



RCVS NEWS / DECEMBER 2018

*Text-only version of
RCVS News email*

Piecing together #TheBigPicture?

A big thank you to the 1,000+ people who have so far completed our Graduate Outcomes consultation and contributed their views on the future of veterinary education and how we can help new graduates better transition from university to practice life.

The consultation is being undertaken by Work Psychology Group and, according to their interim report, there has been an encouraging response so far from younger members of the profession: 34% of respondents were aged between 26 and 35, 22% between 36 and 45 and 12% were under 26.

Twice as many women (68%) than men have responded so far, and, as expected, the majority (60%) of respondents to date are practising veterinary surgeons. There has also been vital input from vet nurses (5%) and vet students (5%), ensuring that we can incorporate the views of all members of the veterinary team, including both the vets of the future and those who will be working closely with them.

With the consultation looking at areas such as the skills and experience expected of veterinary surgeons upon graduation, how to improve the quality and value of extra-mural studies, how the Professional Development Phase can better prepare graduates for life in practice, and how the veterinary degree can ensure there is an appropriate balance of general practice and specialist experience, it is very important that we hear from as many veterinary professionals and other members of the veterinary team as possible.

If you're not already part of #TheBigPicture but would like to be, please check your emails for a message from Work Psychology Group, or visit our #GradOutcomes page, where you can also find details of our weekly prize draw!

RCVS Honours and Awards 2019: A chance to recognise outstanding achievement

Nominations are now open for the 2019 RCVS Honours & Awards, in which we encourage members of the veterinary professions to think about the individuals who they know that far exceed expectation and ought to be recognised for it.

Our Honours & Awards recognise and celebrate a breadth of achievement across the veterinary world and encompass, for example, veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and laypeople who have contributed to the health and welfare of animals, to the veterinary profession as a whole or public health.

If you know someone whose achievements are outstanding and who has worked above-and-beyond the call of duty in the fields of veterinary medicine or science, or related areas, you can use the RCVS Honours & Awards to try and ensure that they are considered for wider recognition.

The deadline for putting forward your nomination is Friday 18 January 2019. Successful nominees for RCVS Honours & Awards will be invited to attend Royal College Day - our Annual General Meeting and awards ceremony - on Friday 12 July 2019.

Please download the guidance and information about RCVS Honours & Awards from the 'Related documents' section at the bottom of this page. To put forward a nomination for a particular award please click on the links for each award on the right hand side of this page.

Below is a video featuring footage of and interviews with some of the 2018 Honours & Awards recipients at this year's Royal College Day.

The Honours

For more information about each of the RCVS Honours & Awards and to make a nomination for a specific award please click on the links below:

The Queen's Medal

The Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award
The RCVS International Award
The RCVS Impact Award
The RCVS Inspiration Award
Honorary Associateship

How to nominate

Nominations can be made by via our online-only webform or by downloading and emailing/posting an application form.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about RCVS Honours & Awards, please contact Peris Dean, RCVS Executive Assistant, on p.dean@rcvs.org.uk or 0207 202 0761.

Call for candidates for RCVS and VN Councils 2019 elections

Nominations are now being invited from all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who are eligible to stand for RCVS Council and Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council, respectively, for next year's elections.

Next year's elections for RCVS Council will be the first that are fully affected by the recent changes to our governance structure which received ministerial approval in May this year, meaning that only three seats will be available as opposed to the previous six.

The changes have also reduced the size of Council and changed its composition. It currently comprises 36 members: six appointed lay members, two appointed veterinary nurse members, seven members appointed by each of the RCVS-accredited veterinary schools and 21 by direct election.

Over the next three years the number of elected Council members will be further reduced to 13. Furthermore, Council members will now only be able to serve a total of three consecutive four-year terms and, once these have ended, will have to wait at least two years before standing for Council again.

Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council also recently agreed changes to its governance and composition, reducing the number of elected members from eight to six and introducing new appointed veterinary nurse, veterinary surgeon and lay members. Another key change is that the term of office for VN Council members has been reduced from four to three years and the same three-term limit also applies. These changes also meant that no VN Council election was held in 2018.

The nomination period for both RCVS and VN Councils runs until 5pm on Thursday 31 January 2019. In order to stand, candidates for either Council will need to complete a nomination form, submit a short biography and personal statement and supply a high resolution digital photo.

Each candidate will also need to have two nominators. For RCVS Council candidates, these should be veterinary surgeons who are on the RCVS Register but are not current RCVS Council members; for VN Council candidates, the nominators must be registered veterinary nurses who are not currently on VN Council.

Eleanor Ferguson, our Registrar and the Returning Officer for both the elections, said: "As always, we would encourage those who are interested in playing a part in some of the current debates around veterinary regulation – whether that's in regards to telemedicine, the impact of Brexit, the future of veterinary education or professional standards – to consider putting themselves forward for their relevant Council.

"There are many important issues coming up to be debated and decided upon and we appreciate knowledge, expertise, constructive criticism and insight from a broad range of people from all parts of the veterinary profession.

"One thing to note is that, with the changes to the governance structure, Council will be meeting generally between six and eight times a year and VN Council will be meeting four times a year, so there will be a small increase in the number of days we expect candidates to spend on Council or VN Council business."

The election period will start around mid-March and run until 5pm on Friday 26 April 2019. Ballot papers and emails with a secure link to a unique voting website will be sent to all registered veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who are eligible to vote.

Furthermore, prior to the launch of the election period, we will also be sourcing questions from members of the professions to put to the candidates, who will be asked to produce a video giving their responses to two questions of their choice. These videos will be published at the start of the election.

Nomination forms, guidance notes and frequently asked questions for prospective RCVS Council candidates can be found on the dedicated RCVS Council election page. The equivalent documents for VN Council candidates are available on the dedicated VN Council election page.

Prospective candidates for either Councils are welcome to contact our Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson (e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk) and our CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or RCVS

Council and VN Council members.

RCVS Council will also be holding a public meeting on Thursday 17 January 2019, prior to the closure date for RCVS Council candidate nominations. Prospective candidates are welcome to attend the Council meeting as an observer. Please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, on d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk if you wish to attend.

ViVet launches new Innovation Workshop Series

A new series of Innovation Workshops is being launched by ViVet – the veterinary innovation network run by the RCVS – to help provide veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses with the tools needed to turn ideas into innovations.

To be held in Cambridge in January and February next year, the innovation and creativity training programme will cover a broad spectrum of innovation methodologies across two one-day courses. Delegates can choose to attend one or both courses depending upon their experience and stage in the innovation process.

The courses will be led across two days by veterinary surgeons Guen Bradbury and Greg Dickens (pictured), both experts in supporting innovation.

The first course, on 16 January 2019, will introduce tools and techniques to help individuals and organisations think creatively and guide participants through the innovation process from identifying need, selecting an idea and developing it into a concrete concept.

The second course, on 20 February 2019, will cover how to test ideas and refine solutions, how to develop business models, and how to win support and funding to maximise the chances of the innovation's success.

Anthony Roberts, Director of Leadership and Innovation at the RCVS says: "Our ideation workshop is not just for entrepreneurs or innovators, it's to give vets and vet nurses the tools and techniques to create new ideas or nurture existing ones. These could be ideas for starting a new business, a new product, new content, or even just inventive ways of talking about or marketing an existing product or service."

Each full-day course costs £100, including course materials, certificate of completion, lunch, and all refreshments. Booking the full workshop, ie both courses, will attract a 10% discount.

To read further information about the course – including the programme, venue, timings and directions – and to register, please visit the event's dedicated Eventbrite page.

ViVet: inspired by #VetFutures

Fellows inspire next generation of UK veterinary surgeons

Throughout this autumn RCVS Fellows have been speaking to students at various UK veterinary schools about the new Fellowship and to give presentations on Fellow's diverse research and careers.

In September this year RCVS Council agreed a new strategy for the Fellowship which includes promoting scientific excellence across the whole veterinary profession and furthering professional skills and practice, invigorating creativity and promoting the public awareness of veterinary science. This strategic vision was announced at the Fellowship Day at the Royal Institution by Professor Nick Bacon, Chair of the Fellowship Board, on Friday 5 October.

To this end, in order to inspire the next generation of UK veterinary surgeons, members of the Fellowship Board and other RCVS Fellows have been holding a series of talks at UK vet schools to promote the Fellowship.

The events kicked off at the University of Surrey on 9 October with Nick Bacon giving an opening introduction to the Fellowship and then inviting other three other Fellows – Myra Forster-van Hyfte, David Harwood and Clare Rusbridge – to talk about their journey to the Fellowship and their work.

The University of Nottingham vet school was the next destination on 23 October with an audience of 28 students and five speakers from the Fellowship – Professor Sarah Freeman, Dr David Godfrey, Dr Andrew Knight, Professor Tim Morris and Dr Daniel Parker.

The next day was the turn of the University of Cambridge's vet school in which 75 students across all years attended the talk which took place at the Queen's Lecture Theatre at Emmanuel College. Dr Jane Dobson FRCVS from Cambridge Vet School gave the introductory talk followed by Fellows Dr John Houlton, Dr Andrew Knight, Professor Celia Marr (pictured above right) and Dr Polly Taylor.

The final talk of the tour took place at Liverpool Vet School on 30th October with 25 fourth and final year students in attendance to hear the introduction from the university's Professor Jo Dukes McEwan. There were then talks from Professor Eithne Comerford, Dr Dai Grove-White and Dr Mandy Peffers on a variety of topics including equine osteoarthritis, dogs' knees and veterinary careers.

Professor Nick Bacon said: "One of the key strategic aims of the Fellowship is promoting best practice and inspiring others and we thought that there was no better place to start than by talking to veterinary students about the newly reconstituted Fellowship, how it works and how veterinary surgeons can join.

"We were delighted to have so many students in attendance at these events and they seemed to react very positively and gain a lot from being able to hear from their more experienced peers in an informal setting. We certainly hope they came away thinking that the Fellowship was not something that was remote and only relevant for members of the profession towards the end of their career, but is something that they could aspire and work towards upon graduating and entering the profession – whether that's in clinical practice, academia, research or otherwise."

The Fellows on Tour will continue through to next year with other vet school visits planned.

For more information about the Fellowship, its strategic vision and the three new routes to entry, please visit our dedicated Fellowship webpage.

RCVS seeks members of the profession for Stat Exam roles

We are currently looking for a lead examiner and a further 15 examiners for our Statutory Examination for Membership, which has recently undergone a change in format.

The Stat Exam, as it is better known, must be undertaken and passed by all individuals who have graduated outside of the UK whose veterinary qualification is not recognised by us, in order for them to join the Register and practise as a veterinary surgeon in the UK.

The exam was recently reviewed by the RCVS Statutory Examination Board, in consultation with veterinary and medical educationalists.

As a result of this review, the written examination now consists of two parts: a clinical multiple choice question paper and an open book examination on our Code of Professional Conduct; while the practical examination will take the format of a multi-dimensional Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

To accompany the new method of examination, we are now seeking a new body of examiners to observe and assess the performance of Stat Exam candidates.

The Lead Examiner role would be responsible for reviewing and approving the written and OSCE exams, ensuring that they remain valid and represent the standards required of vets practising in the UK, as well as supporting the ongoing development of Stat Exam content in conjunction with members of the Statutory Examination Board.

In addition, up to 15 examiners are being sought who would represent the following areas of veterinary practice: companion animals; equids; production animals; and veterinary public health. Although their primary role would be assessing candidates, there may be some scope for examiners to contribute more widely to the standards of the Stat Exam through the Statutory Examination Board.

Dr Linda Prescott-Clements, our Director of Education, said: "For these roles we are seeking experienced veterinary surgeons with knowledge of the professional standards expected by the RCVS upon graduation and a familiarity with assessing the performance of exam candidates against pre-determined criteria.

"In the case of the Lead Examiner, we would be looking for additional experience in designing examinations as well as knowledge of how the exams themselves can be assessed and quality assured."

The deadline for applications to the Lead Examiner and the other 15 examiner roles is 5pm on Monday 7 January 2019.

Full details about the roles, including information about time commitment and remuneration, as well as the person specification and requirements, are available to view on the 'Work for us' section of this website.

RCVS offers reassurances in light of Isoflurane shortage

The RCVS is offering reassurances to the profession in view of the announced shortages of Isoflurane anaesthetic gas.

In light of the shortages of the product, as recently reported by the manufacturer Zoetis, we would like to reassure members of the profession that any problems that may arise from a shortage of the anaesthetic agent are very unlikely to be considered as a professional conduct issue.

This is provided that, as would always be the case, any clinical decisions made are justifiable, that detailed contemporaneous notes are made, that the prescribing cascade is followed where authorised veterinary medicines are not available and that, where unauthorised medicines are being used, informed consent is gained from the animal's owner with a full explanation of the risks, potential side-effects and costs, for example, being given before the medicine is administered.

Amanda Boag, RCVS President, commented: "We understand that this is a concerning situation for many in the profession who are worried about the impact of the shortage of Isoflurane on both elective and emergency operations.

"We are also concerned to hear that some vets are worried that they may be disciplined by the RCVS for clinical decisions and outcomes that may arise from the shortage, and so we are keen to stress that we understand that members of the profession can only do their best under the circumstances presented to them and that, provided they can clinically justify the decisions they have made, keep detailed notes, gain informed consent and follow the prescribing rules, then there is very unlikely to be an issue of professional misconduct."

Whilst clinical decisions are for veterinary professionals, if veterinary surgeons have any questions about the shortage in relation to the Code of Professional Conduct and its supporting guidance, then they can contact our Standards and Advice Team on 020 7202 0789 or advice@rcvs.org.uk.

For further information about the shortage and alternative sources and products, we recommend visiting the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website.

RCVS 2018 Christmas donation announced and opening hours

RCVS President Amanda Boag has chosen the animal welfare charity The Links Group, as the sole recipient of this year's RCVS Christmas Box, a £3,000 donation to the charity of the President's choice given in lieu of sending Christmas cards to the profession.

The charity is part of The Animal Welfare Foundation, and is a multi-agency interest group that promotes the welfare and safety of vulnerable animals, children and adults to ensure they are free from violence and abuse. Research and clinical evidence suggests that there are 'links' (inter-relationships) between the abuse of children, vulnerable adults and animals.

The charity seeks to research and discover these potential links between animal abuse and domestic violence, with the aim to prevent this and protect those involved. It also strives to raise awareness of these links, to encourage agencies to work together to help prevent any cases from going undetected.

The charity has made notable progress since its inception and can list a number of achievements, including initiating the first successful RSPCA prosecution for non-accidental injury as well as the first successful Scottish SPCA prosecution for non-accidental injury. It has also ensured that pet fostering services are increasingly widespread and provided advice and training to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other employees in how to recognise abuse in animals and humans.

Dr Freda Scott-Park, Chairperson of the Links Foundation, said: "The Links Group has promoted multi-agency working for nearly 20 years; members of the veterinary team working closely with human healthcare professionals, victim support agencies and police domestic abuse leads.

"In a household torn apart by violence, vulnerable people, often women, children and the elderly, suffer daily, at risk of direct physical harm or perhaps subject to controlling or coercive control – an insidious denigrating situation that strips self-esteem from the victim and leaves them unable to seek help. With over 50% of households in the UK owning a pet, animals too are at risk of direct harm, or they may be used as a lever for the perpetrator to further control or coerce a victim. The words "I will hurt/kill the dog if you don't...." must strike dread into every veterinary heart but is the reality for many victims who rely on their pet for support and unconditional love.

"The Links Group offers practical support and advice to vets and human health professionals, through guidance and education for the veterinary profession. An online course in basic animal welfare is available for human healthcare professionals entering violent households to evaluate the wellbeing of pet animals.

"We work under the banner of One Welfare, supporting the wellbeing of both animals and vulnerable victims at risk of abuse. Our volunteers take no payment for the work that they do and therefore we are so pleased to have been nominated to receive support from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as their Christmas charity. With this support, we can continue to promote our role in helping to break the cycle of violence."

Speaking about the charity, Amanda Boag, President of the RCVS, said: "The Links Group does tremendous work supporting animal welfare along with the welfare of vulnerable adults and children. As veterinary professionals, we all recognise the importance and value of the human-animal bond, and how this bond can enrich our lives. When animals suffer abuse it can be very distressing for the veterinary professionals involved and may mean that humans are also at risk of this behaviour.

"The Links Group works tirelessly to promote better understanding of the link between animal and human abuse, throughout all of the relevant professions, and through this work, aims to reduce and prevent human and animal suffering. I therefore felt this was a truly worthy cause for our Christmas donation this year."

The President's Christmas Box donation is made every year, with previous recipients including The Horse Trust, Medical Detection Dogs, Worldwide Veterinary Service, Mind, Riding for the Disabled Association, Canine Partners, Hounds for Heroes, and Vetlife.

Christmas opening hours

Over the festive season the College will operate the following opening hours:

Friday 21 December - open until 3.30pm
Monday 24 December - closed
Tuesday 25 December - closed
Wednesday 26 December - closed
Thursday 27 December - open
Friday 28 December - open
Monday 31 December - open until 3.30pm
Tuesday 1 January 2019 - closed
Wednesday 2 January 2019 - open
Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

MMI focuses on wellbeing for webinar series

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) is focusing on how to increase wellbeing with a slew of upcoming webinars hosted by The Webinar Vet.

The first webinar takes place on Thursday 13 December at 1pm and will focus on the link between psychological wellbeing and regular outdoor exercise. The webinar will be hosted by Oli Glackin, the RCVS Leadership Initiative Manager who is also a consultant in the psychology of exercise, and Nat Scroggie MRCVS, a keen marathon runner who is known for her blog, 'This Vet Runs'. The webinar is titled, "'I know it'll be good for me tomorrow': physical activity, the elixir that's just around the corner".

The webinar will explore what is commonly known about the positive relationship between physical activity and psychological wellbeing and mental health, including details of exercise 'dose' and intensity. It will also focus on changing the way we approach physical exercise, the sorts of motivators that work for us individually, the introduction of fun and pleasure into the regime of exercise, and will seek to help participants improve their own relationship with exercise.

Nat Scroggie will also be speaking personally about her own journey with exercise and how it has had a positive impact on her wellbeing.

She said: "It's been an absolute honour to be involved in promoting well-being in the veterinary profession, and to share my own story. Exercise has been my biggest tool in managing my first few years in practice. It has been a relief from the day to day stresses, whilst also giving me a challenge and identity outside of my working life. I'm a pretty average runner, but I recently ran my first marathon, something I never ever thought I could do. It's hard to explain how much confidence those 26.2 miles have given me in my working life, even if it seems like it's nothing to do with finally nailing a bitch spay.

"Making time to do something that's great for your body, and your mind, is allowing yourself the time to prioritise you. As veterinary professionals we are brilliant at caring for our clients and patients, but it's amazing what we can achieve when we allow ourselves that same compassion."

Sign up to take part in this webinar, which can also count towards a veterinary surgeon's or veterinary nurse's continuing professional development.

In January 2019 the RCVS MMI project will be holding a series of webinars on the evening of the 'Pre-Congress Associates Day' on Friday 18 January 2019, ahead of the Webinar Vet's Virtual Congress from Saturday 19 to Sunday 20 January.

The webinar series focus on veterinary wellbeing and are as follows:

- 7pm – 7.30pm: Qualified accountant and wellbeing advisor Jo Stevens will present 'How to stay positive in a negative world'.
- 7.30pm – 8pm: Positive psychologist and professional wellbeing coach will present 'How thinking positively makes life easier'.
- 8pm – 8.30pm: Leadership coach and trainer Anne-Marie Svendsen-Aylott will talk about 'Understanding the concept of "mindset" – a key to finding a more positive outlook.'
- 8.30pm – 9pm: Dr Sara Tai, Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at the University of Manchester and Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, will be presenting 'Living the life you want'.
- Any member of the veterinary team is welcome to take part in the Webinar Vet Virtual Congress and the sessions being run by the RCVS. Visit the Virtual Congress website for more information and to purchase tickets.

Reminder to pay VN annual renewal fee by end of year

We are reminding veterinary nurses that they must pay their annual renewal fees by the end of this year.

We have recently sent out reminders by email and post to veterinary nurses who have not yet paid their fee. These fees must be paid on or before Monday 31 December 2018 with those who do not pay being removed from the Register.

The annual renewal fee for veterinary nurses is currently set at £67 and payments can be made by debit or credit card via the 'My Account' area of our website or by cheque, bank draft or bank transfer.

All veterinary nurses also need to confirm their Register details, confirm their compliance with the continuing professional development requirement of 45 hours over a three year period and declare any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings.

Veterinary nurses with any queries about paying the annual renewal fee should contact our Finance Team 020 7202 0723 or finance@rcvs.org.uk

VN Education (December 2018)

19 December 2018

VN Education - 866kb PDF

December 2018 edition of VN Education - the RCVS veterinary nurse training newsletter. This edition includes information about the College's ENQA accreditation, our Schedule 3 case studies, plans for post-registration qualifications and information on VN Council elections.

Available to download from the website:

https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/vn-education-december-2018/?utm_source=Informz&utm_medium=Referral&utm_campaign=RCVS

RCVS Knowledge / Tickets available for VET19 EBVM conference

<http://www.veterinaryevidencetoday.org/>

Looking back over a year of achievement

Lizzie Lockett - RCVS CEO

As we approach the end of 2018, which was, incidentally, my first full year as CEO of the RCVS, it is always a good time to indulge in a bit of reflection.

Sometimes you can get so lost in the midst of the day-to-day that when you take a moment to pause and look back over the year just gone, you realise that so much has been done and achieved, particularly, this year, in delivering both on our three-year (2017-19) Strategic Plan and the actions and pledges of the Vet Futures initiative.

I just wanted to pick out a few of my personal highlights of the year that I think capture the breadth and depth of the activity with which the College is engaging:

- the launch of the Graduate Outcomes consultation, a once-in-a-generation review of the future of veterinary education and how we nurture graduates into practice;
- the launch of the RCVS Leadership programme and, last month, its massive open online course hosted by FutureLearn, which already has around 1,800 veterinary professionals signed up to it;
- greater public outreach with members of staff and officers of the RCVS attending public events in mid-Wales, Devon, and Oxfordshire;
- seeing major projects such as Mind Matters and the ViVet innovation initiative grow in strength and impact;
- achieving accreditation from ENQA, the pan-European body that quality assures organisations that themselves quality assure in higher education;
- the bestowal of the first ever Impact Award and Inspiration Awards at this year's Royal College Day;
- a successful first year for the Veterinary Client Mediation Service which, according to figures from October this year, has resolved some 1,700 disputes between veterinary practices and clients;
- the continuation and expansion of our trial on an outcomes-based method of assessing continuing professional development;
- the development of case studies for veterinary nurses and vets on navigating Schedule 3 in practice and also informed consent; and,
- developing a strategy for the future of the Fellowship and its path to becoming a learned society for the veterinary profession.
- I'm keen to point out that these are only the things that have prominence with the profession and that there have been plenty more improvements and initiatives within the College which go a long way to improve the service you receive.

These include updating our IT infrastructure, improving our HR processes to ensure we get the best from our people, reviewing our concerns investigation and disciplinary processes, and increasing our engagement and outreach with veterinary students, to name a few.

You've probably noted that there's one thing that hasn't been mentioned so far that has potential implications and impacts on all we do – and that's Brexit. Our guess is as good as anybody's as to how this will pan out but, regardless of what may happen, we have been busy doing what we can to prepare for all eventualities, working in partnership with the British Veterinary Association and Defra to mitigate the impact that it could have on veterinary capability and capacity.

This autumn we also took the rather unusual step of explicitly saying that a 'no-deal' Brexit would have unacceptable consequences for the veterinary profession and animal health and welfare and public health; taking 'no-deal' to mean a complete absence of agreement between the UK and EU in areas such as mutual recognition of professional qualifications and the rights of EU citizens already living and working in the UK. While this stance was criticised in some quarters, we considered that 'no-deal' would be fundamentally incompatible with both our Brexit Principles and our Mission Statement and so made the decision to speak out.

While we don't yet know what 2019 will bring in this regard, what we can assure you is that the RCVS and BVA will continue to work together to ensure that veterinary concerns and interests will be heard.

Looking forward to next year, 2019 is the last year of our current Strategic Plan and so we will be looking at how to deliver on its remaining actions. Priorities include reviewing how we have met the objectives of the First Rate Regulator project,

exploring the ability of the College to engage in compulsory practice inspections, and looking at our global reach in terms of how we can share our regulatory best practice internationally as well as the potential international appeal of some of our standards and qualifications. Post-Brexit it will be important to maintain a strong global network and presence, both with our European neighbours, and the wider world.

Another key area of activity will also be developing our next Strategic Plan. In due course we will be consulting with veterinary and public stakeholders, RCVS and VN Councils, our committees and RCVS staff about our vision going into the 2020s.

In the meantime it just remains for me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and stress that we recognise and appreciate all your hard work in safeguarding animal health and welfare in the UK and beyond, both over the Christmas period and throughout the year to come.

Events

ViVet Innovation Workshop series part 1 – Turning ideas into innovation

16 January 2019, The Study Centre at the Moller Centre, Storey's Way, Cambridge

RCVS Council – January 2019

17 January 2019, RCVS, Belgravia House, London

SPVS VMG Congress 2019

24 – 26 January 2019, Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, Wales

Mind Matters: Mental Health Awareness Training

28 January 2019 (Manchester), 18 February (Reading), 4 March (York), 25 March (Wincanton near Yeovil)

Mind Matters: Mental Health Resilience Training

1 February 2019 (Belfast), 13 February (Newton, Powys), 26 February (Edinburgh)

ViVet Innovation Workshop series part 2 – Turning ideas into innovation

20 February 2019, The Study Centre at the Moller Centre, Storey's Way, Cambridge

OV struck off for falsifying certificates

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has directed the Registrar to remove a former Official Veterinarian from the Register for dishonestly backdating certificates in order to avoid new regulations.

Laura Padron Vega appeared before the RCVS Disciplinary Committee between Monday 3 and Friday 7 December in relation to four charges against her.

The first and second charges alleged that, on or about 3 February 2016, for the purposes of an application to the Food Standards Agency for a Certificate of Competence under the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations 2015, she backdated two separate veterinary witness certificates to 7 December 2015. The third charge alleged that her acts of backdating were misleading, dishonest and in breach of the RCVS Principles of Certification.

The fourth charge against Miss Padron Vega was that, between September 2015 and February 2016, she failed to fulfil her duties as an Official Veterinarian in respect of: failing to prepare herself for the implementation of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations 2015; failing to have regard to the information provided to her by her employers about the regulations and their implementation; failing to take any steps to ensure that the two individuals for whom she had given veterinary certification were licensed to perform slaughter in accordance with the regulations; and failing to identify that two individuals were not licensed to slaughter in accordance with the regulations.

The Committee heard that the Welfare at the Time of Killing Regulations were introduced on 5 November 2015 which placed the responsibility on slaughtering operations not to permit animal welfare abuses and required certification by a veterinary witness regarding compliance.

The new regulations required existing slaughter licence holders to apply for a Certificate of Competence before midnight on 8 December 2015 or they would not be permitted to continue operating even with experienced operatives.

During the hearing, Ms Padron Vega admitted charges 1 and 2, admitted that she had been in breach of the Principles of Certification and, furthermore, admitted the fourth charge against her. However, she denied she had backdated the certificates in a misleading or dishonest way, maintaining that she had done so by mistake.

In considering the facts of the case, however, the Committee rejected this argument and, taking into account that she had been responsible for veterinary certifications in the UK since 2001, found that her conduct was knowingly misleading and dishonest.

The Committee then went on to consider whether the charges she admitted and the charges found against her constituted serious professional misconduct, both individually and cumulatively. The Committee found that all the charges amounted to serious professional misconduct.

In relation to charge 4 in particular Stuart Drummond, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee has found that the respondent failed to read even those emails which her employer sent to her which were marked 'urgent' or 'OV importance high'. She must have known that her employers were directing attention to some new statutory scheme for she was provided with PowerPoint slides in that regard which she could read at any time of her convenience.

"The Committee has been driven to the conclusion that the respondent did not even bother to read those slides for, had she done so, she would have known that she needed to apprise herself of the requirements of the impending new statutory scheme.

"The respondent's failings in this regard are little short of extraordinary, especially given her obligations as Lead OV for FAI Farms. The total abdication of her responsibility to understand the requirements of the Regulations governing the slaughterhouse operations constitutes, in the judgement of this Committee disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

The Committee then went on to consider the aggravating and mitigating factors in the case. In terms of aggravating features the Committee noted a lack of insight into the gravity of her conduct, that her conduct undermined in the most serious way public confidence in veterinary certification, and that there were animal welfare implications on her conduct as a number of chickens had to be removed from the slaughterhouse and alternative arrangements made because an auditor from the Food Standards Agency found that it was not compliant.

In mitigation the Committee considered that, despite the potential risk of harm, there was no actual harm occasioned to animals, that Miss Padron Vega has had a long and otherwise unblemished career and no previous issues with the RCVS and that she had

admitted some of the charges against her.

Stuart Drummond added: "Ultimately, the Committee was driven to the conclusion that the public's desire to see the implementation of the highest certification standards in relation to activities which impact on animal welfare and public health, and which did not occur on 3 February 2016, must outweigh this particular veterinary surgeon's desire and need to continue in practice.

"This is not a conclusion which the Committee has arrived at lightly. On the contrary, it has reached this decision because it has been driven to the conclusion that it would be failing in its public duty to protect the wider public interest in the maintenance of standards of honesty and right conduct in a member of the profession.

"It is, therefore, the conclusion and decision of this Committee that the only proper sanction that can be imposed in this case is that the respondent's name should be removed from the Register and it directs the Registrar accordingly."

Miss Padron Vega has 28 days from being informed of the Committee's decision to lodge an appeal with the Privy Council.

Please note: This news story is a summary that is intended to assist in understanding the case and the Committee's decision but does not form part of the decision itself. The full facts and findings of the Disciplinary Committee are the only authoritative documents and are available to download from the DC hearings page.

Vet suspended for assault and medicine misadministration

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has suspended a North Yorkshire veterinary surgeon for six months, following his conviction for common assault and failings related to inappropriate attempts at surgery and administration of medicines to another person.

The hearing for Richard Sutcliffe took place from Monday 12 to Wednesday 14 November and concerned three charges against him.

The first charge related to his conviction on two counts of common assault by beating, relating to an incident on 3 December 2016 in which he assaulted two individuals, and as a result of which he was made subject to a community order and a restraining order, as well as being fined and made to pay a victim surcharge and costs.

The second charge related to him undertaking, or attempting to undertake, in or around August or September 2015, non-emergency surgery on the eyelid of one of the individuals referred to in the first charge, and administering, or attempting to administer, a Prescription-Only Veterinary Medicines to the same person.

The third charged related to him supplying, in or around August 2016, that same individual with a Prescription-Only Medication other than in accordance with a valid prescription.

At the outset of the hearing Mr Sutcliffe admitted the first and second charges against him and that these constituted serious professional misconduct. He denied the third charge. In relation to that charge the Committee found that, having considered the totality of the evidence, it was unable to be sure that the College had proved the allegation to the requisite standard of proof, namely so that the Committee was sure. Accordingly Charge 3 was dismissed.

The Committee decided that the convictions in the first charge rendered Mr Sutcliffe unfit to practise veterinary surgery and that his conduct in Charge 2 constituted serious professional misconduct. The Committee then went on to consider sanction.

The Committee considered the aggravating features for both charges. For the first charge it considered the actual injury to one of his victims and risk of injury to the other, noting also that both of his victims were vulnerable people and one was a child, and that the overall incident during which the assaults occurred lasted over a seven hour period.

For the second charge, aggravating factors were that the non-emergency surgery performed by Mr Sutcliffe was wholly inappropriate, that there was a risk of injury to the individual on whom he performed the surgery and that his conduct was reckless.

The mitigating factors considered by the Committee were that Mr Sutcliffe recognised the gravity of the findings against him and demonstrated insight into the allegations, that the incident in charge 1, though prolonged, was an isolated one, that the incident in charge 2 was consensual and did not result in actual harm and that neither charge had any connection with Mr Sutcliffe's veterinary practice, nor did they affect client care or animal welfare.

Professor Alistair Barr, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "As recognised by the Committee, the respondent has displayed insight as to the seriousness of his behaviour. Having regard to the evidence of all the character witnesses and the written testimonials the Committee accepts that the respondent's conduct as set out in charges 1 and 2 was wholly out of character and, therefore, there is no significant risk of repeat behaviour. The Committee considers that the respondent would be fit to return to practise, having regard to his excellent track record as a veterinary surgeon to date, after any period of suspension.

"Having regards to the aggravating and mitigating factors in this case, the Committee has decided that it is sufficient to maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct to give a direction for suspension of the respondent's name from the Register of Veterinary Surgeons.

"The Committee considers that the period of suspension must be sufficient to mark the seriousness of the charges but must be proportionate and fair in the circumstances of the case. The Committee has therefore concluded that the appropriate period of suspension is six months."

Mr Sutcliffe has 28 days from being informed of the Committee's decision to appeal to the Privy Council.

Please note: This news story is a summary of the hearing produced on behalf of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee. It does not form part of the full facts and findings which are the only authoritative documentation. The full facts and findings are available to download from our Disciplinary Committee hearings page.