

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday, 24 January 2018 at 10 am at Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

Members:	Mrs E Acaster	
	Dr M A Donald	
	Mrs J M Dyer	
	Dr M O Greene	
	Professor R A Hammond*	
	Mr D C Hutchison*	
	Miss R M Marshall	
	Dr K A Richards	Chair
In attendance:	Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar
	Mr N Oldham	Standards and Advisory Manager
	Mrs R Rafferty	Senior Advice Officer
	Ms B Jinks	Standards and Advisory Officer
	Professor S A May	President
	Mrs J M Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Mr D Chambers	Council member
	Dr C Scudamore	Council member
	Professor M Herrtage	Recognised Veterinary Practice sub-committee Chair (Present up to and including item 4a)
	Ms L Grannell	Senior Manager, Practice Standards Scheme (Present for item 5a)

*absent

Apologies for absence and welcome

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr D C Hutchinson and Professor R A Hammond.
2. The Chair welcomed Professor May, Mr Chambers and Dr Scudamore to the meeting as observers.

Declarations of interest

3. Declarations of interest were received from:

Dr Donald: now the President of the Scottish Branch of the BVA and was involved with the development of the Scottish tail docking legislation.

Minutes of last meetings held on 24 September 2017

4. It was noted that there is a typo at paragraph 6 where the word “conventions” is used, where it should read “convictions”.
5. Reference to a “colony” of cats within paragraph 31 was questioned as it is believed this adjective should only be used if an ASPA licence has been obtained.
6. In relation to the matters arising from paragraph 20, the Registrar provided figures of the number of veterinary surgeons on the register who are non-UK nationals (approx. 35%), and figures of non-UK national veterinary surgeons who have appeared before DC since 2015.
 - 2015: 7 veterinary surgeons, 2 of whom were non-UK nationals (40%). It was noted that this is a low number of cases which can lead to misleading percentages.
 - 2016: 9 veterinary surgeons, 44% of whom were non-UK nationals. However, out of the 44%, only 2 of the veterinary surgeons went to a non-UK university (New Zealand and Germany).
 - 2017: 17 veterinary surgeons, 11 veterinary surgeons, 64% were non-UK nationals. It was noted that many of these cases related to CPD, PII, convictions, and non-disclosure of convictions, instead of being ‘clinical cases’.
 - 2018 - 6 cases heard or listed so far - all relate to UK nationals
7. The Committee agreed that there was no evidence of any issue/trends but requested that they be kept advised regarding non-UK veterinary surgeons at DC. It was agreed these figures would also be provided to PIC/DC Liaison Committee.

Action: Registrar

Standards and Advice End of Year Report

8. The Chair thanked the Standards and Advice Team for their on-going work.

9. The Committee noted the report and the Standards and Advisory Manager highlighted the following aspects:
10. Telephone calls received by the team (and the Professional Conduct departments as a whole) decreased by 200 from the previous year. This is largely down to better internal triaging and identification of where calls need to go. It was also noted that the RCVS website was updated last year which also helped in directing callers to the correct departments.
11. There will be an RCVS press release confirming that telemedicine is currently under discussion. The Registrar confirmed there would be a further paper brought to the Committee in April.

Matters for decision

Informed consent

12. The Committee noted the confidential report from veterinary surgeon and PhD student Miss C Gray and were grateful for the information provided which they found extremely helpful.
13. It was raised that RCVS Council and PIC have previously made particular reference to informed consent for dental procedures. Currently it is commonplace for an animal to be admitted for an unspecified "dental assessment and treatment" due to the fact that often a veterinary surgeon will not know how many teeth to remove until the time of the surgery. Clients have expectation set at the removal of 2 or 3 teeth and the outcome is more teeth removed, leading to complaints. The Standards and Advisory Manager clarified that this would be covered by proposed guidance at paragraph 11.2(h). It was agreed however that a form of words would be devised where the degree of uncertainty is high (e.g. dental assessment and treatment) and included as an example at paragraph 11.18 of the supporting guidance.

Action: Standards and Advice team

14. The Committee suggested the following amendments to the proposed guidance:
 - At paragraph 11.3(a) the words "and qualified" should be removed. The Committee noted that delegation to a 'suitably trained person' was more representative of practice.
 - At paragraph 11.5 the words "they are" should be replaced with "the veterinary surgeon is"
 - At paragraph 11.8 the words "whether this is necessary" should be replaced with "the potential advantages"
 - At paragraph 11.9 it was decided that the addition of "made in ink" is outdated and should be removed
 - Paragraph 11.25 should be removed

Action: Standards and Advice team

15. The Committee also suggested the following topics for case studies on informed consent:
 - Dental procedures
 - Routine surgery
 - Stray animals
 - Negative exploratory laparotomies

- Student Veterinary Nurses/RVNs without confidence or experience declining tasks, making it clear they could refer back to the veterinary surgeon.

Action: Standards and Advice team

Exemption orders

16. The Chair introduced the paper and explained that the Exemption Orders and Associates Working Party had previously referred questions to Standards Committee.
17. Based on information provided by the British Veterinary Poultry Association, the Committee agreed that feather plucking is an act of veterinary surgery and should be eligible for an exemption order.
18. The Committee discussed the paper and the clarification that beak trimming in laying hens is currently omitted from the Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 2015 (under the definition of "fowls"). It was agreed that the definition should be extended to include laying hens.
19. Standards and Advice team to feedback to Working Party

Action: Standards and Advice team

Scottish tail docking guidance

20. It was agreed that the revised guidance reflects the current legal position in Scotland and therefore should be incorporated into the appropriate chapter of the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct.

Action: Standards and Advice team

Confidential matters for decision

Feline blood transfusion

21. The minutes for this section are confidential and are only accessible to RCVS Council.

GDPR

22. The Committee noted the paper and praised the comprehensive information within. It was explained that the guidance within the paper will not form a new chapter of the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct, instead it will be standalone on the website.
23. It was agreed that the final guidance and Q&A will be confirmed by email to the Committee, and will be published on the website in mid-February/early March at the latest.

Action: Standards and Advice team

Matters for report

DC report

24. The Committee noted the report

Riding Establishments Sub-committee Report

25. There were no comments and the report was noted.

Practice Standards Scheme Report

26. Ms Grannell provided an oral update to the Committee. She confirmed that there are 3282 practice premises part of the PSS scheme (2770 SA, 523 equine, 494 farm), representing just

over 60.5% of all eligible practice premises. The most frequently achieved awards are Client Service (76), followed by Emergency and Critical Care (39) and In-patient service (19).

27. The most recent discussions at Practice Standards Group included:

- The agreement to explore a Level 7 qualification for PSS assessors. This would be open to anyone to achieve, including RVNs.
- RCVS staff to put forwards suggestions on areas where mental health initiatives and awareness might be included in existing PSS modules for consideration by PSG.
- Consideration of further guidance on the responsible use of antimicrobials in farm practice to be included as a requirement at GP level in the Practice Standards. The group decided that the wording of any such guidance would need to be in a format that was "inspectable ". Possible wording was being reviewed and would return for further consideration by PSG.

28. In October 2017 4 new assessors were recruited for the scheme, plus 5 reserves. The new assessors have begun carrying out shadow assessments this month and will continue these during February. The need to recruit more assessors arose due to; retirements, maternity leave and the general growth of the Scheme. In view of the urgency required in this round of recruitment, Registered Veterinary Nurses were not included (a change of the rules would have been required for them to be included). The Practice Standards Group is exploring the possibility of an external qualification for assessors which will include both Veterinary Surgeons and Registered Veterinary Nurses. A meeting will be held in late February with Harper Adams University to discuss proceeding with developing a qualification which PSS assessors could achieve.

29. Ms Grannell explained that in the past PSS reports have typically not been disclosed as the Scheme is voluntary and the College has taken the view that these would not be disclosed unless necessary. Recently the Information Tribunal has clarified the obligations of the College on publishing accreditation and assessment reports on request. The background surrounds a request from a member of the public for reports for one practice, the College refused the request (a decision supported by the ICO). However the Information Tribunal found in favour of the member of the public and required disclosure of the reports. All practices in the scheme will be notified of this change.

Confidential matters for report

Certification Sub-committee Report

30. There were no comments and the report was noted.

Recognised Veterinary Practice Sub-committee Report

31. This report was taken in conjunction with the agenda item on Feline Blood Banks (AI 04a).

Ethics Review Panel Report

32. There were no comments and the report was noted.

Risk register, equality and diversity

33. It was raised that that the numbers of non-UK national veterinary surgeons appearing before the statutory committees should be considered.

Any other business

Chapter 13 SG

34. It was explained to the Committee that it was considered appropriate to inform them about an observation that had been made by a veterinary surgeon advice-seeker. This was in connection with chapter 13 of the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct, specifically, 13.11 and 13.12 which confirm that radiographs in digital form, form part of the clinical record and that, if so requested, veterinary surgeons should provide a copy of the clinical record, including digital images, to their client.
35. The advice-seeker explained that clients sometimes seek copies of their animal's clinical records so that they may share these with various types of therapists (non-veterinary surgeons) whom they wish to 'treat' their animals. He had explained that this can cause difficulties for veterinary surgeons and suggested that it would be ideal if veterinary surgeons had the freedom to refuse to provide copies of clinical records in such circumstances, instead only being bound to provide copies directly to other veterinary professionals. He felt that this would enable veterinary surgeons to have the confidence that they are not in some way facilitating a potential breach of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 by enabling a non-veterinary surgeon to 'treat' an animal.
36. The Committee noted the observation but was not convinced that the guidance ought to be changed. The Committee felt that to require a veterinary surgeon to 'police' client requests for clinical records in this way would be giving them too much responsibility. It was agreed that veterinary surgeons should comply with a client's request for a copy of their animal's clinical history, but, should they have any concerns about the client's intentions they were absolutely entitled to advise and warn the client accordingly, noting such conversations on the records.

Date of next meeting

37. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday, 25 April 2018 at 10 am.