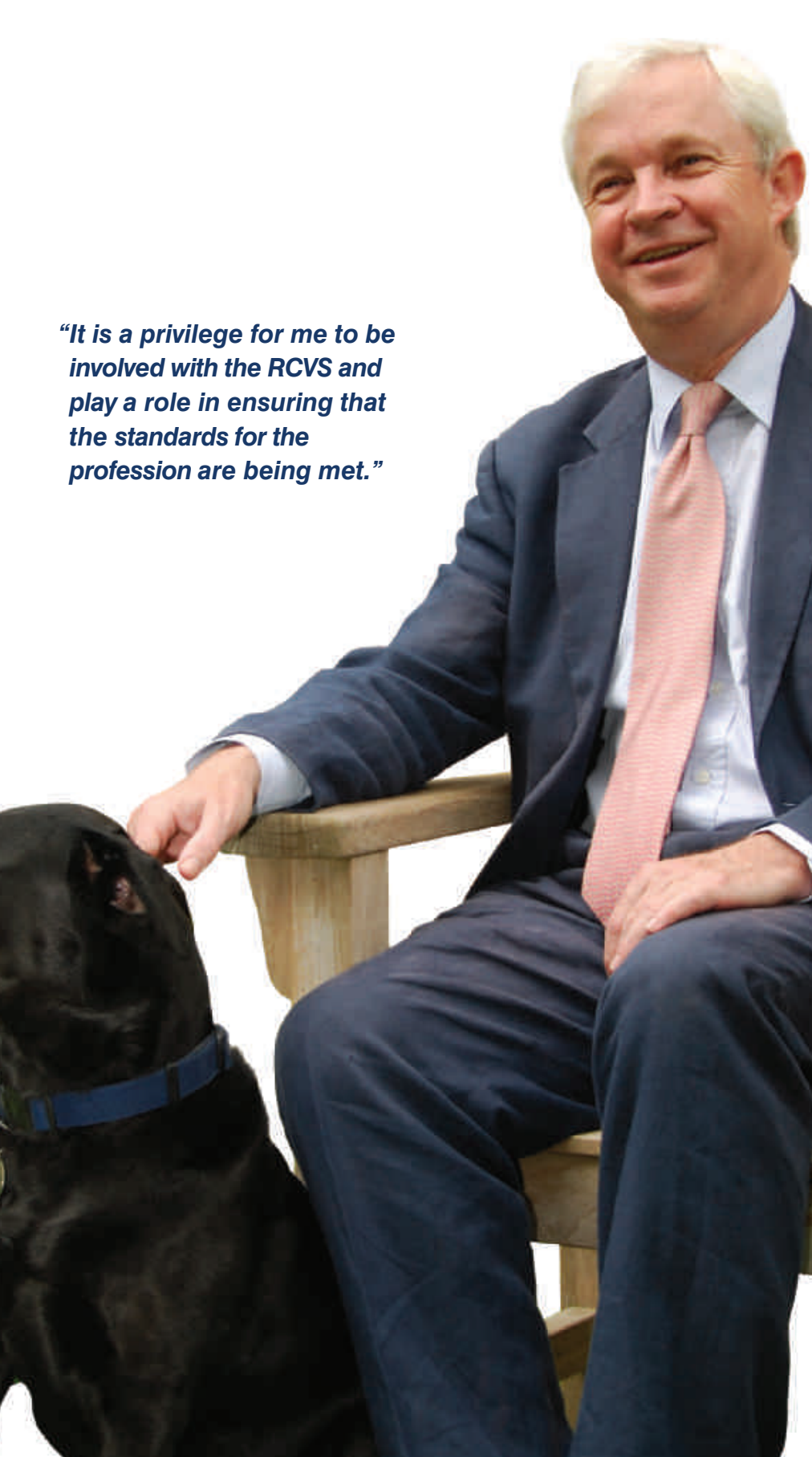
There has also been the recent and welcome introduction of the Health Protocol. It provides for veterinary surgeons with health problems affecting their fitness to practise, in certain cases, to be supported in a structured programme under the auspices of the Preliminary Investigation Committee, rather than being referred to a public Disciplinary Hearing, which is stressful, time-consuming and expensive.

The broader jurisdiction of the College is also being reconsidered in the light of the way that other regulators approach the setting of standards. This may give the College greater flexibility to consider issues affecting animal welfare, for example, cases of clinical competence. As the College potentially moves into new territory, the role of the Legal Assessors in advising and supporting the Disciplinary Committee will remain essential.

**Read our Disciplinary Manual  
at [www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints/  
disciplinary-hearings](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints/disciplinary-hearings)**



***“It is a privilege for me to be involved with the RCVS and play a role in ensuring that the standards for the profession are being met.”***



Other complaints- and guidance-related activities include:

- Carrying out 63 visits to veterinary practices, with 192 interviews of veterinary surgeons and complainants, to investigate complaints
- Solicitors investigating complaints taking 139 formal witness statements
- 47 hearing days by the Disciplinary Committee hearing cases and applications for restoration
- Undertaking 71 reviews for complainants unhappy with the RCVS decision to close their complaint
- Training for veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses, lay members/observers and veterinary investigators involved in the complaints and disciplinary process
- Securing approval of the Rules to regulate registered veterinary nurses
- Introducing a Health Protocol to seek to ensure veterinary surgeons' health problems are treated medically and sympathetically
- Developing a draft new Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons, and seeking views via consultation.



# A long haul, but worth it

**Veterinary surgeons must be registered with the College in order to practise in the UK. Each year, we register around 1,300 new members, of which about 600 are overseas graduates. Most of the time this is straight-forward, but, as recently-registered member Shay Shelly Eisenberg MRCVS outlines, it can be a rather complex process.**

As an Israeli, I see a problem as a challenge – that’s our spirit – but even I was not prepared for the struggle that registering as a veterinary surgeon with the RCVS would become! But then, mine is a special case...

I started my veterinary studies at the Hebrew University in Israel but, after 18 months, I followed my then-partner to Bulgaria. I thought that after studying in such a prestigious university, switching to the University of Forestry in Sofia wouldn’t be a problem, but I actually had to start all over again. In Bulgarian!

***“I was very proud to come to Belgravia House in London for my registration ceremony.”***

There was a big difference between studying veterinary medicine in Israel and in Sofia. Bulgaria is a poor country and the facilities weren’t as good, but there was a high level of discipline and we worked so hard. We also had a good supply of cases on which to practise neutering, due to the high numbers of stray cats and dogs in Bulgaria.

Following a tough eight years of study, I was proud to graduate from Bulgaria. By this point I had met

my husband James, who is also an Israeli but with Czech parents, so he also has EU citizenship, whereas my mother is from Chile and my father from Tunisia, so I do not. James has a veterinary degree from Hungary, and has practised in Sweden: by the time I graduated, he had secured an internship in the UK. As a graduate from an EU veterinary school, I thought that moving with him to the UK would be straight-forward, but once I contacted the RCVS, I realised this wasn’t to be the case. Although under EU law the College recognises the Bulgarian degree if held by an EU national, as an Israeli I could not register on the strength of my degree alone.

For a long time, it looked as though my dream of moving to the UK was not going to become a reality. I was starting to consider sitting the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination, and was beginning to weigh up whether I would be better taking the American or Australian registration exams. Then Jenny Harris in the RCVS Registration Department recognised that I could in fact migrate with James, as he is an EU national and was coming to the UK from another EU country. This brought me into EU legislation as a Community Rights Entitled Person and entitled me to register.

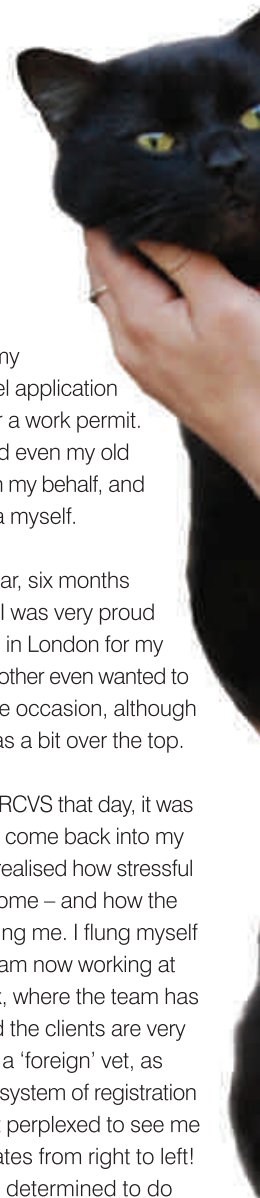
However, even with the promise of this new route, I had to produce an awful lot of original

documentation to support my application – and the parallel application to the UK Border Agency for a work permit. I had friends in Bulgaria, and even my old professor, running around on my behalf, and also had to go back to Sofia myself.

So, on 25 January of this year, six months since I started the process, I was very proud to come to Belgravia House in London for my registration ceremony. My mother even wanted to come over from Israel for the occasion, although I persuaded her that that was a bit over the top.

Becoming a member of the RCVS that day, it was as though the sunshine had come back into my life. It wasn’t until then that I realised how stressful the whole process had become – and how the uncertainty had been affecting me. I flung myself into applying for posts and am now working at Medivet in Southend, Essex, where the team has been really supportive. I find the clients are very open-minded about having a ‘foreign’ vet, as they are confident in the UK system of registration – even though they are a bit perplexed to see me signing vaccination certificates from right to left! I love working here and am determined to do Jenny proud!

**Check our Register at [www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/check-the-register-list](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/check-the-register-list)**







Other registration-related activities include:

- Working with a new database (which also impacts on the entire organisation)
- Developing and implementing the new Registration Regulations, including online payment for the first time
- Reporting on the EU Commission review of the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications
- Processing a continuing number of Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) applications and inspections, including 20 practices (linked to 26 premises) in the last quarter of the reporting year (January to March 2011), and 51 practices (linked to 63 premises) over the whole year
- Ongoing training for the PSS Inspectors
- Continuing removals/additions to the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises, the Register of Members and the List/Register of Veterinary Nurses
- Working with the Olympic Committee to ensure processes are in place to register overseas veterinary surgeons accompanying international Olympic teams to the UK, including provision for a test event to be held in summer 2011.



# Trust funding aids healing

**The RCVS Charitable Trust granted £17,000 to Professor Janet Patterson Kane MRCVS, at the University of Glasgow, in 2010. This is funding blue-sky research into translating a new gene therapy from human use to treat leg wounds in horses.**

Both horse owners and equine vets know that leg injuries are common in horses and that getting them to heal is problematic compared with body wounds. Often, masses of scar tissue – 'proud flesh' – form, which can resemble tumours and, as a veterinary diagnostic pathologist working with horses, I frequently examine samples. I wanted to find a solution to these wound-healing problems and joined with Professor Derek Knottenbelt of Liverpool University, who is recognised internationally as an expert in equine wound healing.

We work with Professor David Becker, at University College London (UCL), as he has been researching the treatment of non-healing human skin wounds, for example, leg ulcers associated with diabetes. He has found that an important factor when certain wounds fail to heal is that a protein called connexin 43 is not being properly downregulated at the wound edges. Consequently, his team developed a treatment to prevent gene expression of connexin 43. This treatment is now in clinical trials in the USA for use in humans and we thought it might also work for horses. To find out, we needed the Trust's funding to prove the similarity between non-healing wounds in horses and those in humans.

As horse leg wounds are common, we asked equine vets for samples, and are hugely grateful

in particular to Glasgow and Liverpool University hospitals and also to Rossdale and Partners at Newmarket and the Chine House Veterinary Hospital. We've also found veterinary nurses to be especially helpful, as they often deal with processing and forwarding of samples to pathology laboratories, and, like their veterinary surgeon colleagues, are interested in the science and the welfare of horses.

We supply all practices taking part with information sheets to help vets explain the research to owners and gain their consent: nothing that we do affects the treatment of their horses. The samples taken come from tissue that is debrided during treatment, and would otherwise be discarded.

As we know, practices are busy, so we send participating vets a suitable histological fixative with a detailed written description of exactly where and how to take the samples; it doesn't take much time to do this during normal treatment. Our control samples from healthy skin come from abattoirs.

So far, we have found that the pattern of connexin 43 expression in the normal equine epidermis is similar to that in human skin, unlike that of laboratory rodents. Our initial results also indicate that, as we expected, connexin 43 is expressed at

high levels at the edges of non-healing wounds in horses – just as in human patients. This similarity indicates the likelihood that the treatment being developed for humans will also work in horses.

The next stage is to study further the effects of connexin 43 knockdown therapy in horses and we are now analysing further skin samples and extending our work into cell culture in the laboratory, using cells that Derek Knottenbelt has collected from wounds at various stages of healing. Our aim is to test this in equine wounds and then begin clinical trials.

This is work that benefits both humans and horses, particularly as few laboratory animal models exist to research this type of wound. I am extremely grateful to the Trust for their support. Their blue-sky funding is allowing us to establish 'proof of principle' for using this realistic, scientifically-based therapy in horses, which, if the next stage of the project confirms our early findings, greatly increases the chance that this research can be taken forwards and will result in a safe and effective new treatment for horses suffering from this common and serious problem.

**Could a Trust grant make a difference to you? Visit: <http://trust.rcvs.org.uk/grants>**



***“This is work that benefits both humans and horses.”***



Other Trust-related activities include:

- Distributing £492,000 in grants, including £164,000 in new grants during 2010
- Changing the working name to RCVS Charitable Trust, with a new logo
- Saying goodbye to our retiring Chairman Steven Ware, and appointing our new Chairman, Jill Nute
- Implementing a new website, with improved access for Library users and additional features
- Welcoming 120 new individual Library members
- Loaning 531 books and 1,229 journals
- Supplying over 400 subject alerts, giving subscribers details of the latest research in their area of interest
- Partnering with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, through the Library membership scheme
- Receiving three legacies from supporters.



# Solving an identity crisis

**The evolution of the RCVS corporate identity is a timely development which will help the College to fulfil its aims – increasing the public's awareness as well as maintaining its relevance to the profession, says Kevin Bolton, of creative agency Poulsen Selleck.**

When we were invited to work with the RCVS on a review of its corporate identity we heard a familiar story. Over time, as needs arose, the identity had diversified and a plurality of logos, some historic, others more recent, now sought to identify different aspects of the organisation's work.

Piecemeal development had left an untidy and unworkable visual identity which was not helping the organisation's communications and public image.

The core College corporate identity, it was suggested, looked back instead of forward, was remote, impersonal, dated and poorly understood. How was this, we were asked, compatible with the RCVS self-image as an 'approachable' and 'modern' organisation?

It's a fair question. The RCVS is an organisation with a long and distinguished past and a very relevant role in the present, but the issue it faces is similar to that of other professional organisations. Like many, it chose to project its statutory responsibility and its professional status with a coat of arms and a very traditional typeface. But society's values have altered. It's no longer necessary to use medieval identity systems to establish respect and confidence in the minds of the public – it may, in fact, be a hindrance.

Seeking an answer, we asked a mix of RCVS stakeholders – internal and external – about their views of the RCVS, its role, its relevance, and the extent to which its corporate identity reflected its aims and aspirations. A programme of in-depth telephone interviews with vets, veterinary nurses and animal owners uncovered important insights, as did internal workshops with Council members and staff.

While animal owners appeared to have an ingrained belief that vets and veterinary nurses are qualified, professional and trustworthy, they hadn't a clue what the RCVS stood for or what it did. If prompted, they recognised that professionals have letters after their names, but had no idea what they might mean. Similarly, their lack of awareness of the role of the RCVS was acute when compared to other regulators: when asked who they would contact if they wanted to complain about their bank, lawyer or doctor, respondents had a pretty clear idea. But if dissatisfied with a vet, people other than equine owners and farmers could suggest no better than consulting Google.

We also asked our research group what they thought about the logo. On the whole the message from respondents from all audiences was far from approachable or modern: 'old', 'intimidating', 'traditional', 'royal', 'London', 'stuffy'.

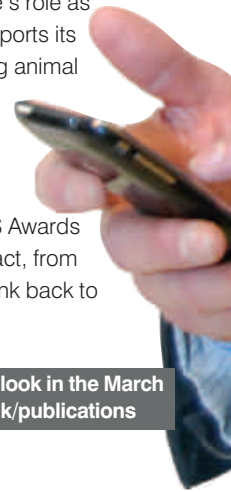
Such views may validate the idea of change, but it should be recognised that as well as being better understood and more obviously relevant to an audience, it is essential that the RCVS remains respected, professional and serious.

Working closely with the team at the RCVS we used the research to create a brief for a new corporate identity. The resulting work is an evolution rather than a revolution; we consider it an important step forward.

The design achieves more clarity of the role and purpose of the RCVS and is visually simpler. Taking elements of the old coat of arms it retains a link with the past, while adding a descriptive line ('setting veterinary standards') makes it clear that the College's role as the profession's regulator supports its ultimate objective of protecting animal health and welfare.

A family of logos for the RCVS Charitable Trust, Practice Standards Scheme and RCVS Awards now support, rather than detract, from the core identity, making the link back to the parent organisation clear.

**There's more about our new look in the March RCVS News: [www.rcvs.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/publications)**



**“The design achieves more clarity of the role and purpose of the RCVS.”**



Other communications-related activities include:

- Launching a new, more interactive website in the new livery ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk))
- Supporting the 50th anniversary of veterinary nursing with media campaigns, competitions and a seminar
- Attending BVNA and BSAVA Congresses and the London Vet Show, and hosting well attended seminar sessions
- Launching a *Guide to Professional Conduct* quiz to test VNs' knowledge
- Launching a twitter account (@RCVS\_UK)
- Posting 114 items of Latest News, together with press releases, features and regular columns in the media
- Responding to 12 consultations
- Hosting three Regional Question Times, four Meet the RCVS Days, four parliamentary functions, student meetings at all vet schools and RCVS Day
- Developing our ePolitix microsite for parliamentarians ([www.epolitix.com/rcvs](http://www.epolitix.com/rcvs))
- Publishing the findings of our 2010 Survey of the Veterinary and Veterinary Nursing Professions
- Becoming a member of the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare
- Publishing three issues of *RCVS News*, three *RCVS News Extras*, four issues of *VN Standard* (including one 'Extra'), plus, online *RCVS e-News* and *The Practice Standard*.



# Determined pioneers

**The new veterinary school at The University of Nottingham is the first to open its doors in the UK for over 50 years, so no surprises that its progress has been watched with interest. As the degree course nears the final stages of RCVS approval, we hear what it's like to be a pioneering student, from fourth-year Katie Fitzgerald.**

I already had a degree under my belt when I started at the vet school – in Animal Science, also from The University of Nottingham. That made me the kind of student the vet school was keen to take on, as I had the experience to help other new students settle in, and the enthusiasm to take any challenges that come with being a founding student at a new school in my stride.

Enthusiasm is a characteristic of many of the students at the vet school and one of the main reasons I decided to study here. It's a daunting prospect to join a new course, in a new school, but we share a will to make it work, and a pride in what we have achieved. The ability to be able to work together – and support each other as students – is helped by the fact that there is no split between pre-clinical and clinical years. We are all on the same site and that integration helps enormously.

The course is also integrated. So, rather than learning biochemistry, anatomy or physiology as separate subjects, we take a 'system' approach, looking at, say, the musculoskeletal system in the round. I have found this to be a really intuitive way of learning. The fact that we look at clinical cases from day one also helps – so we can understand the context of what we are learning right from the start. In the later

years, much of the clinical teaching is carried out in practice, which sets Nottingham apart from the other schools.

***“Enthusiasm is a characteristic of many of the students at the vet school and one of the main reasons I decided to study here.”***

As President of the Veterinary Society, and Treasurer of the Association of Veterinary Students, I am reasonably clued up on the political side of things, so it was interesting to be involved with the recent RCVS visitation process, the result of which will determine whether the vet degree is approved, meaning that graduates will be able to register and practise. The visitors were keen to hear about our experiences, particularly in areas such as veterinary public health, which is being delivered with the involvement of a number of external lecturers as well as our own School staff.

We were asked what we might change about the course, but actually there has been an ongoing process of feedback and change throughout the time I have been here. The staff are very keen to hear our views, take account of them and make changes. Although such

improvements won't affect us directly, it's good to know they will help others down the line.

We are due to hear soon if the degree has been approved, although I am aware that the RCVS has a back-up plan in the event of any delays: external examiners will ensure that our final exams can be counted as RCVS membership examinations.

The proof of the pudding, though, will be how our graduates perform in practice. I hope to work in farm animal practice, possibly in Cheshire, where I was brought up. My interest in farm animal practice was sparked when I did some work experience locally, and nurtured by inspirational teaching here at Nottingham, coupled with what I learned during my Animal Science degree course. I have always wanted to be a vet, although we didn't even have pets when I was a child. Although my pathway towards a career as a vet has not been straightforward, I have always been determined to get there in the end, and my determination has been shared by the students, lecturers and staff at Nottingham.

**Read about our visitation process at [www.rcvs.org.uk/education](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education)**





Other education-related activities include:

- Undertaking a full visitation to The University of Nottingham, and later recommending approval of the new degree to the Privy Council
- Signing up 713 new graduates to the Professional Development Phase (PDP); over 1,000 recent graduates have now completed their PDP
- Adding 28 new Specialists to the List of RCVS Recognised Specialists
- Awarding four new Diplomas of Fellowship, six RCVS Diplomas and 81 RCVS Certificates
- Enrolling 275 new candidates for either the full CertAVP or individual modules towards it; 26 CertAVPs were awarded during the year in review
- Consolidating links with other international veterinary accrediting bodies and agreeing a framework for future joint visitations with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC)
- Sending observers to join the AVBC's accreditation teams on three Australian visitations, approving new veterinary degrees from Charles Sturt University in New South Wales and James Cook University in northern Queensland, and agreeing to restore full approval to the BVSc degree at the University of Queensland in Brisbane.



# Celebrating the birth of a profession

**It's 50 years since the launch of veterinary nurse training. A great deal has been achieved during this first half-century and the College is celebrating with events and activities. We hear from Dorset-based Gail Lawson RVN, one of the early pioneers, who has enjoyed a rewarding career as a veterinary nurse for over 40 years.**

I wanted to work with animals, but there didn't seem to be many options when I was at school. Then a careers lecturer gave me a leaflet about being a Registered Animal Nursing Auxiliary (RANA) – a new qualification – and I jumped at the chance. I trained with Roger Pinniger in Swanage and qualified in 1966. Roger was one of the first veterinary surgeons to train nurses, in one of the first veterinary hospitals. He was wonderful, giving us lectures, sending us off to other practices for extra experience and filling us with enthusiasm.

On qualifying, I fancied a change of scene and headed to London, where I secured a role at the Blue Cross Hospital in Victoria. After Dorset, working in London was a bit of an eye-opener. Even by today's standards, the facilities there were amazing, and well ahead of their time. We were involved in the nursing care of a broad range of cases, including complex surgery that would probably be hived off to a specialist practice these days, so we probably gained more varied experience than many nurses do today.

Veterinary surgeons often use their qualification as a passport to work overseas, but it's quite rare for veterinary nurses to do that. It was even rarer in the 1960s, so when I decided to practise in Switzerland to learn French, but instead found myself with a job in German-

speaking Zurich, I rather wondered what I had let myself in for! But it was a great experience, once I had overcome the language (learning Swiss-German from a Hungarian!) and cultural barriers. The vets were keen to take English nurses, as the training here was more established, and I still keep in touch with colleagues from that practice, and the one in Geneva in which I went on to work.

***“It's a pleasure to help to train the next generation of nurses, although the world in which they will work is very different from the one I first knew.”***

After heading back to the UK, I took up a variety of nursing posts, in Bournemouth, Weymouth and Dorchester, and I am currently working at the Myerscough-Lynwood School of Veterinary Nursing in Poundbury, Dorset. Our network of training practices covers a broad territory, and I am out and about visiting them frequently. I also support our 50 students in completing their assessments and practical exams and, using my own horses, assist with the equine tuition.

It's a pleasure to help to train the next generation of nurses, although the world in which they will

work is very different from the one I first knew. The role of nurses is better defined and recognised – a great achievement – and, of course, we now have a regulatory framework. This reflects increasing professionalism and I also think it makes those in practice think twice about the extent of their competence, and ensure they don't go beyond it, which is good.

But I still feel that many nurses are under-utilised, and worry that the training is becoming too academic. Pay also remains poor. Sadly, I know many veterinary nurses who have been unable to stay in the profession because they couldn't afford a mortgage. I suspect the under-use of nurses' skills and their ongoing low pay are not unrelated.

Having said that, and although I have had several short breaks in my career – to run a café, write a book, support my parents and raise a family – I always came back to nursing. Being a veterinary nurse has allowed me to work with animals and people in a career I love, both home and overseas, for over 40 years. You can't ask for more than that, and if I had my choice again, I wouldn't change a thing!

**Want to join the celebrations?  
Visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/VNat50](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/VNat50)**





Other VN-related activities include:

- Making final preparations for the implementation of the registered veterinary nurse disciplinary procedures, which went live on 1 April 2011
- Seeking, and acting upon, legal advice concerning the status of nurses removed from the Register in relation to Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966
- Affiliating the RCVS to ACOVENE, the European organisation overseeing standards of VN education; assisting with an ACOVENE advisory visit in Zagreb and hosting a training day for ACOVENE visitors
- According direct approval to VN degree programmes offered by Harper Adams University
- Liaising with Lantra in the review of the Veterinary Nursing Occupational Standards
- Presenting the first modular DipAVN certificates to Myerscough College students.

And, via RCVS Awards:

- Developing and implementing the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing to replace NVQs, including the Nursing Progress Log – an online recording system for practical teaching, supervision and competence recording to replace the NVQ portfolio
- Approving a new VN college in the Midlands
- Conducting 139 visits to centres and training practices
- Developing a mixed practice pathway for the Level 3 Diploma
- Bidding for Leonardo da Vinci funding to share the Nursing Progress Log innovation in Europe.



## RCVS COUNCIL

2 July 2010 – 1 July 2011

RCVS Council comprises 24 elected members, two appointees from each of the six UK veterinary schools and four persons appointed by the Privy Council, as specified in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

Elected Members	Attendance	Appointed Members	Attendance
David Catlow MRCVS	2/2	Malcolm Bennett MRCVS (Lv)	2/2
Christopher Chesney MRCVS	3/3	Alison Bruce (G)	3/3
Beverley Cottrell MRCVS	2/3	Ewan Cameron MRCVS (G)	1/1
Sheila Crispin FRCVS	3/3	Susan Dawson MRCVS (Lv)	1/1
Jerry Davies MRCVS	3/3	Caroline Freedman (E)	2/3
Roger Eddy FRCVS	3/3	Michael Herrtage MRCVS (C)	3/3
Mark Elliott MRCVS	3/3	Andrea Jeffery (Br)	2/2
Bertie Ellis MRCVS	3/3	Peter Lees (Ln)	1/2
Catherine Goldie MRCVS	3/3	Duncan Maskell (C)	2/3
Chris Gray MRCVS	3/3	Joanna Price MRCVS (B)	3/3
Charles Gruchy MRCVS	3/3	Stuart Reid MRCVS (G) & (Ln)	3/3
Lynne Hill MRCVS	3/3	Sandy Trees MRCVS (Lv)	3/3
Peter Jinman MRCVS	3/3	Elaine Watson FRCVS (E)	0/3
Barry Johnson MRCVS	3/3		
Jacqui Molyneux MRCVS	3/3	<b>Privy Council Appointed Members</b>	
Bob Moore MRCVS	3/3	Richard Davis	2/3
Jill Nute MRCVS	3/3	Nigel Gibbens MRCVS	3/3
Bob Partridge MRCVS	2/3	Rachel Jennings	2/2
Christine Shield MRCVS	3/3	Judith Webb	2/2
Neil Smith MRCVS	1/2		
Richard Stephenson MRCVS	3/3	<b>Notes:</b> In January 2011, Susan Dawson replaced Malcolm Bennett as appointee from the University of Liverpool and Ewan Cameron replaced Stuart Reid as appointee from the University of Glasgow. Stuart Reid attended two meetings as an appointee from the University of Glasgow and one meeting as an appointee from the University of London.	
Clare Tapsfield-Wright MRCVS	2/3		
Chris Tufnell MRCVS	3/3		
Bradley Viner MRCVS	3/3		

**Note:** Universities: B = Bristol, C = Cambridge, E = Edinburgh, G = Glasgow, Lv = Liverpool, Ln = London.

## VN COUNCIL

2 July 2010 – 1 July 2011

VN Council comprises eight elected veterinary nurses, six appointed veterinary surgeons (including three from RCVS Council), two lay members and one Lantra representative.

Elected Members	Attendance
Elizabeth Branscombe RVN	3/3
Dot Creighton RVN	2/3
Louise Glysen RVN	0/3
Andrea Jeffery RVN	3/3
Katherine Kissick RVN	2/3
Suzanne May RVN	2/2
Hilary Orpet RVN	2/3
Jennifer Thompson RVN	3/3
Appointed Members	Attendance
Anthony Birbeck	2/3
Jerry Davies MRCVS	2/2
Richard Hooker MRCVS	3/3
Christopher House MRCVS (Lantra)	2/3
Alan Hughes MRCVS	2/3
Jacqui Molyneux MRCVS	3/3
Jill Nute MRCVS	3/3
Penelope Swindlehurst	2/3
Helen Torrington MRCVS	3/3

3/3 = attendance at Council meetings during the year under review, ie. 01/04/10 – 31/03/11 (denominator indicates total number of possible meetings for each Council Member).

## PERMANENT STAFF

As at 31 March 2011

Annette Amato	Libby Earle	Richard Holford	Jenny Orme*
Freda Andrews	Janet Etheridge	Ian Holloway	Marilyn Pablo
Duncan Ash	Lesley Evans	Judith Hylton	Nicola Page
Emma Baxter	Rebecca Fellows	Christine James	Vivienne Pankhurst
Clare Boulton	Richard Foster	Anne Jermey	Stephanie Platt
Gabriella Braun	Eleanor Ferguson	Lo Kei Kwok	Thelma Rees
Dorothy Brereton	Christine Fraser	Lizzie Lockett	Alison Rengert
Paulette Brown	Carrie Gage	Rupa Makwana	Anthony Roberts
Cherry Bushell	Esther Gent	Corrie McCann	Liz Troman
Mike Byrne	Andrew Grainger	Alison McClary	Danielle Van den Berg
John Collins	Fiona Harcourt	Laura McClintock	Martyn Webster
Helen Cook	Jenny Harris	Claire Millington	Sue Whall
Britta Crawford*	Victoria Hedges	Christopher Murdoch	Juliet Whatley
Mary Davidge	Natalie Heppenstall	Ben Myring	Simon Wiklund
Ashley Doorly	Michael Hepper	Sandra Neary	Tom Winters
Myai Du	Jane Hern	Jordan Nicholls	Amy Woods
Julie Dugmore	Gordon Hockey	Fiona O'Regan	

\*on maternity leave

Special thanks to all those who agreed to be featured in this *RCVS Review*, for giving up their time and for their patience; thank you also to those who allowed us to take photographs on their premises.

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