The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons  
Specialisation and Further Education

THE CERTIFICATE IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE NOTES FOR CANDIDATES  
[These notes must be read in conjunction with the B1 General Guidance Notes to Candidates]

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

1. It is a requirement of the Veterinary Dermatology Board that ALL Candidates entering for the Certificate are Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS).

SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE

2. A candidate working in general practice or in another branch of the profession on which experience is being gained over at least two years in approved practice as defined in byelaw 5.3, which has included experience as defined by the Board, should be involved in dermatology and in the diagnosis and treatment of dermatological cases for at least 10% of his/her time over a period of at least two years. Candidates would be advised to arrange to spend short periods in veterinary centres [which would be accepted as approved centres in terms of byelaw 5(4)] in order to gain further intensive experience. In addition, candidates may not enter for the examination unless they have been Members of the College or held an approved veterinary qualification for at least three years.

3. CPD Records cards must be submitted with an application for final approval of experience and must cover the period of experience being offered. Course material relevant to Veterinary Dermatology should be highlighted and the Board expects that at least 75% of CPD undertaken will be directed towards Veterinary Dermatology.

4. Candidates are strongly recommended to see practice with an experienced dermatologist before applying for final approval of experience.

5. Candidates should ensure they have primary responsibility for an adequate case load before entering for and sitting the examination.

THE EXAMINATION

6. The examination consists of three Sections:

   (a) 10 case reports
   (b) TWO x 2 hour written papers, and
   (c) a clinical, oral, and practical examination.
Submit your work for the examination.

Number and Format

7. Ten case reports must be submitted. **One** copy only of each report is required. There is a brief commentary on the syllabus, which gives an indication on the breadth of knowledge required.

8. **Candidates are asked to submit an electronic version of their submitted work together with their hard copy.** This will be retained at RCVS unless requested by the examiners for purposes such as checking the word count. The electronic version should be Microsoft Office 2000 or XP compatible and should be submitted on CD. Please ensure that the disks are easily identifiable by placing them in an envelope with your name, subject and ‘Electronic version of submitted work’ marked clearly on the front.

9. Candidates are required to submit a series of reports of dermatological cases which they have dealt with personally. Candidates may be questioned about the reports in the oral section of the examination. These guidelines are issued to aid candidates in the production of the reports.

10. The cases should be selected to reflect a candidate’s broad practical coverage of the subject.

11. The casebook must involve clinical cases covering at least **four** different species in which the candidate has had ‘hands on’ experience and has been fully involved in the diagnosis and treatment. **However, there are no longer any specific requirements for large animal cases, e.g. a casebook including dogs, cats, rabbits, and reptiles would be acceptable** (applicable from 2001).

12. Candidates should avoid repetition of the same conditions. However, the discussion of several similar cases emphasising different points may constitute a single long case report. Routine cases are quite acceptable, and, while reports of more unusual cases are encouraged, they should be confined to those in which a definitive diagnosis was made. Where possible cited bibliography should be from refereed journals. It is anticipated that "long" cases will be those which require more extensive investigation. The progress of each case and its outcome should be documented with appropriate comments and illustrations, wherever possible, in the form of photographic prints; colour transparencies should not be used. Candidates should note that (again wherever possible) sufficient photographs should be included to illustrate the progress of cases during treatment. The illustrations will be judged as records of the case and not as evidence of photographic ability.

13. Candidates need to ensure that photographic quality of images is good, and that lesions are clearly visible on photographs. Candidates are encouraged to take initial case photographs before procedures, such as clipping, biopsy or euthanasia are carried out where possible.
14. The material should be typewritten, double spaced on A4 paper and may be presented as a book or bound into a single ring binder, though experience has shown that certain forms of binding are unsuitable and that the spirally bound form is best. Each page must be clearly numbered and a suitable index sheet, grouping the long and short cases, should be included at the front of the book or binder. No more than one of the cases submitted should have received major attention in the form of rewriting by the candidate's adviser. Candidates should identify cases with which they have received a significant amount of help with an asterisk. It is important that the candidate's name appears on the bound reports in a form which can be easily removed for the purposes of the examination and the candidates should take care to remove their name from any laboratory reports that may be included. Case reports must be presented in English, report in a structured way, and of a standard that would be considered suitable for publication. If original records are included, candidates should ensure that any handwritten originals are legible, or accompanied by typed or printed copies.

15. Care must be taken over the use of English: although examiners can make some allowances for candidate's whose first language is not English, nevertheless the meaning must be clearly conveyed. Care must be taken to ensure that terms are correctly spelt – especially those for common therapies, brand names, and dermatological terms. Candidates must spell check and carefully proof read their work.

16. Candidates are reminded that it is a European Directive which governs the use of medicines and that the "British cascade" can therefore not be disregarded.

17. It is helpful to the examiners in assessing the candidate's management of a case to see the original histopathology report with a translation into English if appropriate. Histopathology reports should therefore be included where relevant to the case, and any laboratory reports supplied should be in English.

18. Cases should be set out under the following headings, where applicable:
   - General case heading
   - Species, breed, age and sex of animal
   - Owner's complaint
   - History
   - Physical examination
   - Differential diagnosis
   - Laboratory and other diagnostic tests
   - Diagnosis and prognosis
   - Treatment
   - Re-inspections and final outcome
   - Discussion
   - References

19. Candidates should note that the discussion should concern itself mainly with points raised by the case. The more important pertinent literature may be briefly cited but a detailed discussion of it is not possible in the number of words requested and is not required.
20. Candidates should adapt the template declaration enclosed in the Information Pack and submit it with the case reports on a separate loose page.

21. It is not necessary to acknowledge the assistance of veterinary laboratories, or veterinary investigation centres, etc, where relevant papers are included as part of a case report. (Names should be deleted if any such papers are included).

22. Candidates are advised to retain a copy of the text (and of illustrative material if feasible).

**Word Count**

23. Ten case reports will be required – at an average of 1,000 words per case report, total word count not to exceed 10,000 words. Candidates should state the word count on the front page of each report and should include a total word count at the front of the submitted work. Submitted work that exceeds the stated limit (excluding bibliography) will be disqualified, and the candidate will not be permitted to proceed to the remaining sections of the examination for the year in question.

**Grading Scheme:**

24. The submitted work will be graded “Good Pass”; “Pass”; or “Fail”.

25. Certificate work that achieves a “Good Pass” may be kept in the RCVS Library and used as an example for prospective candidates.

**WRITTEN EXAMINATION**

26. Candidates are warned that answers should be given specifically and that illegible handwriting may result in examiners being unable to award marks for information which candidates intended to convey.

27. Candidates are encouraged to read the question on the written papers carefully and to answer clearly and concisely. Include sufficient detail when answering questions and ensure that questions requiring a clinical approach do not lack order.

**Format**

28. Paper I will consist of ten compulsory short-answer questions and Paper II will consist of six essay-type questions of which the candidate must answer three.

**Marks Scheme:**

29. Paper I will be marked out of 50 marks
   Paper II will be marked out of 50 marks
   Total Mark for this Section (b) = 100 marks
CLINICAL, ORAL, AND PRACTICAL EXAMINATION

Format

30. Depending on the number of candidates, the clinical, oral, and practical part of the exam will take place over a number of days with each candidate attending for more than one day.

31. **Practical:** During the practical examination, candidates will be expected to examine specimens relevant to veterinary dermatology and provide short, written answers to questions relating to them.

32. **Clinical:** During the clinical examination, candidates will be presented with one or more veterinary dermatological cases. They will be expected to assess the case as a whole by its history and physical examination and will subsequently be questioned about it. Clinical pathological specimens relevant to the cases may be available. The use of pro forma questionnaires will not be permitted. Candidates should provide themselves with appropriate protective clothing including two white coats and stethoscope. Candidates must pass this section in order to pass the C/O/P overall.

33. **Oral:** The oral examination will comprise a discussion of theoretical and practical aspects of veterinary dermatology. Candidates may expect to be questioned about points they have made in any other part of the examination, including the submitted case reports.

Marks Scheme

34. The Clinical exam will be marked out of 100 marks
(NB. candidates must gain the pass mark of 50 in this section in order to pass overall)

The Practical will be marked out of 100 marks
The Oral will be marked out of 100 marks

An overall percentage will then be awarded, and the TOTAL Mark for this Section (c) = 100 marks

Advisers

35. Candidates should consult the RCVS Register of Members for a suitably willing and qualified individual (someone holding a Certificate or Diploma or equivalent) who is familiar with the RCVS Certificate or Diploma examination system and active clinically.

36. Candidates are urged to seek the proactive support of their advisers and other dermatologists in preparation of the examination at an early stage.
ABBREVIATION FOR QUALIFICATION

37. Successful candidates are permitted to use the abbreviation "CertVD" after their names, in the RCVS Register of Members, and on the practice plate and stationery, etc.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS  
CERTIFICATE IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY - 2008

Commentary and Syllabus

Commentary

1. The syllabus is presented as a guide to candidates and should not be considered exhaustive. It details the major divisions of dermatology upon which the examination will be based. Examiners will expect candidates to have a sound general knowledge of the principles of pathology and medicine, including therapeutics, and to be familiar with the current literature in veterinary dermatology.

2. Candidates should possess both theoretical and practical knowledge of veterinary dermatology as it applies to general practice. Emphasis will be placed on examination procedures and laboratory and other diagnostic tests required to establish a specific diagnosis and on therapeutic approaches. The influence of other organ systems on the skin should be appreciated and the candidates’ abilities to take a general history and carry out a general physical examination as part of a dermatological consultation will be assessed. Systematic case recordings will be expected.

3. Candidates will be expected to have a sound knowledge of dermatological conditions of the dog and cat and of the common skin diseases of other pet and laboratory animals, farm animals, and horses.

4. A detailed knowledge of rare conditions and highly sophisticated methods of diagnosis and therapy will not be expected.

Syllabus

1. EMBRYOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT, ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, AND HISTOLOGY OF NORMAL SKIN AND EPIDERMAL APPENDAGES

2. RESPONSES OF THE SKIN

Inflammation, pruritus, and wound healing
Effects of ageing and of environmental stimuli.

3. EXAMINATION OF THE SKIN

History
General clinical examination including the physical examination of the skin.
Concept of primary and secondary lesions. Description of lesions (morphology).
Laboratory and other diagnostic techniques: theoretical and practical aspects of relevant haematological and biochemical tests, skin scraping and brushing, microscopic examination of hairs, bacterial and fungal examinations (including culture techniques), intradermal, and patch testing. Indications for and techniques of skin biopsy.
4. SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

A. Congenital and hereditary diseases

A detailed knowledge will not be required but candidates should be familiar with the clinical aspects of the more commonly seen conditions.

B. Parasitic diseases

The concepts of physical, irritant, and hypersensitivity responses to ectoparasites. Diseases associated with the common arthropod, helminth, and protozoal parasites. Reactions to the hymenoptera.

C. Bacterial diseases

Normal skin flora
Pathogenic organisms
Concept of bacterial hypersensitivity

D. Diseases resembling bacterial infections

E. Fungal diseases

Diseases associated with Malassezia
General characteristics of pathogenic fungi affecting the skin
Classification and principles of identification of fungi
Superficial mycoses
Subcutaneous mycoses
Systemic mycoses—basic knowledge only

F. Common Viral diseases

G. Protozoal diseases with particular emphasis on Leishmaniasis

H. Immunologically mediated skin diseases

Overview of cutaneous immunology (with clinical orientation)
Gell and Coombs classification of hypersensitivity
Urticaria and angioedema
Drug eruptions
Allergic diseases
Disorders associated with autoimmunity
A basic knowledge of other diseases suspected of being immunologically mediated.

I. Endocrine disorders

Production and physiological control of relevant hormones
Action of relevant hormones
Interpretation of the results of laboratory techniques for assessing endocrine function
Endocrine disorders associated with skin and coat changes.

J. **Nutritional skin diseases**

Dietary components required for normal skin health
General malnutrition
Obesity
Skin diseases responding to nutritional therapy

K. **Diseases due to physical agents, chemical agents, ultraviolet radiation, temperature change, and trauma**

L. **Psychogenic diseases including:**

Individual response to cutaneous insults
Acral lick dermatitis
Feline psychogenic alopecia and dermatitis
Miscellaneous disorders

M. **Skin changes associated with systemic diseases, not included elsewhere**

including:
Hepatic disease
Pancreatic disease
Malabsorption

N. **Conditions of unknown or multiple aetiologies**

Conditions resulting in specific cutaneous reaction patterns:
Alopecia
Disordered pigmentation
Seborrhoea
Feline miliary dermatitis
Lymphoedema

Conditions involving specialised areas:
External ear diseases
Eyelid diseases
Anal sac diseases
Nail diseases

O. **Neoplastic diseases**

Classification of skin tumours
Breed predilections
Natural history and prognosis of skin tumour types
Methods of treatment
5. OTHER PETS, LABORATORY ANIMALS, AND LARGE ANIMALS

Common dermatological conditions of other commonly kept pet and laboratory animals, farm animals, and horses.

6. THERAPEUTICS

General hygiene and care of the skin and hair
Protection from self-inflicted injury
Principles of therapy, including routes and vehicles for administration of drugs
Actions and uses of general therapeutic groupings including:
  - Hydrotherapy
  - Bath oils
  - Keratolytics and keratoplastics
  - Anti-inflammatory agents
  - Antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral and antiparasitic agents
  - Hormones
  - Chrysotherapy
  - Retinoids
  - Immunomodulatory agents
  - Immunotherapy
  - Cytotoxic agents
  - Vitamins
  - Minerals
  - Essential fatty acids
Actions and uses of specific therapeutic agents
Physical therapy:
  - Surgery
  - Cryotherapy
  - Radiotherapy

October 1988
December 1992
January 1994
November 1998
CERTIFICATE & DIPLOMA IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

READING LIST

Candidates should note that the reading list for the Certificate and Diploma in Veterinary Dermatology was frozen in 2002 and will eventually be withdrawn. Candidates are expected to research the literature for themselves and are recommended to make use of the RCVS Library and Information Service for this purpose (http://www.rcvslibrary.org.uk, e-mail - library@rcvs.org.uk or telephone 020 7222 2021). Candidates should also seek advice on suitable reading matter from their advisers.


A Colour Handbook of Ear Diseases of the Dog and Cat R Harvey; A Delauche; J Harari, Manson Publishing ISBN: 1840760036

Equine


Large animal and exotics:


CD-ROMs published by Blackwells (£49.50 plus VAT):

Canine Pyoderma - Diagnosis and Treatment.  REW Halliwell & DH Lloyd ISBN 1901872 11 4

Interactive Learning in Dermatology: Crusting and Scaling Dermatoses in Dogs / Allergic Skin Diseases in Dogs.  DH Lloyd & REW Halliwell ISBN 1 901872 06 8.

Otitis in Dogs and Cats CE Griffin, DN Carlotti, REW Halliwell & DH Lloyd. ISBN 1901872122.

International Veterinary Dermatology Listserve:

This is an email distribution list that allows exchange of ideas and discussion between dermatologists from around the world. Certificate candidates would be advised to subscribe to this list so that they are aware of current topics of interest. For instructions on how to subscribe, contact the listserve manager on: vetderm-owner@lists.ncsu.edu
DIPLOMA PUBLICATION LIST:

**Structure and function**


Histopathology and Cytology


Journals

Veterinary Dermatology; Veterinary Record; JSAP; JAVMA; JAAHA; EVE; Veterinary Clinics of North America – Large & Small Animals (Edns.).
Details of the veterinary practice in which experience is being gained over at least two calendar years to meet the requirements of the byelaws for the Certificate in Veterinary Dermatology:

(if more than one practice please photocopy this form and complete in respect of each such practice).

1. Name of practice and address ___________________________________________

                                            ___________________________________________

                                            ___________________________________________

2. Date of joining the practice
   (and date of leaving, if you are no longer employed at this address):

                                            ___________________________________________

3. Numbers of veterinary surgeons usually working in the practice

                                            ___________________________________________

4. Approx. percentage of practice-time devoted to dermatology

                                            ___________________________________________

5. Approx. percentage of your own time devoted to dermatology

                                            ___________________________________________

6. The main items of equipment (including laboratory equipment) and facilities available for the examination and treatment of dermatological cases are as follows:

                                            ___________________________________________

                                            ___________________________________________

                                            ___________________________________________

                                            ___________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

PLEASE RETURN ORIGINAL FORM PLUS FOUR COPIES
Specialisation and Further Education

CERTIFICATE IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

Application for FINAL approval of experience and for permission to submit an entry to the next examination.

To be completed and returned to the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62–64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF by 1 November prior to the examination which you wish to enter.

NO LATE APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED

1. **NAME** in full (block letters) __________________________________________________________

2. **DEGREES/DIPLOMAS/CERTIFICATES** ________________________________________________
   in abbrev. form

3. **ADDRESS** for all correspondence (block letters) _________________________________________
   ____________________________ Postcode _____________

4. **TELEPHONE NO(s)** for contact during the day ____________________________________________
   **FAX NO(s)** for contact during the day ____________________________________________
   **E-MAIL ADDRESS** for contact during the day __________________________________________

5. **DATE OF ENROLMENT**
   (MONTH/YEAR) _____________
   
   If application for enrolment is being submitted concurrently with this application please state 'concurrent'.

6. **PERIODS OF EXPERIENCE BEING OFFERED** to meet the requirements of the byelaws:

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7. If there has been any change in the work-load of the practice/centre, or in your personal work-load, or if you have changed employment since you applied for enrolment, please give details below: __________________________________________________________
8. **ATTENDANCE AT RELEVANT SHORT COURSES**

Candidates must fill in the attached copy CPD Record Card, for each year in which they are applying for approval of experience. Details of all relevant short courses, conferences and meetings attended should be recorded. Candidates must comply with the annual recommended minimum hours (35) of CPD otherwise final approval of experience and permission to sit the next examination will not be granted.

9. **OTHER INVOLVEMENT IN RELATION TO VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY**

List any attendances at relevant congresses, conferences, meetings, symposia, etc., with dates:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

10. **PUBLICATIONS/ARTICLES/PAPERS/LECTURES**

Give details below (including any involvement in the instruction of others):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

11. **OTHER POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

During the period of experience being offered, have you been or are you studying for any other postgraduate qualification? YES/NO

If yes, please give brief details: ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

12. **I HEREBY APPLY FOR APPROVAL OF EXPERIENCE AND FOR PERMISSION TO SUBMIT AN ENTRY TO THE NEXT CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY.**

I certify that the period of experience being offered has not been/is not being offered to meet the requirements of the byelaws for any other RCVS Certificate or Diploma.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
13. CONFIRMATION OF INTENT TO SIT THE EXAMINATION

If approval of experience is granted, I do / do not (delete as appropriate) intend to submit an entry to the next examination (closing date for receipt of entries is 1 March).

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________

PLEASE RETURN ORIGINAL FORM PLUS FOUR COPIES

The following section should be completed by your Adviser.

I confirm that I am acting as this candidate's Adviser.

Name: __________________________________________
(block capitals)

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________
CERTIFICATE IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY - ADVISERS

Candidates should refer to the lists of Certificate holders published in Section 3 of the RCVS Register of Members.

For ‘Role of Advisers’ see – Common Documents.

April 2007
1. **List** the common bacterial isolates that are found in cultures from the skin of a normal adult dog. **Indicate** where possible at which body sites the organisms are found.

2. **Describe** the haematological changes commonly associated with hypothyroidism and hyperadrenocorticism and explain the underlying mechanism for each change.

3. Write **short notes** on:
   
   a. Immunoglobulin E
   
   b. Mast cells
   
   c. Langerhans cells.

4. **List** the procedures that you would follow in a case of severe acute anaphylaxis in a dog resulting from an immunotherapy vaccine injection.

5. **Describe** the following terms and **explain** which conditions they are most relevant in:
   
   a. Nikolsky sign
   
   b. Diascopy
   
   c. Tzanck test.

6. Write **short notes** on the drug class, mechanism of action, indications (including licensing details), efficacy and adverse effects of:
   
   a. Milbemycin oxime.
   
   b. Hydrocortisone aceponate.
7. List the causes (in major groups with examples) of feather picking in psittacines.

8. List the ectoparasites reported in pigs and **briefly describe** the clinical signs, differential diagnosis, diagnostic tests available and treatment for sarcoptic mange.

9. Write **short notes** (aetiology, clinical signs, differential diagnoses, diagnostic test available, prognosis and management) of alopecia areata in the horse.

10. List skin diseases caused by husbandry in reptiles and the environmental factors responsible.
CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO ANSWER THREE OUT OF THE FOLLOWING SIX QUESTIONS.

ALLOW 40 MINUTES PER QUESTION.

ILLEGIBLE HANDWRITING OR FAILURE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION IN THE FORM REQUESTED MAY RESULT IN EXAMINERS BEING UNABLE TO AWARD MARKS FOR INFORMATION WHICH CANDIDATES INTENDED TO CONVEY.

1. **Describe** the clinical signs, differential diagnosis, diagnostic tests available and treatment of THREE types of genetic coat colour-linked alopecias reported in dogs.

2. **List and briefly discuss**, the differential diagnoses and **describe in detail** your investigation of a case of bilateral symmetrical dorsal alopecia in an 18-month old male neutered cat of three months duration.

3. **Describe** the cell and basement membrane structures that anchor basal keratinocytes to the underlying dermis (**using diagrams if appropriate**) and the role of these structures in disease in the dog.

4. **Discuss** the use of oral corticosteroids, ciclosporin and immunotherapy in the management of severe canine atopic dermatitis in dogs with house dust mite allergy.

5. **Describe** the mechanisms that lead to the development of autoimmune disease and **discuss** the tests available for diagnosis of this group of diseases affecting the skin of domestic animals.

6. **Describe** the common viral skin diseases affecting sheep reported in the United Kingdom.