

Making sense of the letters

“The use of postnominals and titles by veterinary surgeons should be rationalised to avoid confusion amongst the public.”

Consultation launched on simplifying specialisation

The RCVS Specialisation Working Party has made ground-breaking proposals about the future of veterinary specialisation. Now it's your chance to have your say.

The review of the specialism status quo was triggered by a finding that the structure of veterinary specialisation is “confusing and opaque” to both animal owners and the profession (*Unlocking Potential – a Report on Veterinary Expertise in Food Animal Production*, by Professor Philip Lowe, 2009). A Working Party was set up to address the issue, exploring the routes to RCVS Recognised Specialist status, and considering the use of the term ‘specialist’ more broadly, given that it is not a protected term in the veterinary field. It also considered the expectations of animal owners.

Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, a former Chief Medical Officer, chaired the Working Party. He emphasises that the proposals focus on simplification and improvement, adding: “New legislation to introduce statutory registration for veterinary specialists would no doubt make things clearer, as it is for doctors and dentists, but, in the meantime, we believe there are a number of actions which the RCVS could take to improve matters.”

These proposals could have far-reaching impact. One suggestion is that the use of postnominals and titles by veterinary surgeons should be rationalised to avoid confusion amongst the public. The term ‘RCVS Recognised Specialist’ could be replaced with the simpler ‘specialist’ or ‘veterinary specialist’, and a ‘middle level’, potentially called ‘advanced practitioners’, could be introduced, whose holders would also be subject to periodic revalidation.

Veterinary surgeons should also be obliged to explain referral options to their clients, including the level of expertise of those to whom they are referring cases.

“There is little doubt that the variety of postnominals used currently by members of the profession is confusing both to other members of the profession and to the animal-owning public,” says Professor Tim Greet, an equine practitioner and RCVS Recognised Specialist who sat on the Working Party. “We have made an attempt to simplify this. Hopefully, the rest of the profession and the general public who read the consultation document will understand and appreciate what we are trying to achieve.”

The proposals also seek to encourage more veterinary surgeons to become specialists: out of a profession with 17,400 members registered as practising in the UK, only 319 vets are on the RCVS List of Recognised Specialists. It is suggested that those meeting the criteria for specialist status would also become Fellows of the RCVS (FRCVS) – a status currently granted only to those who complete a thesis or who qualify on the basis of ‘meritorious contributions to learning’, but who are not necessarily practising clinicians. By extending the FRCVS to specialists, the College would in effect be adding an alternative route to Fellowship for clinicians. This could re-establish the Fellowship as an award for those who are leaders in their field and who have made a significant contribution to the profession, be that through research or clinical practice.

The consultation, which we launched in October, can be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/specialisation, and the deadline for comments is Friday, 9 December.

In this issue: Registrar to stand down, VN legislation update, Review Group report, Awarding Body to close, PSS bookmarks, seeking veterans, new RVN badge, nomination time, Codes on track, Vectar update, firing of horses, complaints resolution, VN Guide quiz, spotting fakes, solicitors’ approach, MRPQ, Golden Jubilee review, DC hearings and Trust updates.

Awarding Body to close

Focus on regulatory role in VN education

The College will cease being an awarding body next year, which means it will no longer offer the vocational Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing.

The decision was made by VN Council at its meeting on 11 October and was confirmed by RCVS Council on 3 November.

We will ensure that the Diploma continues to be available by transferring the intellectual property associated with the qualification, such as the question banks and systems, to another well established awarding body, in a move which is likely to take effect for the beginning of the 2012 academic year.

The decision reflects recent changes in the regulatory Conditions of Approval for awarding bodies, which it would have been hard for the College to meet while continuing to offer the Diploma cost-effectively. The changes mainly relate to potential conflicts of interest between the College's primary role, as professional regulator that safeguards standards within the veterinary professions, and its role as an awarding body.



The standards-setting role includes the regulation of education and training leading to the veterinary and VN Registers, and it was felt that the College could no longer exercise this role effectively if it was also an awarding organisation, as it might be suspected of treating its internal qualifications more favourably, or of obstructing competitors.

Although this has not been a problem in the past, due to careful management of activities, the rules are now more stringent, and the costs of setting up a fully independent awarding body would be prohibitive.

The market for the Diploma is also likely to fragment in the future, with three other awarding bodies

“The RCVS has been offering vocational qualifications since 1998 and the decision to cease being an awarding body has not been taken lightly.”

expressing an interest in offering veterinary nursing qualifications. Any reduction in the number of students taking the RCVS Level 3 Diploma would further push up the costs, potentially making the RCVS Awarding Body unviable. A larger awarding body can take advantage of economies of scale across a range of awards in a way that we cannot.

“The RCVS has been offering vocational qualifications since 1998 and the decision to cease being an awarding body has not been taken lightly,” says Colonel Neil Smith (pictured), Chairman of the RCVS Awarding Body Board.

“We have taken this decision in order to focus on our core responsibilities of professional regulation and standard setting. However, we remain committed to maintaining the Diploma, which has been carefully developed by the RCVS and the profession. This move ensures that it will stay in safe hands,” he adds.

The name of the awarding body to which the qualification will be transferred has not yet been announced because the process is not complete. However, the College felt it was important to give those involved with the delivery of training as much notice as possible of the change. More information, and the change-over plan, will be released in due course.

It will be a condition of the transfer that the veterinary profession continues to have a say in the future development of the qualification.

We will continue to look after those students still in the process of completing the old NVQ qualifications, the accreditation of which is due to run out in 2013.

As the professional regulator, we will continue to issue RCVS certificates and badges to those who have successfully completed a registerable qualification – such as an approved vocational qualification run by another awarding body, or an RCVS-recognised veterinary nursing degree.

The Advanced Diploma in Veterinary Nursing will be unaffected by the change as the qualification is awarded by the College under its Royal Charter powers.

Q&A about the changes are available online.

The Awarding Body delivers a vocational qualification in veterinary nursing. This is not the only type of qualification which is accepted for the RCVS Certificate in Veterinary Nursing (and thus registration). The complete list is as follows:

- Honours degree – normally four years, including 60 weeks' work-based training
- Foundation degree – normally three years, including work-based training as above
- Higher National Diploma – three years as above
- Vocational qualifications – must be at a minimum of QCF Level 3, a minimum of two years in duration, and contain at least 700 contact hours of study and 60 weeks of work-based training.

Upgrade time

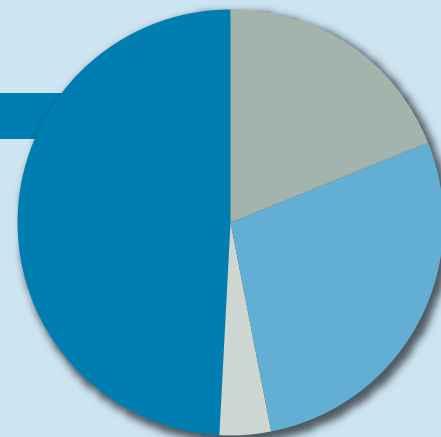
RCVS-accredited practices are changing categories

Are you one of the practices we've noticed raising their standards and applying for accreditation at a new level? The Practice Standards Scheme team says there seems to be an increase in Core standards practices applying for General Practice accreditation, and General Practices becoming Hospitals.

We'll keep an eye on the figures and keep you updated.

Practice Standards statistics: almost a third of practices currently hold general practice or veterinary hospital accreditation

- Core standards (956)
- General Practice/Emergency Service Clinic (1,441)
- Veterinary Hospital (187)
- Not accredited (2,431)



Nurses push for statutory regulation

House of Commons reception sets agenda

The Veterinary Nurses Council held a reception in the House of Commons to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the veterinary nursing profession and to explain the need for statutory regulation of the profession.

The event, which took place on 11 October and was sponsored by Roger Gale MP, was well supported by parliamentarians, despite important debates taking place simultaneously in both Houses. We were delighted by the response of MPs and Peers to our calls for the statutory regulation of the profession and the repeated offers of assistance we received, to help us bring such a regulatory framework into existence.

Sign up to support

To coincide with the reception, Andrew Rosindell MP also put his political weight behind the campaign for the statutory regulation of veterinary nurses, by tabling an Early Day Motion (number 2217), calling on the Government to support the work of the RCVS, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), to develop proposals for such a regulatory framework. We are encouraging veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to write to their MPs to ask them to sign up



VN Council Chairman Liz Branscombe addresses the reception

to this Motion, which had received the support of 20 MPs by 31 October.

In addition, the BVNA, with the support of the RCVS and the BVA, has launched an HM Government e-petition to promote the need for statutory regulation of veterinary nurses. On 31 October, the petition had received 486 signatures. We are encouraging the professions and the public to show their support and sign the petition:

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/18700>

Working Party

We have been working for a number of years to make veterinary nursing a profession regulated by statute, but recent events have been driven by the Veterinary Nurses Legislation Working Party (VN LWP), a group that was commissioned by the RCVS VN Council in May 2011, to develop detailed proposals for statutory regulation of the profession, which will serve the public interest, and better protect animal health and welfare.

The VN LWP is chaired by VN Council member Hilary Orpet and held its first meeting on 20 September 2011. The Working Party includes representatives from the BVA and the BVNA.

The VN LWP will feed into the wider work of the RCVS Legislation Working Party, which will be reporting to the Defra Minister of State in the summer of 2012, with proposals as to how the Veterinary Surgeons Act could be reformed to bring it into line with modern regulatory legislation and to provide statutory regulation for veterinary services providers, including veterinary nurses.

The VN LWP will hold its next meeting on 8 November, when it will begin the process of developing detailed proposals for a statutory regulatory regime under the umbrella of the RCVS that will protect the title 'veterinary nurse'.

New Edinburgh appointee

Professor David Argyle, the new Head of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh, has joined the RCVS Council as a university-appointed member. He replaces on Council the interim Head of School, Professor Susan Rhind.

A University of Glasgow graduate, David worked in general practice before returning to Glasgow to undertake a PhD and subsequently lecture at the Department of Clinical Studies. He moved to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, in 2002, to become Head of Clinical Oncology, returning to the UK in 2005 to take the William Dick Chair of Clinical Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

He is an RCVS and European Specialist in Veterinary Oncology, and a Diplomate of the European College of Veterinary Internal Medicine in Oncology.

Committee reshuffle

At its November meeting, Council considered proposals from a group of past-Presidents and lay members of Council regarding the future role of Council and how the Committee structure might be improved to ensure it remains effective. The issue will be revisited at the March meeting.



End of an era

Registrar Jane Hern to stand down

The Registrar and Secretary Jane Hern announced on 31 October that she will be standing down at the end of the year.

After 15 years in the job, Jane has decided that it is time to move on and pursue other interests. She has been pleased to oversee a number of significant reforms and new initiatives in her years leading the organisation.

The College is now embarking on a comprehensive review of its governance, committee and management structures, during which the Officers and Council will consider how best the executive should be led in future.

Jane says: "I have greatly enjoyed my time with the College and the Trust. Working with a profession held in such high regard by the public has been a real pleasure. I wish veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and all my colleagues all the very best for the future."

"I have greatly enjoyed my time with the College and the Trust."

The President, Dr Jerry Davies, said: "The Royal College has been very fortunate in having the benefit of Jane's wisdom and guidance for so many years, and we wish her every success in the future."



Veterinary veterans

Trust focuses on Vets in Conflict and War

With Remembrance Sunday approaching, those in the armed forces are at the forefront of many people's minds. Many veterinary surgeons went to the front in two World Wars and other campaigns, and continue to serve today as members of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps or as soldiers within the Territorial Army.

As part of a project called 'Vets in Conflict and War,' the RCVS Charitable Trust is looking to borrow memorabilia such as diaries and photographs from those who have taken part in past conflicts, or from their families. An exhibition of relevant material from the Trust's historical collection is being considered, in which this memorabilia would be included. The Trust also encourages veterinary surgeons who have served in the armed forces to email with stories about their experiences. These stories will be included in any exhibition and selected accounts may be explored as part of our Life in Practice oral history project (see page 27).

"Veterinary surgeons have been serving in the British Army for over 200 years," says Colonel Neil Smith, Director of the Army Veterinary and Remount Services, and an RCVS Council member. "They have made, and continue to make, a vital contribution to military operations, often in difficult and challenging places. Many will have interesting stories to tell. Getting on record the stories of these former soldiers is an important project – and one which I very much support."

Please contact the Trust by email library@rcvstrust.org.uk, or speak to Clare Boulton, on 020 7202 0752.



*Captain Becky Hart, one of the latest generation of army vets, treats livestock in Afghanistan
Photo courtesy of Corporal Gary Kendall RLC*

Review group reports

Recommendations taken on board by Council

At its November meeting, Council received a report from a group that had been tasked with "looking at all aspects that relate to the College budgeting and expenditure processes and proposing lessons that should be learned".

The group, chaired by Professor Bill McKelvey, made a range of recommendations, which Council welcomed and agreed to take on board. Some of the issues had already been under discussion prior to the Council meeting.

Amongst others, the recommendations include:

- A requirement that protocols for managing capital projects be reviewed, including sign-off of expenditure
- Improved routes of communication regarding spending, outside scheduled meetings
- The consideration of the appointment of independent project managers to oversee the specification, evaluation, tendering and delivery of major investments
- The setting up of an independent Audit and Risk Committee, to take oversight of both external and internal audit procedures and maintain the College Risk Register

The report also called upon Council to provide executive staff with a robust governance framework.

President Jerry Davies said: "That such a review was required is regretted, but I would like to thank Professor McKelvey, Richard Davis and Judith Webb for their diligence in this work. Their recommendations will be a very helpful addition to the work that is currently underway to ensure corporate governance is fit for purpose and, in particular, that the management of capital projects within the College is optimised."

The recommendations can be found online at www.rcvs.org.uk/McKelvey.

VNs pay up online

VN registration renewal now available via website

Remember, remember, the first of November – as it's the due date for veterinary nurse (VN) retention fees! If you are one of the VNs who hasn't managed to make your payment yet, don't panic: we will not remove from the List or Register any VN or registered veterinary nurse (RVN) whose payment is made – and cleared – before 31 December.

The annual retention fee is £61 and it can now be paid online. Simply check the retention fee reminder letter you have been sent, and you will find an individual login code. Then visit the login area on the website (button top right) and follow the instructions.

If you've lost your login code, then please email membership@rcvs.org.uk with your full name (including any middle names), badge number (which you will find on the back of your badge), current address on the Register/List and date of birth, and the number will be sent to you.

VNs can also confirm their Register/List address online, and RVNs can declare any criminal convictions and confirm their compliance with the continuing professional development (CPD) requirement, which must be done annually as a condition of registration.

Another quick way to pay – and one which avoids credit card administration fees – is to make a bank transfer to the RCVS. For details, please contact the Finance Department on 020 7202 0774. There is also still – just – time to pay by cheque. Remember to write your name and List/Register number on the back and send it early, so it doesn't get stuck in the Christmas post.

RVNs – badge up and be counted!

New badge to identify registered veterinary nurses

Over 86% of veterinary nurses are now registered – which means they agree to be accountable for their professional practice. But how does a member of the public know who's who?

We hope our new badge for registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) will help.

The new badge, which was launched at BVNA Congress, builds upon the old version but with the word 'registered' underneath. Plans for a more dramatic departure from the existing badge were dropped when the College saw the affection in which veterinary nurses held the traditional antique silver and red-enamel badge, introduced in 1984.

"There is currently no legislation to protect veterinary nurses' title and area of work, but we have not stood still, and the Register shows a real commitment to developing our status as



professionals," says Liz Branscombe, Chairman of VN Council. "We need to ensure this commitment is recognised by clients and others in the veterinary team, and hope the new badge will make it easier to identify who is professionally accountable."

The new badge will be presented to all those qualifying since 4 July 2011, and those registering earlier can purchase it for £15 (to cover the cost of the badge and engraving it with the RVN's individual number) up until the 31 January 2012. Thereafter the price rises to £43.

RVNs are under no obligation to purchase the new badge, although we hope that many will choose to do so, in order to mark the step forward which the profession made when it launched the Register.

It could be you!

Electoral candidates sought



If you want to influence how your profession is regulated, then now is your chance, as candidates are being sought for the 2012 RCVS Council and Veterinary Nurses Council elections. Those wishing to stand must make sure that their nomination is received by the RCVS Registrar on or before the closing date of 31 January 2012.

"The veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who sit on the RCVS and VN Councils are vital to the governance of their professions, and in steering the activities the College undertakes under its Royal Charter," says Registrar Jane Herr. "If you're interested in making sure that your profession is well-governed, its standards are upheld, and the interests of animals and the public are protected, why not consider standing in these elections?"

Any veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse, except for those currently on the RCVS or VN Council, may propose one candidate each, and each candidate needs to find two proposers. "So, if you know someone you think would be good, you could try a little gentle arm-twisting to encourage them to step forwards," Jane adds.

"If you're interested in making sure that your profession is well-governed... why not consider standing in these elections?"

There are six seats due to be filled on RCVS Council, and two on VN Council. Those elected will take their seats on RCVS Day next July, to serve four-year terms, and will be expected to spend at least six to eight days a year, and sometimes many more, attending Council and other meetings (for which a loss-of-earnings allowance is available).

Nomination forms, full instructions and guidance notes are available for RCVS Council from www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil12 and for VN Council www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil12.

A lightbulb moment?

VNs' ideas could prove winners with the Trust

Veterinary nurses often have bright ideas about how practices could be improved for patients – and the Trust is helping turn these into action through a new competition. To enter, all VNs have to do is email their idea, using 50 words or fewer, to grants@rcvstrust.org.uk, putting 'my lightbulb moment' as the subject line.



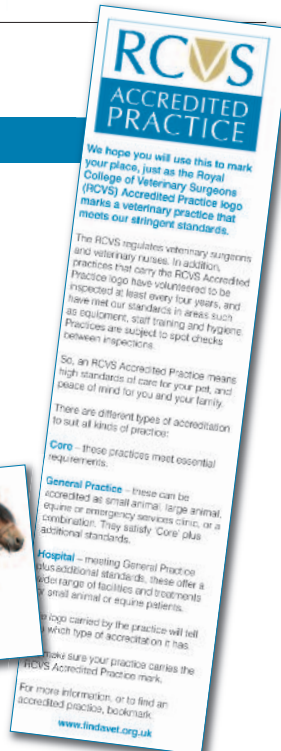
All good ideas will be progressed: the Trust will discuss with entrants how the idea could be implemented – options range from trying it in their practice with the Trust's support, to handing it over to the Trust – and VNs can enter as many times as they like. Ideas received before 30 November also have a chance of winning £100 of shopping vouchers. To find out more visit www.rcvs.org.uk/lightbulb.

Book marks the spot

New bookmarks to promote accredited practices

If yours is an accredited practice, make sure you get your hands on the new bookmarks we have produced as a simple marketing tool for practices to explain the Scheme to their clients. With an eye-catching design on one side, and information about the Scheme on the other, we hope that clients will use the bookmarks – and keep on being reminded that their practice is accredited.

All accredited practices may order a free sample of 100 bookmarks, and a further 400 free bookmarks are available to practices recently renewing or receiving accreditation. You can also order extra bookmarks, as well as the new Scheme logos, using the order form available at www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards.



Hounds for Heroes for Christmas

Paws to remember those who need support



Once again, we have decided that rather than spend money on one more Christmas card to add to people's mantelpieces, we will instead produce an e-card, and donate the money saved to a worthy cause.

This year, the 'President's Christmas Box' of £3,000 will go to Hounds for Heroes, a charity which provides specially-trained assistance dogs to injured and disabled men and women of both the UK armed forces and the civilian emergency services.

"I am delighted to support the work of Hounds for Heroes this Christmas," says President Jerry Davies. "In practice, we see every day the special bond between humans and dogs – and especially those that are specially trained to assist. To enable injured and disabled people to benefit from this in such a practical way – and one that really enhances their lives – is a privilege."

"It's great news that the RCVS wishes to support our cause," says Allen Parton (pictured, holding dog), Founder of Hounds for Heroes. "We are passionately committed to the health and welfare of our dogs, and the support of the veterinary profession means a lot. We have just received five new puppies and this donation will help us buy much-needed equipment for the training centre, so we can ensure that each puppy develops into a dog that will make a huge difference to someone's life."

For more information, please visit www.houndsforheroes.com.

The long and the shortage of it

Profession no longer on 'Skills Shortage List'

In the past, we have been keen to ensure that the veterinary profession remained on the Government's 'Skills Shortage List', which has meant a simpler process for immigration for those eligible to Register who are nationals from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Under this scheme, employers who are licensed sponsors can bring in migrant workers from outside the EEA to fill vacancies in those occupations listed.

More recently, changing trends have made the need less critical, and, following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee in September, the Government agreed in October that veterinary surgeons should be removed from the list, with effect from 14 November this year. The removal of veterinary surgeons from the Skills Shortage List will mean that this route of qualification under Tier 2 applications for work permits will no longer be available for non-EU vets.

Why the change? Previously, there were not sufficient UK graduates to fulfil demand, and the veterinary workforce was supplemented with both EU and non-EU graduates. However, even with non-EU graduates taken out of the equation, it looks likely that we are moving towards a balance of supply, or even, potentially, an oversupply. It therefore seems unlikely that this change will have a major impact on the profession.

On average, over the last five years, we have registered 185 non-EU overseas graduates annually, but the actual figure has dropped from 236 in 2007, to 159 this year. In addition, as many of these – particularly from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – may be in possession of dual nationality, it does not necessarily follow that the new restrictions would have affected them all.

The supply of UK-qualified veterinary surgeons has increased, with more undergraduates in the UK veterinary schools, particularly since

Nottingham produced its first graduates this year. It is, however, likely that a proportion of overseas nationals studying in the UK veterinary schools return to their country of origin on graduation.

This must be balanced with additional manpower provided by EU graduates working in the UK. It would appear, though, that many of these graduates will also return to their home countries after a few years.

However, the situation is not clear cut. The continuing global economic uncertainty may affect demand for veterinary surgeons' services in the medium term. In contrast, the marked feminisation of the profession, and the expectation of improved work-life balance of both male and female graduates, are continuing trends on which we will keep a close eye, to ensure that animal health and welfare are properly served with an adequate supply of properly qualified veterinary surgeons.

Hard cop for hard copy Register

This year's will be the last printed edition

Every year we send out several tonnes of paper in the form of the RCVS Register of Members. It costs us around £120,000 to print and distribute, not to mention the staff time to compile, yet is out of date even before it hits your doormat. We know that many of them end up in the bin – and people write to ask if they can be removed from the mailing list.

But, producing the Register is one of our core statutory duties: it's a public document which allows easy access to the list of individuals who have been granted what is in effect a licence to practise veterinary surgery, granted under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

So, how do we square the need to be more environmentally friendly, and cost effective, with our public duty to provide the Register in accessible form?

A decision was taken some time ago that this year's Register – which members will be receiving shortly – would be the last hard copy to be produced. Instead, in line with the majority of other regulators, the data will only be available online. However, we are conscious that although the Register is a public document available to all, the perception amongst some members is that full publication online of all of the information it contains would be more intrusive.

“We know that many of them end up in the bin – and people write to ask if they can be removed from the mailing list.”

It is currently possible to check if someone is a registered veterinary surgeon or a listed or registered veterinary nurse via the 'Check the Registers' feature on the website. Results returned currently show the person's registration number, full name, postnominals (ie registerable degree and additional qualifications approved for inclusion), registration category, town/county/country of the registered address (which ought these days to be the address where they practise, since the requirement was brought in last March that the Register address be a veterinary surgeon's place of work) and date of registration.

The results returned do not currently show other information that is included in the full Register entry, ie full address and phone number, plus any previous names.

Practising information is available about some members – the majority of those in clinical practice – through our online Find a Vet search (www.findavet.org.uk). The data which supports this facility is not the statutory Register data, but

that which practices volunteer to give us and was previously used in the *Directory of Veterinary Practices* (hard copy publication of which ceased last year).

Work will be carried out to link these two online search facilities so that it is possible to first check if someone is registered, and then link through to their entry on the Find a Vet practice details page for their practice address, website, etc.

We will also seek to add places of work other than clinical practices to Find a Vet – such as universities, charities etc – although the plan is that these will be excluded from the primary search facility that members of the public use.

There is still a question-mark over how we handle those who do not have a work address. It is arguably not in the public interest to publish contact details for someone who is no longer a practising member. Others who may list their home address as their work address may find this address is available online. However, members can always use a PO Box for their Register address in the interests of privacy and security.

We hope to continue to provide a pdf version of the Register for the next couple of years, available on request to members, for those who find this format easier to use.

Finally, it is likely that, going forward, only the postnominals relating to the qualification leading to RCVS registration, plus the MRCVS/FRCVS, will be included in the Register (and therefore reflected on the 'Check the Register' results page). This decision will be finalised following the recommendations of the Specialisation Working Party.

We will keep you up to date with plans as they progress. If you have any questions or comments, we would like to hear from you. Please email communications@rcvs.org.uk.



Look snappy for a ticket

Share Jones lecture open to all

Agile as a crocodile' isn't a well-known aphorism – but you might find yourself convinced if you're in the audience at the 2011 RCVS Share Jones Lecture, 'Who says you can't be big and nimble? The fragility of giant land animals,' to be given by Professor John Hutchinson on 23 November at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), London.

Professor Hutchinson was proposed for the 2011 lectureship by the former RVC Principal and RCVS Council member, Professor Quintin McKellar, and has been widely published on subjects ranging from the anatomy and locomotion of dinosaurs and crocodiles, to elephants and broiler chickens.

He is also the associate editor of the *Journal of Theoretical Biology* and holds a PhD awarded by Berkeley in the 'Evolution of hindlimb anatomy and function in theropod dinosaurs'.

The lecture will be held at 6pm on 23 November in the Great Hall of the RVC's Camden Campus, with refreshments available afterwards.

Tickets are free and are being snapped up – so get yours by contacting Fiona Harcourt on 020 7202 0773, or f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.



Supporting would-be vets

Unlike most other subject areas, and contrary to recent press reports, the latest UCAS figures actually reveal that there has been an almost 7% increase this year in the number of applicants hoping to study veterinary medicine and science. Giving would-be applicants accurate careers information is important, and secondary schools often ask if vets could give their pupils careers talks. If you decide to help, you might find our 'Walks of Life' careers resources useful. These consist of an online booklet and short films about different types of veterinary careers and the different people who work as vets, as well as giving advice on the current academic requirements for entry to vet school. The online brochure, with embedded videos, can be found at www.walksoflife.org.uk and the individual short films at www.youtube.com/VetCareers. You can order brochures via info@walksoflife.org.uk.

Resolving complaints

Council considers proposals for complaints conciliation and mediation



In 2010, the House of Commons Select Committee for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs stated that too many complaints against veterinary surgeons received by the RCVS were rejected without a hearing, and supported Defra's observation that "allowing such a large number of complaints each year to be dismissed in this way inevitably harms the reputation of the veterinary profession". The fact is, that after investigation, most complaints we receive fall outside our jurisdiction due to the limitations of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

Nevertheless, the then RCVS Officers set up a Complaints Resolution Working Party, chaired by former RCVS President Jill Nute, to consider whether it would be feasible to establish a scheme for resolving consumer disputes, taking into account veterinary willingness to participate, likely costs and the potential benefits to animal owners. In addition to meeting four times, conducting a limited consultation amongst members of the profession, and holding discussions with representatives of key veterinary organisations and other regulatory bodies, the Working Party also sought independent legal advice from Counsel.

Counsel's opinion was submitted in April this year, and considered by the Working Party in August. The Working Party then made the following proposals to Council in November:

- the Professional Conduct Department to continue to provide limited conciliation in the context of complaints handling, by mediating between the parties involved (increasingly, complainants are visited by a senior case manager and a veterinary investigator to explain the RCVS decision, as part of a complaint review);
- the Practice Standards Scheme and the new Code of Professional Conduct to be used to provide more guidance for the profession to enable more complaints to be avoided, and those that do arise to be handled better; and,
- to conduct a pilot study for a non-statutory mediation service.

Council approved these proposals, but noted that there would be no statutory funding for the mediation service, and that such a scheme would need to be self-funding; it also agreed that it would be worth waiting 12 months before embarking on any pilot, and that consultation with the public should occur before any new service was developed.

New Codes on track for 2012

Guides to Professional Conduct review – an update

The draft Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons was considered by RCVS Council in November, and work is now underway to finalise the supporting guidance. Consultation on the draft VN Code of Professional Conduct has also closed, and this is now being finalised by a smaller group within the Working Party.

Working Party Chairman Clare Tapsfield-Wright has presided over four meetings involving drafting the new Code of Professional Conduct. Following a consultation exercise earlier this year, further amendments have been made to the latest draft which has been circulated to RCVS Council. The new principles-based Code is a shorter, more

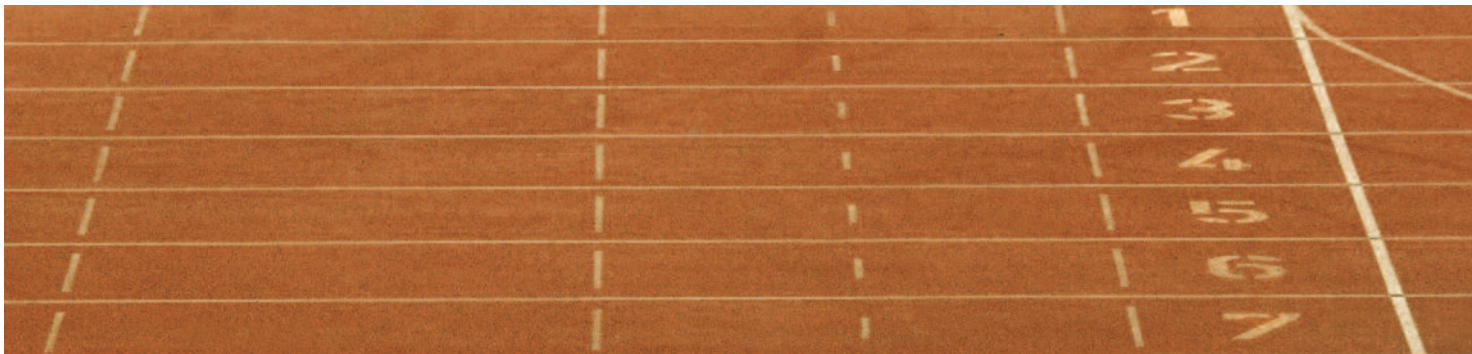
concise, document which should be easily accessible to members of the veterinary profession.

The supporting guidance currently being drafted will provide detailed advice on compliance with the Code and will incorporate and improve much of the professional conduct advice that is currently spread throughout the *Guide*, Annexes to the *Guide* and Advice Notes. A meeting will be held between representatives of the Working Party and the BVA to discuss the new Code and supporting guidance before final versions are prepared.

The Working Party will be meeting in January 2012 to put the finishing touches to the new Code, resolve any practical issues arising from implementation

and finalise the new format. Approval will then be sought from Advisory Committee in January, followed by Council in March.

Meanwhile, Andrea Jeffery is leading the subgroup of the Working Party that is considering the responses received to the recent public consultation on the VN Code. The feedback has been welcome, and a meeting to consider this and finalise the VN Code will be held in November. It is expected that the supporting guidance being prepared for the Code will then be equally applicable to the VN Code, which should allow VN Council and RCVS Council also to approve the VN Code and supporting guidance in March 2012.



Performance Protocol in pipeline

Comments sought on draft protocol for managing performance concerns

We are calling for comment on a draft Performance Protocol, which aims to manage proportionately any justified concerns about the professional performance of veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses (RVNs).

The Preliminary Investigation and Advisory Committees have been working together to develop a new protocol setting out the way in which we will respond to ongoing performance-related concerns. There is an expectation that veterinary surgeons and RVNs are already regularly reviewing their clinical work in the workplace. This will be reinforced by the new principles-based Code of Professional Conduct, currently being finalised (see opposite), which is likely to require clinical governance to be part of professional practice for veterinary surgeons and RVNs.

“It is important that the College is able to provide a supportive framework to oversee remedial steps.”

The draft protocol is intended to formalise and build on the way the RCVS already manages ongoing serious performance-related concerns. It introduces new measures, including supervision and undertakings, to seek to ensure that veterinary surgeons and RVNs take reasonable steps to address any serious performance concerns. This will bring the RCVS into line with other professional regulators and enable a tailored and proportionate response to these cases to protect the welfare of animals and the public interest.

Our current system of offering advice to veterinary surgeons and RVNs will remain for complaints which are closed, because there is no indication of serious professional misconduct.

According to independent legal advice, such an approach is appropriate and necessary in order for us to fulfil our regulatory responsibilities. The draft performance protocol follows similar legal advice that supported the implementation of the RCVS Health Protocol, and both protocols clarify our parallel jurisdiction relating to health and performance-related issues.

“When veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses are unable to deal with performance-related concerns, it is important that the College is able to provide a supportive framework to oversee remedial steps that are designed to address those concerns and encourage professional development. This is best achieved outside a Disciplinary Committee hearing, if at all possible,” says RCVS President Jerry Davies.

The approved draft protocol is now open for public consultation, and may be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/performance. All comments on the draft should be emailed to Simon Wiklund, Advisory Manager, at s.wiklund@rcvs.org.uk, by 13 January 2012 – please add ‘Performance Protocol’ to the subject heading.

The feedback received from the consultation will be considered by the Preliminary Investigation and Advisory Committees in January 2012, before being submitted to RCVS Council for approval in March. We hope that a performance protocol will form part of the supporting guidance to the new RCVS Codes of Professional Conduct for both veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses.



Know your Guide?

The latest in a series of quick reminders from the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct

Euthanasia of a healthy animal (Part 2D)

Although euthanasia is not by law restricted to veterinary surgeons, they do have the privilege of being able to relieve an animal's suffering in this way in appropriate cases. However, veterinary surgeons can experience difficulties when an owner wants a perfectly healthy or treatable animal destroyed, in which case, the following should be considered:

- a veterinary surgeon's primary obligation is to relieve or prevent an animal's suffering;
- account should be taken not only of the animal's condition but also the client's wishes and circumstances;
- refusing a client's instructions for euthanasia may add to the client's distress and compromise the welfare of the animal;
- after full consideration of all relevant issues, veterinary surgeons can only advise their clients and act in accordance with professional judgement;
- where, in all conscience, a veterinary surgeon cannot carry out a client's request for euthanasia, the extreme sensitivity of the situation should be recognised;
- a veterinary surgeon should make sympathetic efforts to direct the client to alternative sources of advice, including another veterinary practice.



Guide to Professional Conduct

Health Protocol for RVNs

In November 2010, the Health Protocol was approved by RCVS Council for inclusion in the *Guide to Professional Conduct* as Annex T. The Annexes also form Part 3 of the *Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*.

The Health Protocol now also applies to registered veterinary nurses who, since 1 April 2010, are subject to new disciplinary procedures. Additions have also been made to Part 1E of the *VN Guide*, which implement the Health Protocol.

Further information on the changes to the *VN Guide* and the Health Protocol can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/vnguide.

Starter for ten...

VN Guide quiz results in

Following on from the success of the *Guide to Professional Conduct* quiz for veterinary surgeons in 2009, we launched a similar quiz, with slightly different questions, for veterinary nurses.

As with the vets' quiz, the aim was to test knowledge of the *Guide* via a set of 25 online multiple-choice questions. The quiz ran for eight months from November 2010, and we received 1,695 entries from a range of registered, listed and student veterinary nurses, some veterinary surgeons and students, and lay practice staff. The largest group taking part was student veterinary nurses, at 690, with registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) the next largest, at 500.

The average score was 18.9 out of 25, rising to 19.5 if only the RVNs' scores were counted. Those veterinary surgeons taking part scored an average of 20 – but they should have done well, they had already had a warm-up with their own quiz!

Generally the questions were answered well, but several seemed to stump more than a quarter of entrants.



College role

As with the vets' quiz, one question answered badly was with respect to the role of the RCVS – something that we reiterate at every opportunity, but information which appears hard to retain. Just over 65% felt that the College had authority to give compensation for negligence, which it does not. The standard of proof for cases heard by the Disciplinary Committee was also a cause of confusion, with only 46% recognising that it is 'so that it is sure', the equivalent to the criminal standard of proof.

Emergency dilemmas

Meanwhile, many struggled with a question on 24-hour emergency cover:

"You work in a day-time practice which uses a dedicated out-of-hours provider for night emergency cover. During the morning consult, a veterinary surgeon admits a critically ill dog that he estimates will need five days' hospitalisation. Which of the following options is NOT compliant with the *Guide*?:

- Provide appropriate overnight care in your own clinic for the five days
- A Listed or Registered VN to transport the dog to a clinic where 24-hour care can be provided
- The animal to be transported back and forth between the day and night practices for the next five days."

The correct answer is c), although only 60% got this right, with the wrong answers split fairly evenly across the other two options.

Another question relating to 24-hour cover was answered wrongly by just less than 75% of those taking part. The question asked: "Your practice provides an out-of-hours emergency service and you receive a call at

midnight from a caller that is not a client of your practice. Which of the following does the *Guide* say that a veterinary surgeon can do?"

The answer options included refusing to see the animal as the owner was not a client; directing the client to their own practice in the first instance; and, agreeing to see the animal on condition that they register with the practice. The middle option is correct, although nearly a quarter felt the latter was acceptable.

Staying with out of hours, 46% felt it was acceptable for a veterinary practice to have a policy of never carrying out home-visits after hours... which it is not.

A further question outlined a situation where a practice is presented with an animal for non-urgent treatment and the veterinary surgeon on duty establishes that it has already received extensive treatment at another practice, but the owner refuses to provide information to enable the veterinary surgeon to contact the other practice. The practice ought to decline the case, although only 52% of those answering got this right.

Although next year we will be moving to the new Codes for both vets and veterinary nurses, much of the information in the *Guides* will continue to be relevant as good practice, as part of supporting guidance.

Many thanks to all those who took part in the quizzes. We received positive feedback regarding both the veterinary nurse and veterinary surgeon versions – it seems a popular and fun way to test your knowledge.

We are considering other such quizzes in the future, if you have a topic on which you feel it would be useful to test your colleagues, please let us know by emailing Lizzie Lockett on l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk.

Firing of horses

RCVS position unchanged on this unethical procedure

Veterinary surgeons have reported to us that some horse owners and trainers are requesting that they carry out thermocautery, or 'firing', of horses. This provides a timely opportunity for us to reiterate our position.

Firing of horses is the application of a red-hot iron (line or bar firing) or electrical process to produce a thermal burn to the skin over an injured tendon; or, a red-hot pin (pin firing) which burns through the skin to produce thermal tissue damage; or, a chemical burn by chemical reaction (acid firing). The resulting scarring and hardening at the site of tendon, ligament or periosteal injury was thought to improve healing by causing a counter-irritation or inflammatory response.

We have consistently declared that firing is unethical. Since the enactment of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, it is a criminal offence to carry out a procedure which involves interference with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of an animal (prohibited procedure), other than for the purpose of medical treatment of an animal.

While we respect the veterinary surgeon's freedom to select a treatment of their choosing, there is no readily foreseeable justification for the use of firing. We are unaware of any scientific evidence that suggests the use of firing is therapeutic, so remain of the view that firing cannot be legitimately undertaken by a veterinary surgeon for the purpose of medical treatment. In addition to any

potential criminal liability, the professional conduct of a veterinary surgeon subjecting a horse to firing in England, Scotland or Wales could be called into question.

While a veterinary surgeon who carries out a prohibited procedure in Northern Ireland may not necessarily commit an offence under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, their actions could also be the subject of a professional conduct investigation by the RCVS.



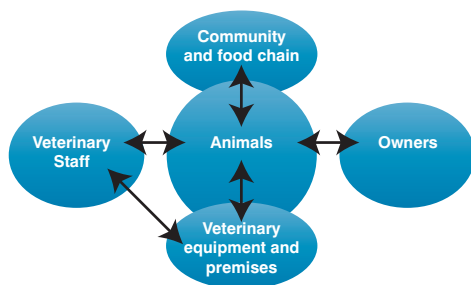
Bug watch

Biosecurity: why and how

As awareness of antimicrobial resistance increases, Dr Tim Nuttall, RCVS Council member and Head of Veterinary Education at the University of Liverpool's Veterinary School, stresses the importance of good biosecurity in practice, and how it can be achieved.

Infectious disease outbreaks such as Foot and Mouth Disease can be devastating. In addition, a variety of antimicrobial resistant and zoonotic bacteria such as MRSA is of increasing concern in veterinary healthcare. Many organisms can cause serious and life-threatening infections, can readily colonise veterinary premises and can be spread by direct contact or poor hygiene. Colonisation of in-contact humans can pose a public health risk and may result in dissemination into the wider community. Effective infectious disease control methods are therefore vital.

Major risk pathways for contamination and infection



Hand-washing and disinfection

Hand-touch sites are most commonly contaminated and are therefore most important in transmission. Hand-washing is the single most effective hygiene measure - which means using a detergent scrub; disinfection is the simple use of alcohol etc without washing. Alcohol gels are convenient but simple disinfection is only effective if hands are clean and dry - soiled hands must be washed first.

Hands should be washed and disinfected before and after handling any patient or its immediate environment. Practice design should allow access to hand-washing facilities without having to touch anything. Vets visiting farms and stables etc should carry hand washes and disinfectants with them.

Cleaning and disinfection

Equipment and surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between patients. Alcohol wipes are easy to use on equipment, but, again, won't be effective if these are soiled. Practice design should facilitate cleaning, avoiding materials that can't be cleaned in high risk sites (ie use waterproof keyboards, laminated instructions and posters, white boards and impervious seats). Vets again should ensure that equipment taken onto other premises can be properly cleaned and disinfected.

Cleaning should be performed according to strict rotas and protocols, divided into daily, weekly and monthly tasks, as visual assessments are highly unreliable. Clinical waste must be placed in leak-proof yellow bags or sharps containers for incineration.

Aseptic technique

Use simple uniforms that are regularly cleaned. Long hair should be tied back, sleeves rolled up, ties avoided, and wounds or skin lesions covered with waterproof dressings. Protective equipment may be necessary for contact with body fluids, lesions and contaminated materials. Theatre staff should be kept to the necessary minimum, and clothing and equipment should be clean and sterile. Good surgical technique is important in minimising tissue trauma and infection. Antibiotics should not be routinely used to prevent post-operative infections.

Training and monitoring

All staff must be trained properly. Written protocols and guidelines clearly explaining protocols for cleaning, disinfection, barrier nursing and responsible antimicrobial use should be prominently displayed in the appropriate sites. Client education helps reinforce good practice on hygiene and responsible antibiotic use (including the importance of good compliance). It also reassures clients that you take hygiene and antibiotic resistance seriously - they see this in human hospitals and will expect similar standards.

Surveillance

Active screening of patients, staff and the practice environment is rarely indicated, unless as part of an epidemiological investigation of a specific outbreak. Veterinary environments are not sterile - contamination with opportunistic pathogens is common and expected. Cleaning and disinfection is designed to reduce the environmental burden, not achieve sterility. Active surveillance must have clear aims, a defined protocol and specific action in light of the findings. This should be discussed with epidemiologists and infection control experts before starting.

Managing animals with MRSA or other antimicrobial-resistant bacteria

Screening all cases prior to admission is not usually feasible in most practices. Specific risk factors for infections with antimicrobial-resistant bacteria include:

- Animals from known positive households or with owners that have frequent healthcare contact

- Animals with non-healing wounds
- Animals with non-antibiotic responsive infections
- Post-operative, practice-acquired or secondary infections

Admit known or suspected cases directly into a consultation room to avoid contamination and contagion in the waiting room. Movement and procedures should be minimised and, where possible, scheduled for the end of the day. Discharging wounds should be covered with an impermeable dressing. Using trolleys will help minimise contamination of corridors etc. Contaminated rooms and equipment should be cleaned and disinfected before further use. Affected animals should be isolated as far as possible and barrier nursed.

Responsible use of antibiotics

Practices should establish protocols for responsible antibiotic use, stewardship of these drugs will help preserve efficacy for the future and reduce the potential for development of resistance. A number of organisations have produced practical guidelines, including the Small Animal Medicine Society, affiliated to the British Small Animal Veterinary Association.

Article reprinted from the August issue of The Practice Standard, the e-newsletter for accredited practices which comes out three times a year. To sign up, email pss@rcvs.org.uk.



Dr Tim Nuttall

Who's afraid of the bogus-man (or woman)?

Advice to avoid hiring a fake vet or VN

At the end of a difficult day in practice, you might wonder why on earth you are doing your job, let alone why someone might want to pretend to be a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse. But it happens, and it seems to be happening more frequently, too.

In the last couple of months alone, there have been two such cases – one alleged bogus vet and one veterinary nurse. Both were employed in clinical practice – jobs given in good faith, decisions no doubt now regretted. How do you make sure your practice doesn't hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons?

Fake vets come in many different guises – although all of them pose a threat to animal health and welfare and, to an extent, the public. Some can be handled by the College (if they were registered, albeit illegitimately), others are dealt with by the police or other regulators – in which case the College will assist. Often those involved have some degree of training or experience, although, typically, they never qualified.



Bona fide name

In last year's *RCVS Review* we reported the case of somebody who practised illegally using the name of a bona fide veterinary surgeon, even though he had no qualifications himself. With the assistance of the RCVS, he was prosecuted under the Fraud Act.

Then there was Russell Oakes, who faked his way onto the RCVS Register using fraudulent documentation – he also held himself out to be a doctor, although he was not registered with the General Medical Council (GMC). He was such an accomplished con-man that police later commented: "He honestly seemed to have convinced himself he was innocent." Following an investigation, which involved the RCVS, the General Osteopathic Council and the GMC, Mr Oakes was given a two-year jail sentence.

In Lincolnshire back in 2007, Leonard 'Ginger' French was posing as a veterinary surgeon and selling unlicensed veterinary medicines. The

College assisted in a prosecution following which he was sentenced to 12 months in prison (*RCVS News* November 2007). More recently, he resurfaced as part of a gang working out of France to distribute veterinary medicines illegally. The group, which included a Princess Diana look-a-like (as Theresa May would say, we are not making this

"Often those involved have some degree of training or experience, although, typically, they never qualified."

up...), was recently prosecuted for bringing more than £6million worth of veterinary drugs into the UK. There have also been two cases heard by the RCVS Disciplinary Committee in the last two years, where individuals possessed a qualification which could lead to registration, but their registrations were not valid, thus meaning they were working illegally. In one case, the College contended that the registration was made on the basis of fraudulent documentation. The Disciplinary Committee upheld the charges and the vet's name was removed from the Register. Perhaps more of a 'there but for the grace of God...' scenario was that of another vet, who was suspended from the Register for three months, having practised illegally during a period when her registration had lapsed due to non-payment. Some may consider such a sentence harsh, but for the public to have faith in a regulated profession, it needs to be sure that only those properly registered are practising in the UK.

VNs also a target

Meanwhile, veterinary nurses are learning that, alongside the benefits of becoming a profession, come the downsides: unqualified people holding themselves out to be veterinary nurses. In this case, the situation is not always clear-cut, because the law currently does not provide statutory protection for the title of 'veterinary nurse' other than for the purposes of ensuring that veterinary surgeons only delegate minor surgery and medical treatment to those whose names appear on the RCVS List/Register of Veterinary Nurses. The *Guide to Professional Conduct* says that only these people should be given the title 'veterinary nurse' within a practice team, to ensure the public is not misled.

A person holding themselves out as a veterinary nurse is more likely to be dealt with under the Fraud Act or, possibly, the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Somebody was recently prosecuted under the Fraud Act for holding herself out to be a veterinary nurse – saying her RCVS paperwork was

pending – when in fact she had not completed any qualification recognised by the RCVS for the purposes of registration as a veterinary nurse. She received an eight-month jail term, suspended for two years, plus 180 hours community service. The VN profession is pushing for a change in the law to better protect the title of veterinary nurse (see page 3).

So, even a quick review of recent cases will show that there is a great variety of ways in which a potential employer could be taken in. Staff at the College will shortly be undergoing training from ex-Fraud Squad personnel in detecting fraudulent documentation – although it's fair to say that, with advances in technology, fakes can be incredibly convincing.

What can you do in practice? Veterinary surgeon Austin Kirwan, Principal of the Barn Lodge Veterinary Hospital in Ormskirk, employed the recently-convicted fake VN for four months last year – during which period she not only claimed to be a registered veterinary nurse, but also stole from the practice. His advice is to check, then check again: "This nurse first came to our practice via a locum agency which claimed to have carried out all relevant checks," he says. "I would warn other employers not to take such screening claims at face value and to carry out additional checks themselves, by calling the RCVS, following up references and checking formal photo ID, such as a passport."

Advice to practices

No doubt you follow up references for potential employees, but here are some more things to consider:

- Check online (<http://findavet.rcvs.org.uk/check-the-registers/>) to see if the person is registered with the College; if you have specific grounds to think the person might not be genuine, please call us.
- Always ask to see formal photographic identification from new employees – preferably a passport or driver's licence; take a photocopy of this, and tell the person you are doing so.
- If the person is being supplied to you via a locum or recruitment agency that claims to have made relevant checks, it's worth asking what checks were made and double-checking these (unless the details of the checks can be made available to you).
- The College always asks to see original documentation – certificates, letters of good standing etc – from overseas veterinary surgeons when they register. There is no reason why an employer should not ask to see similar



documentation, if they are in any doubt, or even the Certificate of Registration issued to all registrants.

- If the person seeking work is an overseas national, ensure they are entitled to work in the UK – the College may register someone, but it is not our responsibility to ensure they are otherwise legally entitled to work.
- If you are employing a recent graduate, ask to see their certificate of completion of the Professional Development Phase.
- Be wary of employing someone who may be qualified as a veterinary surgeon but is prepared to work as a veterinary nurse. They are different professions and require different types of registration. If someone is incorrectly registered, or registered as neither, they have no legal right to carry out delegated tasks under Schedule 3.
- If someone has qualified as a veterinary nurse but not yet registered, be aware that they are no longer legally designated as a student, therefore legally should not be carrying out Schedule 3 tasks.
- Be aware that a student veterinary nurse may only carry out Schedule 3 tasks, under direction and supervision, within their own training practice and within the course of their training: a student who locums in another practice cannot do so.
- While it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that their registration is current and in the appropriate category, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure their staff are working legally. NB 'overseas practising' membership is for vets who practice overseas, not overseas-graduates working in the UK.
- Listed and registered veterinary nurses are given an annual card by the College (pictured above), which includes their name and registration/listing number – ask to see this and ensure it ties up with any passport shown.

Of course, having said all of this, it's worth putting things into perspective. The cases of fake professionals, whatever walk of life, have a habit of hitting the headlines. But we have over 24,500 veterinary surgeons on our Register, and over 9,700 nurses on the List/Register – against which the number of dodgy characters really is just a handful. That's not to play down the significant threat to animal health and welfare – and public safety – which they represent, but it would be a shame if a culture of mistrust – both from within the veterinary team and from the public – became the norm. It's only because veterinary surgeons – and to an extent, veterinary nurses – are regulated professionals, that such aberrations become news.



Does a rules-based approach always work?

Richard Collins, Director of Policy and Standards, the Solicitors Regulation Authority

Considering a different approach to regulation

The legal services market is not static. The legal businesses we regulate are innovating and evolving rapidly. The pace of evolution will accelerate in the coming years as the market continues to adapt to the changing business environment, the increasing expectations of consumers, the opportunities presented by new technology and a globalised market for legal services, and the introduction of alternative business structures (ABS) permitting the non-lawyer ownership and management of legal businesses.

Our view is that a rules-based approach to regulation is inappropriate in such a changing environment. Given our primary responsibility to regulate in the public interest and in the interests of consumers, a rules-based approach creates a focus on strict compliance with the rules rather than the primary aim of achieving positive outcomes for clients. It also results in a concentration upon low-risk issues, which diverts finite resources from those risks which most affect the public interest and consumers. This has a negative effect both on the firms we regulate and on our capacity to engage constructively with those firms, to the ultimate detriment of consumers.

The approach runs a significant risk of stifling innovation and the development of more consumer-focused services delivered through more flexible and efficient business models. It also creates a reactive approach to evolving opportunities and risks, with the focus being on amending existing rules, or creating new rules, to address problems that have already arisen.

Our response to these challenges has been to introduce principles-based, outcomes-focused regulation (OFR) which marks a step-change in our approach and in our relationship with the regulated community. It places a primacy, not simply on compliance with rules, but on achieving the required outcomes for clients, underpinned by a strong ethical framework. Primary responsibility for achieving these outcomes, and for operating ethical and effective systems and processes that enable outcomes to be achieved, now more clearly lies with the individuals and the firms we regulate.

The implementation of OFR is consistent with a wider regulatory trend and consistent with current regulatory best practice. It is an approach being adopted across the legal sector. Our new outcomes-focused requirements are set out in a new Code of Conduct contained in our 2011 Handbook of regulatory arrangements. This came into force on 6 October this year.

There was an extensive consultation on the Handbook, involving two major public consultations, direct engagement with the profession and their representative bodies and input from consumer groups. A series of roadshows were held throughout England and Wales, attended by 1,500 members of the profession. Reference groups were created to test proposals, while research programmes were developed at the same time to understand better the relationship between consumers and the profession.

We observed a noticeable change in the response of those attending our roadshows as we went through successive waves of consultation and providing information and practical examples of how the new approach would operate. As the level of understanding increased, so did the level of comfort with the new arrangements and acceptance of their potential to benefit both clients and those we regulate. We will continue this process of engagement as the new systems operate and as we review the performance of the new approach.

Where the public is concerned, the nature of legal services can often mean that consumers have infrequent yet intensive contact with those we regulate, perhaps when moving house or when dealing with a will. That makes it difficult for them to fully appreciate whether or not they really are getting the outcomes they deserve from their solicitor. We have an established programme of consumer research and we will be using this to assess directly impacts on consumers from the implementation of OFR.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) regulates more than 120,000 solicitors in England and Wales. Its purpose is to protect the public by ensuring that solicitors meet high standards, and by acting when risks are identified. For more information, visit www.sra.org.uk.

A Key learning experience

CertAVP candidates wax lyrical about the Professional Key Skills module

It's probably fair to say that some modules of the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) sound more interesting than others. Module A 'Professional Key Skills' is one of two compulsory key skills modules and covers communication skills, personal development, welfare and ethics, data handling, business management and legislation – topics perhaps not at the top of many vets' wish-lists. But, as the saying goes, don't knock it until you've tried it, and feedback from those who've completed the module is good.

"I saw Module A as something just to be worked through – with no relevance to me," says Nick Marsh (pictured), of Woodlands Veterinary Hospital, Plymouth, who took the module at the Royal Veterinary College. As he started working through the essays, he says it was a pleasant surprise to find that "each of them did actually relate to experiences in my own life. In fact, I eventually realised that writing the essays was helping me improve in all the ways which had originally motivated me to start a Certificate in the first place."

Shona Haydon, of Calder Vets, Horbury, has also recently completed Module A. She says that she started it purely to be able to achieve the Certificate, and it seemed daunting initially, "not least because it necessitated a transition from a familiar scientific approach to a more philosophical 'reflective' style." Having completed the module, however,

she finds that "as a result of adapting my approach according to the knowledge acquired, I am beginning to notice improvements in my case management and progress along the pathway from novice to expert."

The module is also useful to those aiming to become a partner. Eleanor Atkinson, a partner at Castle Vets, Dorchester, says that "during the study for this module I became a partner in our business and some of the work has helped prepare me for this role." She also found that "studying for the CertAVP has smoothed the transition from employee to employer, and has made me a better boss."

So, if you're considering the CertAVP but don't fancy Module A, why not talk to someone who has tried it? The postgraduate Certificate is designed to be a broad-based qualification relevant to the general practitioner and able to be completed while working in practice.

Once enrolled on the Certificate, vets can take modules one at a time in any order over a period of up to ten years. However, you don't necessarily need to take a whole Certificate. Modules can be taken individually for those who don't yet want to commit to a full qualification. To complete the whole Certificate, vets need to take the two compulsory key skills modules and choose several from a range of optional modules, giving considerable flexibility for vets to pursue their own interests. Module assessment, along with various

supporting courses, is offered through UK universities, and accredited by the RCVS. To find out more, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/modcerts.

To make sure that the qualification remains relevant for general practitioners, the CertAVP Subcommittee is due to look at how the qualification is structured, in particular, streamlining the professional and clinical key skills modules. Any proposed changes will be put out to consultation with the profession.



"I eventually realised that writing the essays was helping me improve in all the ways which had originally motivated me to start a Certificate in the first place."

Europe-bound

Euro funding for UK VN training project

Leaders may be gathering to develop a bail-out strategy for Europe... but funding is still available, for the right projects. Our Nursing Progress Log (NPL) has been given the green light for development into Europe with a Leonardo da Vinci grant worth €245,000.



Dubbed 'Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record' (VECTAR), the project will explore how best the NPL (used as part of the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing in the UK), and the training of practice-based mentors for veterinary nurse students, can be developed in the six partner veterinary nursing schools – based in Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal and Italy.

The project will be overseen by the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA), which means that European veterinary employers will have a direct link to progress throughout.

This is the latest of several similar projects in which UK best practice in veterinary nursing has led EU developments, and it is timely that the funding was secured during the 50th anniversary of veterinary nurse training in the UK.

"We were delighted that the project has been granted funding, as it reinforces the position of UK veterinary nurse training as a gold standard in

Europe," says Libby Earle, RCVS Head of Veterinary Nursing. "But there is still a lot we can learn: the project will be a two-way process and we hope to gain from the experience of our European colleagues in developing and improving the NPL, and accessible training and support for those involved in coaching student VNs in practice."

"We were delighted that the project has been granted funding, as it reinforces the position of UK veterinary nurse training as a gold standard in Europe."

The project kicks off with an event at the RCVS on 10 November.

The NPL will remain the intellectual property of the RCVS following divestment of the Awarding Body function next year (see page 2).

Free movement of professionals

Language testing and training requirements under the spotlight

The European Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) was introduced in 2005 to facilitate the free movement of qualified professionals (including veterinary surgeons) throughout Europe. Over the course of 2011, the European Commission has been consulting on the revision of the Directive, with a view to making legislative proposals for the European Parliament to debate and pass into law by the end of 2012.



We have been following the review of the MRPQ closely and have sought, wherever possible, to share with the Commission our experiences of the Directive and the problems that it has presented. In March 2011, we submitted a response to the first-stage European Commission public consultation on the Directive, and later, in June 2011, we provided a detailed response to the Commission Green Paper entitled 'Modernising the Professional Qualifications Directive'. Our responses to these consultations can be found at: <http://bit.ly/rcvsresponses>.

Furthermore, in April 2011, Head of Education Freda Andrews attended a European Commission workshop to discuss a crucial aspect of modernising the Directive – the updating of the minimum training requirements for veterinary surgeons. At this meeting, wide support from other European regulatory bodies was expressed for the incorporation of the RCVS-defined 'Day One Competences' into the Directive, as a means to updating such requirements.

House of Lords report

In October, the House of Lords' Social Policies and Consumer Protection EU Subcommittee published a report on the Mobility of Healthcare Professions. This report was critical of the MRPQ, noting that it struck "the wrong balance between allowing healthcare professionals to work in other EU countries and ensuring the safety of patients". While the report did not specifically refer to veterinary surgeons, it made a number of headline recommendations that struck a chord with our experience of the Directive. These included that regulatory bodies be allowed to test the language skills of non-UK applicants, that a mechanism for sharing information on fitness to practise and disciplinary proceedings across EU member states should be introduced, and that the qualifications and skills recognised by the Directive needed to be updated.

English language testing

Every year, around half of all new registrants with the RCVS come from overseas, and the majority of these are from EU or EEA countries. Due, in part, to the way the MRPQ has been implemented in the UK,

we have no power to test the English competency of graduates from the EU or EEA. This has meant, for example, that there have been cases where potential registrants have on occasion wanted to bring an interpreter to the College to assist with the registration process. The restriction that the MRPQ has placed on the ability of the College to test the language skills of registrants has been one of the key issues that we have sought to raise with the Commission during the consultation process to review the Directive.

In response to our concerns, the Commission has suggested that the Directive itself does not prevent new registrants from being required to demonstrate a certain level of linguistic ability, but only on a selective basis and not as a blanket requirement by a regulatory body such as the College. This has also been supported by legal advice we have received.

Since 2010, a number of the other healthcare regulators have also been taking legal advice and are challenging the UK Government's view on how the Directive should be interpreted with respect to language testing. Furthermore, on 4 October 2011, the Secretary of State for Health, Rt Hon Andrew Lansley CBE MP, announced to the Conservative Party Conference that in future the NHS would be required to check the English language skills of foreign doctors prior to their employment and that the General Medical Council (GMC) would be given powers to take action against doctors whose English skills are brought into question. This would put the onus clearly on the employer, in this case the NHS, to check language ability. In the veterinary world, employers are reminded that there is no bar on them requiring job applicants to have demonstrable competence in the English language before they are appointed. The tried and tested International English Language Testing Scheme (www.ielts.org) is a readily available test used by many organisations for international applicants.

In light of the Commission's review of the Directive and the recent positive statements from Andrew Lansley, we are hopeful that a solution to the problem of ensuring the English language competence of potential registrants might be found, which in turn would serve to protect better the health and welfare of animals.

Revisit for Bristol

Conditional approval reconsidered

The University of Bristol's School of Veterinary Science is currently under conditional approval from the RCVS, following a visitation in March 2007, and subsequent revisit in October 2009, when deficiencies in the School's facilities for small animal surgery and on the farm were highlighted.

A further revisit is due in mid-December, and will be led by former Council member Stephen Ware (pictured). The current status of conditional approval does not affect graduates' ability to register with the College.

The visitation team's report will be considered by the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee in February 2012, and by Council in March.



Exam deadlines

The final date for those studying for the old-style Certificate to apply for final approval of experience has now passed. Only those remaining in the system who have been granted final approval of their experience will be eligible to proceed to the final examination, for which the deadline is **1 March 2012**.

1 March is also the deadline for entry to the 2012 Diploma examinations.



Application figures up, despite fee hike

Council considers impact of vet school fee increases

At the March 2011 Council meeting, it was proposed that a social responsibility working group be set up to consider the likely impact of the new tuition fee regime for England on veterinary students, and the future diversity of the profession. Of particular concern was the likelihood that increased fees would reduce the number of veterinary students intercalating primary science degrees within the veterinary degree.

Council asked the Officers to consider the terms of reference for such a group, and the Officers felt that initially the issue might be better addressed by the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee (EPSC), with a review of the existing evidence base.

“Of particular concern was the likelihood that increased fees would reduce the number of veterinary students.”

Although it's early days, there are initial signs that the impact may not be as great as feared. The UCAS figures on applications for veterinary medicine and science show an increase of 6.71% on last year – compared with a decrease of 0.8% across all courses with a 15 October deadline (ie those at Oxford and Cambridge, plus veterinary, medicine and dentistry).

Meanwhile, the evidence suggests that last time there was a fee increase – in 2006 – it did not have an adverse effect on those taking intercalated courses. In fact, the total number of students

intercalating increased slightly, with key factors on their decisions appearing instead to be the influence of individual academics and their peers.

Of course, often as important as the evidence base is the perception of a problem. We are keen to point would-be students towards relevant information, such as the Government's online student debt calculation tool (linked to from our online careers pages), rather than let them be swayed by the doomsayers. The Government has also acknowledged that information provision

has been weak, and has set up an Independent Taskforce on Student Finance Information to tackle this.

The paper considered by EPSC, which includes useful information for anyone who might be called upon to give careers advice to potential students, can be downloaded from the November 2011 Council meeting section of the RCVS website.

At its November meeting, Council agreed that the EPSC should monitor the issues annually.



Forging relationships

Farriers extend generous offer of paid placements to veterinary students



The Master of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, Jeremy Fern, with veterinary students at the Guildhall ceremony

We have written in previous issues about the Worshipful Company of Farriers' (WCF) Equine Veterinary Studies Award, which offers the opportunity to one student from each of the veterinary schools to spend a week with a Master Farrier, all costs met, to better understand the interrelationship between the two professions.

The WCF now reports that five of the seven 2010 awardees accepted an offer to join the Freedom of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, one of the ancient City of London Livery Companies, and were admitted by the Master and Wardens at a Ceremony held at the Guildhall in the City of London in July.

The 2011 award holders spent time over the summer with host farriers in Scotland, Cambridgeshire, Wales, Surrey and Kent, where they saw a wide range of typical work, and will be offered the opportunity to join the Freedom of the Company in due course.

Students are recommended to contact their Schools' EMS Co-ordinators for more information about the 2012 awards.

Online development records

New online CPD recording system due in the New Year

Whether you're a new graduate, experienced veterinary surgeon, or registered veterinary nurse (RVN), planning and keeping track of your continuing professional development (CPD) is a professional obligation. To make this planning and recording less onerous, we are developing an online, lifelong learning system for vets and RVNs to record their CPD, which will enable users to outline their learning objectives, make notes on their CPD activities and upload relevant documents or notes which they wish to store.

"These should be more user-friendly than paper records," says RCVS Head of Education, Freda Andrews. "We hope it will encourage a more systematic approach to CPD planning and enable vets and VNs to record and track their professional development activities more effectively. There will be space for notes for the user to reflect on what they have done, and a diary feature to help users plan ahead and set reminders."

The two CPD recording systems – one for vets and one for vet nurses – are being developed side by side, so that the approach for both professions is consistent. However, the veterinary nurses' CPD system will sit alongside the Nursing Progress Log, whereas the vets' CPD log will be one component of a larger three-part system. The first section will serve as an experience log for veterinary students

to record their animal-handling and clinical skills, and the second will comprise an improved interface to replace the existing Professional Development Phase (PDP) website for recent graduates. The PDP website is being made easier to navigate, and – like the CPD log – will allow new graduates to upload brief case notes and other documents. Linking the PDP to CPD by using the same interface will make clearer that PDP is the first step of the career-long process of professional development expected of every veterinary surgeon.

"This new system acknowledges that, for vets, continuing professional development is a continuation of what happens prior to graduation."

"Although we set minimum numbers of hours for both vets and RVNs to spend doing CPD – and many people exceed these expectations – individuals are best able to decide what it is they need to do to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. The professional development recording system is designed to support this planning, as well as encourage users to make notes after they have undertaken any CPD, so they can track the

extent to which they are meeting their objectives," says Freda. "Focusing more explicitly on one's objectives and the outcomes for CPD can also help people assess what is most cost-effective when funds are tight."

This new system acknowledges that, for vets, continuing professional development is a continuation of what happens prior to graduation, and so undergraduates will also be using it to record experience gained during their EMS and intra-mural rotations. A list of animal-handling and husbandry skills and clinical skills and procedures to be recorded by all students is being agreed with the vet schools, and will link to the Day One Competences required at graduation. Vets supervising EMS students on placements will also be able to use the system to give feedback to the university about a student.

The CPD component of the system is on track to be tested in the New Year, and will then be made available to vets and RVNs. The student experience log and PDP components will come on stream later in the year. For those who prefer to use paper records, a CPD Card will still be produced next year and mailed out to practising veterinary surgeons and RVNs. Using the online learning record will not be compulsory, although we hope that the online records will prove a convenient and popular option.

Quick on the PDP uptake

Don't forget the Professional Development Phase

So far, over 40% of vets graduating this year have already signed up for the Professional Development Phase (PDP) – which is important for all new graduates.

Building on the 'Day One Competences' gained by all vets at graduation, the PDP is an online record intended to guide the systematic development of these competences over approximately the first year in practice. Carried out conscientiously, it also fulfils the first year's CPD requirements – and we have been following up vets who graduated in 2007 and whose PDP is not yet complete.

"The PDP offers new vets and their employers a means of checking that a suitable broad range of experience is being gained following graduation," says Freda Andrews, RCVS Head of Education. "There can be good reason for its non-completion – working outside the UK or outside clinical practice, for example – but vets should remember that it is necessary to have completed the PDP before enrolling for the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice."

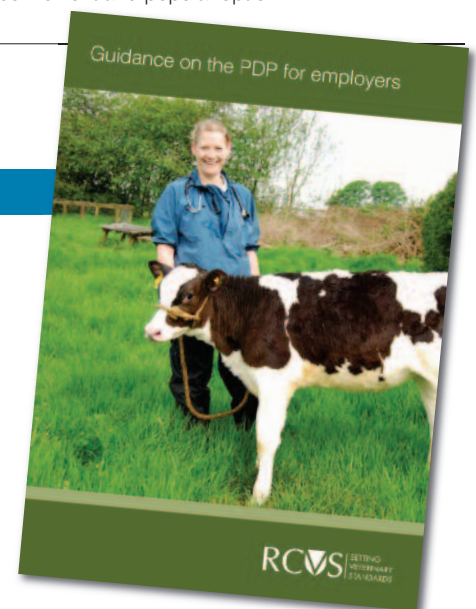
Peter Cockett, Managing Director of Abbey Veterinary Practice in Reading, mentored one of

his practice's vets through the PDP last year. "Obviously it requires some work on the part of the new graduate, but we found no particular

"The PDP offers new vets and their employers a means of checking that a suitable broad range of experience is being gained following graduation."

problems with the PDP – and new vets do need support from the practice," says Peter. "In the bad old days, you would be green as anything when you started out, and might not have received any support. Any new employer would also have no way of having confidence that you had gained the experience you needed. I think it's good that there is now some control and documentation about what experience new vets are picking up."

As the PDP focuses on acquiring a set of competences, it can be used by employers as a benchmark for appraisals. It can also be used by job-hunting vets – and their prospective employers



– as a record of developing skills and experience, since it shows the procedures a vet has undertaken, along with reflective notes they've made about the cases seen.

When they sign up for PDP, all new graduates are given a booklet entitled *Guidance on the PDP for Employers*, which they are asked to pass on to their employers to explain the PDP in a little more detail. It can also be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp.

Looking back over a golden year

VN 50th anniversary has been celebrated in style!

We hope it's been hard to miss the fact that this year marked the Golden Jubilee of the veterinary nursing profession – being 50 years since the first training course was offered, in 1961.

And what a year's it's been. The theme we chose was one of looking back and stepping forward, to ensure we not only celebrated what had been achieved but also gave momentum to the future direction of the profession, and there have been many activities across the year to reflect this.

Step forward

We started the celebrations in earnest at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress in April, by encouraging veterinary nurses to take part in our 'step forward' campaign. The plan was that everyone in veterinary nursing took the next step in their careers – such as taking the plunge into training, switching from the List to the Register, or starting a post-qualification award. At Congress, we challenged VNs with a competition to identify various animal footprints to get them thinking about that next step. Also, to help us explain the extent and diversity of the role of VNs to the animal-owning public, we asked VNs to take away a 'step forward' pedometer and let us

know how far they walked in practice during a typical day. Answers ranged from 1,118 steps to 14,067 – with an average of 5,748. At a typical step-length of 67cm, this works out at around 3.85km per day! OK, the sample size and general variations don't make this terribly scientific, but it's probably a lot further than many would think. There also seemed to be a healthy competition between vets and veterinary nurses about who walked the furthest...

Also at BSAVA Congress, we launched the new disciplinary system for veterinary nurses. It might not sound like a cracking way to celebrate, but registered veterinary nurses agreeing to be fully accountable for their professional practice marks a big step forward for the profession, and means the public is more likely to take it seriously, and to be more aware of the crucial role of veterinary nurses in patient welfare.

“There also seemed to be a healthy competition between vets and veterinary nurses about who walked the furthest...”

VNs reunited

Moving on to June, we held a seminar entitled 'Looking back, stepping forward' at Belgravia House, with a mix of delegates, including some of the original veterinary nurses and those who trained them, plus some of those driving the profession today. A fantastic atmosphere pervaded, as some veterinary nurses who had not seen each other for many decades were reunited. There was cake, champagne and a display of 'vintage' photographs, documents and even a 1960s uniform... but also serious business to be done.

The day was split into two parts. The morning was spent reflecting on the early days of the profession and those whose energy had shaped its foundations. The afternoon considered 'where next for veterinary nursing?', with a mix of speakers including Tim Curry from the Royal College of Nursing, Valerie Beattie, Registrar of the Veterinary Council of Ireland, where a statutory register for veterinary nurses has been in place since 2006, and Christian Kummernes, a Lecturer at the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, who discussed the VN training system in Norway. There was much food for thought – a full report, plus comments from our guest-book from the day, can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/VNat50.

Awards

One of the speakers at the seminar was Jean Turner RVN who, together with her husband, veterinary surgeon Trevor Turner, had been involved with the early days of the profession and continues to play an active role. At RCVS Day on 1 July, Jean was delighted to be presented with the inaugural Veterinary Nurses Council Golden Jubilee Award for her exceptional contribution to veterinary nursing. The contribution of Jill Dent, who began her veterinary nursing career just after the Second World War, in the days before formal training was available, was also marked with an achievement award.

Meanwhile, articles have been written and placed in the animal owner press (see page 21) to raise awareness of the role of veterinary nurses, in particular, the additional responsibilities that registered veterinary nurses agree to undertake.

Over the summer, the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) held VN Week, which included various events where, under 50th anniversary bunting wafting in the gentle breeze, pets were given free health-checks. Well, actually, the wind tore the bunting off the stand and sent it across the field, apparently, but the pets and their owners were still suitably grateful!

Staying with BVNA, at its Congress on 7-9 October, we launched a new badge for registered veterinary nurses (see page 5) and also challenged visitors to the stand to step back in time with our 50th anniversary quiz (see page 20).



Liz Branscombe and Sue Badger, then-BVNA President, 'stepping forward' at BSAVA Congress





House of Commons reception

That was a busy week as, a few days later on 11 October, VN Council made the decision (later ratified by RCVS Council) to relinquish our awarding body status (see page 2). This may have seemed an odd decision to make during a year in which we celebrate the foundation of VN training, but it is actually one which should secure its sustainable future. New regulations for awarding bodies have put the spotlight on a conflict of interest between the College's regulatory role in VN education, and its role as a body awarding its own qualifications, making a transfer of the intellectual property of the Level 3 Diploma to another established awarding organisation the only viable option. When the process completes next year, it will certainly be marked on the historical timeline of the VN profession. But it needs to be put into context: the College's main role is as a setter and regulator of standards. It will continue to do this for veterinary nurse education, just as it has for the last 50 years.

“Even parliamentarians wishing for a radical change in their ‘day job’ could, legally, turn up for work as a veterinary nurse tomorrow.”

Finally, coming up to date, the afternoon of the 11 October VN Council meeting saw Roger Gale MP host a reception to celebrate the jubilee at the House of Commons. The event was attended by a mix of those involved with the early days of veterinary nursing, representatives from veterinary, VN and animal owner organisations, and parliamentarians.

The turn-out of MPs and members of the House of Lords was excellent, given that two rather juicy debates were taking place at the same time. And why were we so keen for parliamentarians to attend? The key theme was the need for statutory regulation for veterinary nurses. As Liz Branscombe said at the event: “Even parliamentarians wishing for a radical change in their ‘day job’ could, legally, turn up for work as a veterinary nurse tomorrow... We believe that the nation's animals and their owners deserve better than this.”

Early Day Motion

As reported on page 3, Andrew Rosindell MP tabled an Early Day Motion to tie in with the event, calling for MPs to support the need for statutory regulation for veterinary nurses. At the time of going to print, it had received 20 signatures from MPs – a reasonable sum compared with many other EDMs. To garner support from the profession and the public, the BVNA mounted a petition on the government's e-Petitions website along similar lines. Please visit <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/18700> to register your support.

Based on feedback from MPs and Peers both at and after the event, we have some support in the push for statutory regulation. The question for the



Jean Turner and Liz Branscombe celebrate at the summer seminar

VN Legislation Working Party, and the Veterinary Legislation Working Party into which its work feeds, is, as always, about the best way of achieving this. It's not a challenge that will be resolved overnight, but hopefully such deliberations will take their own important place in the veterinary nursing history books when the profession's 100-year anniversary comes to be celebrated!

More information about activities during the year can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/VNat50.



Visit us at Congress

Some dates for your diary

Management menu

The 2012 Veterinary Practice Managers Association Congress is being held at Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, on 26-28 January.

During the Friday lunch-break (1:15 – 2:00), we will be offering three courses of advice and information to delegates.

Bring your lunch with you and join us in the Kenilworth 2 lecture theatre for one, two or all three of the following bite-size sessions:

- 1:15 – 1:30 Practice managers' guide to the Professional Development Phase
- 1:30 – 1:45 Update on the Practice Standards Scheme
- 1:45 – 2:00 The new Codes of Professional Conduct for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses: what you need to know

Essential guidance for all those attending the Congress – put the date in your diary now!

World-class

A bit further down the M40, we will be attending the BSAVA World Congress at the NEC in Birmingham, from 12-15 April.

This year's Congress is set to be the largest international veterinary event ever held in the UK, and the RCVS will be there, offering information and advice.

There will be no missing us, as our stand will be conveniently located in the Foyer of Hall 1 in the ICC, so you can visit us before or after the lectures.

Getting to know us

Your opportunities to find out more



Christianne Glossop, CVO for Wales, discussing a point in Haverfordwest

There are lots of chances to get to know more about your professional regulator. Come to us... or we can come to you.

Look inside the RCVS

Have you ever wondered what goes on inside Belgravia House?

There are still a few places left for our next Meet the RCVS Day, on Thursday 8 December.

Open to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others involved in the profession, Meet the RCVS Day gives visitors the chance to meet members of the Officer team and staff, visit departments and find out exactly who we are and what we do. Led by RCVS Vice-President, Peter Jinman, the day starts at 10.30am, finishes at approximately 4pm and includes plenty of time to ask your burning questions.

Lunch is provided and reasonable travelling expenses paid. See below for booking details.

RCVS on tour

On Thursday 27 October, members of the RCVS Officer team and VN Council visited Pembrokeshire, for RCVS Question Time.

The meeting was attended by a small group of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others working in the profession, and was chaired by Dr Jerry Davies. Held at the Wolfscastle Hotel, the location was of particular significance for Jerry, having spent much of his childhood in the area, and at his uncle's veterinary practice in Haverfordwest, during school and university holidays.

A range of topics were raised and debated on the night, including Day One Competences and the Professional Development Phase, the role of paraprofessionals and the benefits of lay members on RCVS Council.

Members of the Officer team will be visiting Leeds on 8 March and Northern Ireland on 17 May 2012, venues to be confirmed.

If you would like further information, or to book a place at any of the following meetings, please contact Fiona Harcourt (f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk, 020 7202 0773).

- Thursday 8 December – Meet the RCVS Day, London
- Thursday 8 March – Regional Question Time, Leeds
- Wednesday 2 May – RCVS Open Day, London
- Thursday 17 May – Regional Question Time, Northern Ireland

Badge-bagging at BVNA



Chocolate and time-travel at Congress

Visitors to the RCVS stand at BVNA Congress (Kettering, 7-9 October), were able to see the new RVN badge for the first time (see page 5) and place their orders – and they did! So far, 200 forms have been returned, and the new badge received a very positive reception.

The badges are engraved with each RVN's unique number, so could not be collected on the day, but we did send people away with an edible version, in the form of our chocolate medallion commemorating the new badge and the 50th anniversary of veterinary nursing. If you missed your chance, we still have a few chocolates to hand out at the London Vet Show.

We also invited delegates to step back in time to 1961, with our multichoice quiz to celebrate the 50th anniversary of veterinary nursing. Do you know which princess was born in 1961? Or which song topped the charts on 8 October of that year? What about which legal tender was withdrawn? No? Neither did very many VNs, as it happens, with less than a quarter of our 237 entrants getting all the answers right. Given the average age of VNs is 31, perhaps this shouldn't have been a surprise!

The lucky winner was Laura Tomlinson, a student veterinary nurse at Bridgnorth Veterinary Centre in Shropshire, who will receive £50 of shopping vouchers.

Back to the present, Chairman of the VN Council, Liz Branscombe, gave a well-attended lecture on the Saturday of Congress about the new disciplinary process for RVNs, which was introduced in April, and how to avoid becoming a complaints statistic.

Global celebrations

A review of Vet2011 activities

Vet2011 drew to a close, perhaps a little prematurely, in October, with an event at the World Veterinary Congress in Cape Town.

The celebratory year was devised to mark the 250th anniversary of the foundation of the first veterinary school, in Lyon, France, by Claude Bourgelat in 1761.

We, together with the British Veterinary Association and other groups, have played our part in highlighting the profound effect that the veterinary profession has had over the last 250 years, not just on the health and welfare of the planet's animals, but also on public health.

For example, we shone a spotlight on veterinary history with a timeline of the development of the profession on the RCVS Charitable Trust's website and a series of articles in *RCVS News* (see page 22).

Meanwhile, Dr Christophe Buhot, President of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and member of the board of Lyon Veterinary School, and Professor Gary England, Foundation Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science at

the University of Nottingham, were the guest speakers at RCVS Day this year (1 July 2011). Under the heading 'From Lyon to Nottingham, the education of the veterinary profession' they spoke of the development of veterinary education from its foundation to the opening of the first veterinary school in the UK for 50 years, at the University of Nottingham.

"We have played our part in highlighting the profound effect that the veterinary profession has had over the last 250 years."

On 11 August, the House of Commons officially recognised Vet2011 with an Early Day Motion (EDM), sponsored by Neil Parish MP, chair of the Associate Parliamentary Group on Animal Welfare (APGAW), and co-sponsored by Peter Bottomley MP, Jim Dowd MP, Andrew George MP, Andrew Miller MP and Andrew Rosindell MP.

The EDM supports the work of both the RCVS and the BVA and recognises "the key role of



Dr Christophe Buhot (left) presents Peter Jinman with some commemorative stamps at RCVS Day, which mark the 250th anniversary of the world's first veterinary school in Lyon

veterinarians in a changing world where issues of public health, animal health and welfare and global food security are increasingly important". It continues by calling on Government to "support the goals and principles of World Veterinary Year and to deliver policies which complement the existing work of practitioners and enable and inspire future generations of veterinary students."

As of 1 November, the EDM had been supported by 32 MPs – a healthy figure for such a motion. Do encourage your local MP to sign up.

If you carried out any activities locally to support Vet2011, we would love to hear from you, please contact I.lockett@rcvs.org.uk.

Olympian code-breakers wanted

Visit us at LVS for code secrets

If you're heading to the London Vet Show (Olympia, 24-25 November), come and try your hand at our code-cracking competition!

To promote our breakfast session on the Friday morning (8.30, part of the Business Stream), at which President Dr Jerry Davies will unlock the secrets of the proposed new Codes of Professional Conduct for vets and VNs, we will be inviting visitors to our stand (J90) to solve our photo enigmas and be in line to win a pair of super sleuthing video glasses (which may also be useful

for recording tricky procedures to share with the practice team...).

The photographic clues will produce a series of words that can be found in the new Codes.

In addition, VNs who missed BVNA Congress will have a second chance to get their hands on a 50th anniversary commemorative chocolate medallion.

Coffee and pastries will be available at the morning session on Friday – no need to book, just turn up.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Royal Colleges to debate AMR

'One world' theme brings scientists together

The RCVS, together with the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Pathologists, and in association with the Health Protection Agency, is planning a one-day symposium on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

"Antimicrobial resistance in human and veterinary medicine – one health, one problem?", will be held on Thursday, 15 March 2012, at the Royal College of Physicians in London.

The aim of the symposium is to bring medical and veterinary scientists and leading practitioners together to discuss antimicrobial resistance, in the

spirit of 'one medicine'. Speakers will review the scientific evidence base to inform a rational debate, focusing on the sources of antimicrobial resistance in animals and humans, and the flow of resistance between them and the environment.

This symposium will consider the rapidly-growing importance of antimicrobial use and misuse globally, the impact of travel and the historical outcomes of previous restrictions.

Further information and booking details will be available in the veterinary and medical media in due course.

Read all about it

Reaching out to animal owners

As you might expect, the majority of our communications are with vets and veterinary nurses. But we also seek to produce information tailored to the needs of animal owners. The 'pet press' are an important way of getting this information to animal owners in the form of news stories and features.

For example, we wrote about the Practice Standard Scheme in a feature in the latest edition of *Pet Gazette*, aiming to explain the Scheme to pet shop staff so their discussions with customers can be better informed.



We've also recently written about the 50th anniversary of veterinary nursing in November's *Your Cat* and *Your Dog* magazines, and lay Council member Caroline Freedman has a feature we arranged in the November edition of *Dogs Today*, advising animal owners on preparing for veterinary emergencies out of hours. And, as we go to print, *The Lady* magazine has just told us that an article we wrote for their website on choosing a veterinary practice is now online at www.lady.co.uk.

If you have any suggestions for publications that would help us reach out to animal owners – particularly press or radio that is local to you – please let us know.

Chain of events

Pioneering female vet celebrated

One of the most evocative items in the RCVS archives is the Society of Women Veterinary Surgeons (SWVS) Presidential Chain of Office, the story behind which is inextricably linked to the woman who first wore it – Joan Joshua – as veterinary historian Bruce Vivash Jones and RCVS Charitable Trust Librarian Clare Boulton explain.

The SWVS chain comprises an oval brass badge with the initials SWVS in filigree work inset with semi precious stones, the badge is suspended from green webbing on which are mounted brass plaques inscribed with the names of SWVS presidents. It was first worn by Joan Joshua, one of the small group of women who, following in the footsteps of Aleen Cust, entered veterinary education in the 1930s. These women were destined to make a major contribution to establishing the place of women in the profession.

Joan Joshua qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 1938: she had won seven medals and was judged the best overall student in her fourth and final years. After a year as house surgeon in the Beaumont Animal Hospital, she put up her plate. This was not an auspicious time, as it was just before the outbreak of the Second World War.

As an able small animal clinician, Joan became a leader due to her particular skill as a diagnostician, and she also developed a keen interest in the profession. This was triggered by what she recognised as sex discrimination: in 1941, the Ministry of Labour began to call up women veterinary surgeons, to be directed into essential war work (frequently this meant in a factory). Men were considered exempt and therefore in a reserved occupation. Joan Joshua received such a notice and, as an obituarist wrote, "With the belligerent vigour that was to characterise the whole of her professional life, she sorted out this sexist discrimination by challenging the Ministry of Labour in person. Within 10 days she had the position rectified with the assurance that this would not recur!"

Representation

This incident crystallised a problem that had worried the women members of the RCVS – how could they get representation in the corridors of veterinary power? Shortly afterwards, she decided to act. As a result, the SWVS was founded in December 1941. Joan was elected President and, in her presidential address, she showed her interest, amongst other pressing matters, in education. She delivered a characteristically level-headed and concise address. As President

of the SWVS, Joan had a platform from which she was able to present her concerns, not just feminist issues, but her deep commitment to tackling what she saw as political issues – either by confrontation or slow, reasoned debate.

After some 49 years of activity, the Society was dissolved in 1990. It had served its purpose: the place of women in the profession was recognised, established and valued. During its life, the SWVS did much to correct perceived inequalities, as well as enabling women to take an active role in professional development.

“Joan became a leader due to her particular skill as a diagnostician, and she also developed a keen interest in the profession.”

Education

During the early years of Joan's professional life she was active in many ways, particularly her involvement with education matters. She served on the Barcroft and Loveday Committees, whose recommendations were instrumental in enhancing the financing of veterinary education and research within the university system, and aided Dr Reg Wooldridge in the formation of the Veterinary Education, later to be the Animal Health, Trust. She became the first female Fellow of the RCVS in

1950, served on many committees, and, in 1953, was elected to RCVS Council. However, she stood down in 1966, after leaving practice and taking a teaching post, knowing that she was in line to become President. Joan considered it wrong to remain on Council if not in practice and, with her typically high moral stance, she resigned.

In 1962, she joined the staff of the Liverpool Veterinary School where, with her clinical teaching, she also ran the small animal hospital, it was said, "as a benign dictatorship". Initially, she found students difficult to comprehend – she did not suffer fools gladly; but, once they understood her innate benevolence and belief in old-fashioned discipline, she was highly regarded and respected for her clinical and observational skills.

Joan Joshua was well recognised for her contributions to the profession: she received five medals and awards, in four of which she was the first woman recipient.

The RCVS archive has many mementos of this remarkable woman, as well as a complete collection of documents and records of the SWVS, these show how the Society, with Joan Joshua's leadership, was instrumental in paving the way for women, not just in the profession but in its governance.

If you would like to view items from the Historic Collection, please contact Clare Boulton on c.boulton@rcvstrust.org.uk.



Inspire and be inspired

Lift the lid on career opportunities in veterinary sciences

Those considering a career in veterinary science often focus on the 'veterinary' and not the 'science,' but it's important to remember that the veterinary degree is a science degree. There are lots of opportunities for veterinary surgeons to help inspire the next generation of budding scientists, according to Natasha Warren, Communications Officer at STEMNET.

The UK's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills base will play a vital role in securing our future social and economic prosperity. Every company or organisation relies on people with STEM skills, who provide support through a vast array of professions. In light of the increasing skills gap in key STEM fields, it is important that young people are encouraged to study STEM subjects and realise their true potential in these fields.

STEMNET is an independent charitable organisation that creates opportunities to inspire young people in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). This enables young people to develop their creativity, problem-solving and employability skills, widen their choices and support the UK's future competitiveness. STEMNET coordinates national programmes that allow teachers and students across the UK to engage with activities to enrich and enhance the STEM curriculum. The STEM Ambassador Programme (nationally coordinated by STEMNET) involves over 28,000 STEM professionals who volunteer as inspiring role models for young people aged 5-19.

“Anyone who uses STEM in the world of work and who is willing and able to enthuse young people about STEM subjects can apply to become a STEM Ambassador.”

STEM Ambassadors represent a diverse range of backgrounds and occupations, including environmental scientists, chemists, civil engineers, marine biologists, medical physicists, pharmacists, apprentices and energy analysts.

The STEM Ambassador Programme is supported by over 3,500 employers across the UK. From large firms to smaller enterprises and independent businesses, each organisation appreciates the potential of the programme to improve the motivation and confidence of staff. The STEM Ambassador Programme provides a fantastic opportunity for the veterinary profession to help bring STEM to life for students and raise awareness of career opportunities available within the sciences.

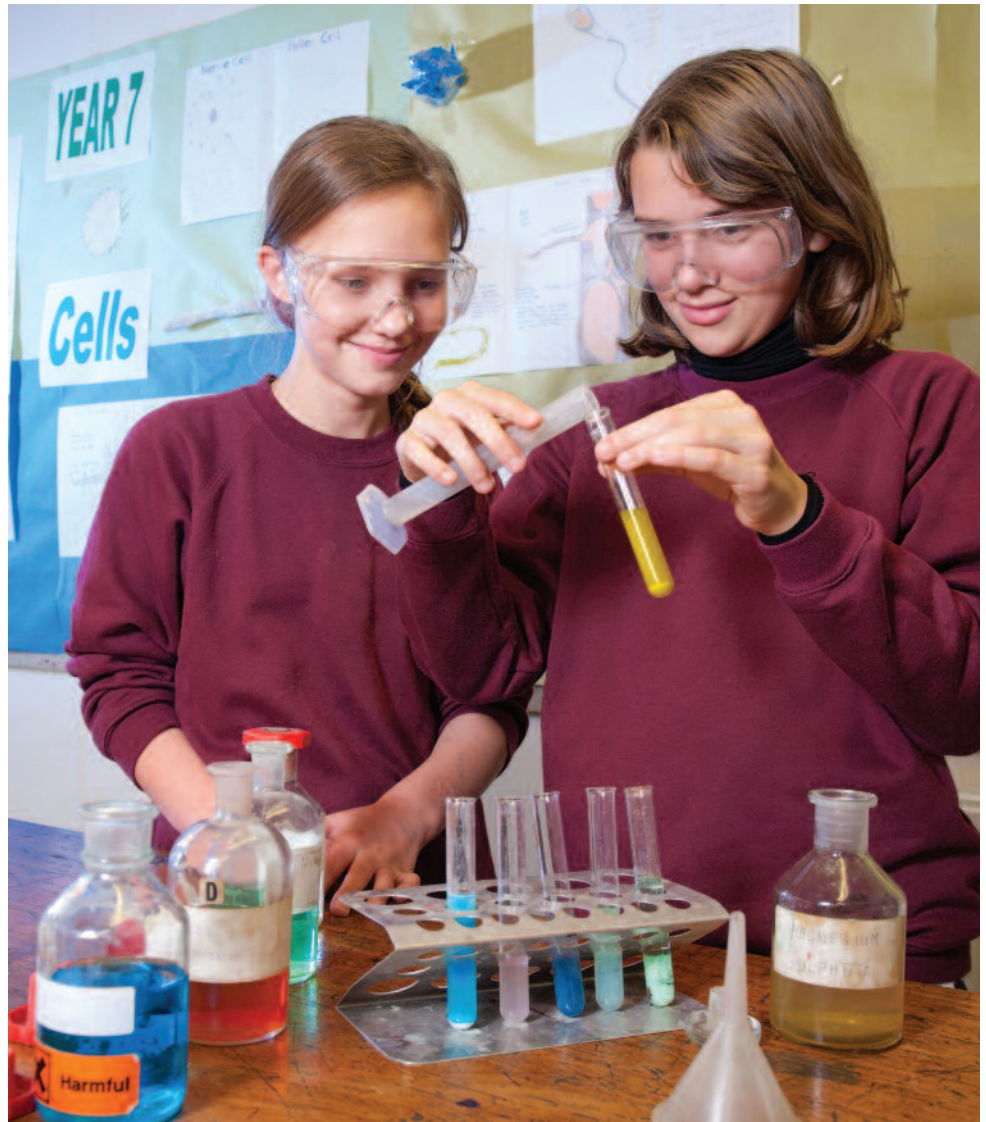
Professionals working in veterinary science careers already registered as STEM Ambassadors

are currently taking part in a wide variety of STEM activities with students and teachers, including: STEM fairs, 'Meet the Scientist' sessions and supporting weekly STEM Clubs. One of these volunteers, Andrew Davis, STEM Ambassador and statistician in Pfizer Veterinary Medicine Research and Development, became involved following an outreach programme coordinated by his employer. Since becoming a STEM Ambassador, Andrew has been involved in statistical activities for A-Level maths students. Andrew believes these activities “have the potential to encourage mathematics students to appreciate the exciting range of practical career options that statistics can lead to – something I didn't have the chance to at their age.”

Andrew's example demonstrates the difference positive role models from industry and research organisations can make in raising the awareness of career opportunities within veterinary science.

STEMNET would welcome others working in veterinary science to consider volunteering as part of the STEM Ambassador programme, giving them the opportunity to share their passion for their profession. Many volunteers comment on the sense of achievement they feel following activities, which also provide opportunities to develop communication and presentation skills, building self-confidence through interaction with students.

Anyone who uses STEM in the world of work and who is willing and able to inspire young people about STEM subjects can apply to become a STEM Ambassador. By signing up as a volunteer, you would join a nationwide network of 30,000 volunteers, each creating opportunities for young people to witness the range and scope of professions that use Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, enabling them to make informed choices about their professional futures.



For more information, please visit: www.stemnet.org.uk



Report to Council November 2011

PI Committee Chairman Jill Nute

Since the last Report to Council, there have been four Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, during which time 37 complaints have been considered.

Of these, three were closed, nine were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon, two were held open, five were referred to the veterinary investigators for visits and interviews, eight were referred to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigations, eight were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken and two were referred to the Senior Case Manager to liaise with police and assist with investigations.

The PIC is investigating 45 ongoing complaints, including complaints referred to solicitors, visits and health cases. In order to consider these ongoing complaints, the PIC held an extra meeting on 7 September 2011.

Health Protocol

Since the last report, one veterinary surgeon has been taken off the RCVS Health Protocol, following a satisfactory psychiatric report by the Medical Examiner. Two veterinary surgeons are being considered under the Protocol and have agreed to undergo a medical assessment by the Medical Examiner. In total, four veterinary surgeons are now monitored under the Protocol.

Communication and informed consent

One complaint was reported to Council highlighting how communications between veterinary surgeons and clients can be easily misinterpreted, leading to complaints being made. The complaint was closed by the Case Manager and the Veterinary Assessor at Stage 1 of the complaints process (no potential for serious professional misconduct).

In March 2011, the complainant – a longstanding client – took his cat for veterinary examination. The veterinary surgeon administered an anti-inflammatory and asked to see the cat in two weeks for re-examination, saying that if the presenting clinical signs were still present, a blood test would be carried out. The client returned with the cat in two weeks and, with consent (confirmed in a signed consent form that included a fee estimate), a blood sample was taken. The results were received and the complainant was subsequently invoiced for the veterinary services provided.

The client paid the fees, but expressed dissatisfaction that there was a charge for the blood test. He said that the veterinary surgeon's wife had told him that the blood test would be a 'free T4 [thyroxine] test'. The client complained to the veterinary surgeon in writing expressing his dissatisfaction at the total amount of the bill and accusing the practice of misleading him regarding the 'free T4 test' fee. The veterinary surgeon wrote to the complainant setting out in full an explanation for the fees charged, however, the complainant remained dissatisfied and complained to the RCVS.

The RCVS assessed the information provided by the complainant, which included the veterinary surgeon's letters. The complaint was closed on the basis that there was no potential for the complaint to amount to serious professional misconduct. The assessors considered that the veterinary surgeon had dealt with the complainant's concerns promptly and constructively and there was no information to suggest the complainant had been misled.

It was considered that the confusion related to the use of the word 'free'. The word was used to describe the test, a 'free T4 test', which was subject to a charge; not to suggest that the test itself was free of charge.

General advice re off-label medicines

Due to certain complaints that veterinary surgeons have not sought consent for the administration of off-label medicines, the profession is reminded that when supplying 'off-label' medicinal products under the Cascade, the RCVS *Guide to Professional Conduct* advises that clients are asked to sign a consent form, after the relevant risks and side-effects have been explained.

The full report is available on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk).

Mr Richard Conlon

Inquiry concerning: criminal convictions for common assault and public order

DC decision: not unfit to practise veterinary surgery; case dismissed

Registration status: name remains on Register

On 27 June 2011, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) dismissed a case against Richard Conlon, a Staffordshire veterinary surgeon, having found that his convictions under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Public Order Act 1986 did not make him unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

At the one-day hearing, the Committee heard that Mr Conlon of Warrendale Veterinary Care Centre, Biddulph, was convicted of one instance of common assault and one public order offence involving threatening, insulting or abusive language,

Mr Kfir Segev

Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register

DC decision: application granted

Registration status: name restored to Register on 21 September 2011

After hearing an application for restoration to the Register on 21 September 2011 by Kfir Segev, having removed him over two years ago for dishonesty and misleading clients, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that he should be restored to the RCVS Register.

Mr Segev, formerly practising in Stanmore, Middlesex, was removed from the Register following an 11-day hearing ending on 19 May 2009, at which he had been proven guilty of deliberately concealing from his clients that their bitch was terminally ill, whilst at the same time recommending that she undergo expensive and unnecessary procedures.

"Mr Segev's efforts at rehabilitation were described as 'exceptional'."

This was Mr Segev's first application for restoration to the Register. The DC found that, during his period of removal, he had undergone "extensive personal and professional rehabilitation", which included attendance at a clinical psychologist and voluntary work in the local community. From 2009 to September 2011, Mr Segev logged 420 hours of certificated continuing professional development, with particular emphasis on ethics, client

both of which occurred during an altercation in a public house in Biddulph on 28 November 2009. The court ordered Mr Conlon to pay two fines of £300 each, a victim surcharge of £15, and £700 of court costs.

“From the nature of the charges and the sentence of the court, it can be seen that this was at very much the lower end of seriousness.”

As the facts involved in Mr Conlon's offences had been proved by the court that convicted him, and Mr Conlon admitted to his convictions, the Committee considered only whether these offences made him unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

The Committee was advised that although the convictions were unrelated to Mr Conlon's

professional practice, any criminal conviction may call into question a veterinary surgeon's fitness to practise if the conduct for which they are convicted raises doubts over their capability as a veterinary surgeon. Convictions that damage the wider public interest in the good reputation of the profession and public confidence can also raise questions about fitness to practise and may be considered.

Speaking on behalf of the Disciplinary Committee, Vice-Chairman Professor Sheila Crispin said: “In reaching our decision, it is important to emphasise that the Disciplinary Committee does not condone Mr Conlon's behaviour in any way. We accept the submission of the College ‘that it is incumbent on any veterinary surgeon to act with decorum and not to engage in any violent, aggressive or intimidating behaviour,’ and, on any view, for a veterinary surgeon to get involved in a brawl in a public house is unacceptable behaviour. In the Committee's judgment this was a one-off incident of brief duration with no premeditation on

Mr Conlon's part; fortunately no significant injury was suffered by anybody involved.

“From the nature of the charges and the sentence of the court, it can be seen that this was at very much the lower end of seriousness and, as is accepted by the College, involves no concern about Mr Conlon's ability to practise as a veterinary surgeon.”

The Committee ordered the charges be dismissed.

Learning point

- Although criminal convictions may be unrelated to professional practice, they may call into question a veterinary surgeon's fitness to practise, for example, if they question the veterinary surgeon's capability or damage the wider public interest or the good reputation of the profession and public confidence in it.

relationships and animal welfare. The DC noted he had also seen practice and taken the advice of mentors, including about 80 days at “a number of high quality practices with eminent members of the profession”. These included Professor Dick White MRCVS, of Dick White Referrals, Professor David Noakes FRCVS, Emeritus Professor of the Royal Veterinary College, and Mr David Grant MBE FRCVS, Hospital Director at the RSCPA Sir Harold Harmsworth Memorial Hospital, all of whom gave evidence at the hearing in support of Mr Segev.

Professor White said that, since late 2009 when he was approached by Mr Segev for help in remedial training, continuing education and mentoring, he had subsequently had frequent dealings and conversations with him. “I formed the opinion that he invariably exercised professional clinical judgement that is, if anything, considerably deeper than many professional colleagues,” Professor White said, adding: “I felt he demonstrated compassion for patients and empathy for owners in equal measure” and believed him to have come to understand fully the seriousness of his behaviour.

Mr Segev's efforts at rehabilitation were described as “exceptional” by Professor Noakes, who said he was “impressed by Mr Segev's genuine acceptance of the fact that he had committed a serious offence and deserved to be punished.” Mr Grant, who had been in contact with Mr Segev since November 2010, told the hearing that, in his opinion, it was most evident that Mr Segev accepted his wrongdoing and, along with Professor Noakes, indicated that he was willing to offer continued support and help.

The College opposed the restoration of Mr Segev on three grounds, namely: the gravity of the

matters found proved at the original hearing; that the length of time off the Register was insufficient to mark these and ensure that the reputation of the profession was not undermined in the eyes of the public; and, Mr Segev's conduct, relying on two matters arising from the footage in a BBC Panorama programme, which was filmed both before and after the 2009 hearing. The College also questioned whether Mr Segev genuinely accepted the original findings.

“Restoration to the Register of a veterinary surgeon who has been guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect of such seriousness is not something to be undertaken lightly...”

The DC agreed that the findings of the original hearing were serious; it was, however, impressed by Mr Segev's complete and genuine written and public apologies for what he had done. The DC disagreed that the length of time off the Register was too short. It was mindful that the purpose of the sanction of erasure is not primarily of punishment and considered that no useful purpose would be served by delaying further Mr Segev's restoration.

Whilst the Committee found Mr Segev was wrong to have continued to display ‘veterinary surgeon’ on the practice nameplate (as shown in the television footage), it was satisfied that he did not intend to hold himself out as a practising veterinary

surgeon and no harm to the public or animal welfare resulted from his mistake. The footage also showed Mr Segev was in breach of RCVS guidance on the administration of anaesthesia by permitting a student veterinary nurse to induce anaesthesia by using incremental doses of intravenous propofol, with an unqualified assistant offering advice on the depth of anaesthesia during its incremental induction. The Committee considered Mr Segev's actions to be an error, now cured.

In conclusion, the Committee accepted Mr Segev “had made genuine and successful attempts to reform his previous attitude and failings”. It noted that a large number of testimonials had been provided by colleagues, friends and clients, and that the impact of removal on Mr Segev had been severe. It concluded that his previous mistakes provided “no reason, relevant to animal welfare, to suggest that his restoration would be unwise.”

Speaking on behalf of the Committee, Chairman Beverley Cottrell said: “Restoration to the Register of a veterinary surgeon who has been guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect of such seriousness is not something to be undertaken lightly... But, in all the circumstances of this case, [we have] decided that Mr Segev is a fit person to restore to the Register, and so direct the Registrar.”

Learning point

- The purpose of a Disciplinary Committee sanction is not primarily one of punishment, but to protect the health and welfare of animals under veterinary care and maintain public confidence in the veterinary profession.

Mr Dewi Wyn Lewis

Inquiry concerning: inaccurate bTB testing and false certification

DC decision: guilty of serious professional misconduct; suspend for five months

Registration status: name suspended from Register on 26 August 2011

On 19 July 2011, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that Dewi Wyn Lewis, a Cardigan veterinary surgeon, should be suspended from the RCVS Register for five months for failure to perform accurate bovine tuberculin testing and for falsely certifying the test results.

During the two-day hearing, Mr Lewis, of Priory Veterinary Ltd, Cardigan, answered charges about inaccurate skin fold measurements and false certification relating to two visits he made as an Official Veterinarian (OV) to a farm in April 2009 to undertake tuberculin testing.

“[The DC] does not believe that there is any likelihood that he will repeat his previous conduct.”

Mr Lewis accepted that he had not carried out the tuberculin tests in the way required by Animal Health (AH) and had taken short cuts to save time. However, he denied the charges, arguing that, although instructions to OVs clearly required the use of callipers to measure the skin folds of cattle necks on Day One of testing, not using callipers and using his finger and thumb did not amount to failing to measure. He also argued (and it was accepted by the Committee) that, regarding Day Two of testing, there was inconsistency in AH's instructions on calliper use, which in written form

required using callipers for measuring every animal but in practice accepted use of callipers when a reaction could be detected by manually palpating the skin. On Day Two, Mr Lewis said, he had done what AH required: he had used callipers on the cattle he identified for closer examination. The DC, however, found that by failing to use callipers on the first day, as required by AH, Mr Lewis had failed to measure the skin folds of almost all of the 104 cattle. The DC was also satisfied that, on Day Two, 10-20% of the herd were not even touched by Mr Lewis and it accepted the evidence of the three other witnesses present during the testing, which indicated that Mr Lewis had failed to carry out careful assessment and manual palpation of every animal.

The DC then considered whether Mr Lewis had dishonestly signed the certificate, or had signed a false certificate which he ought to have known was inaccurate. It noted that there were no previous disciplinary findings against Mr Lewis, and was prepared to believe his assertion that, although he knew he had not carried out the tests in strict compliance with AH's instructions, he genuinely believed his methods to be at least as accurate as measuring with callipers and did not think he was doing anything wrong or dishonest. The DC could not then be sure that Mr Lewis had realised what he was doing was dishonest.

However, the DC noted that 'false' also means 'inaccurate' and, as Mr Lewis ought to have known that his testing methods were not adequate, he also should have known that a considerable number of measurements on the certificate were inaccurate and that the certificate itself was inaccurate.

After considering the facts of the case, the DC concluded that Mr Lewis's actions amounted to serious professional misconduct and directed that he should be suspended from the Register for five months, after which he may return to practice.

In relation to the sanction, the DC said: "In reaching this decision it is relevant that the false certification was not dishonest and that there was professional and personal mitigation put forward on behalf of Mr Lewis. The Committee has paid regard to the fact that Mr Lewis is an experienced veterinary surgeon who is highly thought of in his local area. It does not believe that there is any likelihood that he will repeat his previous conduct."

The DC also said it gave considerable weight to the fact that Mr Lewis had had to wait an additional three-month period for the hearing because of an earlier adjournment.

Dr Gary J C Samuel

A Disciplinary Committee (DC) inquiry into Gary Samuel was scheduled for 13-16 June 2011, but an application for adjournment was received from his union representative on 10 June. The application was heard by the DC on 13 June and granted.

The hearing is now due to resume on 14 November 2011 and has been listed for four days.

Mr Joseph L Holmes

Joseph Holmes appealed to the Privy Council against the decision of the Disciplinary Committee at the conclusion of their Inquiry into him in January 2011. This appeal was heard by Baroness Hale, Lord Wilson and Lord Kerr on 1 November 2011 and their decision is awaited.

Mr Holmes is entitled to continue to practise at least until this decision is announced.

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

RVN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE



Report to Council, November 2011

RVN PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill

There are currently 8,806 Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses and, as of 1 April 2011, they are subject to regulation under the Rules agreed by VN and RCVS Councils in November 2010. The procedures for complaints and disciplinary cases are very similar to those for veterinary surgeons.

Complaints received

Since the last Report to Council there has been one meeting of the Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee. One complaint has been referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken.

There have been two new complaints received against RVNs. These have been assessed and further information has been requested.

The full report is available on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk).

Sad loss to veterinary history

We remember Norman Comben FRCVS

We were saddened to learn of the death on 16 September of Norman Comben, veterinary surgeon and historian, and long-time friend and advisor to the Trust.

Norman graduated in 1945 from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), and went into small animal practice, shortly afterwards opening his own premises in South Kensington, London, and later moving into industry, where he remained until retirement.



Norman Comben receiving his lifetime achievement award at RCVS Day, from Trust Chairman Jill Nute and then-President Peter Jinman

It is as a veterinary historian, however, that many will best remember him, as Norman turned an undergraduate interest in the history of farriery and the veterinary art into over sixty years of study and development of the subject. He built what is perhaps the largest English language collection of veterinary books and ephemera, now held by the Science Museum, whose bibliography has become the standard reference work for veterinary history. He was also a founder member, Chairman and, later, Honorary Fellow, of the Veterinary History Society, as well as a regular contributor to its journal.

Norman used his expertise to help others, assisting the Trust to re-appraise and overhaul the Library's Historical Collection, for which he was named Honorary Advisor, and producing and advising on exhibition displays at the World of James Herriot Centre in Thirsk, Yorkshire. The library of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) was catalogued by

Norman, for which he was made an honorary member of the RAVC Association, and he also helped the RVC to reorganise its library.

In recognition of his contribution and achievements, Norman was awarded the J T Edwards Memorial Medal in 1990 by the RCVS, and made an Honorary Fellow in 2005. He was also presented with the World Association for the History of Veterinary Medicine's Cheiron Medal and, in July this year, the RCVS Charitable Trust honoured him with a Lifetime Contribution Award for the assistance that he had given to the Library over many years. With his typical generosity, and sense of humour, Norman then presented the Trust with a 19th century plate of a poodle playing dominoes to add to its historical collection.

The Trust extends its deepest sympathies to Norman's wife, Annemarie, and to his sons, Peter and Martin, and their families. He will be much missed.

Veterinary voices at the British Library

Oral history project to record veterinary lives

The Trust is working with Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy on a project to record veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses telling their life stories for a new national collection to be held at the British Library. Oral historian Sue Bradley, who is working with us on the project, explains.

Social history is isn't just for academics, it interests lots of people – as does veterinary work itself. But it's surprising how few resources exist for veterinary social history. Other professions – including human medicine – can draw on a wealth



of personal accounts when it comes to their history. Where are the veterinary equivalents?

Imagine if we could hear Sir Frederick Hobday talk about his training, or his ideas about veterinary ethics. Or if we could listen to his students and assistants? The Trust holds a treasury of artefacts and documents. The life stories of veterinary surgeons and nurses – told in their own voices – will bring a new dimension to the collections. They're comparable to personal diaries and letters in the past, and especially valuable as digital media make paper records less likely to survive.

National Life Stories at the British Library is our archive partner, so these recordings will enter the leading national collection alongside the life stories of professionals from science and the arts, and be publicly accessible to current and future generations. And they won't just stay there. We're exploring ways of using them to highlight the profession's contribution to society.

And just think of the remarkable rise in numbers of women vets and achievements in veterinary nursing. Developments like these are important far beyond the veterinary field, but unless the stories are registered, their significance will be ignored. Oral history is a powerful medium because it puts experience in human terms.

As the daughter and god-daughter of vets, I know the older generation has seen extraordinary changes, and that it's vital to record them while we can. I've had the privilege of making recordings with Mary Brancker in the last year of her life, and also with Pam and Tony Owen, who worked for her

in the 1950s. As well as adding to Mary's account, they have given valuable in-depth descriptions of their later work in mixed practice in Cumbria.

Now we would welcome your suggestions. Which subjects should the programme cover? Or do you know any families with more than one generation of vets? While including some of 'the great and the good', we want to weight recordings towards the majority, whose experiences are important for social history but whose lives and work might otherwise remain unsung.



Will you support this project with a gift? We aim to conduct up to 24 interviews in total. You can make a contribution, or sponsor one or more interviews. To sponsor a named life story, or make suggestions for an interview, please contact Trust Director Cherry Bushell (020 7202 0721 or c.bushell@rcvs.org.uk).

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 Alphabet soup

Proposals aim to clarify specialist status – have your say.

2 Awarding role relinquished

We will cease being awarding body for VN training next year.

3 Open House

House of Commons reception calls for statutory regulation for VNs.

Registrar bids farewell

After 15 years, Jane Hern to stand down.

4 Remembrance project

Focus on vets who have served their country.

Capital idea

Review recommends overhaul of capital building projects, amongst other things.

Online payment for VNs

Retention fees due – pay at midnight if you like.

5 Badgering for a badge?

Get your new RVN badge before end of January for a big saving.

Ready for the hot seat?

Election nominations now open.

Page-turner

Read about our new PSS bookmarks.

6 More than a best friend...

We support Hounds for Heroes this Christmas.

Skills in supply

Veterinary profession taken off Skills Shortage List.

7 Bell tolls for Register

This year's is last hard copy.

Jack be nimble...

... and get yourself a ticket for the Share Jones lecture.

8 Mediation matters

Complaints Resolution Working Party reports.

On your marks, get set...

New Codes on track for 2012 introduction.

9 Critical notices

Performance protocol consultation open.

Let them down gently

Communicating with clients if you can't perform a euthanasia.

10 Testing times

VN *Guide* quiz results out.

All fired up

We're passionate that the firing of horses should not go on.

11 Squeaky clean

Biosecurity advice from Dr Tim Nuttall.

12 Totally bogus, Dude

Ensure you don't hire a fake.

13 All's well that end's well?

Solicitors Regulation Authority moves to outcomes-focused approach.

14 Reflective practice

CertAVP candidates reflect on Professional Key Skills module.

Euro winner

Not quite Euro millions, but healthy support for Vectar project.

15 Mind your MRPQs

Language testing on the cards?

16 Watching the pennies

Fees up, applications... also up!

Strike while the iron's hot

Consider farriers' EMS award.

17 Don't just do it, record it!

Online recording system for CPD due in the New Year.

Professional duty, please

Make sure your new grads are on the PDP.

18 Golden glow

We look back with pleasure on the VN Golden Jubilee year.

20 Nice to see you

Congress and events roundup.

As useful as a chocolate badge

You couldn't pin 'em, but you could scoff 'em, at BVNA.

21 Global stage

House of Commons recognises Vet2011.

How can you resist?

Antimicrobial resistance symposium set for 15 March 2012.

22 Chain links to history

SWVS chain represents pioneering spirit.

23 When I was your age...

Inspire the next generation of vets through ambassador programme.

24 Free? That's radical

Watch your words, advises PI Committee Chairman.

25 DC hearings

Mr R Conlon, case relating to criminal convictions for assault and public order dismissed; Mr K Segev, restored to Register; Mr DW Lewis, suspended for five months for inaccurate bTB testing and false certification; case against Dr G Samuel adjourned; and, Mr J Holmes appeal heard on 1 November, decision awaited.

26 RVN PIC

Two new complaints considered.

27 Historic loss

Saddened by loss of veterinary historian, Norman Comben.

Sounds good

We're looking for support and ideas for veterinary oral history project

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2011

23 November

Share Jones Lecture

24-25 November

Join us at London Vet Show

30 November

Trust VN competition closes

8 December

Meet the RCVS Day

9 December

Specialist consultation deadline

23-27 December

College closed

31 December

Deadline for VN fees

2012

2 January

College closed

13 January

Performance protocol consultation deadline

26-28 January

VPMA Congress

31 January

Deadline for Council and VN Council nominations

1 March

Closing decline for Cert and Diploma exam applications

8 March

Regional Question Time: Leeds

15 March

AMR symposium

12-15 April

See us at BSAVA Congress



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