

## 2009 STATUTORY EXAMINATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

### EXAMINERS' REPORTS

#### SUMMARY

Of the 43 candidates who sat the written examination this year, 22 were allowed to progress to the oral/ practical stage. Most of those who failed to achieve the 45% required to proceed did so by a significant margin, once again emphasising the value of sifting out , at the written stage, those candidates with no realistic chance of passing the examination as a whole. Of the 22 who sat the whole examination, 18 were sitting all four subjects and the remaining 4, either one or two.

Fourteen candidates passed the whole examination – 67% of those allowed proceed to the oral/practical stage and 35% of those who sat the written papers. Eight candidates failed but of these, 5 were allowed to retain passes and to re-sit only the subjects they had failed.

The overall marks of those required to re-sit individual subjects and those of the majority required to sit the whole examination, were such that, with further study and particularly more practical experience, these candidates should be capable of passing the examination at a further attempt. However, the very poor standard achieved in the written paper by the majority who failed to proceed to the oral/practical stage, indicates that these candidates would be advised to seek a structured re-education program before re-sitting the examination.

The reports of the subject examiners highlight the deficiencies in each of the subject areas.

### JOINT SUBJECT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO THE RCVS EXAMINATION BOARD

Examination Subject      **The horse**

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#### Section A

Please use this section to make general comments about the examination and candidates' performance. Please comment on the **written** part of the examination and the **combined clinical, oral and practical examination**, including the steeplechase. (Section A of the report, or extracts from it, may be published as part of the examination guidance for future candidates)

#### Written Paper

The paper tested a broad range of medical and surgical topics and provided a fair and balanced opportunity for the candidates to demonstrate their knowledge.

As in previous years, the candidates performed better in the long answer section but the marks in the short answer section were an improvement compared to last year, in part due to the fact that fewer candidates failed to attempt individual questions.

#### *Note*

*The short answer section of each subject question paper consists of 10 compulsory questions. If a question has not been attempted and no answer has been provided, zero (0) marks are awarded. .*

#### Combined clinical, oral and practical examination

The candidates who failed the examination generally demonstrated poor practical skills, particularly in clinical examination. Many candidates who failed had a poor knowledge of topographical anatomy. It was evident that, while they had been taught the theory of clinical examination, their ability to apply this to individual cases, and where necessary to modify their approach, showed a lack of hands-on-experience. Knowledge of topographical anatomy was lacking and some candidates demonstrated poor handling skills.

**2009 STATUTORY EXAMINATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

**JOINT SUBJECT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO RCVS EXAMINATION BOARD**

Examination Subject **Small companion animals**

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**Section A**

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1. Long/Essay Type Answers

There was a marked variation in the quality of the written answers. Frequently candidates who scored poorly neglected the basic details of case handling such as history taking and clinical examination, in favour of writing down all they knew about the clinical condition that they perceived to be at the centre of the question. Candidates should concentrate on the entirety of the long questions which are designed to test their understanding of the decision making processes

Candidates that scored below 35% in the overall examination or who had a large number of questions that scored below 3 should consider that their level of understanding of UK veterinary practice and procedures is so far below the standard required that their best recourse would be to seek a structured re-education opportunity before re-sitting the exam.

Despite these comments there were a number of candidates that produced long answers of real distinction and they should be commended.

2. Short Answer Questions

There was also considerable variation in the answers to these questions but in general candidates knowledge of specific diseases particularly medical problems was the best area of this section. Candidates were less able in the broad spread of surgical skills. Specifically candidates should ensure that they have covered satellite subjects such as radiology, anaesthesia, ophthalmology and neurology as they apply to practice; that is the skills of examination, diagnosis and basic decision making in these areas. Candidates should also ensure that they have some familiarity with the emerging species in companion animal practice such as reptiles, chelonians, rabbits, and other small mammalian pets.

3. Steeplechase examination

There was a high rate of failure in the steeplechase with only one student reaching a mark of 60%. The questions here present diagnostic information, and images of equipment and presentations that would be commonly found in UK veterinary practice. Candidates who feel that they will have a problem with this type of presentation should spend as much time as

possible experiencing UK practice in order to reduce the problem of lack of familiarity with such images.

#### 4. Oral Practicals

A number of candidates appeared reluctant to engage in the physical examination of the animals or models that were presented to them, suggesting a lack of experience in handling small animals. Candidates were also frequently keen to concentrate on giving "textbook" information about diseases or conditions at the expense of explaining the basic details of case management, or clinical decision making. Candidates presenting at the oral practicals should be prepared to discuss the logical management of cases, taking into account the information, images and other case material presented to them. They should also listen carefully to the section of the examination or case that the examiner directs them too.

**2009 STATUTORY EXAMINATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

**JOINT SUBJECT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO THE RCVS EXAMINATION BOARD**

Examination Subject **Veterinary public health**

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**Section A**

Please use this section to make general comments about the examination and candidates' performance. Please comment on the **written** part of the examination and the **combined clinical, oral and practical examination**, including the steeplechase. (Section A of the report, or extracts from it, may be published as part of the examination guidance for future candidates)

General comments

Throughout the exam, we noticed a number of serious gaps in the knowledge and skills of candidates that were of major concern. Some of these were consistent. Specifically, this was observed when asking questions about:

- Legal framework in UK and EU
- Organisational structures of government veterinary services in the UK, responsibilities and collaboration between agencies and veterinarians in practice
- International context, global infectious disease situations, relevance of international trade, role of international organisations, process of intra-community trade
- Concepts and application of risk analysis in food safety and animal health decisions, including international trade.

Written exam:

Section A - Answers to Q2b were poor in understanding the issues around responsibilities for decision making in submission of animals with disease or injury and specifically the transport of such animals.

Section B - Knowledge on the use of the Cascade Principle in prescribing medicines were often sub-standard (Q2). Candidates must be aware that the prudent of medicines is a key public health responsibility of all vets. Basic understanding of the purpose and implementation of zoning in response to an outbreak of contagious diseases was lacking (Q3). Candidates had serious gaps in their understanding of regulations and processes related to intra-community trade (Q5). Regarding post-mortem judgements, frequently, statements were made on action without indicating the need to obtain additional evidence, for example by conducting tests (Q9). There was appallingly limited knowledge on Brucella surveillance in animals (Q10).

Oral exam: Generally, performance of candidates was found to be better than in the previous year. Gaps identified in the written examination were confirmed and in some cases accentuated. This concerned again the international context, legislation, basic microbiology, epidemiology, diagnostic tests and issues related to the food chain as well as risk analysis. Some candidates were also challenged by the need to apply logical thinking, comparing issues and translating factual knowledge into specific case examples. While the theoretical understanding of disease notification and control was relatively robust, there were serious gaps in the practical understanding of the consequences of the legal framework. We also want to mention the fact that there were some candidates that displayed very good

understanding and communication of VPH issues. There were no English language issues that would have compromised communication.

Steeplechase: Candidates' performance was mixed. Only about a third of candidates achieved passing marks and only thanks to high marks in two questions. Some questions received solid answers and others were disappointing. Particularly, a question on efficacy of a vaccine was answered appallingly. This is of major concern as this indicates that candidates will not be able to critically appraise data provided by medicine manufacturers. Candidates need to be reminded that they need to be able to conduct basic epidemiological calculations such as incidence and prevalence. Regarding ante- and post-mortem questions, too often there was background information provided which - although correct - was not requested and did not contribute to answering the question. Candidates should carefully read the questions and stick to the point.