

Meeting	Council
Date	23 January 2020
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Chair's Report to Council
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since RCVS Council's last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the PIC.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
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Preliminary Investigation Committee

Chair's Report to Council 23 January 2020

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee from September 2019 to January 2020 (13 January being the date of writing the report).

Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 20 September 2019), there have been eight Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings: 9, 23 and 24 October, 6 and 20 November, 11 December, 6 and 8 January. Of these, two have been additional meetings to consider individual cases where the volume of information was so great that it would not have been possible for them to be considered as part of a scheduled meeting.

New cases considered by the PIC

2. The total number of new cases considered by the Committee at the eight meetings referred to above is 23. Of the 23 new cases considered,
 - 16 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these,
 - 9 cases were closed with no further action, and
 - 7 cases were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon.
 - 7 were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports, and
 - None were referred to DC.

No cases have been referred to the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

3. The PI Committee is currently investigating 25 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports for example. This figure does not include cases on the Health and Performance Protocols.

Health Protocol

4. There are 3 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol

5. There are no veterinary surgeons currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department - Enquiries and concerns

6. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
7. In the period 21 September 2019 to 13 January 2020,
 - the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 907, and
 - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 165.
8. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 21 September 2019 and 13 January 2020.

Concerns registered between 21 September 2019 and 13 January 2020

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	0
- Certification	3
- Client confidentiality	1
- Clinical and client records	2
- Communication and consent	10
- Communication between professional colleagues	0
- Conviction/notifiable occupation notification	0
- CPD Compliance	1
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	1
- Euthanasia of animals	3
- Giving evidence for court	0
- Microchips and animals without microchips	0
- Miscellaneous	2
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	4
- Referrals and second opinions	1
- Registration investigation	0
- Social media and online networking forums	0
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	0
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	0
- Veterinary care	125
- Veterinary medicines	8

- Veterinary teams and leaders	2
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	2
Total	165

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

9. In the period 21 September 2019 to 13 January 2020, the Committee referred one case to the Disciplinary Committee; this case related to an allegation of dishonesty and fraudulent representations.

Veterinary Investigators

10. The Veterinary Investigators and the College's external solicitor carried out 2 announced visits in the period 21 Sept to 13 Jan 2020. No health-related, performance-related or review visits were undertaken in the period.

Concerns procedure

11. At Stage 1 of the process, the aim is for the Case Examiner Group to decide 90% of cases within 4 months of registration of complaint (the Stage 1 KPI). For each complete month from September to December 2019, the monthly percentage of cases achieving the KPI is 88%, 82%, 80% and 60% respectively. As Council may be aware, the department has seen some changes in staffing over this period that have led to cases being reassigned. This, coupled with holiday periods, has led to delays in concluding some cases. A new Case Manager joins the Department on 14th January, which will bring the team up to its full strength. We are monitoring the cases carefully to try to ensure that December is an exception and that compliance improves in the next few months.
12. The Stage 2 KPI is now for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within 7 months, and on complex cases within 12 months. A case is deemed to be complex where the PIC requests that witness statements and/or expert evidence be obtained.

In the period 21 September to January 2020, the PIC reached a decision (to close, hold open or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI,

- in 86% of simple cases.

The number of complex cases decided was so low as to render percentages meaningless. In accordance with normal practice, those cases will be reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

Operational Matters

13. Velia Soames left the College in October 2019 and Gemma Crossley, previously the Senior Case Manager, became Head of Professional Conduct. Chris Murdoch became Senior Case Manager. These changes have obviously created some upheaval in the Department, however, the full complement of Case Managers will be restored as of 14th January.

Conclusion

14. The Committee continues to consider concerns on a wide variety of topics, with veterinary care and communications failings being the main topics for consideration.