

# RCVS review of Day-One Skills for veterinary nurses

June 2015

We are consulting on revisions to the 'day-one' clinical skills for the practical training of veterinary nurses. The proposed skills list is set out for ease of reference on the following pages, categorised according to the corresponding Day-One Competences. We would welcome comments on the relevance, accuracy and completeness of the Day-One Skills via our online consultation at [www.rcvs.org.uk/consultations](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/consultations) by **5pm on 29 July 2015**.

## **A. Legal, professional and ethical**

### **Day-one competences**

A1. Be fully conversant with, and follow the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct

A2. Understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of the veterinary nurse in relation to patients, clients, society and the environment.

### **Day-one skills**

A i. Practice in accordance with the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct

- Professional competence
- Honesty and integrity
- Independence and impartiality
- Client confidentiality and trust
- Professional accountability

A ii. Use professional standards of practice to self-assess performance

## **B. Management of the environment**

### **Day-one competences**

B1. Demonstrate knowledge of the organisation and legislation relating to a veterinary business

B2. Promote, monitor and maintain health and safety in the veterinary setting; demonstrate knowledge of quality assurance systems; apply principles of risk management to their practice

### **Day-one skills**

B i. Familiarise self and work within Health and Safety requirements and local risk factors

- Comply with legislative requirements

B ii. Use equipment and materials in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures and manufacturer's instructions

B iii. Take appropriate action and report injury to self or others

## **C. Communication**

### **Day-one competences**

- C1. Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned
- C2. Prepare accurate clinical and client records, and laboratory reports when necessary, in a form satisfactory to colleagues and understandable to the public
- C3. Demonstrate ability to cope with incomplete information, deal with contingencies, and adapt to change
- C4. Communicate clearly and collaborate with referral and diagnostic services, ensuring they receive an appropriate history from the veterinary surgeon
- C5. Advise clients on programmes of preventative medicine appropriate to species

### **Day-one skills**

#### **C i. Communicate effectively with people**

- Owners
- Veterinary colleagues
- Inter-professional colleagues
- The general public

#### **C ii. Prepare and maintain clear and accurate accounts for different purposes**

- Patient records and reports
- Laboratory reports
- Admission and consent forms
- Client home care plans/instructions

#### **C iii. Record, store and retrieve information using appropriate information technology systems**

#### **C iv. Admit patients**

- Obtain written and verbal informed consent

#### **C v. Conduct effective nursing consultations**

- History taking
- Appropriate examination
- Identifying cases for referral to a veterinary surgeon

- Application of treatments
- Programmes of preventative medicine

C vi. Provide discharge information and guidance to owners

- Advise clients on safe and correct routes of administration and potential side effects
- Demonstrate to clients safe techniques for administering medication
- Advise clients on the storage and disposal of medication

C vii. Implant a microchip

C viii. Complete appropriate paperwork for referral and diagnostic services

- laboratory samples
- clinical histories
- hereditary tests

## **D. Socio-economics**

### **Day-one competences**

D1. Understand the economic and emotional context in which the veterinary nurse operates

### **Day-one skills**

D i. Respond accordingly to economic status of clients

- pet insurance
- referral to charity

D ii. Demonstrate emotional intelligence in a range of situations

## **E. Reflective practice**

### **Day-one competences**

E1. Be able to review and evaluate literature and presentations critically

E2. Understand and apply principles of clinical governance and practise evidence-based veterinary nursing

### **Day-one skills**

E i. Promote evidence-based nursing

- Appraise literature
- Discuss finding with practice team

E ii. Apply evidence-based nursing

E iii. Collaborate with inter-professional colleagues to improve professional practice and relationships

- Consult the veterinary team in the event of unexpected medical or surgical complications, serious complaint, accident or anaesthetic death
- Consider mitigating circumstances
- Ensure clear protocols are in place
- Communicate changes to the practice team

## **F. Lifelong independent learning**

### **Day-one competences**

F1. Work effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in the delivery of services

F2. Demonstrate that they recognise personal and professional limits, and know how to seek professional advice, assistance and support when necessary

F3. Demonstrate a commitment to learning and professional development, both personal and as a member of a profession actively engaged in work-based learning

This includes recording and reflecting on professional experience and taking measures to improve performance and competence

### **Day-one skills**

F i. Recognise and work within personal limits

- Seek advice, assistance and support when necessary
- Manage time effectively

F ii. Identify one's own professional development needs by engaging in, and on, practice and lifelong-learning

- Develop a professional development plan (personal, professional and organisational needs)
- Contribute to creating a climate conducive to learning



## **G. Handling and restraint**

### **Day-one competences**

G1. Handle and restrain animal patients safely and humanely, and instruct others in helping the veterinary surgeon perform these techniques

### **Day-one skills**

G i. Assess behaviour and environmental factors when approaching and handling animals

G ii. Move and lift animals using approved manual handling and lifting techniques.

G iii. Select and wear protective clothing to protect oneself and others from injury

G iv. Demonstrate techniques for approaching and catching animals

G v. Restrain animals for a range of situations, including:

- Clinical examination
- Blood sample collection
  - Jugular
  - Cephalic (small animal only)
  - Saphenous (small animal only)
- Administration of medication
  - Oral
  - Topical
  - Parenteral
  - Ophthalmic
  - Aural (small animal only)
- Endotracheal intubation

G vi. Lead and move animals with the most appropriate equipment for the species

G vii. Safely use a range of restraining devices

- Muzzles
- Catchers
- Crush cages
- Nose twitch
- Neck twitch

## **H. Nursing care**

### **Day-one competences**

H1. Deliver nursing care in accordance with best practice and due regard for animal welfare

H2. Develop appropriate care plans and administer care in the interests of the patients and with regard to the resources available

H3. Be aware of suspected adverse reactions and alert the veterinary surgeon

H4. Assess pain and alert the veterinary surgeon

### **Day-one skills**

H i. Use an appropriate model of care to deliver the nursing process and create care plans for a range of disorders and diseases

- Interpret nursing care plans and carry out appropriate nursing interventions

H ii. Carry out a nursing assessment ascertaining information about the patient's normal routine in the following areas;

- Food and fluid intake
- Weight
- Temperature, pulse, respiration (TPR)
- Urination and defecation
- Mucous membrane colour
- Capillary refill time
- Behaviour
- Mobility
- Sleep and rest
- Maintain own hygiene levels

H iii. Monitor, manage and report the status of wounds

- Assessment of dirty and surgical wounds
- Irrigation and topical applications
- Patient interference management
- Client education
- Management and removal of drains

H iv. Apply dressings appropriate to type of wound

H v. Apply bandages

- Abdominal
- Cranial
- Thoracic
- Tail
- Forelimb
- Hind limb
- Foot
- Stable (equine only)

H vi. Provide general husbandry to animals within a veterinary setting

- Accommodation
  - Consider age, species, condition and demeanour
  - Enrichment
- Nutrition
  - Assessment of body condition
  - Calculations based on disease and lifestage/lifestyle
  - Manage assisted feeding
    - Hand feeding, manage and maintain assisted feeding tubes
    - Oral rehydration
- Excretions
  - Manage indwelling urinary catheters and be able to monitor urine output
    - Placement of urinary catheters (equine only)
    - Catheter care
  - Manage bowel function
    - Administration of laxatives
    - Enemata (small animal only)
- Groom and bathe patients
  - Species
  - Lifestage specific requirements

H vii. Administer medicines in accordance with instructions from the VS/manufacture

- Oral
- Topical
- Subcutaneous
- Intramuscular
- Intravenous

- Infused medications
- Intravenous bolus medications

H viii. Monitor for adverse medication reactions and alert veterinary surgeon

- Score and evaluate pain
  - Intensity of pain
  - Associated anxiety and behaviour

H ix. Perform basic physiotherapy

- Passive movement
- Active exercise
- Thoracic coupage

## **I. Emergency first aid**

### **Day-one competences**

I1. Administer emergency first aid and assist with the provision of emergency treatment to animals

### **Day-one skills**

I i. Demonstrate emergency care techniques

- Triage patients
- Perform basic CPR
- Administer oxygen therapy
- Haemorrhage control

I ii. Administer first aid within the limits of law and the expertise of the student

- Cast horse (equine only)
- Musculo-skeletal (equine only)
- Abdominal pain (equine only)
- Compromised airway
- Hyperthermia
- Haemorrhage
- Wounds
- Fractures

## **J. Laboratory techniques**

### **Day-one competences**

J1. Collect preserve and transport samples, prepare appropriate diagnostic tests, understand the limitations of the test results and identify the significance of spurious results

### **Day-one skills**

J i. Formulate and implement an appropriate sampling strategy

- Personal protective equipment (PPE), clipping and preparing sample site. Preparation of patient and equipment.
  - Blood
  - Urine
  - Faeces
  - Skin and hair
  - Tissue biopsies

J ii. Take appropriate samples

- Preparing and cleaning the site
- Blood, urine, faeces, skin, hair
- Bacterial swabs
- Assist with the collection of joint fluid and peritoneal fluid (equine only)

J iii. Carry out haematological analysis

- Biochemistry
- Haematology
- Packed Cell Volume
- Total Protein
- Smear

J iv. Carry out urinalysis

- Specific Gravity
- Urolith identification (small animal only)
- Reagent strip tests
- Total protein (equine only)

J v. Carry out faecal analysis

- Faecal worm egg count

J vi. Carry out skin and hair analysis

- Skin scrape
- Hair pluck
- Tape strips
- Coat brushings
- Ear swabs (small animal only)

J vii. Use a microscope

- Low magnification
- High magnification
- Oil immersion
- Record Vernier Scale reading

J viii. Prepare samples for external analysis

- Completing documentation
- Packaging and labelling
- Correct storage

J ix. Record laboratory test results and communicate accurately to the appropriate clinician

- Identify inconsistencies/inaccuracies in test results

## **K. Diagnostic imaging**

### **Day-one competences**

K1. Prepare and conduct diagnostic imaging and other techniques carrying out the procedure in accordance with good health and safety and current regulations.

### **Day-one skills**

K i. Prepare and use radiography imaging equipment

K ii. Prepare and use personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Lead gown
- Gauntlets
- Thyroid protector as appropriate
- Dosemeters worn correctly

K iii. Prepare and use radiography equipment

- Positioning aids
- Grids
- Left and right markers
- Patient identification markers

K iv. Position an animal and an area of interest

- Appendicular
- Axial
- Thorax
- Abdomen

K v. Process radiographs according to practice policy

K vi. Record results of radiographs according to practice procedure

- Appraisal of quality of image
- Radiographic faults

K vii. Carry out cleaning and maintenance of endoscope

- Prepare, maintain, clean and store

K viii. Prepare and support animals during endoscopy investigation

K ix. Prepare and support animals during ultrasound investigation



## **L. Dispensing**

### **Day-one competences**

L1. Access the appropriate sources of data on licensed medicines

L2. Dispense medicines correctly and responsibly in accordance with veterinary surgeon direction, legislation and latest guidance.

### **Day-one skills**

L i. Ensure safe and legal handling and management of drugs

- Manage risk to self or others associated with particular substances
- Store medicines in accordance with specific requirements
- Calculate drug dosages
- Package and label in accordance with legal requirements

L ii. Maintain appropriate records

- Dangerous drugs

L iii. Dispose of medicines in accordance with legislative guidelines

- Cytotoxic
- DOOP
- Schedule 2 medicines

L iv. Interpret prescriptions and prepare medicines for dispensing

## **M. Infection control**

### **Day-one competences**

M1. Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including observing the appropriate health and safety recommendations

M2. Apply principles of biosecurity correctly, including sterilisation of equipment and disinfection of clothing

### **Day-one skills**

M i. Comply with reporting procedures

- Notifiable diseases
- Reportable diseases and injuries (RIDDOR)
- Zoonotic disease

M ii. Formulate and implement an appropriate infection control strategy

- Constitute appropriate cleaning and disinfectant solutions
- Prepare, clean and maintain kennelling that maximises the welfare of hospitalised patients
  - General in-patient kennelling, isolation
- Prepare, clean and maintain examination rooms, operating theatre (periodic deep clean and infected cases)

M iii. Check and clean surgical instruments

- Identify and report damage to equipment and instruments

M iv. Prepare package and sterilise instruments and materials

- Drapes and gowns
- Single instruments
- Instrument sets

M v. Dispose of hazardous and non-hazardous waste safely and correctly

- Body fluids
- Faeces
- Tissue
- Cadavers
- Sharps

M vi. Ensure appropriate hygiene skills are followed before and after handling animals

- Following the World Health Organisation hand washing method
  - Removal of visible jewellery
- Shower in and shower out (equine)
- Use and dispose of protective clothing

M vii. Carry out effective barrier nursing

- Accommodation
- Personal protective equipment
- Fomites
- Isolated patients

M viii. Scrub up and assist with a surgical procedure

- Wear sterile gown, gloves, cap and mask
- Maintain sterility of self, other operators and materials
- Handle instruments and equipment
- Handle tissue (retraction technique, use of swabs and packs)

## **N. Theatre practice**

### **Day-one competences**

N1. Prepare the environment, equipment and patient for aseptic surgery

### **Day-one skills**

N i. Prepare the theatre for use

- Daily damp dusting
- Equipment, materials

N ii. Position patients on the operating table in accordance with the planned procedure

- Use positioning aids
- Table position
- Lighting

N iii. Prepare the surgical site

- Identification of site
- Care and use of clippers
- Initial skin scrub
- Final skin preparation

## **O. Aseptic theatre practice**

### **Day-one competences**

O1. Assist the veterinary surgeon as a scrubbed nurse to perform surgical procedures on patients

### **Day-one skills**

O i. Behave appropriately in the operating theatre

- Personal hygiene
- Theatre clothing
- Movement and speech
- Personal safety
- Safety of others

O ii. Open and pass sterile materials

- Directly to a scrubbed operator

O iii. Keep track of materials during surgery

- Swab count
- Instrument count
- Blade and needle count

O iv. Handle instruments and equipment

- Passing items, including blades
- Managing powered equipment
- Mounting and dismounting blades

O v. Place a routine instrument set according to practice protocol

## **P. Anaesthesia**

### **Day-one competences**

P1. Assist the veterinary surgeon by preparing patients, equipment and materials for anaesthetic procedures

P2. Assist in administering and maintaining anaesthesia to patients

### **Day-one skills**

P i. Prepare for anaesthesia

- Check and prepare the anaesthetic machine
- Select and prepare breathing system/circuit/pollution control
- Select and prepare monitoring equipment
  - Pulse oximeter
  - ECG
  - Oesophageal stethoscope
- Prepare materials and equipment required for induction of anaesthesia
  - Locate and select appropriate preparation and strength of pharmaceuticals
  - Appropriate endotracheal tube

P ii. Prepare the patient

- Introduce endotracheal tubes
  - Check position of tube
  - Inflate cuff
  - Secure tube
  - Attach to breathing system

P iii. Maintain and monitor the patient during the anaesthetic process

- Measure temperature, heart rate, central and peripheral pulse, respiratory rate
- Measure depth of anaesthesia
- Monitor equipment (circuits and tube, gasses and volatile agents, patient monitors)
- Interpret and report observations to the directing veterinary surgeon
  - Inconsistencies, patient monitors
- Calculate and administer inhalation anaesthesia under veterinary direction
  - Change the depth or level of inhalation anaesthesia under veterinary direction

P iv. Complete anaesthetic monitoring records

P v. Supervise recovery from anaesthesia

- Disconnect patients from anaesthetic equipment and materials
- Position patients for recovery
- Extubate patients trachea at appropriate stage of recovery
- Maintain accurate recovery records
- Communicate post operative and/or anaesthetic recovery progress to the supervising veterinary surgeon

## **Q. Euthanasia**

### **Day-one competences**

Q1. Understand the appropriate need for euthanasia; sensitively support the owner and others with due regard for health and safety of those present; advise on disposal of the carcass

### **Day-one skills**

Q i. Convey appropriate sympathy and empathy in verbal and non-verbal communications

- Prepare the owner for loss
- Support the owner through euthanasia
- Provide follow-up support for a bereaved owner
- Maintain and adapt professional approach to the circumstances

Q ii. Handle animals and equipment safely for euthanasia

- Care for the animal sensitively
- Select and prepare appropriate equipment