



PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN VETERINARY MEDICINE



Contents

- Guide to Professional Conduct
- FVE AGM in Belfast
- RCVS Visitation to Cambridge
- CPD Survey - Results
- Regional Meetings & RCVS Day
- RCVS Disciplinary Hearings
- Veterinary Nursing

NEW JVP ELECTED

Professor Richard Halliwell was elected Junior Vice-President of the RCVS at its Council meeting on the 28 February 2002. After graduating from Cambridge in 1961, Professor Halliwell spent two years training in surgery at Bristol, followed by five years in small animal practice in London.

He returned to Cambridge to undertake a PhD and then went to the University of Pennsylvania as Assistant Professor of Dermatology in 1973. In 1977 he moved to the University of Florida as Head of the Department of Medical Sciences in the new Veterinary College. He returned to the UK in 1988 as William Dick Professor of Veterinary Clinical Studies at Edinburgh, and is currently in his second term as Dean of the Faculty.

Professor Halliwell has served as President of both the American and the European Colleges of Veterinary Dermatology, and of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education. He has been a longstanding and active member of the College's SFEC and Education Committees and became RCVS Treasurer in July last year.

In addition to his academic interests in the areas of dermatology and clinical immunology, he has major interests in the area of veterinary education, postgraduate clinical training and in specialisation.

Commenting on his election, Professor Halliwell said: "It is indeed both an honour and a challenge to be asked to serve the College in this capacity. This is a time of change and the profession faces many exciting challenges ahead. Obviously, these include our relationships and interaction with the profession in Europe and beyond. We cannot plough our own lone furrow. The opportunities are there, and we must seize them."



UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE EDUCATION STRATEGY STEERING GROUP

Since publication of its consultation paper in July last year, the Education Strategy Steering Group (ESSG) has received a total of 96 written responses to its proposals for an education and training framework for 2010 and beyond. 45 different organisations representing a wide range of veterinary interests submitted responses, and 50 individual veterinary surgeons from around the country, including some recent graduates as well as more senior members of the profession, took the opportunity to send in comments.

Following the written consultation exercise, 18 separate veterinary organisations were invited to send representatives to give oral evidence over a three day session held at the Royal Ocean Racing Club in London in November. Members of the group,

chaired by Professor Neil Gorman, were very encouraged by the positive and constructive nature of the discussions held with all these organisations, which helped to crystallise the issues that needed further work.

continued on page 5

COUNTDOWN TO E-COMMERCE LAUNCH

We are delighted to announce that the new e-commerce facility section on the RCVS website is in the process of going live. The new service, which will soon be available at www.rcvs.org.uk, offers you the chance to order RCVS publications (such as the Directory of Practices and the VN Training Handbook) and RCVS Trust gifts online.

Rather than having to phone the College during office hours, write out order forms and put cheques in the post, you will be able to browse through the electronic

continued on page 5

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GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - 2002 EDITION

Members should by now have received at their registered address a copy of the 2002 edition of the *Guide to Professional Conduct*. The new Guide is similar in many respects to the 2000 *Guide to Professional Conduct* but it incorporates changes and new guidance that have been agreed by RCVS Council in the past two years.

The main changes are:

- A new requirement for members to ensure that all their professional activities are covered by professional indemnity insurance (page 7)
- A recommendation that members make clients aware that medicines can be obtained on prescription from other suppliers (page 7)
- New guidance on 'whistle-blowing' (page 8)
- New guidance on euthanasia (page 23)
- Additions to the list of annexes, namely advice on the provision of veterinary services via the Internet and a statement from the State Veterinary Service and the RCVS.

The Guide and all its annexes are available on the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk/vet_surgeons/professionalconduct/view.html. Updates and changes to the Guide will be notified to you through *RCVS News* and will be incorporated into the online version of the Guide. The online version will therefore become the definitive version of the Guide, although 'hard copies' will continue to be re-printed and issued.

EXAMINERS' HONORARIA TO INCREASE

Following last year's proposal by SFEC to rationalise the system of awarding honoraria to certificate and diploma examiners, Council approved Phase 1 of the proposed changes. Examiners can therefore expect modest increases in their honoraria to be implemented this year, with further increases in the years ahead.

The improved remuneration model recognises the increasing amount of time examiners need to spend marking candidates' examination papers. In order to ensure that the College continues to offer these qualifications, while maintaining consistently high standards across the range of available subjects, it will be necessary to increase the honoraria offered for this important work. The College's certificate and diploma awarding activities must be self-financing and cannot be subsidised from any other source of RCVS income, so a rise in the examination entry fee will now be inevitable (as reported in *RCVS News*, Nov 2001).

BELFAST PREPARES TO WELCOME VETS FROM ACROSS EUROPE

Parallel to the Golden Jubilee weekend celebrations, the UK (RCVS & BVA) will be playing host to over a hundred veterinary surgeons and VIPs from over 30 countries.

The 2002 AGM of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) will be held at the Europa Hotel in Belfast from Thursday 29 May to Saturday 1 June 2002 and attended by each Member State.

A full agenda is planned and is set to include, amongst other items, the international recognition of veterinary qualifications, the Code of Good Veterinary Practice, availability of medicines, the 2002-5 FVE Business Plan (to which RCVS and BVA contributed in January) and various animal health issues including BSE, FMD and CSF. In addition, Dr Peter Storie-Pugh (RCVS Past President) and Dr Alistair Porter (former RCVS Registrar) are to be awarded an FVE honorary medal.

The busy work schedule will be complemented by a diverse social programme encompassing a golf tournament (Ireland vs. the rest of Europe), an Irish Evening at Belfast Castle (co-hosted by our colleagues in Ireland), and a Gala Dinner at Belfast City Hall attended by the Lord Mayor. A full activity programme has also been arranged for accompanying persons.

The event is generously sponsored by a variety of national and European organisations, and the intention is to give our European colleagues a flavour of Northern Irish hospitality to make it not only a productive meeting but also a very memorable occasion!



Belfast Castle

CHECK YOUR ENTRY IN THE DIRECTORY OF PRACTICES

The *RCVS Directory of Veterinary Practices* is the standard guide to the profession, used by libraries, local authorities, pharmaceutical companies, charities and by vets themselves. It also forms the basis of the Find a Vet service on the RCVS web site, used widely by the public when looking for a veterinary practice in their locality. The new 2002 Directory of Practices will be published in the summer.

The accuracy of the Directory and the Find a Vet service depends on you. If you haven't already done so, please check that the College has your latest details. The easiest way to do this is to look at your Find a Vet entry on the web site (www.rcvs.org.uk) and inform us of any changes by contacting the Membership Department on 020 7202 0706.

FITZWYGRAM PRIZE - END OF AN ERA

It was after much deliberation, and with not a little regret, that Council finally decide to bring the 127-year-old Fitzwygram prize to a close. The prize, which was first presented in 1875, has been awarded annually to the most academically outstanding veterinary student from the UK veterinary schools. However, in view of the reported falling interest amongst veterinary students in taking the Fitzwygram exam, the failure to attract a sponsor to fund the prize itself, and the inherent logistical difficulties in identifying such a student, a motion to abolish the prize was passed by an overwhelming majority.

NOTICE

Will any member who has submitted amended registration details via the RCVS website (NB not via the FindaVet service) since the beginning of January 2002 please contact the Membership Department on 020 7202 0706 for data verification purposes? Thank you.

RCVS VISITATION TO CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY, NOVEMBER 2001

As part of its statutory duties, RCVS undertakes visitations to each of the UK veterinary schools once every seven or eight years, in order to inspect the standards of veterinary degrees. Reports on the visits are submitted to the Privy Council with a recommendation as to whether the degree should continue to be recognised for registration purposes.

Visits, which take between four and five days, are undertaken by a panel of experts covering pre-clinical subjects, veterinary public health, food hygiene, and production animal and companion animal medicine. The visitors make their assessment against a set of criteria, which follow those agreed by the European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE) to evaluate veterinary schools across Europe. (A copy of the detailed criteria and

guidance for RCVS approval of veterinary degree courses can be downloaded from the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk/vet_surgeons/education/app_criteria.html)

The visitors look in detail at:

- the organisation of the institution, and whether it has adequate finances, facilities, libraries, equipment, staff, and access to sufficient animal cases to support the course;
- the procedures and policies for student admissions, and for student welfare and support;
- the curriculum - to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and EU requirements, and that the methods of instruction and content of the course are directed towards producing a competent professional at graduation

- the provision, organisation and evaluation of extra-mural studies; and,
- the veterinary degree examinations.

A panel of visitors chaired by Professor Lance Lanyon (Principal of RVC) spent a week in Cambridge in November 2001, inspecting the VetMB degree course. The draft report from the visitors was considered by RCVS Education Committee and Council in February, and the University will be formally asked to consider and respond to the visitors' recommendations, before the report is forwarded to EAEVE for comment, and thence on to the Privy Council.

The visitors' recommendation to RCVS Council was that the VetMB should continue to be recognised but that a number of issues needed to be addressed.

Reflecting the increasingly international interest in accreditation, the Cambridge visitation panel included experts not only from the UK, but also from Austria, Portugal and Australia. (By reciprocal arrangement, RCVS representatives are also now included on accreditation visitations to veterinary schools in Australia and New Zealand - organised by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. - most recently to Melbourne and Sydney and shortly to Queensland.)

Glasgow will be the next school to undergo a visitation, with a panel due to visit in early May. Liverpool will follow in March 2003.

RCVS is always keen to receive nominations from practitioners and other members of the profession who are interested in taking part in its visitation programme. If you would like to know more about what is involved, please get in touch with Freda Andrews, Head of Education, on 020 7202 0702, or email f.andrews@rcvs.org.uk.

KEY DATES FOR RCVS CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS

New and enrolled candidates for RCVS Certificates and Diplomas should note the following key dates which apply to all subject areas:

| | |
|---|---|
| Friday 1 March 2002 | Closing date for receipt of entries to the 2002 examinations for both Certificates and Diplomas. (NB. Diploma candidates must also submit their dissertations/papers by this date.) |
| Tuesday 2 April 2002 | Closing date for receipt of submitted work for Certificate candidates taking the 2002 examination. (The deadline for receipt of work is normally 1 April, but candidates will be allowed up to midday on 2 April this year to allow for the Easter Bank Holiday.) |
| Tuesday 30 or Wednesday 31 July 2002 | Written examinations to be held at the University of London on one of these dates, depending on the number of candidates entering |
| 1 November 2002 | Closing date for receipt of new enrolments, and for enrolled candidates to submit their applications for Final Approval of Experience. |

CHANGES TO CERTIFICATES

Following a recommendation from the Specialisation & Further Education Committee, a number of Subject Boards have recently made changes to the length of their Certificate written examinations taking place in 2002, and to the requirements for submitted work to apply to examinations in 2003 onwards. The objective is to bring about greater consistency in the requirements across subjects. Candidates who have already enrolled should by now have already received notification of any changes affecting their subject.

Updated information packs for those taking an exam in 2003 and beyond, incorporating these changes to Certificate requirements, will be available to download from the RCVS website from 1 April 2002. If you are interested in taking a Certificate or Diploma, or if you are involved as an adviser, or in providing courses for any of these awards, you are advised to refer to the website from 1 April, to ensure that you have a copy of the latest information.



Professor Armando Louza, visiting expert from Portugal, together with Mr Mike Herrtage, Deputy Head of the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences at Cambridge.

EDUCATION ISSUES

RESULTS OF CPD PROVIDERS SURVEY

RCVS recently undertook a survey of CPD providers to investigate how much CPD is currently available, and to try and estimate how the providers would cope with an increased demand for CPD, should it become mandatory in the future.

Questionnaires were sent to 50 CPD providers, and 29 were returned by the due date. Sixteen respondents identified themselves as private companies, four as veterinary societies, seven as universities, the remaining two as 'other'. This survey therefore underestimates the amount of CPD provided by pharmaceutical and food companies, and does not include in-house training.

Providers were asked to categorise the type of CPD they provided by topic, by method of delivery, and by 'level'. Coverage by topic is represented in Figure 1 below, from which it would appear that, although CPD is available for many aspects of veterinary work, certain topics such as sheep and pig work appear to be under represented. Management topics accounted for a large percentage of the hours available - perhaps reflecting that this area is not well covered in the undergraduate curriculum.

Number of available CPD hours by species/topic

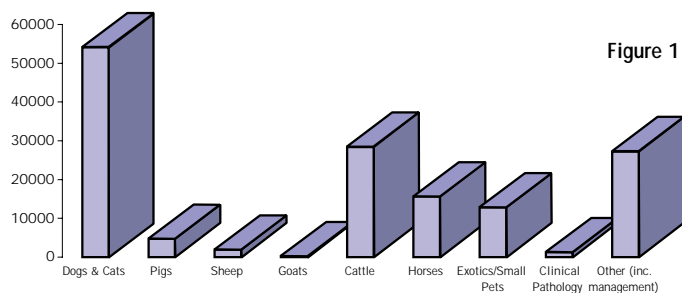


Figure 1

Two of the universities and four of the private companies who replied provided computer-based or distance learning CPD, but the vast majority of respondents provided lecture based courses, and/or other forms of training. 16% of CPD was pitched at Diploma level, 31% at Certificate level, 39% was intended as 'general refresher' training, and 14% was designed for the new or recent graduate.

From the returns, the total delegate hours of CPD offered in the year 2000-2001 amounted to 146,608 hours. If we assume that our survey represented 50% of the available CPD (and this is very much an estimate) then the total delegate hours of CPD that was available in 2001-2002 would be around 293,216, or enough for 8,377 veterinary surgeons doing their recommended 35 hours per year. With around 15,000 active members on the RCVS register, it raises the question: are all active veterinary surgeons doing the recommended minimum?

Respondents were also asked to indicate how many delegate-hours they expected to provide in the year ahead (2002-2003). Eleven respondents expected to provide about the same amount as in the previous year; fourteen anticipated an increase, and three predicted a decrease. Overall, the total number of hours predicted to be available for 2002-2003 was 159,634, ie. an increase of about 9% overall. Asked what increase in hours they could provide should CPD become mandatory, respondents indicated that they would be able to increase provision by around 26%. A rough extrapolation from these estimates would indicate the future availability of 35 hours of CPD per year for approximately 10,500 vets.

It was encouraging to note that most respondents found it fairly or very easy to find suitable speakers to lead their CPD events, although areas mentioned as causing some difficulty included ethics, exotics, camelids and small animal surgery.

Accepting that this survey does not provide information about the geographical distribution of the available CPD, and that there is little information about the quality and suitability of such programmes, the survey has nevertheless provided some insight into the current state of CPD provision. It is encouraging to note that providers expected to be able to increase their provision significantly should RCVS introduce a mandatory CPD policy, although more work would clearly be needed to ensure adequate provision for all practising veterinary surgeons. One respondent mentioned the need for increased provision of on-line CPD, and this is one way of developing greater geographical coverage. In the future there should hopefully be greater choice both in the course content and the mode of delivery of CPD.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

A course in communication skills training (CST) which is specifically designed for veterinary students is now in its third year at Liverpool Veterinary School. This has been developed in collaboration with the Department of Education at Liverpool and as a result of generous sponsorship from the Veterinary Defence Society. There are currently three units, one in each of the first, third and fourth years of the course where students operate in small groups and perform role-play with actors. With the additional involvement and assistance of local practitioners, the fourth year unit deals with some of the more complex communications issues such as breaking bad news, and handling emotion and aggression.

The success of this training programme has since spread to some of the other veterinary schools. Glasgow and Edinburgh have their own units, which have been developed from the Liverpool model, and Cambridge has run a unit based on the video scenarios produced at Liverpool. The Liverpool team (comprising Paula Stockley and Alan Radford MRCVS) has also visited the Royal Veterinary College in London. The feedback from the students has been very encouraging and it is anticipated that specific training in communication skills will become a core feature of all veterinary undergraduate curricula, as has been the case in medicine for some years.

REGIONAL MEETINGS - SPRING 2002

This year the College will be holding its first round of Regional Meetings in Cornwall and Shropshire, at the following venues:

Tuesday 26 March - Alverton Manor, Truro

Wednesday 27 March - MacDonald Albrighton Hall, Shrewsbury

These meetings provide an opportunity for members to meet the Officers of the RCVS and to air their views on matters concerning and affecting the profession. The agenda is open, although submitting any questions/ comments to the College beforehand should ensure that full answers can be given on the day.

A buffet supper will be provided from 7pm, with both meetings due to start at 8pm and finish around 10pm. To book your place, please contact Christine Pithey on c.pithey@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0725. Further details, including a report of last November's meetings, may be found on the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Our apologies for the confusion of dates and addresses in the first invitations sent out.

EDUCATION ISSUES

continued from page 1

UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE EDUCATION STRATEGY STEERING GROUP

The overall response to the group's proposals has been positive, and the majority of respondents have agreed with the principles set out in the consultation paper. There was widespread support for the proposal that CPD should eventually become a requirement for continued registration, as well as for proposals to modularise RCVS Certificate qualifications. There was also agreement that the five-year veterinary degree should be retained as a broad, science based course leading to achievement of the 'day one' competences. As expected, many respondents outlined concerns on points of detail, particularly on the perceived barriers to implementation. Many were concerned that the framework could prove costly to implement, or felt that there was

a danger of introducing excessive bureaucracy into a system that needed to remain flexible in the interests of animal welfare.

One topic that has generated a lot of discussion is the proposed professional training phase for new graduates. Again, there was a lot of support for the general principle, particularly from younger respondents who welcomed the suggestion of a more structured introduction to work in the profession, but many commented that the concept could be burdensome to implement. In response to comments received, the Strategy Group is now discussing how a period of professional training for new graduates could be best implemented without placing excessive burdens on

practices. It is likely that a pilot programme would be needed before any large scale changes were introduced. Group members have been discussing these points in more detail with a number of practices, and BSAVA is also contributing significantly to the consultation, by circulating a further questionnaire to its members.

It was also clear from comments received that more attention needs to be given in the framework to the role of mixed practice, to the importance of research, and to the implications for overseas vets applying to practise in the UK. The Strategy Group will be discussing these points further with interested parties over the coming months and is aiming to produce its final recommendations on a long term education strategy to Council in the Summer.

You can still access the consultation document, "A Framework for 2010 and Beyond" on the RCVS website at: http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vet_surgeons/education/esg_consultation.html. An update report will be given at RCVS Day in July. Please see page 8.



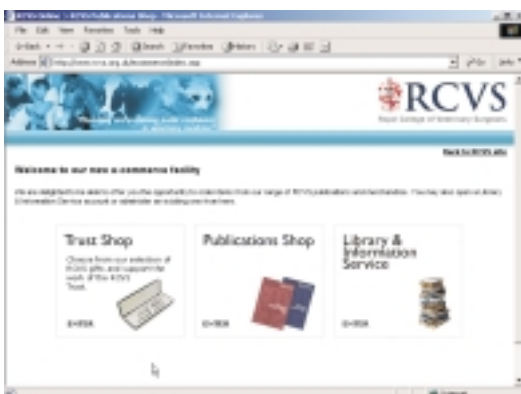
Members of the RCVS Education Strategy Steering Group meeting at the Royal Ocean Racing Club in November. Standing: Anne Jermy (RCVS), Chris Tufnell, seated from left: Tim Greet, Betty Philip, Neil Gorman, Julie Fitzpatrick, Julian Wells and David Noakes. Absent: Carl Padgett. (Secretary to the Group, not pictured, Freda Andrews)

continued from page 1

COUNTDOWN TO E-COMMERCE LAUNCH

catalogues in your own time, make your selection and submit your order online instead. All details are encrypted and sent via a secure server and we aim to dispatch your order within 14 days.

There are a number of discounts available on certain publications and gifts and of course any purchase from the range of RCVS gifts will support the work of the RCVS Trust.



In addition to the two online shops, you may also purchase RCVS Library services, either by depositing money into your account or arranging to pay an invoice; you may also open a new Library & Information Service account from here if you do not already have one.

Ultimately, we aim to increase the e-commerce facility by providing members with the option of paying retention fees and examination fees, quickly and simply, over the Internet.

SURVEY RETURNS - APATHY OR CONTENTMENT?

Many thanks to those of you who responded to the communications audit survey which was distributed last November. We received just over a thousand responses (just under 6% of the profession) which was rather lower than expected - could this mean that the majority of members are happy with the College's communications, or now too resigned to take action? The responses are currently being analysed - please watch this space for the results.

We received a significantly higher response to the Mini-Manpower survey, circulated in January 2002 with approximately 24% of members replying. These results will be used to update the larger Manpower survey of 2000, and enable the College to monitor trends and developments in the veterinary profession. Our thanks again to those who responded.

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

1. There have been three meetings of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since the last Council meeting, during which 31 new cases as well as ongoing cases were considered. 2 of the new cases were referred to solicitors for investigation and formal statements. 10 cases (all of which are ongoing cases involving a total of 3 different veterinary surgeons) were referred to the Disciplinary Committee. There have been 5 interviews and 2 practice visits since the last Council meeting.
2. Three cases are specifically reported to Council and the profession.
3. The first case concerned an allegation that the practice supplied by post an alternative prescription only medicine to a cat owner without explaining its usage. The usual product was the flea product, Program administered orally. The alternative product was Frontline administered through the skin. The owner administered the new product orally. The Committee decided that the veterinary surgeon should have specifically explained how the product differed and how it should be used, even though the owner could have read the product information sent with the product. The Committee considered that the complaint might have been resolved without recourse to the College, if at the outset the practice had offered an apology and a refund.
4. The second case concerned a complaint about the fees charged by a practice for providing treatment to a cat with a blocked bladder. The cat was initially admitted and given emergency first aid. Subsequently the veterinary surgeon contacted the client, but treatment options and costs were not discussed. The client was concerned to receive an invoice for £445. Weekend hospitalisation was recommended and the bill rose to £850. Again the client was not informed of the likely costs involved. The Committee decided that there was a point following emergency treatment when treatment options and costs could have been discussed with the client and the practice was advised accordingly.
5. The third case concerned a veterinary surgeon's care for an animal during and following surgery. The Committee acknowledged that complications can be encountered following surgery and the College's role in relation to such complaints was to decide whether (if at all) the treatment given fell so far below the standard to be expected that it might amount to serious professional misconduct. The Committee decided there was no indication of serious professional misconduct in the complaint. However, in this case the consent form for the administration of general anaesthetic was barely legible. The Committee stressed the importance of clear documentation to ensure an accurate record that informed consent had been given.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE HEARINGS

MR HANS F BAIER

On 26 November 2001 the Disciplinary Committee held an Inquiry into Mr Hans F Baier, who was charged with applying an official health mark to a bovine animal allowing it to enter the human food chain, when acting as an OVS for the Meat Hygiene Service, when he knew that the animal was not eligible to do so. Mr Baier was also charged with dishonestly altering documentation to disguise the fact that the animal was over thirty months at the time of slaughter.

The Committee found the charges proved against Mr Baier and before passing Judgment, considered his mitigation. The animal concerned was one day over thirty months when it was slaughtered; there was no human health issue; he had dealt with a similar situation some months earlier by refusing to health mark the over age animal; he was working in a small plant and was subjected to suggestions and pressure as to how he should handle the situation; and he had exercised his discretion when the regulations gave him no discretion. Mr Baier gained no

financial benefit and lost his job as a result. Balancing these and other factors but mindful of the need to maintain public confidence in the profession, the Committee decided that Mr Baier should have his registration suspended for a period of twelve months.

MR MICHAEL J ROACH

On 29 January 2002 the Disciplinary Committee held a resumed Inquiry into Mr Michael J Roach. Mr Roach was brought before the Committee in January/February 2000 and found guilty of conduct disgraceful in a professional respect in relation to a charge of failing to provide an adequate level of professional care in carrying out the castration of a guinea pig.

Substantial mitigating circumstances were presented to the Committee, relating to Mr Roach's health and personal circumstances. Mr Roach entered into undertakings that included severe restrictions on his surgical practice, compulsory CPD and the obligation to provide regular medical reports to the College.

In view of the efforts of Mr Roach in complying with his undertakings set by the Committee and the improvements achieved in relation to his medical and professional position, the Committee concluded this matter by giving Mr Roach a warning as to his future conduct.

DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

MR JOHN ALAN ARMSTRONG

On January 14, 2002, the Disciplinary Committee resumed an Inquiry into Mr John Alan Armstrong and in addition heard new charges against him. (1) The Inquiry had been listed for November 2001 but was adjourned at Mr Armstrong's request.

The resumed Inquiry related to a hearing held on January 23, 2001, when the Committee found that Mr Armstrong had discharged a springer spaniel so soon after a major operation that he could not have reasonably expected her condition to have stabilised. In postponing judgment for 2 years, the Committee had directed that Mr Armstrong undertake at least 15 hours of appropriate and verifiable CPD per quarter and keep within his own areas of competence save for the requirement to provide emergency first aid.

The new charges against Mr Armstrong, found proved by the Committee, alleged that in March 2001, some 3 months after the hearing in January, Mr Armstrong had failed to provide an adequate level of post-operative care to a Staffordshire terrier. The Committee also found that in carrying out major surgery on the dog and putting himself in a position where the dog might need critical care and/or post-operative support, Mr Armstrong took an unjustified risk with the dog's welfare in view of the finding of the Disciplinary Committee on 23 January 2001.

Mr Armstrong was present during the hearing on January 23, 2001 but was neither present nor represented at subsequent hearings in November 2001 and on January 14, 2002.

The Committee concluded that Mr Armstrong's conduct disclosed a blatant disregard for the welfare of the animals under his care and directed that the only appropriate judgment in respect of each and every charge was that Mr Armstrong be struck off the Register.

The Chairman also said that "His attitude towards other members of the profession during the interim period of January to November 2001 showed a disinclination to abide by the procedures of the Royal College and a rejection of its efforts to assist him towards an improvement in his clinical skills."

DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

MR MICHAEL ANTHONY PETER SIMONS

On November 29, 2001 the Disciplinary Committee held an Inquiry into Mr Michael Anthony Peter Simons, who was charged with failing to store safely medicines, including pethidine, a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985. Mr Simons was also charged with failing to take reasonable steps to prevent Mrs Diana Simons, his former wife, from having access to pethidine when he knew she was habitually injecting herself with pethidine. (Mrs Simons died from an overdose of pethidine.) In addition he was charged with failing to maintain adequate professional standards in his practice based at his home and with failing to respond to enquiries from the College.

Mr Simons accepted the facts of each charge and pleaded guilty to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

In considering the case, the Committee noted that veterinary surgeons have the right and privilege to obtain, store and prescribe medicines for use in their practice and that the public relies upon the profession not to abuse this privilege. The Committee considered that the Code of Practice on Medicines issued by the British Veterinary Association amply supported the law itself.

The Committee accepted in mitigation that Mr Simons had had a distinguished career as a veterinary surgeon specialising in equine practice and that the Inquiry involved personal and tragic circumstances for Mr Simons.

The Committee concluded that the first three charges were sufficiently serious that it had no alternative but to order Mr Simons' name be removed from the Register. As for the fourth charge, the Committee stated that it was the duty of all veterinary surgeons to respond to letters or other communications from the College, to enable the College to carry out its statutory responsibilities.

SCHEDULE 3 ISSUES

Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 allows listed veterinary nurses to give medical treatment or carry out minor surgery (not involving entry into a body cavity) to companion animals, subject to certain conditions. In November 2000 the RCVS Council agreed that the Schedule ought to be changed to allow VNs with appropriate training to deal with species other than companion animals, and also to provide for student VNs to give treatment under supervision. A Ministerial Order for this purpose is expected to be made by Parliament very soon.

It has come to the attention of the College that veterinary nurses may be performing canine castrations. Castration by any technique cannot be described as "minor surgery", so it should not be delegated even to a listed VN. It has also been suggested that unqualified assistants are injecting medicines in some practices. This is medical treatment, and should only be given by listed VNs.

VETERINARY NURSING ISSUES

PROGRESS WITH NEW TRAINING PRACTICE APPROVAL

The new arrangements for the approval of veterinary nurse training practices (TPs) are progressing well. Over 360 practices have now linked with the 40 new Veterinary Nursing Approved Centres (VNACs) and feedback from those that have made the move has been very positive. Practices have all been visited by their new centres and are experiencing significantly improved levels of support in VN training matters. Reminders will shortly be sent to those ATACs which have not yet made a VNAC link. It is vital that these practices actively seek TP status immediately; the approval process takes up to three months and VNACs are likely to have an influx of last minute applications. There will be no extensions of ATAC status after July and the training of any students remaining in these practices must be quality assured directly by the RCVS (which will entail visit fees) if it is to continue.

In Scotland all ATACs were required to become part of the new arrangements by 1 January. Although the timescale was very tight the response has been good; of 82 Scottish ATACs, 59 have now been approved as TPs and 15 are in the process of being approved. Three practices had no students and therefore have no immediate need to seek approval. The remaining five practices will be directly quality assured by the RCVS until their students complete training or they elect to associate with a VNAC.

CERTIFICATION ISSUES CONCERNING VN TRAINING

Practice principals are reminded that any declarations made with regard to veterinary nurse training must comply with the RCVS guidance on veterinary certification. Cases continue to arise of students employed at unapproved branch practices whilst enrolment forms state employment at the main (approved) practice.

A small number of ATACs have found difficulty in gaining TP approval because either the practice caseload or facilities do not meet the requirements. In two cases the forms originally submitted to the RCVS for ATAC approval contain apparently false certification concerning facilities e.g. the presence of a separate operating theatre and preparation area. The College views knowingly misleading declarations as a serious breach of professional conduct, which may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Application forms for Training Practice approval must reflect an honest picture of the facilities, case load and resources available at the practice and its ability to support veterinary nurses in training.

REVIEW OF VN QUALIFICATION

New veterinary nursing occupational standards were approved by QCA in January. These are now informing a review of the VN levels 2 and 3 awards. The syllabus is being refined and updated and will be ready for use this autumn. In order to preserve and improve access to public funding, an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship in veterinary nursing is being developed by Lantra with the College. This framework will be in place, once again, by the autumn.

The new Standards are available for information on the RCVS website. Drafts of the level 2 syllabus review will be posted on the site for consultation shortly along with a response form. Practices are encouraged to participate so that the widest possible response can be gained. Those wishing to receive a hard copy may request this from the VN Department (020 7202 0788).

NEW REGISTRATION CARDS FOR VNS



Veterinary nurses now receive an annual VN Registration Card which provides evidence of their current Listed status. This move should make it easier for employers to check a nurse's entitlement to undertake work which falls under the provisions of Schedule 3. Practices are asked to check the VN Registration Card whenever employing a new VN and annually thereafter. This check is especially important when employing a locum nurse.

RCVS LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

ELECTRONIC SERVICES

We have negotiated access for members to two bundles of electronic journals: Blackwell Science's Synergy and Elsevier's ScienceDirect. Members can also access the Library & Information Service catalogue online. For an information sheet on how to use these services contact us: library@rcvs.org.uk

NEW MODELS IN VETERINARY INFORMATION

We are organising a meeting in late spring under the title "New Models in Veterinary Information". It will be an opportunity for members to tell us how you want the library and information service to develop; the meeting will also hear how others, particularly the medical and other health care professions, have approached the problem of access to the scientific knowledge base. Further details of this meeting will be finalised in early March; if you are interested in attending, please let Tom Roper know: t.roper@rcvs.org.uk.

PUBLICISING OUR SERVICES

We are also preparing publicity for the veterinary press to promote our services and would like to include real-life examples of how using our service has made a difference, for example to the management of a particular case or to achieving a particular professional goal. We can anonymise examples, where necessary. If you can offer an instance that might be useful or interesting, please contact the Head of Library & Information Services, Tom Roper: t.roper@rcvs.org.uk

RCVS TRUST

The RCVS Trust says 'Thank You'

... to all donors to the Dame Olga Uvarov Scholarship Fund. Contributions have topped £3000 and are still coming in. The travel scholarships will be offered later in 2002 for projects in 2003 - interested applicants should watch our website for details.

... to the growing ranks of 1100 RCVS Credit Card holders. The RCVS credit card is one of the most robust amongst UK professional organisations and has to date generated over £20,000 for the Trust's educational work. We receive royalties when a new card is first 'activated', every time it's used for purchases, and at every card anniversary. Contact the Trust office for information about applying for your RCVS credit card.

... to purchasers of RCVS Gifts. Orders were particularly high before Christmas, but are welcome throughout the year, providing steady income for the Trust. We're delighted to offer two new note cards in the gift range (pictured below) at £7.95 for a pack of 10, and a reduced price for multiple packs. Ordering is easy - contact the Trust office or log on to our website at www.rcvstrust.org.uk

Finally, please watch out for information from the Trust over the coming months about how the Trust's funds are distributed. And also about the many other ways RCVS Members can contribute to our work. Meanwhile, to all of our ongoing supporters, thank you again.

Contacting the RCVS Trust:

RCVS Trust, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road • London SW1P 2AF • Tel: 020 7202 0741 • Fax: 020 7222 2004
Email: trust@rcvs.org.uk • Web: www.rcvstrust.org.uk



8



New Note cards available from the RCVS Trust.

RCVS DAY - HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR PLACE YET?

Members are invited to contact the College to obtain their free tickets to attend RCVS Day on Friday, 5 July 2002. As numbers are limited, allocation will be on a 'first come, first served' basis.

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

10.00 am: Prayer of Thanksgiving/Short Address

10.15 am: AGM and Presentation of Awards

To be followed by:

Lecture entitled "A Framework for 2010 and Beyond" by Professor N T Gorman BVSc PhD DipACVIM FRCVS, Chairman of the RCVS Education Strategy Steering Group. This will be followed by a Question and Answer Session.

12.30 pm: Reception

For those arriving early, coffee will be available from 09.30 am. Please contact Dawn Wiggins on 020 7202 0761 or by email d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk for further information and tickets.

Please see article on page 1 for an update on the work of the ESSG.