

RCVS NEWS

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

FEBRUARY 2010



Time for action!



2009 was the year of the consultation. We asked the questions, you responded, we regrouped and revised our proposals... and now it's time for implementation. **New guidance has been issued on Extra-Mural Studies and a new Manual for the Practice Standards Scheme.**

We are in the process of developing the new veterinary nursing qualifications, and there are opportunities for you to tell us about how you encourage new vets into the profession, so we can respond to the Cabinet Office's Unleashing Aspirations report.

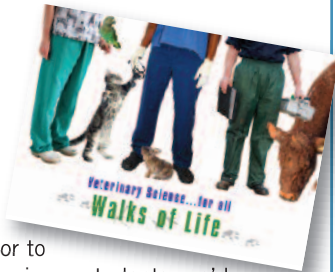
Practice managers can play a vital role in helping us to implement these changes on the ground, and ensure practices run in accordance with better practice. So we have produced this special issue of *RCVS News Extra* to bring you up to speed with the latest changes. Are you ready for action?

Careers advice

How do you engage with potential students?

Last year we launched a suite of careers materials, including a brochure, DVD, poster and website (www.walksoflife.org.uk) to reach out to a broader range of potential vet students than currently apply to vet school.

If any of you have used these to help support local careers events, display in practice or to encourage work experience students, we'd like to know. We'd also like to hear about any other careers activities you carry out. The feedback will be used as part of our response to the Cabinet Office's *Unleashing Aspiration* report on fair access to the professions, published last summer. Please drop us a line to education@rcvs.org.uk.



Walks of Life

- For more copies of the Walks of Life brochure or DVD, contact: education@rcvs.org.uk
- Or you can view the interactive brochure online at www.walksoflife.org.uk
- Or the DVD modules on www.youtube.com/vetcareers

New guidance for EMS providers

Review is now complete

Following a period of review, which included consultation with employers, vet schools and students, new proposals have been accepted to modernise and formalise the way that Extra-Mural Studies (EMS) are carried out.

The review considered all aspects of EMS and, while it was agreed that it remained a very valuable component of the veterinary education system, it was felt that communication in particular could be improved.

“It was agreed that [EMS] remained a very valuable component of the veterinary education system.”

The vet schools will liaise with their EMS providers to nominate a 'base practice' where students can spend a significant amount of time, with a named EMS contact for each student. They will also urge that some time is set aside for entry and exit interviews to bookend each placement. Students should arrive at the practice with a set of objectives they're hoping to meet and practices should not feel inhibited to give honest feedback to and about the student to the school's EMS coordinator.

For more information, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/ems.

More help for graduate employers

PDP surgeries launched

Uptake of the Professional Development Phase, which has been compulsory for all new graduates since 2007, is encouraging, but awareness amongst employers of how they need to support their new graduates appears to remain low.

In 2008, we published *Guidance on the PDP for Employers*, which is available online (www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp) and is also given to all new graduates when they sign up to the PDP to pass on to their employers.

This year, we are offering a more direct opportunity for employers to gain

advice by hosting some PDP surgeries, linked to our Regional Question Times. They will follow the same format as our popular PSS sessions.

Contact us on events@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773 to book a free 45-minute private appointment with one of our team of Postgraduate Deans. If you plan to stay on for the Question Time meeting in the evening (which kicks off at 6.30pm) you might wish to fix a later session.

The next two meetings are:

- Preston, 18 March
- Berwick-upon-Tweed, 6 May



PSS: new standards agreed

New Manual to be launched in April

The five-year review of the Practice Standards Scheme is now complete and the new Manual, which includes the updated Standards, will come into force in April 2010. Accredited practices will be given time to comply: it is unlikely that any major investment in new facilities or equipment will be required.

The review has given us the opportunity to make some timely adjustments to the original Standards, placing greater emphasis on clinical outcomes and training. We have also revamped the layout of the Manual (www.rcvs.org.uk) to incorporate guidance alongside the Standards.

The new format clarifies the derivation of each standard, so that legislative requirements are distinguished from those required under the RCVS

Guide to Professional Conduct and those indicated by better practice (see sample page, pictured).

If you are visiting the Veterinary Practice Managers Association (VPMA) Congress at the end of January in Oxford, and would like to hear more about the changes and what they mean for you, Practice Standards Group Chairman (and RCVS Senior Vice-President) Jill Nute will be making a presentation at 11.45 on Saturday 30 January: "The new PSS

Manual – what's changed and why". See www.vpma.co.uk for more information.

For more one-to-one help, don't forget our PSS surgeries. Held on the day of our evening Regional Question Time meetings in Preston, 18 March, and Berwick-upon-Tweed, 6 May. To book your free 45-minute appointment with the PSS team, contact events@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773.

Indicates which category this applies to – colour-coded.

Indicates that the derivation is "Better Practice".

Indicates documentary evidence is required.

Advice now all in one document.

7.2 The laboratory procedures must be performed in a clean and tidy designated area used specifically for that purpose (BP)

The laboratory bench shall be made of impervious materials to permit proper cleaning. There must be adequate facilities for washing of hands. There must be adequate facilities for storage of specimens and reagents, including refrigeration, and disposal of waste materials.

7.3 All laboratory procedures must be undertaken by designated persons who are suitably trained in the tasks performed by them (BP)

All of persons trained in handling laboratory specimens and in the maintenance of laboratory records must be kept.

If technology is introduced on site, adequately qualified staff must be available. The accurate interpretation of technologic data requires staff qualified to RRC in applied storage or equivalent standards.

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7.4 The results of all laboratory tests must be stored so as to permit easy retrieval (BP)

Data must be stored safely in an easily retrievable form.

A complete record system must be maintained of all tests undertaken in the period as set by any state or laboratory. A system must be in place to train operators related to a central laboratory to ensure results are obtained and communicated promptly to the client.

The program area does not have to be a separate room, and may, for example, be part of the laboratory or the preparation area. However, the designated professional must be clearly used only for laboratory purposes.

The inspector will expect to see evidence of storage of results.

© Core Standards: GP General Practice, M1 University Hospital, SA Small Animal, TA Farm Animal, EC Equine, ESC Emergency Service, Clinics, BP Better Practice, L Legislative Requirement, GRC RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct, +BP The Standard applies to GPMS & +BP Public

Prompt payment

Useful deadlines

It often falls to the practice manager to organise payment for a raft of RCVS fees and charges. If you're in a busy RCVS-accredited practice full of vets and VNs working on further qualifications, that can amount to a lot of different payments. Here's a handy list of the key due-dates and fees.

NB: this table does not include fees for certificate and diploma exam entries and enrolments, or Recognised Specialist applications and re-applications.

Fee	Due date	Fee for 2010
CertAVP annual administration fee	31 January	£26
Veterinary surgeons retention fee	1 April	Home-practising - £294
Practice Standards fee	1 April	Branch - £56 Main practice - £245 (enrolment - £454)
Register of Veterinary Practice Premises fee	1 April	£40 - not required from PSS practices
Specialist annual administration fee	1 July	Cash - £110 Direct debit - £100
Veterinary nurse retention fee	1 November	£60

Qualified developments

New VN qualifications due in autumn



Many Training Practices involved with the current veterinary nursing NVQ would echo the sentiments: “We like the quality of qualified VNs, but not the paperwork that goes with them.”

So it may well be good news that the abolition of the NVQ by government from summer this year has given us the opportunity to develop a new qualification which will reduce the burden on practices while making training accessible to more students.

Following an initial period of consultation last summer, the Working Party tasked with looking at the new qualifications developed draft proposals which were put out for comment. The level of feedback was excellent, with over 400 responses received, representing the views of over 2,000

individuals. The proposals were amended towards the end of the year and agreed by the Awarding Body, which has responsibility for the development of the new award.

Perhaps the two most major changes for practices are that there will no longer be a portfolio – it will be replaced by an online logging system, similar to that for the Professional Development Phase – and that Assessors will no longer exist as such. Students will still require an accountable mentor in practice – an experienced RVN or MRCVS – who will be responsible for ensuring requisite clinical tuition, suitable experience and for verifying competence. It is likely that many of these mentors will be drawn from the pool of qualified Assessors, who will be very well placed to take on this role.

The next step is for the Working Party to draft units to meet the new framework, bearing in mind that the National Occupational Standards are also currently being revised by the Sector Skills Council Lantra. There will be opportunity to comment on the units before they are finalised. For more detail on the new proposals, see www.rcvs.org.uk/vnawardsreview.

Key changes include:

- The opportunity for school-leavers to have a first year of full-time college study without the need to be employed in practice
- Portfolios replaced by an electronic logging system
- In-practice assessors to be replaced by an accountable mentor
- Centres to visit Training Practices less frequently
- Increased post-qualification career development options
- Choice of either small animal or equine-specific nursing units in year 2

Check out

When you are recruiting – or employing a locum – it's always worth checking out the legal status of the individual: if they are not properly registered (or listed/registered for VNs) they may not be legally able to carry out the jobs you need

them to do. For example, an unlisted/registered veterinary nursing assistant is not allowed to carry out Schedule 3 activities. It's quick to check online at www.rcvs.org.uk/checkregister for vets and www.rcvs.org.uk/vnlist for VNs.

It's all change for 2010

Please help us to implement new guidance and recommendations



Last year seemed to be the year of the consultation. We sought views on four different topic areas – Extra-Mural Studies (EMS), Practice Standards review, veterinary nursing qualifications and the future of veterinary legislation – and in some cases consulted more than

once during the year, as proposals for change developed. We listened to the views from members, veterinary nurses, practice managers and other stakeholders, and adapted our plans accordingly.

So, 2010 is going to be the year of putting proposals into action – and this is where practice managers can play a key role in helping us implement changes on the ground. This special issue of *RCVS News Extra*, timed to coincide with the Veterinary Practice Managers Association Congress, outlines policy changes that affect practices, and what to do next.

We offer an update on progress with the new veterinary nursing qualifications, which will replace the NVQs and VRQs when they are phased out by government next year; the timetable for the introduction of the new Manual for the Practice Standards Scheme and why the changes have been made; and, outline recommendations approved by Council to help improve the effectiveness of EMS, for students, practices and the veterinary schools.

“2010 is going to be the year of putting proposals into action.”

If you don't already, can I encourage you to promote the Professional Development Phase (PDP) for new graduates and support EMS for students? Does your practice ensure that all your new graduates are enrolled on PDP and do you include PDP in the appraisal system? It is one way of ensuring there is some support for graduates at a particularly difficult time in their career, and it doesn't cost the practice anything! And does your

practice have an EMS coordinator? Good liaison with students and their vet school will ensure all parties get the best out of EMS.

We will still be listening in 2010, with a further consultation on the veterinary nursing qualifications planned, in addition to an overhaul of the *Guide to Professional Conduct* for both vets and veterinary nurses. So watch out for updates on these.

This newsletter also provides an update on sources of information which we hope will be useful to you – such as our ever-growing library of Advice Notes, which cover a mix of clinical topics, such as blood transfusions and euthanasia, and more management-oriented ones, such as staff pregnancy and 24-hour emergency cover.

Stay in touch

If you don't manage to grab your colleagues' copies of *RCVS News* in time, why not sign up to *RCVS e-News*, our free monthly update on all things RCVS delivered straight to your inbox? Visit www.rcvs.org.uk/enews to sign up.

If your practice is RCVS-accredited, you can also sign up for our quarterly e-update *The Practice Standard*, which includes news, top tips from inspectors and an opportunity to meet the team behind the Scheme.

Meeting up

As a College, we recognise that we don't have as much opportunity to talk to practice managers as we would like. There are chances to meet face to face, though, such as our Regional Question Times (we will be in Preston and Berwick-upon-Tweed over the next few months), Meet the RCVS Days (contact events@rcvs.org.uk if you would like to visit Belgravia House for a behind-the-scenes look at the College life) and stands at Congresses. I hope to meet more of you – both to answer your questions and to pose some of our own – over the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. V. TREES".

Professor Sandy Trees
President

Timely advice available

Need advice? Check online

Our Professional Conduct Department deals with around 1,400 written requests for advice every year, and a lot of phone calls. This is good news – we are much happier to help before a problem occurs than wait until things go wrong.

Some of the topics raised have prompted the development of a library of Advice Notes. These help to standardise our advice and also offer a useful resource for those involved in practice and the public.

There are currently 31 Advice Notes in the series – including clinical topics and more management-oriented issues – see www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes.

The list is generally added to after Council Meetings (March, June and November) and the new notes are flagged up in *RCVS News*. If there is a topic on which you would like to see additional advice being made available, please let us know on profcon@rcvs.org.uk.

Master the quiz

Test your knowledge: Guide quiz now online

How well do your veterinary colleagues know their *Guide to Professional Conduct*? If there is ever a complaint coming into the practice, no doubt you as the practice manager end up getting heavily involved. Although, at about 700 a year, we don't receive a huge amount of complaints, many of them could still be avoided if vets were better acquainted with the *Guide*: it lays out the principles of good professional and ethical behaviour and helps vets avoid doing something the RCVS Disciplinary Committee might consider 'serious professional misconduct'.

To challenge practitioners' knowledge of the *Guide*, and provide a bit of instruction along the way, we recently launched an online *Guide Quiz*. The anonymous quiz comprises 25 questions, the answers to which also link to the relevant section of the online *Guide*.

Encourage your colleagues to have a go – and try it yourself: when we trialled the quiz at the London Vet Show last November, a practice manager got the highest score, at 24 out of 25!

www.rcvs.org.uk/guidequiz.



New website

Over the summer, we will be launching a new website which will enable many of our fees to be paid online by individuals or by the practice, providing appropriate authority has been given by the individuals concerned.

There will also be the opportunity to update practice and individual data online.

If you have any comments about our current website, or suggestions for the new one, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Please contact communications@rcvs.org.uk.



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