



RCVS

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons



news

JUNE 2001

PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN VETERINARY MEDICINE



Contents

- What is the role of the RCVS?
- RCVS Council Election Results
- RCVS's role in the FMD outbreak
- Bogus Vets - members urged to be on the look out
- Employing veterinary nurses - make sure you know a VN's listed status
- RCVS Disciplinary Hearings

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Belgravia House
62-64 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AF

e-mail: extaffairs@rcvs.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7222 2001
Fax: 020 7222 2004
Web: <http://www.rcvs.org.uk>

RCVS CONSIDERS GUIDELINES FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION

At its meeting on 7 June 2001, RCVS Council considered draft guidelines for carrying out kidney transplantation in cats. They were drawn up by the RCVS Advisory Committee, following a seminar held at the RCVS in March, and incorporate guidance produced by the BVA Ethics Committee. The guidelines aim to ensure that the interests of both the source and recipient animals are safeguarded. Approval would need to be sought from the RCVS by a centre hoping to undertake the procedure and satisfactory protocols would need to be in place before it could be granted. These include: two teams of surgeons comprising Diplomates and Certificate holders; adequate arrangements for the source animal and; the existence of an ethics committee involving veterinary nurses and lay representatives to discuss each case.

The draft guidelines will be available for consultation within the profession with a view to them being finalised by Council in November 2001, for inclusion in the *Guide to Professional Conduct*. Those members who are interested can download the draft guidelines from the RCVS website or can obtain a copy from the Professional Conduct department.

RCVS DAY 2001

Members are invited to contact the College to obtain their free tickets to attend RCVS Day on **Friday 6 July 2001**:

Venue: The Conference and Banqueting Centre, Church House, Deans Yard, Westminster, SW1

10.15 am: Prayer of Thanksgiving/Short Address

10.30 am: AGM and Presentation of Awards

to be followed by a Lecture entitled *"Requirements of a New Graduate - Are we getting it Right?"* by **Prof. Otto M Radostits DVM MS DipACVIM**,

followed by a Question and Answer Session

12.30 pm: Reception

For those arriving early, coffee will be available from 9.30 am. For tickets, available on a 'first come, first served basis' please contact Dawn Wiggins on 020 7202 0761 or email d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk.

"We must start thinking and planning 'outside the box'" - this is the main thread of the AGM's key speaker, Professor Otto Radostits (see picture). His lecture will focus on the need to adapt educational and professional programmes to meet the rapidly changing needs of society and will suggest that new veterinary graduates are undertrained for many opportunities which are available in so many fields of veterinary medicine. He will question also whether educating a generalist veterinary surgeon is really necessary today - has omniscience held back progress in veterinary science?

Professor Radostits is currently Professor of the Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, and is renowned for his co-authorship of the veterinary textbook *"Veterinary Medicine"*.



*Prof. Otto M Radostits
DVM MS DipACVIM -
The main speaker at RCVS
Day 2001*

NEW NUMBER FOR VET HELPLINE

The telephone number for the Vet Helpline service has changed to **07659 811118**. The paging system, which the service had previously used, ceased on 3 June 2001, and a new system had to be found. Unfortunately it was not possible to retain the old number.

RCVS REGIONAL MEETINGS

The next round of Regional Meetings will take place on 7 and 8 November 2001 in Scotland. The venues are still to be confirmed, but will be announced in the veterinary press and on the RCVS website.

Invitations are sent out to individual veterinary surgeons in the area, although you are more than welcome to bring other members along - just let us know on the number below. There is no formal agenda for the meeting; discussion revolves around issues that members wish to raise with the RCVS Officer team either in advance or on the day. A report of the last two meetings, in Hatfield and Winchester in March 2001, is now available on the RCVS website so that you can see the wide range of issues recently covered.

Meetings start at 8.00pm, although a buffet supper is provided from 7.00pm, and usually finish at around 10.00pm. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Alexandra Thompson on 020 7202 0727, (a.thompson@rcvs.org.uk).

UK MEMBER ELECTED PRESIDENT OF FVE

UK veterinary surgeon, Fred Nind, was elected President of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) at its Annual General Meeting in Budapest on 17 May 2001 for a 2 year term, replacing Dr Karlheinz Simon of Germany. Mr Nind, who was formerly in small animal practice near Edinburgh, has been President of the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners since 1999 and has been politically active within BSAVA since 1985.

"Foot and Mouth disease - Lessons for the future" was among the main topics discussed during the AGM and issues raised included the regular presence of the veterinary practitioner on the farm, a review of resources and manpower, the use of vaccine in disease control and veterinary border checks.

Other topics discussed during the AGM included the welfare of animals during transport, the evaluation of veterinary teaching establishments, veterinary medicines availability and risk based meat inspection.

The next General Assembly will convene in Brussels on 16-17 November 2001, and the UK delegation will host the 2002 AGM in Belfast from 29 May to 1 June.

RCVS COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS

The results of the 2001 RCVS Council Election Results were as follows (those in bold were elected). The number of papers returned was 3131.

Mark Elliott	1798	Bertie Ellis	1042
Jerry Davies	1637	John Parker	1022
Jill Nute	1608	Philip Duffus	941
David Harding	1459	John Penfold	844
Nigel Swayne	1398	John Hoare	484
Charles Ross	1293	Thomas Lonsdale	235

Due to Walter Beswick's early retirement from RCVS Council after 11 years with effect from 6 July 2001, Dr Bertie Ellis, as the 7th placed candidate, will take a seat on Council for the remainder of his term. Professor Philip Duffus, in his capacity as Dean of Bristol Veterinary School will also remain on Council, but as an appointed member and Dr Susan Long will step down. Also resigning from Council, after 10 years, is Professor David Noakes of the Royal Veterinary College. John Parker, Mark Richer, Geoff Ostle and Penny Gripper will retire from Council in July after 4 years service each.

The number of ballot papers received in this year's Council elections was about 25% lower than last year with the highest number of votes barely exceeding the poll of the best of last year's unsuccessful candidates. Indeed the number of members who voted in 2001 is lower than it has been for a number of years and it would seem that voter apathy is not an issue which uniquely affects General Elections!

Year	Total number of ballot papers returned	% of Members voting	No. of votes received for the highest place	No. of votes received for 7th place
2001	3131	17%	1798	1042
2000	4095	23%	2204	1764
1999	3588	21%	2153	1567
1998	3567	22%	2166	1469
1997	4075	25%	2485	1569
1996	3908	25%	2284	1569

RETENTION FEES SET TO INCREASE

Council has approved a recommendation to increase the registration and retention fees by 4% with effect from April 2002 (registration fee: from £220 to £230; retention fee from £200 to £208; overseas fee from £80 to £83). This will now be submitted to the Privy Council for approval. Council has reaffirmed the policy, agreed last year, of building up the RCVS's reserves to ensure that it is able to fully discharge its regulatory responsibilities in the future, respond to any legal challenges that might arise and deal effectively with the media and policy issues.

RCVS WEBSITE

Many members will have noticed the changes to the RCVS website over recent weeks. The layout and overall design of the site have been dramatically altered to make the site easier to navigate around. All RCVS certificate and diploma information is now available online and the membership and Library & Information Service sections have been improved. The RCVS Trust and veterinary nursing sections are currently undergoing re-development. The 'Find-a-Vet' service was also launched in May 2001 (www.findavet.org.uk) and members of the public are able to search online for a veterinary practice in their area. The service is based on the *Directory of Veterinary Practices* and if you would like to add your practice to the database, please telephone the Membership department on 020 7202 0706, email membership@rcvs.org.uk or download the form from the website.

The **latest news** column on the home page enables us to communicate more quickly with members, in between editions of *RCVS News*. News about the RCVS Council Elections, disciplinary hearings, RCVS Day and FMD related information are some of the items recently posted. There are now well over 500 user sessions a day on the RCVS website and it is becoming an ever more important means for us to get information out to the membership. Feedback is always welcome and an RCVS 'webgroup' meets internally each week to discuss website issues - so ideas are always considered! If you have any ideas or suggestions for improvement, please email webmaster@rcvs.org.uk.

MESSAGE FROM RCVS PRESIDENT ON FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The FMD outbreak has, understandably, generated a considerable increase in activity for the RCVS staff and myself. The Membership department has been overwhelmed at times with telephone calls from around the world from veterinary surgeons wanting to come to the UK to help with the outbreak. Some 900 EU and overseas veterinary surgeons have been awarded either full or temporary registration since 20 February 2001. The External Affairs department has also been subjected to an increased workload with enquiries from the media and some MPs.

On Fridays I have been attending the Stakeholders meetings chaired by the Agriculture Minister, followed by a meeting of representatives of BVA and its species divisions with the CVO, where a valuable dialogue has taken place. I suggested to Ministers that the Chief Scientist's Group should be expanded by inviting two independent veterinary members, one a Scientist and one who had experience working as a TVI. Professor Joe Brownlie from the Royal Veterinary College and Mr Dick Sibley, President of BCVA, were subsequently invited to join the group.

I have been receiving numerous calls from TVIs working in the field and have taken on board many of the concerns that have arisen and transmitted these to the CVO. Welfare issues have predominated, particularly the supervision of slaughter where it appeared that confusing messages were being relayed to TVIs. However these confusions were quickly corrected following representations to MAFF and veterinary supervision of slaughter remained a priority.

One policy that has concerned many members has been the way that the contiguous cull policy has been implemented without any local veterinary risk assessment. I and other veterinary representatives made strong representations on a number of occasions. A refinement of the culling policy in relation to cattle was subsequently

announced on 25 April.

The RCVS has been consulted on and provided significant input into the certification issues of the three movement schemes, the Livestock (Welfare Disposal) Scheme and the veterinary examination certificate to be used prior to vaccination. The draft exemption order to allow trained para-professionals to vaccinate animals with FMD vaccine was circulated to Council members and the response was impressively rapid, demonstrating the value of electronic communication.

More recently, the use of Form A on premises where animals are to be slaughtered under the contiguous cull policy, and which is signed by the attending veterinary inspector prior to slaughter but after he has inspected the herd or flock and found the animals free of signs of FMD, has become a certification issue. Discussions are ongoing with the State Veterinary Service, as it is believed that the use of Form A in these circumstances may constitute an act of false certification. Further guidance on this issue can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/fmd_info.html.

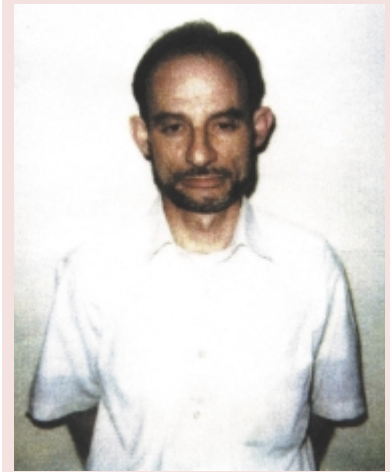
Discussions regarding the alleviation of breeding problems because of the cessation of AI services in infected areas have been ongoing. Farm gate deliveries of semen are now licensed in infected areas, as are one off visits by an inseminator to inseminate batches of synchronised animals with strict biosecurity measures being implemented. Licensing of bulls into infected areas has recently been permitted. Discussions regarding setting up emergency training courses for DIY AI are also ongoing.

The RCVS Library & Information Service has information on resources to help in the fight against the disease on its website (www.rcvslibrary.org.uk). Further information can also be found on the RCVS site at www.rcvs.org.uk/fmd_info.html.

MEMBERS URGED TO BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR BOGUS VETS

The man pictured (whos real name is Mr Keniry or Kinery) has recently been convicted on the Isle of Man of obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception, after being exposed as a bogus veterinary surgeon. A warning was first issued about him in the *Veterinary Record* in 1998. He may be deported following sentencing this month, but also could return to the UK in the future. His past record suggests that he is a convincing fraudster and members are asked to watch out for him.

This is not the only report of a bogus veterinary surgeon and members are reminded that they should always check any prospective employee's identity and veterinary qualifications, and ensure that his/her name appears on the current RCVS Register.



MAINTAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN CLINICAL COMPETENCE

Revalidation of clinical qualifications formed the theme of the first joint seminar between the RCVS and the General Medical Council (GMC), held at the RCVS on 11 May 2001. The idea grew from initiatives by Dr Lydia Brown and Professor Bob Michell, RCVS Senior Vice-President, to establish closer regular contacts between medical and veterinary interests. It was intended as the first in an annual series, hosted alternately, on subjects of mutual scientific and political interest. An invited group of participants from both professions heard short talks to trigger discussions on the chosen theme - 'Revalidation'. This was currently a contentious issue within the medical profession, following the publication of a GMC strategy discussion document, whereas the RCVS was currently considering issues of principle, approach and logical feasibility. Without doubt some form of periodic revalidation of performance would be expected of any self-regulating profession, by both the public and politicians.

The GMC focussed on their scheme, which rested on CPD, annual appraisals, and an evolving career development portfolio which was assessed every 5 years, with corrective recommendations where needed. The RCVS addressed the question of fitness to practise, noting differences in culture and circumstance between the veterinary and medical professions. Other areas discussed included the scope for computer based performance evaluation, developments in other professions and the importance of confidential 'incident reporting schemes', to learn from 'near misses' and to avoid real mishaps. Full reports will be submitted to both Councils.

VACCINATION RECORDS

Members are reminded that records of vaccination for companion animals should be fully completed and relevant parts of the record card should not be left blank. In particular, the animal should be identified with reference to at least a brief description AND the name and address of the owner, and if possible with reference to a microchip. This applies even if the animal may be sold to a new owner soon after vaccination.

REFERRALS

Members are reminded that the *Guide to Professional Conduct 2000* states that they "should recognise when a case is outside their area of competence and be prepared to refer it to a colleague whom they are satisfied is competent to carry out the investigations or treatment involved" and that they have "a responsibility to ensure that the client is fully aware of the level of expertise of the referral veterinary surgeon".

RCVS RE-HEARS CASE AGAINST VET

Mr Russell King

On 4 May 2001 the Disciplinary Committee concluded a part heard Inquiry into Mr R J King of Park Veterinary Practice, 121-123 Cockfosters Road, Cockfosters, Herts. The details of the first hearing in 1999 are set out in the *RCVS Annual Report 1999* and in brief are that Mr King obtained controlled drugs by deception: stating they were for veterinary use when they were obtained for his own use. In 1999 the Committee found him guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and postponed making any final judgement for two years on the basis of certain undertakings from Mr King, who had been drug-free since the date of the incidents in April 1998.

Two years on, the Committee heard that Mr King had complied with his undertakings and been monitored by a medical consultant, who reported regularly to the RCVS. The medical consultant's evidence was that Mr King had continued to be drug-free and the Committee closed the Inquiry warning Mr King as to his future conduct.

UPDATE FROM PI COMMITTEE

There have been three meetings of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since the last Council meeting, during which 43 new cases as well as ongoing cases were considered. Of these, six cases were referred to solicitors for investigation and formal statements, three of which have been referred to the Disciplinary Committee. There have been six interviews and two practice visits since the last Council meeting.

Four cases are specifically reported to Council and the profession.

The **first** case was a complaint by Practice A that Practice B had not provided a proper response to an existing client whose fish was unwell in the middle of the night, but had simply referred the client to Practice A. Practice B's response had been that there was no expertise on fish within the practice and that Practice A had such expertise. The Committee decided that Practice B had a responsibility to provide initial emergency first aid treatment to all species and that if a referral was appropriate it should have been organised by Practice B in consultation with Practice A. The case was closed.

The **second** complaint concerned an allegation that a veterinary surgeon had made a mistake during surgery that amounted to misconduct. The Committee noted in particular that the veterinary surgeon concerned had immediately informed the client of his error, referred the matter on an emergency basis to a referral practice and paid for the cost of the referral and apologised to the client for the error. Taking into consideration the nature of the error and the actions of the veterinary surgeon after the incident, the Committee decided that there was no indication of misconduct and that the case should be closed.

The **third** case concerned the disjointed management of a clinical case by a number of veterinary surgeons within a practice. As well as seeking comments from the veterinary surgeon in charge of the practice, the Committee sought comments from the senior veterinary surgeon associated with the company that owned the practice. The senior veterinary surgeon for the company acknowledged that the standard of service in this case had been below that which clients had a right to expect and the Committee was satisfied that communication within the practice and with clients would be improved. The case was closed.

The **fourth** case concerned a complaint by one practice that another practice had advertised to one of its clients, a charitable organisation, by writing directly to the secretary. This was an unsolicited approach that followed a similar unsolicited approach the previous year. The Committee decided that writing a letter to a named individual with responsibility for a commercial/public/charitable organisation, on a yearly basis, advertising a practice was acceptable under the *Guide to Professional Conduct 2000*. [The Committee recognised that the Guide did not permit an unsolicited approach by telephone or visit.] However, in this case the Committee also noted that medicines had been advertised to a non-client, contrary to the advice set out in the Guide and the matter was closed with advice on this issue.

DISPENSING OF PRESCRIPTION ONLY MEDICINES

The report of the Independent Review of Dispensing by Veterinary Surgeons of Prescription Only Medicines was published on 11 May and is available on the website of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (<http://www.vmd.gov.uk/>). The Review Group - Professor Sir John Marsh, Dr Jerry Lucke, Mr John Moffitt and Lady Patsy Yardley - were appointed by the Minister of Agriculture last August "to review the procedures by which prescription only medicines (POMs) for veterinary use are classified and sold in the United Kingdom and the impact current practices may be having on availability and prices".

The report makes 14 recommendations. The first, of particular interest to veterinary surgeons and RCVS, is that "veterinarians, having made a diagnosis and prescribed medicine, should be required to provide a written prescription, at either no additional charge or at a fee to be determined by the RCVS acting in the public interest." This would not apply to emergency treatment, treatments during surgical procedures or the use of anaesthetics.

The RCVS will consider the recommendations and formulate a response after consulting with the Office of Fair Trading to obtain their views on the RCVS setting any fees.

RCVS DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

Mr Martin Humphrey

On 1 May 2001 Mr M Humphrey, of 3 Roughdown Villas, Felden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, appeared before the RCVS Disciplinary Committee on a charge of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect arising out of a hearing before the disciplinary committee of the Farriers Registration Council.

The (RCVS) Committee heard that in the summer of 1999 Mr Humphrey had completed an application form for a proposed apprentice farrier in such a way as to ensure that she was not paid the minimum wage of £3.60 for all of her employment. When the Farriers Training Service (FTS) did not accept the application, Mr Humphrey completed a second application form, which both he and the apprentice signed. On the second application form Mr Humphrey appeared to accept that the Minimum Wage Regulations applied to all of the apprentice's employment and on this basis the FTS accepted and signed the agreement.

Later the apprentice said that the agreement was a sham, which she had signed because she wanted one of the few apprenticeships on offer. She said that after the agreement came into effect she continued to get the same pay as before, £70 a week.

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee found that on the second application form Mr Humphrey had deceived the FTS into believing that he had entered into a proper apprentice agreement, thereby misleading the FTS into entering into the agreement. It was also found that when the apprentice's allegations were investigated Mr Humphrey had avoided telling the FTS the true facts of the matter. In addition the Committee found that before there was any purported training agreement, Mr Humphrey had permitted the apprentice to carry out acts of farriery when it had not been lawful for her to do so.

Giving judgement, Professor David Noakes, chairman of the Committee said "it is clear that his (Mr Humphrey's) dishonest behaviour has brought the profession into disrepute, and the Committee has therefore decided that Mr Humphrey should have his registration suspended for a period of three months." [The suspension came into effect on 7 June 2001.]

Dr Ronald Porter

On 2 May 2001 the Disciplinary Committee commenced an Inquiry into Dr R S Porter of Mews House 6, Lyne House, Rusper Road, Capel, Dorking, Surrey. The Inquiry is listed to resume on 28 and 29 June 2001.

Mr Desmond Fegan

On 3 May 2001 the Disciplinary Committee heard an Inquiry into Mr D P Fegan of Walnut Veterinary Clinic, Grove Way Stadium, Ashland, Milton Keynes. There were two charges against Mr Fegan. Firstly, that he had administered, to Romantic Annie, a racing greyhound, Boldebal H (boldenone), an anabolic steroid not authorised in the UK (which by its nature could affect the performance and the well-being of a greyhound), to postpone oestrus to enable her to continue racing, when **he knew or ought to have known** that this would result in a breach of the rules of greyhound racing. Secondly, it was alleged that he had failed to obtain informed consent from the trainer before administering a product not authorised for veterinary use in the UK and "banned" under the rules of greyhound racing.

The Committee heard that on 4 February 2000 her trainer took Romantic Annie from West Sussex to Walnut Veterinary Clinic to receive treatment for an injury. The trainer asked Mr Fegan to administer an oestrus suppressant to ensure that she was able to race in the "Golden Jacket" at Crayford ten days later. The trainer told the Committee that he knew of Durateston, but did not like it because it was too strong. He said he did not ask for any particular substance, just something that was not too harsh because the next time she was in season she was to be mated. Mr Fegan recorded on the injury report form that he had administered "1cc Boldebal H for suppression".

Romantic Annie was entered into the "Golden Jacket" race at Crayford ten days later and after one of the heats tested positive for Boldenone. The trainer was primarily responsible for the positive test and was called to an inquiry before the disciplinary committee of the National Greyhound Racing Club (NGRC). The trainer was charged in relation to the administration of a prohibited substance, but under the rules had a complete defense because the administration had been carried out by a veterinary surgeon.

At the (RCVS) Inquiry Mr Fegan told the Committee that he qualified as a veterinary surgeon in 1986 and practised in the UK until 1988, when he had emigrated to Australia to work in a practice dealing exclusively with

greyhounds. He said that he had returned to the UK in 1998 and purchased Walnut Veterinary Clinic and that he now only treated racing greyhounds. Mr Fegan said that he had used Boldebal H in Australia where the use of anabolic steroids was not permitted but was tolerated by the authorities. He said he had not been familiar with the NGRC rules, which he argued were confusing in any event. Mr Fegan agreed that there was considerable public interest in the precise condition and health status of a racing greyhound, but told the Committee that his information from other colleagues was that there were no positive tests to any anabolic steroids. Mr Fegan accepted that at the time he administered Boldebal H to Romantic Annie he was aware that the product was not authorised in the UK.

The Committee also heard expert evidence that although anabolic steroids could affect the performance of a racing greyhound, one administration of an anabolic steroid would have minimal effect and therefore Romantic Annie would have had no racing advantage in the "Golden Jacket" from the one injection of Boldebal H on 4 February 2000. The Committee also heard that there were medicinal products authorised for oestrus suppression which had some anabolic effect.

The Committee found that Mr Fegan had administered Boldebal H when **he ought to have known** this would result in a breach of the rules and that he had failed to advise the trainer that the product was not authorised for veterinary use in the UK. Giving judgement, Professor David Noakes, the chairman of the Committee said "it is clear to the Committee that your (Mr Fegan's) attitude towards veterinary practice and legislation in the UK and the regulation of the sport of greyhound racing with which you are closely connected, leaves much to be desired. The Committee is very disturbed that you administered a drug which you knew, at the time, to be unauthorised in the UK and that you failed properly to advise your client so as to enable him to give informed consent to the proposed treatment.

It is our hope and belief that you will recognise these deficiencies and after taking advice from the College and other appropriate organisations you will take remedial action. The Committee has therefore decided unanimously that in respect of each charge you should consider yourself severely reprimanded with this warning as to your future conduct."

RCVS CERTIFICATE AND DIPLOMA EXAMINATIONS

- This year's written examinations for Certificates and Diplomas are being held on **Tuesday 7** and **Wednesday 8 August 2001** at the University of London examination halls. Candidates will be receiving letters shortly notifying them of precise times. Details can also be found on the website.
- If you are interested in enrolling to take the RCVS Certificate or Diploma, you can now download complete candidate information packs from the RCVS website. The information packs contain general information about all the examinations, as well as specific information on the requirements for each subject: syllabus, reading list, and application forms.
- All active members were sent a copy of the latest CPD Record Card and Guidance Notes in the last mailing from the RCVS in March. If you have mislaid yours, however, you can download a copy from the website. A 'Word' version is available which you can save on your computer if you prefer to keep an electronic record.
- Finally - if you do decide to enrol for a Certificate or Diploma, please note that your completed application form must be with RCVS by **1 November** at the latest. We are unable to extend this deadline for tardy applicants! You will need to have your enrolment form counter-signed by your adviser, so please allow yourself plenty of time to complete the process.
- If you have already enrolled and wish to take the examination in 2002, you will need to apply for final approval of experience. Your application must be with RCVS by **1 November**. Once again - a reminder that no late applications can be accepted! If final approval is confirmed, your next step will be to submit an examination entry by 1 March in the year in which you wish to take the examination.

THE FUTURE OF VETERINARY EDUCATION

As mentioned in the November 2000 edition of *RCVS News*, the Education Strategy Steering Group has been meeting to review the issues facing veterinary education and training, with a view to recommending a long term strategy to guide the College's work over the next two decades. The Group is keen to consult widely before presenting its recommendations to RCVS Council, and a consultation paper is being circulated to key veterinary organisations in July. The document will also be available on the RCVS website, and individuals and organisations wishing to respond will need to submit their written comments by 12 October 2001. Representatives from a number of key veterinary organisations will be invited to share their views in person with the Group at a series of meetings to be held in London on 21, 22 and 23 November 2001.

For further information, please contact Freda Andrews, Head of Education, f.andrews@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0702.

SO, WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE RCVS?

6

The role of the RCVS, as a statutory body founded by Charter in 1844 and operating under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, is to manage the veterinary profession to ensure that members of the public and their animals are able to obtain services from veterinary surgeons who are properly qualified and conduct themselves in a professional manner. In managing this interface, RCVS ensures that the protection given to the veterinary profession (its monopoly) is offset by a responsibility to protect consumers against abuse of this privileged position. The representative organisation for veterinary surgeons is the BVA.

Like many other professions, the veterinary profession is self-regulated and the RCVS has been given the responsibility of regulator by statute. The privilege of self-regulation for all the professions is under threat and to maintain this privilege the professions must act and be seen to act in the public interest.

Does the RCVS set out to discipline vets?

When the RCVS receives a complaint about a member, it has a statutory responsibility to seek evidence from all parties concerned and, on the basis of this, to assess what further action, if any, is required. In 2000, the RCVS received 835 complaints, of which

less than half got as far as consideration by the Preliminary Investigation Committee. Thus RCVS supports the veterinary surgeon in a large number of cases and indeed gets complaints from the public for protecting its members.

The RCVS is always available to offer advice on any issue relating to professional conduct and would prefer this to happen before an incident occurs which may result in a complaint.

Is the RCVS democratic?

All members can stand for election to RCVS Council, and in March each year, voting papers and candidates' manifestos are sent out for members to vote for whom they would like to see managing the profession. Sadly, in most years, only around 20% of members vote in the elections for Council.

Does the RCVS have any teeth?

Fortunately the vast majority of the profession follow the rules or guidance laid down by the RCVS Council and offer a high level of service to the animal owning public. To be able to discipline a member, sufficient evidence is required to prove misconduct beyond "all reasonable doubt". The powers awarded to the RCVS either by its Charter or the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 are limited and do not reflect the current expectations of the public and the profession. More recently though,

Disciplinary Committee has found innovative ways of applying the powers it has.

Is the RCVS accessible and approachable?

There is pressure on all organisations to be more open and transparent, and the RCVS has tried to improve communications in a number of ways. New information is posted almost daily on the RCVS website and members are kept up to date on developments in *RCVS News* and in the veterinary press. The names and contact details of all Council members and principal members of staff are published in the front of the Register. All Council members receive calls from members on a wide range of topics.

What else does the RCVS do?

The RCVS is responsible for ensuring that educational standards are maintained. This it does by visiting and reporting on undergraduate veterinary education and promoting its postgraduate qualifications. An ever more important function of the RCVS is to oversee the training of veterinary nurses. The RCVS is also consulted as an impartial source of informed opinion on animal health and welfare issues.

Therefore the role of the RCVS can be summarised: **"Promoting and sustaining public confidence in veterinary medicine"**.

IMPORTANT CHANGE FOR VETERINARY NURSE STUDENT ENROLMENTS

ATACs are reminded that the RCVS will start enrolling student veterinary nurses with effect from 1 July 2001. Applications should be addressed to the RCVS, and not the BVNA, from this date. A new version of the enrolment form, and accompanying guidance notes, are available on the RCVS website and may be downloaded for completion. Hard copies of the new forms are available from the RCVS Veterinary Nursing department on request.

VNAC APPROVAL UPDATE

Arrangements for the approval of the new Veterinary Nurse Approved Centres (VNACs) are progressing well. The response from interested veterinary nurse course providers (colleges) and other groupings of practices has been very encouraging. In late May, the Veterinary Nursing department had received thirty nine applications from prospective centres. This level of response is considerably greater than expected at this stage.

Approval visits to these new centres are being arranged and should be completed by late July. The first centres have been approved and are already, in turn, approving their networks of Training and Assessment Practices. We will be writing to all ATACs in late July/early August to update them on the location and contact details of approved VNACs. Practice principals will be encouraged to either link with one of these approved centres, or to consider joining with a group of local practices to form a new VNAC. It is anticipated that, by the end of this year, there should be very few ATACs which are not in a position to join with a local approved centre. Where this does occur, the College will consider practices on an individual basis for special VNAC approval arrangements in order to ensure that all practices with students in training have the opportunity to continue.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTING - EMPLOYING VETERINARY NURSES

Concern was expressed by the Veterinary Nurses Committee about the number of practices that employ unlisted veterinary nurses or unqualified nurses who may be undertaking clinical work which is covered by the provisions of Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. In some cases it is known that these individuals are occupying Head Nurse positions and may be supervising the work of other nurses and VN students.

Medical and/or minor surgical treatment, as defined in Schedule 3 and guidance provided by the RCVS, may only be carried out by a nurse who is qualified and currently listed by the RCVS. Employing veterinarians must check the veracity of the qualifications of any nurse to whom they delegate such work. Special care should be taken when employing locum nurses as agencies often do not conduct these checks. The RCVS Veterinary Nursing department is able to provide instant confirmation of a nurse's listed status on request.

The Veterinary Nurses Committee was especially concerned that veterinary practices' indemnity insurance may not cover them for acts of veterinary surgery carried out by an unqualified or unlisted nurse. It should be noted that acting outside the scope of the Veterinary Surgeons Act constitutes a criminal offence.

WINTER EXAMINATION DATES

The dates for the winter 2001 veterinary nursing examinations are as follows:

Closing date for entries:	1 October 2001*
Written examinations (Parts I & II and S/NVQ levels 2 & 3):	3 December 2001
Practical examinations:	10 -14 December 2001
Results letters posted:	14 January 2002
Pass lists published (RCVS website):	15 January 2002 (from 10 am).
Portfolios to be submitted by:	31 January 2002**

* Please note that no late entries will be accepted; applications must reach the RCVS by the closing date.

** First time level 2 or 3 entries only; late submissions or re-submissions may be made at any time.



Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior, former Dean of Cambridge University Veterinary School, standing next to the bust of himself, presented by the Association of Veterinary Surgeons Practising in Northern Ireland to the RCVS in March 2001



Promoting & advancing
the study & practice
of the art & science
of veterinary surgery & medicine

RCVS TRUST GRANTS RECENTLY AWARDED:

- **Millennium Residency in Production Animal Medicine** (£36,000) to Glasgow Veterinary School in partnership with Vale Veterinary Group in Taunton, Devon.
- **West Scholarship for Feline Research** (£30,000) to Karin Taglinger at Bristol Veterinary School.
- **Mackellar Mitchell Wright Award** (£1500) to Rachael Conwell, to carry out a study project at the veterinary schools of the universities of Pennsylvania and Michigan.
- **Walker Memorial Award** (£1500) to Rosemary Grogono-Thomas towards her research project for the Diploma in Sheep Health and Production.

Connie Ford Retraining Grants

- Katie Dunn - for a retraining programme to return to work in graduate clinical teaching
- Julie Turner - to undertake an intensive feline medicine course
- Frances Regan - to complete her training for formal qualification in veterinary homeopathy.

Closing date for the next round of Connie Ford Retraining Grants is 30 September 2001 - see right for details.

Veterinary Nurses Travel Scholarships

- Claire Cave - to study advanced emergency and critical care procedures at the Pennsylvania University Veterinary School.
- Bonny Millar - to study equine neonatology nursing at the Pennsylvania University Veterinary School.
- Kelly Russell - to study critical care of neonatal foals and adult horses in Lexington, Kentucky and at the Liverpool Veterinary School.

RCVS members are asked to draw the VN Travel Scholarships to the attention of experienced VNs who may be eligible. Applications are now open for 2002 projects and the closing date is 31 July 2001 - see below for details.

RCVS/Fulbright Fellowship

Dr Tom Besser, the current Trust-sponsored Fulbright Research Fellow from the USA, is conducting a research project on issues related to food safety and public health. RCVS members who receive his survey questionnaire are urged to take the 15 minutes needed to complete the form and return it promptly.

The Jim Gourley Prize

Last year, Jim Gourley HonFRCVS set up this prize to encourage practitioners to write up case histories, clinical tips or innovative techniques developed in practice. The first entries were recently judged and Hazel Charlwood, of St Albans was awarded the prize. Her article and the best of the rest will be published in the *Veterinary Times* later this year.

Full application details about RCVS Trust grants currently available may be viewed and downloaded from our website at www.rcvstrust.org.uk, or may be obtained from the RCVS Trust Office on 020 7202 0714, email trust@rcvs.org.uk.

RCVS LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

New access to e-journals

The RCVS Library & Information Service has arranged access to the whole range of Blackwell Science's electronic journals for members. Accessible through Blackwell Science's Synergy product, it includes full text of the following journals:

- Acta Zoologica • Anatomia, Histologia, Embryologia • Animal Genetics • Journal of Animal Breeding and Genetics • Journal of Animal Genetics • Journal of Animal Physiology and Animal Nutrition • Journal of Fish Diseases • Journal of Veterinary Medicine Series A & B • Journal of Veterinary Pharmacology & Therapeutics • Medical and Veterinary Entomology • Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia • Veterinary Dermatology • Veterinary Ophthalmology.

Internet Vet

The VetGate project, in which RCVS Library and Information Service is a partner, has launched a new interactive online tutorial, Internet Vet, at <http://vetgate.ac.uk/vts/vet/>.

It allows users to follow a tutorial at their own pace, finding key veterinary Internet sites, helping to improve information retrieval skills, reviewing the critical thinking needed to assess Internet resources and reflect on how to use the Internet to support study, teaching and research. Why not try it when you have a free moment!

New equine surgery update

A new equine surgery update has been launched. This further broadens the portfolio of updates that are available. Subscribers to the update services receive a list of the latest references in their subject every quarter taken from a series of databases by the RCVS Library and Information Service's expert searchers. Other updates currently available include:

- Diseases of psittacines • Diseases of rabbits • Diseases of reptiles • Equine orthopaedics • Small animal orthopaedics • Small animal surgery • Veterinary anaesthesia • Veterinary cardiology • Veterinary dermatology • Veterinary ophthalmology • Veterinary imaging.

Discounts on library services

The newly introduced discounts on services for practices or organisations who open accounts and deposit £250 or more are proving very popular with users. To register for the discounts, or for details on any of the above issues, please contact the Library on 020 7222 2021, fax 020 7222 2004 or email: library@rcvs.org.uk.



Jim Gourley, Prize Founder with David Watson, Editor, *Veterinary Times* (left), Virginia Caldwell-McNay, RCVS Trust Manager and Des Thompson, Board Member of the RCVS Trust (far right).