



# Advancement of the Professions Committee Meeting

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

## **Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)**

**05 February 2025, 10:00-13:00 Remote via Microsoft Teams**

### **Agenda**

- 1. Apologies for absence, declarations of interest and welcome (5 mins)**
- 2. Matters arising and minutes of the meeting held on 02 October 2024 (5 mins)**
- 3. Workstream updates (15 mins)**
- 4. Oral update: VN Vision events (15 mins)**
- 5. Oral update: Animal Behaviour Working Party Report (Annex 1 - 15 mins)**
- 6. Oral update: outreach and engagement (10 mins)**
- 7. Introduction: new Project Implementation Manager role (10 mins)**
- 8. Oral update: Reasonable Adjustments Campaign (20 mins)**
- 9. Oral update: MMI research grants and outcomes (20 mins)**
- 10. Discussion: UKHACC 10 commitments (20 mins)**
- 11. Brainstorming session: APC and governance reform (Annex 2 - 45 mins)**
- 12. AOB**
- 13. Date of next meeting 07 May 2025 IN PERSON at a London location. The meeting will run between 10am-3pm, further details to be confirmed shortly.**

Summary	
Meeting	APC
Date	02 October 2024
Title	Advancement of the Professions Committee Report 02 October 2024
Summary	To note the attached minutes and classified appendix of the meeting held on 02 October 2024
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Stephanie Taylor Advancement of the Professions Administrator s.taylor@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification <sup>1</sup>	Rationales <sup>2</sup>
Paper	Unclassified	N/A
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

### <sup>1</sup>Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation, or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

## <sup>2</sup>Classification rationales

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## Minutes of the Advancement of the Professions Committee Meeting Held Virtually at 10:00

<b>Members:</b>	Dr L Allum	RCVS Council Member
	Mrs B Andrews-Jones	VN Council Chair, Chair of Innovation
	Ms A Boag (Observer)	Chair of Board of Trustees for RCVS Knowledge
	Mr J M Castle	RCVS Lay Council Member
	Dr T Gardiner	Diversity and Inclusion Working Group Chair, and Lead for Global Development
	Ms L Lockett	RCVS CEO and Vet Futures Project Board
	Dr S Paterson (Chair)	RCVS President, Council Lead for Environment and Sustainability, Lead for Leadership & Chair of the Advancement of the Professions Committee
	Mr Simon Williams*	VN Futures Project Board
	Dr Niall Connell	Chair of the Fellowship Board

<b>In attendance:</b>	Mrs A Belcher	Director for Advancement of the Professions
	Mr L Bishop	Media and Publications Manager
	Mrs J Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Mr L Emeka	Diversity and Inclusion Senior Officer
	Mrs G Gill	Leadership and Inclusion Manager
	Ms Katie Mantell	RCVS Knowledge CEO
	Mrs Rapinder Newton	Mind Matters Initiative Lead
	Mr I Holloway	Director of Communications
	Mr S Hurley	Mind Matters Initiative Senior Officer
	Miss J Macdonald	VN Futures Project Lead

Mr B Myring	Policy and Public Affairs Manager
Mr M Sundhu	Policy and Public Affairs Officer
Mrs Abi Hanson	Media and Publications Officer
Miss S Taylor	AP Administrator
Ms A Youngs	Fellowship and Leadership Senior Officer
Ms Deborah Rowlanes	Events Manager
Ms Rosie Powley	Outreach and Engagement Manager
Mrs Vicki Bolton	Research Manager

\* apologies

### Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting including Louise Allum as the new chair of the Mind Matters Initiative (MMI), Niall Connell as the new chair of the Fellowship, and Simon Williams as the new VN Futures Project board lead. Further introductions were made for the new RCVS Research Manager, Vicki Bolton and Outreach and Engagement Manager, Rosie Powley.
2. Apologies were received from Simon Williams.

### Matters Arising and Minutes Held on 08 May 2024

3. Minutes from 08 May 2024 meeting were approved.
4. Discussed the status of the work on trigger warnings from the previous APC meeting. It was noted that advice and data had been received from a psychologist which further demonstrated risks around over-using trigger warnings. It was decided that APC will revisit this topic in a 2025 meeting once more research has been conducted, including seeking legal advice.

### Workstream Updates

5. A brief update was given on the RCVS CEO's recent trip to the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB). Discussions were had around remote prescribing, utilising artificial intelligence, and mandatory practice regulation.
6. A campaign will be run for Black History month aligning with the theme of 'Reclaiming Narratives'. This will focus on the outputs of a social media survey sent to the black veterinary community including questions such as: what 'reclaiming narratives' means to them, and what aspects of their heritage are unknown or inaccurate. Discussed the possibility of sending a future survey inviting non-

black individuals to submit questions about black history to encourage further learning and understanding.

7. It was noted that a project proposal will be presented at a future APC meeting for the RCVS to continue their work on assisting the Veterinary Council of Zambia in developing their regulatory functions.

### **School Outreach Lead Introduction**

8. An introduction to the new RCVS Outreach and Engagement Manager and the functions of the role which include: widening participation and outreach, engaging with students and new graduates.
9. An update on the upcoming New Scientist Live event. RCVS will hold a themed 'veterinary learning environment' stand with interactive activities. There will be representative vets, nurses and students, and all data will be captured to measure impact and help shape future outreach work.

### **Oral Update: MMI Research Grants**

10. A brief background was given of the Mind Matters Sarah Brown Award and an overview of the new grants programme to be established for 2024-2028. The new programme includes changes such as: two grant opportunities for both established researchers and postgraduate/early career researchers, five areas of research focus, clear and accessible applicant support documentation. An optional diversity and monitoring form has been included for applicants to help measure demographic reach.

### **Oral Update: New Fellowship Chair**

11. Dr Niall Connell will officially assume the position of Fellowship Chair on Fellowship Day 2024 following the elections. It was noted that the Fellowship Vice Chair elections have amassed higher levels of interest and applications in comparison to the previous election. Fellowship is currently in the process of dissolving the development of the Fellowship Working Group and transitioning to task and finish groups with a greater focus on evidence gaps.

### **Oral Update: Animal Behaviourism**

12. A brief explanation was given on the purpose of the Animal Behaviourism Working Party which is led by the Fellowship Science Advisory Panel. Three of the four total meetings have been held, and a draft report has been compiled. Once this report has been signed off, it will come to APC for approval and depending on the outcome, may need to proceed to the RCVS Council.

### **Review of DCIS Outputs and Activities**

13. A brief overview of the key findings and highlights from the Disability and Chronic Illness Survey. Some key themes included were: the poor levels of knowledge and understanding around disability

and chronic illness, discriminatory behaviour and the lack of consistent support experienced across both education and employment.

14. Guided by the results of this survey, the Diversity and Inclusion team are working on a reasonable adjustments campaign, an EDI fundamentals Academy course, and guidance for supporting Neurodivergent students on placement. There will be further research undertaken in student experience, workarounds and adaptations, employer support and workplace culture. Discussions were also had around a possible Vet Schools Council collaboration to develop health passports for students which will assist in the disclosure of disabilities and chronic illnesses.

#### **Workforce Modelling (Confidential)**

15. This information is available in the classified appendix.

#### **Oral Update: Changes to DIG Committee (Confidential)**

16. This information is available in the classified appendix.

#### **VN Vision Events: Insight from Events**

17. A presentation was given on the outcomes of the VN Vision Events. The events have been held both in-person and virtually; it was noted that the in-person events appeared to have higher levels of engagement as it was easier for attendees to discuss topics with each other. The key areas for discussion were structure of delivery of care and what nurses do, education, and practice culture. There were many re-occurring topics raised including: the nurse prescriber role and community nursing but it was clear that culture change was at the core. The overall feedback from the RVN's was positive and they found the opportunity to share their opinions very valuable.
18. The data from this will be compiled into a report with solidified actions and projects. Discussions were also had around possible collaborations with RCVSK and MMI to target the research and mental health topics raised at the events. The report expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2025 and the progress will be revisited in the next APC meeting.

#### **Oral Update: UKHACC**

19. Discussions were had around UKHACC's twelve commitments and whether all members should be directly implementing them. The current progress that the RCVS has made against these commitments is being measured, with plans to review and discuss the results at the next APC meeting. Also touched on the opportunity to establish a sustainability lead within the Fellowship to contribute towards Environment and Sustainability work.

#### **AOB**



20. No AOB was raised.

**Date of Next Meeting 05 February 2025 Online**

21. The date of the next meeting is 05 February 2025. It will be a virtual meeting starting at 10am and finishing at 1pm.

## Summary

Meeting	Advancement of the Professions Committee
Date	05.02.25
Title	Updates from APC Workstreams
Summary	<p>Provided below is an update on the outputs and outcomes of APC workstreams since the last Committee meeting in addition to looking forward to planned work for the next. Where relevant, also highlighted are matters arising as a result of these activities that would benefit from further APC scrutiny presently or in due course. The Summary is ordered as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Mind Matters Initiative</li> <li>ii. Environment and Sustainability</li> <li>iii. Fellowship of the RCVS</li> <li>iv. VN Futures</li> <li>v. Diversity and Inclusion Working Group</li> <li>vi. Global Strategy</li> <li>vii. RCVS Knowledge</li> </ul>
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Author	<p>Steph Taylor</p> <p>AP Administrator</p> <p>s.taylor@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>020 7050 1228</p>

## Classifications

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Paper	Unclassified	N/A

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## Fellowship Update

### Events

#### **Fellowship Day**

1. The 2024 Fellowship Day event was well-received by attendees, with the Keynote speaker, Peter Cairns delivering an engaging and thought-provoking talk.
2. The two panel sessions held on the day created much conversation with the attendees desiring the Fellowship take the sessions further into groups which can action some outcomes to deliver to the profession.

#### **Fellowship Board Elections**

3. The vacant position of Vice-Chair to the RCVS Fellowship Board was filled by Prof James Wood following an election which closed in October 2024. Prof Wood was welcomed to the Board at Fellowship Day and has attended the first Board meeting of 2025, where he was formally introduced to all Board members present.

### Fellowship Science Advisory Panel (FSAP)

4. The final meeting of the FSAP Animal Behaviourism Working Group took place on 17 January and the group were able to come to a consensus on the final wording for the report, which will be brought to APC for review before being considered by RCVS Council for inclusion in the recommendations for legislative reform.
5. The FSAP are due to hold a meeting on 19 February and will be discussing the themes from Fellowship Day, mostly the *Preparedness for Disease Outbreak* panel session. They will look at what can be achieved by the FSAP, what the desirable outcomes would be and the skillset/experience we should be looking for when recruiting into the task and finish group that will be created to tackle this topic. Sustainability has long been on the agenda, and following the consensus statement on sustainability, we are now able to move forward, and Ms Ellie West (who is chairing the sustainability task and finish group) will be joining the meeting to discuss some plans for how the FSAP can take the sustainability task and finish group forward.

### Promoting the Fellowship Task and Finish Group

6. A task-and-finish group has been established to look at ways of promoting the Fellowship. Sitting under the remit of the Fellowship Board's Projects and Engagement Officer, this group have the first meeting scheduled for 24 February and will look at creating a proposal to

### Evidence Gaps Task and Finish Group

7. We are currently trying to find suitable dates for the meeting to take place. The meeting will scope out how we can discover the evidence gaps that would be of the most benefit to the profession, who we would need involved in the group, the structure (i.e. whether there would be many sub-groups or one main group etc) and how we would position this to Knowledge for collaboration.



## Mind Matters Update

### Events, Outreach and Engagement

#### **Association of Veterinary Students (AVS) Congress 2025**

1. The team will be joining the Education team at the Association of Veterinary Students Congress in February 2025 (Cambridge) to talk to students about the work of MMI and support available.

#### **British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress 2025**

2. Following the success of MMI's programme of talks at the BSAVA 2024 Congress, we have been invited to deliver a talk in the new Community Hub space at BSAVA Congress on 22 March 2025. We are pleased to be supported again by Elinor O'Connor, Professor of Occupational Psychology at the University of Manchester, who will deliver a talk on our behalf.

#### **Myerscough College talk**

3. MMI will be joining RCVS colleagues to deliver a one-hour session to Myerscough College Veterinary Nursing cohort on 24 April 2025. They have expressed an interest in learning more about MMI, the RCVS and what it means to be registered, and professional conduct.

#### **Vettnet Conference and CAW Clinical Supervisors Congress 2025**

4. In 2024 we commissioned speakers to speak on behalf of MMI, and present at Vettnet and the College of Animal Welfare (CAW), Head Nurse congress, who delivered presentations on topics such as incivility and how to thrive as a veterinary nurse. Following the successful presentations, both speakers have been invited to return. The MMI team is working with both representatives to provide them with a brief about MMI.

#### **MMI Research Symposium 2025**

5. Preparations are underway for the fifth Mental Health Research Symposium, which will coincide with MMI's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The symposium take place on Friday 10 October 2025 at the Eastside Rooms in Birmingham. The call for abstracts (both oral and poster) is currently open and closes on the 28 February 2025.

### Research

6. Following the launch of our new research grants programme in 2024, we were pleased to award a £15,000 Impact grant to researchers at Oxford Brookes University, who will explore alcohol, mental health and help seeking behaviours in veterinary practice. You can find further information about the research via this RCVS news article: [RCVS Mind Matters awards funding to project exploring alcohol use behaviours and barriers to help seeking in UK veterinary practice - Professionals](#)
7. The second round of our new research grants programme will launch in Spring 2025, where two £5,000 Discovery grants (no Discovery Grant was awarded in 2024) and one £15,000 Impact grant will be available. The Senior MMI Officer will be providing a more detailed update on the Research Grants programme during APC meeting.
8. The final funded project SVN Mental Health Education under the previous Sarah Brown Research Grant, has progressed well with initial findings nearly ready for sharing, and dissemination planning underway. A further report will be available at the May APC meeting.

## **Campaigns, Content and Publications**

### **Let's Talk Adjustments Campaign**

9. We are working in partnership with the RCVS EDI team on the Reasonable Adjustments Campaign. Further information on the campaign can be found within the EDI workstream update.

### **Applied Mental Health Science Content Series**

10. Later this year, we will be launching our Applied Mental Health Science Series, aimed at the wider veterinary community. Accessible and evidence-based information, that can be utilised to make informed health decisions and help raise awareness, is crucial to protecting and supporting health. The series will be used not only to raise awareness of mental health conditions, but also provide individuals, managers and leaders with access to high quality, practical information which can then be used to further support others. We will provide more information at the next APC.

### **Safe Events & Congresses Guide**

11. In the MMI strategy we have committed to launching guidance on creating psychologically safe events and congresses, which was to be released in 2024. However, due to resource constraints, work commenced on this guide in autumn 2024, and we will be launching this guide (name TBC) in spring/summer 2025. We have worked with the MMI Taskforce members to set up a task and finish group, to ensure that this is a collaborative effort and shows a commitment to creating safe events across the sector.

### **Understanding and Managing Stress in the Veterinary Workplace Guide**

12. We are currently working with Elinor O'Connor, Professor of Occupational Psychology at the University of Manchester, to update the first edition of [a guide to enhancing wellbeing and managing work stress in the veterinary workplace](#). The MMI team will be launching the revised edition of the Guide as part of Stress Awareness Month in April 2025.

## **Professional Development**

### **Mental Health First Aid courses**

13. MHFA training for the veterinary community continues into 2025, as there was high demand for our Mental Health First Aid Courses in 2024. Last year, we trained 49 Mental Health First Aiders, and 46 Mental Health Champions across the UK (including a fully funded course for the Association of Veterinary Students). This year we have organised six 2-day online MHFA England Courses to take place between January and June 2025, training in total a further 96 Mental Health First Aiders. The January, February and March dates sold out very quickly. Similar courses for Scotland and Wales, are also being planned. Extra courses have been put on to reduce the numbers on the waiting list. We will communicate course availability for July-December 2025 later this year.

### **RCVS Academy courses**

14. A Civility Fundamentals course, which built upon work undertaken at the University of Aberdeen, has now been launched via RCVS Academy, and positive feedback has been received so far.

### **Progress against strategy and KPIs**

Below is a brief overview on how we are progressing against our five-year strategy in some of the key areas. A blog post outlining what we delivered in 2024 is available on our website: <https://vetmindmatters.org/reflections-on-2024-key-mmi-moments-and-achievements/>

Workstream	What we said we will do	Progress made to date
<b>Prevent: Leadership</b>	Mental health for line managers to be incorporated into our core training programme ready for 2024.	To be launched in 2025.
	Our new veterinary mental health grant programme will support researchers at all stages of their career to make a tangible impact with research that makes a difference in practice as well as enhancing our understanding of the theory around mental ill-health in the veterinary professions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched new research grants programme 2024-2028.</li> <li>• Two grants available, including £5,000 Discovery grant to support early career researchers.</li> <li>• Application process updated to provide guidance for applicants on areas of interest.</li> <li>• Plans for impact and dissemination embedded into the application and assessment process.</li> <li>• A new guide for grant holders, is also being finalised to provide proactive support and advice.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevent: EDI and civility</b>	<p>We will continue to develop our suite of online resources on these topics, to include written booklets, 'hubs' and webinars.</p> <p>We will continue to deliver relevant, timely, and high quality training on a range of topics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEW Civility Fundamentals course launched on RCVS Academy in October 2024. 83 Individuals have completed the course to date, 11 of which are RCVS staff.</li> <li>• Self-Compassion course available for free on MMI website for the veterinary community. Made available through previous Sarah Brown Grant recipients.</li> <li>• Sponsorship of WellVet Menopause related content.</li> <li>• Facilitated two research webinars, on compassion and veterinary wellbeing with researchers at the University of Surrey, and on SVN mental health education with researchers at Leeds Beckett University.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevent: Widening the conversation</b>	While continuing to raise awareness, we will challenge ourselves and our audiences to have more nuanced conversations around mental health, and mental ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three Campfire Events delivered in 2024. Topics included anxiety, movement and mental health and allyship and LGBTQ+ mental health.</li> <li>• BSAVA 2024 – delivered sessions on key topics such as civility, moral stress and injury, and OCD/PTSD,</li> <li>• <b>INTERNAL:</b> Although not included in the strategy, we have fed into the PSS review, ensuring requirements relating to mental health follow best practice and encourage a positive work culture that is conducive to good mental health.</li> </ul>

<b>Protect: Lesser heard voices</b>	We will continue to provide targeted projects for veterinary nurses, in collaboration with other initiatives such as VN Futures.	Working closely with VN Futures to gather insights from their work, to feed into VN specific projects. Project for 2025 to be determined.
	We will build our rural network of mental health first aiders to 250 vets, vet nurses and support staff by 2025	2024: 25/49 participants live or work in rural communities. 2025: Delivering more courses, including in rural locations across the UK.
<b>Protect: A trusted source of accessible information</b>	We will continue to deliver training on a range of topics relating to mental health and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, as well as delivering MHFA training, we delivered the 'Mind Yourself' CPD programme, with the charity 'Two Roads'</li> <li>• In 2025, we will be moving away from the Two Roads training and launching our Applied Mental Health Series to deliver high-quality, accessible and trusted content relating to mental health.</li> <li>• <b>INTERNAL:</b> Delivered MMI training to PSS assessors and assisted facilitating MHFA Aware training for assessors, to assist them with managing conversations with distressed members of the professions.</li> </ul>
<b>Support: Research</b>	We will continue to deliver a Veterinary Mental Health Research Symposium every other year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for 2025 has commenced. Call for abstracts closes end of February.</li> <li>• Developed abstract guidance and a template submission form.</li> </ul>
	We will develop a 'hub' of resources for those interested in veterinary mental health research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MMI website has been updated, with a tab now dedicated to research. This includes updated information about the research grants, including guidance documents, and terms and conditions which we developed in 2024. We have also created a new assessment process, with clear guidance created for assessors.</li> <li>• The Hub also includes all previous symposium information and information about the 2025 Symposium.</li> </ul>
<b>Support: Hope for tomorrow</b>	We are committed to continuing our support for Vetlife, allowing it to continue to deliver its vital services for the professions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £100K funding continues, as well as additional payment to Vetlife each year for call handling.</li> <li>• We also fund training for VetSupport volunteers, who support members of the professions.</li> </ul>
	Guidance on creating psychologically safe events and congresses will be released in 2024	To be delivered spring/summer 2025.



## RCVS Knowledge Update

### Developments and activities since beginning October 2024:

#### RCVS Knowledge 2025-2029 strategy

- After a process of development throughout 2024, the RCVS Knowledge Board of trustees approved the 2025-2029 strategy in November. The strategy will be published in February 2025.
- The strategy focuses on enhancing the impact of RCVS Knowledge as a charity with a mission to advance the quality of veterinary care for the benefit of animals, the public and society. The strategy lays out three strategic pillars:
  - Supporting veterinary professionals today: We will be the go-to place for veterinary teams to find the knowledge, skills and tools they need to continuously improve the quality of care.
  - Shaping the future of veterinary care: We will influence and inspire broader change that advances evidence-based veterinary practice in a way that benefits animals, people and the planet.
  - Celebrating veterinary history: We will curate and raise awareness of veterinary history, sharing insights from years gone by so that veterinary care today and in the future is built on knowledge of the past.

#### Contextualised care research

- RCVS Knowledge is launching a pan-profession initiative that aims to identify barriers and enablers to the delivery of contextualised care and create a roadmap for what needs to happen to support veterinary teams to deliver contextualised care and shared decision-making as part of good quality veterinary care.
- We will be working with an independent research partner to carry out mixed-methods research, including surveys, interviews and focus groups with veterinary professionals and animal owners, that aims to provide a framework and action plan for what needs to happen to support the delivery of contextualised care now and in the future.
- The work will launch on 4<sup>th</sup> February at the National Forum for Contextualised Care in London, which is bringing together more than 60 people from across the veterinary sector, including leaders from veterinary associations, veterinary educators, students, practice staff, veterinary charities and rescues, pet insurers, regulators, representatives from corporate and independent practices and animal owners.
- The work will culminate in a summit in July followed by a final report in the autumn.

#### Canine Cruciate Registry

- The [2024 Canine Cruciate Registry annual report](#) was published in November 2024 and demonstrates a 79% increase in the number of surgeries recorded by UK veterinary professionals in the last year. The Registry's dataset now contains the details of 1,319 canine cruciate surgical procedures, compared with 735 reported in 2023.
- RCVS Knowledge clinical lead for registries, Mark Morton, was awarded the BSAVA J.A. Wright Memorial Award for his innovative work and inspirational leadership skills in driving forward this work.

#### Veterinary Evidence student award winners announced

- Veterinary students from Australia and the United Kingdom were recognised as part of the [Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2024](#). These yearly awards challenge veterinary students from around the world to critically examine the evidence on a certain topic and

submit a written knowledge summary on their findings to *Veterinary Evidence*, the peer-reviewed journal published by RCVS Knowledge.

### Quality Improvement (QI) training, support and resources

- In November 2024, RCVS Knowledge hosted the third QI in a Day: Enhancing Patient Care, Team Culture and Communication event. For the first time, this event was fully virtual, enabling 52 delegates to attend from anywhere in the UK.
- The event aimed to: embed QI skills within the professions and encourage the application of QI techniques to advance the quality of care to patients; encourage veterinary individuals to champion QI initiatives in their place of work; and enhance teamwork, discussion and communication in practice.
- 100% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with the experience and that their learning would benefit their practice, teams and patients.
- In addition, over this period, three podcasts were released exploring QI in practice:
  - [November 2024](#): Lizzie Booth from Quarry Veterinary Group, explains how her team reviewed aspects of the BSAVA Protect ME Poster to facilitate discussions on their antimicrobial stewardship activities and rational use of antibiotics in ear and skin conditions.
  - [December 2024](#): Lou Northway speaks to Lizzie McLennan-Green from CVS about their award-winning project using clinical audit to investigate blood pressure monitoring in cats.
  - [January 2025](#): Hannah Jones from Avenue Veterinary Centre, explains how her team approached a prospective audit using post-operative pain scoring to assess the analgesia protocols for neutering in feline patients.

### Feature in InFocus on Influenza H5N1 in mammals

- RCVS Knowledge has updated and shared a feature in its [InFocus journal watch](#), bringing together current reports and evidence regarding H5N1 in mammals. Recent cases of Highly Pathogenic Influenza H5N1 in dairy cattle in the United States have raised concerns about whether this strain of influenza, which is currently circulating widely in birds, is becoming adapted to mammalian species, and poses a potential threat to human health.

### Upcoming activities

- **Farm vet workshops:** As part of the Farm Vet Champions initiative, we are running two workshops – one in [Somerset](#) and the other in [Staffordshire](#) – to support farm vets with responsible antimicrobial stewardship and data collection in the ruminant sectors on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> February.
- **Veterinary history:** We will be re-launching our veterinary history website, enabling enhanced digital exploration of the historical collections and archives.
- **Announcement of [Knowledge Award](#) winners:** Applications to the awards are currently being reviewed and assessed ahead of an announcement in the early summer.

## Diversity and Inclusion Update

### Events

#### **AgriFuture Programme: STEAM Challenge, 30 January 2025**

1. The Senior Officer, Diversity and Inclusion will be attending the STEAM Challenge event, held as part of the AgriFuture programme which actively supports students from ethnic minority backgrounds to enter agriculture. Representatives from across the sector will come together to understand the scale of the challenge, share knowledge and insights and explore opportunities for collaborative action.

#### **London Vet Show: BVCIS Community Mastermind session, 15 November 2024**

2. The Leadership and Inclusion Manager participated in a community mastermind session organised by the British Veterinary and Chronic Illness Society (BVCIS) at London Vet Show in November. The session looked at outcomes from the Institute of Employment Studies (IES) Disability and Chronic Illness in Veterinary Work and Education research, which was commissioned on behalf of RCVS and BVCIS. Attendees explored key data and discussed the need for improved support and better line manager training in disability and reasonable adjustments.

#### **VMG Congress: Using 'reasonable adjustments' to boost productivity and retain talent, joint RCVS/BVCIS Session, 24-25 April 2025**

3. The AP Director and the Leadership and Inclusion Manager will deliver a joint session with BVCIS to disseminate findings from the Disability and Chronic Illness in Veterinary Work and Education research. The session will consider implications for workplace culture and staff retention.

### Research

#### **Disability and Chronic Illness Student Report**

4. IES have analysed student and early career respondents' data from the recent Disability and Chronic Illness in Veterinary Work and Education research. The latest draft of their report is now being reviewed. The final report should be ready for publication in March.

### Campaigns

#### **Reasonable Adjustments: 'Let's Talk Adjustments' campaign**

5. The Disability and Chronic Illness in Veterinary Work and Education research report showed that there was a need to improve understanding of disability and reasonable adjustments in veterinary workplaces. In response to this, the D & I workstream has been working with the Mind Matters Initiative planning and developing content for the 'Let's Talk Adjustments' campaign, which is due to launch in mid-late February.

The campaign focusses on aware raising and education of reasonable adjustments and will run through until July 2025. More information will be provided in agenda item 8.

#### **Black History Month 2024**

6. Black History Month campaign was launched in October 2024 and achieved strong results. The campaign was focused on the 'reclaiming narratives' theme which aimed to correct historical inaccuracies, showcase untold success stories and challenge narratives. Black veterinary professionals and students were invited to participate in a social media campaign and share their perspectives in relation to the theme. The campaign featured on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X. The campaign achieved strong results with performance on Instagram being a notable highlight. Our top performing post on Instagram achieved 3% engagement rate and 86 likes. This was considerably higher y-o-y for the Black History Month campaign and also in comparison to the Disability History Month 2024 campaign.

## **Courses**

### **EDI fundamentals**

7. The Leadership and Inclusion Manager and Senior Officer, Diversity and Inclusion are currently working closely with RCVS Academy to develop content for the EDI fundamentals course. The course will consist of three modules and provides learners with an introduction to key concepts and topics related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Estimated launch date for the course is July 2025.

## Summary

Meeting	Advancement of the Professions Committee
Date	5 February 2025
Title	Report of the RCVS Fellowship Science Advisory Panel's Animal Behaviour Working Party
Summary	This paper presents the report of the Working Party, including recommendations on the regulation of Clinical Animal Behaviourists.
Attachments	
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## Classifications

Document	Classification <sup>1</sup>	Rationales <sup>2</sup>
Paper	Unclassified	

## Fellowship Science Advisory Panel: Report of the Animal Behaviour Working Party

1. This report sets out the recommendations of the RCVS Fellowship Science Advisory Panel's Animal Behaviour Working Party ("the Working Party"). The report follows four meetings of the Working Party between 2023-2025, subsequent to an initial evidence-gathering roundtable in 2023.
2. The Working Party was tasked with making a recommendation on whether behavioural therapy could be considered an act of 'veterinary surgery' and, if so, whether there should be a role for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in the regulation of animal behaviourists. The need to answer these questions emerged from discussions in recent years concerning the potential for the RCVS to regulate additional animal health professions, the criteria that such a profession would need to meet, and the possibility of a replacement to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 which would empower the RCVS to become an 'umbrella regulator' for the animal health professions.
3. A key philosophical and practical question raised in earlier discussions was whether animal behaviour treatment could fall within the definition of 'veterinary surgery' under section 27 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Veterinary specialists in animal behaviour (and specialists in associated scientific fields) argue that any behavioural modification can impact the physiology of the brain in a deliberate way. Coupled with the general direction of travel in terms of incorporating mental health within wider concepts of health in both the human and veterinary medical world, an end point could be envisaged in which some or all of Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CAB) treatment, and the same treatments undertaken by individuals who have not registered as CABs, could fall into the definition of 'veterinary surgery'. There is therefore potential for both the assessment of the nature of any condition and the resulting treatment to be considered to be acts of veterinary surgery. It is equally clear that behaviour modification by animal trainers, whilst also impacting brain physiology, is not an act of veterinary surgery as it does not address medical issues.

### Animal behaviour and veterinary surgery: key definitions

4. The Working Party agreed that it would be helpful to agree definitions of some of the key terminology. Some suggested definitions are as follows:
5. **'Behavioural Medicine'** is exclusively a veterinary discipline and may include the diagnosis of physical and/or psychological conditions and the prescription of medicines.
6. **'Behavioural modification'** refers to a broad field of study and practice encompassing non-veterinary surgeons involved in addressing behavioural issues in animals.
7. **A 'Clinical Animal Behaviourist' (CAB)** is a behavioural therapist who may or may not be a veterinary surgeon. They use a clinical approach - i.e. a structured approach of observation and treatment of animals. Non-veterinary surgeon CABs are not involved in the prescription of

medicines, and do not oversee the link between physical, emotional, and cognitive health, which are functions reserved to veterinary surgeons only. Clinical Animal Behaviourists work on veterinary referral, helping the owners of animals resolve behavioural issues through assessment of the problem behaviour and application of an individual behaviour therapy programme.

8. **Clinical** – a structured approach, based on evidence. The Oxford English Dictionary (2010) defines clinical as “relating to the observation and treatment of patients (rather than theoretical studies)” and thus its use implies, or may imply, medical knowledge and/or training.
9. A **‘trainer’** is a practitioner who carries out animal training.
10. **‘Training’** addresses the behaviour of animals but is not a form of behavioural therapy or a clinical practice and does not involve addressing behavioural issues caused by physical or emotional injury, illness, or disease. It would therefore not ordinarily be considered to be an act of ‘veterinary surgery’. Training covers owner/handler interactions with the animal, reinforcing desirable behaviours and ensuring training plans are developed, goals are met and the training is evaluated to ensure its continued appropriateness.
11. **‘Paraprofession’** is traditionally used to describe a profession that assists a lead profession, though increasingly they may be seen as professionals in their own right. An existing example is the veterinary nurse, as they rely on veterinary surgeons for diagnosis and delegation. Other roles such as musculoskeletal therapists, veterinary technicians, foot trimmers and equine dental technicians are often considered to be paraprofessionals in the context of the vet-led team.
12. **‘Allied professional’** is a term used by the RCVS to describe paraprofessionals who are part of the vet-led team and regulated by the RCVS, e.g. veterinary nurses.
13. **‘Diagnosis’** is not a term defined in law, and it would be given its ordinary meaning. The Oxford English Dictionary defines diagnosis as “the identification of the nature of an illness or problem by the identification of its symptoms”. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 includes the diagnosis of illness and injury in animals as an act of ‘veterinary surgery’. All diagnoses are a form of clinical **assessment**, but not all assessments are diagnoses. Non-vets can carry out an assessment, but this assessment cannot eliminate conditions and/or causes such as an underlying physical condition, hence the need for a veterinary diagnosis before referral to an allied professional, who may then carry out their own assessment and whose subsequent activity may itself be an act of veterinary surgery (and whose findings and progress should subsequently be reported back to the veterinary surgeon as part of the ‘vet-led team’ relationship).

### Terms of Reference 1: Should any aspects of the various roles in the animal behaviour sector be defined as an ‘act of veterinary surgery’?

14. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA) restricts the undertaking of acts of veterinary surgery to veterinary surgeons, except where specific exemptions are given. The VSA defines ‘veterinary surgery’ as:

“the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, shall be taken to include—

- a. the diagnosis of diseases in, and injuries to, animals including tests performed on animals for diagnostic purposes;
- b. the giving of advice based upon such diagnosis;
- c. the medical or surgical treatment of animals; and
- d. the performance of surgical operations on animals.

15. It is important to note that carrying out any one of these functions will amount to an act of veterinary surgery – it is not required to show that all of the above criteria have been satisfied for there to be an act of ‘veterinary surgery’.
16. In considering the work of other groups such as musculoskeletal therapists, the RCVS has previously concluded that the nature of any assessments that they carry out may fall short of making a diagnosis. Such assessments, however, in certain circumstances could become diagnoses and therefore be considered an act of ‘veterinary surgery’. The RCVS further concluded that this, along with the nature of treatments given, required suitable underpinnings in statute (i.e. a suitable exemption to the provisions of the VSA or any future legislation to replace the VSA).
17. Clinical animal behavioural work involves assessments of a similar nature. The treatment of behavioural issues in non-human animals is often, if not primarily, associated with understanding and addressing the mental state (and emotive responses) of the animal in question. A CAB, and potentially also other non-veterinary behaviourists, will therefore, as the keystone of their work, assess the possible cause(s) of the animal’s behaviour, to understand why a behavioural issue is likely being exhibited, before suggesting a treatment plan.
18. Considering a behavioural issue with a health component as a physical, emotional or cognitive illness, injury, or disease is consistent with existing legislative definitions found in statutes affecting both human and non-human contexts.
19. Behavioural issues are an indicator of health in a comprehensive sense, as physical, emotional and cognitive aspects may all contribute to their development and maintenance to a greater or lesser degree. Understanding the relative involvement of physical health is essential in every case - this can be complex and it is not possible to rule this out. Veterinary involvement is therefore necessary throughout the process of investigation, management and treatment of behavioural issues.
20. In human healthcare, the definition of illness includes “any disorder or disability of the mind” (National Health Services Act 2006). The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 defines disease as “any injury, ailment or adverse condition, whether of body or mind.” In an animal context, the



Animal Welfare Act 2006 defines injury to animals to include 'mental injury' and it is therefore reasonable to suggest that the treatment of illness or disease should be considered an act of 'veterinary surgery', whether the illness, injury, or disease is of the body, the mind, or both.<sup>1</sup>

21. Furthermore, the National Health Services Act 2006 defines mental illness as "any disorder or disability of the mind", and the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 defines disease as "any injury, ailment or adverse condition, whether of body or mind." Therefore, categorising psychological conditions experienced by animals as a disease, illness, or injury etc appears to be consistent with legislative wording and the 'One Health' approach that permeates human healthcare services – an approach to which animal healthcare services are now also progressing.<sup>2</sup>
22. As noted in the definition above, Clinical Animal Behaviourists use a clinical approach to the observation and treatment of health-related behaviour issues in patients. In contrast, it is important to note that *training* (e.g., teaching a dog recall and/or other basic life skills) is not meant to address an injury, illness, or disease and therefore would not ordinarily be considered to be an act of veterinary surgery.<sup>3</sup>

## **Terms of Reference 2: Is the existing voluntary regulation of the animal behaviour sector and the various roles within it sufficient, or should there be a role for the RCVS?**

23. When examining other potential allied professions, the RCVS concluded that in addition to new legislative provisions to allow them to carry out acts of 'veterinary surgery', those allied professions should have statutory provisions to allow them to be regulated by the RCVS. This is because the scope of activity is too large to be underpinned by an exemption order, as exemption orders are intended to underpin simple individual procedures that require very limited training (measured in hours and days rather than years). Carving out a scope of activity for delegation, as Schedule 3 does for veterinary nurses, requires that scope of activity to be reserved to a regulated profession, as it is for veterinary nurses.
24. Regulation would include a statutory register and protection of professional titles, alongside all the 'fitness to practice' and other measures that accompany professional regulation. Protection of title helps to ensure that only properly qualified and regulated professionals are delegated to, and gives clarity and assurance to both professionals and the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Wallace, *Diagnosing the UK's Private Dog Training Industry: an examination of industry practices and the case for industry regulation* (working title), PhD Thesis, Leeds Beckett University (Forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *Some members of the Working Party felt that there is no clear distinction between behaviour modification and training as both alter the brain physiology. The correction of some issues presented as undesirable by an animal's guardian, such as excessive pulling on the lead, may fall under the remit of both trainer and CAB depending on the underlying cause, and that therefore both trainers and CABs should be regulated, and by one regulator.*

25. Non-veterinary surgeon CABs, and other non-veterinary surgeon practitioners undertaking behavioural therapy, are therefore similarly a candidate for regulation by the RCVS.

## Conclusions

26. The working party therefore makes the following recommendations:

- a. That the work of non-veterinary surgeon Clinical Animal Behaviourists, and other non-veterinary surgeon practitioners undertaking behavioural therapy, should be considered to include acts of veterinary surgery.
- b. That the work of non-veterinary surgeon Clinical Animal Behaviourists therefore needs appropriate legislative provisions to be enabled in any replacement to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, including regulation by the RCVS alongside other Allied Professionals.

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### Summary

Meeting	Advancement of the Professions Committee
Date	5 February 2025
Title	RCVS governance reform & the Advancement of the Professions Committee
Summary	This paper outlines the possibility of retaining an elected element on APC following RCVS Council reform, and asks the Committee to consider options and potential impacts of this.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	
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### Classifications

Document	Classification <sup>1</sup>	Rationales <sup>2</sup>
Paper	Unclassified	

## RCVS governance reform & the Advancement of the Professions Committee

### Introduction

- 1) In November 2024, RCVS Council agreed on a number of recommendations for reform of RCVS governance, including agreeing that Council should become a fully-appointed body. RCVS Council governance reform will require changes to or a replacement of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.
- 2) In discussions concerning reform, it was stressed that the RCVS is primarily a regulator. While a small minority of functions are non-regulatory in nature, such as the RCVS Fellowship and the College's Honours and Awards, the majority of College functions fall into one of two categories:
  - a) Core regulatory functions - ensuring that *professionals are fit to practise*: those relating to getting on the register, staying on the register, and being removed from the register.
  - b) Upstream regulatory functions – ensuring that *the profession is fit for purpose*. These functions are largely currently overseen by the College's Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC), the current Terms of Reference for which are appended to the end of the paper.
- 3) 'Core' and 'upstream' functions do not clearly divide into 'Veterinary Surgeons Act' and 'Royal Charter' functions, and some functions that would once have been considered 'Charter activities' are now commonly carried out by other regulators who do not have Royal Charters. Meanwhile, some 'core' regulatory functions are carried out under the Charter, for example, the registration of veterinary nurses.
- 4) RCVS Council agreed to investigate the possibility of retaining an elected veterinary element on a future council or committee, which would report to RCVS Council, focused on upstream regulation and development of the professions. This would acknowledge the unique status of the RCVS without risking administrative divisions, and allow reform to bring RCVS Council closer to the regulatory norm. The composition of such a committee would likely continue to be a matter for the College that did not require legislative reform, and thus could potentially be trialled ahead of legislative change.
- 5) The College's new Legislative Change Working Party has been tasked with making recommendations to RCVS Council on the outstanding questions related to governance reform, including the possibility of a new council or committee for upstream regulation. Noting that all future committee memberships will look different once RCVS Council is fully appointed, one obvious solution would be to reform the selection of APC's membership so that it remained primarily or partly elected following RCVS Council reform. However, consideration would need to be given to how this would impact the functioning of APC, and the impact on the current 'Council lead' system for workstreams reporting to APC.
- 6) APC is asked to discuss this question so that any view on possible reform can be passed to the Working Party for consideration. Questions for consideration might include:

- a) Would elected members be added to the committee in addition to appointed Council leads, or replace the existing Council leads?
- b) What might the mix of veterinary surgeons and allied professionals (including veterinary nurses) be?
- c) Would it be appropriate to rename APC so that it became a 'Council', or would this undermine clarity?
- d) Would formal representation from veterinary representative bodies be more effective than retaining an elected element?

### **Current APC Terms of Reference**

The Advancement of the Professions Committee will oversee work that is non-statutory in nature and contributes broadly to the advancement of the veterinary and/or veterinary nursing professions.

Such activity includes, but is not limited to, leadership, innovation, mental health (Mind Matters), the Fellowship, international strategy, Vet Futures, VN Futures, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and other workstreams to be defined by Council.

This will exclude work that is non-statutory but sufficiently covered by existing standing committees, such as postgraduate education.

The Committee shall comprise the chairs of relevant working parties or taskforces, or appropriate Council member champions, together with up to four other members of Council (chair, lay member, veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse), together with relevant members of the Senior Team. Other Committee members may be co-opted if necessary. RCVS Knowledge, an independent charity, will contribute by means of its Chair of Trustees, who will be an invited observer. Although they each have responsibility for individual projects or areas of work, Committee members will review and input across all areas, with collective responsibility.

The Committee shall:

- a. Take regular reports from the leads on these areas of work and consider the ongoing effectiveness of the work against agreed strategy, timing and resourcing, making recommendations for changes, where appropriate. Consider any additional budgetary impact of these workstreams, which would then be escalated via the Financial Controls process;

- b. Ensure that potential synergies between the various projects and initiatives reporting into the Committee are identified and exploited, and that opportunities for working collaboratively to maximise the impact of workstreams is explored;
- c. Provide a forum for in-depth consideration of the issues surrounding or arising from the projects and initiatives that report into the Committee;
- d. Provide a forum for blue-sky thinking to support the identification and development of new non-statutory projects that would serve to advance the professions;
- e. Flag up any issues of concern to the Audit and Risk Committee, via the Risk Register, particularly in terms of financial, reputational or legal risks associated with the project and initiatives reporting to the Committee;
- f. Make recommendations to Council for any new streams of work which may be appropriate under our Royal Charter; and,
- g. Make a report to Council on a regular basis summarising the work that comes under its purview (usually via the minutes of its meetings).