

RCVS news

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*Text-only version of
RCVS News email*

A day of firsts as RCVS holds unprecedented virtual AGM

This year we held our first ever virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) which, among other things, saw the investiture of the first black woman as RCVS President and the first male veterinary nurse to chair Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC).

In her opening address as RCVS President, Dr Mandisa Greene (pictured) acknowledged the symbolic significance of her being the first person from a minority ethnic background to hold the office, commenting: "When the College was founded in 1844, it would have been unthinkable that a woman, let alone a black woman, would become President of the institution one day. I am immensely proud of this achievement and, while it clearly demonstrates progress, there is still plenty to do in widening access to our professions."

She added that she hoped to use her position as President to act as a role model to young people from under-represented groups, in order to encourage them to consider careers in veterinary surgery, as well as supporting those already in the profession.

She gave a recent example of where she encouraged Reanne, a young woman who, like her, was from an Afro-Caribbean background and had always wanted to be a vet, to conquer her doubts about joining the profession and successfully apply to study at Liverpool Vet School.

Mandisa, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh in 2008 and an elected member of RCVS Council since 2014, added: "I also take the Presidential baton from Niall to champion a more diverse and inclusive profession with renewed intention, and look forward to playing my part in our upcoming Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan.

"As recent weeks and the Black Lives Matter movement have highlighted, there is more to be done, and we are committed to doing the work necessary. It is essential that we support all members of the veterinary team to work in an environment that is free from discrimination and racism."

The 177th Annual General Meeting of the RCVS took place on the morning of Friday 10 July 2020 with proceedings being introduced by outgoing RCVS President Dr Niall Connell who acknowledged the extraordinary nature of this year's meeting.

After approving the minutes of last year's meeting and hearing a message from the College's Patron Her Majesty the Queen, Council went on to approve the Annual Report & Financial Statements for 2019.

Dr Connell (pictured) also read out the answers to two questions that had been received in advance of the meeting regarding the Annual Report & Financial Statements.

The first was from President of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) Dr Daniella Dos Santos MRCVS on behalf of BVA members, and the second from Alastair Welch MRCVS. We will publish the full answers to both questions in due course.

The proceedings then turned to changes to the membership of RCVS and VN Councils, starting with the results of the RCVS Council election, which saw successful candidates Dr Kate Richards, Dr Richard Stephenson and Dr Melissa Donald formally welcomed on to Council for four-year terms.

Our Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson, also confirmed that Professor David Argyle, Professor Susan Dawson and Professor James Wood had been appointed for further four-year terms on Council by the Veterinary Schools Council, the representative body for UK vet schools.

Turning to retiring members of Council, Dr Connell started by saying farewell to five university-appointed members:

- Professor Ewan Cameron from the University of Glasgow, who had served nine years on Council, including serving on the RCVS Education Committee;
- Professor Gary England from the University of Nottingham, who had also served for nine years and had been the inaugural chair of the Advancement of the Professions Committee;
- Professor Richard Hammond from the University of Bristol, who had served a total of three years on Council and will continue to be a member of the Graduate Outcomes Working Group;
- Professor Ken Smith from the Royal Veterinary College, who has served for one year and was a member of the Education Committee;
- Professor Chris Proudman from the University of Surrey, who had served on Council for five months following the recent formal accreditation of his university's veterinary degree by the RCVS.

Members of RCVS Council then said farewell to five retiring elected members of Council:

- Lucie Goodwin, who had served as an elected member for four years, including on VN Council, the Mind Matters Initiative Taskforce and the RCVS Knowledge Board;
- Dr Kit Sturgess, who had served as an elected member for seven years and had served as Treasurer for three years. Dr Sturgess was praised for his financial acumen and prudence in the latter role and his key contribution to the COVID Taskforce, which included helping to develop a system by which veterinary surgeons who have been adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic could pay their annual fee in instalments;
- Chris Barker, who had served eight years on Council and on a wide variety of committees and working groups including, latterly, the Legislation Working Party. Chris was praised for always putting the interests of the general practitioner at the forefront and for providing robust scrutiny of the RCVS and its decisions;
- Amanda Boag, who had served eight years on Council, including as Treasurer from 2014 to 2017 and RCVS President from 2018-19. Amanda was praised for her intellect, diplomacy, and good-humour, particularly during her presidential year, which saw concerns over 'no-deal' Brexit and the RCVS working with government and other stakeholders to prepare the professions for the impact of the UK leaving the EU;
- Professor Stephen May who, in total, had served on RCVS Council for 16 years and was President from 2017-18. He was praised for his vision, intellect and the key role he had played in pushing forward some of the key projects to emerge from the Vet Futures project, including the integration of reflection into continuing professional development, the Graduate Outcomes Project and the Legislation Working Party.
- The proceedings then turned to changes to VN Council with this year's election (the first since 2017) seeing a record number of candidates and voters, with the election of Matthew Rendle and Claire Roberts for three-year terms. It was also confirmed that appointed lay member Dominic Dyer would serve another three-year term, and the appointment of two new lay members was announced: Stephanie Richardson and Sarah Fox.

Dr Connell also gave his thanks to VN Council lay members Wendy Drinkwater, who stood down in January, and Professor Susan Proctor, who retired at the AGM.

A short meeting of RCVS Council was then convened to confirm our presidential team for 2020-21, with Dr Mandisa Greene as President, Professor David Argyle as Junior Vice-President, Dr Niall Connell as Senior Vice-President and Professor Susan Dawson as Treasurer.

After a short break, Council then reconvened for the investiture of the new President and Chair of VN Council and speeches.

The first speech was from the outgoing Chair of VN Council Racheal Marshall (pictured), who was praised by Niall for her diligence as Chair, her drive for raising the profile of the profession and, in particular, her recent work on mitigating the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on student veterinary nurses through her chairing of a special taskforce set up to develop an alternative assessment method to the objectively-structured clinical examinations (OSCEs).

In her speech Racheal, who had served as Chair since 2018, said that, while the profession had come a long way in recent years, she wanted to concentrate on the future, urging members of the profession to take part in the upcoming consultation on legislative reform, which could lead to wide-scale enhancements to the profession.

"This is the opportunity for all nurses to provide their feedback and I urge every veterinary nurse to read the report, complete the consultation and encourage all their colleagues to get involved as well. Things will not change if we sit back and rely on someone else to make it happen. We all have a part to play in the future of veterinary nursing," she said.

Referencing the VN Futures project, a joint endeavour between the RCVS and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) to help the profession prepare for and influence its future, she added: "With the project reaching the end of this cycle, now is the time to consider what comes next. I encourage you to think big and not be short-sighted about what the future of veterinary nursing could be."

Following Racheal's address, Matthew Rendle and Belinda Andrews-Jones were invested as the Chair and Vice-Chair of VN Council, respectively.

In his opening address Matthew (pictured), an elected member of VN Council since 2016, said: "In the position of Chair, I will continue to keep my fellow nurses very much at heart, whatever the species, environment and role they are working in.

"Veterinary nursing is not an easy profession. When I talk to nurses, they often highlight their biggest frustration with the profession is the extensive lack of understanding about our role and what we can and are very capable of doing.

"Achieving more clarity on our role as veterinary nurses, at all levels is my priority, as I know resolving this could in turn improve several other chronic issues in our profession."

Following Mathew's address, it was time for Dr Niall Connell to give his final address as the outgoing RCVS President. In his speech Niall said that when he was first diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 17 years ago, he would never have imagined that the highlight of his veterinary career was yet to come and, while acknowledging some of the challenges during his year as President, highlighted some of the achievements.

This includes the University of Surrey formally being recognised by the RCVS as the UK's eighth veterinary school, the Graduate Outcomes Project bearing its first fruit with the publication of new Day-One Competences, a digital marketing campaign to promote the Practice Standards Scheme and projects such as Mind Matters, RCVS Leadership and the ViVet innovation initiative going from strength-to-strength.

He also praised the way that the College and his peers in the profession at large were dealing with the two major current challenges facing them: the coronavirus pandemic and the UK's exit from the EU. For the latter he said: "I've been struck by the nature of international cooperation of some of our stand-out moments over the last year and how, true to the motto that accompanies our coat of arms – *Vis Unita Fortior* – there really is strength through unity. We are still working towards EU Exit – remember that? I genuinely thought I might become known as 'The Brexit President', although I fear that moniker will now be superseded.

"Nevertheless, in October, we signed an historic mutual recognition agreement with the Veterinary Council of Ireland to recognise each other's veterinary degrees.

"In the same month, we gained significant international support for our joint statement with the American Veterinary Medical Association to promote and support positive mental health amongst the veterinary community, when it was also signed by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association.

"Then, in January, we signed a joint statement with BVA and the FVE that the European veterinary community remains united, with the emphasis on the highest standards of care and animal welfare."

Regarding coronavirus, he acknowledged the immense pressure and strain it had put upon the profession but praised the way it had risen to the occasion – by continuing to ensure animal health and welfare and public health, as well as by donating time and equipment to the National Health Service.

He added: "Our professions will... get through this, thanks to the incredible veterinary surgeons and nurses working in general practice, specialist practice, education, government, laboratories, and everywhere in between. Working in strange situations and enduring personal hardship, emotional upheaval and financial turmoil, yet still doing their very best for our animals.

"I was heartened to see this huge effort and commitment publicly recognised by the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Secretary of State George Eustice in his open letter of thanks to the professions earlier this year.

"To my vet and VN colleagues across the UK: you absolutely deserve the trust and respect placed in you by the public. I salute you."

In his last official duty as RCVS President, Niall officially welcomed Mandisa as the 149th President of the RCVS, 'handing over' his bespoke Presidential chain of office, made by the two daughters of Amanda Boag, over to Mandisa who was, in turn, wearing a special chain made by her two sons and nephew.

After thanking Niall for his leadership during a difficult year, Mandisa went on to outline some of the priorities for her presidential year which, in addition to role-modelling, includes helping to deliver the College's new five-year Strategic Plan; demonstrating appreciation and recognition for the contribution of EU veterinary surgeons so that they continue to want to live and work in the UK; and improving the College's engagement with and recognition of general practitioner vets.

Referencing the main areas of focus for the College's Strategic Plan, she concluded: "Leading our fantastic professions through such times, alongside my fellow Council members, an amazing RCVS team, and all our stakeholders and supporters, is such an honour.

"There is much to do, but we must continue to forge ahead and aspire to greatness. We shall move forward with clarity and compassion in these times of uncertainty, and with the courage and confidence to tackle the difficult challenges and exciting opportunities ahead."

All of the pre-recorded speeches from the day are available to view on our YouTube channel and can be read on the Features section of our website.

RCVS publishes new set of competences for veterinary students to meet upon graduation

The RCVS has published a new set of Day One Competences, which describe the knowledge and skills expected of veterinary students upon graduation.

The new competency model and underpinning Day One Competences was developed following detailed feedback from the profession during the Graduate Outcomes consultation.

The Graduate Outcomes consultation explored how the RCVS, working with the UK veterinary schools, could better prepare veterinary students for life in practice and ensure that new graduate vets were better supported during their first years in practice.

There was a significant response from the profession with valuable feedback being submitted which was used to finalise the new RCVS Day One Competences. The competences are described within a conceptual model of continuous learning and with animal welfare at its heart. There are four broad areas each containing detailed competences, which are:

- **Personal leadership:** the competences under this heading set out the attitudes and behaviours expected of a professional veterinary surgeon and includes knowledge of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, recognition of one's own abilities and limitations, and how to react and/or act in different situations and circumstances.
- **Professional commitment:** these competences encompass the graduate's professional capabilities around the business aspects of veterinary practice. Competences in this domain recognise that graduates are not expected to have full knowledge of how to run a successful business, but that they should be aware of the way the profession operates, both in terms of businesses that exist within the profession and also outside the profession in related areas.
- **Reflective relationships:** the competences under this heading concern professional relationships including with those whom graduates work directly with and those in other locations and areas of the profession as well as allied professionals and with clients. Understanding how to communicate and collaborate effectively is key for the competences within this domain, as they are central to forming and maintaining the relationships that will exist within a veterinary surgeon's professional life.
- **Vet capability:** this domain describes the clinical competences, and encompasses the practical skills, techniques and underlying veterinary scientific knowledge that veterinary surgeons must possess upon graduation. By meeting these competences, graduates demonstrate that they are ready to carry out clinical procedures independently (to a day one competence standard). The majority of the competences lie within this domain.

RCVS Council member Professor Stephen May (pictured right), who led the Graduate Outcomes Working Party which developed the consultation and the new Day One Competences, commented: "Developing new Day One Competences was one of the key strands of the Graduate Outcomes consultation and we are very glad that we can now deliver on this important work.

"While clinical and scientific skills will always be a central focus of a degree in veterinary medicine, the new framework recognises that professional ("non-technical") skills, such as effective communication, relationship-building, reflective practice, business acumen and professional responsibility, are as important in successful practice as technical aspects of veterinary work.

"One of the key findings of the Vet Futures project, which in turn led to us launch Graduate Outcomes, was that a significant reason why new graduates sometimes felt disengaged with and disappointed by life in clinical practice, was the divide between the technical aspects of what they learned in vet school and the realities of life in practice where technical knowledge needs to be used effectively alongside the other important professional skills.

"The new Day One Competences build upon what the RCVS expects of new graduates in all these areas."

Susan Paterson (pictured right), Chair of the RCVS Education Committee which approved the new document, added: "Over the coming years we look forward to working with the vet schools to ensure these competences continue to be incorporated and embedded within their curricula and hope that, in time, the new framework will help meet the aim to better prepare our graduates and new colleagues for life in practice."

The full documentation on the Day One Competences can be found on our Publications page.

Work on other aspects of the Graduate Outcomes consultation – including the new Professional Development Phase, changes to Extra-Mural Studies and developing clinical education for general practice, is ongoing.

Record number of vets admitted to the RCVS Fellowship this year

A record number of veterinary surgeons have been admitted to the RCVS Fellowship this year, joining the learned society in recognition of their contribution to veterinary science and practice.

Some 58 Fellows have been admitted this year out of a total of 65 applicants. Of those joining the Fellowship, 39 have been recognised for meritorious contributions to clinical practice; 14 for meritorious contributions to the profession; and five for meritorious contributions to veterinary knowledge.

The RCVS Fellowship is a learned society whose key purpose is to advance veterinary standards by providing a resource of independent knowledge for the benefit of the veterinary profession. It aims to do this by promoting scientific excellence, furthering professional skills and practice, and enriching the discourse about the importance of veterinary science to everyone.

Although the Fellowship was founded in the 19th century, it was relaunched with its new mission statement in 2016 and with three new routes to entry to reflect the breadth of veterinary achievement. Since its re-launch over 200 new Fellows have been welcomed on board, although this year has seen the most new Fellows in an individual year.

Professor John Innes FRCVS (pictured) was elected as Chair of the Fellowship Board, which governs the scheme, last year. He said: "The number of new Fellows this year is a real testimony to the depth and breadth of veterinary excellence that the Fellowship draws upon.

"I am delighted to preside over a record number of applicants and our efforts to widen the appeal of the Fellowship and develop a clear strategy and direction of travel for the learned society has clearly paid off. I look forward to formally welcoming them later this year."

Dr Mandisa Greene, RCVS President, added: "Many congratulations to all those who joined the RCVS Fellowship this year, it is a fantastic achievement and it can only help to enhance the status of our learned society, the veterinary profession and veterinary science in general."

The full list of new Fellows has been published on our Fellowship webpage.

Further details about this year's Fellowship celebrations, which are being reviewed in light of the coronavirus pandemic, will be published in due course.

Applications to join the Fellowship in 2021 are already open. Details on how to apply and the application criteria are available to view on the Fellowship webpage - those who are interested can also contact Ceri Chick, Leadership Initiatives Officer, on c.chick@rcvs.org.uk for further details.

We also have a dedicated directory of existing Fellows that is available to browse.

Knowledge Awards expand to include education

RCVS Knowledge is inviting educators and learners to join practitioners in entering the awards that recognise the use of continuous quality improvement (QI) principles.

The Knowledge Awards, now in their third year, celebrate the achievements of individuals and teams who are championing the use of QI methodology in their area of work.

The awards are open to anyone who works within the veterinary industry. This includes all those working in a practice setting, encompassing the administration team, veterinary nurses, practice managers or surgeons at all levels.

New this year, educators and learners from under- and post-graduate education are also encouraged to apply or nominate others for their inspiring work to enhance the awareness and development of QI skills in the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions.

Pam Mosedale, Chair of the RCVS Knowledge Quality Improvement Advisory Board, explained: "We have introduced a new category to the Knowledge Awards this year. As well as inviting applications from those who are using QI methodology in a practice setting, we are including a new category that acknowledges the crucial contribution those in education make to embedding QI in the professions.

"Eligible applications to this new category could take the form of students using QI methodology as part of their education, such as clinical audits, drawing up clinical guidelines, or other techniques. Educators should demonstrate how they are teaching QI methodology to better equip students for practice. We encourage anyone undertaking high-quality activity in this area to enter."

The Knowledge Awards aim to recognise individuals and teams who are focusing on driving continuous improvements for better outcomes for patients, better service provision to clients, an improved business or environmental case, or better working conditions for the team. Applicants will be assessed on their passion for QI, and for encouraging and championing QI.

Winners will be crowned 'Knowledge Champions' or 'Champion Practices'. Winners will receive a £250 reward, tickets to the awards ceremony and the opportunity to work with RCVS Knowledge to further promote their Quality Improvement work.

Applications can be made as an individual or as part of a team. Colleagues can nominate others for the award. The deadline for nominating colleagues is 16th October 2020, and the deadline for applications (whether you have applied directly or have been nominated) is 30th November 2020. Winners will be announced in early 2021.

The winners of the 2020 Knowledge Awards were recognised for a variety of QI activity, including an audit and updated guidelines that reduced post-operative complications by half; creation and use of a surgical safety checklist that reduced serious surgical errors; a whole-team approach to QI initiatives that led to effective audits, guidelines and checklists; and national auditing of pain relief guidelines, cruciate surgery outcomes and incident reporting.

Chris Gush, Executive Director of RCVS Knowledge, said: "We set up the Knowledge Awards not only to reward those behind the committed and innovative QI work going on across the professions, but also as a means to share effective approaches widely in order to support the advancement of the quality of care provided to patients.

"We are looking forward to learning more about excellent QI work taking place and giving this the acknowledgement it deserves."

Find out more about the Knowledge Awards and how to apply at: rcvsknowledge.org/qi-awards

Combined lobbying effort sees vet courses gain ability to apply for extra student places

A joint lobbying effort by the British Veterinary Association (BVA), the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the Veterinary Schools Council (VSC) has seen the Department of Education add veterinary medicine to the list of subjects that can apply for additional student places if needed.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of Education had announced that it would be placing a cap on the number of student places at universities in England. As a result of this decision, the three organisations wrote to Michelle Donelan MP, the Minister of State for Universities, in May to express their concerns over the plans and its potential impact on veterinary medicine degrees in England and the veterinary workforce.

The letter outlined the fact that there is evidence that there is already a shortage of veterinary surgeons in the UK, with overseas veterinary surgeons (the vast majority of whom are from the EU) filling in this shortfall by making up over half of new registrants in a given year.

It stated that the coronavirus pandemic was likely to severely stymie the flow of EU registrants, particularly in the context of the UK leaving the European Union, and that any cap placed on the six universities in England offering veterinary medicine degrees would further diminish 'home-grown' veterinary capacity.

As a result the Department of Education, in its Introduction of Temporary Student Number Controls in Response to COVID-19 document published this month, confirmed that veterinary medicine was amongst a number of subjects for which course providers in England, if needed, could apply to the Department for Education for a share of 5,000 additional places it has made available.

Professor Susan Dawson (pictured right), Dean of Liverpool Vet School, Chair of the Veterinary Schools Council and a member of RCVS Council, was one of the co-signatories of the letter. She said: "We are very glad that the combined efforts of the regulator and the representative bodies for veterinary surgeons and veterinary schools respectively, was able to sway the Government to grant veterinary courses in England access to this additional allocation of student places.

"The coronavirus has had an obvious and understandable impact on the number of EU veterinary surgeons choosing to live and work here. Combined with continued uncertainty over the status of the Brexit trade talks and the future of the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive, we were looking at a potential 'perfect storm' situation with the addition of caps on the number of student vets in the UK.

"We thank the Department of Education and the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs for listening to our concerns and making the changes to allow vet schools in England to apply for extra places accordingly. It should be noted, however, that there are only 5,000 places available amongst a number of subjects and that there is no guarantee that individual courses/ institutions in England will get additional places allocated even if they apply.

"We also call on the government to ensure that the expansion of domestic student numbers is supported by appropriate funding, otherwise any additional students will reduce the amount available to spend per student and therefore may not be viable."

BVA President, Daniella Dos Santos added: "It is encouraging to see that the Government has listened to our concerns and enabled veterinary schools in England to access additional student places amid its decision to apply a temporary cap on student numbers. Access to additional places for vet schools will help to mitigate any negative impact that the pandemic may have on student numbers, which in turn would exacerbate the shortage of veterinary surgeons there already is in the UK.

"Vets play an essential role in safeguarding animal health and welfare in the UK and help to make sure animal products are safe to enter the food chain. We are delighted with this decision and want to thank the Department of Education and the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs for taking our call on board and making these changes. It is vital that any increased places are also matched with increased per-capita funding to safeguard the high educational standards of the UK's veterinary schools."

The full version of the letter written to Michelle Donelan MP has been published on the RCVS website.

Time to reflect with Mind Matters

We're pleased to announce we will be holding a series of free online 'Reflection Time' sessions over the coming months. These facilitated sessions aim to help veterinary professionals reflect on the emotional aspects of their work in a safe, confidential online space.

The series will be facilitated by Mind Matters Manager Lisa Quigley and each monthly theme will have afternoon and evening sessions (taking place 12.30pm to 1.30pm and 7.30pm to 8.30pm respectively) to ensure that it can be accessed by people with different working and/or caring responsibilities.

The themes and timings are as follows:

- Support from my team – Wednesday 29 July
- Everyday leadership – Thursday 27 August
- Juggling it all – Thursday 17 September and Thursday 24 September
- A lesson learned – Thursday 22 October and Thursday 29 October
- Believing in myself – Thursday 19 November and Thursday 26 November
- In addition to the Reflection Time sessions Lisa Quigley will also be hosting a free series of informal online 'Lunchtime Learning' sessions in which she will give an overview of Mind Matters activities and how to get involved.

Broader issues around mental health and wellbeing in the professions will also be covered. Each session starts at 12.30pm and will take place on:

- Friday 31 July
- Friday 25 September
- Friday 30 October
- Friday 27 November

Lisa Quigley commented: "The Mind Matters Reflection Time sessions are an excellent opportunity for members of the profession to take themselves away from their clinical day-to-day work, and to pause and reflect on the more emotional aspects of themes such as support, leadership, work-life balance and learning culture. All members of the practice team are welcome, including veterinary and veterinary nursing students.

"The feedback that we had from the previous sessions was very positive, with many saying they valued the opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences in a safe space.

"I look forward to hearing the reflections of members of the profession about these important topics and helping them to integrate their insights into working life, as well as introducing people to the excellent work of the Mind Matters Initiative via the Lunchtime Learning sessions."

Details on how to sign-up are available in the Events section.

1CPD platform: you said, we did

Since we launched our 1CPD recording and planning platform in January 2020, we have been engaging in a process of constant improvement of the platform based on user feedback.

As a result, we have made several upgrades to make the platform even more useful and intuitive for members of the professions.

Here is a summary of some of the major changes we have made:

- Regarding the recording of reflections, the update gives our users a choice between guided reflection, which uses three questions to help members of the professions frame their reflective notes, and free-form reflection. Free-form reflection provides members of the professions the opportunity to use free text and/or voice notes as well as allowing them to upload images and additional documents.
- We have doubled the character limit in the notes section from 2,000 characters to 4,000.
- We have enhanced the 'CPD activity type' selection process from a long list of CPD activities that users needed to scroll through, to a list of activity types sorted by sub-categories. This provides a better user experience.

Richard Burley, RCVS Chief Technology Officer, (pictured), commented: "Thank you to all those who have provided feedback on the platform so far – like you, we are committed to constant improvement and your insights on where and how we can improve are invaluable.

"We continue to welcome feedback from users and there are 'send feedback' buttons in the app and the web portal. Alternatively, please email onecpd@rcvs.org.uk."

CPD and coronavirus

When the lockdown started in March, we made a decision to reduce the annual CPD requirement for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses by 25%, in recognition of the increased strain being placed on the personal and professional lives of members of the professions.

However, for many of those in practice, the pandemic and its associated challenges and restrictions may actually be providing concrete learning opportunities that can and should be recorded as CPD.

Susan Paterson, Chair of the RCVS Education Committee, (pictured), commented: "From what I've seen, for those in the profession who have worked in practice throughout the pandemic, the thought of sitting down to watch a free webinar in the evening after an exhausting and stressful day has not been an appealing prospect.

"What's really important though is recognising that working during Covid – from triaging cases on the phone to physically seeing animals in the clinic, out on a farm or at the stables - provides a rich set of potential CPD.

"Every time a vet or VN consults the RCVS flow chart, listened to the BVA Sunday update webinar, checks their species guidance on triage of cases, looks up advice on vaccination and neutering or checks resources to perform a risk assessment of staff, developed an oxygen-saving protocol for anaesthesia, or consulted information on the use of PPE, then they are undertaking CPD. They are learning, doing and reflecting.

"So even if you haven't had the 'luxury' of a quiet webinar over a glass of something in the evening during lockdown, you have still been doing your CPD. All that's left (when you get some time) is to record it in the 1CPD portal and reflect on it."

VN Futures Board meeting July 2020

The VN Futures Board met virtually on Friday 3 July to discuss the progress of the project and plans going forward. Understandably, progress has been slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic however, there has still been behind-the-scenes work taking place, with plenty to discuss.

VN Futures Project Manager Jill Macdonald gave an update on progress which included the release of the final webinar in the VN Futures series on the value of veterinary nursing. All three webinars in the series are fantastic and I would highly recommend taking the time out to watch them, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all three speakers; Louise Northway RVN, Stephanie Writer-Davies MRCVS and Gillian Page RVN for their brilliant work and support of the VN Futures project.

Another exciting development has been the launch, in May, of a dedicated VN Futures website where the work of the project is showcased along with news, upcoming events and resources such as career case studies. We hope that you take the time to look at all the content the website has to offer, take inspiration from it and be inspired to get involved in the project.

The Board also discussed plans for the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) This is Us 2020 online event, where we will be holding several sessions to allow you to give your views on current topics affecting the veterinary nursing profession. This is your opportunity to have your say so please register – details will be available soon.

This was my last meeting as the Chair and a member of the Board. It has been a great privilege to work with such an amazing group of people who are so passionate about our profession, and to see the immense amount of work which has been done. I would like to thank everyone who is involved with the VN Futures project – your contributions are invaluable.

It is my pleasure to hand over to Jo Oakden, BVNA Junior Vice President, who I know will be a great Chair.

Racheal Marshall
Outgoing Chair, VN Futures Board

I joined the VN Futures Board when I became BVNA Junior Vice President in October 2019. So much has been achieved by VN Futures up to this point and it is a very exciting time to be part of the VN Futures journey and I am looking forward to chairing for this upcoming year.

I would like to say a huge thank you to Racheal for chairing this last year and her invaluable contributions to the project.

Jo Oakden
Incoming Chair, VN Futures Board

Updates on other Board Members
We welcome Nikki Ruedisueli as a member of the VN Futures Executive Group, in her role as the BVNA's Head of Learning and Development.

Following the RCVS AGM on Friday 10 July, and the investiture of Matthew Rendle and Belinda Andrews-Jones as respective Chair and Vice-Chair of RCVS VN Council, we can confirm that Matthew will continue his role as a VN Futures Board member, and would like to welcome Belinda as an incoming member of the Board.

VNs take top Veterinary Evidence Student Award

Three veterinary nursing students have won first prize in RCVS Knowledge's Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2020.

The winners were the first veterinary nursing students to place in the awards, which were launched by RCVS Knowledge last year to recognise and support students' engagement with evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) and its application into practice.

The winning Knowledge Summary was written by Carla Husband, Abbie McMillan and Lauren Sweeney, all studying veterinary nursing at the University of Bristol. The team highlighted the paucity of evidence regarding the impact of educational interventions on hand hygiene compliance in small animal environments, a highly relevant topic during the COVID-19 pandemic, and called for more research to be carried out to support hand hygiene compliance in the veterinary professions.

Carla said "I feel so proud of myself and my co-authors for winning this competition. We worked very hard on making this Knowledge Summary the best it could be and can't believe our hard work has paid off. I also feel very proud to represent the vet nursing profession and to come out of university with a published paper. To any vet nursing or vet students out there who are thinking of submitting to Veterinary Evidence, I say go for it! The more evidence we can contribute to our knowledge base, the better our profession can become."

Lauren said, "It was really exciting as a Student Veterinary Nurse to be able to submit our work into this competition. I truly believe that the Veterinary Science evidence base should be continually built upon and I am so glad this competition allowed our Knowledge Summary to do so!

"This competition has allowed our work to be peer-reviewed and our findings heard. I recommend this experience to all students as it has emphasised that all members of the veterinary community should be contributing to evidence-based medicine!"

The team's win underscores that an evidence-based approach can be embedded by all veterinary professionals. The paper can be viewed on the Veterinary Evidence website.

Second place went to Laura Pratley, University of Liverpool vet student, whose paper asked: "In horses with osteoarthritis, is mesenchymal stem cell therapy more effective at managing lameness than intra-articular corticosteroids?"

Laura said, "I became interested in research and EBVM in the latter years of vet school and was worried I'd missed opportunities to get involved with research/studentships. So when I saw the Veterinary Evidence Student Awards, I really wanted to get involved and have found the whole process really rewarding!"

Lesca Sofyan, a Veterinary Medicine student at the University of Sydney in Australia, took third place, for her paper investigating whether Meloxicam is superior to Carprofen for reducing discomfort in dogs diagnosed with osteoarthritis. This is the first time an international submission has been recognised in the awards.

Lesca said: "I entered the Veterinary Evidence Student Awards when I wanted to share my results on my research. Patients and clients deserve to be provided the top standard of care, and Veterinary Evidence allows me to do so quickly, as I can always analyse the available evidence behind my decision and choices."

The Veterinary Evidence Student Awards recognise the capability of undergraduate students to produce high-quality research, with all submissions subjected to the journal's usual standards and peer-review process. The submissions for this year's awards were of a high standard, with all deemed suitable for publication in RCVS Knowledge's open access, peer-reviewed journal Veterinary Evidence.

Peter Cockroft, Editor-in-chief of Veterinary Evidence, said, "I would like to thank all the students who submitted Knowledge Summaries for consideration in this year's competition. Knowledge Summaries provide an important resource to bridge the gap between research and practice and we are grateful for the student body's input in helping grow the evidence base.

"I would like to congratulate the award winners on their outstanding achievements. We hope the student authors who have either won or been accepted for publication, will feel encouraged to continue to practise EBVM in their future careers."

This will be Peter's final year of involvement with the awards, as he is stepping down from his role as Editor-in-chief later this month after three years.

Chris Gush, RCVS Knowledge's Executive Director, congratulated the winners, saying, "We are delighted to announce the winners of this year's awards, who have provided a valuable contribution to the evidence base. The recognition of veterinary nursing, veterinary surgeons and international entries this year clearly demonstrates that EBVM can be practised effectively by all veterinary professionals.

"We make all our evidence-based resources and research available for free to students as well as qualified professionals, so that they can continue to draw on the latest evidence in their practice throughout their professional lives.

"We would like to extend our congratulations to this year's winners, and wish our applicants great success in the future."

The winning paper is available to read on the Veterinary Evidence website: bit.ly/SAKSHandHygiene. The second and third place papers, along with the other submissions, will be published at a later date. The awards will be presented at the RCVS Day Honours and Awards virtual event in September.

The Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2021 are now open to submissions. All undergraduates studying veterinary medicine, veterinary nursing, veterinary bioscience or bioveterinary science are eligible to apply.

Further information is available on the RCVS Knowledge website: bit.ly/VEstudentawards

RCVS listed as one of top 5 places for women to work in the UK

The RCVS has been rated as one of the top medium-sized organisations in the UK for women to work in.

The RCVS was rated number 5 in the medium employer category (covering organisations with between 51 and 250 employees) in the Great Place to Work Foundation's Best Workplaces for Women awards.

The awards looked at a number of areas to assess the quality of a workplace for women including pay, recognition, fairness, development, representation in senior leadership, and policies around leave and flexible working for those with caring responsibilities.

The College has recently strengthened its policies around flexible- and home-working and also carries out regular audits on pay, other work-based benefits and recognition.

Speaking of the results Lizzie Lockett (pictured right), RCVS CEO, commented: "I am delighted that we were ranked as the fifth-best medium-sized UK organisation for women and it demonstrates the great strides we have made over the past few years to make the RCVS a fairer and more flexible workplace and one in which everyone can thrive and get the recognition they deserve.

"With a majority female Senior Team and workforce, it is important that we can demonstrate that this is a great working environment for women and that we are leading the way with our diversity and inclusion agenda."

The full listings for the Workplaces for Women awards can be found on the Great Place to Work Foundation's website.

VN Futures School Ambassadors Pilot temporarily suspended

The decision has been made to suspend the VN Futures School Ambassadors Pilot until the 1st September, when the new school year is due to start, at which point the situation will be reviewed.

The aim of the pilot is to develop a selection of resources for provision of school talks, and ideas for approaches to educating schoolchildren on a career in veterinary nursing. This has been enabled through the recruitment of eight ambassadors who attended training in November 2019 and who have been communicating about the scheme and developing their presentations and supporting resources.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, veterinary nurses have been under increased pressure in the work environment, and in some cases, in also providing home-schooling for children, and this also impacted on the school ambassadors and their understandable need to prioritise work and other life challenges over extra activities.

Since most schoolchildren are also not returning to school until September (and this will also be dependent on developments over the coming weeks), this has a further impact on the ability of the pilot scheme to perform its work.

The end-date of the pilot will also be moved forward to offer sufficient time for the resources to be tried and tested, and feedback gained from schoolchildren, school staff and the ambassadors themselves.

VN Futures is also considering development of online 'virtual' school talks, which may be an approach that is necessitated by the pandemic, and in terms of a 'silver lining' may provide opportunity to reach more schoolchildren.

Supporting resources such as information leaflets and posters are continuing to be developed and refined during this time by the VN Futures Project Manager, Jill Macdonald and the communications team at the RCVS.

We hope to be able to get back to you soon with further updates, and if you are interested in this area of work, then please do contact us.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATES

Quarantine restrictions and travel corridors

Following the government's announcement of travel corridors on 10 July, we have updated our FAQ relating to quarantine restrictions on returning to the UK. Whilst UK border rules state that anyone returning from overseas (excluding Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) must self-isolate for 14 days after arrival, there are travel corridor exemptions in place for each of the devolved nations, subject to review dependent on the level of risk for certain countries/territories. Where travel corridors do not apply, certain veterinary professionals returning to the UK from overseas may be exempt from quarantine.

Face coverings in veterinary practices

From today (24 July), it is mandatory to wear face coverings in a number of settings including retail shops, supermarkets and on public transport, with requirements varying between the devolved nations. Although the government has not made it a mandatory requirement to wear face coverings in veterinary practices, some practices do operate out of retail premises where coverings are mandatory. The government has also strongly advised the wearing of face coverings in enclosed public spaces where social distancing is not possible and where people come into contact with people they would not normally meet.

Report on third COVID impact survey published

We have published the report on our third survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on veterinary businesses. The survey was held between 12 and 16 June and was sent to the 3,139 UK veterinary practices for which we hold a unique email address.

In total it gathered 196 responses (a response rate of 6%) compared to the 532 responses to the initial survey conducted between 3 and 7 April (a response rate of 17%) and 251 responses to the second survey conducted between 1-5 May (an 8% response rate).

Some of the key changes from the latest survey identified in the report were that:

Generally, this survey indicates an improving picture with a marked increase in practices running a 'near normal caseload' and practice turnover data reflect a shift back towards normality.

Fewer staff are self-isolating, with around 15% of practices having veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses self-isolating/or with Covid-19, compared with 30% in the first survey and 20% in the second survey.

As expected with the improvement in practice turnover and workload, fewer practices have staff on furlough. The modal (most frequent) response for the percentage of staff furloughed was 11-25% for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in this survey. This is in contrast to the previous two surveys where the modal response was 26-50% for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

Lizzie Lockett, RCVS CEO, commented: "This latest survey has demonstrated a continuation of the previous survey's positive trends including an increase in practice turnover with more practices approaching a 'near normal caseload' and with a reduction in the number of practices impacted by staff self-isolating or with confirmed cases of Covid-19.

"In this survey, we also asked about what difficulties practices may be experiencing with EMS placements for vet students and VN training placements as a result of Covid-19, and this will help us to understand how we can better support students and practices in these areas.

"We will continue to monitor the situation via these regular surveys, with the next one planned for later this summer. I would urge as many practices as possible to continue to complete them, so that we can build up a stronger evidence-base on how veterinary businesses have been affected and how they are recovering.

"This information is not only vital for our own policy decisions but also allows us to present a stronger case to the Government and other public bodies where we wish to influence the decisions they make that will impact the veterinary professions and businesses."

All three survey reports can be read in full at www.rcvs.org.uk/coronavirus-resources.

RCVS Covid-19 Taskforce extends remote prescribing guidance

The RCVS Council Covid-19 Taskforce yesterday (25 June 2020) decided to extend by six weeks our temporary guidance that allows veterinary surgeons to prescribe prescription-only veterinary medicines (POM-Vs) remotely, without first having physically examined the animal, subject to a number of conditions and safeguards being in place.

RCVS Council originally decided to change the supporting guidance to the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct in March, in view of the nationwide lockdown measures in place at that time due to the coronavirus pandemic. This enabled veterinary practices to continue to provide the animal-owning public with veterinary services, a proportion of which via remote means, whilst safeguarding the health of their teams and clients.

As this position was due for review no later than 30 June, the Taskforce considered a number of key factors in relation to this guidance including: whether all types of veterinary practices could operate face-to-face under current distancing guidance; the risk factors associated with remote prescribing, in terms of animal health and welfare; and, a return to fuller practice caseloads across all types of species.

The Taskforce also considered the varying ability of clients to travel to practices, both in the case of those who might still be shielding and in view of the different rules in place across the four nations of the UK; the potential impact of quarantine relating to track and trace on practices; and, the need to ensure inclusivity of staff teams and enable as many as possible to contribute to the practice workload.

RCVS President Niall Connell (pictured), who chairs the Taskforce, said: "After reviewing a number of relevant factors, we agreed that the UK, and UK veterinary practice, had not yet sufficiently returned to 'normal' to enable the temporary change in guidance to be halted.

"We were particularly aware that there are still quite distinct differences in how veterinary practices around the country are able to cope with the ongoing restrictions, especially around social distancing in the workplace, so we decided the simplest and safest approach would be to maintain the status quo for a further six weeks.

"We will therefore review the temporary guidance again no later than 6 August, but would also like to reassure practices that they will be given at least three weeks' notice of any change."

The Taskforce further agreed that the current flowchart – produced to help practices decide whether or not to carry out certain work during the pandemic – did not need to be changed for the time being.

Should practices feel that remote consulting was not the most effective option they could move to face-to-face consulting, providing they could do it safely with appropriate social/physical distancing.

We have also commissioned an independent study into individuals' experiences of remote consulting and remote prescribing during the pandemic. The main purpose of this survey is to see if there are any immediate safety, quality or efficiency issues relating to this renewed temporary exemption to RCVS guidance that need to be taken into account.

A secondary objective is to capture data on individuals' experiences to inform our wider review of 'under care' and 24/7 out-of-hours emergency cover, planned to resume later this year.

The study is being undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies, with a survey of UK-practising veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses launching on 26 June 2020 and closing 10 days later.

VN Council approves 'Patient-based Assessment' as alternative to OSCEs

The RCVS Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council has approved an alternative assessment method for those awarding organisations and universities who are unable to provide objectively-structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) under the current social distancing guidelines.

VN Council set up a special OSCE Taskforce in April this year to develop and draw up proposals for a safe yet comprehensive alternative to the OSCEs. This was due to the fact that the exams, which student veterinary nurses need to pass to get their qualifications and join the Register, were being cancelled on the grounds that they could not comply with the social distancing guidelines and were therefore unsafe for students and examiners.

While some awarding organisations and universities have since developed methods of safely holding their OSCEs within social distancing guidelines, others have had to cancel the OSCEs indefinitely on the grounds it would not be safe or practical to hold them.

In response, the Taskforce developed a new 'Patient-based Assessment' (PBA) method, which was approved by VN Council at its meeting on Wednesday 17 June, which will allow student veterinary nurses to prove they meet the Day One Competences and Skills, meaning they are eligible to join the Register as fully qualified veterinary nurses.

Racheal Marshall (pictured right), Chair of VN Council, explains: "After much hard work, deliberation and consideration over a number of different options, we have developed an alternative assessment method for student veterinary nurses that is safe and complies with the social distancing guidelines, while still upholding our standards and ensuring student veterinary nurses are competent to join the Register.

"The alternative, called a Patient-based Assessment, will involve building up a small portfolio of case reports and supporting evidence to prove how those who use this assessment method meet the Day One Competences and Skills. Once this has been signed-off and submitted, students using this assessment method will undertake a detailed and structured discussion about their involvement with the cases they have described.

"There will be two examiners present for the interview, however, students will only have to discuss their cases with one of them. The outcome of the discussion will determine whether students can be awarded their licence to practise qualification and subsequently apply to join the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses."

The alternative assessment method may not be relevant to all student veterinary nurses as they may have an awarding body or university that has decided it can safely hold its OSCEs under the current conditions, or they may be training through the apprenticeship route. Those who are unsure whether this assessment method is applicable to them should contact their educational establishment for further advice and clarification.

Racheal added: "We recognise the difficulties student veterinary nurses have faced and that this has been an unsettling time, so we are pleased that the taskforce and VN Council has come together to develop a workable and deliverable alternative."

A detailed handbook containing further information about the criteria and process for the Patient-based Assessment has been published on the RCVS website. It is recommended all student veterinary nurses read this to get a full understanding of how the assessment method will work. The RCVS Veterinary Nursing Department can also be contacted on VNPBA@rcvs.org.uk

Royal College Day 2020 speeches: outgoing President Niall Connell

My Lord, ladies and gentlemen. I am very proud, and very grateful, to be here today – very much with you in online spirit, if not quite yet in socially distanced body.

This format wasn't quite what I, or I'm sure any of us, imagined. I knew we were looking for a new venue for RCVS Day this year, but no one told me it would be my study. We are living in very strange times indeed.

17 years now with Multiple Sclerosis and I'm still pinching myself that I'm part of this wonderful world of dedicated veterinary professionals. A year ago, I remarked that I never imagined the highlight of my career was still to come, but what a host of highlights it's been.

Now I can imagine being at some event in the future and someone asking, "Hey Niall, How did you get on as RCVS President? What happened in your year?"

"How long have you got?" I shall ask.

The past 12 months have been a whirlwind of wonderful events, celebrations and meeting so many fantastic folk, along with a healthy dose of adrenalin, sleepless nights and interminable Zoom meetings!

We HAVE achieved an enormous amount: much of it responding to the strange situation of the past four months, which I will come on to in a moment, but much of it planned.

Allow me to canter through a few things to give you a wee flavour:

- A packed Fellowship Day in October, showcasing the talents of our Fellows and also the Fellows of the Future.
- A series of innovation evenings hosted by ViVet, our innovation network in August, and our second ViVet Symposium in October.
- We launched our Under Care and Out of Hours review, which aims to ensure that our guidance remains fit for purpose in an ever-changing world.
- Additional cohorts of our very popular Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership MOOC, which has now had approaching 10,000 learner enrolments since inception.
- A series of Mind Matters resilience courses, run jointly with BSAVA; plus our first student mental health roundtable and second mental health research symposium.
- Formal approval, in October, for the University of Surrey's veterinary degree. My congratulations to Chris Proudman and all the team at Surrey.
- In November, a digital marketing campaign to raise awareness of the Practice Standards Scheme, under the theme 'Veterinary care - from your kind of vets'.
- On the education front, VN Council launched new qualification accreditation standards, and we launched a new outcomes-based approach to continuing professional development. Our new 1CPD app has proved very popular, even amongst some of our greatest critics!
- Back in January, a series of sessions at the joint Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Management Group Congress on diversity and inclusion, with a fantastic session chaired by Clare Balding, which reflects the work being carried out by our Diversity and Inclusion Group – more on that shortly.
- Our Graduate Outcomes project bore its first fruit, with Council approving a strong direction of travel for new Day-One Competences and a replacement for the Professional Development Phase.
- I've also been struck by the nature of international cooperation of some of our stand-out moments over the last year and how, true to the motto that accompanies our coat of arms – Vis Unita Fortior – there really is strength through unity.

We are still working towards EU Exit – remember that? I genuinely thought I might become known as 'The Brexit President', although I fear that moniker will now be superseded.

Nevertheless, in October, we signed an historic mutual recognition agreement with the Veterinary Council of Ireland to recognise each other's veterinary degrees.

In the same month, we gained significant international support for our joint statement with the American Veterinary Medical Association to promote and support positive mental health amongst the veterinary community, when it was also signed by

the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association.

Then, in January, we signed a joint statement with BVA and the FVE that the European veterinary community remains united, with the emphasis on the highest standards of care and animal welfare.

An exemplar of our ongoing close ties with our veterinary colleagues across Europe was to be the FVE General Assembly we were due to host jointly with BVA in London in June. But of course, that, along with so many, many other things was forced to change with the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic in March.

At this point, I would like to invite you to join me in pausing for just a few moments to remember all those who have lost their fight with this terrible virus in the UK and around the world in recent months. Thank you very much.

I should like to express my heartfelt condolences to everyone who has lost family members or friends, and to thank, most sincerely, the NHS frontline staff who have risked everything to keep us safe, and all key workers and essential businesses who have joined the national effort to beat this disease.

So, of course from March, everything started to change and, like everyone, we were forced to shift our priorities. The team at Belgravia House rapidly changed its focus from planning, developing and creating, to cancelling, suspending and rescheduling, and all the while getting to grips with not being in Belgravia House anymore.

Initially via Council, and then through dedicated RCVS Council and VN Council Covid-19 Taskforces, we have worked with speed and agility – perhaps not words you would naturally associate with this particular august body – while, and this has been the difficult part, ensuring we continue to maintain robust standards.

It would have been easy just to tear up the rule books, but we are a statutory regulator, so we had to make a huge raft of swift and pragmatic temporary changes whilst ensuring they will stand up to scrutiny once this is all over.

A few highlights of these changes included:

Council agreement to permit temporarily the remote prescribing of veterinary medicines in certain circumstances
Amended EMS requirements for veterinary students, in consultation with the Veterinary Schools Council
(If you'll permit me a small, but important aside, here. The training provided by the UK's vet schools is excellent and the College's education oversight is robust. Our new graduates are among the best the UK has ever produced. They deserve the best support and guidance as they start in their new careers and I wish them well.)

To continue, we...

- developed online registration processes for overseas vets and nurses, and allowed new graduates to postpone registration until they had a job;
- introduced phased payment of fees and waiving of late fee for veterinary surgeons;
- reduced by 25% the CPD requirements for vets and VNs in 2020;
- postponed disciplinary hearings, Practice Standards Scheme assessments and vet school accreditations;
- lobbied government about student caps and furlough arrangements;
- devised an innovative replacement for the VN practical examination – the new patient-based assessment;
- changed arrangements for Statutory Membership Examination candidates;
- run a monthly survey on the impact of Covid-19 on practice, which has helped inform our decisions, and recently launched another into practitioners' experiences of remote prescribing;
- launched new resources and support during the pandemic around leadership, reflection and mental health; and,
- coordinated the donation of equipment and ventilators by veterinary practices, advised on volunteering roles and even donated our spare computing power to an international effort to understand the structure of Covid-19.
- As you might imagine, there has been a huge increase in our Advice Team's output, producing guidance on what work can be carried out, key worker status, quarantine, social distancing, and critical businesses, amongst many other things.

And, at the same time, our communications efforts have skyrocketed, with a multitude of email and social media updates, dedicated online coronavirus advice hubs for the professions and the public, and even a number of radio interviews and podcasts by yours truly.

Very sadly, we have also had to postpone or cancel a huge number of events – the dates in my diary disappeared like tears in

rain. Some, like the FVE General Assembly, should return in 2021, whilst others we're moving online, like our AGM today.

We have worked closely with BVA throughout, producing a number of joint statements to help guide and support the professions, particularly through those acutely challenging and confusing first months.

I was particularly pleased and privileged to join BVA President Daniella Dos Santos – who is putting in a real shift – in a webinar at the height of the outbreak with an audience of over 3,000 listeners.

RCVS Officers have met frequently not only with BVA and its divisions, but also Veterinary Schools Council, the UK's CVOs, Defra, APHA, FSA, FSS, and every stakeholder you could possibly imagine.

We are 'Teamed' and 'Zoomed' to the max, and "You're on mute!" has become an all-too familiar catchphrase, under Zippy's ever-watchful eye.

Our professions will, however, get through this, thanks to the incredible veterinary surgeons and nurses working in general practice, specialist practice, education, government, laboratories, and everywhere in between. Working in strange situations and enduring personal hardship, emotional upheaval and financial turmoil, yet still doing their very best for our animals.

I was heartened to see this huge effort and commitment publicly recognised by Defra Secretary of State George Eustice in his open letter of thanks to the professions earlier this year.

To my vet and VN colleagues across the UK: you absolutely deserve the trust and respect placed in you by the public. I salute you.

So, what of the future?

Well, we will hear a little more, shortly, about our exciting new five-year strategic plan, which in spite of everything that has happened recently, is already well underway.

RCVS Council recently agreed for the recommendations of our Legislation Working Party, chaired by Professor Stephen May, to go out for full consultation. After more than a dozen meetings with BVA and BVNA over three years, and looking at 56 different reform proposals, this is the most comprehensive review of the Veterinary Surgeon's Act since 1966. It aims at ensuring RCVS is a modern, principle-based regulator with far-reaching possibilities for our professions.

I will continue to chair the Diversity and Inclusion Group, whose vital work we unfortunately have been forced to pause during the pandemic.

We must reach out to individuals and communities who may not be aware of opportunities to work with us and are facing obstacles in their path. We must improve, support and protect diversity in the workplace and not be afraid to call out if things are not right or safe for any individual. We will continue to work with other groups to break down barriers to a more diverse profession with regard to selection, recruitment and retention.

We need role models, mentors and guides. We want diverse role models into schools to improve awareness of our professions and assist opportunities to join with us. Once in our veterinary world, everyone must enjoy the same opportunities and rewards, without ever fearing prejudice or abuse.

And so, in closing, I hope you will indulge me in a few personal thank yous.

I owe everything to my parents who sadly are gone. I absolutely could not have managed this year without the support and hard work of my wife, Colette. Thank you, Colette. And the support of my children, Andrew, Natalie and James and three grandchildren!

I'm very grateful for the support and hard work of my fellow Council members. Council is at its finest when it is debating and deciding on complicated issues with integrity, tolerance and respect, and we have had plenty of such debates these past 12 months.

The team at Belgravia House (or rather, scattered across London) and our assessor team around the country do a fantastic job too. On behalf of the Councils and wider professions, I should like to thank them sincerely for everything they do, and for their long hours and commitment to get the RCVS work done, in all its myriad forms. And raising £3,700 for Shelter in the 2.6 Challenge in their spare time. Brilliant!

One particular person, however, deserves special mention. A certain Elizabeth Ann Lockett, our CEO.

Lizzie has been simply magnificent, working incredibly hard to support me, my fellow Officers and Council, and to guide and lead the whole staff team. She has skilfully and unassumingly steered the College through these recent extremely challenging times, whilst continuing to achieve so much more for our professions along the way. She is the epitome of integrity, decency and compassion with a mind as sharp as an obsidian scalpel blade.

Thank you, Lizzie and your whole team, and thank you, everyone, for joining us today.

Royal College Day 2020 speeches: incoming RCVS President Mandisa Greene

Fellow Council members and colleagues, RCVS team, invited guests, and all my family and friends (especially those of you who live in another time zone and woke up exceptionally early for this event) and in particular my mum and dad – good morning, and thank you for being here. I am very grateful for this enormous privilege.

When the College was founded in 1844, it would have been unthinkable that a woman, let alone a black woman, would become President of the institution one day. I am immensely proud of this achievement and, while it clearly demonstrates progress, there is still plenty to do in widening access to our professions.

As it happens, I am also the first RCVS President to be invested at a virtual AGM. It seems I just keep making history!

I want to use the platform I now have (the Presidency, not Zoom), and my passion for veterinary medicine and animal welfare, to inspire others who may think the veterinary professions are 'not for people like me'. I want to help change their mind set and see that this is something they can achieve.

To help illustrate this, I would like to share with you a very short story...

I met Reanne – a young lady from an Afro-Caribbean background – about 18 months ago. Like me, she always knew she wanted to be a vet, but life didn't quite take her directly to vet school.

When I met Reanne, she had some hesitations and worries about vet school. Over a number of conversations with her, I was able to share my experience of vet school, and reassure her about what the journey would be like.

I am happy to say Reanne messaged me last week with the news that she had passed all her first year exams and is well on the way to achieving her dreams.

Having a role model, even simply just talking to someone with similar life experiences and shared goals, really can make all the difference.

I come on board as President during the early stages of our new five-year strategic plan, which our CEO, Lizzie, has expertly driven and nurtured over the past couple of years. Council approved this back in January and we were just starting to put in place operational plans when the virus struck and we all went into lockdown.

There has been some frustration that we haven't been able to get on with projects within the plan as quickly as we would have liked, but it has still informed our recent work throughout the pandemic.

At its core, are streams of work around how we do things, as much as what we do – which focused on the four Cs of compassion, clarity, courage and confidence – and we have tried to apply all these in our decision making during the pandemic.

Our new plan is forward looking, and includes a people strategy that will develop our talent, diversity, leadership, and culture. It will offer us a framework to take stock of our potential and be ambitious about the challenges ahead.

These challenges include the ongoing pandemic, our upcoming exit from the EU, a potential office move, and our three hugely significant consultations on 'under care' and 24/7 cover, our regulatory framework and all the Legislation Working Party's recent recommendations.

Now, you would think these might be quite enough undertakings for one year, but there are a few other actions within the strategic plan that I am also keen to prioritise over the next 12 months.

Whilst the impact of factors such as EU exit remain unclear, I would today like to signal my ongoing support and admiration for our EU colleagues. I would like them not just to be able to stay and work in the UK, but to also choose to stay here, by demonstrating that we are both a profession and a community that recognises and appreciates their vital contribution.

I also want to say to general practitioner vets who may have long felt unheard, we hear you. During these 12 months, we will work towards improving our engagement with general practitioners and highlight the invaluable contribution of GP vets within our profession.

And, as I've said, I also take the Presidential baton from Niall to champion a more diverse and inclusive profession with renewed intention, and look forward to playing my part in our upcoming Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan.

As recent weeks and the Black Lives Matter movement have highlighted, there is more to be done, and we are committed to doing the work necessary. It is essential that we support all members of the veterinary team to work in an environment that is free from discrimination and racism.

Leading our fantastic professions through such times, alongside my fellow council members, an amazing RCVS team, and all our stakeholders and supporters, is such an honour.

There is much to do, but we must continue to forge ahead and aspire to greatness. We shall move forward with clarity and compassion in these times of uncertainty, and with the courage and confidence to tackle the difficult challenges and exciting opportunities ahead.

Thank you.

Royal College Day 2020 speeches: outgoing VN Council Chair Racheal Marshall

Thank you very much, and good morning everyone. I am very honoured to speak to you today, and give a brief overview of a few things that have been happening in my last twelve months as Chair of the Veterinary Nurses Council.

In my speech last July, I looked at where the veterinary nursing profession had come from and what had been achieved. I talked about the need to galvanize the next generation of veterinary nursing leaders to ensure that our profession continues to move forwards, so it was fantastic to see a record number of candidates in this year's Veterinary Nurse Council elections. For the first time ever, we had more candidates than the vets, with the highest turn out of voters.

We need to keep up this momentum, as there are now over 18,500 VNs on the register and, whilst taking on roles in the wider profession is not for everyone, we need to encourage all nurses to engage with their profession.

Whilst it is good to reflect on what we have achieved, today I want to concentrate on the future of the veterinary nursing profession.

In the recently published report from the Legislation Working Party, it is fantastic to see that there are a number of recommendations which would lead to significant positive change to the veterinary nursing profession. These include protection of the VN title, separating employment from delegation, and enhancing the role of the veterinary nurse.

The RCVS is also exploring additional recommendations to enhance the VN profession including research into VN prescriber role.

However, the publication of this report is just the first step; later this year there will be a full consultation with the professions and the public.

This is the opportunity for all nurses to provide their feedback and I urge every veterinary nurse to read the report, complete the consultation and encourage all their colleagues to get involved as well.

Things will not change if we sit back and rely on someone else to make it happen. We all have a part to play in the future of veterinary nursing.

One of the highlights of being VN Council chair is leading VN Day – our admission ceremonies at which veterinary nurses new to the Register are formally welcomed to the profession and invited to make their professional declaration in front of family and friends.

Unfortunately, due to social distancing requirements, we have been unable to hold VN Day so far this year, so I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate all of the nurses who have joined the Register in 2020 and I wish you all the very best in your future careers.

Social distancing measures have also meant that some OSCE examinations had to be cancelled resulting in some student nurses being delayed in completing their qualification and entering the Register.

I appreciate that this has been a difficult period for many students and their tutors. We worked hard, and considered all feedback, to establish an alternative assessment whilst ensuring that we maintained standards. Thank you to everyone who contacted us to share their views.

I am pleased that the decision in the VN Council meeting in June was to approve the proposal. I would like to thank every member of the taskforce for their invaluable contributions, and acknowledge the vast amount of work undertaken by the RCVS veterinary nursing team. They did an amazing job in writing the proposal and producing all of the guidance in an extremely short timeframe.

The Veterinary Nurses Council has also continued to work with the British Veterinary Nursing Association on the VN Futures project. It is great to see that the Advanced Veterinary Nursing qualifications, which were approved last year, are now being delivered by universities. Thanks to the RCVS web team, the VN Futures Project also has an excellent new website, which provides all the details and updates on the initiative, and is well worth a look.

In order to inspire future generations of veterinary nurses, we launched a pilot group in November working with STEM Learning

with the aim of promoting veterinary nursing in schools.

With the project reaching the end of this cycle, now is the time to consider what comes next. I encourage you to think big and not be short-sighted about what the future of veterinary nursing could be.

It has been a great privilege to be the Chair of VN Council for the last two years. I have working with an amazing group of people on both VN Council and RCVS Council and, of course, the RCVS staff who all do a fantastic job. I would like to thank everyone for their support and guidance.

I would also like to thank my family, friends and work colleagues. I could never have done this without their understanding and encouragement.

Thank you.

Royal College Day 2020 speeches: incoming VN Council Chair Matthew Rendle

Thank you, Racheal, for all your hard work as chair over the last two years, especially in tirelessly supporting veterinary nursing during the pandemic. You have done a great job, thank you.

I am pleased to accept the position of chair for VN Council and have the opportunity to continue the great work that has been achieved by my predecessors. I am honoured to have the opportunity to work both with and for my profession at the highest level, it means the world to me.

In the position of chair, I will continue to keep my fellow nurses very much at heart, whatever the species, environment and role they are working in.

Veterinary nursing is not an easy profession. When I talk to nurses, they often highlight their biggest frustration with the profession is the extensive lack of understanding about our role and what we can and are very capable of doing.

Achieving more clarity on our role as veterinary nurses, at all levels is my priority, as I know resolving this could in turn improve several other chronic issues in our profession.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer some thanks. First, to my Mum and Dad, who made lots of personal sacrifices in the early days that allowed me to train. That unconditional support continues to this day.

Second, like most veterinary nurses, my career has not been without its challenges and I would like to thank those few people who supported and saw value in me, when others did not. You know who you are - thank you.

I would like to end with a quote that I reflect upon frequently when doing my conservation nursing. It's from Baba Dioum, a Senegalese forestry engineer and conservation trail blazer. He said,

In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught.

Thank you.

LWP recommendations

Following the recent report of our Legislation Working Party, we are running a series of features in Vet Record to provide more background to its key recommendations. In the first two, Claire McLaughlan and Liz Cox discuss assuring practice regulation and regulating paraprofessionals.

George Gunn

Founder and partner of Stonehaven Consulting, a global company offering management consultancy services and partnership to large and small life sciences businesses.

I didn't plan to spend my career in industry. I grew up on the Shetland Isles; my father was a shepherd, we lived in a tied cottage and, materially, my family had very little. I wasn't really aware of this as in so many ways we had everything we needed. After qualifying from Edinburgh, I worked in mixed practice and intended to spend my life as a general practitioner. Circumstances intervened and I had to leave practice. I spent six years as a ministry vet, which taught me a lot about big organisations – and also that there is life for vets outside of practice – before I joined the animal health industry.

My industry career began in the UK but I went on to work for companies in Europe and the USA. In 2003, I joined Novartis as Head of Animal Health, North America, before going on to be president and CEO of Novartis Animal Health worldwide from 2004. Subsequently, I headed up the Novartis Consumer Health Division and managed Corporate Social Responsibility for the Novartis Corporation before I retired in 2015.

What are you most proud of and why?

I've done lots of things in my life that I'm happy with, and I've been very lucky in my career, but what I'm most proud of is, honestly, qualifying as a vet. It has been the ticket to everything that I've done since, and without it, I wouldn't have done any of those other things. I never had any great ambition to head up a company, but I found that I could do it. A vet degree equips you with so many transferable skills.

Do you think vets are good at innovation? What barriers to innovation do they face?

Like every profession or group of people, there's a range – some vets are naturally good at innovation, some are not, although that's not to say that they're not good at what they do. Innovation isn't necessarily about making huge leaps. In the pharmaceutical industry, innovation is all about how to sell more product, make more profit for the company, and enhance value to shareholders, but this doesn't just mean making great pharmaceutical breakthroughs. It can be simple ideas, like new packaging or ways of dispensing a product.

I do think that being in practice can dampen vets' innovative side, particularly if you're not naturally innovative. Practice can be routine, you can end up doing the same things, again and again, so you're far more likely to get a bit ground down by routine work and not see opportunities for innovation.

What advice would you give to a vet who has an idea for an innovation and wants to take it to the next level?

For those looking to start a business, the first thing you need is excellent technology – a sound idea. Then you need a professional business plan. This is the biggest stumbling block that start-ups encounter. Very few people can put a good business plan together, predicting what it will cost to get their product to market and then what the return could be once it's there. It's tough and it takes time, but there are people who can help, so my advice would be to seek them out.

Also, I would say "talk to your customers". If I were launching a new brand, would I do so without finding out what my customers wanted? Of course not! I'd use focus groups, surveys, discussions. Use your audience – your current clients, your potential customers – to find out what they want, and then give them what they want.

What are your top tips for start-ups that are looking for funding or investment?

Take the local route first – follow the '3Fs' of finding funding and approach 'family, friends and fools' initially. These people are more likely to be willing to offer you a loan but not want a stake in your company in return. Then look for local innovation funds. You might be surprised what's out there. Only once you're beyond the proof-of-concept stage and at the point of taking on employees, should you start looking for what is loosely termed 'venture capital' funding. However, this funding will be dilutive for the originator's shareholding – venture capital investors will want an equity stake in your company.

Also, be aware that chasing international funding rarely works.

What innovation do you think will offer the greatest opportunity to better the health and welfare of animals?

I think there will be two major developments in the animal health field in the next few years. First, there will be a revolution in animal health biotech just as there has been in human health. In the past, animal health has bumped along on the coat tails of human pharma, but now a number of the big human pharmaceutical companies have separated off their animal health interests. This independence is a good thing, but it has its downsides too. For instance, the animal health industry used to benefit indirectly from the £40 billion spent on human health innovation each year by the former owners of these animal health companies: separating the two industries means this no longer happens. The animal health industry spends about £3 billion annually on innovation and the big animal health companies need innovation to keep growing. They do a brilliant job of what they're already doing, but they need to bring in innovation and will look to animal health biotechs for this.

Second, there are huge opportunities to improve animal health and welfare through increasing digitisation. We have greater ability than ever before to identify and monitor companion and farm animals individually, enabling us to improve disease prevention and enhance individual animal outcomes. Monitors allow us to pick up changes in an animal's movements, rumination, breathing – we can identify an individual that is unwell simply by checking our phones! Monitoring can indicate when a cow is coming into oestrus, so she can be served at the optimum time – and because you know the length of the oestrous cycle, you can predict when she should come into oestrus again. If she doesn't, she's almost certainly pregnant, so do you really need to put her through the stress of handling and examination for the purposes of pregnancy diagnosis? If a machine can do it better, it's better for animal welfare – and it could change vets' lives too.

The profession has understated what can be achieved by measuring outcomes. Vets should be leading the field on animal monitoring, helping their clients gather and use data to improve outcomes for their animals. It will bring about more and more innovation, and I really believe that this is where we should go.

Guen Bradbury

Innovation consultant at Innovia Technology

Guen Bradbury has had a varied career since she graduated from Cambridge in 2011 with an MA in pharmacology alongside her veterinary degree. She's been a small animal practitioner, an anaesthetist, a lecturer, a researcher and a rabbit behaviourist. She now works as an innovation consultant for Cambridge-based consultancy Innovia Technology.

What does an innovation consultant do? That's the million-dollar question! Basically Innovia Technology supports companies with their innovation processes. It's not feasible for even the biggest multinational companies to employ experts across every single area that they might face challenges in, so what we provide is people with a lot of expertise and experience in innovation from a whole host of backgrounds and specialties, who have worked with lots of different companies. We can draw on our experience of what other people are doing, or we may have solved similar problems before, and we have a very structured approach to taking an innovation from a need to a market-ready product. We help companies work through this process.

Does your veterinary training help you with your role?

I think vets have the skills they need for roles in innovation. To start with, we're a selected population, chosen for our curiosity and desire to fix things. Every day of our working lives is about flexibly responding to problems. Then we're trained as consultants – for animals, yes, not innovation but the skill set and process are the same. There's a knowledge-based element, there's the interaction with clients element, and there's the diagnosis and treatment element. All of these are very relevant. For instance, as a vet, I have an in-depth knowledge of how body systems work. So, if I'm thinking about how something might interact with the body, whether it's a consumer product, a cosmetic or a medication, I've got a good understanding of first principles and I can use this to predict what the outcome might be.

I've also got training and experience in taking a full history from an animal-owning client, which can equally be applied to talking to a client in a big company. I can examine a problem in a very structured way, just as I would have approached the examination of a patient, and reach a diagnosis using all the information I've collected. Then I can think about possible treatment options, consider costs, the effort required, and so on, to reach a solution that is right for that specific situation. Veterinary consultation skills are extremely transferable to any sort of consulting work.

There's the problem-solving aspect, too. I've had a lot of practice in evaluating what I need to know to help me solve the biggest problem first. That way I can prioritise the order in which I solve problems and approach a situation in the most efficient way to make sure I reach the right outcome.

What barriers to innovation do vets face?

I actually think the term 'innovation' itself can be a barrier. It's so closely associated with technology and technology is often seen as a threat. That's a real shame – innovation isn't just tech, it's also new ways of working or of doing things.

Another barrier is practice life. Typically, even if the managers of a practice are trying to take a long-term view, the day-to-day focus in practice is on getting things done in the short term. Innovation comes a long way down the priorities list, and unless an organisation encourages buy-in and creates a social opportunity around the innovation process, people won't engage.

There is also a tendency to focus too much on 'an innovation', rather than on a need or a problem. Vets aren't trained to think about how they would use an innovation, they're trained to see a need or a problem and work out how to solve it.

I think that talking about innovation as a core competence at vet school might help. Thinking that we might be good at being a vet, but that we're not innovative doesn't really add up to me. We have the skills we need, and creating an environment that helps us realise this would help us be more innovative.

What advice would you give to someone who is keen to encourage an innovation culture/mindset in their workplace?

Talk – and listen – to everyone. Innovation in an organisation is often approached in one of two ways – from the top down, or from the bottom up. Neither works. With the first, managers decide that something needs to be done to solve a problem, but the problem they identify may not be the problem being felt 'on the ground'. So either people aren't motivated to do anything about it, or the wrong problem gets solved. With the bottom-up approach, the right problem might be identified, but unless

there's a system in place for raising it within the practice, nothing gets done.

So, ideally, you need to have a very open discussion with a spectrum of people. Hold a meeting, perhaps with someone other than a manager running it. Set clear ground rules and flatten any workplace hierarchies so that everyone feels able to speak up. Create a team that can work together to identify a problem that needs solving, assess how this could be done and test possible solutions. That way you have people who have bought in to the process and a team that can identify and solve problem after problem – and in doing so you've created an innovation culture in your workplace.

Why is it important for vets to be proactive about innovation?

The coronavirus pandemic is a really good example of how external events drive change and its impact on the vet profession could be immense. For instance, clients who find themselves unemployed after the current situation eases may decide that pet insurance is an unaffordable luxury. Pet insurance underpins many vet services and, without it, our financial model begins to crack. We could find ourselves facing vet unemployment – something that we've not experienced for many years. We need to be proactive now in thinking of ways to continue serving our clients – whether that is through new technology, new ways of working, or new ways of helping them pay for vet services. The pandemic will undoubtedly drive innovation, and, now more than ever, it is vital that vets are proactive about it. If you can do it well now, you will have an advantage in the future.

What are you most proud of and why?

It's totally non-innovation related! I'm really proud of the fact that I published a textbook on rabbit behaviour. It's a field where there's never going to be any money in it – people aren't going to pay to understand why their rabbit bites them! I was lucky in that I was really interested in rabbit behaviour at a time when there were no resources available on it, so I could be the first. It's opened lots of doors for me in a really interesting area.

Disciplinary Committee refuses to restore former Portsmouth vet to Register

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has rejected the application of a former Portsmouth-based veterinary surgeon to be restored to the Register.

Simon Wood was originally removed from the Register of Veterinary Surgeons on the direction of the Disciplinary Committee in June 2018 following his conviction at Portsmouth Magistrate's Court in December 2017 for possessing indecent images of children.

Following his conviction Mr Wood, who pleaded guilty to three charges of making indecent images of children, was given a community sentence, was fined and was made subject to a sexual harm prevention order for five years.

The restoration hearing for Mr Wood took place from Wednesday 24 to Thursday 25 June. Mr Wood's application for restoration, which was presented on his behalf by his counsel, was based on the argument that Mr Wood was professionally competent to be restored to the Register, that he had strong mitigation for his original conviction (for which he had demonstrated remorse), that he had a low chance of reoffending, had engaged proactively with the Probation Service and rehabilitative courses, and that had completed his community service.

In considering Mr Wood's application, the Disciplinary Committee took into account a number of factors including Mr Wood's acceptance of the Committee's original findings, the seriousness of the original findings, protection of the public, the future welfare of animals in his care should he be restored, the length of time off the Register, his conduct since removal from the Register, efforts by Mr Wood to keep up-to-date with his continuing professional development (CPD), the impact of removal from the Register on Mr Wood and public support for his restoration.

However, on balance, the Committee decided that Mr Wood was not currently fit to be restored to the Register.

Ian Arundale, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "In essence, the Committee decided that the facts of the charge justifying removal from the Register and the underlying criminal behaviour were too serious for Mr Wood to be restored at this time.

"It concluded that because Mr Wood continued to be subject to a sexual harm prevention order, notification requirements for sexual offenders and because he remained on the Barring List by the Disclosure and Barring service until January 2023, he was not fit to be restored to the Register at this time.

"The Committee accepted that Mr Wood had made significant efforts to rehabilitate himself but it was not persuaded that he was fit to be restored to the Register because ancillary orders relating to the underlying criminal offences remained in force.

"The Committee noted that at the time those orders were made Mr Wood was described as having an addiction and although the Committee accepted that there was a low risk of future reoffending, it decided that because the orders were still in place for public protection reasons, Mr Wood was not fit to be restored to the Register."

The full report of Mr Wood's restoration hearing can be found on the dedicated RCVS disciplinary hearings page.

Disciplinary Committee rejects eighth application for restoration from former vet

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has rejected the eighth attempt of a former Kent-based veterinary surgeon to be restored to the Register after he was originally struck off in 1994.

Warwick Seymour-Hamilton was originally removed from the Register following a practice inspection in 1993 which found that his operating theatre “showed a total disregard of basic hygiene and care for animals and was such as to bring the profession into disrepute”.

Since being removed from the Register, Mr Seymour-Hamilton has made applications for restoration in 1995, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Each of these has been rejected.

In his latest restoration application, the hearing for which took place on Tuesday 30 June and Wednesday 1 July, Mr Seymour-Hamilton said that he did not want to re-join the Register in order to practise but, instead, to facilitate his research in the area of herbal medicine.

In considering Mr Seymour-Hamilton's application for restoration, the Committee had to take into account a number of factors such as his acceptance of the findings of the original hearing and their seriousness, protection of the public, the future welfare of animals should he be restored, length of time off the Register, his conduct since removal, efforts to keep up-to-date with veterinary medicine and impact on the individual of being off the Register.

The Committee found that, while Mr Seymour-Hamilton, had accepted some of the findings of the original case, he disagreed with key facts, such as whether or not his surgery was open at the time of the inspection, and showed ‘minimal insight’ into the seriousness of the findings. The Committee also voiced concerns over public protection and animal welfare should he be restored, saying that he had demonstrated little or no understanding of the purpose of regulation and had, furthermore, admitted to, in recent years, spaying two cats at a practice in Calais despite his long absence from the Register and unregistered status as a veterinary surgeon in the UK or France.

In considering his conduct since leaving the Register, the Committee found that Mr Seymour-Hamilton had admitted to a number of instances of conduct which it found ‘reprehensible’. This included carrying out spays; not self-isolating after testing positively for coronavirus and, in fact, travelling through France and Spain in breach of the lockdown put in place due to the pandemic; deliberately trying to re-infect himself with coronavirus and then visiting a vulnerable person without maintaining social distancing; treating his own animals with untested herbal remedies; and using his own remedies to treat people, which, in one case, included a nine-year-old boy in Greece.

In summing up Judith Way, who was chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: “The Committee has concluded that he has not satisfied it that he is fit to be restored to the Register. He has exhibited a disregard for regulation and compliance with the law. He lacks an understanding as to why he has not been restored in the past. He has not set about addressing any of his shortcomings. He relies wholeheartedly on his research, yet he does not support that research with any real peer-reviewed publications and he fails to acknowledge the consequences of being out-of-practice for so long. He has misplaced confidence in his own abilities and does not recognise that his approach and/or actions can represent a danger to animals and to the public. The Committee has therefore reached the conclusion that the applicant is not a fit person to be restored to the Register.”

The full findings of the restoration hearing for Mr Seymour-Hamilton can be found on our [Disciplinary Hearings](#) page.