



RCVS

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons



news

JUNE 2002

PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN VETERINARY MEDICINE



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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 DAY 2002

Members are invited to contact the College to obtain their free tickets to attend RCVS Day on Friday 5 July 2002.

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

10.00 am: Prayer of Thanksgiving/ Short Address

10.15 am: AGM and Presentation of Awards

to be followed by a Lecture entitled "A Framework for 2010 and Beyond" by Professor Neil T Gorman BVSc PhD DipACVIM FRCVS, followed by a Question and Answer Session.

12.30 pm: Reception

For those arriving early, coffee will be available from 9.30 am. To apply for tickets, please contact Mrs Dawn Wiggins at RCVS, Belgravia House, 62/64 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AF. Tel: (020) 7202 0761 or e-mail:



Professor Neil Gorman - the main speaker at RCVS Day 2002

d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

The report of the Education Strategy Steering Group, chaired by Professor Gorman, was issued in July 2001. Since that time there has been wide and continuing consultation with the profession culminating in a set of recommendations which Council has now approved to progress to feasibility testing (see report on page 5).

Professor Gorman is a Past President of the RCVS and has just been re-elected to serve on Council for a further four years.

RCVS FEES FOR 2003-4

Council has agreed to proposed increases in the Retention, Registration and Restoration Fees as part of the draft budget for 2003. The proposals for increasing the fees, which now need to be considered by the Privy Council before they can be confirmed in November, take into account the actual costs involved in supporting the different categories of membership. Council decided that the fees for overseas and retired members should be increased, as it was not acceptable for these members to continue being subsidised by their professional colleagues.

In addition, it was agreed that the Restoration Fee should be significantly increased so that it will be more of a deterrent to members who risk being removed from the Register for non-payment.

The fees proposed for 2003 are as follows:

Membership category	2002	2003
Home members	£208	£216
Overseas members	£83	£108
Retired members	£20	£54
Registration	£230	£240
Restoration	£22	£108
Temporary Registration	£220	£228

NEW SCOPE FOR VETERINARY NURSES

It may not have hit the headlines, but Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 was amended from 10 June to give VNs new opportunities. This is progress toward the RCVS Council's aim "to increase the range of tasks which veterinary surgeons can safely decide to delegate to an appropriately trained paraprofessional".

Listed VNs can now treat animals other than companion animals. All kinds of animals are now within a listed VN's scope, provided the veterinary surgeon directing the treatment is satisfied that the nurse is qualified to carry it out. Initially this will only affect nurses looking after horses and other equine species. Student VNs can also now give treatment under supervision in the course of their training.

New guidance is on the RCVS website and will be printed with the VN List.

REDUCED FEES FOR POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS

It is clear from correspondence received from members that the RCVS did not advertise widely enough a concession introduced in April 2001 that members registered as undertaking full-time post-graduate courses with higher education establishments in the United Kingdom would be eligible for payment of a reduced fee, provided they met specific criteria. Council agreed that:

- the reduced fee would not be available to members undertaking residencies, scholarships or internships unless they were also studying for a post-graduate qualification;
- members enrolled for an RCVS certificate or diploma would not be eligible unless they were also studying for a European or American College diploma;
- the reduced fee would be available for a maximum of 3 years and would be half the home members fee;
- the Registrar would be final arbiter for deciding eligibility for payment of the reduced fee; and,
- eligibility for the reduced fee would start in the April after commencement of the course.

Members who consider they are eligible for payment of the reduced fee should contact the Head of Membership for further information on (020) 7222 2001.

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EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2002

Just over 29% of members replied to the 2002 Employment Survey. This survey was much shorter than the previous ones as it was designed only to pick up the main trends in veterinary employment. The results will be used to help the College decide when it needs to carry out another full survey of veterinary employment, to ensure that an up-to-date picture of the profession is maintained.

Analysis of the results is still under way, but some familiar trends remain:

- The proportion of women in the profession is now 36%, up 3% from two years ago, and their different working patterns continue to have an impact on practice.
- The shift towards small animal practice and away from large and farm animal practice is continuing.
- Average working hours seem to be falling, but on-call hours are increasing.

The full report should be available on the RCVS web site in the summer.

RCVS COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS

The results of the **2002 RCVS Council Elections** were as follows (those in bold were elected). The number of ballot papers returned was 2697.

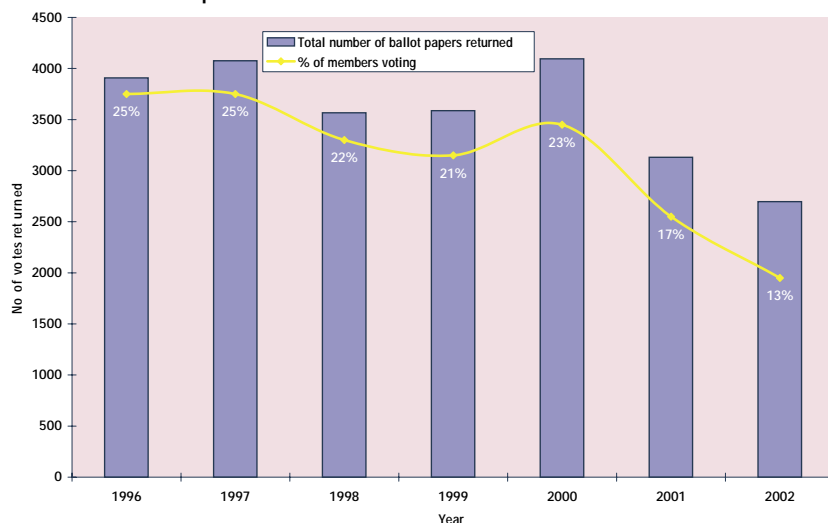
John Parker	1503
Christine Shield	1340
Judy MacArthur Clark	1290
Geoffrey Skeritt	1226
Neil Gorman	1210
John Bailey	1183
Anthony Buxton	1063
Bertie Ellis	1046
Alan Richardson	970
Roger Green	921
Thomas Lonsdale	276

Of the eleven candidates standing for election, just one new person, John Bailey, was successful. Four sitting Council Members were re-elected and John Parker was elected back on Council having lost his seat in 2001. RCVS

President Roger Green's term on Council will now finish this July after 12 years' service. Council has decided that Roger Eddy, the current Senior Vice President will continue in this role for another year.

Once again the profession's participation in these Elections dropped, with just 13% of members choosing to vote. This continued a downward trend seen over the past few years (see chart) and represents a 24% fall on last year's response alone. It is unclear whether this poor response indicates members' disenchantment with the College and its activities or reflects a more general voter apathy seen in elections nationwide. An insight into members' views on the RCVS has been gleaned from the Communications Audit survey (see page 7) although the response to this was even lower!

Votes cast in past seven RCVS Council elections



DART GUNS

Council approved new stricter guidance for veterinary surgeons concerning "Medicinal Compounds for use in Dart Guns". The new guidance provides that before the supply of such medicines, both the dart gun licence holder and the veterinary surgeon should sign a written agreement; the written agreement to include such information as the details of the dart gun licence holder's firearms licence, confirmation that the dart gun licence holder will provide a signed receipt for the supply of medicines used for restraint (such as Immobilon) and the details of specified antagonists, and that these will be available in an emergency.

The guidance is available on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk) and hard copies may be obtained from the Professional Conduct department.

VSA/(SP)A ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

The RCVS and Home Office have produced a flow diagram, with examples, to help with the understanding of the "Report of the working party to consider the interface between the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986", an Annex to the Guide to Professional Conduct, Edition 2002. This may be viewed on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk) or a hard copy obtained from the Professional Conduct department.

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL JUNE 2002

1. There have been three meetings of the Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee since the last Council meeting, during which 27 new cases as well as ongoing cases were considered. Two of the new cases were referred to solicitors for investigation and formal statements. Two cases were referred to the Disciplinary Committee. There have been two interviews and two practice visits since the last Council meeting.
2. Four cases are specifically reported to Council and the profession.
3. The first case concerned an allegation of failing to provide an adequate 24-hour emergency service. The elderly veterinary surgeon went on holiday for two weeks thinking he had a long-standing agreement with another veterinary practice to cover his out-of-hours emergency service. This was not the case. The veterinary surgeon was interviewed at his home and in all the circumstances decided that it was time for him to retire. The Committee decided that the complaint should be closed.
4. The second case concerned the overnight care that had been provided to a dog. The dog was left as an in-patient throughout the night and found dead the next morning. The Committee discussed the information that clients might expect to receive from veterinary surgeons concerning overnight care of in-patients. In the Committee's view clients should be advised of the level of overnight care. The Committee decided that the complaint should be closed with advice to the veterinary surgeon that clients should be informed of the level of care provided overnight. The Committee noted that there was little evidence on the cause of the dog's death and that the post-mortem was

inconclusive and had no reason to conclude that the care provided to the dog had been anything other than appropriate.

5. The third case concerned the removal of a dog's dewclaw by a veterinary surgeon, which the owner later said was without his consent. The Committee was unclear whether in this case there was a cut pad, which needed suturing, or a pad that had been penetrated by a dewclaw, which needed to be resolved by work that included suturing. It was unclear what consent had been given and the consent form was ambiguous. The Committee decided that the case should be closed with advice that consent forms should record more clearly the precise procedures which the client had consented to.
6. The fourth case concerned a veterinary surgeon from the Republic of Ireland who had treated animals in the North of England and signed relevant certificates. There was concern that the animals had not been under the veterinary surgeon's care and that certificates had been signed inappropriately. The veterinary surgeon was interviewed at the RCVS on a formal basis (a full transcript is taken of a formal interview, which, if the case is referred on, may be put before the Disciplinary Committee). Subsequently the PI Committee decided that the veterinary surgeon gave an explanation of his involvement in the matter, although there were some inconsistencies in the evidence. The Committee decided that the case should be closed with advice to the veterinary surgeon that he review the principles of certification. The Committee also indicated it would be concerned if any similar complaint arose in the future.

DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

MR MAURICE J KIRK

On 29 May 2002 the Disciplinary Committee concluded an eight-day Inquiry into Maurice John Kirk, of St Donat's, Llantwit Major, South Glamorgan. The Committee found that Mr Kirk had been convicted of criminal offences which rendered him unfit to practise veterinary surgery and decided that his name should be removed from the Register. The Committee also found that he was guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, and for this decided that he should be suspended from the Register for six months.

The offences which were taken into consideration by the Committee in reaching its decision to remove Mr Kirk from the Register were motoring offences, including failure to provide a specimen of breath for a breath test; public order offences, including common assault, threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, and resisting a constable; failure to prevent the deposit of controlled waste; and an offence under the Building Act 1984.

The Committee concluded that Mr Kirk had been guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect by reason of his behaviour when attending an injured dog on 7 January 2001 at Cold Knap Beach, Cardiff. The charge against Mr Kirk was that he had behaved inappropriately by acting in an aggressive and/or angry and/or agitated and/or rude manner, thereby bringing the profession into disrepute. Mr Kirk would not give the Committee a full clinical account of this incident, and as a result the Committee was not reassured that his clinical approach and judgment was unimpaired by annoyance and agitation.

Commenting on the decisions, Mr Brian Jennings, the Chairman of the disciplinary hearing, said: "The veterinary profession seeks to maintain public confidence and trust, not only in the practical competence of its members to treat animals, but also in the standing of the profession within the community. The behaviour of its members should not be such as to bring the profession into disrepute."

The Committee indicated that it will give full reasons for its decision and Mr Kirk has indicated his intention to appeal against the Committee's decisions.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

The next round of [Regional Meetings](#) will be held on 26 and 27 November in the Peterborough and Darlington areas.

A report of the March Regional Meetings, is available on the website.

ADVERTISING - RCVS GUIDANCE TO BE REVIEWED

The Advisory Committee has indicated that it will review the RCVS advice on advertising set out in the Guide to Professional Conduct, Edition 2002, at Part 2, C, "advertising". In particular the Committee will review the guidance that

Where fees feature in any promotion they must encompass a range of professional services offered by the practice, and advise that further details about possible variations or additional costs may be obtained on request.

The guidance on the advertising of medicines will also be reviewed.

Any members who wish to contribute to the discussion are asked to send comments or observations to the Chair of the Advisory Committee, c/o the Professional Conduct Department at the usual address (front cover), before September 2002.

INCREASES IN FEES FOR RCVS EXAMINATIONS

Following discussion at the Specialisation and Further Education Committee (SFEC) and the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee, Council has agreed to increase the fees for enrolment and examination entry for RCVS Certificates and Diplomas by 20%. Registration and examination fees for the Fellowship and for Specialist Recognition will be increased by 3%. The new rates are set out below and will come into effect from 1 January 2003.

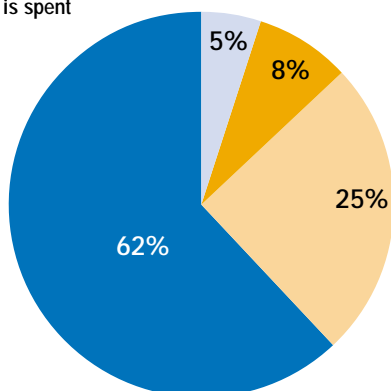
The increases follow a review of operating costs and the introduction of more robust procedures for Certificates and Diplomas designed to ensure that the quality of the awards is maintained. As the costs of running RCVS postgraduate examinations cannot be subsidised by members' retention fees, the exams must operate on a self-financing basis. Fees paid by

candidates cover not only the honoraria plus travel and subsistence expenses paid to examiners, invigilators and practical assistants, but also the hire of examination facilities and materials necessary to run practicals, postal and courier charges, and the costs of running subject boards, as well as administrative overheads such as staff time and IT support. Examination fees cover the direct costs of running the exams, where as enrolment fees covers staff overhead costs. In order to maintain the standards of the examinations, it was therefore agreed that increases were necessary.

If you are thinking of enrolling for a Certificate or Diploma, you might like to note that the next deadline for enrolment is 1 November 2002, when the current 2002 enrolment fee will apply. Candidates who are already enrolled and who wish to enter for the 2003 examinations will need to enter by 1 March 2003, when the new rates will apply (see box).

From 2003, candidates who do not succeed at Part A of the Certificate or Diploma examinations (submitted work) and who cannot therefore proceed to the rest of the examination, will, for the first time, be able to claim a partial refund of their examination fees.

How the examination fee is spent



- Honoraria for Examiners, Assistants, Invigilators, Local Organisers
- Examiners' travel and subsistence
- Postage & courier charges
- Hire of facilities & animals, insurance & administration costs

	Current Fees (2002)	Fees applicable from January 2003
Certificates:		
Initial enrolment	£290	£350
Final approval of experience	No charge	No charge
Examination entry	£420	£505
Diplomas		
Initial enrolment	£170	£205
Final approval of experience	No charge	No charge
Examination entry	£585	£700
Fellowship by Thesis:		
Registration	£275	£285
Submission of thesis for examination	£700	£720
Re-examination of thesis	£350	£360
Fellowship by MCL:		
Preliminary submission	£275	£285
Submission of publications	£700	£720
Recognised Specialist		
Initial Application/reapplication	£165	£170
Annual listing	£78	£80
Restoration fee	£20	£20

TOWARDS GLOBAL ACCREDITATION OF VETERINARY TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS?

At the moment, the differing systems of accreditation across the globe create significant barriers to the free movement of veterinarians from one continent to another. This impedes the sharing of good practice, of newer techniques and of experience in general. The consumer and the animal owning public are, in the end, the losers. Currently, if a veterinary school wishes to ensure that its graduates have free movement throughout the western world, it will need to be assessed with a positive result by at least two, or possibly three of the following four systems: (i) the AVMA, (ii) the RCVS, (iii) the Australasian and (iv) the European system administered by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (the EAEVE) and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (the FVE).

At the instigation of the AVMA, the RCVS and others attended a meeting in Chicago. Chairman, and former AVMA President Jim Nave reiterated that it had no desire to be the "global accreditor", but that it was concerned about standards.

It is clear that there are differences in the application of standards in the different systems. The AVMA is extremely punctilious on matters such as buildings, health and safety, and stocking of out-of-date drugs. The other systems are more concerned about curricula and about the adequacy of teaching materials - especially clinical and pathological material.

At the conclusion, it was agreed that all parties would embark upon a period of knowledge acquisition and confidence building. Each system would invite observers and/or participants from the other systems. If everyone is then reassured that the systems are truly equivalent, a system of "mutual accreditation of the accreditation systems" - or something similar - might be reached.

This is a good beginning, but it seems unrealistic to expect positive outcome in less than five years. In the meanwhile, the RCVS has agreed to host the next meeting in London in some 18 months time.

EDUCATION STRATEGY - A FRAMEWORK FOR 2010 AND BEYOND

RCVS Council has approved far-reaching proposals from the Education Strategy Steering Group (ESSG) which was set up in autumn 2000 and chaired by Professor Neil Gorman. The group's remit was to review the key issues facing education and training in the veterinary profession and present a draft strategy to enable the RCVS to meet identified challenges over the next 10-20 years.

ESSG published its first proposals on a framework in a consultation document in July 2001. The document was circulated to all BVA specialist and territorial divisions, as well as being available on the RCVS website. Comments were invited and 98 written responses were received, of which 45 were from veterinary organisations including various BVA divisions. Eighteen veterinary organisations, including RSPCA, PDSA, VDS and others, attended oral evidence gathering sessions in November 2001. The overall response was very supportive of the framework in principle, although reservations were expressed on matters of detail. Members of ESSG undertook further individual discussions with practices and members of the profession concerning proposals for the professional training phase, and BSAVA circulated a questionnaire on this topic to its members in February 2002: of the 423 responses it received, 77% supported the proposal for a professional training programme (PTP). ESSG members have also participated in various discussions on the framework, including those at AVT&RW and BCVA congresses and the VetCPD conference in Edinburgh.

The latest proposals (see box) take account of the views expressed during the initial consultation. ESSG has sought to develop a clear vision for the future, and its proposals aim to present a holistic, strategic view of education and training for the profession. It has sought to develop a consensus on approaches and firmly believes that change should be managed rather than imposed prematurely on the profession. The proposed framework is therefore intended to be flexible and adaptable to change in the light of pilot testing and further discussions on implementation.

The proposals now move into the stage of feasibility testing, including exploration of options for funding. Pilot studies will be undertaken, the first starting in 2002 to test out the so-called Year One competences and skills lists that have been refined somewhat since first publication last year. A second phase pilot of the Professional Training Programme will begin in 2003, following the progress of a cohort of new graduates over a two-year period.

One of the proposals is that a network of RCVS Postgraduate Deans should oversee PTP by liaising with PTP graduates in their area and providing the necessary quality assurance for the programme. Depending on the results of the pilots, the network would need to be in place by 2005.

IT solutions will need to be developed during 2004 to support the framework. There is already work in progress at Liverpool and within other professions in developing on-line personal development

files, and it is hoped to build on these developments to provide support to PTP.

Council agreed in principle that there should be a statutory requirement for all veterinary surgeons to maintain their competence, linked to the periodic renewal of their licence to practise. Although this would need a change to legislation to implement fully, it was agreed that more could be done now to strengthen the College's CPD requirements. The development of modular Certificates, aligned to CPD provision, will be a significant step towards improving the coherence of the College's examinations and CPD provision.

A challenging agenda has now been set for RCVS Council to implement over the coming years. Adjustments to the framework may follow further feasibility testing - it was emphasised that nothing is cast in stone - but there is now a clearer vision of the direction the Council should be following for its education policy. The ESSG will continue to consult with the profession throughout the process.

A more detailed account of the Education Framework proposals will be published and circulated to all members soon.

STATUTORY MEMBERSHIP EXAMINATION

Sixty-seven candidates will sit this year's examination, a higher than usual entry owing to the FMD-related cancellation of the 2001 examination. Another fifteen veterinary surgeons were accepted as candidates for the 2002 examination but subsequently had to withdraw their applications due to personal problems.

Over three-quarters of this year's candidates are currently "seeing practice" in preparation for this examination, or have already done so. The RCVS is grateful to members and their practices for allowing these veterinary surgeons to attend in order to gain valuable practical and clinical experience in the UK.

The Veterinary Surgeons (Practice by Students) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 permit candidates to gain experience in UK veterinary procedures by attendance at a UK veterinary practice "for the purpose of entering for the MRCVS examination". Any veterinary surgeon who is interested in allowing candidates to attend their practice can find out more about the regulations from the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk or contact Anne Jermy in the Education Department on (020) 7202 0705.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

- The broad, science-based five-year veterinary degree, should equip graduates at least with the core 'Day One competences'. Graduates will then be entitled to register with the RCVS and receive their MRCVS when they graduate.
- A professional training programme should follow graduation.
- Pre-graduation differentiation electives could count towards PTP and eventual licence.
- The new graduate should work in a registered practice until 'Year One competences' have been achieved. A licence to practise within a broad named area would follow.
- Self-assessment and appraisal of competence during PTP will be based upon a portfolio approach similar to the dental profession.
- A network of RCVS Postgraduate Deans will oversee assessment of PTP.
- There should be a statutory requirement for all veterinary surgeons to maintain their competence, linked to the periodic renewal of their licence to practise.
- Those who wish to change direction and work in other areas may need to undergo conversion training leading to a revised licence to practise.
- By 2010 practices should be registered to undertake work in particular areas:
 - dependent upon the qualifications and experience of the staff;
 - the majority of practices should be able to achieve the required standard.
- The RCVS Certificate should be restructured to become more accessible for those in practice and modular.
- Achievement of a Certificate or of modules within it should become the norm for new practitioners.
- The RCVS Fellowship should be retained as the highest award of the College, and there should be greater convergence with European Colleges for the award of Diplomas where appropriate.
- Inclusion on the RCVS Recognised Specialist List should be open to Fellows, RCVS Diploma and European Diploma Holders.

DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

MR LAURENCE SWIFT

On 1 May 2002 the Disciplinary Committee dismissed three charges of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect against Mr Laurence Swift, principal veterinary surgeon at the William Street Veterinary Clinic in Herne Bay. The charges related to complaints made against him by two of his clients.

The first charge alleged that from 7 to 11 July 2000 Mr Swift had provided inadequate post-operative care to a Staffordshire bull terrier called Tyson, after an operation on 3 July. In dismissing the charge on the basis that Mr Swift had no case to answer, Dr Judy MacArthur Clark, Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, said "The Committee would like to make the point that in upholding the submission of 'no case to answer' it does not mean to convey the impression that it condones the way that Mr Swift handled this case. The Committee is very aware that the task facing Mr Swift was a difficult one, and that the outcome of the surgery on Tyson's leg was always going to be uncertain, and the healing time potentially lengthy. The Committee is very concerned that the owners of Tyson, Mr & Mrs Baddiley, do not seem to have been made fully aware of this."

The second and third charges related to Mr Swift's assessment and care of a greyhound called Thomas, which had injured its back late on the evening of Sunday 2 July 2000. That evening Mr Swift sedated and examined Thomas and administered pain relief. He took what the Committee described as the "unorthodox approach" of leaving Thomas in the owners' garden overnight. The owners called Mr Swift in the early hours of 3 July but he indicated that there was no more he could do at that time. Later on during the morning of 3 July Thomas was transferred to Mr Swift's practice. On 4 July Thomas was euthanased.

Dr Judy MacArthur Clark Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, said "Mr Swift was not wrong to adopt a conservative approach of waiting to see if Thomas would show signs of improvement within 48 hours...Mr Swift correctly sedated Thomas and administered pain relief but should have taken him there and then to his surgery for care and assessment." In relation to Thomas' assessment she said "the Committee does not commend all of Mr Swift's acts or omissions but on balance concludes that his assessment in the circumstances was adequate, but only barely so." In relation to Thomas' care she said, "the Committee finds that Mr

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UPDATE ON PRACTICE APPROVAL FOR VN TRAINING IN ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

At the time of going to press, 582 practices are fully approved as Training Practices (TPs) and many more are fulfilling action plans set by their Veterinary Nursing Approved Centres (VNACs) prior to confirmation of approval. VNACs are completing approximately 40 TP applications per week and submitting them to the Veterinary Nursing Department for final processing. It can be seen, therefore, that the majority of Approved Training and Assessment Centres (ATACs) are now either approved or are in the process of being so.

The RCVS, through its external verifiers, is actively following up practices which have student VNs in training but which have not yet embarked on approval as a TP. All must now seek TP approval without further delay. Alternatively, practices with candidates nearing the completion of Level 3, and which do not intend to employ new students, may continue as ATACs under direct monitoring by the RCVS (which will include visits to the practice) until all candidates have completed their NVQ awards. No NVQ certificates can be awarded to student VNs after 31 July 2002 unless such monitoring has taken place.

It is vitally important to note that no practice which is not a TP, a VNAC in its own right, or, exceptionally, an ATAC under direct RCVS monitoring arrangements, may enrol new student veterinary nurses after 31 July 2002. Neither will the College process enrolments for candidates before this date unless there is clear evidence that an ATAC practice is actively seeking TP approval.

The process of TP approval involves a visit from the proposed VNAC to determine that the requisite caseload, equipment and personnel are in place to support training and assessment. The majority of practices will find that this is relatively straightforward and many have found it a useful opportunity to discuss and clarify training issues. However, most practices will find that they are required to address some action points before approval can be confirmed. Common action points include registering an assessor for training, purchasing minor resources (eg. textbooks) and developing a system of personnel record keeping for students.

In a small but nonetheless significant number of instances, TP approval has been much more difficult. In these cases the practice has had serious deficiencies, including inadequate caseloads to support training, health and safety deficiencies and a lack of major resources such as separate operating theatre and surgical preparation areas. The RCVS has been

disturbed to note that self assessment forms completed by these practices to gain their original ATAC approval have been found to contain misrepresentations and that, as a result, student VNs have been training under less than satisfactory conditions and exemplars of acceptable practice.

REVISED SYLLABUS

The veterinary nursing awards are being reviewed at present in the light of the updated VN Occupational Standards. Whilst no major changes are being made, the syllabus is being updated and rationalised so that it reflects current practice and is easier to follow. Much of the current repetition has been removed. The [draft versions](#) are available on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk) for comment; a questionnaire is provided in order to facilitate giving feedback to the College, either by email, fax or post. The revised syllabus will be available in August and should be used by all students preparing for Level 2 examinations from July 2003 onwards.

EXAMINATION DATE REMINDER

The closing date for the winter 2002 examinations is 1 October 2002. Training Practice Principals are reminded that no late applications will be accepted for any reason. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that their correctly completed application and fee are posted in good time and to obtain proof of posting (or use recorded delivery).

When signing the supporting declaration, Principals should bear in mind that the portfolio should be nearing completion before either the Level 2 or Level 3 examination is attempted, ie. at least 60% completed by the time of application. Candidates are often keen to undertake an examination before this has been achieved. Examinations are summative, ie. they test all of the Occupational Standards (both knowledge and, in the case of Level 3, skills). Candidates who have not completed assessment of the Standards in practice will be placed at a disadvantage, especially at Level 3. Practice Principals should therefore be mindful of acceding to candidate pressure when signing examination applications.

The winter examination dates are:

**Written papers
Monday 2 December 2002**

**Practical examinations
Week commencing 9 December 2002**

FVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN BELFAST

The RCVS and the BVA played joint hosts to the FVE (Federation of Veterinarians of Europe) in Belfast this summer. The Northern Irish welcomed the delegates with the hospitality for which they are renowned and the Northern Ireland Agriculture Minister, Brid Rodgers formally opened the FVE AGM and was Guest of Honour at a Gala Dinner held at Belfast City Hall. At an "Irish night" held at Belfast Castle, joint hosts NIVA (Northern Irish Veterinary Association) and Veterinary Ireland announced a new joint cross-border veterinary sector education initiative.

After two full days of Section meetings, delegates then completed much work in the one and a half day long AGM, including:

- Turkey and Bulgaria were welcomed as new FVE members;
- A draft Guide to Good Veterinary Practice was approved;
- A three-year business plan and strategy were approved pending budgetary changes;
- Agreement was reached on the FVE position on the welfare of animals in transport;
- Wide-ranging discussions were held on the availability of medicines and the review of the EU Medicines Directive;
- Agreement was reached on the FVE position on religious slaughter.

The next meeting of FVE will be held in November 2002 in Brussels.



Agriculture Minister Brid Rodgers, is welcomed to the FVE AGM by RCVS President Roger Green (right) and BVA President Andrew Scott.

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Swift's professional care was of a poor standard but not so inadequate as to constitute disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

The Committee set out full reasons for its decision which may be viewed on the [RCVS website](http://www.rcvs.org.uk) (www.rcvs.org.uk). A hard copy may be obtained from the Professional Conduct department.

RCVS LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

Your Views Heard

The RCVS Library and Information Service recently ran a survey to inform the debate at the RCVS June Council meeting on the future of the service (reported below). The results show a high level of support but a lower level of awareness of some of the new value-added services the LIS can already supply.

Over 380 members responded, and among the headline results are:

- Around a third of veterinary surgeons refer to published information daily and a further third weekly
- The most useful information sources are the RCVS LIS followed by the National Library of Medicine's PubMed service (www.pubmed.gov)
- The most used services were book loans and document delivery; these were also considered the most important. Many were not aware that the LIS now offers access to electronic journals.
- Nearly 80% felt that current charges were about right and 85% felt that the RCVS should increase its support for the LIS. But 76% were prepared to pay an additional levy on top of the retention fee and 75% would support

an annual subscription for library services, at a level of £25 (61%).

- 93% of respondents were happy with the current location of the LIS at Belgravia House.

The LIS has also followed up literature search requests received over the past six months, to try to measure the impact our services have on the professions. Many used the searches to support expert witness work, research proposals, writing for scientific journals and communicating with clients and or the general public.

Decisions on the future of the LIS by Council and RCVS Trustees

The Council confirmed its decision made in 2000, that the College's annual contribution to LIS funding should be reduced over a five-year period from £172K to £122K. It was accepted that the College must control this expenditure and not just pay whatever costs are incurred. It had never been intended that the College should withdraw funding altogether, or that the LIS should be closed. Indeed Council Members expressed considerable support for the LIS and for the view that the veterinary

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COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

Thank you to everyone who replied to the Communications Survey sent out last autumn as part of a Communications Audit by the College. Amongst the main findings from the 1,200 responses received were:

- The RCVS should strengthen its links with its members, and especially practitioners, and really make an effort to find out what they think on important issues
- It should ensure that the important debates of the day, and the RCVS views on them, are explained clearly and rapidly to the membership

The results also showed that the RCVS website is becoming increasingly popular amongst members, although the main sources of information about the RCVS remain *RCVS News* and the veterinary press.

The full Communications questionnaire report (available on the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk) will be used by the College over the next few months to help develop its communications policy.

REVISED SYLLABUS

The veterinary nursing awards are being reviewed at present in light of the updated VN Occupational Standards. Whilst no major changes are being made, the syllabus is being updated and rationalised so that it reflects current practice and is easier to follow. Much of the current repetition has been removed. The draft versions are [available on the website](http://www.rcvs.org.uk) (www.rcvs.org.uk) for comment; a questionnaire is provided in order to facilitate giving feedback to the College, either by email, fax or post. The revised syllabus will be available in August and should be used by all students preparing for Level 2 examinations from July 2003 onwards.

**RCVS TRUST GRANTS
RECENTLY AWARDED**

**Millennium Residencies in
Production Animal Medicine
(£36,000)**

- Royal Veterinary College in partnership with Shepton Veterinary Group.
- Scottish Agricultural College Veterinary Science Division in partnership with Miller & Cochrane.

**John Lord Perry Research
Scholarship (up to £18,000)**

David Cockerill — to undertake an MSc and PhD in environmental toxicology.

**G Norman Hall Travel Scholarships
(£1000)**

- Graham Baird — to pursue research in the use of autogenous caseous lymphadenitis vaccine at the University of Guelph.
- Louise Clark — to observe new techniques in veterinary anaesthesia at Colorado State University, the University of Florida and the University of California at Davis.
- Charles Nyleti — to study salmonella in poultry processing at the Central Veterinary Research Institute, Lusaka.

**Sir Frederick Smith Research Award
(£1200)**

Stephen Baines — towards a study of E-Cadherin expression in canine round cell tumours at Cambridge.

**MacKellar Mitchell Wright Award
(£1000)**

Jennifer Stephen — to undertake advanced surgical training at Ohio State University and the New Bolton Centre, University of Pennsylvania.

Walker Memorial Award (£1500)

Maureen Milne - for projects in preparation for RCVS DCHP exams and submission of dissertation.

Connie Ford Retraining Grants

- Rachell Haslett - towards training in small animal medicine, especially to improve surgery skills.
- Christopher Lloyd - towards retraining in the field of non-domesticated species.

Small Grants

- Association of Veterinary Students - sponsorship of a lecture at the AVS Congress 2002.
- Carly Abramson (Animal Health Trust) - towards research in identifying canine intracranial meningiomas using magnetic resonance spectroscopy.
- David Godfrey - towards a prospective histopathological study of osteoarthritis in domestic cats.
- Sheena Henderson - towards an investigation of polymerase chain reaction for detection of bacteraemia in small animals.
- Ramsey Hovell - towards a colloquium presentation and producing an educational video on working equines.

VN Travel Scholarships

- Rosanne Barwick - to observe new clinical procedures applicable to the equine veterinary nurse at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky.
- Michelle Richmond - to learn advanced techniques in nursing emergency and critical care patients at Tufts University.

Spencer-Hill Grants

Grants totalling £33,809 were awarded to four veterinary schools for the purchase of essential clinical equipment.

The Jim Gourley Prize 2002

Entries for the Prize consist of write-ups of innovative solutions to clinical problems developed by general practitioners. This year two entries were judged to merit Joint First Prize and both



Peter Clark and Geoffrey Holt will receive £450, together with a commemorative gift and certificate. The Veterinary Times will publish their articles in the summer, to be followed by the other articles that were submitted. The closing date for the next Jim Gourley Prize will be 28 February 2003.

**TRUST PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR
COMPARATIVE CLINICAL SCIENCE
INITIATIVE**

The Comparative Clinical Science Foundation is an initiative fostered by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the RCVS. It has grown out of key findings in the Selborne Report: the difficulty of funding veterinary clinical research, the lack of a strategic funding focus, and the suggestion that the MRC could provide such a focus. The first part of a two-phase fundraising campaign is underway, and the RCVS Trust has pledged £40,000 towards the initial working capital fund. The second phase will aim to raise funds for research projects, to be distributed by the MRC's Comparative Clinical Science Panel.

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

Website: www.rcvstrust.org.uk

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profession must have access to the best information to support its work. To this end it was felt that consideration should be given to all the possible ways of providing this necessary information service, including merger/relocation and sponsorship.

The Board of Trustees of the RCVS Trust,

which met later the same day, decided that the recommendations of a recent Efficiency Review should be implemented as soon as possible to reduce the deficit projected for this year of about £35K. The possibilities of a merger and sponsorship would be pursued, along with a longer-term vision of how the RCVS service might be integrated with other information services. The goal is to

provide the best support for the veterinary profession in the future, particularly bearing in mind the changes to veterinary education which are on the horizon.

For more details on any of the LIS's services, go to their website at www.rcvslibrary.org.uk, e-mail library@rcvs.org.uk or telephone 020 7222 2021.