



Gordon Hockey  
Acting Registrar  
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons  
Belgravia House  
62-64 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 2AF

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Dear Mr Hockey

## ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

### POTENTIAL DUAL VOTING IN COUNCIL ELECTION 2012

I write to set out Electoral Reform Services position on potential dual voting in the above election.

We were made aware in mid March that a small number of RCVS members had contacted the Royal College to say that they had received two ballot papers in their copy of the organisations magazine instead of the one ballot paper they were entitled to.

Although Electoral Reform Services designed and printed the ballot papers and received back votes via the post, internet and SMS, we did not distribute the ballot papers ourselves. They were instead delivered in bulk to the Royal College's mailing house, Sterling Solutions in Kettering, who then inserted them into the magazine and posted them out on behalf of the Royal College.

After some discussion between the Royal College and Sterling Solutions, and the Royal College and ERS, it was concluded that there were 289 members who appeared to have been sent two ballot papers.

It was not possible to identify exactly which members were affected as the specific ballot paper serial numbers issued to specific individual voters were not recorded. This is not an unusual balloting practice and we conduct a significant number of ballots for clients using the same method. If however the specific serial numbers sent to specific individuals had been recorded, we could have established a range of serial numbers likely to have been affected, cancelled those ballot papers and issued new ones to the affected members. As that wasn't possible we instead initiated monitoring procedures to see whether we could find any evidence of dual voting in the votes cast by post, internet and SMS.

We found a total of seven reply envelopes that contained two ballot papers, each of which contained ballot papers with adjacent serial numbers (e.g. 01804 & 01805). Of the seven envelopes, the second ballot paper in two of them was blank, and one of these two had "Received two ballot papers - this one returned unused" written on it. The remaining five had votes on both papers, four of them the same on both and one where the votes cast on each paper were different.





For the internet voting site there were some IP addresses that were used to submit more than one vote. This isn't unusual and we don't necessarily regard it as being problematic. Examples where this occurred for this ballot are IP addresses owned by the Royal Veterinary College and Zoological Society of London for instance. We would expect multiple votes to be submitted from IP addresses such as these, since RCVS members could clearly be reasonably expected to have access to computers based within those organisations.

There were twenty seven IP addresses that submitted two internet votes, of which nine submitted votes from adjacent ballot papers in the print sequence (e.g. numbers 00741 & 00742). It has not been possible to identify who owns these IP addresses as they appear to be in private ownership. Of the nine pairs with adjacent serial numbers, five pairs had the same votes cast for each whereas four were different.

As regards the SMS voting channel there were no instances of two votes being submitted from the same phone number, although it would of course be possible to submit a vote from one phone number and another vote from a different one.

So there is some evidence that there were sixteen members who returned two ballot papers either by post or internet, of which two returned a blank paper each, which leaves fourteen potential examples of dual voting.

However, it is not conclusive that there definitely were fourteen members who returned two ballot papers. Instead of dual voting, they could be examples of two members returning their ballot papers in the same reply envelope, or two members casting votes online from the same IP address for instance. It is simply not possible to say for sure whether they were or were not instances of dual voting.

In addition it is important to note that if we were to presume that the fourteen potential examples of dual voting were actual examples of dual voting, and invalidate the second vote cast in each case, the same candidates would still be elected and they would be elected in the same order.

Our view is therefore that although a number of members were sent two ballot papers, there is no firm evidence of fraud, and that the result is an accurate reflection of the views of the members of the Royal College.

Our recommendation is consequently that the result should be declared as per our election report of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

Yours sincerely

**Adrian Wilkins**  
**Senior Consultant**

