



RCVS

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

news



MARCH 2005

PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN VETERINARY MEDICINE

SHEILA CRISPIN ELECTED JVP

Professor Sheila Crispin, an ophthalmology specialist and researcher, has been elected Junior Vice-President of the RCVS. Professor Crispin, who was one of two candidates, will take up her office formally on RCVS Day on 8 July 2005.

After a short period working in mixed practice in Cumbria, Professor Crispin (right) returned to academic life, initially at Cambridge University, then at the University of Edinburgh, where she combined general surgery with veterinary ophthalmology, anaesthesia and intensive care.

Later moving to the University of Bristol, Professor Crispin specialised in the field of comparative ophthalmology, eventually heading up an ophthalmology team. She left full-time academic life at the end of 2004 but has been awarded a visiting chair at Bristol to enable her to continue to contribute to postgraduate education.

Professor Crispin was the University of Bristol's appointed RCVS Council Member from 1997 to 2003 and became an elected Member in 2003. She currently sits on the Disciplinary Committee (as Vice-Chairman), the External Affairs Committee, the Fellowship Board and the

Animal Welfare Bill Working Party. As a former Chairman of the Specialisation and Further Education Committee, she was also instrumental in developing the new modular approach to RCVS certificates.

In addition to her veterinary activities, Professor Crispin farms a mixed beef cattle and sheep enterprise in Somerset's Mendip Hills. She spends working holidays in Africa and, if she finds spare time amongst her many commitments, enjoys sailing, mountaineering, classical music and watercolour painting.

Commenting on her appointment, Professor Crispin said: "I am delighted to have been elected and welcome the opportunity of contributing to the veterinary profession through the activities of the College and as part of the Officer team.

"With much of my career being spent in academia, education and research are important areas of interest. The introduction of tuition and top-up fees may have an adverse impact on the recruitment and training of veterinary surgeons and the College must be prepared to argue the case for financial support. I am more optimistic about the future of postgraduate teaching and



training, as there is now a structured framework that will benefit all newly qualified veterinary surgeons. The flexibility of a modular approach to the College's postgraduate qualifications should allow veterinary surgeons to enter into lifelong learning with enthusiasm.

"I believe that the profession will be taken seriously if it speaks with a united voice, setting the agenda. To achieve this we must work with others outside the profession, the general public, the scientific community and those in parliament."

POSITION AGREED ON 24-HOUR EMERGENCY COVER

At its March 2005 meeting RCVS Council agreed to retain the general requirement for veterinary surgeons to make provision for 24-hour emergency cover.

Council accepted the Advisory Committee's recommendation that veterinary surgeons must, if in practice, **take steps to provide** 24-hour emergency cover with guidance on the reasonableness of the steps to be taken and the *adequacy or nature* of the cover detailed in the Annex to the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*. This will allow the

Preliminary Investigation Committee, when considering any complaint, to take all the circumstances into account.

The new guidance provides:

- That veterinary surgeons on duty providing 24-hour emergency cover, must:
 - not unreasonably refuse to provide first aid and pain relief for any animal of a species treated during normal working hours; and
 - not unreasonably refuse to provide first aid and pain relief for all other species until such time as a more appropriate veterinary service accepts responsibility for the animal; and
 - not unreasonably refuse to accept responsibility for an animal from a colleague, in order to provide first aid and pain relief for that animal;

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COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2005 – USE YOUR VOTE

This year's RCVS Council Elections are now underway. Members who are entitled to vote will find a separate election booklet enclosed with this edition of RCVS News, containing each candidate's manifesto and supporters' statements, a ballot paper and voting instructions.

There are ten candidates standing for election, comprising six existing Council Members who are up for re-election and four others who have not been elected before.

Ballot papers should be completed and returned to Electoral Reform Services Ltd no later than 5pm on Friday 29 April 2005. Please take a few minutes to read the candidates' details and then use your vote.



RCVS HOME AND AWAY

Meet the RCVS

One of John Parker's key communications initiatives during his year as President is to dispel the myths about the workings of Belgravia House. His idea is to invite as many members of the profession as possible to the RCVS headquarters in London to enable them to see their College for themselves. He would like members to be able to see at first hand the variety and extent of daily RCVS activities and to have the opportunity to meet members of staff and the Officer team.

Following the success of the first meeting last October, at which there were a number of invited guests, there was a positive response to the subsequent open invitation extended to all members to a second meeting in February. The day included a tour of the building, visits to all departments and discussions with key staff members, a question and answer session with Officers and lunch.

We have had a lot of positive feedback from attendees and so we would like to continue the initiative in the future. Two further meetings are therefore planned for Wednesday 6 April and Wednesday 8 June 2005 – reasonable standard class travel expenses will also be paid.

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Meeting the RCVS: John Parker (far right) and invited members listen to an overview of the RCVS Trust Library activities

Regional Meetings

The traditional rounds of Regional Meetings have also continued with RCVS Officers and staff travelling to Cannock and Northampton last November. Attendance was a little on the low side, however, the debates were no less lively for that.

Key subjects under discussion were the review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and the possible establishment of a General

Veterinary Council; implementation of the Professional Development Phase for new veterinary graduates; the development of the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme; the veterinary nurse training scheme; and, the review of 24-hour emergency cover. A full report of the meetings is available on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk).

RCVS Question Time

Planning is underway for the next round of Regional Meetings which are to be styled along similar lines to the BBC's Question Time. Whilst we can't promise to have David Dimbleby in the chair, there will be plenty of opportunity to have your questions answered, whether you choose to submit them in advance or spring them on the night.

We will be in Aberdeen on Wednesday 25 May and in Newcastle on Thursday 26 May 2005. Invitations will be sent to all those within reasonable travelling distance of the venues and are of course extended to all members of the practice team.

A buffet supper will be available from 7pm with the meeting proper starting at 8pm.

If you would like to attend any of the above meetings, please contact Danielle van den Berg in the External Affairs Department (020 7202 0766 or danielle@rcvs.org.uk).

HAVE A LITTLE WINE AT BSAVA CONGRESS

Once again we will have an RCVS stand (E44) at BSAVA Congress this year, with Officers, Council Members and the odd staff member on hand to provide information and answer any questions you may have. And, once again, we will be located close to the Guinness bar for the convenience of all.

You might have queries about your membership category or how to enrol for a certificate or diploma; you may need some advice about professional conduct matters or want to discuss VN training issues; or, you might want to learn more about some of the significant developments currently occupying much RCVS time such as the review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the Professional Development Phase for new veterinary graduates, the review of 24-hour emergency cover or the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme.

Whilst there will be plenty of people available to answer questions on any of these topics throughout the whole congress, we would particularly like to invite you to attend our dedicated question and answer session on the Friday afternoon at 4.50pm in Hall 10 of the ICC. This will be a prime opportunity for you to get the information you need on the many different issues currently facing the profession, so please join us for some interactive debate and a glass of wine to round off the day.

NEW HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS APPOINTED

We are pleased to announce the appointment of a new Head of Communications. In making the appointment, we are aware that a number of recent RCVS Presidents have made improving communications one of their main priorities and that there is still much that we can and should be doing to this end.

Lizzie Lockett, who took up her post on 28 February 2005, will bring to the College over ten years' experience working in public relations, communications and public affairs, having worked throughout Europe for Mmd Marketing Communications Ltd, latterly as Managing Director. Most recently, Lizzie has been working as a communications consultant for Mistral LPM specialising in the field of environment, food chain and rural affairs.

Lizzie's key objectives in her first twelve months will be to introduce a more customer-focused approach to our communications and general activities; to improve the effectiveness of our communication within and outside the profession; and, to develop the promotion of the new RCVS Practice Standards Scheme to the public.



Lizzie Lockett

DTI PUBLISHES CONSULTATION ON MEDICINES

On 18 February 2005 the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) published a consultation paper on measures to improve competition in the market for prescription only veterinary medicines. The consultation includes a draft statutory instrument to implement the recommendations of the Competition Commission made in 2003 and can be found at www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics2/vetmeds.htm.

In the 22 months since the Competition Commission published its recommendations on veterinary prescribing, we have engaged in discussions with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and the DTI while awaiting the publication of their public consultation. During the course of these discussions, we have proposed that the recommendations relating to providing information to clients and the provision of prescriptions might be implemented to greater effect through the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* rather than through Orders under the Fair Trading Act, which could result in court proceedings. This is a way forward canvassed in the consultation paper.

In responding, we will formally propose that a number of provisions should be deleted from the final Order presented to Parliament, on the basis that they can and should be implemented through the Guide.

We cannot and will not enforce the proposed three-year ban on being able to charge for a veterinary prescription.

We also have concerns (which are shared by the EFRA Select Committee) about the recommendations' likely impact on the viability of veterinary practice in certain areas, and have raised these with Mr Gerry Sutcliffe MP at the DTI. There are further complications arising from the VMD's current intention to implement the EU ban on advertising POMs and to restrict the use of trade names in any list of most frequently sold medicines which a veterinary surgeon might display, in accordance with the DTI requirements. It has been pointed out that without the trade names the lists will be generally meaningless to most clients.

We will be reiterating these concerns in our formal response to the DTI. The closing date for responses is 13 May 2005.

VMD CONSULTS ON NEW MEDICINES DIRECTIVE

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate has proposed regulations to implement a new EU directive on veterinary medicines. The regulations would supersede the Medicines Act 1976 so far as veterinary medicines are concerned.

There would be a significant change in the classification and distribution of veterinary medicines. The EU Directive requires all medicines for food-producing animals to be prescription-only. The regulations would comply with this, but there would be two kinds of prescription. Veterinary surgeons would, as now, write prescriptions for certain medicines for animals under their care on the basis of clinical assessment. There would, however, be a further class of medicines for food animals which could be prescribed and supplied by veterinary surgeons, pharmacists or agricultural merchants.

The prescriber would need to be satisfied that the medicine was appropriate for the purpose for which it was being supplied and that the purchaser was competent to use it, but clinical assessment would not be required and the animals would not need to be under the prescriber's care. In effect this would correspond to the present PML class of medicines, but they would be prescription-only. VMD consulted on these proposals informally last year, and modified them in the light of our comments.

Additional important changes would be a ban on postal sales and further restrictions on advertising of prescription-only medicines. We are considering our response to the proposals.

CHOICE OF MEDICINAL PRODUCTS – THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CASCADE

In *RCVS News* (March 2003), we notified members that the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) had contacted us expressing concern that, '...veterinary surgeons are continuing to use unauthorised products in preference to authorised medicines' and asked for a reminder that 'if there is a suitable authorised product available the Cascade does not apply'.

The VMD warned that if it continues, '...to receive evidence of either illegal use of unauthorised products, or misuse of the prescribing cascade, we will have no option other than to submit a report to DEFRA Investigation Branch with a view to instigating legal proceedings'.

Members are further reminded of the Cascade principles and the guidance in VMD's Amelias 8 document, which is an annex to the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*.

MRSA: A WARNING TO PRACTICES

All practices should be aware that MRSA infections, though not common, are a factor in veterinary practice. Many members of the general public have been exposed to the infection and some are carriers of the bacteria. In the case of veterinary practice, it should be expected that MRSA will be present in staff in the same, if not higher, proportions as the general populous.

The basis of controlling MRSA in practice is first to be aware of the issue. Practices should have written protocols regarding hygiene and cleanliness of clinical staff and premises, which should be rigorously adhered to. Premises should be regularly and thoroughly tested and, if pockets of, or trends in, infections are seen through clinical governance processes, steps should also be considered regarding the testing of staff.

All practices should remain vigilant towards cases that present with non-healing wounds and intransient infections. In such cases, MRSA testing should be considered to ensure not only that proper treatment is carried out, but also that proper advice be given to the owner regarding ongoing requirements in dealing with the situation.

Further information is provided on the BSAVA's website (www.bsava.com).

GATEWAYS TO THE PROFESSION – DFES CONSULTATION LAUNCHED

The veterinary profession has been chosen as one of six professions to be the subject of a case study for the “Gateways to the Profession” report being prepared by Sir Alan Langlands, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.



Sir Alan Langlands

A consultation on the project was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on 10 January, and contributions to the consultation are welcomed from 11 January to 18 March 2005 through the DfES website (www.dfes.gov.uk).

Following Royal Assent of the Higher Education Act in summer 2004, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Charles Clarke, commissioned an independent report to examine the gateways into the professions. He asked Sir Alan (pictured), Vice-Chancellor of Dundee University, to lead this work.

The report will make recommendations to Ministers on action that can be taken by employing organisations to provide clear accessible gateways for all graduates who want to pursue a career in the professions. This work is being supported by Public and Private

Sector Reference Groups, on which we are represented, and by a wide range of stakeholders.

During the consultation period for the Higher Education Act, we expressed concerns to the Department and to the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Skills at the likely effect of increased tuition fees for veterinary undergraduates.

Although the new Act will enable undergraduates to defer any payment of fees until after they graduate instead of having to pay up-front as now, it is felt that the increasing level of graduate debt (which is already high as reported in the BVA and Association of Veterinary Students surveys) could deter many graduates from choosing to enter the less well paid sectors of the profession - in rural areas, farm animal practice and research.

It could also act as a disincentive for able students from a wide range of backgrounds to apply to veterinary school, at a time when a decline in the number of veterinary school applications from UK-based students is already being seen. It is therefore encouraging that Sir Alan has chosen to include the veterinary profession in his report, and we will be seeking to ensure that the position of veterinary students and graduates is recognised.

The DfES consultation will provide an opportunity for members of the profession to contribute further to the ongoing debate. The report is due to the Secretary of State mid-2005 and responses to the consultation will be fed into the final report.

If you wish to contribute to the DfES consultation, please visit the DfES website. (You may also, if you wish, send a copy of your comments to Mrs Freda Andrews, Head of Education, RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF, or email it to f.andrews@rcvs.org.uk.)

CERTIFICATE AND DIPLOMA WRITTEN EXAMINATION DATES – 2005

Dates and venues for the 2005 RCVS certificate and diploma written examinations are as follows:

RCVS Diplomas: Wednesday 13 July 2005 or Thursday 14 July 2005 (depending on numbers)

Venue: RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

RCVS Certificates: Tuesday 26 July 2005 or Wednesday 27 July 2005 (depending on subject).

Venue: The Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street, London SW1

The precise timetable for each diploma and certificate subject will be published shortly on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk), and each candidate will be notified separately. Dates for clinical, oral and practical examinations will be published and notified separately.

PHASING OUT RCVS DIPLOMAS – UPDATE

As reported in *RCVS News* (March 2004), it has been agreed to phase out a number of RCVS diplomas where there is a direct European equivalent qualification and where the relevant European College has received permanent recognition by the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS).

The following RCVS diplomas have now been withdrawn in favour of the relevant European diplomas:

- **Diploma in Small Animal Medicine**
- **Diploma in Small Animal Medicine (Feline)**
- **Diploma in Veterinary Anaesthesia**
- **Diploma in Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging (formerly Veterinary Radiology)**

Candidates who are already enrolled on these diplomas will be able to continue with their enrolment and take the examination in due course, but no new candidate enrolments will be accepted.

The RCVS subject boards for **Veterinary Reproduction** and **Veterinary Dermatology** have also agreed to withdraw their RCVS diplomas, having satisfied themselves on the equivalence of the respective European diploma. In the case of Dermatology, however, withdrawal is still subject to the European College of Veterinary Dermatology gaining permanent recognition by the EBVS. It is anticipated that this will be achieved in spring 2005.

The last new enrolments for the following diplomas will be accepted by the closing date of 1 November 2005:

- **Diploma in Veterinary Reproduction**
- **Diploma in Veterinary Dermatology** (subject to the European College of Veterinary Dermatology receiving permanent recognition – expected in spring 2005)

Further information about veterinary specialisation in Europe, the EBVS, European Colleges and European diplomas can be found by following the links on Education and Specialisation on the FVE website (www.fve.org), or from the EBVS website (www.ebvs.be).

RECOGNISED SPECIALIST APPLICATION PROCESS STREAMLINED

Since 2000, the RCVS Specialist Recognition Sub-Committee has been testing a points scoring system drawn from the published criteria when considering applications to join the list of RCVS Recognised Specialists. Now that the system has been refined and a system of self-assessment successfully used for the 2004 re-applications, i.e. for Specialists who have been on the list for at least five years and who are re-applying to maintain their listing, it has been agreed to implement this system for **ALL** applications.

Those applying or re-applying for Specialist status will now be invited to assess themselves against a clear set of criteria and submit their supporting documents and self-assessment scores.

The Specialist re-application fee for those previously listed will now be significantly reduced to £25 (for re-applications submitted in 2005) with the annual administration charge (currently £87) continuing to be levied in July.

Existing Specialists originally listed in 1996 and 2001 are required to re-apply by **Friday 26 August 2005**.

The fee for a new applicant to be considered for the listing in 2006 will be £180 and applications should be submitted by **Friday 19 September 2005**. Payment of this initial fee will cover the Specialist's listing for the following year (i.e. until 30 June 2007).

The revised information pack for Specialist applications will be available on our website (www.rcvs.org.uk) in early April.

NEW RECORDS FOR RCVS ONLINE

Since the launch of our new website last October, RCVS online has:

- been nominated for a Visionary Design Award;
- received 60% more daily visitors (now an average of over 2,200 per day);
- received 5,700 visitors to Find a Vet in February alone; and,
- signed up around 800 more subscribers to RCVS e-News

RCVS online's main recent addition has been a dedicated section to the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme, and Find a Vet has been specially adapted to highlight accredited practices.

NO ANNUAL RETENTION FEES FOR THE OVER 70s

Council has agreed that non-practising members over the age of 70 will no longer have to pay an annual retention fee. Under the new arrangements members will continue to receive voting papers and the Annual Report but not the Register or *RCVS News*.

The decision will come into effect from April 2006, although it is still subject to legal advice over equal opportunities and age discrimination issues, and has to be approved by the Privy Council. The decision may also have to be revisited following any new legislation to revise or replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

Practising members over 70 will continue to pay the full fee.

RCVS PRESIDENT RECEIVES BEVA HONOUR

RCVS President John Parker has been elected as an Honorary Member of the British Equine Veterinary Association in recognition of his "outstanding work for the Association over very many years".

Mr Parker (right) was proposed for the honour at the Association's AGM last December by former BEVA President Richard Jones.

In his proposal speech, Mr Jones paid tribute to Mr Parker's "immense involvement" with the Association, scientifically, politically and as a teacher; his knowledge of equine ophthalmology (in which he gained an RCVS Fellowship); his extensive involvement with BEVA's Prior to Purchase lectures and workshops; and, his wide and varied involvement with other equine related organisations.

Mr Jones continued: "This proposal is all about [John's] work and massive contribution to the Association. It does not ignore the time he makes to farm, to be a magistrate and...to represent us all as President of the Royal College in his own inimitable style of common sense and little regard for stuffy procedures or stuffy people."



BEWARE OF PINPOINT PUBLISHING

We would like to reiterate our warning to veterinary surgeons, veterinary practices and others that they might be contacted by a company called Pinpoint Publishing (Latest News, 10 February 2005). This company is currently selling advertising space in a publication called the "RCVS Directory 2005 Buyers Guide". This publication has no connection with the College's *Directory of Veterinary Practices 2004*, although its name, in our view, is intended to mislead you into believing that it has.

In addition, the acronym "RCVS" in the name of the Pinpoint publication purports to stand for "Regional Classified Veterinary Suppliers", but in our view this is purely contrived, with a clear aim on the part of the publishers to imply some connection with the College. There is no such connection, and we would advise you to check carefully before buying advertising space in this publication.

In the past, the *Directory of Veterinary Practices* has contained a Veterinary Buyers Guide supplement. Please note that this has been discontinued and the 2005 edition of the Directory will not contain any advertising.

If you feel you have been misled into believing that you were advertising in a genuine RCVS publication, please contact John Collins at the RCVS on 020 7202 0708 or j.collins@rcvs.org.uk.

We have no connection with, and do not endorse, any independent publication containing advertisements for veterinary products and services.

VETERINARY SURGEONS ACT



Roger Eddy, Chairman of the RCVS working party that framed the proposals on a revision of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, provides an update on the discussions at the recent extra-ordinary meeting of RCVS Council.

Two years ago the RCVS consulted veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses on the review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Now the RCVS Council has given a fresh steer.

The consultation paper of February 2003 raised major questions about the constitution of the Royal College and how it does its job, in order to identify changes which would be desirable if the Act were to be updated. Council took stock of the outcome in a special meeting a year ago and commissioned further work.

Events have moved on since the consultation. In September 2003, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published its own suggestions for modernising the Act. The Department has said that it hopes to introduce new legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

There has also been a significant development in the neighbouring field of human medicine, with the publication of the Fifth Report of the Shipman Inquiry in December 2004. The report came to the stark conclusion that the General Medical Council has not, in the past, succeeded in its primary purpose of protecting patients. The Chief Medical Officer for England has been commissioned to report to Ministers this year with recommendations for stronger procedures to protect patients, an effective system of revalidation and a reconfiguration of the role, structure and functions of the GMC.

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Whatever is decided for the medical profession is liable to set the benchmark against which the regulatory arrangements for veterinary surgeons are judged. The profession needs to be ready to say how standards for veterinary practice can be set and enforced more effectively for the protection of animals and the public interest.

Over the last year the main focus within RCVS has been on the regulation of veterinary nurses and the other groups that aspire to become professions complementary to veterinary medicine. At its special meeting in March 2004 Council took the view that the legislation should provide for the regulation of the training and conduct of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and a range of other occupations providing veterinary services. We have therefore had discussions with organisations representing veterinary nurses, bovine ultrasound scanner operators, physiotherapists, equine dental technicians and cattle foot trimmers to find out how they see the way forward.

Two messages have come across loud and clear. One is that all these groups wish to be regulated as professions, with recognised training and qualifications, arrangements to ensure continuing competence and regulation of professional conduct. The other is that they are willing to consider arrangements for regulation alongside the veterinary profession. Not surprisingly, they do not want to be regulated by veterinary surgeons, but there is a general readiness to look at ways of managing the different occupational groups side by side.

This response was encouraging, but it has not been easy to develop a workable proposition. The challenge is to find a form of organisation which will give each of the different professions control of its own affairs, while promoting consistency and presenting a coherent face to the public. The proposition that Council favoured at its recent extraordinary meeting would mean separating the setting of standards from the task of ensuring that they are observed.

Under the suggested model, the RCVS would continue to supervise the education of veterinary surgeons, set standards for continuing professional development and competence and issue guidance on professional conduct ...it would not deal with complaints against individuals.

A separate, parallel body would do the same for veterinary nurses, and perhaps

“ Under the suggested model, the RCVS would continue to supervise the education of veterinary surgeons, set standards for continuing professional development and competence and issue guidance on professional conduct ...it would not deal with complaints . ”

for other professions complementary to veterinary medicine. In effect this would be the Veterinary Nurses Council standing on its own feet, instead of reporting to the RCVS Council as now. The two bodies would maintain the registers of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

Neither body would deal with complaints against individual professionals. A new, free-standing Veterinary Services Board would receive and investigate these, and where it was decided that there was a case to answer it would refer them to an independent

Conduct and Competence Committee.

The standard-setting bodies and the board would be free-standing, but with close links. There would be scope for them to share staff and accommodation in order to minimise costs and promote liaison.

Would a scheme on these lines work? It would offer veterinary nurses and other groups full professional regulation independently of RCVS, but the aim would be to regulate all the different professions on consistent lines and offer the public a single portal for complaints. Clients should know that their animals will be treated by people whose competence and behaviour are assured, and not have to worry about the different responsibilities of different members of the veterinary team or how they are regulated.

Members of the profession will soon have a chance to put their views, because Council agreed that there should be a fresh consultation spelling out the details of the new proposition. Individual consultation papers will be mailed to members in the next few weeks.



VN Council Member Dot Creighton assured Council that the VN profession wanted to be regulated, for the protection of the public and animals

RCVS PRACTICE STANDARDS SCHEME



Lynne Hill, Chairman of the RCVS Practice Standards Working Party, reports on the encouraging uptake of the Practice Standards Scheme and provides an update on ongoing developments since its launch at the start of this year.

Since the new RCVS Practice Standards Scheme was launched on 1 January 2005, the overall reaction from the profession has been very positive. In addition to the 400 or so information packs sent automatically to accredited members of the previous BSAVA and RCVS/BVHA Schemes, we have received around 1,100 requests for joining packs. Some have come from veterinary nurse training practices, but even more importantly, practices that have not previously been part of any scheme formed a significant proportion (approximately 25%) and to date some 50 new inspections have already been arranged. Notably, these cover the range of categories – Farm Animal, Equine, Emergency Service Clinic as well as Small Animal – and all Tiers.

Much hard work was put into getting the paperwork right and many practices have commented favourably on the assistance they feel the Scheme gives them, particularly through the checklists for Tiers 1 and 2, by providing specific accessible information on what is required, although on first glance these may seem formidable! This is especially heartening as one of the basic aims of the Scheme has been to help the profession put the fundamentals in place.

“ Most importantly, practices not previously part of any scheme have formed a significant proportion of those requesting joining packs. ”

There has been some criticism in the press that the Scheme does not go far enough, particularly that it does not deal in enough depth with issues of clinical governance and quality of service. These were not areas covered in any of the previous schemes, but they have been introduced in the new standards. The Scheme as launched is only the first step in what will be an evolving process. Clinical governance is recognised as

important and it forms part of the agenda for the Scheme's ongoing development. Ideas from any organisations and members of the profession on taking the Scheme forward in this, or indeed any other areas, are welcome.

On the topic of future development, the Practice Standards Working Party (which was made up of representatives from BSAVA, BVHA, BEVA, BVA, BCVA and RCVS) was conscious of potential difficulties in attempting to go too far too soon when we had the initial issues of amalgamating the previous schemes, updating them and widening them into areas of practice not previously covered, and to try to promote compliance with standards at the most fundamental level.



Some have stated that by not being mandatory, the Scheme is weakened. However the imposition of a mandatory scheme at this point was not possible under current legislation and indeed would not be helpful in trying to assist practices to comply. The scheme is using a carrot rather than a stick to improve standards within the profession and at this point we need to ensure we have got the basic structure right. Extension of the scheme into new areas is likely to occur but we must remember that the new standards have moved on greatly from the last revision of both the Hospital and BSAVA standards.

All practices already accredited under the BSAVA or the RCVS/BVHS scheme are automatically eligible for accreditation under the Scheme. However, to turn eligibility into actual accreditation those practices **must** notify the College that they wish to be part of the Scheme by completing the application process.

On a practical note, a few comments have also been made regarding the paperwork. It appears that some confusion may have arisen from 'mixing and matching' of old and new documents in the latter part of 2004.

All documentation relating to the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme, including the standards, rules, checklists, application forms and more, can be downloaded from the dedicated practice

“ All previously accredited practices are eligible for accreditation under the RCVS Scheme, but they must notify the College by completing the application process. ”

standards section on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk), or, if preferred, can be posted to practices in hard copy. Information for the general public can also be found online. What's more, accredited practices are highlighted as such in the results of searches on the popular online Find A Vet service (www.findavet.org.uk).

The College is happy to discuss specific issues with practices and deal with queries on any aspects of the Scheme (practicestandards@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0767).

Finally, for those members of the profession attending this year's BSAVA Congress, members of the RCVS working party and staff will be available on both the RCVS (E44) and BSAVA stands to answer your questions (see page 2).

HSE INCREASES FOCUS ON VETERINARY PRACTICES

Historically, veterinary practices have not been proactively inspected as a matter of course. However, in a timely reminder of the importance of the new RCVS Practice Standards Scheme to modern-day veterinary practice, the Health & Safety Executive has shown this may no longer be the case following its recent inspection of some 27 practices in North Yorkshire.

During the inspections, emphasis was placed on anaesthetics, autoclaves, electrics, firearms, lone working, medicines and x-ray equipment. Accreditation under the Practice Standards Scheme would help to ensure that standards in these areas had been met.

While only one practice was served with an enforcement notice, four were notified of major shortfalls. Also, most practices fell short in relation to both COSHH and Manual Handling assessments. (See RCVS online for a full list of the defects identified)

Practices should be aware that an HSE inspection is not just about having the correct paperwork, but having paperwork that is used and understood and put into action.

Since the last edition of *RCVS News*, the Disciplinary Committee has heard three disciplinary cases and two applications for restoration to the Register, the reports of which are set out below.

Further information about each hearing, which may include charges, findings, reasons, decisions, judgments and press releases, are available at *RCVS* online (www.rcvs.org.uk).

MR WILLIAM HENRY STIRLING MANSON

On the 11 November 2004, Mr Manson appeared before the Disciplinary Committee to answer a charge that he was unfit to practise veterinary surgery by reason of four convictions under Regulation 9(2)(c) of the Sheep Animal Premium Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 as amended. Mr Manson admitted the convictions, which concerned a failure on four occasions between January and March 2004 to notify the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) that the number of ewes for which he had claimed a premium payment under the Regulations had changed.

Mr Manson accepted that he should have notified DARD of the changes in the number of eligible ewes. He explained that at the time he was working very long days single-handed and attending night calls on a regular basis. Some of the ewes were kept on a family farm 80 miles from his home in Co Tyrone. A number of testimonials were placed before the Committee attesting to Mr Manson's competence and reputation as a veterinary surgeon.

The Disciplinary Committee emphasised the importance of complying with government regulations relating to animals and the particular importance for veterinary surgeons working within the agricultural community to comply with such regulations. However, the Committee was satisfied that Mr Manson's convictions did not involve dishonesty or recklessness and were offences of strict liability, and decided they did not affect his ability or fitness to practise veterinary surgery, call his honesty into question or endanger the public. Stating that the incidents arose out of a

genuine but regrettable oversight on his part, the Committee dismissed the charges against him.

MR JAMES GERARD ALLCOCK

On 7 January 2005, the Disciplinary Committee found Mr Allcock guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect on all five charges against him and directed his name be suspended from the Register for 12 months. The Inquiry was part heard on 1, 2, 3 December 2004 and concluded on 7 January 2005. The Disciplinary Committee rejected Mr Allcock's interpretation of "under his care" and accepted the interpretation set out in Part 2, H of the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*.

Of the five charges, four alleged that Mr Allcock had failed to provide adequate professional care to animals registered within the Pharmchoice scheme. The professional care was found to be inadequate on the basis that Mr Allcock did not have the animals "under his care" for prescribing purposes, he had made no provision for 24-hour emergency cover for the animals, and he did not liaise with the other veterinary surgeons caring for the animals until they asked formally for the information. On the fifth charge it was alleged he had advertised the scheme in an unprofessional manner, which was found proved. Peter Orpin MRCVS and Matthew Dobbs MRCVS provided expert evidence for the Disciplinary Committee, at the College's request.

The charges arose from the supply of prescription only medicines (POMs) to farmers. Mr Allcock set up his own company, Allpharm Limited, through which he provided veterinary services, including prescriptions, to farmers who had subscribed to the Pharmchoice scheme. Through this scheme farmers had those prescriptions dispensed by a named agricultural chemist.

Under his Care

Farm details considered by Mr Allcock to be necessary for the safe prescription of POMs were collected on a questionnaire completed by the farmer or during a telephone call with the farmer. This information was enhanced by reports from the agricultural chemist's field staff visiting the farms. The field staff were given one day's training and described as Veterinary Prescribing Assistants. It was suggested that veterinary surgeons could visit farms, but there was no evidence of such visits having been made.

Two farmers and their respective veterinary surgeons gave evidence to the Disciplinary Committee. Both farmers were unsure about specific diseases and medicines used on their farms. One had seen all his stock destroyed during the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001. After re-stocking he encountered a number of diseases, which had not been present on the farm before. The farmer's usual veterinary surgeon was making regular visits to the farm to treat the herd. On Mr Allcock's questionnaire, the Committee could find no indication of the complex nature of the farmer's herd health problems and said that a farm visit would have been essential before any medicine was prescribed.

The Disciplinary Committee's view from the evidence was that following receipt of the original questionnaire and field staff report, prescribing was a simple request from the farmer followed by a telephone call from Mr Allcock to discuss the farmer's requirements.

24-hour Emergency Cover

Pharmchoice promotional literature stated there would be no clinical services, which included 24-hour emergency cover. Mr Allcock argued that he could avoid the requirement to make provision for 24-hour emergency cover if the farmer accepted this and was registered with another veterinary surgeon. The Disciplinary Committee said that for this to be an acceptable provision, Mr Allcock should have made a personal approach to the other veterinary surgeons involved and obtained their agreement to provide the service.

Mutual Clients – liaison between veterinary surgeons

There was no evidence that Mr Allcock had liaised with the other veterinary surgeons in respect of mutual clients until some time after medicines had been prescribed and dispensed. Mr Allcock's initial letter to those other veterinary surgeons took the form of a circular that did not specify the medicines by name or quantity, or the client. Detailed information was not provided until after those veterinary surgeons made written requests for the information.

Mr Allcock submitted that the Marsh Report recommended changes in the way veterinary medicines should be prescribed and delivered and that the Competition Commission Report questioned the current charging methods for veterinary medicines and services. He argued that his scheme was in line with the recommendations within these reports.

Finding each of the charges proved, the Disciplinary Committee said, "While accepting that there will always be some

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE HEARINGS

grey areas in the fine interpretation of guidance in respect of legislation, the Committee found Mr Allcock's interpretation of that guidance was so grossly at variance with the legislation that there is no possibility of reconciliation." The Committee indicated that mitigating factors were Mr Allcock's reputation, knowledge and ability as a veterinary surgeon and his impressive testimonials.

Mr Allcock was suspended from the Register for 12 months.

MR DENIS PATRICK CRONIN

On 4 February 2005, after a hearing lasting five days, the Disciplinary Committee found Mr Cronin guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect in relation to seven of the eight charges against him and directed his name be removed from the Register of Veterinary Surgeons. Mr Cronin had pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Charges 1-4 concerned the euthanasia of George, an elderly black cat, in March 2003. His owners took George to Mr Cronin, who was at his home. When Mr Cronin was transporting George to his veterinary practice, George's owners called him a number of times on his mobile telephone asking for George to be returned. They said car journeys distressed George and were unhappy George was travelling by car. Mr Cronin said that George was not distressed, but he pulled over to the side of the road and carried out the euthanasia of George, he said to "diffuse" the situation. The Disciplinary Committee decided that Mr Cronin had carried out the euthanasia of George when consent was in doubt and when there was no emergency. Mr Cronin was also found to have failed to explain adequately to the owners how he had carried out the euthanasia of George, who was returned in a bin liner, soaking wet; to have been rude and threatening, specifically in that he threatened the owners after he learnt they had complained to the RCVS; and to have failed to respond promptly or constructively to the RCVS concerning the complaint against him: he had not responded to the RCVS for five months.

Charges 5-8 related to incidents that took place at Mr Cronin's kennels in 2001. The information relating to these charges came to the College's attention when it investigated the incident in 2003.

In 2001, the Local Authority prosecuted Mr Cronin for boarding cats at his kennels licensed only for dogs. The Disciplinary Committee decided this

conviction (Charge 5) did not affect Mr Cronin's fitness to practise veterinary surgery, but found against on the three other charges relating to 2001. On Charge 6, the Committee found that Mr Cronin had given a cat a lethal injection into the chest while acting in an aggressive and abusive manner; had used excessive force to control a German Shepherd dog, hitting it on its back with a large wooden handle; had handled dogs inappropriately, including lifting dogs using two choke chains around the neck; and, had transported cats and dogs in the same vehicle without partitioning when there was no emergency. On Charge 7, the Committee found that Mr Cronin had threatened a former employee who had assisted the Local Authority with its investigations. On Charge 8, the Committee found that Mr Cronin had abused his position as an employer by frequently using abusive language towards an employee.

Mr Cronin disputed much of the evidence against him and gave evidence to the Committee of a history of depressive illness. The Disciplinary Committee, giving judgment, stated:

"It is not disputed that Mr Cronin has been under enormous pressure from personal and financial problems, which at times have given rise to depressive illness. The Committee feels that the first essential step is for Mr Cronin to seek support and medical advice. These are matters to which no doubt he will give serious consideration and it is for him to decide whether to seek advice. However, the Committee has heard Mr Cronin and been able to observe his reaction to the criticism made in these proceedings. It seems that his attitude which they had found to exist in the past has not changed. His procedures are still the same."

Subject to any appeal, Mr Cronin will be removed from the Register on 21 March 2005.

MR DAVID EDWARD SMITH

On 22 November 2004, after considering Mr Smith's application for restoration, the Disciplinary Committee directed his name be restored to the Register of Veterinary Surgeons.

Mr Smith's name was removed from the Register following a decision of the Committee on 11 September 2003, on five charges concerned with improper certification in relation to the export of horses. On two of the charges the Committee decided that Mr Smith's name should be removed from the

Register and on the other three charges the Committee imposed a suspension of ten months.

MR MAURICE JOHN KIRK

Mr Kirk applied for Restoration to the Register and on 6 January 2005 his application was refused by the Disciplinary Committee which stated:

"We were impressed by the assurances given by Mr Rosen [his solicitor] on Mr Kirk's behalf. This development is a very welcome step in the right direction. However, Mr Rosen was only instructed on 1 January 2005 and, whilst Mr Kirk's change of attitude from that date is most positive, it is of very recent origin. In these circumstances it would be premature to restore Mr Kirk's name to the Register until he has had an opportunity to demonstrate that he has not just accepted the written assurances which appear in Mr Rosen's letter of January 5th 2005, and in his oral submissions, but also put them into practice. Our reservations stem from a number of sources.

"Firstly, Mr Kirk has a long-standing history of disrespect for authority. [Mr Kirk was warned as to his future conduct by the RCVS Disciplinary Committee in 1984 and 1988. In May 2002, the Disciplinary Committee directed Mr Kirk's name to be removed from the Register. Mr Kirk's appeal was dismissed in early 2004 after a number of procedural appeals against the RCVS.]

"Secondly, the three documents in manuscript that Mr Kirk submitted to the RCVS in November 2004 seeking restoration to the Register did not indicate a professional approach to the RCVS.

"Thirdly, copies of some of the material from Mr Kirk's website, dated 2nd January 2005, contained insulting material and the website has only just been closed down on the advice of his solicitor.

"The Disciplinary Committee therefore feels that the success or failure of any future application for restoration rests entirely with Mr Kirk."

The Disciplinary Committee has since given detailed reasons for its decision, which are aimed at helping Mr Kirk prepare for any future application for restoration.

Mr Kirk has sought Judicial Review of the Disciplinary Committee's decision

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL – MARCH 2005

There have been four meetings of the Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee since the last Council meeting, during which 70 new cases as well as ongoing cases were considered. Six new cases were referred to solicitors for statements and in ten cases the Committee requested further investigation by the Professional Conduct Department. PI Committee members have undertaken ten informal interviews and six visits to veterinary practices (two unannounced). Following one visit, the practice was reported to the Health & Safety Executive. Two cases have been referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

A statistical breakdown of the type of new cases referred to PIC in the period November 2004 - February 2005 appears in below:

Category of Complaint	% New Cases
Negligence/Misdiagnosis/Inadequate Treatment	37
Maintaining Practice Standards: Communication & Consent	16
Maintaining Practice Standards: General	10
Maintaining Practice Standards: Euthanasia	10
Maintaining Practice Standards: 24-hour Emergency Cover	8
Fees and Related Matters	8
The Use of Veterinary Medicinal Products	6
Certification	3
Other	2
Treatment of Animals by Non Veterinary Surgeons	0
Disclosure of Information	0

10

One case is reported to Council and one issue is referred to the Advisory Committee for consideration:

Identification of animals and vaccination certificates

In March 2004, the complainants purchased a puppy from a breeder. The breeder sold the puppy as aged 16 weeks, of a stated name (pedigree, but not for show) and fully vaccinated, and a vaccination certificate signed by the breeder's veterinary surgeon was included in the sale.

The complainants took the puppy to their veterinary surgeon, who advised that the puppy was at least seven months old and in poor condition, underweight and had a corneal ulcer.

The Kennel Club confirmed to the complainants that there was only one relevant pedigree litter registered. The puppies in this litter were considerably younger than 16 weeks of age. The complainants said that despite this, the breeder then told them the puppy was of that litter.

The complainants accepted the puppy was not the pedigree puppy claimed by the breeders and renamed their puppy. Their puppy was vaccinated by their veterinary surgeon.

The complainants involved the local Council and Trading Standards and the breeder was investigated and, it is understood, was cautioned for a failure to register as a breeder. The complainants accepted financial compensation from the breeder.

The complainants were concerned that the breeder's veterinary surgeon might have issued a false certificate and complained to the RCVS.

The vaccination certificate stated that a "named breed, black and white female aged 9 weeks, of the stated name and owned by [breeder's name and address]" had been given first vaccinations on 5 January 2004 and second vaccinations on the 20 January 2004.

The breeder's veterinary surgeon confirmed the vaccination certificate had been signed by him and also provided a copy of the clinical records. The clinical records stated that a puppy of that name and owned by the breeder was treated for an eye problem on 22 December 2003, aged seven weeks (before the date of birth of the registered pedigree puppies), and had been vaccinated on 5 and 20 January 2004.

The PI Committee decided the breeder's veterinary surgeon had done all he could to identify the puppy presented to him. It was possible the puppy presented to him was



Careful note of the dentition of companion animals may allow actual age to be correlated with stated age.

older than stated, or the puppy purchased by the complainant was not the puppy vaccinated on 5 and 20 January 2004. There was no evidence the breeder's veterinary surgeon had been dishonest. The PI Committee closed the complaint.

The PI Committee noted that veterinary surgeons should identify companion animals to be certified, so far as possible, but that without the use of microchips or tattoos, the identification of companion animals is very difficult. Recording any identifiable features/markings might be helpful in this respect. During the course of a pre-vaccination examination careful note of the dentition may allow the actual age of the puppy to be correlated with the stated age. Any perceived discrepancy could be noted on the vaccination card.

The relevant RCVS advice may be found in the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct at Part 2 G, Certification; Identification of Animals.

Responsibility for emergency cases transferred between primary practices and out-of-hours service providers

In a number of recent complaints the PI Committee has noted that the care of hospitalised patients can be problematic when a practice has outsourced out-of-hours (OOH) work to a dedicated OOH service provider and both practices are only open for part of the (24-hour) day.

In a recent complaint (on an unrelated issue) the Committee was concerned that a critically ill dog was transferred between a local practice and a dedicated OOH service provider. There appeared to be no facility for the dog to be hospitalised at either practice outside their respective normal working hours. In addition, the client was responsible for transporting the critically ill dog between the practices. The Committee considered this was not in the animal's best interests.

The Committee decided to refer consideration of the transfer of patients between practices and OOH service providers to the Advisory Committee.

24-hour Cover, continued from page 1

- Clients of another practice may be directed to their own practice for their animals' emergency treatment, at least in the first instance. But, immediate first aid and pain relief must be provided if, for whatever reason, the other practice's client cannot contact his or her usual veterinary surgeon;
- Written information should be provided about practice arrangements, including provision, initial cost and location of the 24-hour emergency service, and information on the care of in-patients;
- Confirmation that, in an emergency, immediate first aid and pain relief should take precedence over payment of fees.
- Any veterinary surgeon accepting a referral must make reasonable provision for 24-hour availability of advice for the referring veterinary surgeon;
- Revised guidance on attending away from the practice premises; the decision to attend away from the practice is for the veterinary surgeon concerned, having balanced the needs of the animal against relevant health and safety issues for practice personnel;
- Confirmation that 24-hour emergency cover to be provided by, or in conjunction with, one or more other veterinary practices;
- Limited service providers, such as vaccination and neutering clinics must make provision in the same way as other veterinary surgeons in practice.

The revised guidance is now RCVS guidance and will be included in the online Guide to Professional Conduct with immediate effect. It will also be notified to the profession as part of next year's Guide update.

BOOK YOUR PLACE FOR RCVS DAY 2005

Members are invited to contact the College to obtain their free tickets to attend RCVS Day on Friday, 8 July 2005.

Please contact Dawn Wiggins on 020 7202 0761 or d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk for further information and tickets.

RETENTION OF VN STUDENTS IMPROVES STEADILY

It would appear that the investment by practices in NVQ training is paying off in marked and steady increases in the retention of veterinary nursing students each year. A comparison of enrolment versus NVQ level 3 certification rates demonstrates that 52% of students who enrolled in 1999 qualified to join the VN List two years later, whereas of those who enrolled in 2002, 83% qualified to join the List in 2004. This is a vast improvement. The figures for intervening years are set out below, showing that the improvement has been steady and consistent.

	1999-2001	2000-2002	2001-2003	2002-2004
No. enrolled	936	925	1063	947
No. eligible to List	487	543	753	788
Retention rate	52%	59%	71%	83%

Unfortunately, over 500 qualified VNs failed to pay their retention fees for 2005 and have consequently been removed from the List of Veterinary Nurses. All VNs are now provided with an annual List registration card to make it easier for employers to check listed status, and all currently listed VNs have now been issued with their 2005 card. If any of your nurses are not in possession of a 2005 registration card, please contact the VN Department to check their listed status (020 7202 0788 or vnteam@rcvs.org.uk). Unlisted VNs may not undertake Schedule 3 work and may not conduct NVQ assessments for student veterinary nurses.



Around 30 of the veterinary nurses who qualified in the last few months were able to attend an awards ceremony at Belgravia House recently, along with their friends and relatives. There has been a vast improvement in retention of VN students under the NVQ veterinary nurse training scheme

NEW VN QUALITY ASSURANCE ROLE CREATED AT RCVS

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs Julie Dugmore as the new Awarding Body Quality Assurance Manager. Mrs Dugmore, who was formerly the External Verifier (EV) for the Midlands, will be based in our Veterinary Nursing Department. Her appointment will enable the Awarding Body to monitor and improve the overall quality of its service, including both central administration and the quality assurance of centres.

The EV team has undergone some re-organisation in order to rotate responsibilities for centres. These changes have been made in order to foster continued EV objectivity in line with national guidelines for good quality assurance practice. Miss Suzanne May joined the EV team in February 2005.



NEW LIBRARIAN JOINS RCVS TRUST

Brendan McDonagh has joined the RCVS Trust as Librarian. Brendan has worked in a variety of special and academic libraries, both in the UK and overseas. In addition to managing the library team, his main responsibilities include preserving and cataloguing the archive collection and promoting the Library and Information Service to RCVS members. In particular he will continue to develop online access through electronic databases and the internet, via the RCVS Trust website (www.rcvstrust.org.uk). He would welcome any feedback from members on the current library service and ideas as to how the RCVS Trust's unique hard copy and electronic library collection can be made even more accessible and relevant. Please contact Brendan on b.mcdonagh@rcvstrust.org.uk or (020) 7202 0721.



TRUST GRANTS ROUND ATTRACTS SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

The latest RCVS Trust grants round, offering a comprehensive range of educational programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, has attracted bids to a value of almost £1.6m.

Gerri McHugh, Director of the Trust, said, "We are delighted that the unique mix of programmes we now offer has captured the imagination of the veterinary profession. An independent panel of experts, chaired by Professor Philip Duffus, will meet in March to assess applications and we look forward to announcing our decisions to the profession by the end of March."

JIM GOURLEY PRIZE FOR INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

The Trust is pleased once again to be offering the Jim Gourley Prize this year.

This award is open to those veterinary surgeons currently in general practice, or who have been in general practice for at least 20 years, and exists to highlight and reward outstanding write-ups of practical techniques or equipment found to be effective and beneficial to veterinary patient welfare. The winning article and best of the rest will be published in *The Veterinary Times*. In addition the winner will receive a cash prize of £600 and a small gift.

Jim Gourley, Hon FRCVS, is a practical veterinary surgeon who has written up case histories for publication in *The Veterinary Times*. He has generously established the prize fund to encourage veterinarians to share their expertise and knowledge through publication of good quality, practical articles.

Articles submitted for this prize may include:

- innovative ideas in veterinary medicine, clinical practice tips, experience or insights gained in the diagnosis and management of clinical cases
- case histories based on surgical/manipulative techniques – or adaptations of recognised techniques – especially those that have involved innovation or ingenuity, not necessarily using complicated or expensive equipment
- thought processes involved in solving a problem that has arisen in practice, showing colleagues things that have been found to be useful – that is, sharing the art of veterinary surgery and medicine



Martin James, winner of the Jim Gourley Prize 2004

The closing date for this award is 31 May 2005. Further information is available on the Trust's website (www.rcvstrust.org.uk) or from Janet Gordon-Jones at the RCVS Trust (020 7202 0741 or j.gordon-jones@rcvstrust.org.uk).

MAJOR RCVS TRUST PRESENCE AT BSAVA CONGRESS

For the first time ever, the RCVS Trust will have a dedicated stand (E46) at BSAVA Congress this year and will use this to engage with delegates, build relations with animal health companies, and offer hospitality to visitors.

The stand will be manned in part by grant-holders past and present, who will be available for interviews with the trade press to showcase high-calibre projects funded by the Trust.

The Trust will also sponsor the following lectures at BSAVA Congress this year:

- Friday 8 April, Interactive lecture on "**Unusual lameness**" (J Cook, USA)
- Friday 8 April, "**Gastroenterology**" (J Simpson, UK and A German, UK)
- Saturday 9 April, Interactive lecture on "**Dermatology**" (E Ferguson, UK)
- Saturday 9 April, Interactive lecture on "**Interpretation of biochemistry profiles**" (J Charles, Aus)

Gerri McHugh, Director of the Trust, said, "We are very excited about our plans for BSAVA Congress and look forward to welcoming a large number of veterinary professionals to our stand throughout the duration of the meeting".

Contacting the Trust

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