Summary

Meeting	Standards Committee
Date	16 September 2025
Title	Standards Committee Minutes
Summary	Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held in person and remotely on Tuesday 16 September 2025, at 10:00am The Committee's attention is drawn to paragraphs 1 – 13 of the classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix
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Classifications

Document	**Classification**[1]	**Rationales**[2]
Minutes	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	**Confidential**	1, 2 and 3

1 Classifications 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.

2 Classification rationales

Confidential	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	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

Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held in-person and remotely on 16 September 2025 at 10am

Members:	Olivia Cook (Chair)
	Sinéad Bennett
	Derek Bray
	Linda Ford
	Christopher Loughrey
	Matthew Rendle
	Tim Walker
	David Black
	Sam Bescoby
	Abbie Calow
	Linda Belton

In attendance:

RCVS	Lizzie Lockett	CEO
	Clare Paget	Registrar/Director of Legal Services
	Gemma Kingswell	Head of Legal Services (Standards)
	Sarah Iddon	Head of Legal Services (PSS)
	Beth Jinks	Standards and Advisory Lead
	Ky Richardson	Senior Standards and Advice Officer/Solicitor
	Nyero Abboh	Standards and Advice Officer
	Bri McLachlan	Standards and Advice Administrator

AI 1 Apologies for absence, declarations of interest, minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2025

1. Apologies were noted from Tim Walker, Sinéad Bennett, David Black, and Abbie Calow. Derek Bray did not attend.

2. It was noted that the meeting was unfortunately not quorate which limited those present to discussing matters and making recommendations only. Matters that required a vote would be put to the full Committee by email after the meeting.

3. There were no new declarations of interest or comments on the minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2025.

Matters for decision/discussion

AI 2 (a) Definition of 'veterinary surgery' - diagnostic tests

4. The Head of Policy, Insight, and Public Affairs explained that the definition of 'veterinary surgery' in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 expressly includes, "…*tests performed on animals for diagnostic purposes*". The Committee is asked whether this should carry through to future legislation given that current RCVS advice is that diagnostic tests may be performed by non-veterinary surgeons, e.g., in laboratories (with the linked but separate exercise of diagnosis being reserved to veterinary surgeons).

5. The Committee was also asked, if it considered that diagnostic tests themselves should be considered an act of 'veterinary surgery', whether any are capable of an exemption order which would allow them to be performed by competent lay people.

6. As the meeting was not quorate, the Committee provided a steer only, which included the following comments:

    a. The current definition of 'veterinary surgery' is broad, which is useful and allows the RCVS to interpret it flexibly over time.

    a. It would be preferable to retain "…*tests performed on animals for diagnostic purposes*" but provide relevant exemptions. If a decision were made to remove it however, the remainder of the definition would need to ensure it includes the act of taking invasive samples, so lay people are not inadvertently permitted to take intravenous or other invasive samples.

    b. In relation to tests that might be suitable for an exemption order, the Committee noted that some already exist in relation to cattle but if new ones were introduced for small animals, it would be useful to limit what owners can do to simple/non-invasive testing, similar to the current animal owner exemption that allows for only minor medical treatment.

    c. It is useful from a broader animal welfare perspective, for owners to be able to send off non-invasive samples, e.g., swabs, to laboratories of their own volition for interpretation. This already happens frequently and is routine practice for snakes and birds, for example. That said, consideration should be given to the fact that the quality of the service provided by these laboratories is questionable given that the quality of the swabs/samples cannot be guaranteed.

    d. As the quality of swabs/samples cannot be guaranteed, any veterinary surgeon relying on test results obtained by clients from swabs taken by clients should consider how much weight to give to them as part of their obligation to provide veterinary care that is appropriate and adequate.

    e. More generally, the Committee noted that there is a difference between interpretation of test results, confirmation of test results, and diagnosis, the former two being information to inform the diagnosis.

f. The term ‘veterinary surgery’ itself is often interpreted literally by the public, i.e., scalpel in hand, so a different term might offer the public more clarity, ‘veterinary acts’, for example.

AI 2 (b) Canine Fertility Clinics - Scotland - confidential

7. The minutes of this agenda item can be found in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1-3.

AI 2 (c) The prescribing cascade in Northern Ireland – confidential

8. The minutes of this agenda item can be found in the classified appendix at paragraphs 4-7.

AI 2 (d) Practice Standards Scheme – new consumer standards – confidential

9. The minutes of this agenda item can be found in the classified appendix at paragraphs 8 - 13.

AI 2 (e) Review - Chapter 13: Clinical and client records

10. This item will be discussed at the next meeting.

Matters for report

AI 3 (a) Disciplinary Committee Report

11. The report was noted.

AI 3 (b) Practice Standards Scheme Report

12. The report was briefly summarised. It was noted that this year’s assessments were the most assessments ever done in one year and the PSS Team was commended for its hard work. The Lead Assessor was acknowledged in particular for her collaboration with the VMD to align guidance, which has proved to be a great success.

13. The number of accredited practices is towards the lower end of the usual scale due to a tougher approach from PSS in relation to compliance, as well as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) process. The majority of new accreditation applications are from independent practices.

14. There continues to be a gradual decline in Awards uptake and whether or not to continue with Awards will form part of the substantive review referred to at agenda item AI 2 (d) above.

15. The reminder of the report was noted.

AI 4 Risk and equality

16. No new risks were reported.

AI 5 Any other business and date of next meeting

17. It was agreed that the election of a Vice-Chair would happen by email, and all Committee members will have an opportunity to nominate themselves alongside Sinéad Bennett before a vote is taken.

Action: Head of Legal Services (Standards)

18. The Committee was provided with a brief update from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in relation to the use of Temporary Registered Novice Official Veterinarians (TRNOVs). Only 3% of the relevant workforce are now TRVNOVs, which is a substantial improvement as it was once 40%.

19. The next meeting with be 22 October 2025.

Table of actions

Paragraph	Action	Responsibility
17	**Arrange a vote for a Vice-Chair of this Committee by email.**	**Head of Legal Services (Standards)**