

# RCVS review of Year-One Competences for veterinary surgeons

September 2015

We are consulting on a new set of Year-One Competences – the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that we believe a veterinary surgeon should possess on the completion of the Professional Development Phase. We would welcome your feedback and suggestions on the proposed competences and associated guidance via our online consultation at [www.rcvs.org.uk/consultations](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/consultations) by **5pm on 27 October 2015**.

**Section A: General professional skills and attributes expected of veterinary surgeons on completion of the PDP.**

PDP completion usually takes between 12-24 months and at the end veterinary surgeons *should be able to show that they can:*

DRAFT RCVS Year One Competences	DRAFT Guidance
<b>A1. Be fully conversant with, and abide by the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct and supporting guidance</b>	<p>The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct and supporting guidance <i>is available on the RCVS website at</i> <a href="http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode">www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode</a></p>
<b>A2. Understand the ethical, legal and professional responsibilities of the veterinary surgeon in relation to patients, clients, &amp; society and demonstrate an ability to apply these in practice.</b>	<p>To abide by the principles in the Code of Professional Conduct, veterinary surgeons need to be able to make professional judgements based on sound principles. They must be able to think through the dilemmas they face when presented with conflicting priorities and be prepared to justify the decisions they make.</p> <p>As well as decisions relating to individual patients, animal groups, populations of animals and clients, veterinary surgeons must take account of the possible impact of their actions beyond the immediate workplace, for example, on public health, the environment and society more generally.</p> <p>Veterinary Surgeons should understand the need for confidentiality, which extends to online activities including social media (see paragraphs 14 and 28 of the supporting guidance)</p> <p>Practical demonstration of ability in these areas could include the application of ethics to the process of supersession or referral, the handling of a complex euthanasia case or a case involving cruelty.</p>

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<b>A3. Demonstrate an understanding of the organisation, management and legislation related to a veterinary business.</b>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding one's own and the employer's responsibilities in relation to employment, financial and health and safety legislation, the position relating to non-veterinary staff, professional and public liability</li> <li>• awareness of how fees are calculated, of income, overheads and other expenditure involved in running a veterinary business and an understanding of the importance of fair and accurate invoicing</li> <li>• ability to work with various information systems in order to effectively communicate, share, collect, manipulate and analyse information</li> <li>• compliance with professional standards, protocols and policies of the business</li> <li>• knowledge of and compliance with legislation affecting veterinary businesses, such as the disposal of clinical waste and safety of medicines.</li> <li>• demonstrating an understanding of the above by clear practical application on a day to day basis in the practice.</li> </ul>
<b>A4. Promote, monitor and maintain health and safety in the veterinary setting; apply knowledge of systems of quality assurance; apply principles of risk management to their practice.</b>	<p>Veterinary surgeons need an understanding of their own and employer's responsibilities in relation to employment and health and safety legislation and the position relating to lay staff and public liability.</p> <p>This includes knowledge and application of the procedure for reporting adverse incidents and the procedures for avoiding them. It also includes applying safe practices relating to the dangers in the workplace. And taking personal responsibility for their own safety and that of those around them.</p>
<b>A5. Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned.</b>	<p>Effective communication includes effective listening and responding appropriately, both verbally and non-verbally, depending on the context.</p> <p>This should have been demonstrated to the satisfaction of senior colleagues/mentors</p>
<b>A6. Prepare accurate clinical and client records, and case reports when necessary, in a form</b>	<p>Patient records should be written in line with the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct (paragraph 13). They should be contemporaneous, clear enough that they can</p>

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<b>satisfactory to colleagues and understandable by the public.</b>	<p>be referred to by others and (if written by hand) legible, avoiding idiosyncratic abbreviations or jargon, so the case can be taken over by another professional for ongoing treatment if necessary.</p> <p>Evidence to demonstrate competence should be available.</p>
<b>A7. Work effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in the delivery of services.</b>	<p>The team may include veterinary nurses, practice managers, technicians, farriers, nutritionists, physiotherapists, veterinary specialists, meat hygiene inspectors, animal handlers and others. The veterinary surgeon should be familiar with and respect the roles played by others in the team and be prepared to provide effective leadership when appropriate.</p> <p>Please see the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct (paragraph 17). This should have been demonstrated as above.</p>
<b>A8. Understand the economic and emotional context in which the veterinary surgeon operates and respond appropriately to the influence of such pressures.</b>	<p>Veterinary surgeons need to be resilient and confident in their own professional judgements to manage the stresses and conflicting demands they may face in the workplace. They should be aware of where to seek help when there are concerns about the wellbeing of themselves and others.</p> <p>A demonstration of understanding would include the handling of cases where economic considerations influenced the outcome or process showing how the veterinary surgeon responded to the issues.</p>
<b>A9. Review and evaluate literature and presentations critically.</b>	<p>Veterinary surgeons must be able to critically assess different sorts of literature and evidence, for example, recognising commercial and other forms of bias.</p>
<b>A10. Understand and apply principles of clinical governance, and practise evidence-based veterinary medicine.</b>	<p>More guidance on clinical governance is included in the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct (see paragraph 6).</p> <p>It includes critically analysing the best available evidence for procedures used, reflecting on performance and critical events</p>

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	and learning from the outcome to make changes to one's practice.
<b>A11. Use their professional capabilities to contribute to the advancement of veterinary knowledge, in order to improve the quality of animal care and public health.</b>	The veterinary surgeon must think beyond the immediate case in hand, and take up opportunities to contribute to the processes of continuous improvement. This may include clinical audit, case discussions, research and adding to the evidence base for others to draw on in the future.
<b>A12. Cope with incomplete information, deal with contingencies, and adapt to change.</b>	Veterinary surgeons must be able to manage cases and make decisions where there is incomplete or unclear data. It is not always possible to run a full set of tests or range of diagnostic procedures which may preclude the investigation of the 'perfect' case. They need to be able to adapt their approach to fit changing circumstances, know how to cope appropriately with contingencies and the unexpected, and identify appropriate options for further diagnosis, treatment and/or referral, should a case require it.
<b>A13. Recognise personal and professional limits, and seek professional advice, assistance and support when necessary.</b>	Veterinary surgeons undertaking procedures on patients must at all stages in their careers be competent in their performance, or be under the close supervision of those so competent until such time as they can act alone.
<b>A14. 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.</b>	It is a requirement of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct that veterinary surgeons must maintain and develop their knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence.
<b>A15. Take part in self-audit and peer-group review processes in</b>	Veterinary surgeons must regularly review how they are performing in their day to day professional work, and play an

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<b>order to improve performance.</b>	active part in performance appraisal.

## Section B: Practical and clinical competences expected of a veterinary surgeon

*By the end of their PDP, veterinary surgeons should be able to demonstrate their competence, in relation to their chosen area of practice, in the following areas:*

<b>DRAFT RCVS Year One Competences</b>	<b>DRAFT Guidance</b>
<b>B1. Obtain an accurate and relevant history of the individual animal or animal group, and its/their environment.</b>	
<b>B2. Handle and restrain animal patients safely and humanely, and instruct others in helping the veterinary surgeon perform these techniques.</b>	Safety applies not only to the animal, but also to others nearby. The veterinary surgeon should be able to make a rapid risk assessment of all procedures as duties are performed, as dangers may appear in situations that initially appear to be safe. They should be prepared to take a range of measures including adaptation, seeking assistance or retreating from the task until safety measures can be put in place.
<b>B3. Perform a complete clinical examination and develop a differential diagnosis allied to an approach for making a specific diagnosis.</b>	A complete clinical examination is not always required or appropriate in practice. Whilst the veterinary surgeon should be able to perform a complete examination, they should know when it is appropriate to adapt their examination to the circumstances.
<b>B4. Develop appropriate treatment plans and administer treatment in the interests of the patients and with regard to the resources available.</b>	<p>This includes being able to tailor a treatment plan when there may be financial or other constraints, whilst prioritising the welfare of the patient(s), whether for an individual animal or the group.</p> <p>On completion of the PDP, the veterinary surgeon should be able to provide evidence that a selection of common medical conditions in the selected species have been diagnosed and appropriately and successfully treated.</p>
<b>B5. Attend all species in an emergency and perform first aid.</b>	The veterinary surgeon must be able to perform basic first aid, and know when and how to call for assistance from others if called to deal with an animal outside their immediate area of competence or where there are

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	potential risks to health and safety. This involves being able to make a rapid risk assessment of the situation and taking appropriate action to protect the health and safety of themselves and those around them.
<b>B6. Assess the physical condition, welfare and nutritional status of an animal or group of animals and advise the client on principles of husbandry and feeding.</b>	This applies to commonly presented cases and would not be expected to include advanced advice for complex cases.
<b>B7. Collect, preserve and transport samples, select or perform appropriate diagnostic tests, interpret test results and understand their limitations, seeking assistance where appropriate.</b>	Tests to be undertaken include sampling in cases of infectious or contagious disease as well as appropriate investigative sampling from major body systems.
<b>B8. Communicate clearly and collaborate with referral and diagnostic services, including providing an appropriate history</b>	
<b>B9. Understand the contribution that imaging and other diagnostic techniques can make in achieving a diagnosis. Use basic imaging equipment and carry out an examination effectively as</b>	This competence includes taking images of diagnostically-useful quality, as well as the safe use of the equipment (eg ionising radiation regulations) in accordance with best practice ('ALARA' principle – as low as reasonably achievable). 'Basic' equipment might include, for example, x-ray, ultrasound and endoscopes, but NOT MRI or CT scanners.



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<b>appropriate to the case, in accordance with good health and safety practice and current regulations.</b>	On completion of the PDP, the veterinary surgeon should be able to interpret images encountered in the selected species correctly or identify when a specialist opinion is required,
<b>B10. Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including notifying the relevant authorities.</b>	This involves identifying the clinical signs, clinical course, transmission potential (including vectors) of pathogens associated with common zoonotic and food-borne diseases and trans-boundary animal diseases.
<b>B11. Apply the RCVS Principles of Certification.</b>	The <u>Principles of Certification</u> are described in the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct, available on the RCVS website (paragraph 21). Veterinary surgeons must be familiar with the Principles and follow the RCVS supporting guidance.
<b>B12. Access the appropriate sources of data on licensed medicines.</b>	
<b>B13. Prescribe and dispense medicines correctly and responsibly in accordance with legislation and latest guidance and ensure that medicines and waste are safely stored and/or disposed of.</b>	Veterinary surgeons must understand the requirements of the Cascade in prescribing. In particular, when prescribing or using antimicrobial agents, care must be taken to minimise the risk of antimicrobial resistance. They must appreciate the importance of obtaining informed consent preferably in writing when using off licence drugs or prescribing same.
<b>B14. Report suspected adverse reactions.</b>	The veterinary surgeon should follow the Veterinary Medicines Directorate procedures for reporting
<b>B15. Apply principles of bio-security correctly, including sterilisation of equipment and disinfection of clothing.</b>	This applies to all areas of veterinary practice and all species. All veterinary surgeons must maintain high standards of biosecurity at all times in order to minimise the risk of contamination, cross-infection and accumulation of pathogens in the veterinary premises and in the field.
<b>B16. Perform aseptic surgery</b>	The veterinary surgeon must take measures to ensure

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<b>correctly.</b>	appropriate levels of asepsis during procedures.
<b>B17. Safely perform sedation, and general and regional anaesthesia; implement chemical methods of restraint.</b>	
<b>B18. Assess and manage pain.</b>	The veterinary surgeon should be able to score and evaluate pain then tailor analgesia protocols according to the species and physiological state of the patient.
<b>B19. Balancing the needs of animals and owners, recognise when euthanasia is appropriate and perform it humanely, using an appropriate method, whilst showing sensitivity to the feelings of owners and others, with due regard to the safety of those present; advise on disposal of the carcass.</b>	Veterinary surgeons should follow the supporting guidance of the Code of Professional Conduct (paragraph 8).
<b>B20. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of what can be gained from a gross post-mortem and give appropriate advice and guidance to clients. When performing a post-mortem examination, record observations, sample tissues, store and transport them.</b>	Veterinary surgeons should be aware of the limitations of such investigations, and the potential for conflict of interest where they have previously been involved with the case. It is important that they are able to differentiate between normal and abnormal, and that good quality records and samples are taken for further investigation by a pathologist if necessary.
<b>B21. Where appropriate, perform ante-mortem inspection of animals destined for the food-chain, including paying attention to welfare aspects; correctly identify conditions affecting the quality and safety of products of</b>	Not all veterinary surgeons will work in food-animal practice and further postgraduate training is needed before taking up official veterinarian duties.

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<b>animal origin, to exclude those animals whose condition means their products are unsuitable for the food-chain.</b>	
<b>B22. Advise on, and implement, preventative programmes appropriate to the species and in line with accepted animal health, welfare and public health standards.</b>	Veterinary surgeons will need to be able to assess health and welfare records (and production records where appropriate) and implement health plans. This does not only apply to production animals but is important for any kept animals, particularly those kept in groups.

## Section C: Underpinning knowledge and understanding

*Veterinary surgeons will have acquired a wide scientific background by the time they graduate. After graduation and throughout their career this underpinning knowledge must be kept up to date and applied to the area in which the individual has chosen to work. The veterinary surgeon should therefore ensure that they maintain their knowledge and understanding of the following:*

1. Understanding of and competence in, the logical approaches to both scientific and clinical reasoning, the distinction between the two, and the strengths and limitations of each.
2. Research methods and the contribution of basic and applied research to veterinary science.
3. The structure, function and behaviour of animals and their physiological and welfare needs, including healthy domestic animals, captive wildlife and laboratory-housed animals.
4. A knowledge of the businesses related to animal breeding, production and keeping.
5. The aetiology, pathogenesis, clinical signs, diagnosis and treatment of the common diseases and disorders that occur in the common domestic species in the UK.
6. Awareness of other diseases of international importance that pose a risk to national and international biosecurity.
7. Legislation relating to animal care and welfare, animal movement, and notifiable and reportable diseases.
8. Medicines legislation and guidelines on responsible use of medicines, including responsible use of antimicrobials and anthelmintics.
9. The principles of disease prevention and the promotion of health and welfare.
10. Veterinary public health issues, including epidemiology, trans-boundary epizootic diseases, zoonotic and food-borne diseases, emerging and re-emerging diseases, food hygiene and technology.
11. Principles of effective interpersonal interaction, including communication, leadership, management and team working.
12. The ethical framework within which veterinary surgeons should work, including important ethical theories that inform decision-making in professional and animal welfare-related ethics