

Celebration time!

Join us to celebrate 50 years of veterinary nursing

It's 50 years since the inception of training for veterinary nurses – or registered animal nursing auxiliaries as they were then – and veterinary nursing has come a long way.

There are currently 8,346 registered veterinary nurses (RVNs), and 1,542 who remain on the List. The College has been accused of sidelining the listed nurses: that's not true, but we are keen to for them to make the jump to the Register. What's the difference? While in law both listed nurses and those who are on the Register, which is a subset of the List, are able to carry out the same tasks (under supervision or direction where appropriate), RVNs have taken the additional step of becoming accountable for their professional practice. That means committing to keeping their skills and knowledge up to date by means of continuing professional development, following the *Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* and, since 1 April 2011, agreeing to abide by a disciplinary system.

It's testament to the growing professional nature of veterinary nursing that veterinary nurses, through their Veterinary Nurses Council, have decided that it is time to embrace a regulatory system. The fact that it is non-statutory, and entered into on a voluntary basis, makes it all the more meaningful.

So, if you are a listed nurse, why not mark your profession's 50th anniversary by deciding to stand up, be counted and join the Register? Transfer is free: contact the Veterinary Nursing Department on vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

The next step is for legal recognition of veterinary nurses and the Register – something that the Veterinary Nurses Council is keen to achieve, although realistically this is a long-term aim. Both the title 'veterinary surgeon' and the area of work carried out by veterinary surgeons are protected in law. For the same ever to be true of veterinary nurses, then the question of precisely 'what is a veterinary nurse and what is veterinary nursing' must be answered. Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 specifies the conditions under which certain aspects of veterinary surgery and medicine may be delegated to listed (and registered) veterinary nurses, but all veterinary nurses would agree that there is more to nursing than this. In fact, if only the Schedule 3 tasks are taken account of, this sells nurses short, as 'mini vets', rather than allowing nursing to stand as a profession in its own right.

The question of the extent, and limits, of veterinary nursing, is just one of the issues on the agenda at our 50th anniversary seminar, to be held on 23 June at Belgravia House in London. Under the theme 'Looking back, stepping forward' we will be celebrating the achievements of the first half-century of veterinary nursing, and looking at where we go from here. With speakers from the UK, Ireland and Norway, we aim to put our domestic situation into a European perspective. Tickets are free and, as we go to press, there are some remaining: please contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk as soon as possible.

There's more about our year of celebration at www.rcvs.org.uk/VNat50.

In this issue: fees frozen, new Postgraduate Deans, motions at Council, election results and retirements, Share Jones Lecturer, Vet2011, Code consultations, doping warning, new PPE certificate, Nottingham recommendation, accreditation update, European news, vet school round-up, Congress dates, RCVS Day, PI Lay Observers' Report, DC hearings, first RVN PIC Report, Trust updates.

Fees on ice

No increases for 2012

The RCVS and VN Councils have each agreed that all registration and retention fees should be frozen for 2012. This follows on from the Councils' decisions last year that fees for 2011 should increase less than inflation, and is intended to help mitigate the impact on veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses of the difficult economic climate. **Members who are over 70 and who cease practising do not have to pay fees if they wish to remain on the Register.**

The RCVS financial policy remains that fee increases should be small and incremental in order to avoid a need for periodic sharp fee hikes resulting from inflationary pressures.

	2012 fees (£)
Veterinary surgeons	
UK-practising retention fee	299
Overseas-practising retention fee	150
Non-practising retention fee	49
Non-practising retention fee (over 70 years old)	0
Registration fee	299
Temporary registration fee	299
Restoration fee	299
Restoration fee following voluntary removal	75
Veterinary nurses	
Retention fee	61



Opening Act?

Regulating veterinary service providers

The RCVS is continuing to consider the possibility of revising the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

Specific changes to the College's disciplinary machinery are already in the pipeline, with plans for an order under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006. This will amend the Act so as to require the RCVS Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees to be made up of external veterinary surgeons and lay members appointed by the RCVS Council. Following a transitional period, the Committees will cease to include Council members. The bodies that consider allegations of misconduct on the part of veterinary surgeons will thus be seen to be independent of the RCVS Council and detached from policy discussions. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs plans to launch a public consultation later this year before placing the proposed legislative reform order before Parliament for approval.

The RCVS carried out its own consultations in 2003 and 2005 to seek views on the arguments for more extensive changes to the Act. Following the 2005 review, the debate came to appear rather

academic, because it was made clear to the College that there was no early prospect of Government legislation to rewrite the Act. Last autumn, however, the present Minister, Jim Paice MP, asked the College to prepare detailed proposals for new arrangements for regulating all providers of veterinary services – veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians.

The RCVS has been committed for many years to seeking full statutory regulation of veterinary nurses and recognition of veterinary nursing as a profession, but there is more than one way in which these objects might be achieved. For veterinary technicians and other practitioners such as physiotherapists there is a problem of small numbers, and any form of regulation needs to be proportionate to the need. The College's Legislation Working Party has taken an initial look at the issues, and the ideas it has formulated will now be considered further, along with other possible changes. It was noted that the VN Council would be developing its ideas about what might be included in a statutory framework for registered veterinary nurses.

Supporting role

Postgraduate Deans to support new vets



Two new Postgraduate Deans have been appointed to advise and monitor new veterinary surgeons progressing through the Professional Development Phase (PDP). These are Jill Hubbard (left), a partner at Cbyn Veterinary Surgery, Caernarfon, and organiser of BVA North Wales' young graduate meetings, and Nicky Paull (right), a former BVA President with extensive experience of running veterinary practices and understanding of the needs of veterinary graduates.

The PDP is the first step in continuing professional development and it applies to every newly qualified veterinary surgeon. It consists of an online record which the vet completes, and is signed off by a Postgraduate Dean. This helps new vets and their employers check that sufficient experience is

being gained so that the vet can progress from the 'Day-One competencies' of a new graduate to those expected of a vet with about a year's in-practice experience.

Jill and Nicky join existing Deans, Professor Agnes Winter and Julian Wells, and replace Professor David Noakes and Stephen Ware, who are retiring from the role having served since 2007, when PDP first became compulsory.

"The PDP is the first step in continuing professional development."

Nicky Paull comments: "The development of young veterinary graduates has been of special interest to me for some years. In employing young veterinary surgeons, meeting recent graduates through my political work and the time spent with undergraduates through extra-mural studies and the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons' final year student seminars in Lancaster, I'm aware of the need for help and guidance for the development of the young vets who are joining our profession. For some it is an easy step, but for others it is not so."

With over 40 applicants, the standard of applications for these posts was high, and we are grateful to all those who applied.

Decisions, decisions – process under review

Motions at Council highlight concerns

Two notices of motion were laid at the June Council meeting. The first, proposed by Professor Sheila Crispin (pictured) and seconded by Beverley Cottrell, considered the process for the introduction of the recent rebranding, in the context of how decisions are made by Council. It fell into two parts. The first requested that all important decisions are made by Council in a public meeting. It was discussed that, given there are only three Council meetings a year (March, June and November), and that convening additional Council meetings would cost approximately £24,000 a time, the sentiment of the motion might be met by requesting that all important decisions are made by Council. This allows for decisions to be made between meetings, electronically or otherwise. This part of the motion was carried as amended.

The second part of the motion requested that the Disciplinary Committee be allowed to continue to use the College coat of arms on its documentation. The designation of the coat of arms was discussed, with some feeling that it ought properly only to be used in relation to Charter activities (such as postgraduate education) rather than activities carried out under

statute; others felt it lent the gravitas that was appropriate to the Disciplinary Committee. The President reassured Council that the coat of arms was continuing to be used on certificates and more ceremonial items - such as the invitation to RCVS Day (pictured).

Professor Crispin cast some doubt over the robustness of the research carried out in order to establish an evidence base for the change in corporate identity but, equally, comments were made about the importance of taking proper account of professional advice that had been sought, and paid for, by the College.

Given that wheels are in motion to make the Disciplinary Committee (and Preliminary Investigation Committee) more independent, an amendment was proposed by past-President Jill Nute that the issue be deferred and reconsidered as part of the future positioning and identity of the re-constituted Committees, and perhaps as part of a wider discussion about the use of the coat of arms. This was agreed by Council on a vote.

The second, somewhat related, motion was proposed by Bob Partridge and seconded by Col Neil Smith, and requested a 'Management Structure Working Party' be set up to assess the current

senior management of the College and the decision-making process, and make recommendations to Council. In discussion, the point was raised that the President had already tasked a small team of past Presidents to look at similar issues, and that the group's report was awaited. He proposed that lay members Judith Webb and Richard Davis be co-opted to this group, to add an important external point of view. This was agreed by Council.

The President acknowledged the importance of proper decision-making processes being in place, a view backed up by many who spoke during the debate, and assured Council members that appropriate changes would be made on the advice of the group. The motion was withdrawn by Mr Partridge, on the understanding that an explanation of, and, if appropriate, apology for, the overspend in relation to the Lower Ground Floor building works and the database implementation would be given to members in due course.





Sterling service

At the June Council meeting, President Peter Jinman paid tribute to retiring Council members Roger Eddy (pictured) and Alison Bruce.

An elected veterinary member of Council since 1991, Roger Eddy has served on all of the College committees and chaired many of them. He was College President from 2000-1, not an easy time, as it coincided with the foot and mouth disease crisis. Peter Jinman said that Council and the profession owed Mr Eddy 'a huge debt'.

Meanwhile, Alison Bruce has served as a lay member appointed by the University of Glasgow since 2002. A valued Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, she has brought an important external perspective to Council business, and the President thanked her for all of her hard work.

Interest rates lowered?

Council election turnouts fall

Following rises in turnouts in recent years, voting figures dropped markedly in 2011 in both RCVS and VN Councils elections, to 15.9% (3,887 voters) and 7.6% (723 voters) respectively. The previous turnouts were 18.8% (in 2010) and 11.2% (in 2009).

For the first time in eight years, all six successful RCVS Council candidates have served on Council before: Sheila Crispin, Sandy Trees, Bob Moore, Mark Elliott, Lynne Hill and Beverley Cottrell (although Sandy Trees is currently an appointed, rather than an elected, member).

For VN Council, one existing member – Liz Branscombe – was returned and two new members have been elected: Elizabeth Cox and Tanya Caley. An additional vacancy arose on VN Council this year due to an existing member retiring early; hence, Tanya Caley, as third-place candidate, will take up that seat for the remaining one year of the term.

“Congratulations to all successful candidates, who I look forward to formally welcoming, or welcoming back, onto the Councils at RCVS Day in July.”

RCVS Registrar Jane Hern said: “It’s certainly disappointing that the turnout has dropped so much this year. It’s unclear whether this is due to lack of time, lack of awareness, or lack of interest, but perhaps anyone who didn’t vote could let us know why, so we can see what we could do to increase participation.

“Nevertheless, my congratulations to all successful candidates, who I look forward to formally welcoming, or welcoming back, onto the Councils at RCVS Day in July, and my commiserations to those who were unsuccessful this time and who I hope won’t be discouraged from standing again next year.”

This year’s chosen charity – the Veterinary Benevolent Fund – will receive a cheque for £922 arising from the College’s pledge to donate 20p for each veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse who cast a vote.



Big is beautiful (and nimble...)

Share Jones lecturer announced

This year’s Share Jones Lecturer will be **Dr John Hutchinson, Reader in Evolutionary Biomechanics in the Department of Veterinary Basic Sciences at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), with a lecture entitled: “Who says you can’t be big and nimble? The fragility of giant land animals”.**

A graduate in Zoology from the University of Wisconsin, Dr Hutchinson completed his PhD at Berkley in the ‘Evolution of hindlimb anatomy and function in theropod dinosaurs’. He is associate editor of the *Journal of Theoretical Biology* and has published widely on subjects ranging from the anatomy and locomotion of dinosaurs and crocodiles, to elephants and broiler chickens.

Dr Hutchinson was proposed for the Share Jones Lectureship by the RVC’s former Principal, Professor Quintin McKellar. The Lectureship was founded at the behest of Professor Share Jones, one of the founders of the University of Liverpool’s Faculty of Veterinary Science, and is bestowed biennially upon a lecturer of special eminence in veterinary anatomy.

The lecture will take place on the evening of 23 November in the Great Hall at the Royal Veterinary College’s Camden campus, and will be followed by refreshments. All veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and students are welcomed. Entry is by free ticket, on a first-come, first-served basis: for more information, please contact Fiona Harcourt on 020 7202 0773 or f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.

Preparation is everything

Online prep for student VNs

If your practice offers VN student placements, then feel free to point your students towards an online resource drawn up by the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) in collaboration with the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. Called the 'VN Online Clinical Placement Tool,' this is designed to help student VNs prepare for, and understand, the expectations of a practice environment – to the benefit of all concerned. Once completed, students can print out a certificate, so you could ask them to do this before arriving on placement.

"We produced this in collaboration with veterinary nurses at the RVC's Veterinary Nursing School," says Sarah Baillie, a senior lecturer at the RVC and part of the team that drew up a similar resource for veterinary students going on extra-mural studies (EMS). "We used the vet students' 'EMS Driving Licence' as a model and spoke to veterinary nurses and students in practice and at the RVC to produce a VN version – the idea is to help student VNs get the most from their placements."

Student veterinary nurses – and anyone else – can try it out at www.live.ac.uk/vn_placement.



Initial decision

VN Council agrees on postnominals

Postnominals for veterinary nurses will be simplified going forward, according to a decision made by VN Council in May.

The new Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing is a single qualification with multiple pathways (currently small animal and equine, with a mixed pathway coming soon – see page 9), as opposed to the NVQ system, under which there were separate small animal and equine qualifications. Those achieving the Level 3 Diploma will therefore be given the postnominals RVN only, with no variations.

The ongoing use of REVN and EVN will be limited to those who have qualified by the equine NVQ route and those achieving the Level 3 Diploma via the transitional pathway.



World Veterinary Year – what's all the fuss about?

Celebrating 250 years of veterinary medicine

Nancy de Briyne, Deputy Executive Director, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)

“Happy birthday and my very best wishes for the next 250 years!” With these words, John Dalli, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, formally opened the celebration of World Veterinary Year – ‘Vet2011’ – on 24 January in France.

The official opening ceremony took place at the historical site of the Palais des Congrès in Versailles, the former residence of the French kings. It was here that, 250 years ago, Claude Bourgelat (see page 15) managed to convince King Louis XV to establish the first ever veterinary school – a landmark in the development of veterinary education and the veterinary profession.

The planning of World Veterinary Year commenced around a couple of years ago. When Professor Jean-François Chary, Inspector General of the French Ministry of Agriculture, presented the idea of Vet2011 to the FVE Board in 2008 and asked us to participate, we had no hesitation in wholeheartedly supporting the initiative.

Vet 2011 provides an excellent opportunity to raise public awareness about the importance of our profession which has been serving humankind for 250 years. It presents the chance to demonstrate that veterinary surgeons are in the unique position of being the only medical professionals educated to protect the health of both animals and people. Vets are not only trained to protect the health and welfare of pets and livestock, as well as zoo, exotic, competition and laboratory animals, but they play a vital role in environmental protection, food safety and public health.

Nearly six months into this celebratory year and Vet2011 is already a huge success. An initial aim was to hold at least one event in 60 countries around the world. So far, however, more than 350 events are planned in over 70 countries across six continents! These include such diverse events as a student essay competition in New Zealand, a national veterinary congress in India, an international conference (including camel racing!) in Sudan, a veterinary careers day in South Africa, a specially commissioned veterinary film in China and an exhibition of veterinary artists in Turkey.

Vet 2011 is also an opportune time to consider the future of the veterinary profession over the next 250 years, a topic that was discussed at the second world conference on veterinary education, held from 13-15 May in Lyon. Delegates concluded that in the light of the challenges facing society, the veterinary profession is more important than ever. Aside from their traditional role in animal health, veterinary surgeons will have to stay on the front line in ensuring food of animal origin is safe to eat and preventing the transmission of serious zoonotic diseases.

At this conference, Tjeerd Jorna, the President of the World Veterinary Association (WVA), commented: “Let the achievements of our profession over the last 250 years be an inspiration for the continuing development of the veterinary profession: a profession to be proud of!”

The WVA will also organise the official closure of World Veterinary Year at its World Veterinary Congress in Cape Town, on 10-14 October, bringing to a close a year of celebration and reflection on the future role for the international veterinary profession, under Vet2011's motto: “Vets for Health, Vets for Food and Vets for the Planet!”

The FVE is a European umbrella organisation representing 46 national veterinary organisations (including the RCVS and the BVA) across 38 European countries. It aims to unite the European veterinary profession for the benefit of animal health, animal welfare and public health.

VNs views valued

Draft VN Code ready for consultation

VN Council has now agreed the new draft Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses for consultation. In the March 2011 issue of RCVS News it was reported that the Guide Review Working Party was drafting the new Code, which would be the subject of separate consultation.

A smaller group within the Working Party was set up under the leadership of RCVS Council and VN Council member Andrea Jeffery (pictured) to specifically review the *Guide* for veterinary nurses. Much of this work has followed the work done by the wider Working Party when drafting the revised Code for veterinary surgeons, but acknowledges the unique position of veterinary nurses. The resulting draft VN Code adopts a similar format to that of the draft Code for veterinary surgeons and introduces a declaration for VNs which underlines the primary importance of animal health and welfare:

"I PROMISE AND SOLEMNLY DECLARE that my constant endeavour will be to ensure the welfare of animals committed to my care and that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to my clients, the public, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons."



The draft Code includes principles-based sections and a five-point list outlining that the overarching duty of veterinary nurses is to ensure the welfare of animals committed to their care and to fulfil their professional duties by maintaining:

1. Professional competence
2. Honesty and integrity
3. Independence and impartiality
4. Client confidentiality and trust
5. Professional accountability

The draft Code also sets out 45 responsibilities for veterinary nurses in the six relationship areas of animals, clients, the profession, the veterinary team or business, the RCVS and the public.

"The resulting draft VN Code adopts a similar format to that of the draft Code for veterinary surgeons."

Now approved, the new draft will soon be available online for members of the whole profession and the public to comment upon. It is important that the VN Code reflects the key issues that pertain specifically to VNs' role in veterinary practice; hence, feedback from relevant organisations, for example, veterinary nursing course providers, will be of particular assistance. In addition, the consultation will highlight the possibility that the Working Party could consider amalgamating the two Codes.

Meanwhile, work will continue on assembling the supporting guidance to illustrate the principles and responsibilities set out in both Codes.

The feedback received from the consultation will help the Working Party to complete the drafting of the new Code for veterinary nurses before approval by VN Council.

Last call for Code contributions

Code consultation ending soon

Our consultation on the new draft Code of Professional Conduct for veterinary surgeons opened on 25 March 2011 to members of the veterinary profession and the public.

Whilst the consultation period is due to close towards the end of June, there is still time for you to send in any comments you may have. The responses already received are currently being considered in detail by the Guide Review Working Party.

The draft Code is a major departure from the style and format of the existing *Guide* so the Working Party is keen to receive as much feedback as possible before completing the draft for approval by RCVS Council.

You can download the consultation paper and draft Code of Professional Conduct from the RCVS website for another couple of weeks. Please send your comments to Christopher Murdoch, Secretary to the Guide Review Working Party at c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk by Friday, 24 June 2011.

Olympic vigilance needed to counter drugs cheats

Anti-Doping body warns vets to be alert

In the run-up to the London 2012 Olympics, UK Anti-Doping – the national body responsible for the implementation and management of the UK's anti-doping in sport policy – is keen to raise awareness amongst the profession of the potential for drugs cheats to target veterinary surgeons.

Whilst the veterinary profession might more naturally be expected to help in the fight against doping in sporting events that involve animals/horses, UK Anti-Doping is aware that human athletes may now be abusing certain substances that are ordinarily used in the treatment of animals.

However, UK Anti-Doping also understands that, under the Cascade, veterinary surgeons may prescribe human medicines for animal use where a suitable veterinary medicine isn't available and some athletes may attempt to obtain certain human medicines via veterinary surgeons. These could include certain growth hormones and steroids.

As some substances and methods that are prohibited in sport cannot be detected through the testing of

samples taken from athletes, UK Anti-Doping is adopting more intelligence-led methods of detection. Its new Intelligence unit therefore focuses on information sharing amongst stakeholders, including the sporting community, general public, pharmaceutical companies and law enforcement agencies, and is able to monitor the trafficking and supply of controlled substances.

At a meeting with UK Anti-Doping representatives earlier this year to discuss the potential for information sharing with the RCVS, it was acknowledged that the abuse of drugs by athletes could become an issue for the veterinary profession leading up to both the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.

Anyone with concerns about suspected doping issues is therefore advised to contact UK Anti-Doping at intelligence@ukad.org.uk or via the confidential hotline on 0800 032 2332. Alternatively, advice can be sought from the Professional Conduct Department (020 7202 0789 / profcon@rcvs.org.uk).

Reporting Caesarean operations

Kennel Club amends registration documents

Amended RCVS guidance on reporting alterations to a dog's natural conformation to the Kennel Club now includes caesarean operations.

Towards the end of last year, the Advisory Committee approved amendments to the Advice Note on reporting to the Kennel Club surgery that alters the natural conformation of a dog, to include caesarean operations (*RCVS News*, November 2010). A corresponding amendment to paragraph 4 of Part 2A of the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* was also approved.

These changes were agreed following discussions between the RCVS, British Veterinary Association (BVA), British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) and the Kennel Club.

The Kennel Club has now also made amendments

to its litter registration documents and the General Code of Ethics, which require dog owners to give consent to the disclosure of information by veterinary surgeons about alteration of natural conformation or caesarean operations.

Veterinary surgeons can therefore now report any alterations to natural conformation and caesarean operations to the Kennel Club. The reporting form and the accompanying notes have been updated and are available from the BVA and BSAVA websites.

From 1 January 2012, the Kennel Club will require owners to declare all of a bitch's previous caesareans and will also take into account all reports submitted by veterinary surgeons made both before and after that date.

The amended Advice Note is now available at www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes (Advice Note 29).

Revised PPE certificate available soon

New certificate to be launched in September

A new certificate for use by veterinary surgeons conducting pre-purchase examinations (PPEs) of horses has been approved by the Advisory Committee and accepted by RCVS Council.

We updated our guidance on PPEs in the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* and in Advice Note 26 in 2010, following the work of the RCVS Equine Pre-purchase Examinations Working Party. However, the PPE certificate itself and the guidance provided by the RCVS/British Veterinary Association (BVA) Joint Memorandum (last revised in 1986) were still in need of updating.

The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) Pre-purchase Examination Committee took up the challenge and has since revised both the PPE certificate and guidance. BEVA took into account a broad range of informed opinion on PPEs from sources including equine practitioners, the RCVS Advisory Committee and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS). Chairman of the BEVA PPE Committee Malcolm Morley attended two meetings of the Advisory Committee to discuss the revised documentation and receive feedback.

"The revised PPE Certificate is less ambiguous."

As a result, the revised PPE Certificate is less ambiguous and addresses issues such as establishing any relationship between the veterinary surgeon and seller, purchasers obtaining insurance and establishing whether commonly performed additional parts of the examination have taken place. PPE guidance notes have also been drafted to replace the Joint Memorandum and accompany the revised certificate. The resulting guidance provides information not only to veterinary surgeons carrying out PPEs but also prospective purchasers.

The new certificate and guidance will be unveiled by BEVA on 8 September 2011, the first day of its congress in Liverpool, and the old PPE certificate will then be phased out over a six-month period. From this date, the revised certificate will be available from the VDS and the guidance notes will be available from BEVA.



Know your Guide?

The latest in a series of quick reminders from the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*

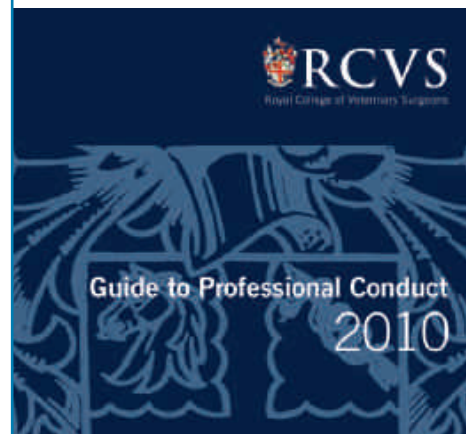
We take a look at responsibilities associated with the prescription and supply of medicines (Parts 2H and 3G).

When prescribing a POM-V or POM-VPS veterinary medicinal product or supplying an NFA-VPS veterinary medicinal product, a veterinary surgeon must:

- before doing so, be satisfied that the person who will use the product is competent to use it safely and intends to do so for a use for which it is authorised;
- advise on the safe administration of the veterinary medicinal product;
- advise on any warnings or contraindications on the manufacturer's label or package leaflet, as necessary;
- not prescribe or supply more than the minimum amount required for the treatment, which calls for a professional judgement to be made by the veterinary surgeon in the individual case; and,
- supply veterinary medicinal products in appropriate containers with appropriate labelling.

Veterinary surgeons prescribing POM-V medicines must have the animals under their care and have made a clinical assessment. This may also be the case for the prescription of POM-VPS medicines but these medicines may be prescribed and supplied without having the veterinary surgeon having the animals under care and without a clinical assessment. In these circumstances, the veterinary surgeon should prescribe responsibly and with due regard to the health and welfare of the animals.

Veterinary surgeons making responsible supplies of POM-VPS medicines for animals should ensure that those purchasing the medicines are aware of their limited professional role.



Stamp of approval

First UK vet degree approved for over 50 years

At its June meeting, RCVS Council agreed to recommend to the Privy Council that the University of Nottingham's Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Bachelor of Veterinary Surgery degree should be recognised. This means that its School of Veterinary Medicine and Science will shortly be the first to have a new degree approved in the UK for over 50 years.

The RCVS and the University have been in close liaison since the School opened in 2006, to help the new degree meet College criteria, thus ensuring students could become members when they graduated. However, approval was never a foregone conclusion, particularly given some of the teaching innovations being introduced by the School. It underwent a rigorous inspection in February 2011, under the chairmanship of Professor Lance Lanyon, following an initial inspection in 2009.

The report prepared by the visitation panel, which was approved by Education Policy and Specialisation Committee and commended to Council, said: "The Visitors were again struck by the level of commitment staff showed to meeting the objectives of the School and the pride in its achievement displayed by all the staff and students that they met. Achieving such unity of purpose in a university setting is remarkable testament to the high standard of leadership from the Dean and his senior colleagues working within a refreshingly supportive environment of devolved authority provided by the University."

The next stage is for the Privy Council to produce a Recognition Order, on the strength of which, all Nottingham graduates will be eligible to join the Register. However, in case there is a delay in finalising the Recognition Order, the College has

put in place a process to ensure that this year's graduates are not disadvantaged. Two RCVS-appointed External Examiners oversaw the summative assessments and examinations taken

"The Visitors were again struck by the level of commitment staff showed to meeting the objectives."

by final-year students, which effectively meant that the final examinations were equivalent to the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination, ensuring graduates can register and practise.

In summing up, the Chairman's report praised the School's creation of an innovative new curriculum, and said: "The School is to be commended on the quality of its students who will no doubt go on to do the University credit as the foundation graduates of Nottingham's new veterinary degree."



RCVS President Peter Jinman (right) congratulates Professor Gary England at the Council meeting which recommended approval of the Nottingham degree



Degrees of difference

EAEVE evaluation status: a useful tool for employers

All European graduates are equal, but are some 'more equal' than others?

Under the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive, which promotes free movement of professionals across Europe, the RCVS is obliged to register graduates from all European veterinary schools listed in the Directive, providing they are 'community rights entitled persons', even if the school from which they graduated has not been accredited.

There is a voluntary evaluation system in place under the auspices of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE).

Under this scheme, European schools are inspected and judged against the same criteria that are used by the RCVS when approving UK degrees. Those that meet the criteria are approved by EAEVE. Unfortunately, this evaluation system is not formally recognised by the European Commission or Parliament.

If you are employing a European graduate and wish to check whether the school from which they graduated has passed its EAEVE evaluation, visit the EAEVE website for more information:

www.eaeve.org, or contact the Education Department (**education@rcvs.org.uk**).

Attested development

Employing a new grad? Don't forget the PDP

If you're employing one of this summer's new graduates, then you'll also need to take into account the Professional Development Phase (PDP), as this is the framework for development that all vets need in the first year or so following graduation.

Undertaking PDP has been a professional obligation for all UK veterinary surgeons qualifying since 2007, and supporting new graduates through their PDP is a requirement for their veterinary employers. If you're considering employing a vet with a year or more of experience, it can also help you see what experience they have had so far, and what support may still be needed, particularly if they haven't yet completed their PDP.

"All UK veterinary surgeons are 'Day-One' competent when they graduate, which means they have the basic skills and knowledge needed for safe practice," explains Freda Andrews, Head of Education. "This is only the starting point in a veterinary career, though, so the PDP helps provide a structure for vets to consolidate these competencies into those expected of a vet with about a year's experience."

There are two components to the PDP, one covering general professional skills, and the other providing a list of clinical skills divided into farm animal, equine and small animal practice headings. The PDP may be completed in the context of any one or more of these three areas. Veterinary surgeons record their case numbers on the database but,

more importantly, they must make notes of how they are progressing under each section.

"The PDP has been compulsory for all new veterinary graduates since 2007 – so it could be useful when advertising a post to specify that you want someone who has completed their PDP. This should help to ensure that they have had a good range of experience across the commonly required areas of practice, as well as showing that they take their own professional development seriously. And, if you are considering taking on a new vet who graduated in the last four years but they have not completed their PDP, you may want to ask them why," says Freda. "Similarly, when you take on a new graduate, or you are reviewing their performance, it offers a structure for interviews or appraisals."

"All UK veterinary surgeons are 'Day-One' competent when they graduate, which means they have the basic skills and knowledge needed for safe practice."

Although the PDP is completed by the veterinary surgeon, a senior colleague in the practice needs to discuss their PDP with them and counter-sign

that they have seen their records. A certificate of completion, which prospective employers can ask to see, is issued once it has been signed off by one of the RCVS Postgraduate Deans (see page 2). If you are employing a veterinary surgeon part-way through their PDP, you could ask to see a printout of their skills list which will indicate, for example, how many bitch spays a veterinary surgeon has been doing, as well as showing where experience is still needed. Ultimately, the PDP can be signed off once a vet is confident they are able to perform a range of common clinical procedures, or manage them without close supervision, in a reasonable period of time and with a high probability of a successful outcome.

The PDP is filled out online, and shouldn't add significantly to your veterinary surgeon's workload, particularly as, if completed diligently, it will count for their first year's continuing professional development. It can also build an employer's confidence that their new employees are fully developing the abilities and experience expected of modern vets. To see what it covers – and try out a preview – visit www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp.

Next year, we plan to launch a new version of the PDP online database which will link PDP to Day One Skills recording systems in the universities, as well as providing an online CPD recording system for all vets to use. More on these developments will follow in future editions of *RCVS News*.

VN qualifications update

Mixed practice pathway comes closer

In the March issue, we announced that plans were underway to develop a mixed practice pathway for the new Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing, in conjunction with Greenmount College in Northern Ireland.

The mixed practice pathway now has the backing of the Sector Skills Council, Lantra, and the draft framework will soon be going out to consultation amongst veterinary nurses, employers and training providers.

Following amendments made in the light of consultation responses, it is hoped that the new option will be accredited for delivery in the autumn.

Although it was initially developed to meet a need in Ireland, where mixed practice is more prevalent and Northern-Ireland-qualified VNs need to have mixed animal competence in order to register and work in Eire, the new qualification will be available for any UK college to deliver.

Anyone interested should contact the Veterinary Nursing Department on vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

Meanwhile, a Working Party considering post-qualification awards for veterinary nurses will meet over summer – look out for an update in our November issue.





International accord

Chicago group explores joint visitation process

International agreement on standards for the accreditation of veterinary degrees is making good progress, following a meeting of the International Accreditors' Group in Chicago in March.

The Group, which included representatives from the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South African and Europe, was attended from the UK by Education Policy and Specialisation Committee Chairman, Professor Stuart Reid, Council member and Federation of Veterinarians of Europe representative, Lynne Hill, and Head of Education, Freda Andrews. The key objective of the meeting was to review the experience of the first ever joint (UK, USA and

Australasia) visitation, to Australia's Murdoch University in 2009. The meeting agreed that the process had been effective and that more such joint visits should be undertaken in the future. The next planned joint visit in the UK will be to Glasgow's School of Veterinary Medicine in 2013. Others are planned for Australia.

The move towards more joined up visitations is being welcomed by the veterinary schools that are subject to both RCVS and American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) accreditation, as it will significantly reduce the time commitment required. However, although the visit and the paperwork will be shared, each country will retain its independent right to approve, or not, the veterinary school in question.

Scottish reprieve

Edinburgh's Telford College lives on

We were pleased to hear that the veterinary nursing course at Edinburgh's Telford College (ETC), which was under serious threat of closure, has received a reprieve, and the course will definitely run this autumn.

"The hiatus will have some positive benefits," says Head of Veterinary Nursing, Libby Earle. "It forced an objective review of this long-standing and very successful course that will lead to improvements and the collaboration of the two Scottish veterinary schools (at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh) in providing practical experience for students."

However, there continue to be concerns about the low uptake of VN training in Scotland more generally, and the ratio of nurses to vets – one of the lowest in the UK.

The problem appears not to be lack of student demand – ETC had over 250 applicants for 20 places this year – it is more a shortage of practices willing to support student VNs.

"We will be working with Scottish colleges to ensure, as best we can, that courses are available and accessible to all practices."

The VN Council will be working to raise awareness with Scottish practices over the coming months. The introduction of the Auxiliary Training Practice (aTP) status, which enables those without a full enough caseload to offer complete training to a

VN to work together with other training practices to fill the gap, has already made it easier for practices to get involved with VN training.

Another positive change brought in with the new Level 3 Diploma has been permitting unpaid placements to count towards training time, and, of course, replacing the dreaded portfolio with an easy-to-use online practical training record.

"We will be working with Scottish colleges to ensure, as best we can, that courses are available and accessible to all practices," adds Libby. "Any practice (especially in Scotland) interested in seeing how they might support a student, is urged to contact us!"

For more information on becoming a training practice or auxiliary training practice, please contact vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

Modernising free movement

European minimum veterinary training requirements

The European Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) was introduced in 2005 to facilitate the free movement of qualified professionals (including veterinary surgeons) throughout Europe.

Modernising the MRPQ Directive is now a priority for the European Parliament, and the European Commission has identified the Directive's revision as one of 12 key issues that must be tackled before the proposed relaunch of the single market at the end of 2012.

As a consequence, the timetable for modernising the Directive has been brought forward and the draft revised Directive will need to be completed by 2011 to allow its passage through the European Parliament in 2012.

As a part of this modernisation process, RCVS Head of Education, Freda Andrews, attended a European Commission workshop in April 2011, to discuss the minimum training requirements for veterinary surgeons. Updating minimum training requirements is a crucial part of modernising the Directive, although the current Directive was introduced relatively recently in 2005, this was as an update to an earlier Directive that was introduced in 1978, and the minimum training requirements have not been updated since that time. This event

was attended by 'competent authorities' for the veterinary profession in the EU and was chaired by Jurgen Tiedje (Head of the EC Professional Qualifications Directorate).

From the UK's perspective, the meeting was very positive, and many of the proposals and concerns of the College in relation to the revision of the Directive were supported and acknowledged by the delegates of the other Member States.

"Delegates were also supportive of the EAEVE evaluation system."

At the meeting there was unanimous agreement amongst delegates that Article 38 of the Directive, relating to minimum training requirements, placed too much emphasis on knowledge at the expense of practical skills, experience and competence. Furthermore, the College was pleased to note that considerable support was expressed for the RCVS proposals to incorporate 'Day-One Competences' into the Directive as a means of updating minimum training requirements. Moreover, competent authorities spoke favourably of the RCVS-defined 'Day-One Competences' used in the UK and suggested that they could form the basis for discussion and negotiation on this topic.



Delegates were also supportive of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) evaluation system and UK proposals that there should be formal recognition of the EAEVE system within the Directive. European Commission officials were mindful, however, of the problems associated with incorporating any notion of accreditation by external organisations into the mutual recognition process.

The RCVS was able to use the workshop to question how non-compliance with the requirements of the Directive could be dealt with more effectively and to highlight concerns related to the current requirement to register graduates from courses that may have failed the EAEVE evaluation system.

In March 2011, the College submitted a response to the first-stage European Commission public consultation on the Directive. The RCVS expects the Commission to launch a further consultation on the revisions to the Directive by the end of June 2011.

Exam dates

Diplomas

The Diploma written examinations will be held at the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF on Tuesday, 5 July 2011.

Candidates will be advised of clinical, oral and practical exam dates by subject – information will also appear on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk/education).

Certificates

The Certificate written examinations will be held at the Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street, London SW1 3DW, on either Tuesday 19 or Wednesday 20 July 2011 – candidates have been advised which date relates to their subject.

Application deadlines

Specialists

Annual fees for RCVS Recognised Specialists are due by 1 July 2011. In addition, Specialists who first listed in 1997, 2002 and 2007 are required to re-apply by 19 August 2011.

The closing date for new applications for Recognised Specialist status is Friday, 9 September 2011

Fellowships

The closing date for applications for the Diploma of Fellowship – provisional or full registration – is Monday, 1 August 2011.

Certificates

The closing date for applications for final approval of experience for RCVS Certificates (old style) is 1 November 2011. NB this is the last opportunity to apply, the last examination will be held in 2012. Enrolment for those candidates who do not apply by this date will lapse, as there will not be a further opportunity for them to enter for the old style Certificate.

Diplomas

The closing date for applications for enrolment on RCVS Diplomas is Tuesday, 1 November 2011; this is also the deadline for applications for RCVS Diploma final approval of experience.

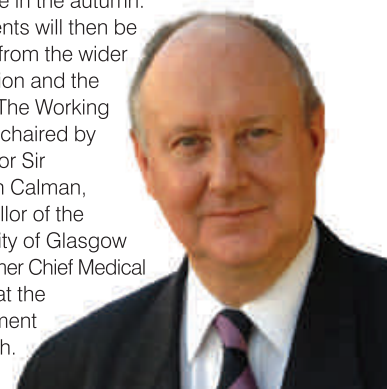
What next for specialisation?

Consultation on its way

Following the stakeholders' meeting held in March, which was attended by representatives of many of the main veterinary organisations, including several BVA divisions, the RCVS's Working Party on Specialisation met in May to take forward the ideas emerging from the discussions.

The Working Party is now preparing a consultation paper which it hopes to make available in the autumn.

Comments will then be sought from the wider profession and the public. The Working Party is chaired by Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, Chancellor of the University of Glasgow and former Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health.



'Cutting edge' in more ways than surgery

What's new in the classroom?

With Vet2011 celebrating 250 years since the foundation of the first veterinary school in Lyon, and Nottingham's first cohort due to graduate soon, the continuum of veterinary education is under the spotlight. So, we take the opportunity to see what's new in the UK vet schools.

At the time of writing, we await formal confirmation that The University of Nottingham's Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Bachelor of Veterinary Surgery degree will be recognised (see page 8), and have made interim arrangements so that, even should there be any unforeseen delay in completing the legalities, Nottingham's first veterinary graduates will be able to register once their degrees are conferred on 22 July.

Many vets may be struck by the fact that Nottingham has no veterinary hospital or practices, counter to a traditional model where most of the teaching takes place in-house. Instead, Nottingham has developed a 'distributed model' in which core course content is taught by university-employed lecturers at independent veterinary practices, called 'clinical associates'. These practices are formally contracted by the university to host staff and students, and are included in university committees and staff meetings.

"There are ethical considerations when teaching many clinical procedures."

"Nottingham uses a community-based teaching model in which the students undertake a lecture-free final year of clinical rotations embedded with the school's clinical associates," says Professor Gary England, Foundation Dean at the University of Nottingham. "These include first-opinion and referral small animal, farm and equine practices as well as other organisations which specialise in exotics, zoo animals, pathology and poultry. The final year puts into clinical practice the skills and knowledge the students have gained across the curriculum over the last four years."

Although this approach has been used to the full by Nottingham, a similar teaching model is used by the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), which carries out some of its core farm animal teaching in Wales, and advanced farm animal teaching at its new farm animal practice in Dorset.

"There is a lack of large animals in the South East so, as well as providing some farm animal

teaching on site, we send students to our Welsh Regional Vet Centre for farm animal teaching," says Adrian Boswood, BVetMed Programme Director at the RVC. "Like our practice in Dorset, this is entirely staffed and managed by the RVC, and the staff are there largely to teach and assess students within the RVC framework."

Benefits

Are there different benefits to teaching in-house or outside the university? "There's not a major gap between distributed models and teaching in a university's veterinary hospital," says Kieron Salmon, Admissions Sub-Dean at the University of Liverpool, where clinical teaching is provided directly through Liverpool's own veterinary hospitals. "Out in first-opinion practices you will see more typical cases, although the veterinary schools using distributed models also include referral practices."

Kieron points out that it is the transferability of the skills that students gain that matters – and these

can be learnt in veterinary hospitals or first-opinion practice. "Post-operative care or fluid management are the same whether it's a complicated, high-tech hip operation or basic surgery – same goes for getting drugs into an animal," he says, although noting that, in a veterinary hospital, students will see more obscure cases which have been referred, and learn how to work up a referral case. "Caseload is more important though, and students must focus on the right things – they need to learn about cat and bitch spays," he says.

Critically, none of these models is extra-mural studies (EMS): the RCVS requires EMS to be part of all veterinary degrees, but practices hosting EMS students do so as unpaid volunteers and are not expected to teach. "We are enormously grateful to our EMS practices, however, vets in practice are not trained and employed to be teachers," explains Adrian. "Clearly, people do experience valuable learning and develop important Day-One skills on EMS, but this cannot be as carefully mapped to the university's curriculum because aspects of it are outside our control."

"There is a lack of large animals in the South East so, as well as providing some farm animal teaching on site, we send students to our Welsh Regional Vet Centre for farm animal teaching."

Not only are teaching models changing, but the traditional degree structure, of two or three years of basic and paraclinical sciences followed by clinical years, is being exchanged for programmes that explicitly teach clinical content from the start. This is the case at Nottingham, the RVC, and also at Edinburgh, where the first cohort to follow the new course from the start will graduate this summer. Susan Rhind, Director of the Veterinary Teaching Organisation at the University of Edinburgh, explains that there are vertical themes running through the whole course – including professional and clinical skills, and animal health, welfare and food safety, which are re-visited and built upon in each year of the course.

Professional key skills are a core part of this veterinary content and Edinburgh students keep a portfolio and write a yearly analysis of their own skills and weaknesses, including the feedback they've received and how they act on it. In their finals, they then discuss one of the cases from it. "This helps ensure the portfolio is taken seriously, but keeps a lightness of assessment," says Susan. "The portfolio is designed to lead into the RCVS Postgraduate Development Phase, and get





Jim Anderson

students used to self-reflective practice." Basic clinical skills also start being taught in the first year. "Students might as well learn right at the start how to use a stethoscope and thermometers, and to examine as many healthy animals as they can," she says.

Competency

Glasgow is in the process of changing its curriculum and expects to include three similar 'vertical themes' to track and benchmark students' progress over the whole five years, again focusing on students gaining professional and clinical key skills early. "Veterinary schools around the world are moving to a competency-based approach," says Jim Anderson, Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching at the University of Glasgow. "The five-year curriculum is seen as an educational journey from start to end, to gain competencies set by accrediting bodies such as the RCVS, and qualify as a new professional." He thinks that this approach will also be engaging for veterinary students who will see earlier on in the programme how what they are being taught relates to being a vet.

A curriculum review is underway at Liverpool and, Kieron says, is also likely to result in a similar structure. He thinks students would gain from having some basic clinical skills prior to their clinical rotations. This would mean they could concentrate on the cases they see rather than trying to acquire these practical skills at the same time. "It's about learning basic suture patterns, basic surgery, surgical instruments, taking different kinds of samples and what to do with the samples – very much the skills of first-opinion

vets," Kieron says. More traditional models of teaching and course structure are retained at Cambridge, although alternative models of delivering some teaching will be considered during its current curriculum review. "The students get plenty of contact with animals in the first three years, but we have not gone down the 'fully integrated' model," says Duncan Maskell, Head of Cambridge's Department

of Veterinary Medicine, noting that teaching changes are also likely to be limited to farm animal and veterinary public health teaching.

"Whether in the profession or the wider world, change is inescapable, so it's reassuring that veterinary education is keeping pace."

Obviously, although familiarity with surgical instruments and suture patterns can be gained without animal welfare considerations, there are ethical considerations when teaching many clinical procedures. Online resources and simulated animals (such as the 'BreednBetsy' cow recently purchased for Bristol by the RCVS Charitable Trust (pictured), and the RVC's award-winning Haptic Cow developed by Sarah Baillie) can help to overcome these. Surely though, these cannot replace a need to use real animals?

"The RVC undertook an ethical review of how many times a cow can be repeatedly rectalled," says Adrian. "There is a need to limit the unnecessary use of live animals and to optimise the educational value of their use when they are encountered for the first time. There's an awful lot of evidence that practical skills develop with repetition. With a simulator you can teach part of the skill in an abstracted way – and students can repeatedly do the same things – so the student is

continued over



'Cutting edge' in more ways than surgery (continued from previous page)

better prepared when they eventually come to examine a real animal."

The internet also means some vet schools are providing students with video guides to procedures, and interactive websites, which they are expected to use ahead of their visits to the clinical skills labs. Edinburgh and the RVC now incorporate these as a key part of their teaching, and Glasgow is following suit.

"It isn't the be all and end all," says Kieron, "however, if students watch a virtual dissection first, when they come to the lecture they are better prepared and it's a question of clarifying the points they are unsure of, rather than first being taught in the room." He points out that, when he trained as a vet, dissection teaching was done in one class with little opportunity to prepare or review. "Students now have interactive guides for anatomy – you can roll the mouse over and it highlights the structure much better than a line drawing or text book photograph."

"We need to focus on equipping graduates with the skills needed to problem solve – to access, evaluate, understand and utilise information."

Both new teaching methods and course structures are influenced by changes in what is being taught. The benchmark of producing clinically-competent and professional vets remains, and is emphasised by the clinical content being introduced from day one in these new curricula. But, with an immense body of knowledge which is constantly growing in veterinary science, can any student vet really be expected to learn it all?

Reflective learning

This is a problem Mark Eisler, Chair of Global Farm Animal Health at Bristol University, recognises. "There is so much information out there that there is too much to learn by rote," he says, explaining that by taking a less didactic, research-centred approach, Bristol's new curriculum will encourage self-directed, reflective learning. "We need to focus on equipping graduates with the skills needed to problem solve – to access, evaluate, understand and utilise information," he continues. "In evidence-based medicine, students need to learn how to apply research to case management and therapeutic treatments, and to use information in a structured way. The aim is for students to gain a broad skills portfolio, centred in a research context." Cambridge also emphasises interaction with research, and students have instigated a Friday afternoon 'happy hour' to hear more from departmental researchers.



In fact, a key aspect of these curriculum reviews is to determine what is core knowledge. "You can't know everything about everything," says Susan, noting that Edinburgh will shortly review its final-year curriculum and the RCVS 'Day-One Competencies' will be deciding factors in what is included. Adrian agrees: "Information is now wide-spread and what distinguishes professionals in the future will not be the body of knowledge that they hold – clients come in armed with information – but being able to seek out and evaluate information, as well as being able to use and discuss it."

"The internet also means some vet schools are providing students with video guides to procedures, and interactive websites."

Nor can the impact of globalisation be ignored. "The widest context is that, following graduation, UK veterinary surgeons usually start out in practice and many will stay there," says Jim. "However, in the EU and the rest of the world, vets have a more substantial role within the food chain – in transport, disease control, food accreditation and tracing provenance – and there are opportunities here for UK vets."

He points out that over two hundred people, including some of the Deans of the UK veterinary schools, attended the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) 2011 World Conference in Veterinary Education in May – only the second of

its type – which proposed three categories as core to veterinary education: animal and human health; food chain, regulation and trade; and sustainable eco-systems. This is similar to the 'One Health' philosophy that is central to Bristol's vision, as Mark explains. "One Health encompasses animal, human and eco-system health, and infectious diseases are only a part of this. Bristol is at the centre of one of the UK's largest production animal populations in the UK and its emphasis is increasingly on food, farm and veterinary public health." To this end, Bristol has also this year increased its complement of senior farm animal and veterinary public health teaching staff.

Even wider considerations lay behind the introduction of the 'Gateway year zero', an entry route offered by most vet schools to students from disadvantaged backgrounds with lower grades or the wrong qualifications. As long as students pass this 'year zero', they are accepted onto the university's veterinary programme. So how are they doing? "The first cohort at the RVC is about to graduate," says Adrian. "They are indistinguishable from the other students in their year – just as they will be when they become vets," he says, adding that they will, however, better reflect the society that they serve.

So, there are changes all round in veterinary teaching. Some are incremental and some are as dramatic as welcoming to the veterinary profession the first new veterinary surgeons graduating from the UK's first new veterinary school for over 50 years. Whether in the profession or the wider world, change is inescapable, so it's reassuring that veterinary education is keeping pace.

The French Connection

This year, the global veterinary community celebrates 250 years since the foundation of the first veterinary school, in Lyon. Veterinary education started in France with Claude Bourgelat and came to Britain with Vial de Sainbel which, in turn, later led to the establishment of the RCVS, as veterinary historian Bruce Vivash Jones and RCVS Charitable Trust Librarian Clare Boulton explain.

In the pantheon of veterinary giants one name, Claude Bourgelat, comes first. As the founder of the first veterinary school, it is right that the profession that he created celebrates his belief in education and the development of the scientific method.

Born into a wealthy Lyon family in 1712, and following a classical education, Bourgelat trained as a lawyer. Later, following his instinctive interest in horses, he joined the army, rapidly earning a reputation for his horsemanship. He studied the subject, in particular the writings of the Duke of Newcastle and Jacques Solleysel, and in 1740 published *Nouveaux Newcastle ou Nouveaux Traité de Cavalerie* (A New Treatise on Horsemanship), in the same year he became Director of the Lyon Academy of Equitation.

Bourgelat was anxious to improve his knowledge and, with the guidance of two surgeons, studied equine anatomy, physiology and pathology, resulting in his three-volume *Éléments d'hippiatrique*, on the anatomy and form of the horse, published in 1750-53. This was a pivotal work and gained him the distinction of *Correspondent de l'Académie de Science de Paris*. These were the Enlightenment years and Bourgelat was active – Voltaire and Diderot were his contemporaries. He wrote well and with diligence, contributing 22 articles to Diderot's great *Encyclopédié*, as well as at least six other significant books on the horse. Bourgelat was a product of his age.

“Born into a wealthy Lyon family in 1712, and following a classical education, Bourgelat trained as a lawyer.”

His reputation grew, aided by his close friend, Henri-Leonard-Jean-Baptiste Bertin, who was initially an administrator in Lyon but, by the 1760s, was Comptroller General of Finance for King Louis XV. There is little doubt that it was through Bertin's influence that Bourgelat was made responsible for Royal equine studs in the Lyon area and also Inspector of the Lyon Library. Bourgelat had already advanced the need for a school to teach the veterinary art in his 1740 book, while Bertin was concerned about the state of French agriculture, in particular the livestock which were regularly ravaged by rinderpest and other epizootics. They had a common purpose.

A proposal was put to the King and on 4 August 1761 a decree of the Royal Council awarded a grant of 50,000 livres to establish a veterinary school, with Bourgelat as the Director, to teach the knowledge and treatment of the diseases of domestic animals. In January 1762, the school opened in Lyon; the premises were a disused tavern and initially there were only six students, however, within the year this had grown to 38.

“To create a course for what was essentially a new discipline was an enormous task, but it was here that Bourgelat came into his own.”

Bourgelat was a hard taskmaster, students had to learn his lectures by rote and were expected to both work and behave. To create a course for what was essentially a new discipline was an enormous task, but it was here that Bourgelat came into his own: he was neither a scientist nor a teacher but he was a magnificent organiser. The school flourished. Bourgelat was an upwardly mobile man and with Bertin's help a second school was established at Alfort, near Paris, in 1764: Bourgelat was named as Director, as well as Inspector General of “all veterinary schools to be established in the Kingdom” and Commissioner General of all Breeding Studs in France.

Veterinary education spread rapidly and by 1800 there were schools in all major European countries. William Moorcroft (1767-1825), a surgeon, attended the Lyon course and became the first in the UK to qualify in veterinary medicine (subsequently becoming an Asiatic explorer). However, it was not until 1792 that the London School was established. While the credit for this must go to the Odiham Agricultural Society, and in particular Granville Penn, the first Professor appointed was Charles Vial de Sainbel (1750-1793).

Sainbel who had been trained at Lyon, and worked at Alfort and Montpellier University, was in England when the famous racehorse, Eclipse, died: he conducted the post-mortem. Sainbel was anxious to start a British veterinary school. His plans were good but the London school venture was fraught with problems, exacerbated by his death in 1793, probably from glanders. The School then passed into the hands of Edward Coleman (1765-1839),



which led to a time of discontent in the growing profession due to his autocratic methods, but it also led to the Mayers (father and son) and the granting of the Charter of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1844.

The Historic Collection at Belgravia House highlights the evolution of our profession. We start with the very beginning of the story – the Minute Book of the Odiham Agricultural Society, arguably the most valuable, and certainly the most historically interesting object, at the College. On the second floor hang two framed copies, one of the Odiham Minutes of the 19 August 1785 meeting when the Rev Thomas Burgess proposed that there should be, “a study of the anatomy, diseases and cures of... horses, cows and sheep,” and the other copy is part of Sainbel's Plan, together with an image of Granville Penn. Also look out for the bust of Edward Coleman in the Members' Room. Through these artefacts one can trace the sometimes hazardous, but always progressive, development of our profession from the idea in 1785 to the reality of 2011.

If you would like to view items from the Historic Collection, please contact Clare Boulton on c.boulton@rcvstrust.org.uk.

Stepping out

Competition winner at BSAVA

Our 'Step Forward' campaign, to celebrate 50 years of veterinary nursing by encouraging everyone to make the next move in their career, was launched at BSAVA Congress (Birmingham, 31 March to 3 April).

To bring people to the stand to talk about what their next move might be – such as committing to training, joining the Register, taking the Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing or even standing for VN Council – we ran a competition which challenged people to identify some animal footprints. Easy! Or so we thought... actually, of the 305 entries, only a third got the answers right, which were: dog, cat and hare.

"Of the 305 entries, only a third got the answers right."

We expected the hare might catch people out, but even the dog and cat foiled some. The more bizarre wrong answers included:

- For the dog: fox, sea otter, cheetah, badger, sloth, bear, panther, pine martin or racoon
- For the cat: dog, wolf, bear, duck (?), tiger, polar bear or snow leopard
- For the hare: deer (most popular answer), sheep, cow, wild boar, pig, goat, frog, reindeer, alpaca, elk, moose or ferret

The winner was Alex Yeu, a registered veterinary nurse at Alfreton Park Veterinary Hospital in Derbyshire, who received £100 vouchers for Blacks. Fortunately, she enjoys stepping out: "I will probably spend the vouchers on a new coat for walking my dog," says Alex. "Winning the competition was unexpected and a nice surprise! Thank you very much!"

Count those steps

All those who took part in the competition were given RCVS-branded pedometers and encouraged to email the College to let us know how many steps they take in a typical day in practice. The information will be used in articles in the animal owner press to help explain the role of the VN in the practice team.

If you missed BSAVA and would like a pedometer, email Lizzie Lockett on l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk. If you picked one up, don't forget to let us know how far you walk! For more information visit www.rcvs.org.uk/step.



Handle with care

RCVS Review and Facts available

In this mailing you will find your copy of *RCVS Review*, part one of the 2011 annual report. It might seem as though we have given animals some of Alice in Wonderland's 'drink me' juice to shrink or grow them, but don't worry, no animals were harmed – and no medicines regulations broken – in the production of this year's *Review*!

As usual, the *Review* looks back over our reporting year – 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 – from the point of view of some of those affected by our key activities. We hear from a fourth-year student at the University of Nottingham, where



the veterinary degree has been recommended by RCVS Council for Privy Council recognition; a pioneering veterinary nurse looks back on a career spanning four decades as we celebrate 50 years of veterinary nursing; and, our lead Legal Assessor reviews some of the important changes that have been made in our complaints and disciplinary processes. Meanwhile, a new member with a rather more complicated than usual route to registration recounts the ups and downs of her journey to practising in the UK; one of the consultants who managed the research and design development of our new look takes us through the process; and, a Trust grant-holder explains how Trust funding is enabling her to research wound-healing techniques in horses which may benefit human medicine. In addition, President Peter Jinman recaps on his year in office and you can read an overview of the *Review* from Registrar Jane Hern.

Part two of the annual report is *RCVS Facts*, which contains all the usual facts and figures about the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, together with a summary of the College's accounts. This will be available online at www.rcvs.org.uk/Facts, or in hard copy by contacting Ian Holloway on i.holloway@rcvs.org.uk. *RCVS Review* is also available online, at www.rcvs.org.uk/Review.

Recognising a year of achievements

Handover time at the RCVS

Friday 1 July marks RCVS Day – our Annual General Meeting and Presentation of Awards.

Held at One Great George Street, the day will start with AGM business, followed by the celebration of veterinary and veterinary nursing achievements, including Honorary Associateships, Honorary Fellowships and Diplomas.

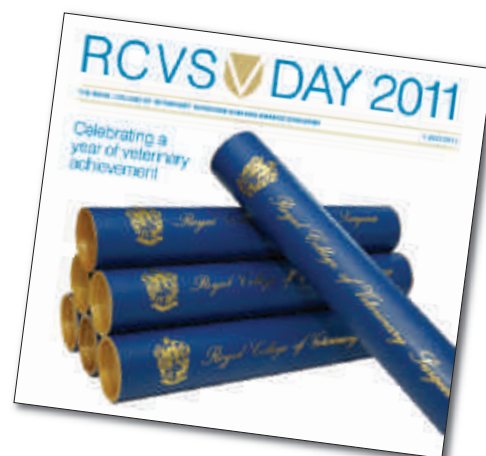
A new award to mark the 50th anniversary of veterinary nursing will also be presented, as well as a Lifetime Contribution Award from the RCVS Charitable Trust.

In his last official engagement as President, Peter Jinman will give a review of his year before formally welcoming new Council and VN Council Members, and Dr Jerry Davies to the role of President for 2011-2012.

We are honoured to announce that there will be two guest speakers this year – Dr Christophe Buhot DVM and Professor Gary England FRCVS, who, as part of Vet2011, will be delivering a talk about the history and future direction of veterinary education.

All members and veterinary nurses are welcome to attend the day, which will start at 10am.

More information, including how to apply for free tickets, is available in the *RCVS Day* booklet, which you should have received in this *RCVS News* mailing, or contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.



Spend the day at Belgravia House

A chance to meet the people behind the scenes

Future dates for our regular **Meet the RCVS Days** – a chance to look behind the scenes at Belgravia House and meet key staff and Officers – will be announced soon.

Below are some comments from those who have joined us in the past:

"This day improved my understanding of RCVS functions – it would be good if more vets could have this experience."

"Very informative, open and stimulating day, appreciated the time and effort of everyone."

"It allowed me to see where the retention fee goes – realise it's probably good value!"

Look out for further details online and in the veterinary press, or contact Fiona Harcourt (f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773) to add your name to the invite list.

Good debate in the Highlands

RCVS Officers visit Inverness

Veterinary nurse training, the financial implications of continuing professional development and the future of the Practice Standards Scheme were just a few of the topics raised at the recent RCVS Question Time meeting, held in Inverness on Thursday 19 May.

RCVS President Peter Jinman chaired the meeting at the Ramada Inverness, which was attended by local veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and practice colleagues, as well as Peter Austin MRCVS, President of the North of Scotland division of the British Veterinary Association.

After a bite to eat and chance to catch up with colleagues, the agenda for the evening was determined by the guests, who discussed a

number of topics in small groups before putting their questions to the room.

The next round of Question Time meetings, to be chaired by incoming President Dr Jerry Davies, will be as follows:

27 October 2011	Pembrokeshire
8 March 2012	Leeds
17 May 2012	Northern Ireland

All local veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses living within reasonable distance of the meeting venues will be sent personal invitations, and the events will also be promoted through the veterinary media and RCVSonline.



Out and about in the autumn

Visit us at events and congresses



If you have questions for the College, come and see us at one of the events we will be attending this autumn.

First up is BVA Congress, which takes place on

22-24 September at the Royal College of Physicians in London, under the theme 'Vets in a Changing World'. We will have a stand at the event and look forward to seeing you there. In addition, on Friday 23 at 16.00, President Peter Jinman (who will by then be Senior Vice-President) will take part in a session entitled 'Teeth, feet, reproduction – what next for veterinary services?' along with speakers Mark Thorne and Dr Madeleine Campbell.

Then, in October, it's the turn of the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), which will hold its Congress on 7-9 October at Kettering Conference Centre. On the Saturday at 14.40, Chairman of VN Council, Liz Branscombe, will make a presentation on the topic of: "Disciplinary hearings and the VN: the procedure and what you can do". The College team will also be available on our stand to answer your questions.

Finally, we will be present at the London Vet Show, on 24-25 November, at Olympia. Join us for a breakfast meeting on 25 November where we will try to answer your questions about the new Code of Professional Conduct which should, pending the outcome of the current consultation, be nearing finalisation at that point. If early mornings aren't your thing, we will have a team on the stand happy to chat with you at a more sensible hour.

Don't miss out on the news

Subscription confirmation required

If you subscribe to *RCVS e-News*, our regular free e-bulletin of what's new at the College, you will receive an email over the next few months asking you to confirm your subscription. This is so that we can ensure only people who wish to receive the newsletter are getting it, and to enable us to transfer your data to a new subscription management system. Please follow the instructions on the email to ensure that you continue to receive your regular dose of College news.

Meanwhile, if you are in an RCVS-accredited practice, don't forget to sign up to *The Practice Standard*, our thrice-yearly electronic treasure-trove of hints, tips and news. Email pss@rcvs.org.uk with 'subscribe to *The Practice Standard*' in the subject line, and state in which practice you are based.

Lay Observers' Report 2011

Judith Alderton, Chris Mattinson and Jane Ramsey

Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings are carried out in the presence of three Lay Observers who provide valuable independent input. Each June, the Lay Observers report to Council, setting out their views on the year's activities and making recommendations for change. An edited version of this report appears below, together with responses from the PIC; the full report is available on RCVSonline at www.rcvs.org.uk.

The three Lay Observers are appointed by the RCVS following public advertisement. Our principal role is to examine complaints from members of the public in the main, and to contribute to the PIC's decision making. We strive to provide a strong, clear voice on behalf of the public and we ensure that all complaints are investigated thoroughly and the College's procedures are operated robustly and fairly.

As we have emphasised in our previous reports, the number of complaints to the College is small when taking into account the tens of thousands of consultations and veterinary interventions that occur each year by some 17,586 home-practising registered veterinary surgeons in the UK.

"The number of complaints to the College is small when taking into account the tens of thousands of consultations and veterinary interventions that occur each year."

To put this in context, a total of 684 complaints were closed by the College. Of these, 14% were not progressed by complainants, 29% were closed by Case Managers in the Professional Conduct Department because they failed to cross the threshold for potential serious professional misconduct. A total of 43% were closed by Case Examiners because there was no arguable case of serious professional misconduct. Complaints which reach this stage of the procedure are examined by a veterinary surgeon who is a member of PIC, and a Lay Observer. In some cases, Case Examiners gave advice to the vet (for example, in relation to communication or the need to revise standard operating procedures). The PIC considered a total of 14% of cases, those referred to it by Case Examiners. Finally, eight cases were considered by the Disciplinary Committee (DC).

We believe that the public and the profession more widely can be confident that in the overwhelming majority of cases veterinary surgeons give attention to the animals under their care to the high standards demanded. We are able to report that, notwithstanding the relatively low incidence of complaints, the College is not complacent and

places significant importance on the need to keep the complaints and disciplinary procedures under continual review, introducing improvements as necessary.

When we reported last year, we expressed the hope that change to legislation would permit Lay Observers to have equal status with other members of the PIC. We are pleased that good progress has been made in this regard and we welcome the College's intention to seek changes (by means of a Legislative Reform Order (LRO)) that would permit Lay Observers to be full members of the Committee, with voting rights. In saying this, the PIC has always sought the views of Lay Observers before, on the very few occasions, a vote has been called.

Council members will know that Parliamentary approval to the LRO will result in the PIC and DC functions becoming independent of the RCVS Council. We support this, as it is in keeping with the direction other regulators are taking. However, we seek assurances that effective transitional arrangements are put in place to ensure that complaints are handled seamlessly during this period.

PIC responds...

The PIC is grateful to the Lay Observers for the work they do, reassuring the public about veterinary regulation. RCVS regulation is increasingly a shared activity between veterinary surgeons and lay persons, to the benefit of the profession and the public. The Legislative Reform Order sought by the RCVS will enhance this and confirm to the public the distinction and necessary independence of decision-making between RCVS Council, which approves formal guidance for veterinary surgeons tantamount to the profession's rules, the PIC, which investigates complaints and decides whether a complaint should be referred to the DC, and the DC, which carries out a judicial function deciding whether a veterinary surgeon's name should remain on the Register.

"In our judgement, the Health Protocol is a welcome addition to the College's capability to deal with vets who, regrettably, may be suffering through physical or mental ill-health."

The Health Protocol continues to be used in appropriate cases, and in our judgement is a welcome addition to the College's capability to deal with vets who, regrettably, may be suffering through physical or mental ill-health and are unable to provide the standard of service expected. Feedback in a number of cases indicates that,

whereas previously vets affected in this way may have been the subject of a disciplinary investigation, they are now responding well to specialist advice and support which permits them to return to practice.

"Clearly, a balance must be struck between over-regulating the profession, to its detriment, and meeting the legitimate expectations of the public."

We welcome the College's recognition that, as the framework of professional regulation has been evolving in more recent years with a move towards 'fitness to practise', it is timely to review current RCVS powers and procedures. Clearly, a balance must be struck between over-regulating the profession, to its detriment, and meeting the legitimate expectations of the public. We feel confident that the College will continue to meet its public duties responsibly and appropriately. We have been kept closely informed of the opinions provided by Timothy Dutton QC in relation to these matters.

Many complaints received relate to performance which is poor, but which falls short of that which would amount to 'disgraceful conduct in a professional respect'. It is clear to us that poor performance needs to be tackled more effectively through monitoring and investigation against agreed professional standards. This focus on performance would be over and above that expected of practitioners under their contract of employment where this arises. We recognise the challenges this poses in the case of single-handed vets. The proposal to develop a 'Performance Protocol' with emphasis on the



Chris Mattinson

importance of compulsory continuing professional development (CPD) to rectify deficiencies is essential, in our view. We look forward to further discussion with the College on the outcome of the current review.

PIC responds...

The PIC is confident that the ongoing move to 'fitness to practise' procedures is legally robust, given the legal opinion on the Health Protocol and the recent legal opinion on RCVS Jurisdiction. The PIC Chairman will be meeting with the Advisory Committee Chairman to explore the feasibility of a performance protocol to complete this process. Poor performance which falls far short of expected professional standards is subject to RCVS jurisdiction, but there may be circumstances where it is not appropriate to refer such complaints to the DC, if suitable undertakings are given by the veterinary surgeon, for example, to undertake appropriate CPD, which protect the public interest.

The external solicitors' review /audit of complaints and disciplinary procedures (5 February 2010) included a number of recommendations relating to investigations and the PIC, the implementation of which were completed by 2 June 2011. These include guidance for the Chairman and a protocol for internal audit.

Complaints about fees are regularly received. The College's position is that these cannot be considered unless the fees charged are deemed to be so excessive as to warrant an investigation. We consider that this position is not sustainable, nor in the public interest. We are aware that other Regulators are tackling this issue and we would support any attempt by the College to issue advice to its members on charging, and the desirability of greater transparency as to how fees have been calculated. Many practices are already doing good work in this regard, but others fall short.

"The growth of large corporate providers, and practices owned by non-veterinary surgeons, presents a particular challenge in terms of effective regulation."

PIC responds...

With regard to fees and pricing of veterinary services, this is generally a matter between veterinary surgeons and their clients, although the current *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* gives advice to veterinary surgeons to give fee estimates and to keep clients informed of ongoing costs. The recent legal advice suggesting that the RCVS

may seek to give veterinary surgeons additional advice on costs will need to be considered by the RCVS Guide Review Working Party, which has prepared a draft Code of Professional Conduct to replace the *Guide*.

We recognise that the profession is constantly evolving. The growth of large corporate providers, and practices owned by non-veterinary surgeons, presents a particular challenge in terms of effective regulation. Whilst the regulation of individual vets is well established, we believe that the RCVS needs to ensure that the regulation of the corporate sector is equally effective. It must be in the interest of the public and the profession that corporate, charitable and those practices run by non-veterinary surgeons in particular, should appoint a Chief Veterinary Officer who has defined responsibility and can be held accountable for the design, delivery, resourcing and quality of all clinical services.

"It is clear to us that the College has taken significant steps to tighten up its internal vetting procedures to minimise the risk of fraudulent applications being approved."

PIC responds...

The Guide Review Working Party has also considered the RCVS advice for corporate practices - practices that are wholly or partly owned by non-veterinary surgeons. The Working Party considered whether to require such practices to appoint a Chief Veterinary Officer, to strengthen the current advice in the *Guide* (Annex F), but decided that a flexible approach was preferable, where veterinary surgeons in a business are accountable to the extent of their influence or responsibility. The PIC is confident that either approach will provide suitable regulation of the profession. The draft Code, which is currently subject to consultation, includes a number of relevant provisions.

In last year's report we raised a range of concerns in relation to the registration of overseas and European vets. Over the years, Mr Oakes and others - the numbers are small - have attempted to fraudulently misrepresent themselves to the public. It is clear to us that the College has taken significant steps to tighten up its internal vetting procedures to minimise the risk of fraudulent applications being approved. Communication between the relevant College departments has improved, and advice and guidance has been sought from the Police and other authorities as to how the College may more effectively tackle attempts to defraud.

PIC responds...

At a meeting between the Lay Observers, Registrar, Head of Professional Conduct and Head of Registration, it was agreed that there will be appropriate training for relevant RCVS staff on how to seek to detect fraudulent applications to the RCVS; there will be increased communication between the Professional Conduct Department and other departments so that the College as a whole can make use of the data held by the Professional Conduct Department, as appropriate to individual members of staff and their roles; and, there will be additional information on professional conduct issues and the potential pitfalls of practice provided to those registering with the RCVS from overseas or Europe, equating to the information UK undergraduates receive in lectures given by the RCVS President and Head of Professional Conduct.

Regarding our concerns about the competency and standards of English spoken by overseas and European vets, we accept that the College is not permitted to implement its own literacy and other tests under current EU legislation. The General Medical Council and other regulators face similar challenges and, unless the Government has the political will to address this issue, no change will be forthcoming. It will, however, continue to be the responsibility of employing practices to ensure that all staff appointed are competent and can speak English to an acceptable standard. It is simply not acceptable to the public to have to deal with a veterinary surgeon who is unable to speak adequate English.

"It will, however, continue to be the responsibility of employing practices to ensure that all staff appointed are competent and can speak English to an acceptable standard."

PIC responds...

The draft Code also includes a provision requiring that veterinary surgeons must be able to communicate using the English language, which is welcomed by the Committee.

The Lay Observers would like to place on record our thanks to Jill Nute for the skill with which she chairs PIC, and her inclusive approach to decision making. Finally, our grateful thanks go to Gordon Hockey and all members of staff in the Professional Conduct Department who, together with other College staff, support us so ably and with such good humour and patience.



Report to Council June 2011

PI Committee Chairman Jill Nute

Since the last Report to Council, there have been four Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, during which time 30 new complaints were considered.

Of these, three complaints were closed; eight were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon; three were held open; five were referred to the veterinary investigators for visits and interviews (one visit to be unannounced); and, five were referred to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigations. Six cases were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken.

The PI Committee is currently investigating 48 ongoing complaints, which include complaints referred to solicitors, visits and health cases.

Health Protocol

Three veterinary surgeons are being considered under the RCVS Health Protocol and have agreed to undergo medical assessment by an independent medical practitioner. In total, five veterinary surgeons are now being monitored in association with health issues.

Breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act

Since the last report to Council, the Head of Professional Conduct and the Senior Case Manager have provided the police with witness statements to assist their investigations of breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The Head of the Professional Conduct Department has been called as a prosecution witness in one case.

As reported to Council in March, there are eight ongoing cases involving non-veterinary surgeons: one case (signing veterinary prescriptions) reported to Trading Standards resulted in the alleged offender receiving a formal caution; another case reported to the police resulted in the arrest of the offender and charges of dishonesty and breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act offences – a court date is still to be fixed and the Senior Case Manager may be called as a witness for the prosecution; another case has resulted in the arrest and interview of the alleged offender – the offender is expected to be charged with dishonesty and breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act offences. In a further case, the offender has been arrested and interviewed – the evidence is currently being considered by the Crown Prosecution Service. In the remaining cases, the Professional Conduct Department continues to liaise with various police forces, Trading Standards and the Health & Safety Executive, and these cases will be included in future reports to Council. The Department is involved in one further case of a police investigation.

Importance of clear and accurate clinical records

One complaint was reported to Council which highlights a recurring issue identified in many complaints considered by the PI Committee. It concerns the importance of clear and accurate clinical records, and providing copies of clinical records upon the request of a colleague or the owner. The complaint was closed by the PIC, with advice given on record keeping and providing all relevant clinical information promptly to a colleague taking over responsibility for a case. Full details are available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Importance of checking medicine dosage

In a previous Report to Council (*RCVS News*, March 2010), a complaint was reported regarding an overdose of Baytril causing blindness in a cat. The PIC recently considered a similar complaint where, again, blindness had been caused to a cat following an overdose of Baytril. In light of this new complaint, the PIC reiterates its previous advice to the profession regarding the importance of checking the dosage before supplying any veterinary medicinal product; particularly Baytril.

The full report is available on RCVSOnline (www.rcvs.org.uk).

Mrs Alina Grecko

Inquiry concerning: falsifying prescriptions to obtain drugs for personal use

DC decision: guilty of serious professional misconduct; reprimanded and warned as to future conduct

Registration status: name remains on Register

On 17 May 2011, the Disciplinary Committee reprimanded Clwyd-based veterinary surgeon Alina Grecko and warned her as to her future conduct, on charges relating to falsifying prescriptions to obtain drugs for her own use.

At the outset of the two-day hearing, Mrs Grecko admitted that, in 2009, she had written out three prescriptions for her own use whilst working as a veterinary surgeon at Greenfield Veterinary Surgery, Holywell, Clywd, and that this amounted to serious professional misconduct. The Committee found this to be the case, and said she was right to admit it. The Committee also said this was deliberate wrong-doing on three separate occasions and involved an obvious breach of Mrs Grecko's legal duties in relation to prescribing, which was bound to diminish the profession and public confidence in it. It was also a flagrant breach of the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons*.

Miss Maria Becerra Parga

Inquiry concerning: charges relating to fraudulent registration

DC decision: charges found not proved; case dismissed

Registration status: name remains on Register

On 19 May 2011, after a two-day hearing, the Disciplinary Committee dismissed a case against Maria Becerra Parga, having found charges relating to fraudulent registration not proved.

Miss Becerra Parga was charged with fraudulently entering her name on the Register of Veterinary Surgeons, by submitting a registration application in 2005 that contained a forged certificate of good standing from the Distinguished Official Veterinary Association of Lugo, Spain. The Committee said that, in order to conclude Miss Becerra Parga had acted dishonestly, it needed to be sure that when she submitted the certificate to the RCVS she knew it was not genuine.

Miss Becerra Parga admitted that she did not make any application for the certificate directly to the Lugo Association. She accepted that the certificate she supplied to the College (the number of which was genuine and corresponded to a male veterinary surgeon registered in Spain) was a forgery, and that it contained a reference to her

In the Committee's opinion the charge was a serious one; it involved falsehoods and disregard of legal obligations and of the profession's standards, as well as compromising another professional – a pharmacist. In mitigation, however, the Committee accepted that the offence involved no harm to any animal or person, nor risk of harm except to herself; nor was there financial gain. Mrs Grecko was a young and relatively inexperienced veterinary surgeon, and the Committee's view was that the offence was the result of her not thinking straight at a time of great stress in her personal and professional life, rather than a clearly thought out course of deliberate conduct. It was in no doubt that Mrs Grecko was genuinely remorseful about her behaviour and had insight into its seriousness.

“The primary purpose of the sanction was not to punish the respondent but to protect the welfare of animals.”

The Committee also considered evidence relating to the circumstances in which the prescription came to be written. It accepted the general case that the original idea of self-prescribing did not come from Mrs Grecko; however, the Committee

did not find that she had been encouraged or persuaded; the most that could be said was that Mrs Grecko had taken up a casual suggestion that she might write the prescription herself.

When deciding on sanction, the Committee took into account both the facts of the particular case and the mitigating factors. It reiterated that the primary purpose of the sanction was not to punish the respondent but to protect the welfare of animals, to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold proper standards of conduct; it said the sanction applied must be proportionate to the nature and extent of the respondent's conduct, and weigh the public interest with the interests of the respondent.

The Committee also said that, in a case involving the writing of false prescriptions, the importance of public confidence in the profession and of upholding the standards of the profession meant that the Committee would normally feel that at least a suspension from the Register should be imposed.

Having given anxious consideration to the question whether that course could properly be avoided in this case, the Committee felt able to take an exceptional course. The sanctions it therefore imposed were that the Respondent was both reprimanded and warned as to her future conduct. It directed that these sanctions would remain on her record indefinitely.

degree, a statement of good conduct, and was dated before she had a need for it; however, she said, this had been given to her by a friend and veterinary colleague and she had understood that she had been given a temporary membership of the Lugo Association for the purpose of registering with the RCVS. She also said that she had left these arrangements to her colleague and assumed that the document she had been given was genuine.

“The Committee also dismissed an argument RCVS Counsel put forward, that Miss Becerra Parga had neither offered nor made payment for the certificate, and that she had forged the certificate to avoid a payment.”

Her colleague, called as a witness by the College, said that Miss Becerra Parga had admitted the fraud to her and she denied that she had given the certificate to Miss Becerra Parga. Her colleague said that she gave no more than general guidance because she knew that Miss Becerra Parga would be guided by a UK company that would arrange

for her registration with the RCVS and through which she would be employed. She thought it possible that she had told Miss Becerra Parga that she needed a letter of recommendation, but she was not sure.

After careful consideration, the Committee preferred the evidence of Miss Becerra Parga and found her account to be “consistent with her naivety, inexperience and trusting nature” and “was sure that she did not forge the document herself”. It found that to the extent that Miss Becerra Parga read the certificate at all when given it, she obviously did not notice its date or significance. The Committee was not able to say who was responsible for forging the certificate.

The Committee also dismissed an argument RCVS Counsel put forward, that Miss Becerra Parga had neither offered nor made payment for the certificate, and that she had forged the certificate to avoid a payment.

The Committee said it did not find it credible that a veterinary surgeon, in work with a supportive family, who obviously was easily able to obtain proof of her good character directly from the university if necessary, would have jeopardised her entire career by forging the document, let alone for a small financial advantage.

The Committee directed that the charges be dismissed.

Mr John Owen-Thomas

Inquiry concerning: dishonest certification

DC decision: guilty of serious professional misconduct; suspend for ten months

Registration status: name suspended from Register on 15 April 2011

On 15 March 2011, the Disciplinary Committee suspended John Owen-Thomas from the Register for ten months, having found him to have dishonestly certified that he carried out bovine tuberculosis (TB) testing and measured and recorded the test reactions of 248 cattle, when in fact he knew he had not tested all the animals.

At the start of the two-day hearing, Mr Owen-Thomas of Teme Veterinary Practice, Ludlow, Shropshire, admitted that in September 2009 he had dishonestly certified that all the cattle on a farm had been tested for TB when he knew he had not tested all of them.

He also admitted failing adequately to identify the cattle he had tested, failing to measure the skin-folds of all the animals, and to entering false information into the national cattle-tracing recording system about the reaction measurements he had purportedly taken.

“The validity of any certificate is an integral part of the system relating to disease control and the maintenance of public health.”

The facts of the case, accepted by Mr Owen-Thomas, were that whilst working as an Official Veterinarian (OV) for Animal Health, an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, he had visited a farm to carry out TB testing on 248 cattle, following the discovery of TB reactors in the herd. Mr Owen-Thomas did not, however, check the animals' ear-tag numbers or make any notes about the individual animals he was testing, as required by Animal Health procedures. There were also a number of animals which were not tested. Despite this, skin thickness measurements were entered into the records for all 248 animals.

The matter came to light during a farm visit from Animal Health after a chance conversation with the farmer. Mr Owen then admitted he had not tested all the cattle as recorded, and was suspended from OV work.

“On previous occasions the Committee has emphasised the importance of the integrity of the certification process,” said Chairman Beverley Cottrell, on behalf of the Committee. “The validity of any certificate is an integral part of the system relating to disease control and the maintenance of public health. It is essential that all particulars

continued over

concerning the animal are true and that all requirements have been complied with."

The Committee also considered that, as an OV, Mr Owen-Thomas was in a position of trust and responsibility which he failed adequately to discharge, particularly as there had been TB in the herd. That Mr Owen-Thomas undermined procedures in place to prevent the spread of disease was a further aggravating factor.

"However, the Committee considers that Mr Owen-Thomas's prompt admissions demonstrate insight into the unacceptable nature of his actions," said Mrs Cottrell, noting as mitigating factors the attestations from farming clients as to his skill and dedication to his work, and that the charge related to a single farm visit.

"False certification will inevitably lead to consideration of the removal of a Member's name from the Register," she continued. "However, the Committee has concluded that in this case the removal of Mr Owen-Thomas's name from the Register is neither necessary in the public interest, nor necessary to protect the welfare of animals, nor is proportionate."

The Committee directed that Mr Owen-Thomas's name be suspended from the Register for a period of ten months.

Mr Dewi Lewis

A Disciplinary Committee hearing into Dewi Lewis was adjourned on 21 April 2011. Having been listed for four days, commencing on 18 April, the hearing is due to resume on 18 July 2011 and has been listed for two days.

Mr Joseph Lennox Holmes

Joseph Holmes has appealed to the Privy Council against the decision of the Disciplinary Committee at the conclusion of its Inquiry into him in January (RCVS News, March 2011). The Privy Council has set a date of 1 November 2011 for this appeal hearing. Mr Holmes is therefore entitled to continue to practise at least until this appeal is heard.



Full details of disciplinary hearings are available at www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary.



Report to Council June 2011

RVN PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill

There are currently 8,275 Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses and, as of 1 April 2011, they are subject to regulation under the Rules agreed by VN and RCVS Council in November 2010. The procedures for complaints and disciplinary cases are very similar to those for veterinary surgeons.

The Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC) meets to consider complaints against RVNs that have been referred to the Committee by the Case Examiners, where there is an arguable case for serious professional misconduct. The constitution of the RVN PIC comprises three RVNs, a veterinary surgeon and a lay person. The Chairman and the lay person have previous experience of the RCVS complaints and disciplinary procedures, having been, respectively, the Chairman and a Lay Observer with the veterinary PIC.

RVN complaint form

A dedicated complaint form has been prepared for complaints against RVNs, which can be downloaded from the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints. The same section also provides information for RVNs about the RCVS complaints procedure.

Training

In preparation, the RVN members of the Committee were invited to attend the PIC's two-day annual training course in December 2009 and 2010. The agenda included training on the RCVS complaint procedures, processing complaints, thresholds for complaints, decision-making at Case Assessment, Case Examination and the RVN PIC, the Disciplinary Committee Rules and the RCVS Health Protocol; as well as Case Law updates and practical workshop sessions.

The RVN PIC's first meeting was on 26 May 2011 and the second meeting is reserved for 20 July 2011, should there be cases to be considered. Prior to the first meeting, the RVN PIC attended an internal training session at the College which included training on the rules and procedures and further training on decision-making at Case Assessment, Case Examination and the RVN PIC.

Complaints received

Currently, one complaint against an RVN has been received by the RCVS, which was referred to the RVN PIC after discussion with the Chairman.

The full report is available on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk).

The long and the short of it

Trust funding enables short-scrotum castration research

The RCVS Charitable Trust offers several Extra-mural Studies (EMS) Vacation Research Scholarships of £500 to £1,500 to support veterinary undergraduates carrying out research projects during their compulsory EMS. Louise Bird, a final-year student at the University of Edinburgh, was one of last year's recipients.

So, what was your project?

I looked at the impact of short-scrotum castration on the weight gain of lambs at the Farm Animal Initiative in Oxford, to compare it with the weight gain of lambs castrated with the standard method, and also those of lambs which were left entire.

Sounds painful. Why research that in particular?

There are over 36 million sheep in the UK and a standard method of castration is used on most farms, although New Zealand farmers prefer using a short-scrotum method. I was also in contact with a farm that is interested in more welfare-friendly methods of husbandry and it had assisted with a previous study that showed lambs' pain responses to be lesser with the short-scrotum rather than the standard method.

Why would a farmer want to change method?

Short-scrotum castration takes the same amount of time, can be performed before seven days of age with no anaesthetic and uses the same

equipment as the standard method, so if I could prove that weight gain is improved by this means of castration, and that this castration is effective, then farmers are more likely to choose this method – it's something that works in the real world.

"I recognise that economic benefits to the farmer of using new husbandry methods need to be proven before they will be widely accepted."

And what did you find out?

My results showed that the short-scrotum method does make lambs infertile – and that weight gain in lambs castrated this way was improved compared with that of entire lambs. There were no lambs castrated by standard methods on the farm, so I used research paper data on lamb weight when castrated by standard methods, which also came out favourably. As a preliminary study it would need further research to prove that short-scrotum castration produces superior weight gain to the traditional method – but the results show this research to be worth doing.

What's next?

Hopefully, to graduate and then work in a farm animal practice! Longer term, I'm interested in

modifying or finding new, more welfare-friendly farming practices. I recognise that economic benefits to the farmer of using new husbandry methods need to be proven before they will be widely accepted, and carrying out this project has helped me better understand this balance.

Could you have done this without the Trust's support?

I doubt it – I needed to keep going back to the farm to weigh the lambs and sometimes stay over so the grant paid for my travel and accommodation and also for equipment I needed.



Trust takes stock and refocuses

Its Director, Cherry Bushell, outlines the strategic priorities of the RCVS Charitable Trust

The RCVS Charitable Trust has been in existence for over 52 years and, like any organisation, must periodically take stock if it is to achieve its aims – in our case genuinely to influence change and benefit the veterinary profession. So, the Trust undertook a review last year to consider how it should continue to help vets and veterinary nurses provide the best possible care for animals.

Nobody will be surprised to hear that the Trust is no more immune from economic realities than anywhere else, and the present climate makes it especially important that we focus our

spending on real, current needs. Fortunately, we also have considerable freedom to tailor grant-making to where it will best have a direct impact in the short term, and can support in particular vets and veterinary nurses in practice, as well as the vet schools.

This year, the Trust is celebrating the 50th anniversary of veterinary nursing with a dedicated programme to encourage veterinary nurses (VNs) to develop their role and make a unique difference to animal care. This will help accredited veterinary nurse training centres buy equipment for nurse training, and set up a pilot fund to help nurses develop their ideas for working with schools and other groups to improve understanding and empathy for animals. As the Trust wants to encourage VNs to use their unique vantage point to change and improve practices, we will be holding a competition to encourage nurses to send in their ideas and will follow up on the best ones – we will announce the details on our website and through the veterinary nursing press.

New awards will also be offered to vets who want to take enterprising or collaborative approaches to

existing problems, for example, how practices might engage with research through partnerships with animal charities. Alongside these new awards, the Trust continues its more traditional grant-making, and this year we will make at least two 'Blue Sky' research awards – more, if we can find sponsorship – and two small grants, as well as help ten veterinary undergraduates to complete extra-mural studies research and ten veterinary postgraduates to visit scientific research centres.

In the longer term, the Trust's priorities are to support new thinking and promote learning and investigation. Not least, we intend to build on the Trust's partnerships and make new allies to become a hub for innovation, investigation and co-operation. An important part of this work will be to maximise the use of our Library, information services and archives. With these changes, and the Trust's resources and experience, we can make sure the Trust is on track for the future.

For more information, and details of the Trust's grants programme, visit www.rcvscharitabletrust.org.uk.



RCVS News at a glance...

Too busy to read the lot? Start here for important dates for your diary and story summaries, so you can decide what might be worth reading in full.

1 Join us and celebrate

Your invitation to the VN 50th anniversary seminar – 23 June.

2 Flat fees

No fee increases for 2012.

Curtain up?

We are staging an ongoing review of the Act.

PDP support

New Postgraduate Deans appointed.

3 Show me your motion

Two motions at June Council meeting, one carried in part.

Mental health support

Funding call for PhD bursary.

4 Hellos and goodbyes

RCVS and VN Council election results – and retiring members.

Sharing knowledge

Share Jones Lecturer announced – join us on 23 November.

5 Prep steps

Online help for student VNs on practice placements.

Simplified letters

Decision on postnominals for veterinary nurses.

250 years young

FVE celebrates Vet2011 and 250 years since the first vet school, in Lyon.

6 Consultation time

Consultation on new vet Code of Professional Conduct draws to a close – and VN version about to open. Your comments please!

Ready, steady... dope!

UK Anti-Doping issues warning about potential Olympic drugs cheats.

7 Caesarean changes

Kennel Club amends litter registration documents and ethics code to enable vets to report caesareans.

Horse sense

Updated PPE certificates available soon.

8 New kids on the block

Nottingham grads head for registration as Council recommends approval of the veterinary degree.

All about EAEVE

Read about the EAEVE vet school evaluation system – useful for employers of European graduates.

9 PDP time again

Ensure your new graduates get the support they need by signing up to the PDP.

VN Diploma in the mix

Mixed practice pathway for Level 3 Diploma in veterinary nursing nears completion.

10 United front

There's progress towards international agreement on standards for joint accreditation of vet schools.

Live to fight another day

Edinburgh's Telford College will continue with VN course.

11 Freedom of movement

Minimum training requirements for European vet schools are under consideration.

Special measures

Specialisation consultation coming soon, as Working Party due to report.

12 Best days of their lives?

Vet schools report on recent developments in the way teaching is carried out.

15 Firm foundations

We look at the 250-year history of veterinary education.

16 Follow in our footsteps

Some surprising answers in our BSAVA footprints competition.

Stand on ceremony

Apply for your ticket to RCVS Day, our AGM and awards ceremony (1 July).

17 Nice to meet you...

We announce meetings, events and congresses where you can meet the RCVS team and pose your questions.

18 Watching us, watching you

Read the report of the Lay Observers on the Preliminary Investigation Committee.

20 Dose warning

PIC report to Council includes warning to check dose rates.

DC hearings

Mrs A Grecko found guilty of serious professional misconduct for falsifying prescriptions, reprimanded and warned as to future conduct; case against Miss M Becerra Parga relating to fraudulent registration dismissed; Mr J Owen-Thomas suspended for ten months for dishonest certification; hearing into Mr D Lewis adjourned; and, Mr J Holmes appeal will be heard on 1 November.

22 VN PIC report

Report from the first meeting of the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee.

23 Working holiday

We hear from a Trust EMS Vacation Research Scholar.

Where next for the Trust?

Trust Director reveals future priorities.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2011

23 June

VN 50th anniversary seminar

24 June

Deadline for vet Code comments

1 July

RCVS Day; Specialist fees due

5 July

Diploma written exams

19-20 July

Certificate written exams

1 August

Fellowship application deadline

22-24 September

Join us at BVA Congress

7-9 October

Join us at BVNA Congress

27 October

Regional Question Time: Pembrokeshire

1 November

Deadline for (old style) Certificates, and for Diploma enrolment

3 November

RCVS Council meeting

23 November

Share Jones Lecture

24-25 November

Join us at London Vet Show



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