Entrustable Professional Activities for the RCVS Veterinary Graduate Development Programme
This document describes the Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) relevant to new veterinary graduates (or those returning to veterinary practice/work) enrolling in the RCVS Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP).

The VetGDP is a structured programme to support new or returning vets in the workplace. Each vet enrolled onto the VetGDP will receive support from a trained VetGDP Adviser within their workplace, who will help guide their professional development through regular discussion, observation and feedback. Please refer to the VetGDP Guidance document at www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/vetgdp-programme-guidance-2021/.

EPAs provide a framework for the VetGDP, as they describe areas of work and / or tasks carried out by vets. Different veterinary roles and workplaces may involve different EPAs.

To ensure the VetGDP is targeted and relevant to each individual vet enrolled in the programme, the first stage is for them to identify with their VetGDP Adviser which EPAs within this bank are relevant to their own role. If there are any areas of their role not covered by the EPAs in this document, then further bespoke EPAs may be added.

Once the EPAs relevant to the vet’s role have been agreed, these form the framework for their e-portfolio, where their development in each area of their work / role can be recorded and progression reflected upon. Although many of the EPAs in this document will be relevant to the majority of vets enrolling in the programme, it is unlikely that all will be relevant to each individual.

Guidance on how to identify and use EPAs included in the VetGDP Adviser e-learning programme.

The EPAs in this document have been informed by the work of Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, Competency Based Veterinary Education working group, who created specific EPAs to complement their work on developing a modern competency framework for veterinary education and clinical assessment.
Preface

EPAs describe performance in a holistic sense, i.e. the everyday work activities of a vet in terms of ‘real’ situations involving dealing with clients, across a range of unique clinical contexts and scenarios. An EPA focuses on the whole activity as it is carried out in the workplace, rather than on the deconstructed individual competences that are done during the process.

The EPAs are deliberately high level and flexible so that they can be equally relevant to the activities as they occur in different contexts and workplaces. Although EPAs will focus on one (broad) area of work, they are integrative and general professional skills such as communication, professionalism, organisation etc. will apply within each, and across multiple, EPAs. EPAs capture the interactive nature of veterinary work, not only with the public but with the whole veterinary team.

This document describes the bank of EPAs developed by the RCVS for the VetGDP programme.

For each activity (EPA), the following information is provided:

- a description and commentary of what the activity involves and encompasses
- relevant variables associated with the overarching activity which may involve different knowledge and skill, for example different species, case complexity, environment
- details of the main areas of competence that are involved in the activity, from the RCVS conceptual model for day one competences (Fig 2). N.B. only the main domains are referenced for each EPA in order to highlight the primary focus of the EPA, however any of the domains from the model can apply to any case / scenario

If there are any areas of a graduate’s role not covered by an existing EPA, there is a toolkit at the end of the document for creating additional EPAs.

The aim is for graduates, upon completion of the VetGDP, to have reached the point across all EPAs relevant to their role by which they no longer feel they would benefit from additional support, and that their VetGDP Adviser shares this view.
Index of EPAs

1. Gather a history, perform an examination and create a prioritised differential diagnosis list 5
2. Develop a diagnostic plan and interpret test results 6
3. Develop and implement a management / treatment plan 7
4. Recognise a patient requiring urgent or emergent care and initiate evaluation and management 8
5. Formulate relevant questions and retrieve evidence to advance care 9
6. Perform a common surgical procedure on a patient, including pre-operative and post-operative management 10
7. Perform general anaesthesia and recovery of patients including monitoring and support 11
8. Formulate recommendations for preventive healthcare 12
9. Perform a post mortem examination, including macroscopic description and appropriate sampling 13
10. Conduct a basic epidemiological investigation of a disease outbreak in a group of animals 14
11. Perform a welfare assessment of an individual animal or group of animals, and take appropriate action if welfare is found to be compromised 15
12. Carry out a veterinary risk assessment 16
13. Conduct an audit of an establishment as part of regulatory activities to safeguard animal health and welfare and/or public health 17
14. Conduct a document and physical checks on live animals imported to the UK through a border inspection post 18
15. Perform dental and oral examinations and procedures relevant to your role, including routine checks and advice, identifying common dental and oral conditions with thorough dental charting and intraoral radiographs and devising an appropriate treatment plan. 19

Toolkit for Alternative/Additional EPAs 20
EPA 1
Gather a history, perform an examination and create a prioritised differential diagnosis list

Description
Gather a history and perform an examination on an individual animal or herd/flock and assimilate the information collected to derive a prioritised differential diagnosis list.

The history and examination should be tailored to the clinical situation and specific patient encounter. This data gathering serves as a foundation for evaluation and management. Expectations include integration of the scientific foundations of veterinary medicines with clinical reasoning skills to guide information gathering.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have demonstrated expertise and proficiency in history taking and examination across a wide range of contexts, resulting in accurate differential diagnoses.

The practitioner is able to carry out this activity out to a consistently high standard, across the full range of clinical contexts relevant to their role including:

(i) across different animal species,
(ii) clinical presentations,
(iii) acute / chronic conditions,
(iv) case complexities,
(v) different degrees of animal and / or client support and co-operation

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal
- Animal population care & management

Reflective Relationships
- Communication

Professional Commitment
- Business / finance
**EPA 2**

**Develop a diagnostic plan and interpret test results**

**Description**
Integrate individual animal or herd data to create a prioritised differential diagnostic list and determine a diagnostic plan, obtain informed consent for diagnostic testing and interpret results.

Developing a diagnostic action plan is an iterative, reflective process that requires continuous adaptation to avoid common errors of clinical reasoning.

**Aiming for... (Success Criteria)**
To have demonstrated the identification of relevant and accurate differential diagnoses to a consistently high standard, across the full range of clinical contexts relevant to their role including:

(i) across different animal species,
(ii) clinical presentations,
(iii) acute / chronic conditions,
(iv) case complexities / data ambiguity,
(v) different degrees of client support and co-operation,
(vi) different sized populations

**Required Competences**
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/ area of practice are as follows;

**Veterinary Capability**
- Clinical reasoning

**Reflective Relationships**
- Communication
- Collaboration

**Professional Commitment**
- Self-awareness and self-reflection
The RCVS Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP)

EPA 3
Develop and implement a management / treatment plan

Description
Utilise working diagnosis and client considerations to formulate a management/treatment plan for an individual animal or herd (including referral or euthanasia when warranted), implement the plan and adjust based on response.

Developing a management/treatment plan is an iterative, reflective process that requires synthesis of medical, ethical, legal and economic factors, as well as knowledge of the strengths and limitations of the client, veterinarian, team and facilities. Implementation of the plan includes performance of veterinary procedures (including surgery), team collaboration, clear communication and client education.

Aiming for… (Success Criteria)
To have demonstrated the development and implementation of effective management / treatment plans which have resulted in optimal outcomes, across a range of patient and case types relevant to their role, and the adaptation of plans when appropriate.

It is expected that the graduate will be independently developing, revisiting and adapting management plans appropriately for;
(i) different species,
(ii) clinical conditions,
(iii) case complexities
(iv) social / economic factors within their role
(v) different sized populations

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/ area of practice are as follows:

Veterinary Capability
• Clinical reasoning
• Individual animal
• Animal population care & management

Reflective Relationships
• Communication
• Collaboration

Professional Commitment
• Business / finance

Personal Leadership
• Professionalism
EPA 4
Recognise a patient requiring urgent or emergent care and initiate evaluation and management

Description
Recognise a patient/situation that requires urgent or emergent care and triage based on severity and the facilities/equipment available. Initial emergency management should include procedures that support vital functions.

This activity requires both application of knowledge and psychomotor skills as well as the ability to function as part of a team, to know one's limitations, and to seek help when necessary. Initial evaluation of the individual should include level of consciousness and adequacy of ventilation and circulation.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To demonstrate the calm and effective evaluation and management of a wide range of emergency situations, providing first aid supporting vital functions in a timely manner, identifying your personal limits and transferring to a professional colleague in an appropriate manner.

Case types should include a wide range of clinical presentations and clinical and environmental contexts relevant to their role.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows:

Veterinary Capability
• Clinical reasoning
• Individual animal

Reflective Relationships
• Collaboration

Personal Leadership
• Professionalism
EPA 5
Formulate relevant questions and retrieve evidence to advance care

Description
Identify questions and information resources. Critique the quality of the evidence and assess the applicability to the clinical situation.

The use of evidence-based practices and self-awareness are essential to identify and remedy/correct knowledge gaps. Life-long learning is an essential professional practice to promote quality patient, client and population care.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have demonstrated the ability to make evidence-based decisions across a wide range of clinical contexts, relevant to their role.

To have a proven commitment to a continuing process of reflection, analysis and improvement in professional practice for the benefit of the animal/patient and the client/owner.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning

Personal Leadership
- Professionalism
EPA 6
Perform a common surgical procedure on a patient, including pre-operative and post-operative management

Description
Perform surgical procedures relevant to your role, including discussion with the client, pre-operative preparation of the patient and the surgeon and post-operative care.

There should be attention to patient preparation to minimise contamination, knowledge of the relevant procedures and regional anatomy, manual dexterity to competently and efficiently complete the procedures, reflection and response to changes, and post-operative care.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have demonstrated expertise and proficiency in performing a range of surgical procedures across a range of different (i) animal species, (ii) clinical presentations, (iii) acute / chronic conditions, (iv) case complexities, relevant to their role. Including pre and post-operative care, whilst communicating effectively with colleagues/instructing others. To be able to react professionally to patient changes and demonstrate an understanding of own abilities.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal

Reflective Relationships
- Communication
- Collaboration
EPA 7
Perform general anaesthesia and recovery of patients including monitoring and support

Description
Induce, maintain and recover anaesthetic patients (American Society of Anaesthesiologists 1, 2 or 3), including monitoring vital functions and providing supportive care. Evaluate patient status, and determine a suitable anaesthetic and analgesic protocol. Apply knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pharmacology and the procedure as well as psychomotor skills to execute the protocol safely, recognise and manage complications.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To demonstrate the ability to safely perform sedation; general and regional anaesthesia; and also implement chemical methods of restraint to a consistently high standard across different;

(i) animal species,
(ii) clinical presentations,
(iii) acute / chronic conditions,
(iv) case complexities.

To deal proficiently with contingencies and complications whilst working effectively as part of a professional team.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal
- Animal population care & management

Reflective Relationships
- Communication
- Collaboration

Professional Commitment
- Business / finance
EPA 8
Formulate recommendations for preventive healthcare

Description
Create a preventive healthcare plan, considering the animal/herd and industry needs, the client’s capabilities, and the care setting, to optimise health and welfare, and to prevent spread of disease.

Prevention of disease is a core veterinary activity that protects health and welfare of animals; public health and provides quality assurance for industry. Educating and building relationships with clients, including assisting with productivity and communicating best practice, is an important part of this activity.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have demonstrated expertise and proficiency in creating an appropriate preventative healthcare plan in the interests of the patient and with regard to the resources available and appropriate public health and environmental considerations.

The practitioner is able to carry out this activity to a consistently high standard, across the full range of clinical contexts relevant to their role including across different:

(i) animal species,
(ii) clinical conditions,
(iii) environmental contexts,
(iv) different degrees of client support and co-operation.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal
- Animal population care & management

Reflective Relationships
- Communication
**EPA 9**

**Perform a post mortem examination, including macroscopic description and appropriate sampling**

**Description**

Perform a post mortem examination relevant to your role, including accurate recording of macroscopic description and sampling for further investigations including histopathology and microbiology.

Demonstrate knowledge of the purpose of the post mortem examination and ensure adequate health and safety precautions are observed. Ensure an adequate history is obtained and considered prior to starting the post mortem, and that attention is given to consistent methods for examination of the carcass using knowledge of anatomy.

Recording of relevant macroscopic findings and appropriate sampling and preservation of tissues and fluids to allow confirmation of diagnosis if required.

Demonstrate required knowledge of the cost benefit of further diagnostic tests. Demonstrate knowledge of common post mortem artefacts, pathological changes and actions to be taken if notifiable or zoonotic disease suspected.

**Aiming for... (Success Criteria)**

To have demonstrated expertise and proficiency in performing a post mortem examination across a range of different;

(i) animal species,
(ii) clinical presentations,
(iii) required outcomes from the examination (e.g. interest v medico-legal)

relevant to their role. Including attention to health and safety of self and others, effective communication to colleagues, clients and competent authority. To be able to demonstrate an understanding of own abilities and knowledge of when to request specialist advice.

**Required Competences**

There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

**Veterinary Capability**
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal
- One health / Public health
- Animal population care & management

**Reflective Relationships**
- Communication
- Collaboration

---

**Diagram**

[Diagram showing the relationship between different competencies related to EPA 9]
EPA 10
Conduct a basic epidemiological investigation of a disease outbreak in a group of animals

Description

Investigation of a disease outbreak by gathering relevant epidemiological data to identify the most likely cause of the outbreak and enable contact tracings to limit transmission of disease.

The investigation should be structured and systematic, following epidemiological first principles. Data gathering serves as a foundation for taking further action to limit transmission of disease.

Awareness of public health and environmental consideration are demonstrated when investigating an outbreak.

Aiming for… (Success Criteria)

To have demonstrated sound investigative and analytical skills in gathering relevant epidemiological information, resulting in control of the outbreak to limit transmission and prevent similar outbreaks from occurring in the future, across different:

(i) animal species,
(ii) diseases
(iii) environmental contexts
(iv) degrees of animal and / or client support and cooperation

Required Competences

There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal
- One health/public health
- Animal population care & management

Reflective Relationships
- Communication
- Collaboration

Personal Leadership
- Adaptability
- Professionalism
Perform a welfare assessment of an individual animal or group of animals, and take appropriate action if welfare is found to be compromised

**Description**
Conduct a clinical examination / inspection of an individual or group of animals, including observation of appearance, behaviour, physiological functions and environment, to assess whether its / their welfare needs are being met.

If animal welfare is found to be compromised, take action, including euthanasia where appropriate.

Assessment of animal welfare is fundamental to veterinary medicine and requires knowledge of animal behaviour and good observational skills. This activity requires assessment against the five freedoms as well as the key welfare indicators above, with appreciation of the legislation governing animal welfare.

**Aiming for... (Success Criteria)**
To have demonstrated effective welfare assessments and provided appropriate advice on improving welfare conditions, for individual animals and groups of animals, including different;

(i) Animal species
(ii) Environmental conditions
(iii) Clinical presentations
(iv) Degrees of animal and / or client support and co-operation

To have recognised where euthanasia is appropriate.

**Required Competences**
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this area are as follows;

**Veterinary Capability**
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal
- One health/public health
- Animal population care & management

**Reflective Relationships**
- Communication
- Collaboration

**Personal Leadership**
- Adaptability
- Professionalism
**EPA 12**

**Carry out a veterinary risk assessment**

**Description**

Carry out a qualitative veterinary risk assessment (VRA) answering a specific risk question or questions to underpin veterinary decision making.

A VRA is veterinary advice, or the evidence supporting a veterinary decision, presented in a standardised format. VRAs document the thought processes leading to a conclusion so that the reasons behind veterinary advice or decisions are appropriately explained, contextualised, documented, and auditable.

Good analytical skills and written communication skills are required to draft high quality VRAs that fully address the risk question and consider uncertainty where the evidence is unclear.

**Aiming for... (Success Criteria)**

To have carried out and effectively reported high quality and accurate VRAs across a range of:

(i) Animal species  
(ii) Environments  
(iii) Clinical presentations

**Required Competences**

There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

- **Veterinary Capability**
  - Clinical reasoning  
  - One health / public health

- **Reflective Relationships**
  - Communication and collaboration

- **Personal Leadership**
  - Adaptability  
  - Self awareness and reflection  
  - Professionalism
EPA 13
Conduct an audit of an establishment as part of regulatory activities to safeguard animal health and welfare and/or public health

Description
Inspect establishments to audit their procedures and records in order to assess compliance with animal health and welfare and/or public health legislation.

Inspection and audit should be thorough and systematic, with findings documented in a structured and consistent way. This requires good observational skills and a working knowledge of relevant legislation and best practice. Assessing compliance with the relevant legislation is vital to safeguarding animal health and welfare, and public health.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have effectively carried out audits and reported findings across a range of environments, different animal species and different levels of client cooperation.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- One health/public health

Reflective Relationships
- Communication and collaboration

Personal Leadership
- Adaptability
- Professionalism
EPA 14
Conduct a document and physical checks on live animals imported to the UK through a border inspection post

Description
Conduct checks on live animals entering a border inspection post to comply with the relevant legislation.

Checks on live animals entering the UK are essential for safeguarding animal health and welfare, and preventing entry of exotic notifiable disease and protecting free trade. Checks must be carried out in a systematic and consistent way to comply with animal health legislation.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have effectively carried out checks on live animals entering a border inspection post, in a systematic way and showing regard for animal welfare, including different animal species.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Individual animal
- Animal population care & management
- One health / public health

Reflective Relationships
- Communication and collaboration

Personal Leadership
- Adaptability
- Professionalism
EPA 15
Perform dental and oral examinations and procedures relevant to your role, including routine checks and advice, identifying common dental and oral conditions with thorough dental charting and intraoral radiographs and devising an appropriate treatment plan.

Description
Perform dental and oral examinations and procedures relevant to your role, including routine checks and advice, identifying common dental and oral conditions with thorough dental charting and intraoral radiographs and devising an appropriate treatment plan.

There should be knowledge of oral and dental anatomy, common disorders, recognition of clinical signs of common dental disease and treatment options as well as preventative treatment. There should be a logical and systematic approach to dental examination with the support of radiography.

Aiming for... (Success Criteria)
To have demonstrated expertise and proficiency in identifying oral and dental disease and treatment options and performing a range of dental procedures across a range of different (i) animal species, (ii) clinical presentations, (iii) acute / chronic conditions, (iv) case complexities, relevant to their role. Including a logical and systematic approach to dental examination including imaging and knowledge of preventative treatments.

Required Competences
There is the potential for all domains within the 2020 RCVS Day One Competences to be relevant to this EPA, however the key areas involved in performance of this activity/area of practice are as follows;

Veterinary Capability
- Clinical reasoning
- Individual animal

Reflective Relationships
- Communication
- Collaboration
### Toolkit for Alternative/Additional EPAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is an EPA?</th>
<th>EPAs are meaningful descriptors of the work of an everyday vet integrated to ‘real’ case situations involving dealing with clients, a range of unique clinical contexts and practice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it already included in the EPA bank?</td>
<td>The EPAs in the bank are deliberately high level so that they can be adapted for all species and scenarios. You may find that there is already an EPA which can be adapted for your needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a brief description of the work.</td>
<td>Use the existing EPAs as examples. It should cover one activity but will cover many skills, both clinical and non-clinical and ideally be adaptable for a range of species and contexts. For example, the act of suturing a wound is not an EPA in itself, the EPA, involving suturing, would cover the entire experience with the animal and owners. EPAs should be written by the VetGDP Adviser and graduate together and further areas which need to be covered by the EPA bank may become apparent when choosing the most appropriate EPAs for the individual portfolios. They can also be added further into the programme, if the VetGDP Adviser and graduate feel that there is an area missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a commentary</td>
<td>The commentary gives more detail of the activity, with key points to cover. You may find it useful to look at the RCVS Day 1 competences: <a href="https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/day-one-competences/">https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/day-one-competences/</a> to ensure that you include the relevant domains and see how the EPA fits with the wider picture. For both the description and commentary remember that it needs to be an observable activity, and therefore it is better to use words such as “demonstrate” that is easily observable rather than “understand”, which would be more difficult. Your commentary may explain how it differs from another EPA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give your EPA a title</td>
<td>This will be easier to write after you have written the description and commentary, it may be similar to the description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send it to the RCVS</td>
<td>Send your draft EPA to the RCVS: <a href="mailto:VetGDP@rcvs.org.uk">VetGDP@rcvs.org.uk</a>. Don’t worry about the formatting, it can be written straight into the email. We need the title, description, commentary and a short note on why it differs from the existing EPAs. We will consult with you if major changes are needed and/or it may be published with small changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>