

ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

INQUIRY RE:

DR WALTER DINGEMANSE MRCVS

DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

1. Dr Dingemanse appeared before the Disciplinary Committee (“the Committee”) to answer the following charge (as amended):

That, being registered in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons, you:

1. On 18th August 2021, in the Oxford Magistrates’ Court you were convicted, following a guilty plea, of the following offences:
 - (i) On or before 14/02/2019 at Streatley in the County of Berkshire, made indecent photographs (of Category A) of a child;
 - (ii) On or before 14/02/2019 at Streatley in the County of Berkshire, made indecent photographs (of Category B) of a child;
 - (iii) On or before 14/02/2019 at Streatley in the County of Berkshire, made indecent photographs (of Category C) of a child;
 - (iv) On 14/09/2019 at Streatley in the County of Berkshire, possessed extreme pornographic images, namely 22 which portrayed, in an explicit and realistic way,

a person performing an act of intercourse/oral sex with a live or dead animal, namely a dog, which were grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character and a reasonable person looking at the images would think that any such person or animal was real;

in relation to which conviction, on 30 September 2021, at the Oxford Crown Court, you were sentenced to 8 months' imprisonment, suspended for 24 months (with rehabilitation activity and unpaid work requirements); directed to sign the sex offenders' register for 10 years; were subject to a forfeiture and destruction of a computer hard drive and ordered to pay 420.00 prosecution cost and 140.00 victim surcharge;

AND that it is alleged that the above conviction renders you unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

Preliminary matters

Application to amend

2. Miss Curtis appeared on behalf of the College and Mr Primmer appeared on behalf of Dr Dingemane. Before the allegation was put to Dr Dingemane, Miss Curtis made an application to make a minor amendment in that, on two occasions, the charge made reference to convictions plural, when in fact there was only one conviction, albeit for four offences. Mr Primmer did not object to the proposed amendments.
3. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor that it could amend the allegation at any time up until the findings of facts, provided to do so would not cause injustice. The Committee noted that the amendments requested were to correct minor typographical errors, they did not change the seriousness of the matters alleged and there was no objection by Dr Dingemane. In the circumstances the Committee was satisfied that the requested amendments could be made without injustice and allowed the application.

Admissions

4. Dr Dingemane admitted the facts as contained within the charge.

Application for part of the hearing to be in private

5. Mr Primmer made an application that parts of the hearing be heard in private. He indicated that he anticipated touching briefly on health matters relating to Dr Dingemanse. Miss Curtis on behalf of the College did not object to the application.
6. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor that whilst these proceedings are ordinarily conducted in public, so that the public are aware of the functions being carried out by the Regulator, there was provision within the Rules to allow the hearing to go into private session where to do so was in the interests of justice. The interests of justice can include protecting the private life of a Respondent and matters relating to health are often dealt with in private for that reason. The Committee was satisfied that it was appropriate that any health matters be dealt with in private. Accordingly, where such matters were raised the Committee would go into private session.

Background

7. Miss Curtis then proceeded to open the case on behalf of the College.
8. At all times material to the allegation before the Committee Dr Dingemanse was registered as a Veterinary Surgeon.
9. On 18th August 2021, in the Oxford Magistrates 'Court Dr Dingemanse was convicted, following a guilty plea, of the offences outlined above.
10. On 30 September 2021, at the Oxford Crown Court, Dr Dingemanse received a suspended prison sentence, as detailed in the particulars of the charge above.
11. The background, as taken from the Crown Court transcript at the sentencing hearing, is as follows:

“On the 14th of February 2019 police executed a warrant at the defendant's address in Streetly. A large number of electronic items were seized. On one hard drive that was seized, AJM-09, indecent images of children and extreme pornography were found. In total five accessible images of children and five inaccessible images of children, and of those, two were of category A, one of category B, and seven of category C.

Additionally, there were 22 images of extreme pornography, depicting images of bestiality.

Kik Messenger is a smartphone, freeware application which allows encrypted messaging between users. The arrest warrant in this case was obtained on the basis of intelligence that a user of Kik using the name John Leng and username John11Leng engaged in sexualised chat about children between November the 27th of 2017 and April the 9th of 2018. The defendant had been in conversation on Kik Messenger with another adult user, and has discussed child sexual abuse, including that he was sexually active with his 16-year old daughter until she was 10 years old and then moved in with her mother. The defendant said that he was interested in setting up a group on Kik Messenger of - and I quote - pervy dads”, so that he could masturbate to some - and I quote - good incest and filth”. The defendant said that girls aged seven were - I quote - a nice age”, as - I quote - everything nice and puffy”. The defendant claimed to be interested in children younger than four years old.

The IP address used by the Kik user at the time of the messages came back to Walter Dingemans. A Section 8 PACE warrant was executed on the 14th of February of 2019, and the defendant was arrested on suspicion of possession of indecent images of children. In interview on the 14th of February 2019 the defendant gave a largely no comment interview. He was then re-interviewed on the 28th of February of 2021, following a forensic examination of that hard drive, and he gave a prepared statement, followed by no comment afterwards, and that statement read as follows:

I accept the images found on my devices were mine and in my possession. I have not viewed any such material since my arrest in early 2019. I accept that during that time I had a sexual interest in the images. I wish to reassure everyone that any comments I made in conversations were not true, and entirely fictitious. At the time I was suffering with a deep depression and loneliness, but it is no justification or excuse for my behaviour. I am deeply ashamed and disgusted with myself. I have engaged the services of a therapist to assist me in my rehabilitation and to understand how I got into that situation. I wish to utilise all the assistance I can. And finally, I would like to express my deep remorse for my actions and the impact it has on everyone involved.”

Turning briefly to the guidelines, category A images, a starting point of a year's custody, a range 26 weeks to three years. There were two images falling into this category. The category B images, a starting point of 26 weeks' custody, with the range of a high-level community order to 18 months' custody; one image falling into this category. Category C images, a starting point of a high-level community order, with a range from a medium-level community order to 26 weeks; custody, and, of course, aggravated by the multiple images; seven in this category. As to the extreme pornography, the maximum penalty for possession of extreme pornography involving bestiality is two years' imprisonment and/or a fine, and, of course, aggravated by the fact there were multiple images; 22 in that category."

12. In passing sentence, the Learned Judge said:

"You are a 35-year-old man of high intelligence. You trained as a vet, you successfully undertook a PhD in canine joint biomechanics, and you've been working in this country for at least three years as a veterinary psychotherapist for dogs. And I immediately ask myself, how can a man of such ability and intelligence stoop so low as to actively engage with conversation with another male about fantasy sex with children, and talking about your desire to have sexual relations with a four-year-old. It's quite impossible to understand. And I've read with care the pre-sentence reports and the character references, that help a little way to explain why it comes about that you relieved the loneliness you felt during the time of these offences by taking part in those conversations, aided with this filthy material that you had downloaded.

I accept that you are thoroughly ashamed of yourself, and are trying to do something to understand why you did it in the first place, and to make sure you don't do it again. And since your arrest, to your credit, not only have you accepted what you have done, but you are actively engaged in therapy to stop you doing it again. But your good character is gone, and you will be known for what you have done for a very long time to come. It will be a huge burden for you to bear.

So I have to deal with you for three offences of possessing indecent images of children, all three categories - A, the most serious, B and C - and possessing extreme pornographic pictures of bestiality. Bearing in mind your profession, I find that very

concerning indeed. But I am satisfied that it is not necessarily in the public interest, let alone your interest, to send you to prison immediately. Mr Grainger rightly says - concedes - that the custody threshold has been passed, but I am going to suspend that sentence, bearing in mind your remorse, the fact that it is very unlikely you will commit further offences of this kind or any other offences, that these matters have been hanging over your head for a long time, and so the sentence I will impose is a suspended sentence.

On count, charge 1, the category A images, I take as a starting point 12 months' imprisonment. It is accepted by both parties that this is a category A possession offence, so starting point one year - 12 months - with a range of six months to three years. So I do take the starting point of 12 months, which I will reduce to eight months to give you the appropriate credit for your guilty plea. I'll suspend that sentence for two years. That means if in the next two years you don't commit any further offence, you won't have to serve the eight months. If you do commit any further offences, whether they be of a similar nature to these or not, the court dealing with you for the new offence or offences is more than likely going to impose the eight months that I'm now passing, in addition to whatever's appropriate for the new offence. So it is a sword hanging over you for the next two years. On charges 2 and 3, the category B and C images, I make no separate penalty for those matters. They are subsumed into the category A images. For the extreme pornographic images, a concurrent sentence of eight months' imprisonment, suspended for two years.

I add two requirements to that suspended sentence order. Firstly you will attend on 40 days rehabilitation activity programmes. The probation service have no doubt explained to you already what that entails, but Mr Grainger will introduce you to the liaison probation officer in this court, who will give you further instructions as to when you are to attend. You will also perform 100 hours unpaid work. You will attend as and when required for the rehabilitation activity requirement and the unpaid work. You will perform the work and follow the instructions of the officers supervising you, otherwise you are breached. And if you're breached, the likelihood is that the court dealing with the breach will send you to prison for eight months."

13. In addition, because Dr Dingemans was convicted of a sexual offence covered by Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, he is required to register with the police and comply with certain

notification requirements for a period of 10 years, commencing on 30 September 2021. The Judge decided not to make a Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

14. Dr Dingemans provided a written statement to the RCVS, in which he said:

“I am writing this to provide a little more information about what has happened. I once read that in order to understand how things ended, you have to know the beginning and the middle.

I will be honest and open regarding what has happened, as I have been with the police, courts, probation service throughout the criminal process. It might change how you see me for better or for worse, which is ok. But it is my story, however much I wish it was made up.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

During the time of offending, I felt so lonely and lost [REDACTED] that I was looking for any sort of connection that would help me escape from life. Online chatrooms allowed me to get into a dissociated state and just feel numb. Things went on a slippery slope and looking back I can't even understand how I ended up in with such awful company and make such incredibly bad decisions.

[REDACTED]

However, it may sound, the reason I found myself in chatrooms was to find some sort of connection. It had very little to do with the images or topic, and I never actively downloaded images nor went searching for them and at the time was unaware any of them were downloaded to my device. I was in a dissociated state and had no realisation at the time that I was looking at victims. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I realise now my behaviour is not without victims and I am deeply remorseful for my behaviour.

I'm not in any way excusing my behaviour, it should never have happened, and I am ashamed that I did it. While I am aware my behaviour was reprehensible, I would like to point out that I have not in anyway acted dishonestly with the Police, Courts and Probation and have been open and frank with them regarding the incident.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I am not sexually attracted to children or to animals.

Ironically, the last 2-3 years was the first time in my life I started to feel accepted for being me, for not needing an avatar version of me in order for people to like me. I felt I had a purpose in life, I could help others and my time on earth was not completely worthless.

Nobody could punish me more than I already am myself, having lost everything, my dreams, my job, my relationship, and I realise I brought this on myself.

I can understand and accept other people may not understand how all of this would bring anyone to do this, but I wanted to share my story regardless. It is important that you know, that the person from 3-4 years ago is not the person I am today. I would like nothing more than to be able to continue that, and to continue working in the professional field that is my passion.

Most importantly for the RCVS, what has happened has never affected my professional life in any way shape or form. Throughout this difficult point in my life, I have undertaken my job diligently, effectively, and behaved honestly in my practice. I hope to be able to put this behind me and continue to do so.”

The Charge

15. The Charge being admitted, there was no necessity for the parties to make any further submissions on the facts.

The Committee’s determination on the Charge

16. The Committee found the charge proved on the basis of Dr Dingemans’s admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College, namely the copy extract of the Memorandum of Conviction from the Oxford Crown Court.

Fitness to Practise

17. Miss Curtis, on behalf of the College, submitted to the Committee that the nature and circumstances of the offence, which led to the conviction, were such as to render Dr Dingemans unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Surgeon.
18. Mr Primmer, on behalf of Dr Dingemans, indicated that Dr Dingemans accepted that his conviction rendered him unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Surgeon. He also provided some context and background to the offending behaviour.

The Committee’s Determination on Fitness to Practise

19. The Committee considered the submissions made by the parties and noted that Dr Dingemans did not dispute that the nature and circumstances of the offence, which led to his conviction, were such as to render him unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Surgeon. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor that, notwithstanding Dr Dingemans’s acceptance that he was unfit, the issue of unfitness remained one for the Committee’s judgement. The Committee also took into account the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons (The Code) and in particular the declaration made by all Veterinary Surgeons, namely:

“I promise and solemnly declare that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and that above all my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care.”

20. The Committee found Dr Dingemane had breached the following parts of the Code:

6.1 Veterinary surgeons must seek to ensure the protection of public health and animal health and welfare ...

6.5 Veterinary surgeons must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.

21. The Committee next considered what factors either aggravated or mitigated the actual offences committed by Dr Dingemane. It did not consider there to be any mitigating factors at this stage, but did find the following aggravating factors:

- actual (albeit indirect) injury to an animal (dogs) or human (children);
- the risk of harm to an animal (dogs) or human (children);
- lack of integrity for a regulated professional to have behaved in such a way;
- premeditated conduct;
- the offences involved vulnerable persons (children) and animals (dogs);
- sexual misconduct;
- misconduct sustained over a period of time from November 2017 to April 2018.

22. In addition, the Committee took into account the case of CHRE v GDC and Fleischmann [2005] EWHC 87 (Admin), which provides that, as a general principle, a professional who has been convicted of a serious criminal offence should not be allowed to practise until such time as they have satisfactorily completed their sentence. This is also referred to at paragraph 49 of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee Procedure Guidance. The suspended prison sentence imposed on Dr Dingemane is not due to expire until September 2023 and therefore that element of the sentence is still current. He also has a further 29 hours of Rehabilitation Activity to complete. The Committee considered this to be relevant to the public interest in a finding that the conviction rendered him unfit to practise.

23. The conduct underlying this conviction involved Dr Dingemans viewing indecent images of children, some of which were in the most serious category. It also involved him participating in on-line sexualised chat about children in which he had discussed child sexual abuse, including that he was sexually active with his 16 year old daughter until she was 10 years old. In the event this was fantasy, since Dr Dingemans does not have any children, but it was still most concerning that he should engage in such fantasy. He also said that he was interested in setting up a group on Kik Messenger of “*pervy dads*” so that he could masturbate to some “*good incest and filth*”. In addition he said that girls aged seven were “*a nice age*”, as “*everything nice and puffy*”. He also claimed to be interested in children younger than four years old. Whether this was all pure fantasy or actually true, it was deeply concerning either way. Furthermore, and perhaps particularly pertinent to his role as a veterinary physiotherapist for dogs, were the 22 images depicting women and dogs involved in sexual acts. The Committee considered this to be very serious and deplorable conduct on the part of a Veterinary Surgeon, a member of a profession specifically entrusted to look after and care for animals.
24. Dr Dingemans’s conduct was also liable to have a seriously detrimental effect on the reputation of the profession and to undermine public confidence in the profession. The fact that he was a Veterinary Surgeon was made clear at the Crown Court hearing. The Committee considered that members of the public would rightly be appalled that a Registered Veterinary Surgeon had committed offences of this nature.
25. The Committee was satisfied that this conduct fell far below the standard expected of a Registered Veterinary Surgeon and that Dr Dingemans’s conviction was of a nature and seriousness that rendered him unfit to practise as a Veterinary Surgeon.

Sanction

26. Miss Curtis informed the Committee that Dr Dingemans has no previous disciplinary matters recorded against him.
27. Dr Dingemans provided a written statement (detailed above), together with a testimonial. Mr Primmer made submissions on his behalf in mitigation and invited the Committee to consider suspending Dr Dingemans’s registration for a period of 12 months.

The Committee’s Determination on Sanction

28. In reaching its decision on sanction, the Committee took into account all the evidence and documents provided, together with the submissions made by Mr Primmer on behalf of Dr Dingemane and all matters of personal mitigation. The Committee also referred to the RCVS Disciplinary Committee Procedure Guidance. The Committee had in mind that the purpose of sanctions was not to punish Dr Dingemane, but to protect animals, maintain public confidence in the profession and maintain proper standards of conduct and performance. The Committee was also cognisant of the need to ensure that any sanction is proportionate. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor.

29. The Committee first considered any aggravating and mitigating factors in this case. The Committee found the following aggravating factors:

- actual (albeit indirect) injury to a human (in this case children);
- actual (albeit indirect) injury to an animal (in this case dogs);
- risk of injury to a human (in this case children);
- risk of injury to an animal (in this case dogs);
- pre-meditated misconduct;
- the involvement of vulnerable individuals (both children and animals);
- sexual misconduct;
- a lack of integrity of a registered Veterinary Surgeon in behaving in this way;
- Dr Dingemane was in a particular position to ensure animal welfare as a Veterinary Surgeon and failed to do so by possessing the 22 images of bestiality and thereby perpetuating the abuse of animals by being part of the market for such images;
- behaviour sustained over a period of time from November 2017 to April 2018 when on Kik chat;
- limited insight in that from 2021 onwards he made admissions and expressed remorse, but at interview in 2019 he made no comments and made no admissions.

30. When assessing the level of insight shown by Dr Dingemane, the Committee also noted that in his written response to the College in November 2021, he said, *“I never actively downloaded images nor went searching for them and at the time was unaware any of them were downloaded to my device. This is further supported by the forensics reports that revealed no indication of active searching in search history, etcetera. Regarding the possession of the extreme images, again I have no recollection of even having seen any material like that, let alone being aware of*

anything downloaded to my device.” This was somewhat at odds with his police interview in February 2021, when he candidly admitted, *“I accept that during that time I had a sexual interest in the images.”*

31. The Committee considered the following mitigating factors:

- no previous disciplinary history;
- admissions to the matters alleged both at Court and to the College;
- some developing insight and steps taken to try to understand his behaviour in order to prevent a repetition;
- [REDACTED]
- expressions of remorse;
- a positive testimonial from Professor Henri van Bree at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Ghent University in Belgium, dated 6 February 2022, about Dr Dingemane’s academic abilities. However, it was unclear whether the Professor was aware of Dr Dingemane’s conviction and the nature of the conviction, there being no reference to it within the testimonial.

32. The Committee noted that Dr Dingemane made reference to his health, however he had not provided any medical evidence for the Committee to consider [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Committee did take into account all he said about his circumstances when considering the appropriate sanction in this case, but without independent evidence about his health matters the Committee did not consider this material carried significant weight.

33. In light of the seriousness of the conduct, the Committee did not consider this was an appropriate case to take no further action or for judgement to be postponed.

34. The Committee next considered whether to reprimand or warn Dr Dingemane about his behaviour. However, the Committee was firmly of the view that such a sanction would not reflect the seriousness of the conduct which led to his conviction. Dr Dingemane had been convicted of possessing indecent images of children and extreme pornographic pictures of bestiality. In addition, he had actively engaged in conversation with another male about fantasy sex with children. The Committee was of the view that public confidence in the profession, and the College

as its regulator, would be seriously undermined if such behaviour were dealt with by either a reprimand or a warning.

35. The Committee then considered whether to suspend Dr Dingemane, as urged by Mr Primmer. The College's guidance states that suspension may be appropriate where some or all of the following apply:

(a) the conviction is serious, but a lesser sanction is inappropriate;

(b) the Respondent veterinary surgeon has insight into the seriousness of the misconduct and there is no significant risk of repeat behaviour;

(c) the Respondent veterinary surgeon is fit to return to practice (after the period of suspension).

36. The Committee noted the mitigating factors in this case and that this offence was committed over three years ago. Furthermore, Dr Dingemane had appeared before a criminal court and been punished for his behaviour. It is not this Committee's role to punish him further. However, it is its role to protect animal welfare and the reputation of the profession. Dr Dingemane's offences were particularly abhorrent and the offence relating to possessing images of bestiality was particularly grave in the context of someone who works as a veterinary surgeon and furthermore one who specialises in the care of the very animals depicted in the images. The Committee noted Dr Dingemane's efforts in trying to understand why he had behaved in this way, but considered that process to be ongoing and thus the Committee considered there to be a risk that he could repeat the behaviour. It noted the assessment of the Probation Officer, who completed the pre-sentence report for the Crown Court, who stated as follows:

"The MOJ approved risk assessment tool, OGRS, indicates a 7% or very low risk of re-offending within 2 years. I would concur with this assessment with regard to general offending.

The Offender Assessment System, (OASys) which underpins the probation service's risk assessment of offenders, contains the Sexual Reoffending Predictor (OSP) tool which is a more accurate predictor of sexual reoffending and is a guide for our assessment on what intervention may be most suitable to address the risk and the needs of the

individual. The OPS indicates that Mr Dingemanse's risk of internet sexual reoffending is medium and his risk of contact sexual reoffending is low. Based on all the information available to me I would concur with this assessment."

37. When addressing the risk of serious harm, the Probation Officer said:

"The MOJ approved Risk of Serious Recidivism (RSR) tool assesses how likely offenders are to commit a seriously harmful offence within the next 2 years based on a range of static and dynamic factors. This tool indicates that Mr Dingemanse poses a medium risk of committing an offence involving serious harm.

I have assessed that Mr Dingemanse poses a medium risk of serious harm to children. Medium risk means that there are indicators of serious harm but the event is unlikely to happen unless there is a change in circumstances. There are protective factors in place, including his relationship with his wife and his wish never to jeopardise this again. The circumstances which might increase risk could be an emotional crisis leaving him feeling lonely and isolated once more, such as loss of employment or breakdown of relationship. The risk of harm presented by Mr Dingemanse is indirect and is based upon the fact that viewing indecent images of children perpetuates sexual and psychological harm through exploitation of victims."

38. These assessments concluded that, at the time of sentencing him in the Crown Court, Dr Dingemanse continued to be at risk of repeating his behaviour, with a medium risk of internet sexual re-offending, a medium risk of committing an offence involving serious harm and a medium risk of serious harm to children. The Committee was of the view that these identified risks remained.

39. Of particular concern to the Committee was the effect of Dr Dingemanse's behaviour on the reputation of the profession and therefore the wider public interest. The Committee was firmly of the view that public confidence would have been severely affected by Dr Dingemanse's behaviour. The Committee considered that suspending Dr Dingemanse's registration would not be sufficient to maintain confidence in the profession and that therefore, for public interest reasons, as well as animal protection, a suspension would not be sufficient.

40. The Committee also took into account the principle enunciated in the case of Fleischmann (*ibid*), as echoed in the guidance issued by the College. There was no doubt that the conviction in this case was serious and Dr Dingemane will not have completed his sentence until September 2023 at the earliest. The Committee was satisfied that the principle applied in this case and that, as a bare minimum, Dr Dingemane should not be allowed to resume his practice until he has satisfactorily completed his sentence.

41. The Committee also referred to its Guidance document, which states the following:

“Removal from the register may be appropriate where behaviour is fundamentally incompatible with being a veterinary surgeon, and may involve any of the following (the list is not exhaustive):

a. Serious departure from professional standards as set out in the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons...

c. Causing serious harm (or causing a risk of serious harm) to animals or the public;

d. Offences of a sexual nature;

h. putting his own interests before the health or welfare of animals.”

42. The Committee was of the view that the nature and seriousness of Dr Dingemane’s behaviour, which led to the conviction, was fundamentally incompatible with being registered as a Veterinary Surgeon and that all of the above matters listed were applicable in this case. The descriptions in the police schedule show concerning abuse of the children being photographed. In the Committee’s view possessing such images is disgraceful conduct of the most grievous and reprehensible kind. The conduct represented a serious departure from professional standards; it was inexplicable, abhorrent behaviour both insofar as it related to vulnerable children and the serious harm caused to them, which can only be perpetuated if there is a market for such images; and, insofar as it related to extreme pornographic pictures depicting sexual acts between women and vulnerable dogs being exploited for the sexual gratification of those who chose to view such images. In light of these conclusions, the Committee decided that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case was removal from the Register.

43. In reaching this decision the Committee recognised the impact this was likely to have on Dr Dingemane. The Committee had considered with care all the mitigating factors and the positive

statements made about him in the testimonial provided. However the need to protect animal welfare, the reputation of the profession and thus the wider public interest, outweighed Dr Dingemane's interests and the Committee concluded that removal was the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case. The Committee determined that it was important that a clear message be sent that this sort of behaviour is wholly unacceptable and not to be tolerated. It brought discredit upon Dr Dingemane and discredit upon the profession.

44. The Committee therefore directs the Registrar to remove Dr Dingemane's name from the Register.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

15 February 2022