

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

Standards Committee

Remote Standards Committee meeting via Microsoft Teams

27 April 2020 10:00 - 27 April 2020 13:00

Standards Committee

Agenda for the meeting to be held on 27 April 2020 at 10.00am

1. **Apologies for absence, declarations of interest and minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020**

2. **Standards and Advice Update** **Oral report**

3. **Matters for decision/discussion:** **Papers attached**
 - a. **Certification – Confidential**
 - b. **UCOOH – Confidential**
 - c. **Badger vaccination training – Confidential**
 - d. **Professional indemnity insurance**
 - e. **Social media case study**

4. **Risk and equality** **Oral report**
 - a. **Risk Register and ARC update**

5. **Any other business and date of next meeting 7 September 2020**

Standards Committee 2019/2020

Chair:

Dr Melissa Donald BVMS MRCVS

Members:

Professor David Argyle BVMS PhD DipECVIM-ca (Oncology) FRCVS

Mr Mark Castle OBE

Mrs Liz Cox RVN

Dr Caroline Allen MA VetMB CertSAM MRCVS

Mr David Leicester BvetMed MRCVS

Ms Claire-Louise McLaughlan MA LLB(Hons)

Mr Martin Peaty BVSc CertEP CertES(Orth) MRCVS

Ms Belinda Andrews-Jones DipAVN(surgical) RVN

Miss Linda Belton BVSc MRCVS

Summary	
Meeting	Standards Committee
Date	27 April 2020
Title	Standards Committee Minutes
Summary	Minutes of Standards Committee held on Monday, 10 February 2020 at 10am at Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF
Decisions required	n/a
Attachments	Classified appendix
Author	Nick Oldham Standards and Advice Manager n.oldham@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7050 5040

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2 and 3

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

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Monday, 10 February 2020 at 10 am at Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

Members:

Prof D Argyle	
Mr M Castle	
Mrs L Cox	
Dr M A Donald	Chair
Mr D Leicester	
Ms C-L McLaughlan	
Mr M Peaty	
Ms B Andrews-Jones	
Miss L Belton	
Dr C Allen	

In attendance:

Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar
Mrs G Kingswell	Head of Standards
Mr N Oldham	Standards and Advisory Manager
Ms B Jinks	Senior Standards and Advisory Officer
Ms K Bowles	Standards and Advisory Officer
Mr N Connell	President (observer from RCVS Officer Team)
Ms L Lockett	CEO
Ms L Lipman	PSS Manager (Present for AI 3(c) and AI 3(d))
Mr A Roberts	Director of Leadership and Innovation (Present for AI 3(a) and AI 3(b))
Dr Celia Marr	BCVSp (Present for AI 3(c) only)
Mr Terry Emmerson	BCVSp (Present for AI 3(c) only)

AI 1 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

1. The Chair welcomed the President to the meeting as an observer.
2. Apologies were received from Prof Argyle. Mrs Cox was delayed and arrived at 10:58am.
3. A declaration of interest was received from Martin Peaty, who stated his practice is part of the Practice Standards Scheme.

AI 1 Minutes of last meetings held on 11 November 2019

4. The Minutes from the last meeting were noted and agreed as accurate.

AI 2 Standards and Advice Report 2019

5. The Standards and Advice Manager introduced the report and advised that a draft Recognised Veterinary Practice ('RVP') framework had been prepared by a small group of the RVP Working Group, set up in 2019. The framework is nearing completion, and will be reviewed further by a

small group active in the field of clinical research, prior to the Working Group and a final proposal to the Committee. It is anticipated the framework will replace the existing Chapter (25) in the supporting guidance covering 'Recognised Veterinary Practice'.

6. The Chair congratulated the team on their work in 2019. The Committee suggested that more could be done to publicise the unsolicited compliments the team receives. The Head of Standards stated that such matters were under review.

Matters for decision

AI 3(a) UCOOH – Confidential (oral update/revised proposal)

7. Confidential information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 9.

AI 3(b) National Rep Survey Results – Confidential

8. Confidential information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 10 – 13.

AI 3(c) BCVSp proposal – Confidential

9. Confidential information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 14 – 20.

AI 3(d) PSS Standards edits – Core, farm, equine, awards

10. The paper was introduced by the Practice Standards Scheme Senior Manager. The Committee were advised that the Practice Standards have been reviewed and updated in line with the five yearly quality cycle, for projected rollout in 2020. In order to achieve this, Practice Standards Group (PSG) working groups edited all modules for each of the three species groups.
11. The Committee were reminded that it considered the Small Animal modules at its meeting in November 2019. The Committee generally approved the proposed edits, with minimal changes however the awards points had yet to be determined for small animal and so these were presented as part of this paper.
12. Although the Committee has already approved the Small Animal edits, the material changes to Core standards were not specifically highlighted and the Committee was asked to reconsider these, together with those for Farm and Equine which had now been approved by PSG.
13. Subject to some minor amendments, the Committee approved wide ranging edits to the PSS modules as proposed by the Practice Standards Group. The edits relate to all aspects of the scheme, i.e. small animal/farm/equine and awards.

Action: PSS team to make the suggested amendments

14. It was noted that changes to the Core standards of PSS have a universal effect as all practices are required to comply with them whether or not they are part of PSS. It was discussed that some

of the proposed changes to Core were more prescriptive than would usually be the case (given that the Code is principles based) and the Committee were asked for its views on these changes in particular. The Committee felt that more clarity was a good thing and the more guidance we can give practices, the better. However, it was noted that the supporting guidance and Core requirements are currently in different parts of the website and so it is possible that vets and practices may look at the supporting guidance and consider that they are compliant with their Code obligations without realising that they also need to check PSS Core. As such, the Committee stressed that where the Core requirements contain essential information for practices, this should be clearly reflected in the supporting guidance and/or signposted as appropriate.

Action: PSS team/Standards and Advice team

AI 3(e) Microchipping of equines

15. The Chair advised that in view of further information received from BEVA on the eve of the meeting, the paper would not be considered and would be brought back to the Committee in April. The Committee were content with this.

AI 3(f) Social media and online networking forums

16. The Standards and Advice Manager introduced the paper, which set out proposed amendments to the supporting guidance. The paper was prepared in order to address concerns raised by the Committee in November 2019, regarding the use of online platforms and forums by veterinary surgeons and nurses. The Committee had requested that proposed amendments specifically addressed the anonymous posting of offensive content that can amount to a hate crime.
17. Two case studies were also prepared for the Committee's consideration, addressing the same issues.
18. The Standards and Advice Manager advised that the case studies had already received positive feedback and requests to be shared. The Registrar advised that further thought would be given as to the appropriate channels to disseminate these case studies.
19. The Committee approved the proposed amendments to the supporting guidance and the two case studies prepared to support this additional guidance. The Committee also requested that a further case study, highlighting the positive uses of social media, be prepared.

Action: Standards and Advice Team

AI 3(g) Ownership of wildlife

20. The Head of Standards introduced the paper which set out the College's current position on the ownership of wildlife and proposed wording for additional guidance within Chapter 11 ('communication and consent') within the supporting guidance.
21. The Committee noted the paper and suggested minor amendments to the proposed guidance and Chapter 11, including;

- A clear wildlife cross reference at the top of the page.
- Signposting to Chapter 3 of the supporting guidance so veterinary surgeons are clear as to their obligations regarding first aid and pain relief for wildlife.
- Signposting to Chapter 14 of the supporting guidance 'client confidentiality' so veterinary surgeons know who to report clients to where wildlife is taken away that should be euthanised.
- A link to relevant legislation advising on the release of invasive species.
- Acknowledgement that members of the public who find injured animals may be emotionally affected.

22. Subject to these minor amendments, to be circulated by email, the Committee approved the draft guidance on the ownership of wildlife to be included in Chapter 11 ('communication and consent') of the supporting guidance.

Action: Head of Standards

Matters for report

AI 4(a) DC report

23. The Committee noted the report. No comments.

AI 4(b) Riding Establishments Sub-committee Report

24. The Committee noted the report.

AI 4(c) Practice Standards Scheme Report

25. The Committee noted the report.

Confidential matters for report

AI 5(a) Recognised Veterinary Practice Sub-committee Report

26. Confidential information is available in the classified appendix paragraphs 21 – 23.

AI 5(b) Ethics Review Panel (ERP) Report

27. Confidential information is available in the classified appendix paragraph 24.

AI 6 Risk and equality

28. The Head of Standards and the Standards and Advice Manager advised the Committee that they would be attending the College's Audit and Risk Committee on 13 February 2020 to present a paper outlining the risks faced by the Standards and Advice team and the measures implemented to mitigate those risks.

29. The Committee were advised that a further update on this paper would be provided in April.

Action: Head of Standards/Standards and Advice Manager

Any other business and date of next meeting

AI 7(a) ATT Pilot Scheme update **CONFIDENTIAL**

30. Confidential information is available in the classified appendix paragraph 24.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is 27 April 2020 at 10am.

Summary	
Meeting	Standards Committee
Date	27 April 2020
Title	Amendment to provisions regarding professional indemnity insurance
Summary	This paper proposes an amendment to Chapter 17 of the Supporting Guidance clarifying the provisions relating to professional indemnity insurance.
Decisions required	The Committee are asked to decide whether to adopt the proposed amendments to Chapter 17 of the supporting guidance.
Attachments	None
Author	Gemma Kingswell Head of Standards gemmak@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7695 1100

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	

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

Introduction/background

1. At its most recent meeting, it was observed by the Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee ('Liaison Committee') that the Supporting Guidance did not explicitly state that the purpose of the requirement for professional indemnity insurance (PII) was to ensure that veterinary surgeons were covered in the event of claims for negligence. It was also noted that there is no reference to the fact that it is not a requirement to have cover for concerns raised with the RCVS.
2. The Liaison Committee further observed that veterinary surgeons often presume that PII policies also provide cover in the event a concern is raised with the RCVS. However, this is not always the case. The Liaison Committee felt that this was a particular issue for locums, who would be covered for negligence under the practice's insurance but may not be covered for anything else.
3. In light of this, the Liaison Committee asked that the Standards Committee consider an amendment to Chapter 17 of the Supporting Guidance, which deals with PII and equivalent arrangements, in order to clarify the position.

Proposed amendment

4. In light of the above, the following amendment to Chapter 17 of the Supporting Guidance is proposed (changes in red and bold):

Professional indemnity insurance and equivalent arrangements

*17.16 Veterinary surgeons must ensure that all their professional activities are covered by professional indemnity insurance or equivalent arrangements. **The purpose of professional indemnity insurance is to cover compensation claims in the event an allegation of negligence is made against you.***

17.17 In addition to professional indemnity insurance, veterinary surgeons may also decide to take out insurance to provide cover in the event a concern is raised with the RCVS (although this is not required). Many policies will include both types of cover, however it should not be presumed this is the case. Veterinary surgeons should have particular regard to this issue when carrying out locum work, as although the practice's insurance is likely to provide cover for negligence claims, it may not provide any other type of cover.

17.18 For 'equivalent arrangements' to be satisfactory, they must cover four key areas:

- a. There must be **sufficient funds** available to cover potential future claims;*
- b. Those funds must be **readily available** in the event that losses need to be compensated – funds are not readily available where use affects significantly the work of the business or life of an individual;*
- c. There must be an **established procedure** in place for dealing with claims and accessing those funds, so that all parties have clarity about the process; and*

*d. There must be arrangements in place to ensure claims are dealt with by those who are **independent** of those who are the subject of the claim, so that decision-making is not based on personal interest.*

17.19 *Veterinary surgeons seeking to rely on the equivalent arrangements provision should seek professional advice (e.g. from a solicitor or accountant) to ensure equivalence with professional indemnity insurance.*

Decision required

5. The Committee are asked to decide whether to adopt the proposed amendments to Chapter 17 of the supporting guidance.

Summary	
Meeting	Standards Committee
Date	27 April 2020
Title	Social media
Summary	This paper proposes an additional case study prepared in order to highlight the value of social media.
Decisions required	The Committee are asked to consider and approve the content of the additional case study on the use of social media.
Attachments	None
Author	Nick Oldham Standards and Advice Manager Nick.oldham@rcvs.org.uk

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

Introduction/background

1. The Committee will recall that at its most recent meeting, they considered a paper on the use of social media and online networking forums. The paper proposed amendments to the supporting guidance in order to address concerns regarding the use of social media and online networking forums by veterinary surgeons and nurses.
2. In addition to proposed amendments to the guidance, the Committee also considered two case studies prepared addressing these same issues.
3. The Committee approved the proposed amendments to the supporting guidance and the two case studies prepared to support them. The Committee requested that a further case study was prepared, highlighting the positive use of social media, as acknowledged within paragraph 28.2 of the supporting guidance (emphasis added):

“It is recognised that social media is likely to form part of veterinary surgeons’ everyday lives and they are free to take advantage of the personal and professional benefits that social media can offer. **Social media can for example be a valuable communication tool and can be used to establish professional links and networks, to engage in wider discussions relating to veterinary practice, and to facilitate the public’s access to information about animal health and welfare.** However, the use of social media is not without risk and veterinary surgeons should be mindful of the consequences that may arise from its misuse.”

Additional case study

Vet-client

4. Paul and Rachel, two senior veterinary surgeons at a rural veterinary practice, were reviewing appointment figures one day when Rachel observed there had been a noticeable increase in the number of ticks they are seeing on patients and the number of tick removal appointments booked in.
5. Rachel, who was keen for the practice to engage with clients more via social media, suggested the practice launch a social media campaign the next month, during which they would try to educate their clients on the importance of checking their animals for ticks and the use of tick prevention products. Paul and Rachel agreed that this advice would really benefit the practice’s mixed client base (small animal, farm and equine).
6. The next month the practice published a series of advisory notes and guidance on how to check for ticks on and what products helped to prevent them. The practice received hundreds of hits on their Facebook and Instagram pages during the campaign and also received a large number of thankful comments. A number of clients also contacted the practice during the campaign with photographs of suspected ticks on their own animals and were able to arrange appointments for their animals to be treated.
7. Advice – As set out in [Chapter 28](#) of the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct, the RCVS recognises social media is likely to form part of veterinary professional’s everyday life and they are free to take advantage of the personal and professional benefits that social media can offer. The RCVS understands social media can be a valuable communication tool, used to establish professional links and networks, to engage in wider discussions relating to veterinary practice, and to facilitate the public’s access to information about animal health and welfare. The RCVS does however remind veterinary professionals

that the use of social media is not without risk and they should be mindful of the consequences that may arise from its misuse.

Decision required

8. The Committee are asked to consider and approve the content of the additional case study on the use of social media.