

ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

INQUIRY RE:

MS ELIZABETH SING MAY LAW MRCVS (2)

DECISION ON SANCTION

1. When considering the question of sanction, the Committee was advised by the Legal Assessor that it should have in mind that the primary purpose of sanctions is not to punish but to protect the welfare of animals, maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct. The Committee understands that the sanction which it applies must be proportionate to the nature and extent of the conduct and that it must weigh the public interest with the interests of the Respondent. The Committee has taken into account the matters urged in mitigation on behalf of the Respondent, the character of the Respondent described by the witnesses called on her behalf, and the written testimonials produced. The testimonials produced and the evidence given orally by members of staff who had worked with the Respondent and a pet owner who was also a veterinary surgeon, spoke with one voice. The Respondent was considered to be an excellent veterinary surgeon, who was caring, devoted to the welfare of animals, and related well to her clients.
2. The Committee has considered aggravating and mitigating factors in its Decision on disgraceful conduct. In addition, the Committee considers that the Respondent has insight into the serious mistake that she made in failing to ensure that Kiwi was checked or monitored overnight. She apologised to the owners as soon as they were notified of Kiwi's death, she admitted this failing at the outset of this hearing, and the apology was repeated to the owners through her counsel. The Committee considers that the Respondent has suffered the ordeal of having the allegations against her hanging over her head for some 17 months, and has demonstrated remorse for her actions. The Committee does not consider that there is a risk that the Respondent is likely to leave an animal overnight after major surgery again, without ensuring that it is checked during that time.

3. The Committee has found that this was a single isolated incident, which involved a serious lapse of clinical judgement, which will probably stay in the mind of the Respondent for the rest of her career.
4. The Committee is satisfied that there was no premediated misconduct in this case, and the Respondent was not reckless in her actions. The Committee considers that there is no future risk to the welfare of animals so far as the Respondent is concerned. Although the Committee considers that there was a serious lapse of clinical judgement in this case, the Committee is satisfied that the allegation of disgraceful conduct against the Respondent falls at the lower end of seriousness.
5. The Committee notes that the Respondent has been in practice for some nine years now, and apart from this incident, there is no suggestion that the Respondent has fallen short of the standards expected of her on any other occasion. The Committee accepts the testimonial evidence that the Respondent is an extremely good veterinary surgeon, who is a valued member of the staff at the Practice, which provides a good service to the local community.
6. The Committee first considered whether to postpone judgement in this case. The Committee concluded that this was not appropriate in a case involving a single isolated incident, where there was no likelihood of repetition.
7. The Committee next went on to consider whether it would be appropriate to take no further action in this case. However, the Committee considered that the finding of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect in this case is too serious for no further action to be taken, having regard to the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct.
8. The Committee concluded that the appropriate sanction in this case was to issue a Reprimand to the Respondent, in relation to the finding of disgraceful conduct that has been made against her. The Committee considers that this sanction, coupled with the findings of fact and disgraceful conduct made against the Respondent, is sufficient to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper standards of conduct. The Committee does not consider it necessary to issue a warning to the Respondent about her future conduct, on the basis that the Committee has concluded that there is no risk of repetition.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE
26 JUNE 2019