

Building bridges

ADR trial launched as first step towards redress system

“Ombudsman Services will work through conciliation, not arbitration, meaning that it can only suggest, rather than impose, solutions.”

We have begun a six-month alternative dispute resolution (ADR) trial as a first step towards setting up a permanent system for settling disputes between users of veterinary services and members of the profession.

The trial will be administered by Ombudsman Services, an independent and not-for-profit organisation, on our behalf. It aims to provide a way of settling concerns which, while perfectly legitimate, may not meet our threshold for serious professional misconduct.

Through our traditional routes, we are only able to deal with the most serious concerns raised about the professional conduct of a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse. Therefore many concerns are closed with no further action, rather than being referred to our Preliminary Investigation Committee; even fewer reach a Disciplinary Hearing.

This often leaves members of the public frustrated as they have no further form of redress. This dissatisfaction was evident when we consulted members of the public who had previously raised concerns with us, as part of the First-Rate Regulator initiative last year. It was for this reason that the development of an ADR trial was put into our Strategic Plan 2014–2016.

Chief Executive Nick Stace explains: “On the basis of ‘what is good for the consumer can be good for the profession’, it was decided to develop this trial to see whether we could improve outcomes for consumers while also safeguarding the profession’s reputation.

“I hope that the profession recognises the benefits of the trial in helping to resolve those long-standing disputes that can hang over practices, as well as improving their overall standing with consumers.

“I also hope that the trial will answer some questions around how well such a scheme would be received, levels of cooperation from the profession and the public, the types of concerns that should be referred to the trial and typical outcomes.”

The trial will be limited to no more than 150 concerns raised about veterinary surgeons in regards to treating small animals. Concerns that could be referred to the trial will be identified by our Professional Conduct Department and will mostly be those for which there is no arguable case for professional misconduct.

Concerns will only be referred with consent from both parties. Ombudsman Services will work through conciliation, not arbitration, meaning that it can only suggest, rather than impose, solutions.

Recommendations will be made which either party is entitled to accept, or not. These recommendations could include financial accommodation up to the small claims court limit of £10,000 (although recommendations are likely to be in hundreds rather than thousands of pounds), the issuing of an apology or other practical action.

Ombudsman Services will be assisted by veterinary advisers who will provide guidance on clinical matters.

The results of the trial will be presented at the June 2015 meeting of RCVS Council, where steps will be considered for the development of a permanent scheme. To find out more, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/adr.



In this issue: new Royal Charter approved, update on postnominals, revamped complaints process, CEO overview, Councils nominations, conviction disclosures, President’s charity donation, student fitness to practise guidance, professional standards and social media, Period of Supervised Practice for VNs, PSS re-launch, Surveys of the Professions, VN Day One Competences, first vet CPD audit, news from the Education Committee, Strategic Plan progress, events and meetings, guest column, DC hearings, WW1 centenary, EBVM Conference report.

New Charter approved on Bonfire Night

Privy Council approval granted

The long process of gaining approval for the College's new Royal Charter has finally reached fruition. The Charter received the official nod in October, and final approval was granted by the Privy Council – headed up by Deputy Prime Minister and Lord President of the Privy Council Nick Clegg – on 5 November.

The new Charter sets out the objects of the College, "to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in the interests of the health and welfare of animals and in the wider public interest". The Charter also modernises various regulatory functions, most importantly by underpinning the regulation of veterinary nurses, and properly recognising them as true professionals by making them associates of the College.

RCVS President Professor Stuart Reid said: "The word historic is overused, but it is perfectly apt in this case. This Charter brings veterinary regulation firmly into the 21st century, and finally gives veterinary nurses the recognition that they so justly deserve. The College is grateful for the support we have received from across the profession, most especially from the British Veterinary Association, whose input has been invaluable."

The College hopes that the new Charter will come into force before the end of 2014. In order for this to happen, the Great Seal of the Realm must be affixed to a version of the Charter written on vellum.



Good governance?

Council debate considers the options

Momentum for reform energised an afternoon session of Council on 6 November, where the topic of governance was discussed.

Governance issues are no stranger to the Council agenda: a working party had last considered major change in 2009, but at that time it was believed that a new Act was the only mechanism for change.

President Stuart Reid said that, following conversations with Defra, he felt the time was now right to reconsider the issue, as the process of developing a legislative reform order (LRO) was now tried and tested. But he cautioned that the window of opportunity may be short, as an LRO would not be a feasible solution should, as is likely, additional legislative powers be devolved to Scotland.

In light of the role of the RCVS as laid down in the new Charter, Council considered its decision-making function, together with its future size, composition and frequency of meeting. The structure and membership of committees was also discussed.

Views in the room were varied and constructive. Some favoured a larger, consultative Council that met less frequently, alongside an enlarged Board that continued to meet monthly. Meanwhile, some felt a smaller and more agile Council was the way forward – with proposals for halving the number of Council members in each of the categories (elected and appointed) also being debated.

Others felt that Council meetings were working increasingly well since day-to-day decision-making had been devolved to the Operational Board and were supportive of maintaining a similar structure as now, albeit with consideration given to size and membership.

A key theme was maintaining the trust and confidence of both the profession and the public. A structure for Council that encouraged diversity of membership was also sought.

The President concluded the discussions by thanking Council for its input, which had indicated consensus for some kind of reform, and saying that the detail would be taken away for further work by the Operational Board.

Doctor in the house?

Consultation on courtesy title agreed

Views will shortly be canvassed as to whether members of the College should be 'allowed' to use the courtesy title 'doctor', following a decision made by Council at its 6 November meeting.

The proposals were brought to the table by President Stuart Reid, in line in with his speech at RCVS Day in July.

"Working in an international context and with recent changes in migration and working patterns, I would like to reopen this issue. The term doctor is not protected and a number of our colleagues already use the title when travelling internationally – the proposed endorsement regularises it use, he said.

"I also believe that not only is there now a greater chance of confusion for the lay public than previously, but there is an opportunity to provide, for those UK veterinarians that wish it, the legitimate use of a title that offers a level of parity with fellow medical professionals," he added.

Professor Reid cited the fact that international veterinary surgeons use the title – and that in Australia and New Zealand this is tied to registration and professional standing rather than academic attainment. He went on to outline that medical practitioners in the UK carry the courtesy title doctor even though the level of



training and educational attainment is identical to that of veterinary graduates. The General Dental Council had also agreed the use of the title for its registrants.

Council was in favour of opening the issue to consultation with both the public and the profession, in order to gauge levels of interest and support in the proposal. An online consultation will be launched before Christmas.

A trip to the Palace

Royal first for NI practitioner

Our patron, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, bestowed the first-ever RCVS Queen's Medal upon Northern Ireland veterinary surgeon Des Thompson OBE at a private ceremony in Buckingham Palace on 8 October 2014.

Des, who received two separate nominations for the award, described the formal presentation as a "marvellous experience" that he would treasure for the rest of his life.



Press Association Images

Recruitment drive for disciplinary committees

PIC and DC members sought

In the New Year we will be looking to recruit lay and veterinary members to our Preliminary Investigation (PIC) and Disciplinary (DC) Committees to replace those RCVS Council members who will need to stand down next year.

Last year a legislative reform order (LRO) to reconstitute the two committees separately from RCVS Council came into force meaning that the committees will need to be made up of veterinary and lay members who are not on Council and who are appointed independently.

For DC we will be seeking to recruit four veterinary surgeons and three lay members; for PIC we will be recruiting three veterinary surgeons. At the same time we will also be recruiting for the Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee, for which two registered veterinary nurses and a veterinary surgeon will be sought.

On Monday 15 December we will be holding an Open Day for those who might be interested in applying for membership of either committee. If you are interested in attending, please contact Peris Dean, Executive Secretary, on p.dean@rcvs.org.uk.



Progress and collaboration

Post-Council update

Nick Stace, Chief Executive

The Strategic Plan: in many organisations, it makes a great doorstep. But I was determined that, given all the hard work that went into developing the RCVS 2014-16 plan, ours was going to be a relevant and living document. And so I was delighted to report excellent progress on all of our 2014 objectives to Council at its meeting on 6 November.

The night before Council met we heard that our new Royal Charter had been approved by the Privy Council – great timing indeed, and news which means that we have a strong platform on which to build a Royal College that will remain fit for purpose for many years to come. The movement of all veterinary nurses onto a regulated Register, becoming associate members of the College, will be one of the first visible changes to spring from the new Charter and signals a new phase of maturity for the VN profession.

This same week we have also launched our alternative dispute resolution (ADR) trial (see cover story). This has been a project close to my heart as I have committed a large part of my career to ensuring fairness for consumers and this is particularly important where services come from a near-monopoly provider, as is the case with the veterinary profession. The ADR will offer consumers another way to seek clarity and closure, and although I hear that some members of the profession worry it will be a charter for those clients unhappy with fees to seek discounts, I am sure that Ombudsman Services and its veterinary advisors to the scheme will ensure only legitimate concerns are resolved.

In fact it's all coming together in November, as we are also continuing to receive applications for our new Advanced Practitioner status; we delivered a well-attended webinar updating the profession on progress with the review of the Practice Standards Scheme (you can 'listen again' at www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars); and we will shortly hold a staff meeting to discuss the results of our most recent 'Great Place to Work' staff engagement survey.

The survey results saw our 'Great Place to Work' score shooting up from 52% last year to 91%, which tops the 2014 UK Best Medium-sized Workplaces score of 89% – a fantastic result. Being a great place to work doesn't mean laying on the beer and skittles. We have worked hard this year to ensure our values, purpose and culture are pervasive, increase staff training and development, improve opportunities for staff to engage with the Senior Team, ramp up internal communications and ensure great work and positive feedback is recognised. Staff engagement improves loyalty and productivity: so what's good for Belgravia House is good for the profession.

You can see a summary of how we are meeting all 12 of our 2014 objectives – together a list of priorities for 2015 – in the feature on pages 18–19.

Having a Strategic Plan in place, together with a strong purpose and vision, should be seen as an enabling device, not a straight-jacket. So, while we have focused our principal energies around delivering the Plan's objectives, it is right and appropriate that we also seek new and additional opportunities to deliver the best we can for the profession and the public. This means listening and being responsive – for example, our fledgling Mental Health Taskforce is a good example of where the College can act as a facilitator to bring together interested parties and support and fund positive action for change. We will launch the new initiative in December this year.

A further excellent example of the way we can work as a collaborative Royal College – rather than a rigid regulator – is a new project that we will be launching jointly with the British Veterinary Association at the London Vet Show to look at the future of the profession. Watch this space!

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

Postnominals update

Will remain on Register

RCVS Council has confirmed it will continue to display postnominals for postgraduate qualifications in the Register.

The decision was made at Council's November meeting, and follows an agreement in June to reverse a previous resolution to remove all postnominals except those for the registerable degree (and MRCVS/FRCVS), in favour of listing Advanced Practitioner or Specialist status, where appropriate.

The focus of the paper this time was on which postnominals would remain and where they would be displayed. Taking advice from the Education Committee, which had discussed the issue in October, Council agreed that postnominals falling into the following categories would be included on the Register:

- Those primary veterinary qualifications that we have a continued legal obligation to display
- Those qualifications approved for Advanced Practitioner and Specialist status
- Other qualifications and honorary postnominals deemed relevant by Council, including some non-veterinary/science-related qualifications.

In addition, it was agreed that only qualifications meeting certain criteria would be added in the future, with such criteria including the nature of the awarding body, that the field of study is evidence based, that the qualification should represent a significant period of study – equivalent to at least 60 credits in the UK credit framework, and that it should be at least level 6/Bachelor level in the UK Higher Education Qualifications framework.

“Prominence will be given to searching for Specialists and Advanced Practitioners.”

These postnominals will be displayed as part of an individual's entry on the online Check the Register tool, and alongside staff names in the Find a Vet search results, but will not be included in the search criteria on Find a Vet. Prominence will be given to searching for Specialists and Advanced Practitioners.

The change will take place once the first list of Advanced Practitioners is published, in the spring. In addition, more information will be provided on the website to decode the various postnominals, for the benefit of both the public and the profession. Lists of those achieving RCVS Certificates and Diplomas will continue to be held elsewhere on the website.

Meanwhile, VN Council will consider which postnominals it is appropriate to show within its Register next year.

Stand up and be counted

Nominations for Council members

Those veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wish to contribute to the future of their professions can now stand up and be counted, as the nomination period for the RCVS Council and VN Council elections has opened.

Each year six RCVS Council seats are contested while two seats are available for VN Council. Successful candidates will serve four-year terms.

The nomination period runs until 5pm on Saturday 31 January 2015 and, in order to stand, candidates for either RCVS or VN Council will need to complete a nomination form, submit a short



biography, write a short personal statement and supply a high resolution digital photo.

Each candidate will also need to provide two nominations – for RCVS Council candidates this should be two veterinary surgeons who are on our Register but are not current RCVS Council members; for VN Council candidates nominators must be registered or listed VNs who are not current VN Council members.

The election period commences in early March 2015 and runs until Friday 24 April. Successful candidates for either Council will take up their seats at RCVS Day – our Annual General Meeting and Awards Day – on Friday 10 July 2015.

Nomination forms, guidance notes and frequently asked questions for RCVS Council candidates can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil15. The equivalent documents for VN Council candidates can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil15. Last year we produced two short videos outlining what is involved in being a Council member, the benefits it can bring and the amount of time it requires. These can be found at www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos.

Prospective candidates are also invited to attend a 'Meet the RCVS Day' at Belgravia House on Tuesday 25 November where they will have the opportunity to find out more about the role of the College and RCVS and VN Council members, as well as having a tour of the building and the opportunity to talk to staff.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Fiona Harcourt, Events Officer, on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773.

Pick a card, any card...

Debit cards can now be used for renewals payments

At its November meeting RCVS Council agreed to amend the registration regulations. One of the changes will allow veterinary surgeons to pay their annual renewal fees by credit card, with no charge, or by debit card.

The current registration regulations say that we must pass on the administrative charge on credit card payments and our systems did not allow differential charges to be levied, which is why, hitherto, we have been unable to accept debit card payments. The amended regulations allow us to waive the administrative charge on credit card payments so we can now accept debit card payments.

Corrie McCann, RCVS Director of Operations, says: "We have taken on board the feedback we received from some members of the profession about the difficulty they have had in paying their fees by credit card and hope that, with this change,

we can make the fee-paying process a little easier and more convenient for all."

Although the Privy Council will need to officially approve the amended regulations, we hope that the new arrangements will come into force in time for next year's annual renewal fee for veterinary surgeons.

Registered and listed veterinary nurses were able to pay their annual renewal fee by debit card for the first time this year as they are not covered by these regulations.



Mind your language

English language testing moves a step closer

We have been continuing to work with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the possibility of implementing English language testing for EU-registrants. This would require a Statutory Instrument to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA). Defra has given the green light to commence drafting an impact assessment – the first step towards a formal consultation.

If implemented, we anticipate that the changes will allow the College to insist on a formal, professional English language test where serious and concrete doubts are raised about a veterinary surgeon's grasp of the English language. Those doubts could be raised when the individual is applying to join the Register as a UK-practising member – either through self-certification, or if the applicant appears to require a translator to complete the registration process.

Alternatively, a significant concern could be raised by member of the public or profession once someone is registered, in which case we would investigate and, where necessary, insist on the completion of a formal language test; the Registrar would have the right to suspend someone from the Register pending the results of the test, or to remove them if they failed it.



Once more with conviction

Disclosure of convictions, cautions and adverse findings

From January this year, existing veterinary surgeons and those applying to join the Register have been required to disclose to us any convictions (including absolute and conditional discharges and spent convictions), cautions or adverse findings since April 2006 that could affect their registration or fitness to practise.

As a result of the disclosure scheme some 31 veterinary surgeons told us about convictions, cautions or adverse findings upon renewing their registration; eight declarations were also made by those seeking to join the Register.

Disclosures made included convictions for common assault, drink-driving, driving without insurance, fraud and careless driving. Of the 31 disclosures made by veterinary surgeons on renewing their registration, four were referred to our Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) – these included convictions for fraud and assault – while the rest were closed with no further action. All eight new registrants who disclosed convictions, cautions or adverse findings were allowed to join the Register.

Gordon Hockey, RCVS Registrar, comments: "The aim of this process is not to add any additional punishment to those who have already been convicted or cautioned for a crime but rather to provide reassurance to the public and the profession by considering any issues around fitness to practise that may arise from these disclosures.

"As is clear with most of the disclosures, we did not think that their conviction, caution or adverse finding needed to be taken any further through our disciplinary process although we will, of course,

remain vigilant in order to safeguard animal health and welfare."

Disclosures were considered by the Registrar on a one-by-one basis to determine whether there was any fitness to practise issue. So, for example, while one drink-driving conviction might not require further action, another might be referred to PIC for further investigation depending on the circumstances, including the aggravating and mitigating factors.

Registered veterinary nurses have been required to disclose any convictions, cautions or adverse findings since 2007 and there were six disclosures by RVNs upon registration this year.

It is important to note that certain minor convictions, such as road traffic offences that were dealt with by means of a fixed penalty, are exempt from the disclosure process.

If you have any questions about disclosing a conviction, caution or adverse finding you can call our dedicated advice line on 07818 113 056 or email disclosure@rcvs.org.uk. The advice line is open Monday to Friday, 11am to 4pm.



Are you being served?

Feedback on our service standards

Following the launch of our Service Charter earlier this year we are now seeking feedback from the profession about how we are doing in terms of meeting our service standards.

As an organisation we aim to give members of the profession the highest possible standards of customer care and, as part of this, we have developed specific benchmarks for five of our services – the Practice Standards Scheme, registration of overseas applicants, registration of UK graduates, registration of veterinary nurses and raising a concern.

We are already monitoring response times for email enquiries, as well as satisfaction levels for new vets registering with us, but we would also like to find out how you feel we are doing. You can send your feedback directly to Nick Stace on nick@rcvs.org.uk.

Register on sale

The RCVS Register of Members 2014 is now available to buy (£25 for members and £40 for non-members, exc P&P). Please order from www.rcvs.org.uk/publications.

Gone away?

Please make sure we have your correct address details on the Register. We currently have 64 vets and VNs for whom we do not have a valid postal address, and a further 175 for whom at least one item of post has been returned by Royal Mail as an invalid address or 'gone away'. It's your legal responsibility to ensure we have an up to date postal address for you. If you have moved recently, please do let us know via registration@rcvs.org.uk.

Direct action

Attention vets: your retention fees will be due on 31 March. Why not set up a direct debit now, as a fuss-free way to pay? Just download the form from www.rcvs.org.uk/vetdirectdebit. For this to take effect in time, please complete the process by 31 January 2015.

CPD cards no longer issued

We would like to remind veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses that we will no longer be issuing hard copy CPD Record Cards but instead ask that you use the free online Professional Development Record (PDR) to log your learning and development.

For those who can't stand the thought of not using paper, CPD Record Cards are available to download in PDF format at www.rcvs.org.uk/education/cpd-for-vns and www.rcvs.org.uk/CPD.

Empowering people experiencing mental health problems

President's Christmas Box supports Mind



The mental health charity Mind has been chosen as the beneficiary of this year's RCVS President's Christmas Box – a £3,000 donation given to a charity of the President's choice.

Mind provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing mental health problems and campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding of such problems. For example, it provides a confidential helpline and a legal advice service as well as local groups providing direct care and support to people within their communities. The charity's President is actor and comedian Stephen Fry.

RCVS President Professor Stuart Reid explains why he chose the charity: "Many of us will have had experience of some challenge to mental well-being, whether personally or through someone close to us. As we are all too aware, the profession faces

issues in relation to anxiety, stress, depression and the often tragic consequences of mental health problems. For these reasons I would like the RCVS to support Mind this year as our nominated charity.

"The College's new initiative on mental well-being will benefit from a closer relationship with Mind and will build upon the excellent work the charity is already doing with our students. I also hope that, in nominating Mind, we are better able to have the conversations we need to have, bringing together all those with a commitment to improving mental health in the profession, and those associated with it."

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive Officer of Mind, thanked the RCVS for the gift, saying: "We are incredibly grateful to Professor Stuart Reid for



choosing Mind to receive the RCVS President's Christmas Box.

"There has never been a greater need for Mind. By 2020, depression will be the leading cause of health problems in Europe, while in the UK an average of 15 people take their own lives each day. This money will help us to provide information and advice for anyone affected by mental health problems so that they have a place to turn for support."

"The College's new initiative on mental well-being will benefit from a closer relationship with Mind."

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

New concerns process to cut time

Improved speed and communication

In August we implemented a new concerns investigation procedure with the aim of streamlining the process and making it less stressful by improving communication and reducing the amount of time taken to resolve concerns.

For example, under the new process, we make regular phone contact with all parties involved in the concern in order to keep them up to date with the investigation's progress. In addition, all our documentation is being 'plain English approved' by the Word Centre to ensure that it is clear and understandable.

"We have set specific timescales for our investigation process, which we are hoping to achieve by the end of 2016."

A simpler concerns investigation process, greater flexibility and the ability to fast-track serious concerns to the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) (and resolve others more quickly), will speed up the process. In order to measure this, we have set specific timescales for our

investigation process, which we are hoping to achieve by the end of 2016. These are:

- Acknowledging all concerns within two working days of receipt
- Appointing a named Case Manager who will phone the person raising the concern within two weeks
- Concluding the initial assessment/investigation stage within three months of receipt
- Where warranted, consideration by our PIC to take place within nine months of receipt of the concern
- Where warranted, a Disciplinary Committee hearing to take place within 12 months

We also recently held a free webinar – presented by Eleanor Ferguson, Head of Professional Conduct, and Jerry Davies, Chair of PIC – which gave further details about our new complaints investigation procedure. To listen again, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars.

Further information about raising a concern with us, as well as information for veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses who have had concerns raised against them, is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/concerns.



New registration regulations approved

Changes to rules on addresses and refunds

At its November 2014 meeting RCVS Council agreed a number of amendments to the existing registration regulations for veterinary surgeons, which date from 2010, to make them more user-friendly and convenient for the profession.

One key change is in regards to the type of address that veterinary surgeons need to supply to the College upon registration. Currently registrants must supply a work address, rather than a home address, for publication in the Register. However, following feedback from the profession, the

amended regulations will allow veterinary surgeons to supply us with either address.

Another amendment is that the College will now provide credits rather than refunds for UK-practising veterinary surgeons who change their status from non-practising or practising outside of the UK between 1 April and 31 October. Paying refunds involves administration, which increases costs, and the refund cheques are often not cashed. With credits, the amount will be deducted from the next year's renewal fees. Anyone who comes off the Register altogether with a credit outstanding will receive a refund.

Other rule changes include no longer charging an additional punitive restoration fee of £299 (as opposed to the standard £75) to those who have been restored to the Register at the direction of the Disciplinary Committee, and no longer annually compounding the fees for those who have been formerly removed from the Register for non-payment.

The new regulations now need to be confirmed by an Order of the Privy Council and are expected to come into force by the end of the year.



VN renewal fee reminder

Fees must be paid by end of year

Registered and listed veterinary nurses have until 31 December 2014 to pay the annual renewal fee of £61 or they will be removed from the Register/List of Veterinary Nurses.

As well as paying the fee, all veterinary nurses need to confirm their Register/List details and correspondence address, while registered veterinary nurses will also need to declare any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings and confirm they have complied with our CPD requirement of 45 hours over a three-year period.

Please visit the 'My Account' area of the website, at www.rcvs.org.uk/login, to pay and manage your details online. Security details for accessing the area have been sent to all registered and listed veterinary nurses. If you have not received your renewal letter or login details, please contact the Registration Department on 020 7202 0707.

For further guidance on how to pay your annual renewal fee, please contact our Finance Department on finance@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0723.

Once the new Royal Charter comes into effect (which is expected to happen before the end of 2014) the List and Register will effectively be merged. All veterinary nurses will become RVNs.



This will have no impact on annual renewal fees, and there will be no additional charge for listed nurses to become RVNs.

“Once the new Royal Charter comes into effect, the List and Register will effectively be merged.”

Once transferred to the Register, former listed veterinary nurses will be responsible for their own professional conduct (as set out in the *Code of Professional Conduct*), including complying with our CPD requirements and declaring any convictions, cautions or adverse findings. Veterinary nurses are asked to make relevant disclosures and confirm compliance with CPD requirements when they renew their registration in September each year.

Your to do list...

- **Vets: apply for Advanced Practitioner status by 30 November (page 13)**
- **Tell us what you think of RCVS News by completing our online survey (page 22)**
- **Seek nomination, or nominate someone, for RCVS Council or VN Council by 31 January next year. If you are interested in being a candidate please also attend our Meet the RCVS Day on 25 November (page 4)**
- **Watch the CEO's post-Council update (page 3)**
- **Vets: set up a direct debit now for your March renewal fees (page 5)**
- **Send your feedback on our services to CEO Nick Stace (page 5)**
- **Listen again to our webinar on the new PSS (page 15)**
- **Read our new guidance on social media and professional standards (page 8)**
- **Make sure your practice premises are on the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises (page 14)**
- **Sign up to the free online Professional Development Record**
- **Practices: make sure to keep Find a Vet informed of any staff changes (page 14)**
- **Have a read of RCVS Facts and its wonderful infographics (page 21)**
- **Come and see us at the London Vet Show and book a PSS surgery (page 21)**
- **Sign up to the EBVM Network (page 27)**

Advice for the digital age

Standards Committee publishes new social media guidance

With the ever-increasing proliferation and popularity of social media – be that Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, online communities and discussion fora, or whatever the ‘next big thing’ might be – comes a number of ethical, legal and professional considerations for those veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who use such technologies.

Although the concept of professional standards and conduct within the veterinary profession is well established, the application of such principles in the age of digital connectivity remains relatively new and the inherent risks are not necessarily obvious.

With this in mind, the Standards Committee has recently approved a new chapter of supporting guidance for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who use social media. This sets out the professional standards expected of you, as well as providing advice on good practice, how to protect your privacy, maintaining client confidentiality and dealing with adverse comments from clients.

The guidance recognises that social media is likely to form part of everyday life and that you are free to take advantage of the personal and professional benefits that it can offer. Social media is a valuable communication tool and can be used to establish professional links and networks, to engage in wider discussions relating to veterinary practice, and to facilitate the public’s access to information about animal health and welfare. However, the use of social media is not without risk and you should be mindful of the consequences that can arise from its misuse.

The new guidance outlines that you have a responsibility to behave professionally and responsibly whether you are offline, online as yourself or online in a virtual capacity (perhaps as an avatar or appearing under an alias). Demonstrably inappropriate behaviour on social

media may place your registration at risk, as the professional standards expected of you online are no different to those in the ‘real world’. The reputation of the veterinary professions must be upheld at all times.

“Demonstrably inappropriate behaviour on social media may place your registration at risk.”

Recent decisions by the courts and other regulatory bodies demonstrate that professionals can be at risk of legal or disciplinary action where their online conduct is unprofessional or inappropriate. One recent disciplinary case involved a barrister who ran an anonymous Twitter account and posted a number of offensive tweets about his opponents. He appeared before the

Bar Standards Board in 2010 and was disbarred for bringing his profession into disrepute.

Doctors and nurses from the Great Western Hospital in Swindon were temporarily suspended in 2009 for posting pictures of themselves on Facebook ‘planking’ around hospital premises; and, in 2010, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) struck off a registrant for pursuing an inappropriate relationship with a former patient via Facebook. In 2012, the NMC reported an increasing number of cases brought before its fitness to practise panels involving the use of social networking sites.

Understanding and applying our new guidance should help you to meet your professional responsibilities and reduce the risks of receiving complaints from clients or others, as well as potential civil actions for defamation. You can find it at: www.rcvs.org.uk/socialmedia.

You should...	You should avoid...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be respectful of and protect the privacy of others ✓ Consider whether you would make the comments in public or other traditional forms of media. If not, you should refrain from doing so ✓ Be proactive in removing content that could be viewed as unprofessional ✓ Remember that innocent references to social activities that might be construed as taking place on duty / on call could be misinterpreted or used as the basis for a complaint ✓ Maintain and protect client confidentiality by not disclosing information about a client or a client’s animal that could identify them on social media unless the client gives explicit consent ✓ Comply with your employer’s / organisation’s internet or social media policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Contravening any internet or social media policy set out by your employer / organisation ✗ Causing undue distress or provoking anti-social or violent behaviour ✗ Being offensive, false, inaccurate or unjustified ✗ Abusing, bullying, victimising, harassing, threatening or intimidating clients, colleagues, staff or others ✗ Discriminating against an individual based on his/her race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or beliefs, or national origin ✗ Bringing the profession into disrepute (you should be mindful that your online personas can have a negative impact on your professional lives)

(Abridged guidance. See supporting guidance chapter 28 for full details.)

Professional indemnity insurance

Guidance on ‘equivalent arrangements’

Professional indemnity (PI) insurance is a vital tool in ensuring that professionals are protected against claims relating to errors, negligence, mistakes and/or breach of professional duty.

Like many other professionals, veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses need PI insurance to practise in the UK – a long-standing professional obligation that is stipulated in the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct* (paragraph 3.4). While the vast majority will be covered by PI insurance, a small minority will seek to rely on the ‘equivalent arrangements’ provision, for example, larger organisations which can properly self-insure and have significant financial resources in terms of capital, reserves or income.

Although it is not anticipated that this will apply to many practitioners, the Standards Committee has approved some new advice on what is meant by ‘equivalent arrangements’ and what is required for these to be considered satisfactory. This is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/vetteam (17.6-17.8).

Revised guidance for Named Veterinary Surgeons

Updates reflect changed legislation

In September, the Standards Committee approved revisions to our supporting guidance (chapter 24) on the duties and responsibilities of Named Veterinary Surgeons (NVS), in order to reflect changes in European legislation. The guidance was revised by a working party that included representatives of the Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association (LAVA) and the Home Office.

The revised guidance should assist the NVS in their relationship with their establishment and seeks to strengthen their position within it, so we would encourage all NVSs to familiarise themselves with it as soon as possible.

Updated Home Office guidance on the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (including the role of the NVS) is also available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/operation-of-aspa.

Helping you help others

New guidance and sources of help

If you become aware that a colleague is in need of emotional support, or is feeling suicidal, it might not always be clear who to turn to for professional assistance. With this in mind, and in conjunction with the Veterinary Surgeons' Help Support Programme, we have published some advice and suggestions on how you could help.

Entitled 'Helping you help others', this short publication describes the warning signs to look out for and what to do in an emergency, suggests how to broach the subject of seeking professional support, and provides the names and contact details of organisations that can help.

It is available to download from our website at www.rcvs.org.uk/helping.



Biosecurity updates for veterinary practices in Wales

New standard operating procedure

As part of the Welsh Government's review of standstill rules for livestock in Wales, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) for Wales has looked at the exemption from standstill for movements of livestock to and from veterinary facilities.

The British Veterinary Association has reviewed the existing biosecurity measures that veterinary practices follow to ensure there is no contact between animals. It has since produced guidance on these measures and a biosecurity Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which has been endorsed by the RCVS Certification Subcommittee.

The CVO for Wales is encouraging all veterinary practices in Wales to adopt this SOP, which is available at www.wales.gov.uk.

Meet your Committee Chair

David Catlow, Standards Committee

David Catlow is a partner at a Lancashire veterinary practice and has been an elected member of RCVS Council since 2010. He is also a past-President of the British Veterinary Association, serving his term in 2006. He became Chair of the Standards Committee this year, replacing Clare Tapsfield-Wright following her retirement from RCVS Council.

What does the Standards Committee do?

Standards Committee defines and sets the standards that veterinary surgeons are expected to uphold and work to. A large part of the Committee's work is to develop, refine and keep up-to-date the supporting guidance that accompany the *Code of Professional Conduct*.

Not only do these guidance notes help veterinary surgeons gain a clearer understanding and practical interpretation of the *Code*, but they also inform the RCVS Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees when investigating any complaints made against a veterinary surgeon.

What made you want to take on the role of Chair of the Committee?

Having spent my first four-year term as an elected Council member getting to know how things work at the RCVS, the structure of its committees and understanding how decisions are made, I felt that I wanted to play a more involved role in the decision-making process.

As a veterinary surgeon who has worked in practice for over 25 years, I felt perhaps my experience might be best placed by focusing my efforts on areas that help provide practical advice to vets working in the front-line of practice.

While taking on the role as Chair of Standards was a fairly daunting prospect with significant responsibility, I felt it would allow me to hear other peoples' views and widen my perspective on everyday issues we face, so I put my name forward to Council to be considered for the role.

Since the start of the RCVS year in July, the workload has already been broader than I originally envisaged, with requests for practical guidance and additional meetings over and above the immediate committee meetings.

How does the Committee decide its focus?

The focus for the Committee is driven predominantly by any current issues or concerns raised with the College where clarity is required concerning professional standards and/or the Veterinary Surgeons Act. They may be raised by members of the College or of the public.

For example, over the last year, a significant amount of time and effort was put into consultation and subsequent review of the guidance relating to out-of-hours emergency cover, after issues were raised by the profession

following a Disciplinary Committee hearing and decision.

My predecessor, Clare Tapsfield-Wright, and last year's Standards Committee members, put in a huge amount of work gathering evidence and revising the guidance notes. Their deliberations and recommendations have been very well received by the majority of the profession and have provided greater clarity for vets working in general practice, while maintaining our professional obligation and reputation with the general public for the service we provide.

Other areas of work are no less important but perhaps less urgent, with periodic reviews of all supporting guidance an important task to keep it relevant, practical and up-to-date.

What are the Committee's main priorities for the coming year?

Our first committee meeting during the current presidential year has already discussed issues relating to advertising, the use of social media, what constitutes adequate professional indemnity insurance and an update on the developments of the Practice Standards Scheme.

Other priorities are likely to include reviewing the guidance on supersession, where more than one veterinary business may be treating the same animal(s); issues surrounding the accountability and responsibility of veterinary surgeons working as employees; and issues surrounding the use of controlled drugs.

What makes the work of the Committee useful to the rest of the profession?

Most veterinary surgeons will, at some stage, find themselves in a situation where they are not entirely clear how they should proceed, or may occasionally feel under pressure to do something that they are not comfortable with, or have less experience of. By providing meaningful and practical guidance to help interpret the *Code of Professional Conduct*,

the work of Standards Committee gives a very useful steer and direction to veterinary surgeons in their decision making process. The supporting guidance to the *Code* is not everybody's idea of good bedtime reading, but it is certainly useful to know where they are and have them close to hand when you need them!



Medicated feed responsibilities

New code of practice underway for responsible use of medicated feed

To reflect the ever-increasing focus on antimicrobial resistance – a global concern in both human and veterinary medicine – the Veterinary Medicines Directorate is working with representatives of the feed industry, the British Veterinary Association and its divisions and the RCVS in order to produce a code of practice to reinforce responsible practice in prescribing, manufacturing and using medicated feed.

The code will set out best practice for veterinary surgeons, feed mills and livestock keepers, all of whom have a role in the responsible use of medicated feed. It will emphasise the significance of an accurate and fully completed prescription, and will stress that this is the responsibility of the veterinary surgeon with the livestock under his or her care and who has diagnosed a condition for which medicated feed is required.

Liaison with the livestock keeper and the feed mill may be required in order to obtain the relevant information for the prescription, but the veterinary

surgeon has sole responsibility for its generation and completion. The code will also encourage livestock keepers to approach their veterinary surgeon as soon as they identify concerns within their herd or flock.

“The code will encourage veterinary surgeons and livestock keepers to work together effectively.”

Discussions as to the finer details of the code are ongoing, but it is recognised that it needs to reflect the commercial realities of medicated feed production. With this in mind, the code will encourage veterinary surgeons and livestock keepers to work together effectively to ensure the timely delivery of medicated feed in the interests of animal health and welfare.

We will provide further updates on the code's progress and its expected publication date.



Students behaving well?

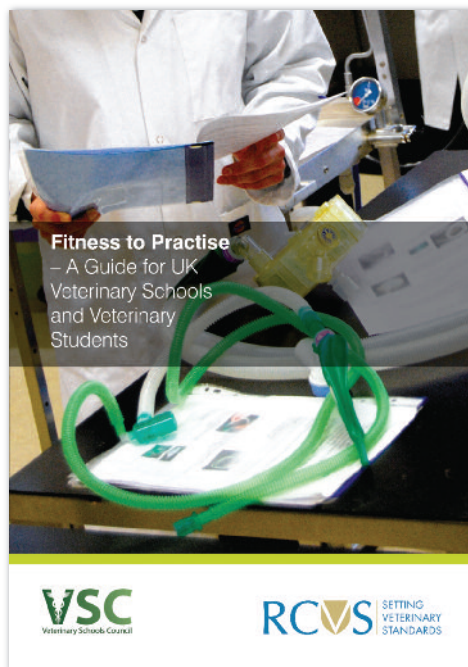
New fitness to practise guidance published for vet students

A year ago, we reported that RCVS Council had approved the formation of a working party to produce, in conjunction with the UK veterinary schools, a 'student charter' based on broad fitness to practise principles, applicable to all UK veterinary students (RCVS News, November 2013, p6). The aim was to introduce veterinary students to the concept of fitness to practise at an early stage, so as to prepare them for professional life, and to promote good fitness to practise regimes throughout the UK veterinary schools.

“The guide is split into two parts: the first provides guidance for veterinary schools on recognising and addressing fitness to practise concerns.”

The working party has now concluded its work and its draft guidance – 'Fitness to practise – A Guide for UK Veterinary Schools and Veterinary Students' – has since been approved by the RCVS Standards Committee. The Veterinary Schools Council, although not part of the working party, has also granted its approval to the guidance.

The guide is split into two parts: the first provides guidance for veterinary schools on recognising and addressing fitness to practise concerns. We are not suggesting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach but do hope to promote consistency



across the veterinary schools. It is understood that veterinary schools will have in place their own specific guidelines and procedures for dealing with individual fitness to practise cases, and that these will be informed by the principles within the guide. Part two sets out the broad principles of fitness

to practise that students should follow and which veterinary schools should expect and uphold. We have no powers to regulate veterinary students, but hope that future members are prepared for the requirements of being a member of a regulated profession and abiding by a code of professional conduct.

“It is recognised that a student is not a fully-fledged professional and some allowance for mistakes and poor judgement will generally be made.”

We expect that any adverse finding made in university fitness to practise proceedings will be declared to us by the student upon application for registration, in line with our protocol on the disclosure of convictions and cautions. The Registrar has discretion to refuse registration where an applicant is considered not suitable, but it is recognised that a student is not a fully-fledged professional and therefore some allowance for mistakes and poor judgement will generally be made.

We will publish the guide on our website later this month, and the UK veterinary schools that offer an RCVS-approved course have also agreed to publicise it to their students. Formation of a new working party to produce equivalent guidance for student veterinary nurses is in the pipeline.

News from the Education Committee

Roundup of topics discussed

The Education Committee, chaired by Chris Tufnell (pictured), last met on Wednesday 8 October – here is an overview of what was discussed at the meeting

Fellowship consultation

Members of the Education Committee heard a report from the Fellowship Working Party regarding the responses received to its consultation on the future of the RCVS Fellowship conducted between May and July this year.

The Committee heard that the consultation received some 63 responses, with the majority being broadly in favour of the proposals, which included three new routes to entry (by Meritorious Contributions to Veterinary Practice, Knowledge and Clinical Practice) to enable more veterinary surgeons, particularly those in practice, to become Fellows, and discontinuing the Honorary Fellowship.

Having considered the responses to the consultation, the Working Party has made some revisions to its earlier proposals, including removing the reference to the 'election' of new Fellows – instead, the process would be modelled on a credentialing process, with applications considered on their individual merits and with no upper limit on the number of Fellowships accepted in any one year.

“The consultation received some 63 responses, with the majority being broadly in favour of the proposals, which included three new routes to entry.”

However, more than half of the consultation respondents were concerned that closing the route to Fellowship by Thesis could make it more difficult for vets in practice to become Fellows.

The Working Party considered these comments carefully, but was still of the view that the best way to encourage people to undertake original research leading to a thesis was through university doctoral programmes, which could provide better support, guidance, and quality assurance than the College was able to provide.

The Education Committee agreed with this approach and the next step will be for the College to gather more detailed information on the various opportunities available for veterinary surgeons in practice to work towards work-based professional doctorates and other doctoral degrees on a part-time basis, which could form a substantial part of their Fellowship application.

The Fellowship Working Party is expected to submit its final recommendation on the reconstitution of the Fellowship to RCVS Council next year.

Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP)

The CertAVP Subcommittee reported that it is working towards the development of a new designation of 'Veterinary Primary Care' to replace the current CertAVP in General Practice.

The Education Committee agreed to the addition of the new designation, which will be aimed at veterinary surgeons who wish to work in first opinion practice at an advanced level and which would have an option to focus on small animal, farm animal or equine practice.

The CertAVP Subcommittee will now determine the detail of the new designation – including its modular structure – for approval at the Education Committee's next meeting, in February 2015.

Professional Development Phase (PDP)

The old PDP website closed at the end of September and over 500 pre-2012 graduates who had not yet completed the Phase have now either completed it, or had their records transferred to the new website with the help of Education Officer Stephanie Platt and the team of Postgraduate Deans. This leaves just over 100 graduates who have not responded to requests to complete their PDP or transfer their records, and who will have to manually re-enter their records into the new system if they wish to continue.

Vet school accreditation criteria

The Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) reported that it had nearly completed its review of the veterinary school accreditation criteria in order to update them in line with the new RCVS Day One Competences, and make them more in accordance with those of other international accreditors, such as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC). The new criteria will be considered by Education Committee next February.

Statutory membership examination

The Education Committee agreed that the Statutory Membership Examination Board should review

the Statutory Membership Examination that must be passed by overseas vets with non-recognised degrees who are not from the EU and who wish to practise in the UK. The aim of the review will be to ensure that the syllabus and examination is in line with our requirements for new graduates set out in the Day One Competences.

Visitations update

RCVS Council member Professor Susan Dawson will be chairing a joint visitation with the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), the AVBC and the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) to the University of Bristol School of Veterinary Sciences later this month.

Next March the RCVS, EAEVE and SAVC will be undertaking a joint visitation to the University of Cambridge's Department of Veterinary Medicine, which will be chaired by Professor Susan Rhind from the University of Edinburgh.

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh will undergo a joint visitation, chaired by RCVS Council member Professor Stephen May, with EAEVE, AVMA, AVBC and SAVC in November 2015.



Monitoring your learning and development

First ever vet CPD audit

This year, for the first time, we will be asking veterinary surgeons to share their learning and development records in order to monitor compliance with our continuing professional development (CPD) requirements and see what type of activities they are engaging in.

Under our *Code of Professional Conduct* veterinary surgeons are expected to undertake 105 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period in order to demonstrate that they are maintaining and advancing their knowledge and skills.

The aim of the CPD audit is to check levels of compliance with this requirement and, where vets have not met it, we will provide some further guidance about what constitutes CPD and how to undertake and record it. After 2015, those who repeatedly fail to comply, or to respond to requests to submit their records, will be referred to our Professional Conduct Department and may be reported to the Preliminary Investigation Committee.

Just under 5,000 vets – made up of three cohorts – will be asked to share their records. The first cohort comprises 4,425 UK-practising vets who registered before 1 April 2012 but who did not confirm compliance with the CPD requirement upon renewing their registration this year. The second cohort comprises a random sample of 400 vets who did confirm CPD compliance this year. The third comprises around 90 vets who graduated before 2012 but have not completed their Professional Development Phase (PDP) or responded to any correspondence regarding the recent closure of the old PDP website.

Vets who have been selected to take part in the audit should have received their letters at the beginning of November and will have until Monday 1 December to respond. They can share their records by either allowing us to view their online Professional Development Record (PDR) profile or by sending us their paper CPD records. Details of how to do both are given in the audit letters.

For the fifth year we have also audited the CPD records of around 800 veterinary nurses to monitor compliance of their requirement to undertake 45 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period.

This year we contacted a random sample of 525 RVNs from across the UK asking them to share their records with us to check they are complying with our requirement. We also contacted 87 RVNs who did not respond at all to our request for records last year and 202 RVNs who shared their records last year but were not compliant. A report on the audit will be made to VN Council in February 2015.

Overseas vets join the Register

Successful statutory examination candidates

A special ceremony was held at Belgravia House in August to welcome six new members to the Register following success in the Statutory Examination for Membership.

The registrants had qualified from universities outside of the UK that we do not currently recognise and so had to pass the exam in order to be eligible to practise in the UK. This year the exams were held at the Department of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Cambridge.

“It was challenging and the hardest part was when I was face-to-face with the examiner answering questions because I wasn’t sure I was answering the questions correctly.”

Of the 28 statutory membership exam candidates this year seven passed – six of whom attended the registration ceremony. One of those was Foong Yan Lum from Malaysia, pictured here with RCVS President Stuart Reid, who graduated from Putra University in 2006 and has been working as a veterinary surgeon in her home country. She said: “I am very happy and it still doesn’t feel

quite real because it was difficult, but I actually passed first time.

“It was challenging and the hardest part was when I was face-to-face with the examiner answering questions because I wasn’t sure I was answering the questions correctly. So I was delighted when I was told that I had passed and was having nightmares even before I came here – I kept checking my emails to make sure it was real!”



Day One Competences for VNs

Minimum professional standards published

We have now published a new set of Day One Competences for veterinary nurses – the minimum level of knowledge, skills and attitudes that we expect all student veterinary nurses to have met upon registration with the RCVS.

In meeting the competences a new veterinary nurse should be capable of practising veterinary nursing at a primary care level on their own, under

direction from a veterinary surgeon. In addition to the competences, new veterinary nurses are also expected to demonstrate competence in spoken and written English and be familiar with the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* and its supporting guidance.

To download the full list of Day One Competences for veterinary nurses, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/vnd1c.



The future’s bright

Students welcomed to the College

We were delighted to welcome members of the Association of Veterinary Students to a special ‘Meet the RCVS Day’ at Belgravia House in October, including Will Bayton (Secretary), Jon Mayer and Jenny Brazier (Treasurer) pictured here chatting to RCVS President Stuart Reid.

The students were able to find out more about our daily activities, meet the President and senior staff and stock up on some wholesome food.

“The future of the profession is in great shape,” tweeted Stuart Reid afterwards.

Make your advances soon

Advanced Practitioner deadline approaching

At the beginning of September this year we started accepting applications for our new Advanced Practitioner status.

The 'middle tier' accreditation will provide recognition for those veterinary surgeons who can demonstrate knowledge and experience in a particular field of practice beyond their initial veterinary degree and who commit to continue to be up-to-date in their designation over and above our CPD requirements.

Applications from holders of RCVS Certificates in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) with a designation were accepted from 1 September 2014, while those holding pre-2012 RCVS Certificates or any other relevant clinical postgraduate qualifications could apply from 13 October. The final deadline for all applications is Sunday 30 November. To apply online, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/advanced.

At the time of publication we had received approximately 160 applications. These will be reviewed by our Advanced Practitioner Panel and successful applicants will have their names included on the list of Advanced Practitioners that will be published in spring 2015. Those on the list will be able to use 'RCVS Advanced Practitioner in [designated field]' after their name and the accreditation and its designation will be searchable on our Find a Vet practice database (findavet.rcvs.org.uk) as well as appearing after

the individual's name on our Check the Register search tool (www.rcvs.org.uk/registration).

To find out more about Advanced Practitioner status and how to apply you can 'listen again' to a recent webinar we held about the status, presented by Kit Sturgess, Chair of the Advanced Practitioner Panel, Christine Warman, RCVS Head of Education, and Duncan Ash, Education Officer, at www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars.

We have also published *Guidance on Providing Evidence of CPD in Professional Skills* for those successful Advanced Practitioner applicants whose postgraduate qualification did not explicitly include these elements and who, therefore, need to present evidence of how they meet the requirements for professional skills in order to have their status reaccredited after five years. This guidance can also be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/advanced.



Are EU hiring?

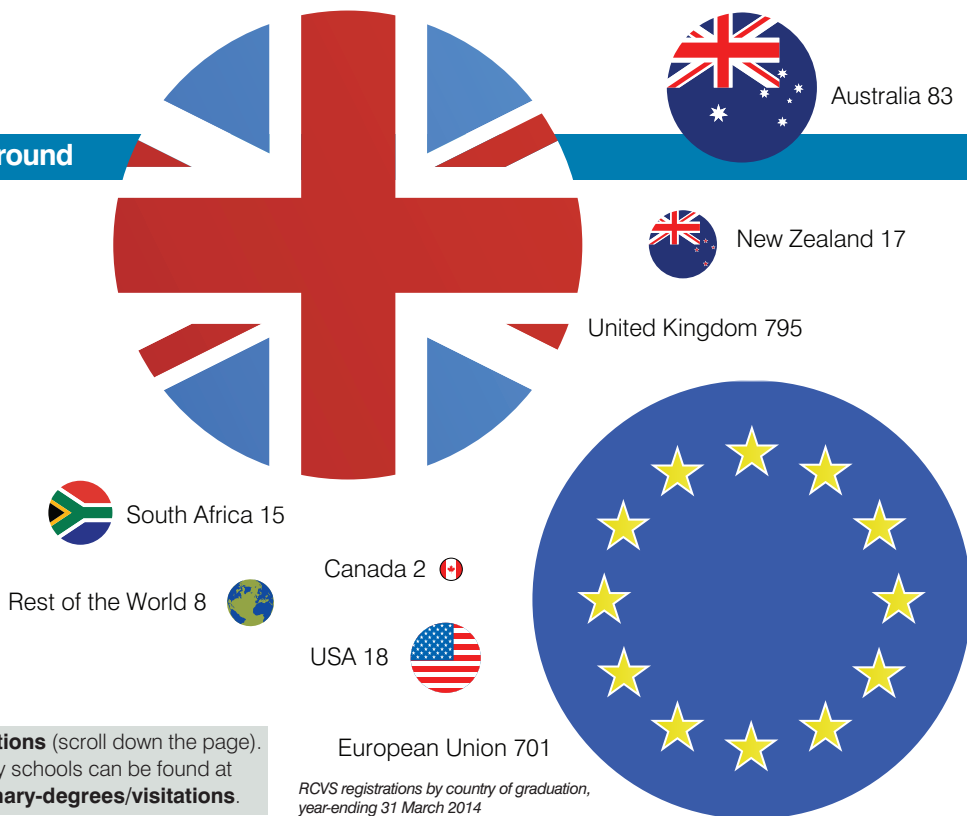
EAEVE reports provide useful background

This year, 43% of our new registrants came from EU countries other than the UK. That's up from 39% last year. In total, 51% of our new registrants were non-UK graduates.

We are obliged to register EU graduates, but we do not directly approve their veterinary degrees in the same way we do in the UK and countries such as the United States, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

If you are considering hiring an EU graduate, you may find it useful to look at the report on their vet school from the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE). While EAEVE approval does not carry any legal weight in terms of registration rights, and schools volunteer to be visited, the reports can be a useful guide to the strengths and weaknesses of a particular veterinary school.

The reports can be found at www.eavee.org/visitations (scroll down the page). Meanwhile, the RCVS reports for the UK veterinary schools can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/education/approving-veterinary-degrees/visitations.



Getting back up to speed

Guidance for VNs returning to work

For veterinary nurses who have taken a significant career break a return to a busy clinical practice can be a difficult transition – whatever their level of experience.

This is why, since 2007, veterinary nurses returning to the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses after an absence of five or more years have had to undertake the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP) to refresh their skills under the guidance of a named mentor who can be either an experienced registered veterinary nurse or a veterinary surgeon.

The PSP should be completed within a year and must take place over a minimum of 17 full-time weeks (or the part-time equivalent), which amounts to at least 595 hours. The PSP should also normally take place at an RCVS-approved Training Practice or a veterinary practice that is approved by the Practice Standards Scheme. Once the number of hours has been met, and the individual is confident that they meet the Day One Competences for veterinary nurses, then they should submit a declaration of completion signed by their mentor in order to fully rejoin the Register.

Our Veterinary Nursing Department has recently been made aware of a number of issues regarding the registration status of veterinary nurses and the PSP.

For example, some have not informed us that they have undertaken the PSP and we have only found out when their final declarations of completion forms have been submitted. Unfortunately, this has made their PSP invalid and we have been unable to restore them to the Register of Veterinary Nurses.

All those who wish to embark on the PSP must first submit an application (and pay a £75 fee) so that they can be categorised as a 'PSP Nurse' which allows them to carry out, under veterinary supervision, delegated procedures under Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA), although their name will not be on the Register of Veterinary Nurses. If they have not officially applied for the PSP but have undertaken Schedule 3 work then they will have breached the VSA and may be referred to our Professional Conduct Department.

“Some have not informed us that they have undertaken the PSP and we have only found out when their final declarations of completion forms have been submitted.”

More seriously, we are also aware of individuals who have been working as veterinary nurses while not on the List or Register – either because they let their registration lapse or never registered in the first place – who have applied to have the PSP recognised retroactively. Again, these individuals have been performing Schedule 3 work illegally and, therefore, their details have been referred to our Professional Conduct Department for further investigation.

We ask that any veterinary nurses who wish to return to practise after a period

off the Register of five or more years contact our Veterinary Nursing Department for further advice on 020 7202 0788 or vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

You can also download our *PSP Handbook* – which contains detailed guidance as well as application and declaration of completion forms – from www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/psp-guidance-notes.



Find the staff

Keep us informed of staff changes

If your practice is listed on our Find a Vet search tool, please make sure to keep us informed of any personnel changes so that we can update the practice profile accordingly.

Updates should be sent to findavet@rcvs.org.uk and should include the individual's name and Register number.

We will also shortly be updating Find a Vet to include details of practice opening times, disabled access and customer parking information, so thank you to all those who got in touch with these details.

If your practice is not listed, then please drop us a line on the email address so that we can include you.



Register your premises, please

Unregistered premises breach medicine regs

We are reminding veterinary practices that they must register any new premises – including branch practices – with the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises (RVPP) before they open.

Veterinary practice premises must be on the RVPP in order for veterinary surgeons to supply medicines from them. Practices that are unregistered are in breach of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations as set by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). This also applies in the case of practices that have moved location.

The Register, which we hold on behalf of the VMD, enables the Directorate to fulfil its obligations under European law to maintain and improve the traceability of, and accountability for, veterinary medicines.

Further information about the RVPP – including registration fees – is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/rvpp. For practices in the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) the RVPP costs are incorporated into the PSS annual renewal fee – however, they must still register any new premises in the same way.

If you are closing a veterinary practice you should also inform us by completing a Register of Veterinary Practice Premises Removal Form, which can be found on the above webpage.

For any queries about registering a practice, please contact the Registration Department on rvpp@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0707.

A pathway to improvement

Practice Standards Scheme re-launch

The process of reviewing and revising the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) continues apace and a new Scheme is due to be launched in November 2015.

The Scheme has been designed to provide a pathway for practices to improve and to demonstrate where they excel. Under the proposals there will be greater differentiation between practices and there will be additional opportunities for members of the Scheme to market themselves.

“The most significant change to the Scheme is that practices will also be able to apply, but are not obliged, to be inspected for additional Awards in specific areas.”

The new Scheme is not confined to considering the facilities and equipment at a particular site, but is designed to focus on all areas of the veterinary practice. It emphasises outcomes and behaviours, and other aspects that impact upon the veterinary care of animals.

Additional benefits of the proposed new Scheme include a professionally-trained inspectorate and dedicated IT system that will save practices time by allowing them to make applications online and to upload all the documents they require for accreditation prior to inspection.

What will the new Scheme look like?

Under the new Scheme the accreditation levels (Core, General Practice and Veterinary Hospital) will remain the same. Practices in the current Scheme will therefore migrate to the new Scheme at their existing accreditation level.

The most significant change to the Scheme is that practices will also be able to apply, but are not obliged, to be inspected for additional Awards in specific areas. Based on the number of points achieved in stated criteria practices could be designated as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ within each Award and practices would be able to promote themselves as such. This follows a similar format to that used by Ofsted in the inspection of schools. So, for example, a practice might be ‘General Practice – Small Animal with Outstanding Awards in Client Service and Diagnostic Service’.

Under current proposals Small Animal and Equine practices will be eligible to apply to be inspected against six Awards, namely: Team and Professional Responsibility, Client Service, Patient Consultation Service, Diagnostic Service, In-patient Service, and Emergency and Critical Care Service. Farm Animal practices will be eligible to be inspected for four Awards: Team and Professional Responsibility, Client Service, Diagnostic Service and Advisory / Consultation Service.

Jacqui Molyneux, Chair of the Practice Standards Group (PSG), comments: “The proposed new Awards have two key benefits. First, they provide practices with a clear pathway to improvement, which is not reliant upon significant investment in facilities or equipment. Second, they offer an additional marketing opportunity that was missing from the original Scheme and, by mirroring the terminology used by Ofsted, the Awards should be easily recognised and understood by the public.”

Gathering feedback

The redevelopment of the Scheme has been led by the PSG, which, among others, comprises representatives from the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and its specialist divisions. This collaborative approach has allowed us to benefit from a wide range of expertise and to adapt the proposals for the new Scheme in the light of extensive feedback from these member organisations.

Furthermore, in September 2014, the RCVS conducted a series of focus groups with both accredited and non-accredited practices. The feedback was very positive, confirming that we are heading in the right direction and that the new Scheme would add significant value. The Awards and the new IT system were highlighted by participants as being particularly positive developments.

“I have been delighted by the collaborative and cooperative way in which the Practice Standards Group has developed the new Scheme.”

In early 2015, we will be launching a consultation exercise to ensure that the entire veterinary and veterinary nursing professions have an opportunity to comment on the detailed requirements of the Scheme.

Jacqui says: “I have been delighted by the collaborative and cooperative way in which the Practice Standards Group has developed the new Scheme. The approach has allowed us to draw upon a wealth of expertise and to ensure that feedback has been sought at every stage. Nonetheless, we are keen to hear the views of the wider profession and I would encourage all veterinary surgeons and nurses to look out for the forthcoming consultation and to submit their comments”.

New Scheme explained in free webinar

On 28 October Jacqui, together with Anthony Roberts, Senior PSS Manager, presented a webinar that provided an update on progress for the new PSS. To listen to the webinar recording please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars.

How do you promote yours?

PSS promotional video coming soon

Our new video to help promote the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) to the animal-owning public is nearly ready, and should be available to all RCVS-accredited practices soon for use on websites, social media and in waiting rooms.

Using whiteboard animation, the short informal video briefly explains what the PSS is all about, what practices have to do to gain accreditation, and highlights some of the key benefits of the Scheme for animals and their owners.

To help launch the video itself, we plan to run a competition on social media in the coming weeks, where we will ask you to post a photo showing how you’re promoting your accreditation to your clients, using the hashtag #RCVSaccredited. Details of dates and prizes to follow!



No tiers for years

A request not to refer to ‘tiers’

Back in 2009, the Practice Standards Group decided to discontinue the terms tier one, tier two and tier three in the Practice Standards Scheme literature, as it was found that both clients and the profession found this terminology confusing and misleading.

We would therefore like to ask all accredited practices to avoid any reference to tiers in their promotional and marketing materials, including websites, press releases, stationery, practice leaflets and signage. Instead, we would recommend using the simple term ‘RCVS Accredited Practice’ to raise general awareness of your PSS membership, with the descriptors ‘Core’, ‘General Practice’ or ‘Veterinary Hospital’, used further as applicable.

Please be aware that references to previous accreditation schemes run by either the British Veterinary Hospitals Association (BVHA) or the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) could also be confusing to clients, as these schemes have not existed independently since 2005, following their amalgamation into the PSS at that point.

A pictorial snapshot of the veterinary professions

Survey of the Professions published this autumn

In September we published the 2014 Surveys of the Veterinary and Veterinary Nursing Professions – a snapshot of the current state of both professions.

We undertake the Surveys, which are carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), every four years in order to build up a picture of the professions in a number of areas such as demographics, work status, job satisfaction and wellbeing and continuing professional development and education.

The Surveys also give us the opportunity to collate qualitative data about how vets and veterinary nurses feel about the current state of the profession.

Information from the Surveys feeds into our work across a wide range of areas, including helping to guide policy, develop new activities and events and inform how and what we communicate to our members.

Some 6,988 veterinary surgeons (amounting to 27% of the profession) and 3,612 registered/listed veterinary nurses (31% of the profession) responded to the Surveys this year, in addition to 1,792 student veterinary nurses.

“The Surveys give us the opportunity to collate qualitative data about how vets and veterinary nurses feel about the current state of the profession.”

This year's survey featured additional questions about 24-hour emergency care – which fed into recent changes to our guidance in this area – and, for the first time, questions from the government-backed Social Mobility Toolkit, which aim to assess the social background of members of the professions.

Here are some key results for veterinary surgeons:

- This year, for the first time, more than half (53.8%) of the respondents were women – in line with the long-term trend towards the ‘feminisation’ of the profession.
- Although over half (52%) of recently qualified veterinary surgeons went straight into practice work, some 17.8% reported they were unable to find employment after graduation – compared to 13.6% in 2010. The average amount of time taken for a graduate to find their first position after they started to look was three months.

- Although almost 90% of respondents stated that veterinary work is stressful, a similar proportion said that veterinary work gives variety and over 80% said it provides job satisfaction.

Some key results for veterinary nurses include:

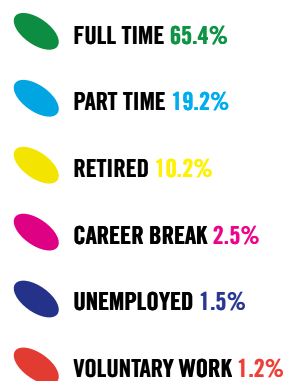
- Veterinary nurses are generally more positive about the profession this year compared to the 2010 survey. For example, 60% said they would choose to become a VN again if they started their career over, compared to 54% in 2010. However, poor pay and stress were highlighted as issues.
- There was a significant shift away from employer-funded CPD to free provision. In 2010, 57% of CPD provision was employer-funded

(and in 2008 this stood at 84%), while this year, it was 43%. The proportion of free CPD has increased from 29% in 2010 to 41% this year.

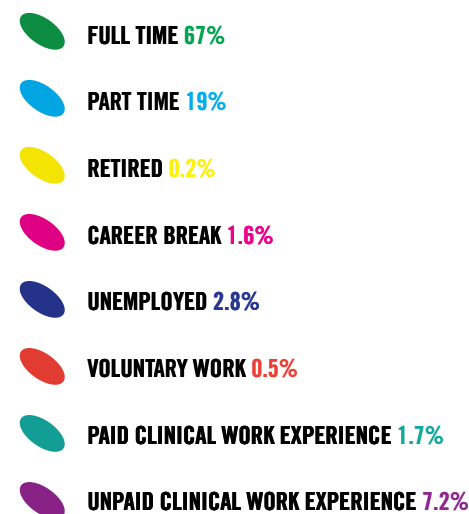
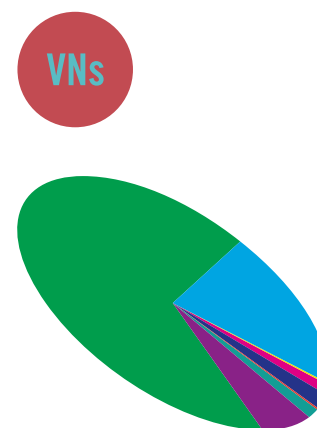
- For student veterinary nurses, the proportion intending to remain employed at their Training Practice after qualification has fallen from 61% in 2010 to 52% this year.

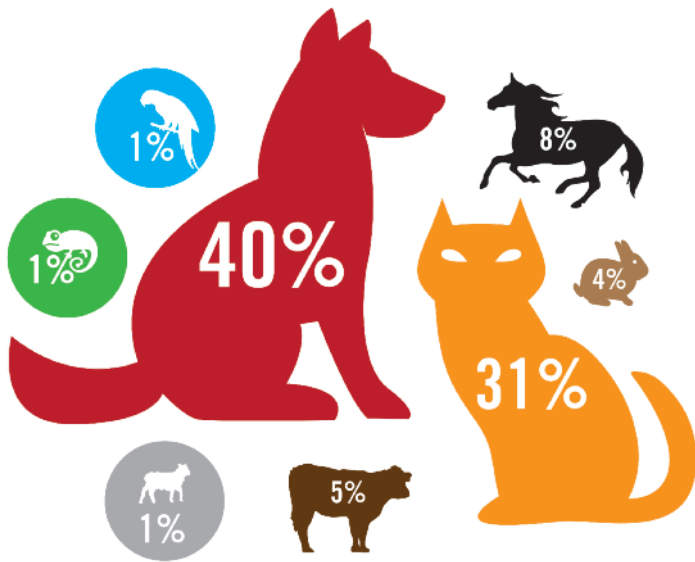
Meanwhile, some of the key data are represented in graphical form on these pages.

You can download both the Survey of the Veterinary Profession and Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession reports, together with a Synthesis Report that draws together trends from both, from www.rcvs.org.uk/publications.



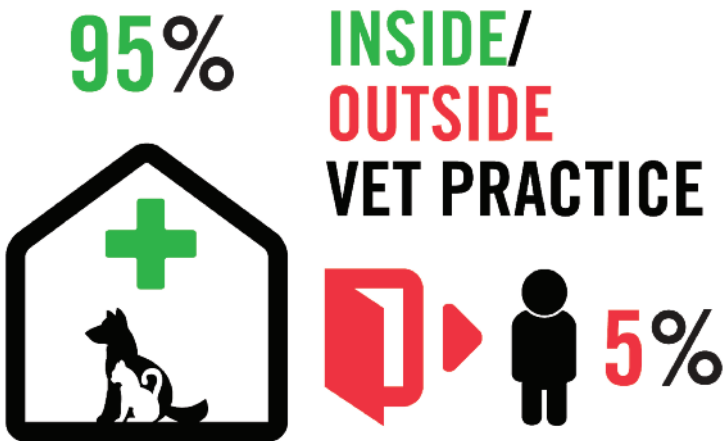
Work status





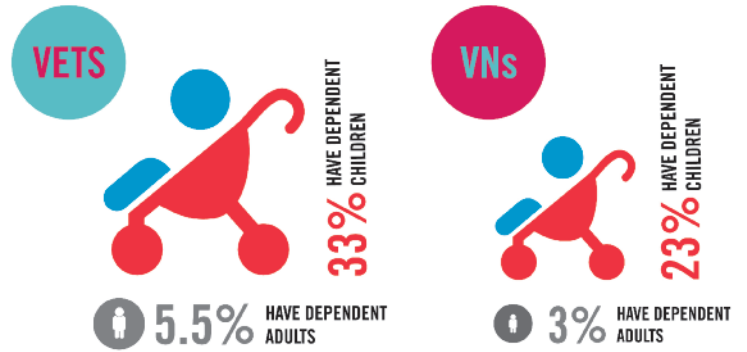
Allocation of working hours by species/activity

These figures relate to the veterinary surgeons' Survey and the remaining percentages include pigs, poultry, fish, veterinary inspection and practice management/ administration.

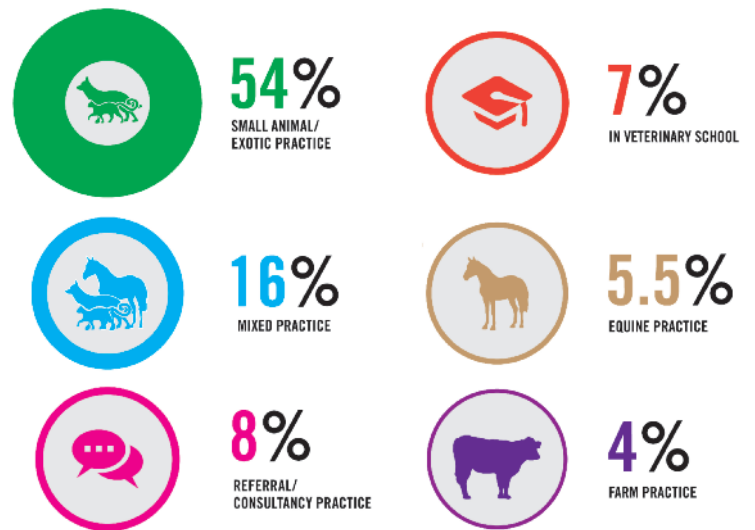


Inside/outside vet practice

This figure applies to both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. The figure was identical for each.



Dependants



Type of practice

This is the figure for the veterinary surgeons' Survey and the remaining percentages are made up of organisations including Defra/UK Government, charities and trusts and the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

How's it going so far?

An update on our Strategic Plan priorities

Last November Council approved a three-year Strategic Plan for 2014-16, which included a clear purpose for the RCVS – an organisation that, as both regulator and Royal College, can sometimes be confusing to the outside world.

Under this new purpose – “To set, uphold and advance veterinary standards” – a series of 35 actions was outlined, clustered under five headings: identity; service; advancing standards, improving core functions; and, strengthening foundations.

The Operational Board and Senior Team prioritised 12 of these actions to be tackled in 2014 (albeit that some involve activities stretching beyond this first year of our Strategic Plan). So, how have we fared?

The table opposite outlines the actions and our progress.



Ingrain our purpose, vision, principles and culture in everything we do and in every way we communicate

Communication is the responsibility of everyone in the College and this year we have worked hard at equipping our staff with the skills they need to better communicate our vision of a College that can enhance society through improved animal health and welfare. Our staff are caring, compassionate and committed, and through training days and workshops we have focused on better conveying that to our customers – be they members of the profession or the public. We have also worked on improving our core communications, such as how we handle registration renewals, with redesigned forms and better online facilities. Activities at events and congresses have also focused around our core purpose of setting, upholding and advancing standards.

Develop a revised Royal Charter to confirm RCVS roles and responsibilities including the recognition of veterinary nurses

Following a great deal of work from the College and a range of other bodies, including the British Veterinary Association (BVA), a draft new Charter was approved at the AGM in July and is currently in the hands of the Privy Council. It better defines the objects of the College and provides a solid foundation for our activities well into the future. It will also enable us to move all listed veterinary nurses to the Register of Veterinary Nurses, so that they can be regulated by the College, thereby putting them on a firm professional footing for the future.

Cost, design and trial a new consumer disputes resolution service

In March, Council agreed to the Operational Board overseeing the development of a trial consumer (or 'alternative') disputes resolution service so that those raising a concern with the College that does not amount to serious professional conduct but nonetheless has some foundation in poor practice can be addressed independently from the College. The concept has been welcomed by the Veterinary Defence Society and the BVA, and the trial started in November, lasting approximately six months and at a cost not to exceed £120,000. The trial will focus on complaints already received by the College, in the area of small animal practice (see cover for more details).

Reduce the time it takes for a complaint to be concluded in a fair and transparent manner

Our complaints process has been thoroughly overhauled this year, with the emphasis on streamlining the process, improving clarity and communication and to reduce the 'fear factor' for the vet or VN and better measure the expectations of the person raising the concern (see RCVS News June 2014 for more details, page 8). The new process went live in August and the objective is to halve the time of a complaint reaching a Disciplinary Hearing (if required) – the average time last year was just less than two years.

Introduce a service charter, for the public and profession, of rights, expectations and responsibilities for every function within the RCVS and assess compliance

Our Service Charter was launched in summer, and included the Service Promise: “Our service agenda is about treating the public and the profession with the highest standards of customer care. We achieve this through our committed, caring and compassionate team, and a working culture that liberates our people to look for, and act on, constant improvement.”

Specific standards that outline what the profession and the public can expect now exist for all of our key activities, such as complaints handling, registration, Practice Standards and veterinary nursing. Our ability to meet the Service Standards is being audited in a variety of ways, such as surveys, email logging and instances of complaint or praise.

Develop our communications with the public and profession to ensure they are in plain English and embrace multiple channels of communication

We have made strides in broadening the range of ways in which the profession and the public can engage with the College. For example, we launched a presence on LinkedIn and Facebook, to join our existing Twitter, Flickr and YouTube channels. In addition, we have produced a series of webinars and regularly add videos to our YouTube channel.

We are currently going through the process of having our new complaints materials checked by The Word Centre, so that they can display the 'Plain English Approved' logo.

Continue to develop and promote a Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) that is clear, meaningful and valuable to the public and the profession

The PSS is currently undergoing a major review, to produce a Scheme that gives more practices a reason to join, and to stay accredited. The emphasis will be on greater flexibility, with a modular approach and optional awards. The inspection process will be streamlined, with a greater focus on behaviour in practice rather than a 'tick box' approach. The new Scheme is on target to be launched in November 2015, and new modules and an IT system, which will help reduce paperwork for practices and allow inspections to focus on talking and looking, rather than checking documents, are under development (see page 15 for more details).

Introduce the new Advanced Practitioner Status

Applications to the Advanced Practitioner list opened on 1 September and will close on 30 November. The first round of applicants will be considered by the Advanced Practitioner Panel assessors and be put to Education Committee for approval in February. The list will be published in spring and thereafter promoted to the profession and the public. A webinar outlining the rationale behind the status, and how to apply, took place on 30 September and can be accessed via www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars.

Promote and support RCVS Knowledge in its development of an evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) network

We have supported RCVS Knowledge financially, as well as in kind, as it continues to develop an EBVM-focused offering. It hosted the world's first EBVM Conference in October – see page 27 for more information. We will continue to support RCVS Knowledge as it builds an international reputation in this exciting field.

Put in place measures that allow us to enter the *Financial Times* 'Great Place to Work' Survey

The latest round of results from the Great Place to Work survey show a great improvement on our first year's figures. The survey asks questions in a range of categories but one key question is used as a benchmark 'Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work'. Our score increased from 52% to 91% this year, and although this may not be sufficient for us to be included in the Top 100 this year, we have made excellent progress in a short space of time.

Activities which have led to this include an overhaul of our appraisal system, more investment in staff training, an active Staff Engagement Group, improved internal communications at all levels, an annual Staff Away Day focusing on key issues affecting the College, and discussions with individuals who were not contributing to the culture of the organisation.

Develop an estate strategy to look at our building requirements, developing options and achieving agreement on a way forward

Nearly 20 years since we moved to Belgravia House, we are outgrowing the building – we estimate we have about three years left before the issue of space becomes critical. An Estates Strategy Working Group – led by the same Dr Barry Johnson who led the last move – is considering options, which include selling Belgravia House and moving elsewhere; keeping it and renting or buying additional space; or hiring additional space for meetings, such as Disciplinary Committee hearings, on an ad hoc basis. The Group will report to Council in March 2015.

Develop IT infrastructure to meet our needs

The iMis database software has been upgraded and the changes to the system are being implemented. As a result, VNs were able to complete their renewal forms as well as pay online this year. Other projects under way include new IT systems for Practice Standards and Professional Conduct, as well as a new intranet.

2015 objectives

A new tranche of objectives from the strategy form our Operational Plan for 2015, outlined below, as well as continuing with those started this year:

1. Secure a new Charter
 - Clearly articulate and make sense of functioning as a Royal College that regulates
 - Move all listed VNs onto the Register
 - Strengthen the RVN title through communications and the *Code of Professional Conduct*
2. Learn from the alternative dispute resolution trial and consider launching an appropriate scheme
3. Launch the new Practice Standards Scheme
4. Continue to improve our Great Place to Work ranking
5. Develop a 'One Team' concept that brings together all those who work on the College's behalf, including staff, examiners, inspectors, non-Council committee members, and others
6. IT transformation – the upgrade of our database system, the launch of a new system to handle professional conduct business and a new intranet for staff
7. Trial longer hours for our advice line, for the profession and the public
8. Increase public and lay involvement across the College
9. Review and modernise the regulations around registration, including methods of payment
10. Implement and communicate the new Advanced Practitioner and Specialist framework

We will report on progress in due course and, towards the end of 2015 and into 2016, work will start on the development of a plan for 2017–19.

Overseas support

Helping overseas graduates develop skills and understanding



Each year, we spend time at the UK veterinary schools talking to the students who are soon to become new members of the RCVS about the role of the College and what it means to be a professional. Meanwhile, there are extramural studies, the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons' Final-year Seminar, professional studies weeks at the vet schools... lots of support available so that UK graduates enter clinical roles with a good understanding of what it means to be an MRCVS.

Each year, we also register around 700-800 overseas graduates. This year, and not for the first time, there were more overseas graduates registering with us than UK graduates – 51%, in fact. Yet, as we don't know who they are before they apply for registration, they don't have any of the pre-graduation support our home-grown vets benefit from. Plus they have additional adjustments to negotiate in terms of culture, language and concepts of professionalism.

We recognised this disparity a couple of years ago and set up a two-day CPD event jointly with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS), to form an

introduction to working in the UK for overseas graduates who were new (up to two years) to the country or contemplating a move.

This year we took this a step further to encourage greater attendance and made the first day of the event free, followed by a paid-for masterclass in communications from the VDS.

"I believe this course is fundamental for a vet starting in the profession in the UK."

We welcomed over 50 delegates to the event, which took place on 10-11 September at the RCVS, from 25 countries, including Iraq, Cyprus and Mexico. Speakers for day one included representatives from the RCVS, BVA, VDS and Veterinary Benevolent Fund, together with the BVA Legal Helpline, Luis Sainz-Pardo from Vet Abroad and Carolyne Crowe, who spoke about securing the right job. Day two featured actor-led role play, allowing a smaller group to benefit from more intensive communications training.

Feedback was very helpful, with suggestions on how we can make the event even more relevant, and also some encouraging comments, including:

"I believe this course is fundamental for a vet starting in the profession in the UK."

"I found the event very informative, well-organised and encouraging."

"I want to say thank you and also congratulations. It's been very useful. I have received lots of information and I am really happy about how comfortable I felt and how well you've treated us."

The messages that the delegates took away included:

"You have to work quite hard at being struck off..."
Gordon Hockey, RCVS Registrar

"You are unlikely to get struck off... but 100% more likely than in most other countries,"
Luis Sainz-Pardo

"Above all, be honest,"
Gordon Hockey

"The Preliminary Investigation Committee deals with the real world, not an imaginary world,"
Gordon Hockey

"[in the event of a complaint or problem] Acknowledge, apologise, give assurance,"
Christine Magrath, VDS

"Don't just take any job, take one you can do,"
Gordon Hockey

"The UK job market is tough, you are competing with vets from all over the world,"
Luis Sainz-Pardo, Vet Abroad

"When seeking a job, focus on what you want, not what you don't want," Carolyne Crowe

"In your new job, the first 48 hours are critical,"
Luis Sainz-Pardo

"Don't ask 'how do you do it,' ask 'how do you do it here',"
Luis Sainz-Pardo

"CPD – what counts is up to you,"
Freda Andrews, RCVS Director of Education

We will be hosting another event in London next year – and possibly one in the North/Scotland, depending on demand. If you would like to register interest in attending, for yourself, or on behalf of a colleague, please email Fiona on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk, and we will keep you posted on dates and venues.

Pimp our website

New homepage and responsive design

Our new-look website should be up and running on the superhighway soon, having been in the garage for a re-spray, on oil change and some tinkering under the bonnet.

The new homepage will have a lot more to offer than the existing one, including access to all our social media channels, an easy-access list of most

popular pages, our find a vet search and a dedicated latest news module.

Meanwhile, the whole site has been converted to a responsive design, meaning that whether you're accessing it via desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone, its looks and performance should be second to none.



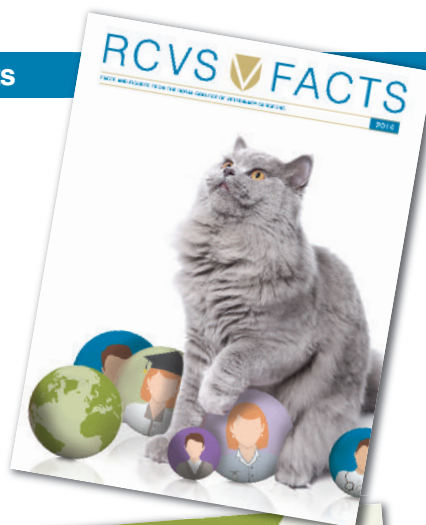
Facts facelift

New infographics pages for RCVS Facts

We've recently published *RCVS Facts 2014* – our annual look at the facts and figures behind the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions in the UK and overseas. This year, for the first time, we have also created some infographics pages to make the data more accessible and help visualise some interesting trends.

How do our fees compare with other regulators? Where do new registrants come from? What's the age and gender balance of RCVS qualification holders? How many complaints did we receive about vets and nurses? What are the attendances records of Council members? All this, and more, is waiting to be discovered!

RCVS Facts can be downloaded from our website, or ordered in hard copy, via www.rcvs.org.uk/publications.



Advancing at the London Vet Show

Join us at Olympia



On 20-21 November, we will be attending Europe's largest veterinary exhibition – the London Vet Show – held in the Grand Hall, Olympia.

The College team will be on stand C67 to answer any questions you may have about topics such as the new concerns process, the new Charter or our alternative dispute resolution scheme trial. Visitors can also advance their knowledge by taking part in a quiz about the Advanced Practitioner status, and enter our competition to win a Kindle Fire.

While at the show we will also be running a free Practice Standards Scheme Surgery. This is a chance for anyone who has any questions or concerns regarding the Scheme – whether already accredited or thinking of joining – to chat one-to-one with an Inspector. Sessions run for 45 minutes and can be booked by contacting Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773.

Don't forget to record all your CPD gained while at the show on the Professional Development Record – see www.rcvs.org.uk/pdr for more information and to sign up before you go – and grab your free 'Done it? PDR it!' neoprene tablet / laptop sleeve from the stand!

Northward bound

Questions asked in Dundee and Carlisle

We will be hosting two of our Regional Question Time (RQT) meetings on 10 and 11 November – in Dundee and Carlisle respectively.

Stuart Reid, President, Nick Stace, CEO, Gordon Hockey, Registrar, and Niall Connell, a member of RCVS Council and Vice-Chairman of VN Council, will be in attendance at both events. Our Treasurer, Amanda Boag, will be attending the Dundee event, while Kathy Kissick, Chair of VN Council, will be in Carlisle.

At the time of going to press, we don't know what issues will be raised by the vets and VNs attending,

although we hope the new Charter, our alternative dispute resolution trial, Advanced Practitioner status and the revised complaints system might garner some interest.

Keep an eye out for summary reports of events at www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-events/regional-question-times. Or, if you follow us on Twitter, hopefully you tuned into our live tweets on the night.

We will be taking the RQT team to Guildford in the spring. More information will be in our March issue and RCVS e-News, and invitations will be sent to all those living within a reasonable travelling distance of the chosen venue.



Are you reading us?

Online readership survey



Have you read this far? Or did the page just fall open here as you were lining the cat litter tray? Will you prop this up in front of the cornflake packet and read it from cover to cover? Or do you hope a colleague will read it and give you any salient bits?

We would love you to look forward to your *RCVS News* and devour it from cover to cover. But we are also realistic about the time you have, the other calls on your attention, and, frankly, the level of interest it's possible to sustain in topics that may seem remote from your daily challenges.

Having said that, we do need to keep the profession up to date on changes to legislation and the *Code*, or guidance on issues such as CPD, the Professional Development Phase and registration. Of course, we would also like you to know where your retention fees are being spent. Plus we would like a way of telling you about other ways of keeping in touch – such as meetings and events.

“Of course, we would also like you to know where your retention fees are being spent.”

So, to ensure that we continue to produce *RCVS News* in a format and at a frequency that suits you – and containing topics you that you find of benefit – we would be very grateful if you could complete a short online survey at www.rcvs.org.uk/reader. If you would prefer a hard copy, please contact Lizzie Lockett on 020 7202 0725 or l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk.

Many thanks for your time – now you can pour that cat litter on top....

Customer service

VPMA/SPVS Congress goes customer-centric

We will be on the road again in January, at the Veterinary Practice Management Association (VPMA) and Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) joint Congress.

Held at the Celtic Manor Resort, near Newport, Wales, on 23-24 January, the event is for all those working in the practice team. Members of RCVS staff will be on hand to answer your questions on stand C39 in the exhibition hall.

The theme of this year's congress is 'The Client Journey', looking at the importance of a customer-focused approach at the heart of effective business and management training. This is a

subject close to our own strategic agenda, and we are pleased to announce that Nick Stace, CEO, will be taking part in the 'Big Debate' on the Friday afternoon.

Jacqui Molyneux and Pam Mosedale will also be giving an update on the Practice Standards Scheme review at 15.30 on the Friday afternoon, and, with this in mind, we will be running a free Practice Standards Scheme 'Surgery' on the Saturday. If you're interested in booking a 45-minute one-to-one chat with a scheme Inspector, please contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773 to book your place.

And the voters said...

The results of our on-stand poll at BVNA Congress



We had a busy time at the British Veterinary Nursing Association Congress this year (10-12 October, Telford), with a declarations session, Q&A, on-stand competition and voting – not to mention winning the 'Best Shell Scheme Stand Award'!

Every delegate visiting the stand was invited to vote on which of four options they felt was the most important for VN Council to consider next year. Their choices were: raise public awareness of the RVN and the importance of being qualified and registered; develop a VN qualification above the DipAVN; that the RCVS should run regional registration ceremonies; or, a greater focus on the evidence base in veterinary nursing.

'Raising public awareness' romped home, with 80% of the vote (307 votes), and VN Council will be considering how best this challenge can be met – both by the RCVS and by other bodies and individuals – at a strategy meeting early next year. In fact, the process of awareness-raising started at Congress, with all VNs voting (regardless of their choice) taking away a free cotton bag with the slogan 'Veterinary nurses: true professionals,' and an entreaty to use it in public as often as possible.

How to raise the profile of the profession was a topic also touched on at a joint Q&A session with the BVNA on the Saturday of Congress.

VN Council Chair Kathy Kissick, RCVS Head of Veterinary Nursing Julie Dugmore, BVNA President Kirstie Shield and President-Elect Fiona Andrew took a range of questions from delegates on issues including mental health and wellbeing, how to engage students in VN politics and Working Time Regulations, among other things.

Just prior to the Q&A, Kathy Kissick had led a group of about 45 registered veterinary nurses to say their declaration in public – something many missed out on at registration, as the declaration was only introduced for RVNs in 2012, as part of the new *Code of Professional Conduct*.

Back on the stand, our 'Advance to Go' game provided a talking point – and a bit of an education for a few VNs too! The winner of the Kindle Fire was Lindsey Guider, an RVN from Townsend Veterinary Practice, Bromsgrove: hers was the first correct answer chosen from the 252 entries.

“Every delegate visiting the stand was invited to vote on which of four options they felt was the most important for VN Council to consider next year.”

Scottish winner

Meanwhile, back in August, we attended the British Small Animal Veterinary Association's Scottish Congress for the first time, and it was a pleasure to meet so many vets and VNs we don't normally encounter at the Birmingham event.

The winner of the Kindle Fire from the competition that we ran over the two days of the event (30-31 August, Edinburgh) was Sophie Spence, a veterinary surgeon from Glasgow, who commented: "I am delighted to have won the Kindle Fire and found the RCVS stand very informative, particularly the new guidance on 24/7 emergency cover."



Report to Council, November 2014

PI Committee Chairman Jerry Davies

Since the last Report to Council there have been five Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, although figures for the October meeting will be included in the next report. Of the 34 new concerns considered at the first four meetings, seven were closed; six were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon; six were held open; ten were referred for further investigation; four were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; and, one veterinary surgeon was referred to the RCVS Health Protocol. The PIC is also investigating 36 ongoing cases, and has referred two new cases to the Disciplinary Committee.

Health and Performance Protocols

There are 15 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols. Of these, 13 currently remain under long-term health and performance management and two are currently undergoing assessment.

Professional Conduct Department

Since the last Council meeting, the total number of concerns raised was 327 (the total number of complaints raised in the same period last year was 261).

Case Examiners Groups

Since the introduction of the new concerns investigation procedure in August (right), the Case Examiners Groups have considered 317 cases. During the period between 5 June 2014 and 8 October 2014, 293 concerns have been closed at Case Examiner (old procedure) or Case Examiners Group (new procedure) stage.

Audit of closed complaints

Since the last Report to Council, the PIC Chairman audited seven from 21 cases closed at the assessment stage and ten from 30 complaints closed at the Case Examiners Group stage. The Chairman commented on six cases but agreed the case assessment and Case Examiners Group decisions to close those cases audited.

Veterinary Investigators

During the period between 5 June 2014 and 8 October 2014, the four Veterinary Investigators, Chief Investigator and Case Manager/Investigator have carried out 29 announced visits, two unannounced visits and one health-related visit. During these visits, members of the public, veterinary staff, third party witnesses and the respondent veterinary surgeons were interviewed.

The Chief Investigator and one Veterinary Investigator have also worked with a Police Controlled Drugs Liaison Officer (CDLO) regarding a drug discrepancy and inappropriate storage of controlled drugs discovered during the CDLO's practice visits. The practices have received advice from the CDLO. (Read more about the work of a CDLO on page 25.)

New concerns investigation procedure

A new procedure for investigating concerns raised about veterinary surgeons was implemented in August (further details are available on page 6). The introduction of the new procedure has gone smoothly but it is too early to report specific data. These will be included in the next report to Council.



Report to VN Council October 2014

RVN PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill

Since the last Report to VN Council there have been two Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVNPIC) meetings. During this period, 11 new concerns have been received about registered veterinary nurses (RVNs), of which five have been closed at the assessment stage (including two notified convictions that had no potential for serious professional misconduct); five are in the process of being investigated by the Case Examination Groups; and, one new health case is being fast-tracked to the RVNPIC for consideration at its next meeting.

New cases considered

Two new cases have been considered by the RVNPIC during this period. Of these, one was closed with advice and one was held open.

Ongoing investigations

The total number of ongoing investigations is two. One case involves a criminal prosecution in Scotland and the Senior Case Manager is liaising with the Procurator Fiscal's Office. The other

case, reported previously, has now resulted in an RVN being found guilty of six counts of causing unnecessary suffering to protected animals for which a two-year conditional discharge was given.

The RVNPIC has adjourned the first case, pending the outcome of the court hearing, and the Head of Professional Conduct has been asked to prepare draft charges in respect of the second case (RVN conviction). These cases will be included in a future report.

Health Protocol

One complaint against a registered veterinary nurses continues to be dealt with under the RCVS Health Protocol. The RVN concerned has signed an undertaking not to practise.

New concerns investigation procedure

A new procedure for investigating concerns raised about RVNs was implemented in August, which is designed to improve efficiency and communication for all involved parties. (Further details are available on page 6).

The full reports are available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Mr Oliver Fraser Lown

Inquiry concerning: charges related to extreme animal pornography and sexual activity with animals

DC decision: remove name from Register

Registration status: name removed from Register on 29 August 2014

On Thursday, 24 July 2014, the RCVS Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that a Suffolk vet be struck off from the Register after he was found guilty of serious professional misconduct in respect of five separate charges relating to the possession of extreme animal pornography and sexual activity with animals.

Oliver Fraser Lown, who graduated from Szent Istvan University in Hungary and had stated that he had never practised in the UK, did not attend the DC hearing but was represented by Mr Jo Cooper, a solicitor-advocate. He was accused of five charges of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect:

1. On 1 September 2011 he was in possession of extreme pornographic video images which portrayed people performing acts of intercourse with animals and, in relation to which, on 13 April 2012 at the Northhallerton and Richmond Magistrates' Court, he pleaded guilty to seven charges and was conditionally discharged.
2. On 1 September 2011 he was in possession of sexually explicit still images involving animals.
3. On 1 September 2011 he was in possession of a sexually explicit video image of a man having sexual intercourse with a sheep.

4. Between approximately 1 April 2009 and 25 June 2009 he engaged in sexual activity with animals.
5. On July 2011 and/or August 2011, he engaged in written communication via a computer messaging facility in which he made reference to sexual activity with animals and/or interest in the same.

“The material found in possession of the respondent and his own conduct in charge four involved the abuse of animals and a total lack of respect for their welfare.”

On the first day of the hearing [Monday 21 July 2014] the respondent made an application to the DC for the hearing to be held in private on the basis that any publicity about the case 'would offend public morality' due to the nature of the allegations and because the respondent's father suffered from ill-health, which could have been adversely affected by any publicity.

However, the Committee rejected the application on the grounds that the nature of the allegations was already in the public domain and that public justice in the context of professional regulation outweighed the private concerns of the respondent regarding his father.

On the second day of the hearing, the respondent made an application to adjourn charges two to five on the basis that he had already admitted, and

received a conditional discharge for the first charge and would, therefore, not oppose removal from the Register and an undertaking never to re-apply.

The respondent also argued that the original decision of the College to register him in July 2013 was flawed because it was unfair to admit him, in awareness of his conditional discharge, apparently for the purpose of taking disciplinary proceedings against him. He also referred to the Crown Prosecution Service's decision not to prosecute him in respect of charge four.

This DC dismissed this application on the grounds of the gravity of charges two to five, and the fact that the respondent chose to apply to join the Register and had been advised to seek legal advice regarding his conditional discharge beforehand. Furthermore, the DC heard that there was no error at the time of his registration because the conditional discharge was not a conviction and, therefore, under the Veterinary Surgeons Act, there was no option to refuse registration.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 22 July, the respondent made a final application to have the case adjourned on the grounds that new documentation he had received the previous day regarding his registration had led his lawyers to conclude that the decision to register him may have been unlawful. However, the DC said that, in its understanding, the RCVS Registrar had no option but to register Mr Lown.

The Committee then dismissed the application on the grounds that any challenge of the validity of registration could and should have been made within the three-month time limit for judicial review

Mr Denis Patrick Cronin

Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register

DC decision: application adjourned

Registration status: name removed from Register on 17 May 2005

On 24 June 2014, the RCVS Disciplinary Committee (DC) decided to adjourn its hearing of an application for restoration to the Register from Denis Patrick Cronin of County Dublin, the Republic of Ireland.

Mr Cronin was originally struck off the Register of Veterinary Surgeons in February 2005, having been found guilty of seven separate charges of serious professional misconduct. At the time, he was based in the West Midlands.

These charges included euthanising a cat in an inappropriate place (his own car) and when consent was in doubt; failing to adequately explain the treatment of an animal to a client; threatening and abusive behaviour towards complainants and employees; failing to respond promptly to requests from the RCVS regarding complaints; and,

inappropriate handling and transportation of animals, including the use of excessive force on a dog.

Mr Cronin was accompanied at the restoration hearing by Dr Kevin Dodd who spoke on his behalf. Dr Dodd argued that Mr Cronin had been, with the assistance of a consultant psychiatrist, successfully treated for the depression from which he had been suffering and which had led to the acts of misconduct for which he was struck off in 2005. Furthermore, the DC heard that Mr Cronin was now aware of the triggers that might lead to a recurrence of his depression and that he had also demonstrated a continuing enthusiasm for veterinary practice.

However, in considering his application, the Committee had three main concerns. These related to the future welfare of animals should Mr Cronin be restored to the Register; his efforts to keep up to date in terms of skills and developments in practice since his removal from the Register; and, the need to ensure public protection.

The Committee felt that Mr Cronin had no real plan for the future or appreciation of the obligations he would face should he return to practice. Therefore,

the Committee wanted to see further evidence that Mr Cronin, if restored to the Register, would confine his future practice to the 'niche' work which he had referred to in the hearing – working with racing greyhounds and racing pigeons.

“This decision ... will afford [Mr Cronin] an early opportunity to reflect on the concerns of the Committee ... and to return with a properly supported programme for the future.”

Other evidence requested by the DC related to Mr Cronin attaining an appropriate level of skill in areas such as communication and team-working; an agreement identifying the support he would receive in the future from professional colleagues and medical practitioners; a clear plan which recognised that vets can no longer have specialist knowledge across all fields of veterinary practice; and, insight into how his future plans for practice

and that no significant new documentation about Mr Lown's registration had come to light that could reasonably be said to have triggered a judicial review and warrant an adjournment. It also again highlighted the gravity of the charges.

The DC then heard evidence in relation to charges two to five, including that of two officers from North Yorkshire Police who took part in the original investigation, who the Committee found to be credible and reliable witnesses, and, after reviewing the evidence, found that all four charges were proven.

In considering an appropriate sanction, the DC took into account a number of aggravating factors including the risk of injury to animals, premeditated misconduct, sexual misconduct, misconduct sustained or repeated over a period of time and his lack of insight into the offences or his overall conduct.

Professor Noreen Burrows, who chaired the Disciplinary Committee and spoke on its behalf, said: "In these circumstances, the Committee has no doubt that the respondent's conduct was of the utmost seriousness. The material found in possession of the respondent and his own conduct in charge four involved the abuse of animals and a total lack of respect for their welfare. In the judgement of the Committee each of the charges individually amounts to disgraceful conduct and the charges certainly amount to disgraceful conduct when taken cumulatively."

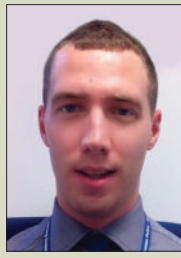
In order to safeguard animal welfare, maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper standards of conduct, the DC directed the Registrar to remove Mr Lown's name from the Register.

would ensure both his personal wellbeing and his ability to practise successfully and safely.

With this need for further evidence in mind, the DC decided to adjourn the hearing for approximately three months in order to allow Mr Cronin time to compile the necessary evidence to support a properly planned return-to-practice programme.

Judith Webb, who chaired the Disciplinary Committee and spoke on its behalf, said: "No doubt [Mr Cronin] will be somewhat disappointed with this decision but it will afford him an early opportunity to reflect on the concerns of the Committee... and to return with a properly supported programme for the future which will show his understanding of the problems that are likely to face him on his return to practice and his proposals to meet those inevitable difficulties and stresses."

However, the DC was keen to stress that the adjournment was not an assurance that it would make a decision favourable to Mr Cronin when it reconvened, even if he provided the requested evidence, and it would need to be satisfied its concerns had been addressed.



How should veterinary practices handle controlled drugs responsibly?

Aaron Farbridge, a Controlled Drugs Liaison Officer (CDLO) with Sussex Police, talks about his role and how he can help and advise veterinary practices in their handling of controlled drugs.

As a CDLO I am responsible for ensuring the safer management of controlled drugs (CDs), in order to prevent their diversion and to protect the public from their inappropriate or unsafe use. My role includes conducting inspections for the purpose of securing the safe, appropriate and effective management and use of CDs, and providing legislative guidance, investigative assistance and crime prevention advice.

I work with a wide range of organisations and businesses including pharmacies, GP surgeries and hospitals. Increasingly I have been working with and advising local veterinary practices on all aspects of CDs. I have also conducted a number of inspections to assess compliance with the misuse of drugs legislation as well as witnessing the destruction of CDs.

If a premise is judged to be non-compliant, a notice of required improvements may be issued. In addition to this, I will also recommend and support the implementation of robust governance procedures to minimise the risk of harm, misuse and criminality deriving from CDs. These measures are intended to support a non-compliant premise to achieve and maintain compliance with the relevant legislation.

Here are some of the common issues that I have encountered during my CD inspections:

- The record keeping requirements pertaining to CD registers are frequently ignored, or not known. Therefore, I would advise all veterinary staff to familiarise themselves with regulations 19 and 20 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 which can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk.
- Access to the CD cabinet must be restricted, with the keys kept by a veterinary surgeon at all times, although they may authorise other appropriate members of staff, such as registered veterinary nurses, to access the cabinet. The veterinary surgeon should ensure that all CDs under their control are kept in a locked cabinet that is constructed and maintained to prevent unauthorised access.
- If CDs requiring safe custody are not kept in the CD cabinet, they should be under the direct personal supervision of the person in charge of the premises, or any member of staff designated by that person.
- Where a drug specified in Schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Act requires destruction, an authorised witness must be present and an entry must be recorded in the relevant CD register. The recorded entry should include particulars of the date of destruction and the quantity destroyed, and the entry must be signed by the authorised witness in whose presence the drug is destroyed.
- The destruction of CDs returned to the practice by clients does not have to be carried out in the presence of an authorised witness, nor does it have to be recorded. However, it is good practice to make a record of any CDs that are returned and to have their destruction witnessed by another member of staff.
- Standard operating procedures should be put in place for the safe management, use, transportation and disposal of controlled drugs, including the prescribing, supply and administration of CDs.

Should you require any advice, please do not hesitate to contact me on Aaron.Farbridge@sussex.pnn.police.uk.

Contact details for your local Controlled Drugs Liaison Officer can be found on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website (www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/vet/controlled-drug.aspx) or on the Association of Police Controlled Drugs Liaison Officers website (www.apcdlo.org.uk).

A centenary thought

We consider the sacrifice made by the profession during the First World War

As the nation marks 100 years since the start of the First World War, veterinary historian Bruce Vivash Jones remembers the vital role played by veterinary surgeons and the animals they cared for, and how so many of them lost their lives in the struggle.

On the staircase wall of Belgravia House is an oak memorial board inscribed with the names of 67 members of the profession who lost their lives during the First World War.

Rarely seen by visitors, the board is probably little noticed even by regular users of the stairway. A hundred years is history – no one now walks past, sees a name and thinks 'I remember him'. Yes, all men, this was before women were accepted by the College.

The First World War was a milestone in the history of the profession. When it was declared, the Army Veterinary Corps (AVC) had 364 officers, all MsRCVS (including 96 overseas in the Empire). The 1914 British Expeditionary Force that sailed to France included 192 AVC officers; by November 1918 this number had risen to 1,356. This meant that half the active profession was in the Army and in the war: the implications for home practice are obvious but for the Army their presence was of paramount importance. Veterinary surgeons played a crucially vital role in the trench warfare that developed.

“War Office records show that some 90 veterinary surgeons were either killed, died of wounds or disease, were seriously wounded, died in accidents, or took their own lives.”

At the outset of war all armies counted on their cavalry strength in the field, but this war was different. Trench warfare was static and therefore demanded a constant flow of ammunition, guns and supplies to the front. A task made incredibly difficult by the combination of weather and the soil of Flanders fields – it produced mud. Mud of a consistency in which both men and horses drowned. Motor transport could not move and horses and mules were the only way to get supplies to the frontline – they became the backbone of the Army and the veterinary corps was indispensable in keeping these supplies moving.

The names listed on the staircase wall of those members of the profession who gave their lives underestimates the true loss. War Office records show that some 90 veterinary surgeons were either killed, died of wounds or disease, were seriously wounded, died in accidents, or took their own lives – six such deaths are noted, for something that is invariably under-recorded. All loss of life in war is tragic, but to even contemplate the pressures that cause such extreme emotional distress are unimaginable to most of us: these deaths truly reflect what it was like to live and work under such circumstances.

The conditions were dreadful for both animals and men. In a letter to *The Veterinary Record* an AVC Officer wrote that no words could adequately describe the ruined land with the “utter terribleness of the ghastly reality, a wasteland, lifeless, desolate, devastated. No roofed houses, roads destroyed, ditches filled with broken equipment, a foul smell and everywhere is mud – oily, black, stenching. Fields wasted, no birds, evacuated trenches full of slimy water, incessant and monotonous background roar of gunfire. Night is as bad with star shells every 10 seconds.”

Today we can only have the greatest respect, one wants to say admiration, but probably sympathy is a better word for our feelings towards our colleagues who laboured at both the frontline and in the hospitals to tend, treat and care for the horses and mules wounded by shrapnel or bullets or incapacitated by gas, suffering from skin or other disease or simply exhausted and emaciated due to overwork and lack of feed. In spite of this, the cure-rate achieved for the two and a half

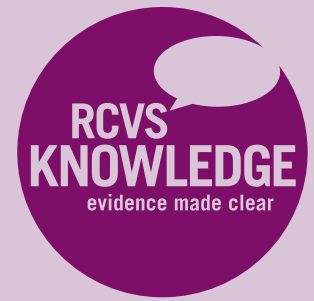
million horses and mules admitted to the veterinary hospitals was a remarkable 78% of patients returned to service.

In war, morality becomes a lip-service word. Welfare, caring and humane treatment become secondary to the imperative of obeying orders and returning animals to work as soon as practical. But is it not possible now to, at least, ask the question, should we continue to use animals in war and what should be the role (and the attitude) of the profession?

For now, however, just remember and give thanks to our colleagues from a 100 years ago, in particular those who died in the war but also to all those who experienced the sheer unrelenting horror of the conflict.



1st International EBVM Network Conference: a success!



Event rated 'excellent', 'exciting' and 'outstanding' by delegates

The 1st International EBVM Network Conference attracted nearly 250 delegates from 15 countries. Organised by RCVS Knowledge, this inaugural event was held at the Beaumont Estate in Windsor from 23–24 October. Delegates enjoyed over 50 talks focused on advancing evidence-based medicine in veterinary practice and improving collaboration across the profession.

Drawn from clinical practice, industry, charities and academia, delegates discussed topics including building the evidence base from clinical data, developing evidence-based clinical guidelines and introducing them into a practice setting, and evaluating scientific literature for bias.

“One of the most exciting scientific meetings I have ever attended.”

Delegates also hosted their own EBVM Network meetings between conference sessions, and participated in free literature-searching surgeries provided by our information specialists.

Brennen McKenzie, a conference speaker and small animal practitioner from California, called the conference “one of the most exciting scientific meetings I have ever attended.”

He continued: “The conference, and the activities and relationships that have emerged from it, represent an unprecedented opportunity to effect broad, meaningful change in veterinary medicine.

“Enthusiasm and passion, scientific expertise, and practical logistical skills and resources were all present together, and that is what is needed to make EBVM not merely an ideal but a reality to improve the lives of veterinary patients.”

Bursaries

Thirty-three conference bursaries were awarded to EBVM Network members, ensuring that a range of veterinary professionals at all career stages were represented. Twenty-five bursaries were awarded to veterinary students, veterinary nurses, and veterinary professionals based in low-income economies. Eight bursaries were awarded to librarians and information specialists, two of which were sponsored by Vets4Pets and Companion Care.

Veterinary nurse and bursary recipient Jackie Belle said: “The speakers and poster presentations were outstanding and I have many ideas and information sources to take back into veterinary practice and share with colleagues. As a veterinary nurse I was also able to network with veterinary surgeons and veterinary technicians about issues relevant to my profession and hope to

expand these thoughts and ideas through the EBVM network.”

Exhibitors, partners and sponsors

The conference was supported by a number of organisations, with insurance company MORE TH>N taking the role of prime partner. Conference partners Agria and Petplan, and sponsors Bayer, Vets Now, and Vets4Pets and Companion Care, also contributed to the event alongside 12 exhibitors.

Marcus Pugh, Head of Fundraising, thanked the organisations, adding: “The number of organisations who stepped up to give their backing to this event was a real indicator to us of the invaluable contribution the industry can make to this important development and how ready it is to play its part.”

A number of announcements about future RCVS Knowledge and EBVM Network projects were also made at the conference.

New journal

Nick Royle, our Executive Director, announced that a new veterinary journal will be launched by RCVS Knowledge and publisher Elsevier in 2015: *The Journal of Evidence-based Veterinary Practice (JEVP)*.

He said: “*JEVP* will publish the information that veterinary professionals need in their day-to-day practice – from practical guidelines on how to implement an evidence-based approach, to systematic reviews that can dispel myths in treatment.

“At the centre of this resource will be Knowledge Summaries, which will offer short, clinically-relevant answers to specific questions in veterinary healthcare.”

Forum

An online forum for the EBVM Network was launched allowing discussions begun at EBVM 2014 to expand and for members to share information and resources. The Network and forum are free to join and everyone interested in furthering evidence-based practice is welcome. The forum will be a space for newly formed Knowledge Groups – each focused on a specific area of veterinary care – to collaborate, with the aim of reviewing evidence and closing gaps in veterinary knowledge.

To sign up to the EBVM Network please visit surveymonkey.com/s/EBVM_Network. Network members can participate in the forum at ebvmnetwork.org.

EBVM Network Grants

It was announced that a second round of Target Grants will be launched in November 2014, which will fund the production of short courses to develop EBVM skills.

Next year an EBVM Network Grants round will open, welcoming applications from projects that will advance and encourage evidence-based veterinary practice.

Conference proceedings

Recordings of sessions, as well as a range of scientific posters, will be available online soon. Join the EBVM Network to be the first to know, and for early-bird tickets to future events!

Next events

A one-day EBVM Network Skills Day will be held on 30 October 2015 in London. EBVM 2016 will be held on 1-3 November 2016 in Edinburgh.



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 We resolve to resolve
ADR trial launched.

2 In with a bang
New Charter approved on bonfire night.

OK, Guvnor?
Governance discussion in Council.

Indoctrination?
Council agrees to consultation on use of doctor title.

3 By Royal appointment
HRH bestows medal on Des Thompson.

Recruiting time
DC and PIC members sought.

CEO Overview
Update on current projects.

4 Are you dancin'?
We're askin'. Time to stand for Council.

Letter box
Postnom decision leaves letters on Register.

Pick a card...
Debit card payment now accepted.

5 Say what?
English language testing on the cards.

Conviction list
Summary of convictions declared.

6 We Mind
Xmas Box goes to mental health support.

Speedier service
Complaints process streamlined to save time.

7 Addressing a need
New registration regulations mean Register address choice.

Renewal reminder
VNs have til 31 December to renew registration/listing.

8 We are not antisocial...
...but here's guidance on doing social safely.

9 Support in need
How to assist colleagues in stressful situations.

Standing up for standards
Meeting your Standards Committee Chair.

10 Fed up?
Changes to medicated feed rules ahead.

More than a prank?
New guidance on student fitness to practise.

11 Education, education, education...
A round up of Education Committee activities.

12 Bright sparks
AVS joins us at Belgravia House.

Done it? PDR it!
CPD audit under way. Get your records up to date!

13 Advancing on all fronts
AP applications storming in.

Where are EU hiring from?
Check out your grads' vet schools.

14 Supervision required
A reminder on PSP rules.

15 All mod cons
Modular PSS will launch in November 2015.

All cried out
PSS: No more tiers, please!

16 Stats nice
Survey of the Professions published.

18 Strategically speaking
Update on Strategic Plan progress.

20 Overseas, overseen
CPD and support for overseas graduates.

Feel at home
New homepage for our website.

21 The Facts of the matter
New facts and figures booklet published.

Head for the city
Join us at London Vet Show.

22 We won!
Stand success at BVNA Congress.

Read all about it
Let us have your *RCVS News* views.

23 PIC reports
Update on concerns investigation.

24 DC hearings
Oliver Fraser Lown removed from Register for charges relating to extreme animal pornography and sexual activity with animals; Denis Patrick Cronin's restoration application hearing adjourned.

25 Controlled CD destruction
And we don't just mean your dodgy 80s hits.

26 History boys
Remembering the sacrifices of WW1.

27 Evident success
First EBVM Conference is a cracker.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2014

20–21 November

Join us at London Vet Show

25 November

Meet the RCVS Day for prospective Councils candidates

30 November

Deadline for Advanced Practitioner applications

1 December

Deadline for audited CPD Records

15 December

Open day for prospective PIC and DC candidates

31 December

VN fees due

24–28 December

College closed

2015

1 January

College closed

23–24 January

Join us at VPMA/SPVS Congress

31 January

Deadline for Councils nominations

5 March

RCVS Council meets



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RCVS SETTING VETERINARY STANDARDS