

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	17 March 2022
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
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 RCVS.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
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Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council March 2022

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee in January and February 2022 (4 March 2022 being the date of writing the report).
2. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 10 January 2022), there have been three Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings: 19 January, 2 February and 16 February.

New cases considered by the PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the Committee at the three meetings referred to above is 5. Of the 5 new cases considered:
 - 3 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these:
 - 2 cases were closed with no further action, and
 - 1 case was closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon.
 - 2 were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports.
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 40 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 two 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 10 January to 4 March 2022,

- the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 564, and
- the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 100.

10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 10 January and 4 March 2022.

Concerns registered between 10 January and 4 March 2022

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	0
- Appeal against DC decision	1
- Certification	0
- Client confidentiality	1
- Clinical and client records	0
- Clinical governance	0
- Communication and consent	0
- Communication between professional colleagues	0
- Conviction/notifiable occupation notification	3
- CPD compliance	0
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	0
- Euthanasia of animals	2
- Giving evidence for court	1
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Microchipping	0
- Miscellaneous	1
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	1
- Performance case (<i>potential</i>)	1
- Referrals and second opinions	0
- Registration investigation	0
- Restoration application	0
- Social media and networking forums	0
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	0
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	0
- Veterinary care	82
- Veterinary medicines	0
- Veterinary teams and leaders	2
- Whistle-blowing	0
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	2

- Unassigned	0
Total	100

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 10 January to 4 March 2022, the Committee has referred 3 cases involving 2 veterinary surgeons to the Disciplinary Committee.

Veterinary Investigators

12. The Chief Investigator has undertaken 1 visit since the last report. This was a joint visit with the SSPCA and the Police to a canine fertility business to execute a search warrant.

Concerns procedure

13. At Stage 1 of the process, the aim is for the Case Examiner Group to decide 90% of cases within four months of registration of complaint (the Stage 1 KPI). In the two months since the last Report to Council the KPI has been met in 62% and 70% of cases respectively. As explained in the last report, changes have been made in the department and new members of staff recruited, and these steps are still in the process of taking effect, while case numbers remain high. Little time has passed since the last report, but the new Case Managers are settling in well and are beginning to build larger caseloads. Given that the newest recruits have only been with us two months, they are still learning the ropes and we are yet to feel the full benefit of the expanded team, but we are hopeful that the improvement in the number of cases meeting the target in the last month is a positive sign that we are heading in the right direction.
14. The Stage 2 KPI is now for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within seven 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 10 January to 4 March 2022, the PIC reached a decision (to close, hold open or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI in 1 out of 3 simple cases.
16. 3 complex cases were decided, of which none met the 12-month KPI. In accordance with normal practice, these cases (and KPI's in general) will be reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

Operational matters

17. New staff members are settling in well and contributing to the work of the department. While the number of cases meeting the Stage one KPI target is still not where would like it to be, we are hopeful that it is now going in the right direction and that this will continue to improve.
18. As the College has recently relocated, we have not held any meetings in person since November last year, but are hopeful that we will be able to make arrangements to do so later in March. The planned training has been deferred until later in the year, when new PIC members and the changes in process can be addressed.