

<b>Meeting</b>	Council
<b>Date</b>	7 March 2019
<b>Title</b>	Preliminary Investigation Committee Chairman's Report to Council
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Summary</b>	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.
<b>Decisions required</b>	None
<b>Attachments</b>	None
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## Preliminary Investigation Committee

### Chairman's Report to Council 7 March 2019

#### Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee from November 2018 to February 2019.

Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to the end of October 2018), there have been seven Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings: 7 and 21 November, 12 December, 9 and 23 January, and 6 and 20 February.

#### New cases considered by the PIC

2. The total number of new cases considered by the Committee at the seven meetings referred to above is 37. Of the 37 new cases considered,
  - 29 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these,
    - 14 cases were closed with no further action, and
    - 10 cases were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon.
    - 5 cases were held open with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon
  - 8 were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports.

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 15 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, nor does it include investigations following notification of a conviction (of which there is currently one with the Committee).

#### Health Protocol

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

#### Performance Protocol

5. There is one veterinary surgeon 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 1 November 2018 to 22 February 2019 (the date of writing the report),
  - the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 968, and
  - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 182.
8. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 1 November 2018 and 22 February 2019.

#### **Concerns registered between 1 November 2018 and 22 February 2019**

<b>Description of Category</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>
- Certification	3
- Client confidentiality	16
- Clinical and client records	7
- Clinical governance	1
- Communication and consent	3
- Conviction/notifiable occupation notification	3
- CPD Compliance	2
- Euthanasia of animals	1
- Miscellaneous	3
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	3
- Referrals and second opinions	2
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	1
- Unassigned	8
- Veterinary care	116
- Veterinary medicines	7
- Veterinary teams and leaders	1
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>

*Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.*

## Referral to Disciplinary Committee

9. Since the last report to Council (ie in the period November 2018 to February 2019), the Committee has referred seven cases to the Disciplinary Committee; these cases referred arose from concerns around clinical matters, honesty, and integrity and professionalism.

## Veterinary Investigators

10. The Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator carried out 4 unannounced visits and 3 announced visits in the period October 2018 to 22 February 2019 (the date of writing the report), 6 unannounced visits 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

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). Since 1 November 2018, the median monthly percentage of cases achieving the Stage 1 KPI is 75%.
12. The Stage 2 KPI was reviewed at the PIC DC Liaison Committee meeting in July 2018, and is now for the PIC to reach a decision on 90% of simple cases before it within 7 months, and on 90% of 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 November 2018 to February 2019, the PIC reached a decision (to close, hold open or refer to DC)

- in 83% of simple cases,
- in 75% of complex cases.

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

## Operational matters

13. Training for PIC members, RVN PIC members and veterinary investigators (with RCVS staff in attendance) took place in December 2018. Attendees participated in case studies facilitated by the College's external solicitors and heard from Pam Mosedale, PSS Lead Assessor on Veterinary Medicines.
14. Implementation of the new professional conduct case management system took place in November 2018.

## Conclusion

15. The Committee continues to consider concerns on a wide variety of topics. The table at paragraph 8 above shows in broad terms the categories of enquiries and concerns, and numbers in each category, which have been registered in the period. As can be seen from that table, concerns about veterinary care form the largest categories of complaints received by the RCVS, and this is reflected in the concerns coming to the PIC. It should be noted that the balance of cases being referred to DC is slightly different, with concerns around honesty, integrity and professionalism outweighing the number of concerns about veterinary care.
16. As referred to in previous reports, consent and communication continue to be a common cause for complaint, with differences in understanding about dental extractions, out of hours care and surgical procedures generally all giving rise to complaints.