

Meeting	Council
Date	3 October 2019
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 3 October 2019

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee from June to 20 September 2019 (20 September being the date of writing the report).
2. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to the end of May 2019), there have been seven Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings: 5 and 19 June, 10 and 24 July, 14 August, and 4 and 18 September 2019.

New cases considered by the PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the Committee at the seven meetings referred to above is 54. Of the 54 new cases considered:
 - 31 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these:
 - 19 cases were closed with no further action; and
 - 12 cases were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon.
 - 23 were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports; and
 - None were referred to DC.
4. No cases have been referred to the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The PI Committee is currently investigating 33 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

6. There are three veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol

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

Professional Conduct Department - Enquiries and concerns

8. 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.

9. In the period 1 June to 20 September 2019:

- the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 1180; and
- the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 156.

10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 1 June and 20 September 2019.

Concerns registered between 1 June and 20 September 2019

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	1
- Certification	1
- Client confidentiality	0
- Clinical and client records	8
- Communication and consent	7
- Communication between professional colleagues	2
- Conviction/notifiable occupation notification	3
- CPD Compliance	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	1
- Euthanasia of animals	6
- Giving evidence for court	1
- Microchips and animals without microchips	1
- Miscellaneous	6
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	2
- Referrals and second opinions	2
- Registration investigation	1
- Social media and online networking forums	1
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	1
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	1
- Veterinary care	104
- Veterinary medicines	3
- Veterinary teams and leaders	1
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	3
Total	156

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 1 June to 20 September 2019, the Committee referred five cases to the Disciplinary Committee; these cases referred arose from concerns around clinical matters and dishonesty in a variety of contexts.

Veterinary Investigators

12. The Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator carried out 2 announced visits in the period June 2019 to September 2019, and are currently assisting two enforcement agencies in the investigation of alleged breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. These investigations are ongoing and at various stages. No health related or performance related or review visits were undertaken in the period.

Concerns procedure

13. 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 June to August 2019, the monthly percentage of cases achieving the KPI is 75%, 78% and 92% respectively.

14. 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.

15. In the period 1 June to 20 September 2019, the PIC reached a decision (to close, hold open or refer to DC) within the relevant KPIs:

- in 77% of simple cases; and
- in 73% of complex cases.

16. Performance against the KPIs continues to be reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meetings.

Operational matters

17. The new Chair of PIC, Dr Viner, took up his post as such in July, and is supported now by two Vice Chairs, an arrangement which works well and allows for the management of any conflicts of interest.

18. Appraisals of PIC and RVN PIC members took place in July 2019 and gave an opportunity to discuss also training needs and suggestions, both on an individual and committee level, including visits to vet schools, consideration of mitigation at CEG and PIC stages, and case studies.

19. Work continues in accordance with the department's aim of continuous improvement, with implementation of enhancements around updating of parties, and the information given to parties when a case is referred to PIC. Feedback form for witnesses at hearings have been introduced, with very positive feedback given about the support given before and during hearings.

Conclusion

20. The Committee continues to consider concerns on a wide variety of topics, with veterinary care continuing to form the largest single category of complaint.