

Developing reflective practitioners

“This reflective learning is more and more a core part of the way they engage in their learning, including CPD.”

Consulting on new CPD policy

Over the summer we will be engaging in a six-week consultation with both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in regard to our policy concerning continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning.

The draft consultation document was developed by the CPD Policy Working Group, chaired by Professor Stephen May, and was approved by Council at its June 2016 meeting and Veterinary Nursing Council in May 2016.

The consultation is the culmination of several discussions at our Education Committee and at Council itself regarding the longer-term direction of CPD and the possibility of introducing an ‘outcomes-based’ approach.

Currently we expect veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to undertake 105 and 45 hours of CPD respectively over a rolling three-year period. An outcomes-based approach, however, would concentrate less on the amount of hours logged and more on interactive, reflective learning and measuring the impact this has on the individual’s practice and patient health outcomes.

Professor May explained: “Through our discussions about CPD policy, the feeling was that the most constructive way of assessing CPD outcomes would be through the engagement of all our skills as ‘reflective practitioners’. By moving our CPD policy in that direction, members of the profession will be making more explicit, to themselves and others, their thoughts about what they get out of engaging in CPD and how it will benefit their practice.

“For newer graduates doing the Professional Development Phase or those doing the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, this reflective

learning is more and more a core part of the way they engage in their learning, including CPD.

“There will be some challenges as far as those who are not accustomed to this sort of approach are concerned, and that is the reason for us doing this consultation on how we achieve the next stage of development. We feel this consultation is needed and a move in this direction is appropriate because if we carry on with a purely ‘input-based’ approach to CPD then it will make us look rather dated and it becomes harder to defend in terms of where the profession is heading.”

The main element of the proposed new CPD model is the concept of ‘Plan, Do, Record, Reflect’ in which members of the profession are encouraged to identify their CPD needs using a development plan; embark upon the planned activity; keep a record of the CPD undertaken (including supporting evidence); and, in the final stage, reflect upon the impact of the activity.

The consultation will ask for the profession’s views on this model as well as asking if they would like to retain the current requirement to log a certain amount of hours, their opinion on potential changes to the online Professional Development Record (PDR) and how easy or difficult they think it will be to implement a new system.

An email with a link to the consultation document will be sent to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses on 20 June. Alternatively, you can access the consultation by visiting www.rcvs.org.uk/consultations.

All responses need to be submitted within six weeks of the launch of the consultation. Consultation responses will be considered at the October meeting of the Education Committee with final recommendations being presented at the November meeting of RCVS Council and the October meeting of VN Council.

In this issue: CPD audit and consultation, RCVS and VN Council elections, ethical review panel, Professional Conduct Department changes, VN Golden Jubilee Award, Alternative Dispute Resolution trial, Wellbeing award, CEO update, Schedule 3 review, new Find a Vet, RCVS Day, advice on prescriptions, referrals and veterinary fees, removals from the Register, PSS feedback, Advanced Practitioner and Fellowship applications, VN Day-one Skills List, Vet Futures Action Plan, meetings and events, Mind Matters, PI and DC reports, second *Veterinary Evidence* issue.

RCVS and VN Councils elections results

Welcoming two new members to each body

This year's RCVS Council elections saw four current and two new members elected to Council as well as two new members elected to VN Council.

For RCVS Council current members Christopher Barker (2,838 votes), Amanda Boag (2,689 votes), Kit Sturgess (2,586 votes) and Stephen May (2,452 votes) were returned to four of the six available seats. Melissa Donald and Lucie Goodwin were also elected to Council for the first time, with 2,532 votes and 2,307 votes respectively. The re-election of Stephen May means that he will serve as our Junior Vice-President for 2016–17.

"I would like to congratulate all those who were successfully elected, and re-elected, to Council, and thank all those who took part in this year's elections."

The two places available on VN Council will be taken by new members Matthew Rendle and Racheal Marshall, who gained 547 votes and 537 votes respectively.

Regarding turnout, for veterinary surgeons 15.6% (or 4,403) of those eligible to vote did so compared to 18.1% last year. For veterinary nurses the total number of those casting votes was higher than last year (1,435 compared to 1,379) but the overall turnout of 10.9% was slightly lower than last year when 11% of the profession cast a vote.

Average turnouts over the past 10 years have been 17.2% for RCVS Council and 8.8% for VN Council.



Christopher Barker



Amanda Boag



Kit Sturgess



Stephen May



Melissa Donald



Lucie Goodwin



Matthew Rendle



Racheal Marshall

Eleanor Ferguson, our Acting Registrar, said: "I would like to congratulate all those who were successfully elected, and re-elected, to Council, and thank all those who took part in this year's elections – whether by standing as a candidate, casting a vote or submitting questions for the candidates to answer."

Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council, added: "Many congratulations to the two brand new members of VN Council – I look forward to working with them over the coming years and seeing what they can bring to help drive the profession forward."

All the successful candidates will take up their positions at RCVS Day – our Annual General Meeting and Awards Day – on Friday 15 July 2016 at the Royal Institute of British Architects (see page 8 for more details).

Each candidate in both elections was invited to produce a short video in which they answered questions put to them by fellow members of the professions. These are still available to view on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos. Both elections are run on our behalf by Electoral Reform Services.

Governance changes one step closer

Plans submitted to minister for approval

Plans for substantial reform of our governance have continued to make progress in recent months, with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) undertaking a successful consultation on the detailed proposals agreed, after two years of debate and consultation, by RCVS Council in March 2016.

The proposed reforms would reduce the size of Council, increase lay membership, and include formal positions for veterinary nurses. The reforms would also replace positions nominated by individual UK universities with a smaller number of members collectively appointed by the UK veterinary schools.

This new model is designed to encourage effective and timely decision-making and a team-dynamic, while meeting the demands of our unique role as a 'Royal College that regulates'.

Following the latest consultation, the proposals have been amended to add the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) to Council as an ex-officio, non-voting member. The number of Council members will be reduced from 42 to 25, consisting of 13 elected veterinary surgeons (constituting a majority of voting members of Council), six appointed lay persons, three members appointed collectively by the UK veterinary schools, two veterinary nurses, and

the CVO. In future an additional member could be added (bringing the total number to 26) to represent any further allied professions that Council may choose to regulate as Associates of the College under our Royal Charter powers.

The final proposals have now been submitted for ministerial approval, and the College hopes that later this year Defra will begin drafting a legislative reform order (LRO) to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966), in which case the changes could come into force in 2017. The changes to Council membership would be implemented over a three-year period to ensure a smooth transition.

5% rise in renewal fees

Income to help College fulfil its goals

Council has decided to increase the annual renewal fee for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses by 5% for 2017–18.

The increase follows a six year freeze in the annual renewal fee for vets and veterinary nurses which have remained at £299 (for UK-practising vets) and £61 respectively since 2010.

If approved by the Privy Council the 5% increase will be applied from April 2017 onwards which will change the renewal fees as follows:

- **UK-practising vets** – £314
- **Practising outside the UK** – £157
- **Non-practising** – £51
- **Veterinary nurses** – £64

“This increase is less than it would have been had we raised the fees in line with inflation every year for the past six years.”

Nick Stace, our Chief Executive, explains: “I am delighted that we have managed to keep fees at the same level for six years, but it is not sustainable to continue to do that. Over the last few years we have improved the service we

provide the profession and the public including an overhaul the concerns process and the launch of a new fellowships, all underpinned by more effective IT and infrastructure.

“In order to ensure that the College can continue to provide an excellent service to the profession and fulfil its strategic aims, we have decided that it would be prudent to generate more income by raising the fees. Even with the fee increase it places the RCVS at the lowest end of fees charged by regulators. This increase is less than it would have been had we raised the fees in line with inflation every year for the past six years.”



Reporting in

Annual Report available shortly

You can read all about our activities in 2015 – and where the money went – in our Annual Report, which was approved by Council at its June meeting.

The Report covers how we met the objectives of year two of our three-year Strategic Plan, including setting up a trial alternative dispute resolution (ADR) system, launching a new improved Practice Standards Scheme and progress with our Mind Matters Initiative.

Our financial accounts are presented in detail, according to the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

The Annual Report will be available from www.rcvs.org.uk/publications around 24 June; for a hard copy, please contact Andrew Grainger on a.grainger@rcvs.org.uk.



Investing in investigating

More resources for concerns process

Over the next six months the College will be investing an additional £225,000 in our concerns investigation process in order to increase the speed at which concerns are either closed or referred, ensure we are meeting our service standards and reduce stress for both the profession and public.

The decision to increase investment was made by our Operational Board and reported to Council in June in response to a steady increase in the number of concerns investigated by our Professional Conduct Department over the past few years. For example, between 1 August 2014 and 31 July 2015 we received 982 concerns compared to 793 in the same period 2012–2013 and 852 in the same period 2013–2014. In the six months from 1 August 2015 to 31 January 2016 we received 506 concerns – meaning that, for the first time ever, we may receive more than 1,000 concerns in a single year.

In 2014 we simplified our concerns investigation process into three stages – Case Examiner Group;

Preliminary Investigation Committee (where it is determined whether the individual vet or veterinary nurse has a case to answer); and, finally, Disciplinary Committee, if there is alleged serious professional misconduct. We also introduced targets for each stage of the process, which aim to close or refer concerns at stage 1 within four months of the concern being raised with timings of nine months and 14 months for stages 2 and 3 respectively. In order to ensure these targets are being met while dealing with an increased number of concerns, we are now in the process of hiring five additional case managers.

Eleanor Ferguson, Acting Registrar, explains: “Currently we are only closing or referring just over half of concerns at stage 1 within four months and so, in order for the system to run more smoothly we will be investing in extra staff to help clear the backlog and ensure our targets are being met going forward.”

“Similarly, in order to deal with the increase in the number of cases being referred to stage 2, we will be increasing the frequency of Preliminary Investigation Committee meetings from one to two per month.”

“Speeding up the process will also reduce the stress and anxiety felt by both members of the profession and complainants.”

“It is important to add that this investment is not just about dealing with concerns more quickly but is also about quality of service and having more staff on hand will ensure that this quality is maintained in terms of how we communicate with complainants and individuals. Speeding up the process will also reduce the stress and anxiety felt by both members of the profession and complainants.”

More details about our concerns investigation process and its various stages can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/concerns



Golden moment for Wigan-based VN

Louise O'Dwyer this year's winner

In May we were delighted to announce Louise O'Dwyer, a Wigan-based veterinary nurse, as the fifth recipient of the RCVS annual Golden Jubilee Award. The award, re-launched in 2015 to make it more leadership-focused and exclusive to veterinary nurses, will be presented to Louise at RCVS Day, 15 July (see page 8 for more details).

Louise has long been a pioneer in the field of veterinary nursing, acting as the first veterinary nurse Clinical Director within the CVS Group and the first UK veterinary nurse to hold a position in a US specialist academy.

She has also lectured around the world and volunteered for several years at the Bella Moss Foundation, worked on a variety of British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Committees, contributed to over 35 journal and magazine articles in the UK, USA and Canada, written three nursing textbooks, and contributed chapters to numerous textbooks in the UK and US.

Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council and member of the selection panel, says of the Award: "The Golden Jubilee is awarded to members of our profession who actively demonstrate outstanding leadership, commitment to veterinary nursing and play an ambassadorial role. Speaking on both national and international stages, Louise O'Dwyer has

widely influenced nursing practice in particular with relation to infection control and patient care. She is a true pioneer for veterinary nursing, and her passion for pushing our profession forward clinically makes her a most deserving winner of the award."

"Nursing is about making your mark, about being there for your patients, and for me that's what my career has been about."

Fellow veterinary nurse Kathryn Latimer nominated her for the award: "I feel Louise is a shining example of everything the Golden Jubilee Award encompasses – she has demonstrated exceptional abilities as a leader, not only to veterinary nurses, but to veterinary surgeons... [and] has demonstrated personal commitment to her education, and therefore to patient care, by pursuing a remarkable range of qualifications."

Louise herself says: "Nursing is about making your mark, about being there for your patients, and for me that's what my career has been about. It's a bit of a cliché, but we really are the voice of our patients, and so when people ask me 'why

do you spend so much time with getting extra qualifications?', it's really about making sure I'm better able to help my patients. And as I get older it's also about educating the next generation of veterinary nurses, helping to train them to do the same and to spread our knowledge and training.

"Our training is something British vet nurses can really be proud of, and it's humbling to receive this award when I know just how many other dedicated, passionate vet nurses are out there, but I am truly grateful that the RCVS, and my colleagues, think that I am a worthy recipient."

A limited number of tickets for RCVS Day will be available to members and veterinary nurses in early June – please visit our website for more information: www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-events/rcvs-day



New ADR trial on horizon

Due for launch in October

We will be launching a new nine-month alternative dispute resolution (ADR) trial this autumn which will be administered by a law firm that runs the General Optical Council's ADR scheme.

Nockolds Solicitors was approved as the new administrator of the ADR trial by RCVS Council at its June 2016 meeting at Cardiff City Hall. The company was identified and approved by the RCVS Operational Board as meeting its requirements, a decision which has been welcomed by both the Veterinary Defence Society and the British Veterinary Association, as well as receiving lay and consumer support.

The current trial, which was launched in November 2014 and is administered by Ombudsman Services, will come to a close by 1 October, when the new trial with Nockolds will start.

Nick Stace, RCVS Chief Executive and Secretary, said: "In order to be able to make an informed choice about how we wish to design and implement a permanent ADR scheme we wanted to ensure that we have as many different options and as much data as possible. It is very important that we get the permanent scheme right and this is why Operational Board made the decision to have a second trial. It was also clear that satisfaction

levels from consumers for the previous trial were lower than we would have liked and that we therefore need to explore other options.

"It is important to note that this will not just be a re-run of the first trial with a different administrator – there will be some significant differences.

"First, this will be a truly alternative process as consumers will be able to access the trial directly rather than having to go through the College's concerns process first.

"Second, this will be a process of mediation meaning that expert advisors from Nockolds will facilitate communication between the complainant and the veterinary surgeon to try and find a satisfactory solution to the concern."

The trial will be promoted to both the public and the profession as an alternative to the College's formal concerns investigation process and participation in the trial will be voluntary. There will also still be a panel of veterinary advisors overseeing the trial and helping staff at Nockolds with any clinical queries they may have.

Jennie Jones is a Partner at Nockolds and will head up the trial. She said: "We are committed to providing a service that mediates complaints to find a fair, efficient and proportionate resolution.

We are looking forward to working with everyone involved in the veterinary profession to develop an effective mediation service that can be accessed by both the public and members of the profession.

"The service will focus on finding effective and practical resolutions. Understanding the root cause of the complaint and re-establishing effective communication are the crucial first steps in mediation and helping the parties to find a solution they can both accept. Over the coming months, we will be working with the RCVS, representative bodies for the profession and consumers to launch the service.

"In addition to mediating complaints, we will share insight in mediation and complaint resolution to inform practitioners and stakeholders and to enhance standards at veterinary practices. This enables complaint analysis to be used to help improve client care, avoid complaints and maintain trust and confidence in the profession."

A bespoke website for the trial will be set up in time for the launch of the trial on 1 October 2016 and Nockolds will also be attending the London Vet Show in November to provide further information to the profession about the trial.

Wellbeing winners

Does your practice have what it takes?

Our Mind Matters Initiative is supporting the Society for Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) in turning the spotlight on veterinary practices where wellbeing is valued, and inviting them to share what they are doing via a new Wellbeing Award.

The award will raise standards and help practices benchmark how they are doing wellbeing-wise, via an online checklist; celebrate those practices with management systems and initiatives that motivate and engage their staff; and, via case studies and tips, inspire others to develop the ways in which they provide a supportive working environment.

Launching the awards at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress in April, SPVS Senior Vice-President, Nick Stuart, said: "There is much discussion within the profession about preventing mental illness and suicide. While this is vitally important, there can be a danger of painting too gloomy a picture of modern UK veterinary practice.

"These awards will help the understanding of mental wellbeing and the role this can play in job satisfaction, with the knock-on effects of reducing staff turnover and increasing profitability. The awards recognise that there are many practices out there where the staff are motivated, feel valued, and look forward to coming into work each day!"

Neil Smith, Chair of the RCVS Mind Matters Initiative, added: "We are delighted to support this exciting new award. Celebrating what practices are doing well is important in terms of inspiring change, offering positive case studies and, perhaps most importantly, maintaining a positive approach to wellbeing as a key activity for all of the veterinary team."

The awards website (www.spvs.org.uk/wellbeing) includes a Wellbeing Checklist which anyone can complete, whether or not they are entering, to audit their own practice performance and use to pick up tips on other activities they could implement.

Entries can be from branch surgeries or whole practices and there are three different categories, depending on the number of employees. The prize for each category includes two registrations and banquet tickets for the Veterinary Practice Management Association/SPVS Congress 2017.

The closing date for entries is 30 September 2016.

Riding establishment courses

As with previous years we have two courses taking place over the summer for new riding establishment inspectors as well as those who want to refresh their knowledge and skills.

The first course takes place at the Westerhood Hotel near Glasgow, on Wednesday 29 June, while the second takes place at our offices in London on Friday 8 July.

Under the Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970, the College holds a list of all those veterinary surgeons who are trained as riding establishment inspectors and are able to therefore inspect and report on such establishments to determine if their licences should be issued or renewed by a local authority.



Are you being served?

Operational update

Nick Stace, Chief Executive

When people talk about doctors – or vets for that matter – having a good 'bedside manner,' what they are really talking about is service. It's not about the individual's clinical competence or their level of technical skills, but about the way someone feels about the experience. This is reflected in the complaints we receive at the College, many of which are about poor communication or low levels of perceived service.

And it's the same when individuals interact with us as a College – whether they are members of the profession or of the public – the tone of voice, efficiency and compassion of our team is critical to customers' levels of satisfaction.

It is with this in mind that we have recently overhauled the way in which we deal with concerns, to effectively double our team and be more creative about the way in which our committee responsible for initial investigation works. This is in response to an ever-mounting number of concerns being raised – likely to top 1,000 this year, a 20 per cent uplift on the average – and cases of increasing complexity, both of which mean we are no longer meeting our service standards. And we know that this results in increased stress for vets, nurses and members of the public alike.

By doubling the number of case managers and their support from five to ten, and effectively splitting the Preliminary Investigation Committee into two teams of five, so that they can work in parallel and process twice as many cases, we hope to be back on track by the end of the year. This has cost us money – amounting to £225,000 (which will come out of our disciplinary contingency) – but the regulation of the profession is at the heart of what we do and it's important that we put our money where our mouth is when difficult issues need addressing.

The new team will need to be housed away from Belgravia House in rented accommodation near St James's Park, due to lack of space. As those of you who visit the College will know, we are bursting at the seams and so, in order to make your College fit for the future, we are currently assessing the options for extending the building upwards. I will let you know more on this when we get an indication from Westminster Council about what is possible.

Finally, I have made no secret of the fact that our success relies on having a highly engaged workforce who are clear on what is expected of them, and, in return, we must provide them with a workplace that makes it worth turning up each day. This makes sense not only in being the right thing to do, but also pays dividends in terms of the level of service we are able to provide. So I am delighted to say that our ranking in the national Great Place to Work awards has increased again, from 30th to 23rd place.

We will continue to challenge ourselves to better meet our service standards, develop and expand our range of services and improve our Great Place to Work ranking. As ever, if you would like to suggest improvements that we can make, do contact me on nick@rcvs.org.uk.

Read my blog at www.nickstaceblogs.org, or follow me on [@nickstacetweet](https://twitter.com/nickstacetweet)

The honour is all theirs

Nomination period from July

Do you know someone who not only meets the public's high expectations for veterinary professionals, but sails beyond them? Someone who has long been an ambassador for their profession, and has committed themselves to conducting research and disseminating knowledge? If so, you will soon be able to nominate them for next year's RCVS Honours, to be presented on RCVS Day 2017.

There are three honours which will be accepting nominations, designed to reward and recognise those who go above and beyond in their pursuit of animal welfare: the Queen's Medal, specific to veterinary surgeons; Honorary Associateships, for non-veterinary professionals; and the Golden Jubilee Award for veterinary nurses (see page 4).

The Queen's Medal is the College's most prestigious honour and recognises a veterinary surgeon for their highly distinguished career and outstanding achievements. This year the Queen's Medal will go to distinguished fish vet, Professor Randolph Richards, from the University of Stirling.

The second category, the Honorary Associateship of the College, is a prestigious Honour conferred up to three individuals who are not members of the veterinary professions each year in recognition of their special contribution. These Associateships are a way for us to recognise the full range of individuals who contribute to the veterinary sphere, such as scientists, lecturers, charity-workers, farriers, farmers and those involved in the commercial field.

"The Queen's Medal is the College's most prestigious honour."

For the first time this year we will also be aligning the nomination period for the Golden Jubilee Award, conferred to veterinary nurses, with that of the other honours.

Please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/honours to find out more about each honour. Nomination forms will be available to download from July, with deadlines in mid-September. For further details about the Queen's Medal or Honorary Associateship, please contact Peris Dean, Executive Secretary, on p.dean@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0761. For enquiries about the Golden Jubilee Award, please contact Annette Amato, Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing, on a.amato@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0713.

All nominations will be considered by the Operational Board and then by RCVS Council at its November 2016 meeting. Nominators and award-winners will be notified in November and the results will be made public at Council next March. The honours will be awarded at RCVS Day in July 2017.

Barry Johnson retires from RCVS Council

Steps down after 112 Council meetings

Barry Johnson, long-time RCVS Council member and former RCVS President, attended his last formal RCVS Council meeting in June and will formally retire at RCVS Day in July. He accepted his commemorative scroll at the most recent Council meeting, marking the end of years on Council (1985–97 and 2000–2016), a term as President from 1993–1994, and positions on nearly every committee the RCVS has to offer.

Barry's dedication to the RCVS is complemented by his own personal success as a veterinary surgeon. Graduating from the University of Liverpool in 1969, he started his career as a single-handed practitioner before developing a multi-person practice with species divisions over three sites. All sites have now achieved RCVS standards for equine, farm and small animals.

"I would also urge practitioners to stand for election, and their colleagues to vote for them at this very challenging time for the profession."

Barry says: "I would like to thank all the dedicated staff at Belgravia House past and present, for all the hard work they do for the profession and for their friendship. I would also urge practitioners to stand for election, and their colleagues to vote for



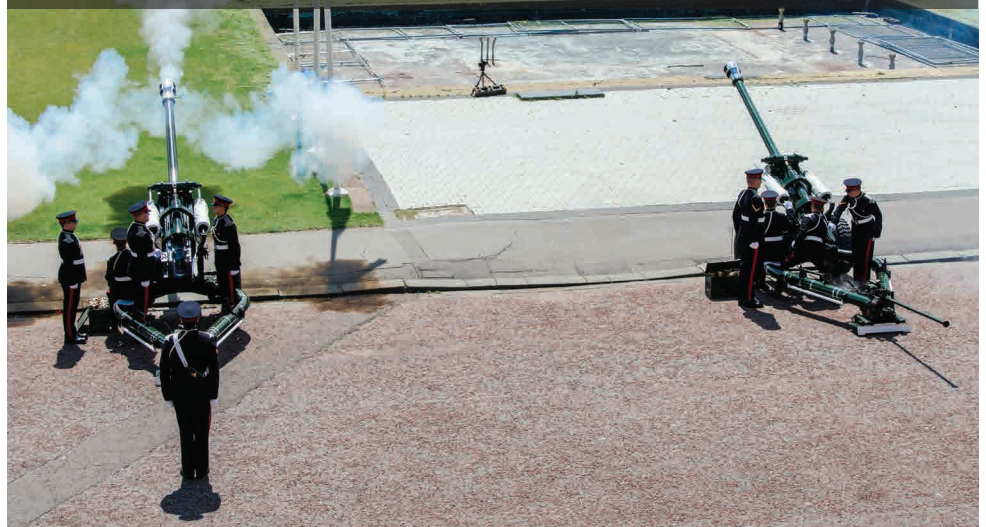
them at this very challenging time for the profession. Finally, I would like to thank all those who have voted me in on seven occasions; I have enjoyed being involved."

Dr Bradley Viner, RCVS President, says: "Barry, throughout his many years of service, always put the interests of the profession and the RCVS first. He has always been a highly respected voice on RCVS Council, and his various committee positions almost cover the entire history of the evolution of RCVS committees! He deserves not just a bowl but a medal for attending 112 Council meetings, and we thank him for his service to the RCVS, and to the veterinary profession."

We would also like to think Professor Jo Price and Richard Stephenson, who retire from Council this year, for their six and eight years' service respectively.

Explosive meeting in Cardiff

Our Council meeting at Cardiff City Hall went off with a bang on 2 June, when it coincided with a 21-gun salute to mark the anniversary of Her Majesty's coronation. During our visit to Cardiff we also hosted a Question Time meeting, a Mind Matters training course, our Operational Board meeting and a meeting with local stakeholders from the veterinary, animal health and farming communities.



Success for a second time

College recognised in staff satisfaction awards

For the second year in a row the College has been recognised as one of the best places to work in the country by the Great Place to Work Institute.

This year we moved up seven places from the previous year, being ranked number 23 in the medium 950 to 499 employees) category at the Best Workplaces Awards ceremony held on Wednesday 27 April. The awards are run by the Great Place to Work Institute, which carries out comprehensive annual surveys of staff engagement with a wide variety of small, medium and large businesses and organisations.

In last year's survey 93% of RCVS staff gave a positive answer to the question "Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work", compared to 91% agreeing with this statement in 2014 and 52% in 2013.

Nick Stace, our Chief Executive, commented: "We are delighted that our efforts to engage with staff and make the College a vibrant and enjoyable place to work have been recognised for the second year in a row and that we have moved up in the league table.

"It demonstrates that we have not been resting on our laurels since last year's success. For example, we put in place a number of initiatives last year, such as volunteering days and improving our recycling offer, to improve staff wellbeing and the work environment and this has clearly paid dividends.

"We are delighted that our efforts to engage with staff and make the College a vibrant and enjoyable place to work has been recognised."

"However, this is not all about improving things internally at the College. Having a happy and engaged workforce is essential in delivering upon our service agenda, where we seek to improve how we engage with the profession and the public and have stretching ambitions around how we better serve their needs, whether through initiatives such as Mind Matters or through the actions flowing from Vet Futures."



Schedule 3 review

Working Party formed

At the end of 2015, Defra offered to work with the College to review Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966; this is the part of the Act that allows veterinary surgeons to delegate medical treatment and minor acts of veterinary surgery to veterinary nurses. In addition to expanding the role of veterinary nurses in assisting with anaesthesia, as agreed by RCVS Council in October 2015, the College is also considering possible reform of the language and content of Schedule 3 and related College guidance to give veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses more confidence in delegating and undertaking Schedule 3 activities.

For the last few months we have undertaken desk-based research, including examining the role of veterinary nurses in other countries and collating academic research into the role of the veterinary nurse. The College has also run a series of Schedule 3 workshops as part of the VN Futures roadshow, which has visited Bristol, Leeds and Edinburgh among other places, in order to gather the views of the profession.

Following this preliminary work, our Operational Board has now agreed to establish a Working Party to examine the evidence in detail and form a view on what any reform of Schedule 3 should be. The Working Party will be chaired by Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council, and will meet approximately four times, with an aim to report to RCVS Council in March 2017 with recommendations on reform. With Council's agreement the College will then be able to open negotiations with Defra with the aim of amending Schedule 3 via a Ministerial Order.

New Find a Vet launched

Revamped online search offers new functionality, fresh design and more information

In early April we launched our brand new Find a Vet service, allowing users for the first time to search for a veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse or veterinary practice all in one place.

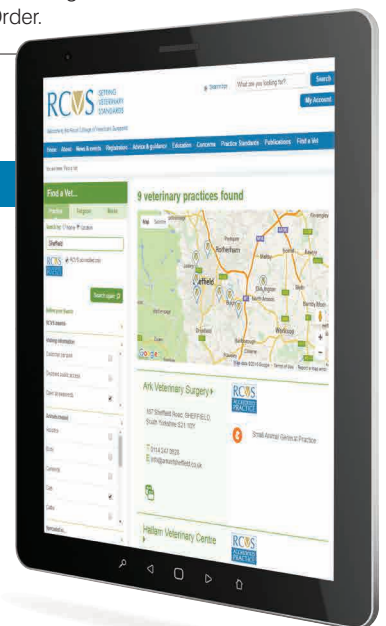
The new service, which we hope will become the 'go-to' place for information about the UK veterinary profession, combines our old Check the Register search tool with the previous Find a Vet practice search. As well as a fresh new design and layout, the new functionality includes:

- More useful practice information for the public, including opening times, visiting information, full contact details, social media channels, staff lists, maps and a 'get directions' function
- More detailed listing of RCVS-accredited practice status and awards

- More prominent search for, and display of, Advanced Practitioners and Specialists
- Individual profile pages for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses
- Improved search engine optimisation, particularly for RCVS-accredited practices, Advanced Practitioners and Specialists
- Field of work listing (optional) for individual veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses

Individuals can also now search for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists, as well as RCVS-accredited practices, straight from our homepage. These accreditations are then displayed much more prominently in the results.

To start searching, and to check your individual and practice details are up to date, please visit: www.rcvs.org.uk/find-a-vet.

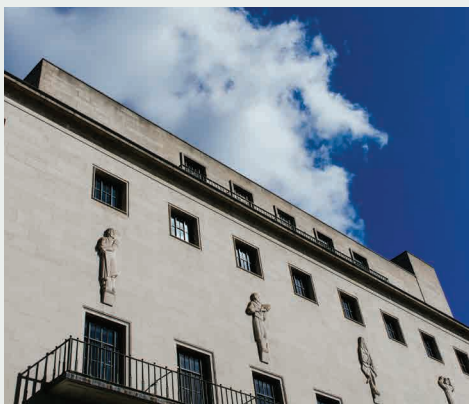


You can update your information through the My Account area on our website at www.rcvs.org.uk/myaccount.

Honours and awards: join us at RCVS Day

Royal College Day 2016 – Annual General Meeting and Awards Presentation

All veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are warmly invited to attend this year's RCVS Day, to be held on Friday 15 July, at the beautiful Grade II listed art deco surroundings of the Royal Institute of British Architects, in Portland Place, London.



As his last official engagement of the year, RCVS President Dr Bradley Viner will chair the Annual General Meeting and welcome new members to Council and the Veterinary Nurses Council, before handing over the reins to Chris Tufnell, who will formally take up his office as President for 2016-2017.

Awards

RCVS Day is a chance to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our colleagues across the veterinary profession. Honorary Awards will be bestowed, and Fellowships and Diplomas awarded.

We will be celebrating the success of Professor Randolph Richards as the recipient of the RCVS Queen's Medal – the most prestigious honour that the RCVS can bestow upon a veterinary surgeon – and this year's Golden Jubilee Award recipient Louise O'Dwyer for her pioneering role in veterinary nursing (see page 4).

The following Honorary Fellowships will also be bestowed, recognising outstanding individual achievements, above and beyond the call of duty, in the fields of veterinary medicine or science, or related areas:

- Professor Martin Hugh-Jones MA VetMB PhD MRCVS, for his work in the field of veterinary epidemiology
- Ian Wright MA VetMB DEO DipECVS MRCVS, for his contribution to the advancement of equine surgery.

We are pleased to announce that an Honorary Associateship will be presented to:

- Professor David Lane MSc PhD FCIPD FRSH FCP FBPsS, for services to education and professional development.

And a Fellowship will be presented to:

- Professor Michael Reichel DVPH MVSc DrMedVet FACVSc PhD, DipECVPH MBA MRCVS.

Digital practice: the shape of veterinary medicine in 2030

We are delighted to announce that Adam Little DVM will be our guest speaker, addressing the topic of the impact technology will have on the future of the veterinary profession.

Dr Adam Little is a Canada-based veterinarian and graduate of Singularity University – a Silicon Valley-based institution focused on exploring and understanding exponential technologies and their impact on our world. He has spent time working in remote villages of Tanzania for the Chief Veterinary Office of the Canadian Government, working on how technology can address food security and animal health issues.



His talk will ask if the veterinary profession is ready for the impact that exponentially accelerating technological development will have on the veterinary profession, with its unprecedented opportunity to connect, diagnose, treat and support patients and its potential to shift primary care from the practice, to the patient's home.

Book your place now

To book your place at RCVS Day 2016, please contact Emma Lockley, on e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk or **020 7202 0773**. Tickets are free and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Venue

Royal Institute of British Architects,
66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD
www.architecture.com/RIBA/Aboutus/Aboutus.aspx

The minutes from RCVS Day 2015, held at One Great George Street, London, can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-events/rcvs-day

Programme

9.30am–11.00am: Coffee

10.00am: Annual General Meeting

1. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
2. Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2015
3. Questions
4. Council elections: new members and retirements
5. Date of next AGM: Friday 7 July 2017

Meeting of the RCVS Council

6. Meeting to elect President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer

Coffee break

11.00am: Presentation of Awards

7. Presentation of RCVS Queen's Medal
8. Presentation of Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award
9. Presentation of Honorary Associateships
10. Presentation of Honorary Fellowships by Election
11. Presentation of Fellowships
12. Presentation of Diplomas
13. Presentation of Diplomas in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (small animal)
14. Presentation of Diplomas in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (equine)
15. Presentation of books to the RCVS Knowledge Library from the British Small Animal Veterinary Association
16. Chief Executive & Secretary's address
17. President's address
18. Talk from guest speaker, Adam Little DVM
19. Introduction of new President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer
20. New President's remarks

12:45: Lunch

15:00: End

* The RCVS Annual Report and Financial Statements 2015 will be available online from 24 June on www.rcvs.org.uk/publications and can be posted on request. Please email a.grainger@rcvs.org.uk

Then there were 10

Standards approves certification changes

Standards Committee has recently approved changes to the 12 Principles of Certification and associated supporting guidance (www.rcvs.org.uk/certification) following a review undertaken by the Certification Subcommittee.

“There is brand new guidance on official certification for export of live animals and animal products and this covers key areas such as the importance of complying with official Notes for Guidance or advice from the competent authority.”

As part of the review, we asked responders to comment on our existing ‘12 Principles’ and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe’s (FVE) ‘10 Principles of Veterinary Certification’. Responses were submitted by the British Veterinary Association and its divisions, UK government departments, the Veterinary Defence Society and a number of other organisations involved in certification work, ranging from export of animal products to meat hygiene. The evidence gathered

pointed to a need to update the 12 Principles to reflect modern certification practice, but otherwise many of the 12 Principles remain relevant today.

The key change is that the 12 Principles have been reduced to 10. Each Principle is now followed by a section of relevant supporting guidance. This explains how the principle should be applied in practice and gives practical advice. It is hoped that the additional guidance will help veterinary surgeons to fulfil their certification duties with confidence and propriety.

There is also a refreshed format and improved structure for the guidance. This includes more detailed opening paragraphs and more positive statements about the role of the veterinary surgeon in certification. There is brand new guidance on official certification for export of live animals and animal products and this covers key areas such as the importance of complying with official Notes for Guidance or advice from the competent authority. New guidance on the recognition of the role of paraprofessionals in assisting official certification has also been included. This covers the use of trained official auxiliaries as permitted by some EU certification regulations. There is also updated guidance on electronic certification, including the use of electronic signatures, and advice on the need for appropriate retention and storage of certificates.

Feline renal transplantation decision

Procedure from dead animals only

At the June 2016 meeting of RCVS Council, David Catlow reported that Standards Committee, which he chairs, had come to a decision regarding the College’s policy on feline renal transplantation, taking into account the Science Advisory Panel report and comments made and given by Council members at its March meeting.

The decision was that it was only considered ethically and legally acceptable to transplant a kidney from a dead animal and that living and pre-euthanasia cats (defined as animals under terminal anaesthesia before undergoing euthanasia for an unrelated condition) were not acceptable transplant animals.

The ethical sourcing of donor animals is also assured by confirming that only animals euthanased for justifiable welfare reasons with full and informed consent from their owners would be acceptable as potential donor animals.

At its September meeting Standards Committee will also consider welfare issues around recipient animals. In the meantime the guidance on feline renal transplantation will remain suspended.

Prescription probity

Directing written prescriptions – new guidance

The Standards Committee would like members to note some new guidance in chapter 10 of the supporting guidance (‘Fair trading requirements’), regarding the fact that written prescriptions should not contain any recommendations of retailers or other services. The Committee considers that if a particular retailer or service is to be recommended to clients, this should be done by means other than the prescription itself, and should be capable of justification. In addition, in the interests of transparency, any commercial or financial interest in that retailer or service should be drawn to clients’ attention.

The Standards Committee has spent its last two meetings considering this issue, having been asked for its view on whether it is appropriate for veterinary surgeons to direct (or seek to direct) their written prescriptions to specific retailers by means of a printed recommendation at the bottom of the prescription. The Committee’s discussions were informed by input from the Competition and Markets Authority, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, the British Veterinary Association and the British Small Animal Veterinary Association.

The practice of directing prescriptions is discouraged in the human healthcare setting, where it is considered to be incompatible with the principle of patient freedom of choice. Client freedom of choice is, of course, a paramount concern in veterinary medicine, and the sanctity of the client’s ability to obtain (where appropriate) a written prescription is core to this. The Committee felt, however, that a recommendation by itself does not necessarily restrict choice, and indeed many clients may take no notice of such recommendations, having already decided which service they wish to use. The Committee also considered that there may be occasions where a recommendation can be justified, for example, if it is based on knowledge and experience of the service, or where a product has been ordered especially for an animal in a time-critical case. Even so, the Committee considered that the written prescription itself should not be the vehicle for the recommendation.

The Committee also noted concerns that some large veterinary groups may be using the written prescription as an opportunity to direct clients to other parts of the group, without making this clear to clients. It was felt that this

lack of transparency was not professional and contrary to allowing clients to make fully informed choices. The same would apply where a veterinary practice received some form of incentive in return for its recommendation.

To read this guidance, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/fairtrading



Referrals – what is best for your patient?

Standards Committee emphasises freedom of choice

New guidance agreed by the Standards Committee at its meeting in April reinforces the expectation that veterinary surgeons will make referrals appropriate to the case and will always be able to justify their decisions. It is hoped that such a reminder will help veterinary surgeons assert themselves and fulfil their proper role in the new era of the preferred supplier network, as hosted by certain insurance companies, such as Royal Sun Alliance (RSA).

The RSA scheme in particular came to the College's attention last year and we talked to the company to emphasise the importance of the referring veterinary surgeon's freedom to refer to a colleague or institution of his or her choice, based upon consideration of what was right for that particular case. We accept the argument put forward by RSA that clients insured with them do still have the freedom to choose a referral vet or centre outside of the network but, given that such a choice incurs a financial penalty, there are concerns that veterinary surgeons may face pressure from clients to find them a suitable referral within the network.

The new guidance (Chapter 1, paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5) reminds veterinary surgeons of all the considerations relevant to their referral decision, which includes the availability and any



limitations of insurance. However, there is also an expectation that the referring veterinary surgeon has knowledge of the ability and experience of those to whom they refer. The guidance adds: *In cases where the client does not accept the*

veterinary surgeon's advice regarding referral and would instead prefer referral to a colleague, organisation or institution of which the referring veterinary surgeon has insufficient knowledge to determine appropriateness, they may need to advise their client accordingly. In some such cases, the veterinary surgeon may consider that they cannot be party to such a referral relationship.

The Committee has also taken the opportunity to remind veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses that incentives or 'kickbacks' should not distract from their obligations towards patients and clients.

In recent months, the Standards and Advice Team has received a small number of enquiries which would indicate that incentives and kickbacks of various forms and degrees might be on offer to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in a variety of situations, potentially including the referral setting.

The new guidance (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.7) reminds the profession that their first consideration is animal health and welfare and specifically states that an incentive should be declined where a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse would not otherwise enter into that arrangement.

To read the new guidance to Chapter 1 ('Referrals and second opinions') in full, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/referrals

Your papers please!

Ethics Panel now accepting proposals

Our trial Ethics Review Panel has now been constituted and is asking members of the profession to submit their research project proposals for review.



The Panel is chaired by Emeritus Professor David Morton CB, and was set up as a year-long trial to provide ethical review to practice-based researchers who may not have access to university or industry-based mechanisms of ethics review. The other members of the Panel include vets Zoe Belshaw, Carol Gray, Dr Richard Mellanby and Malcolm Ness, veterinary nurse Alison Devonshire and lay member Caroline Freedman.

“We set up this Panel in recognition of the fact that veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working in clinical practice may have excellent ideas for practice-based research.”

Although the Panel will start considering research projects from **1 August 2016**, researchers may submit their proposals in advance of this date if they wish. For the trial period research proposals

will be limited to projects involving cats and/or dogs, but this may be expanded if the trial is extended or made permanent.

Proposals from both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are encouraged and the trial has been endorsed by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), British Veterinary Association (BVA) and British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA).

Dr Bradley Viner, our President, commented: “We set up this Panel in recognition of the fact that veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working in clinical practice may have excellent ideas for practice-based research, but may not necessarily have access to ethical review which ensures that the research is compliant with our *Code of Professional Conduct* and adheres to the ethical and legal requirements required by most academic journals and publications.”

If you wish to submit a project, or wish to discuss a proposal beforehand, you can contact Natalie Heppenstall, our Standards & Advisory Officer, on ethics@rcvs.org.uk.

Don't discount our advice!

Clarification on veterinary fees and insurance

Those of you familiar with the guidance at Chapter 9 ('Practice information and fees') on animal insurance may have spent some time pondering the phrase 'Veterinary surgeons treating an animal covered by an animal insurance policy should charge the normal practice fee rate'. Ponder no more!

At its meeting in April, the Standards Committee accepted that this phrase has been a source of some confusion, leading some members of the profession to worry that it inadvertently prohibits them from ever offering a discount to a client. The Committee has clarified its original intention by replacing this phrase with a new statement in Chapter 9: *'The existence of animal insurance is no excuse for charging inflated fees or any other activity which enables a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse to profit dishonestly or fraudulently.'*

The Committee has simultaneously confirmed that discounts on veterinary fees generally are acceptable, provided that these are true discounts.

The Committee has also sought to guide the profession to act with integrity when presenting claims to insurance companies, particularly where the insured client is also entitled to some form of discount on the fees, for example, if they are a member of practice staff. New guidance confirms that, in the interests of transparency, any discounts that have been or will be applied should be accounted for on any paperwork sent to the insurer.

In its discussions, the Committee specifically discussed the issue of retrospective discounts, for example, where a veterinary surgeon waives an amount equivalent to the client's excess following recovery of the balance from the insurer. The Committee considered that to do this is to give a discount on the fees and it should therefore be accounted for so as not to mislead the insurer.

The new guidance can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/fees

New tech in practice

RCVS consult on new technology

The Standards Committee and Operational Board have approved plans for an evidence-gathering exercise on the hot topic of telemedicine and new technology.

With predictions that this may be the next big thing on the horizon for the UK veterinary profession, affecting all angles of veterinary activity, the College has committed to reviewing the possibilities that exist for this emerging form of practice.

Towards the end of the year, the College will be launching an evidence-gathering exercise, inviting views, comments and ideas from all interested parties. The evidence gathered will then be considered by the Standards Committee with a view to identifying how telemedicine and technological advances sit alongside professional standards and responsibilities. More to follow later in the year...

REGISTRATION

Caught in our web

Nearly 150% increase in online renewals

Just over 19,600 veterinary surgeons, of the 26,665 currently on the Register, completed their annual renewal online this year through our 'My Account' area, compared to 13,183 in 2015.

The increase in the amount renewing online may be partly due to our concerted effort to switch to electronic communications, emailing the vast majority of veterinary surgeons with annual renewal reminders rather than posting them, and using automated text message reminders about fee payment for the first time.

The My Account online service, as well as allowing for membership renewals and fee payment, also allows veterinary surgeons to change their name or postnominals, confirm compliance with our continuing professional development (CPD) requirement, and disclose any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings.

Nicola South, our Head of Registration, says: "Feedback on the new My Account area suggests that the majority of members are really pleased with the new look, saying that it was quick and easy, and that it saved them both time and the hassle of returning a paper form.

"In addition we saw an increase in the number of vets completing their CPD and disclosure declarations at the same time as they completed their annual renewal, which means less follow up work for everyone, suggesting that moving the annual renewal process online really has been a win-win for both members and the RCVS.

"We received some lovely comments from members about completing the annual renewal via the My Account, so thank you! We also received some constructive feedback, which we will use to improve and develop the My Account area even further."

Some sample feedback is listed below:

"Having just completed my online registration, I just wanted to say how much easier it is now than it used to be! Thanks for making the system so streamlined and easy to use. Much appreciated."

"Many, many thanks for your efficiency – as ever! I don't know what us 'old' vets with limited knowledge of technology would do without you. Thank you again for your understanding and prompt help."

More information on My Account can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/login.

Renewals and removals

Details can still be updated

On 1 June, we removed the names of some 296 veterinary surgeons from the Register for non-payment of the annual renewal fee.

The fee was officially due by the end of March, although the very final date on which it could be paid was 31 May. We have published a list of the names on our website (www.rcvs.org.uk/registration) and would encourage practices to check that their staff members do not appear there. If any person who has been removed from the Register performs an act of veterinary surgery they will be doing so illegally.

Veterinary surgeons who have paid their annual renewal fee but who have yet to complete the annual renewal process by confirming their registration details, confirming they have met our requirement for continuing professional development of 105 hours over a three-year period, and declaring any convictions, cautions or adverse findings, should do so by the end of July.

To confirm this information and complete your renewal, please email registration@rcvs.org.uk.

High praise for PSS

Continued success of the Scheme

The new Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), launched in November 2015, continues to have excellent uptake, and feedback, from practices across the UK. In the first three months following launch, new applications were over four times higher compared to the same period the previous year, and in the first six months they are over three times higher. We have also seen a growing interest in the new awards, with 68 practices having achieved awards, or due to be assessed in the coming months.

Positive feedback

The new Scheme was developed by the Practice Standards Group, which includes members from the key representative bodies and was based on feedback from members and extensive consultation.

As a consequence we were confident the new Scheme would be well received by the profession. We have nevertheless been taken aback by the positive response we've received to the new team of 18 assessors, the behaviour and outcome-based approach to assessment and the awards, which ensure that practices receive recognition for the areas in which they excel.

For example, following a recent routine assessment visit, Louise Ketteridge of Oak Barn Veterinary Centre in Guildford, Surrey commented:

"Our PSS assessment was a pleasant surprise. Our assessor was professional and lovely, taking the time to speak to everyone in the practice – a great new approach."

Whilst Professor Josh Slater from the RVC Equine Veterinary Hospital in Hertfordshire, one of the first equine practices to be assessed for awards under the new Scheme, commented:

"I think the Scheme is excellent and the awards capture what a high-performing equine hospital looks and behaves like. Preparing for the inspection has been a really useful team exercise

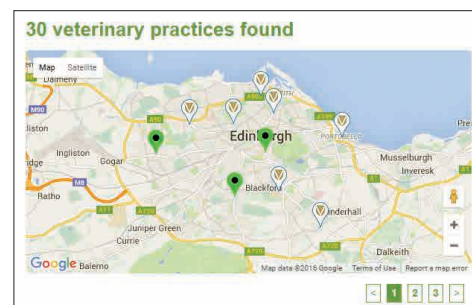
and the result is that we have a team who are much more engaged about practice standards than was the case with the old scheme."

Stanley

Work is still underway to implement changes to improve the functionality and user experience of the new IT system 'Stanley'. The system is expected to be launched later this year and will underpin the new Scheme, helping practices to achieve accreditation and awards by leading them through the process in an easy to follow step-by-step fashion. Another key advantage of the system will be that practices will be able to upload paperwork, certificates and other documentation in advance of awards or accreditation assessments, meaning that our assessors can focus on observing outcomes and behaviours whilst at the practice.

The Mayne Veterinary Clinic in Colchester was recently accredited as a Small Animal General Practice and helped us to beta-test Stanley. Veterinary surgeon and practice owner Charlotte Mayne commented:

"Stanley is very clear and being able to upload all our documentation prior to the inspection meant on the day our assessor was able to spend more time chatting with the team and seeing how we work rather than having to go through lots of paperwork. We all worked hard as a team to get everything ready via Stanley, which meant the actual day was relaxed and stress-free."



BVNA Congress

On Friday 7 October the Practice Standards Scheme will be holding a reception at BVNA Congress in Telford to celebrate the first wave of practices to achieve awards under the new Scheme. The choice of BVNA Congress as the venue for this event reflects the importance the new Scheme places on veterinary nurses and their contribution to the practice team.

Raising your profile

To help raise the profile RCVS-accredited practices amongst the animal-owning public, our brand new Find a Vet service, launched in early April (see page 7), now includes a lot more information about the Practice Standards Scheme and the new awards.

Users can search for accredited practices direct from the homepage, and the new map display of search results now includes special pins to denote those that are part of the Scheme (as pictured). The new practice accreditation types are now included and there is an additional filter to enable users to search for practices with specific PSS awards. Furthermore, on the profile page for each practice, there is a dedicated section to showcase the PSS accreditation levels and any awards achieved, together with new graphics to convey this information at a glance.

Finally, we have incorporated a new page structure to the whole Find a Vet service to improve search engine optimisation (SEO), helping to raise the online profile of RCVS-accredited practices still further.

Meanwhile, work is ongoing to provide additional marketing assistance, including an online portal from where bespoke and generic marketing materials can be ordered and a communications toolkit for accredited practices can be downloaded.



Accreditation update

Revisions to accreditation standards and visitor training

Our Education Committee recently agreed several changes to the standards by which we accredit veterinary degrees. The Committee also agreed to introduce a new category of accreditation, together with additional training for visitation teams.

The new accreditation category, 'Accreditation is denied' is aimed at veterinary schools that do not meet the standards for accreditation and for which the category of 'Terminal accreditation' is inapplicable.

In addition, minor amendments were agreed to the classification 'Accreditation for a shorter period' in order to clarify when a follow-up visit will take place. If there are numerous minor deficiencies across multiple standards, for example, there could be a full visit over the period of a week, but if there are one or two areas of deficiency they might only warrant a focused visit over one or two days.

Finally, there will be an annual training session for visitation team members. This would

complement the current training, which consists of acting as an observer on a visitation before being assigned as a full visitor to a visitation team.

We will pilot the programme with the team due to visit St George's University in Grenada in November 2016. The rest of our 2016 visits will be in Australia, jointly with the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council. In July we will be visiting Murdoch University and revisiting James Cook University, and in October we'll be attending a follow-up visitation at the University of Adelaide.

Education Committee also agreed continuation of the University of Edinburgh's full accreditation for a period of seven years, following a visit in November 2015.

For more information about our visitation programme, please contact Jordan Nicholls, Education Officer, on j.nicholls@rcvs.org.uk, or Christine Warman, Head of Education, on c.warman@rcvs.org.uk.

CPD auditing in September

Vets to be asked for records

At its May meeting, Education Committee approved plans for the next audit of continuing professional development (CPD) for veterinary surgeons, to take place in September this year.

As with previous years the audit will ask for the CPD records of five different groups – a random sample of 400 vets who said they were compliant as part of this year's annual renewal; all vets who did not respond to the 2015 audit; all vets who were non-compliant in the 2015 audit; all vets who have not confirmed CPD compliance in the annual review for two consecutive years; and all vets who voluntarily said they were non-compliant as part of the 2016 annual renewal.

“As with previous years the audit will ask for the CPD records of five different groups.”

Under the *Code of Professional Conduct* all UK-practising veterinary surgeons (including those working part-time or not currently working) are expected to undertake 105 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period. This requirement exists in order to ensure that veterinary surgeons are improving the knowledge and skills relevant to their practice and keeping abreast of the latest developments.

As part of the auditing process we will be asking veterinary surgeons to share their records by post (in the case of paper records) or by allowing us to access their online Professional Development Record (PDR). Veterinary surgeons who are found to be continuously non-compliant, or who fail to answer requests for their records, may be referred to the CPD Referral Group and, ultimately, our Professional Conduct Department for further investigation. Currently there are 197 veterinary surgeons who have not answered requests for records in two consecutive audits.

The CPD Referral Group has already considered the cases of 21 veterinary nurses who had not responded to requests to submit their CPD records in at least three annual CPD audits. Some of these were subsequently contacted by the Professional Conduct Department by telephone in order to discuss their reasons for not responding and offer support and guidance on how they could fulfil the requirement.

At their most recent meeting in May, the CPD Referral Group referred two veterinary surgeons and five veterinary nurses to the Professional Conduct Department. They also agreed upon a number of recommended changes from the Education Committee, including making CPD submission an essential component of annual renewals and introducing a series of steps before a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse is referred to the Disciplinary Committee for non-compliance.

That's champion!

New CPD blogs by and for the profession

Since the last edition of *RCVS News* we have published three new blogs on our CPD Champions webpage, in which we encourage both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to share tips, expertise and best practice regarding engagement with CPD.

“Shona McIntyre wrote a blog about the benefits of practices, particularly in isolated rural areas, forming clinical clubs to share best practice and learning points.”

In the latest published blog, 'How to do CPD on a budget', veterinary nurse Lauren Valentine (pictured) writes about ways in which she engages in low-cost CPD, for example, by writing and performing presentations, preparing learning materials for student veterinary nurses and attending and contributing to clinical audit meetings in practice.

In April, Shona McIntyre wrote a blog about the benefits of practices, particularly in isolated rural areas, forming clinical clubs to share best practice and learning points, while Pam Brown wrote about how she manages to integrate around 100 hours of CPD a year into her everyday working life.



You can read the blogs by visiting www.rcvs.org.uk/cpdchampions – if you are interested in contributing to our CPD Champions blog please email cpd@rcvs.org.uk with your proposal.

Updated Day-one Skills List has been approved

Live from this September



At its May meeting, VN Council approved a new Day-one Skills List which will better reflect the clinical and professional skills needed for newly registered veterinary nurses.

Day-one Skills are a key aspect of student veterinary nurses' assessment, allowing them to demonstrate their competence across a range of areas. The new List and accompanying guidance, designed by a Working Party comprising representatives from the VN Education Committee, clinical practice and industry, are designed to better reflect the reality of veterinary nurses' modern duties in clinical practice.

Some of the principal changes include a reduction in practical placement hours from 2,100 to 1,800, and an increased emphasis on the behavioural and emotional needs of patients.

The new List will come into force from September 2016, after which we will expect all providers of veterinary nursing education to calibrate their curricula accordingly. The full Skills List can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library

Apply for AP

Deadline: end of October

We are still accepting applications from veterinary surgeons who wish to become Advanced Practitioners, having extended this year's application period from February to the end of October.

Advanced Practitioner status recognises those veterinary surgeons who have demonstrated advanced knowledge and skills in a designated area of veterinary practice. To apply, veterinary surgeons must have had at least five years' experience in practice, have an eligible qualification at postgraduate certificate level and have demonstrated knowledge and experience in a particular area of practice beyond their veterinary degree.

They must also confirm they have undertaken further work and study in their chosen field over and above our minimum continuing professional development requirements.

To find out more about Advanced Practitioner status, and to find a list of designations, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/advanced

Fellows, it's been a success

Dozens of applications received

Following the launch of our new Fellowship scheme in April this year we have received some 56 applications from veterinary surgeons for the prestigious honour.

The Fellowship was recently redeveloped, following changes approved by Council at its June 2015 meeting, to move it away from being an examination-based award, to becoming a learned society more open to vets from a broad range of backgrounds, including clinical practice.

"As a learned body we hope that the Fellowship will help advance and develop clinical and professional standards by sharing their knowledge and expertise in many different areas of veterinary life with the rest of the profession."

Key to the redevelopment was the replacement of the two old routes to becoming a Fellow (Fellowship by thesis and Honorary Fellowship) with three new pathways: meritorious contribution to knowledge; meritorious contribution to clinical practice; and meritorious contributions to the profession. In the space of just a month we received 56 applications, of which 32 were for meritorious contributions to knowledge, 18 for clinical practice and six to the profession.

Bradley Viner, our President, is a member of the Fellowship Board that will consider the overall list of applications and decide which are eligible to join the Fellowship. He said: "We have been

very pleased with the number of applications in a comparatively short space of time and the fact that they have been spread over all three of the different routes to entry.

"The Fellowship Board will be meeting in late summer or early autumn in order to decide which of these applicants will become Fellows. As a learned body we hope that the Fellowship will help advance and develop clinical and professional standards by sharing their knowledge and expertise in many different areas of veterinary life with the rest of the profession."

We are currently in the process of planning a special 'Fellowship Day' – a celebration of the Fellowship's new mission and purpose to which all existing and new Fellows will be invited – which will take place on Wednesday 19 October at the Royal Institution (pictured).

The next application period will be announced in due course.

For more information about our Fellowship and what is required to join, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/fellowship



Accrediting the accreditors

College applies for European recognition

Our Education Committee recently agreed to seek membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA), an umbrella organisation representing quality assurance organisations from EU member states.

The move to apply for membership had been approved in principle by the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee and was endorsed by Education Committee as it was felt that this would strengthen the College's position as an international accrediting body. As a membership organisation the Association promotes European cooperation in the field of quality assurance, represents quality assurance organisations at a European policy level and provides support to its members in understanding and responding to developments in Europe and the challenges they pose.

If the application is successful the College would be added to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, which would demonstrate that it complies with a common set of principles for quality assurance in Europe.

In order to comply with ENQA's requirements it is likely that we will need to make some changes to our current visitation process. This will include having a student representative as part of all visitation teams, introducing a published policy and process for internal quality assurance, implementing an appeals process against decisions, conducting a regular review of processes and putting in place a mechanism for feedback and producing a periodic report on quality assurance.

An update on the application for ENQA membership will be given at the next Education Committee meeting in October.

Summit on the horizon

Vet Futures Action Plan will launch on 4 July

The Vet Futures Action Plan, which will bring to life the recommendations of the Vet Futures Report – Taking charge of our future – will be launched at the Vet Futures Summit on 4 July, kindly hosted by the Royal Veterinary College in Camden, London.

Vet Futures is jointly powered by the RCVS and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and aims to help the profession prepare for and shape its future. Since the Report was launched, in November 2015, the Vet Futures Action Group has been working to develop the Action Plan, which includes around 20 activities that will help to implement the 34 recommendations of project.

The event will also see the launch of the VN Futures Action Plan, the culmination of a recent

project that has included a series of meetings to engage the VN profession, and VN educators and employers.

There are still a few tickets available for the VF Summit: you can register online at www.vetfuturesummit.eventbrite.co.uk.

Vet Futures Europe

Meanwhile, we have recently outlined the VF project so far to colleagues within the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, to investigate whether something similar may be appropriate at European level.

The Vet Futures ambitions – around animal welfare; veterinary mental health and welfare; vets' wider roles in society; careers; thriving



businesses; and exceptional leadership – seemed to resonate well with those countries represented, and conversations are underway about the extent to which a European project may be appropriate.



Mind-full to mindful

Online mindfulness proves a hit

Lizzie Lockett, Project Director for our Mind Matters Initiative, gives an update on recent activities as part of this project to help address mental health issues in the profession.

Mindfulness online

Our recent online mindfulness-based stress-reduction course ("Turning from mind-full to mindful"), run in conjunction with The Webinar Vet and Dr Mike Scanlan of Kindminds, has proved very popular, with XX individuals registering and many hundreds listening to the eight hour-long sessions.

The evidence base for the positive impact of mindfulness has been growing over recent years. In fact, the practice, which grew out of Buddhist traditions of meditation, has been credited with helping to reduce stress and anxiety, relieve pain, improve sleep patterns and general wellbeing, and even make positive physical changes to the brain.

Our online format made mindfulness accessible to a broad range of individuals and anecdotal feedback has been really positive. A more formal evaluation of the course is underway and will inform whether we run a further series. It certainly captured the imagination of the French veterinary press, with a full page article on the initiative appearing in the 6 May issue of *La semaine vétérinaire*.

Mental health awareness training

We have now completed eight mental health awareness training sessions for veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and members of the practice team. The purpose of the course is to raise awareness of common mental health issues and help individuals understand how to have important first conversations with people they are concerned about. The session also touches on looking after your own wellbeing.

The majority of these have been carried out by Trevor Bell, a specialist mental health trainer who

also delivers courses for large corporations and other professional audiences.

"We have known for years that the veterinary profession is tremendously challenging for individuals at all levels," he comments. "It's a complex profession and it could be argued that we, as individuals, have also become more complex, and our lives have the potential to be much more emotionally charged and at times chaotic than at any other time in our history.

"Having the opportunity to gather members of the veterinary team in a small-group situation, and explain to them some basic principles of how we engage with our environment and how this affects us as individuals is challenging, but it's also been a real privilege to work with the Mind Matters Initiative and see the difference it is making.

"During and after these sessions, I have been really encouraged by the positive can-do attitude expressed by individuals and the concern and care shown to their colleagues. Long may it continue!"

Some comments from our recent session in Cardiff include:

- Excellent course: a speaker who is very knowledgeable and compassionate about his subject
- It was useful to challenge perceptions about mental health and the best way to help people
- Lots of content covered in three hours: worth the trip
- I feel more confident in how to approach situations and what to look out for now
- I feel I will now be more aware of how I speak when I support those who are struggling



Courses near you

We have now teamed up with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) to offer a series of mental health awareness courses across their regions – for more information and to find a course near you, please visit: www.bsava.com/CPD/MindMatters.

The sessions are free to BSAVA members and £40 to others – all are welcome.

See also page 5 for news about our new SPVS/Mind Matters Wellbeing Award!

Keeping note

Those attending our mental health awareness training courses are given bright orange notebooks in which to write their notes, and are also encouraged to record and celebrate positive things that happen each day – a tried and tested trick to promote wellbeing.

We have also produced some Mind Matters lapel badges, which we encourage people to wear to show their support for the project and to act as the starting point for discussion about mental health issues within the profession. If you would like one, please email Lizzie@vetmindmatters.org.

These are just some of our ongoing activities. For more information about Mind Matters, please email Lizzie@vetmindmatters.org or follow us on Twitter: [@vetmindmatters](https://twitter.com/vetmindmatters)

Overseas CPD course returns

September dates available to book

We will be holding our popular CPD course for overseas vets and nurses for the second time this year on Thursday 8 and Friday 9 September at our offices in Belgravia House, London.

Jointly organised by us, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS), this two-day course provides overseas graduates with the key information and skills needed to practise in the UK, as well as helping them understand their legal duties as veterinary professionals.

The course is aimed at overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses during their first two years working in the UK, as well as those considering working here, and the overall aim is to reduce the risk of a concern being raised against them, improve their experience of working in the UK and advance their communication skills.

The first day of the event (Thursday 8 September) is free, and will include the following topics:

- What it means to be a veterinary professional in the UK
- Tips from an overseas vet who has succeeded
- Support available
- Developing your skills and knowledge
- Securing your dream job

The free day will be followed by 'a masterclass in communications skills' provided by the VDS in a popular role-play format with professional actors, which will cost £160. It is possible to attend either or both days.

Booking for the event is now open via Eventbrite <http://overseascpd.eventbrite.co.uk>

Vet nurses unite!

Gearing up for the BVNA Congress

Registration is now open for the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress. Held in Telford, Shropshire from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 October, the Congress will include an event to celebrate the first Practice Standards Scheme awards (see page 12), as well as a series of talks by our staff about the VN Futures project.

The discussions surrounding VN Futures, a joint project with BVNA investigating the next five years of the veterinary nursing profession, will be led by Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council, and Julie Dugmore, our Head of Veterinary Nursing. The talks will build on topics raised by the VN Futures Action Plan, due to be published in July, such as: enhancing the value of the veterinary nurse; training,

development and career progression; patient-centred practice; One Health; and the review of Schedule 3.

Other speakers will include this year's Golden Jubilee Award winner, Louise O'Dwyer, who will be giving several lectures on anaesthesia, and last year's winner, Dot Creighton, with a lecture titled: 'Step up and step out!'

If you are attending the Congress please also make sure to come and visit us on stand B11 where our staff will be able to help you with any queries you may have. There will also be a range of literature for you to peruse as well as a game based around our new Find a Vet search tool with participants having the chance of winning a special prize.

Listen up!

An array of webinars to listen to again

Want to find out more about what we are doing and claim some CPD to boot? Then you can listen again to our webinars, hosted by The Webinar Vet, via the website www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars

Recent highlights include a webinar on the new Fellowship hosted by our President Bradley Viner and Gayle Hallowell, a member of the Fellowship Appointment Group and Associate Professor in Large Animal Internal Medicine and Critical Care at the University of Nottingham, which took place on Thursday 5 May.

On Tuesday 12 July, RCVS Council member Professor Stephen May and former VN Council Chair Kathy Kissick will be presenting a webinar about our current consultation on changing the College's CPD policy. More details about this can be found on page 1.



Down in the Country

RCVS heading to popular new festival

We are excited to announce that this year we will be exhibiting at Countryfile Live which will be held in the spectacular grounds of Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire from Thursday 4 to Sunday 7 August.

The event will allow members of the public to explore various aspects of the countryside, from live arena shows, farming machinery to canoeing and craft stalls.

While there, our team will be promoting the various services we offer to the public, including the recently re-launched Find a Vet service and the new Practice Standards Scheme while providing information and guidance on starting a career in the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions. To top it all off we will have a series of exciting games and interactive demonstrations and will also be running a social media competition based around our Find a Vet search service which visitors will be able to take part in whilst at the show.

Come and find us at stand H012 opposite the Dog Arena.

Game of throws

PSS promoted at BSAVA

We enjoyed another successful British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress in Birmingham in April, with a focus on promoting our new Practice Standards Scheme to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and practice managers attending the event.

The highlight of our stand was the PSS-themed game in which we encouraged delegates to throw animals (toy ones of course...) into nets representing some of the new Awards that are available for accredited practices to gain.

The winner of the competition was Kerry Brundle, a veterinary nurse from Stowmarket, who won an iPad Mini for her excellent throwing skills. She said: "I was thrilled to hear that I had won the PSS competition. It's such a great Scheme to encourage high standards of care across the veterinary profession. I love my new iPad and I'm sure my children will too."

We'll also be running the PSS game at the British Equine Veterinary Association's Congress at the ICC in Birmingham in September – so come and visit us on stand B34 to have a go and find out more about the Scheme.

An EXCELlent event

Search service promoted to public

Last month we made an appearance (alongside racing rabbits, show-jumping dogs and animatronic cats) at the increasingly popular National Pet Show in Excel London to promote our re-launched Find a Vet service to members of the public.

Our staff on the stand were inundated with people coming to play our Find a Vet-themed dice game. The game proved to be extremely popular with young and old alike, with over 200 people matching two or more of the Find a Vet animal icons and being entered into a prize draw to win an iPad Mini.

"I think your Find a Vet service is a great idea, especially if you move to a new area and need to find a vet in a hurry, or even if you want to change practices, you can find all the information on your web page."

The lucky winner was Alison Topp, who owns two cats called Max and Maggot and has an indoor foreign finch aviary with around 20 birds. Alison attended the show to look at the animals and products available and said: "I think your Find a Vet service is a great idea, especially if you move to a new area and need to find a vet in a hurry, or even if you want to change practices, you can find all the information on your web page."

See page 7 for further information about the changes we have made to the service.



Cultural change in the veterinary profession

Brian McErlean MVB MRCVS is a Trustee of the Australian Veterinary Association Benevolent Fund

A veterinary career can be extremely challenging. It may be your first epidural anaesthetic experience, the stress of dealing with infection after surgery or coming to terms with the consequences of a long-term veterinary partner leaving the practice. Perhaps the issue is tenure at a University.

The speed bumps affect all of us and they keep coming. It is how you deal with them that really matters. Sadly, some individuals stall at the first speed bump and see it as a wall. Others can't wait to go over the speed bumps and discount anything in their way.

The accounting firm PwC in Australia has reported that there is a return of \$2.30 for every \$1 spent on mental health strategies. In fact, in small mining companies, the return is \$15 for every \$1 spent, and for small essential providers, there is a return on investment (ROI) of 14.5.

Hopefully I have now locked a few employers into the debate. The Department of Health in Australia is launching a campaign to encourage businesses to start taking the mental health of their employees seriously and the centrepiece is the Heads Up website (www.headsup.org.au).

What's new down under?

At the recent National Australian Veterinary Association Conference in Adelaide, we succeeded in getting a record number of veterinarians through wellness checks. Approximately 30% of veterinarians attending the conference went through checks. They filled out a mental health assessment form and then had a basic check carried out by a medical technician. Each attendee that goes through gives a drop of blood and receives a card afterwards that records BMI, blood pressure, serum glucose and cholesterol levels and both height and weight. At the Wellness Room, we also had a photographic display and live art opportunities.

The Veterinary Orchestra played with a 60-piece local Symphony Orchestra on one evening. Next year we hope to have musical events during the breaks at the conference.

Let me recount what it takes to be happy:

1. Play to your character strengths, for example, if you love people, be the consulting veterinarian
2. Cultivate relationships with friends and family
3. Have a job you enjoy
4. Do voluntary work
5. Express gratitude
6. Develop a hobby

Notice that it does not take money or a gym-body or letters after your name to be happy. It is almost as though society and the professions are losing sight of what actually makes us happy!

We now have two veterinarians in Australia who are life coaches and who are firm advocates of positive psychology. One, Dr Natasha Wilks, spoke at the conference. Positive psychology is one of the best tools we can use to prevent the slide into poor mental health.

Here is a great self-help challenge for anyone feeling a bit down or to boost anyone. You can do this exercise in a diary or on your phone. You can even have the whole practice contribute by creating an artificial client: Mr and Mrs Positive.

Write down three things that made you happy today and two things you are grateful for. On a daily basis read back what you wrote yesterday and at the end of the week read back through all the entries. The poorer you may feel the longer you should keep the diary going for. If you are a negative thinker, it can take three months or longer to change the 'polarity' of your brain from negative to positive. This will help stave off depression by encouraging positive sentiments. Ruminates on the good stuff!

Talking to others helps lighten the load. If you feel you need some support, you can contact Vetlife Helpline on **0303 040 2551** or use their confidential email service via www.vetlife.org.uk. The Samaritans are available round the clock on **08457 90 90 90**.

Be vigilant on insurance fraud

Advice from the College and IFED

Back in our March 2012 edition we reported on the launch of the City of London Police's Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department (IFED), the first of its kind to specialise in, specifically target and tackle insurance crimes in England and Wales. In this edition we catch up on some of the latest work of the Department and its advice to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses on both how to spot insurance fraud and how to avoid becoming embroiled in it.

In recent years there have been two high-profile prosecutions and convictions of veterinary surgeons in respect of insurance fraud. In both cases, that of Francisco Cruz and Matthew Morgan, the individuals had made fraudulent insurance claims for treatment of fictitious animals for personal gain and both received prison sentences and were struck off the Register.

However, while these were two very clear-cut and extreme cases of members of the profession engaging in insurance fraud, there may be times where members of the professions collude in more minor cases of insurance fraud unknowingly or because they wish to be supportive of their clients. However, both IFED and the College are keen to stress that, whatever the circumstances and the intention, aiding and abetting insurance fraud may lead to prosecution and disciplinary action.

“The message that we are keen to hammer home is that even if you think you are doing it for the benefit of your clients and their animal, insurance fraud is not a ‘victimless crime’.”

Since the Association of British Insurers (ABI), the trade association for the insurance industry, started keeping records on pet insurance claims in 2010 there has been a steady increase in the number of suspected fraudulent claims, with over 2,000 recorded in both 2013 and 2014. The ABI passes on information about suspected fraud to IFED, and 105 fraudulent claims passed to the Department in 2014 were found proven.

Detective Chief Inspector Oliver Little (pictured) currently leads IFED. He said: “We would ask that members of the professions keep insurance fraud at the forefront of their mind when assisting with any claims made by their clients for treatment and not become ‘enablers’ for pet insurance fraud, whether knowingly or unwittingly.

“For example, if they are made aware that the client has not told their insurer about their pet's pre-existing condition they should, when submitting the insurance claim, make sure to highlight this condition with the insurers so as not to be accused of being complicit in any alleged fraudulent claim.

“We would also recommend they have a word with the client to highlight the fact that, by not making the condition known, they are committing a fraud, even if they are doing so unknowingly, and that they should get in touch with their insurance company at the first opportunity to inform them of the condition.

“Likewise, veterinary surgeons should not be inflating prices for treatment on pet insurance

forms because they want to benefit the client. If there are additional administration fees, for example, these should be clearly stated and accounted for.

“Overall, the message that we are keen to hammer home is that even if you think you are doing it for the benefit of your clients and their animal, insurance fraud is not a ‘victimless crime’. In the long-run it leads to higher premiums for all who take out pet insurance and, as professionals, it is incumbent on veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to act with integrity and honesty in their dealings with clients and insurance companies alike.”

Pre-signed forms

One worrying trend that has been encountered by our Professional Conduct Department involves clients being asked to pre-sign insurance claims forms for the veterinary surgeon to complete and submit later.

Michael Hepper, Chief Investigator for the RCVS, says: “While it may be quick, easy and convenient, this method of dealing with insurance claims is less than ideal and could raise suspicions of fraud or dishonesty. Ideally, although not always possible, insurance claim forms should be completed by the veterinary surgeon in the





Report to Council, June 2016

PIC Chair Andrew Ash

presence of their client so that they can check and sign off the details there and then.

“If a practice does adopt a policy of pre-signed forms then it is good practice to send a copy of the completed form to the client before sending it to the insurance companies.

“Likewise, veterinary surgeons should not sign any blank insurance claim forms. Even doing this with the best of intentions, you could end up unwittingly helping someone to commit fraud so our advice is to simply steer away from this completely.”

It is common when a claim is rejected for a client to seek the help of their veterinary surgeon. While contacting the insurer to add relevant explanatory detail is acceptable it can be tempting to paraphrase a condition or diagnosis in the hope that this results in a successful claim. While the motives of the veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse might be admirable they should always be alert to the fact that such modification might be construed as an attempt to defraud. We recommend that all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses familiarise themselves with Chapter 9 ('Practice information, fees and animal insurance') of the supporting guidance to our Code of Professional Conduct, which has several sections on pet insurance. This can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/fees

For additional information on the work of IFED, please visit www.cityoflondon.police.uk/ifed

Pet insurance industry: the facts

All figures supplied by the Association of British Insurers (www.abi.org.uk)

- In 2015 the pet insurance industry grew, with gross written premiums, subscribers and claims increasing by 9% from the previous year, and 911,000 claims being made at a value of £657 million
- Dog insurance makes up around three-quarters of the market, with £500 million being incurred from dog insurance claims in 2015. The next biggest area for claims is cats, at £100 million, with other animal claims making up £50 million
- The average claim for a dog was £730 in 2015, a slight increase from 2014. The average claim for cats was £542 in 2015 – an increase in nearly £30 from the previous year.

Since the last report to Council there have been two Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, in March and April 2016.

The total number of cases considered by the Committee at these meetings was 38, of which eight were closed, nine were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon, five cases were held open, eight cases were referred for further investigation and eight cases were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken.

In total, the Committee is investigating 38 ongoing cases including those referred to solicitors, visits and Health Protocol cases.

Health and Performance Protocols

There are 14 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol. Two veterinary surgeons were released from their undertakings and discharged from the Protocol after positive reports were received and the Committee felt they had made significant progress. In both cases it was decided that supervision was no longer required, although one signified their intention to maintain independent contact with support services.

There are four veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department

In the period 13 February 2016 to 3 May 2016, the total number of cases registered with the College was 212, compared to 214 in the same period in 2015. During the same period 173 cases were closed. Of these approximately 71% were closed by Case Examiner Groups because there was no arguable case, 22% were closed or held open for a specified period by PIC, 6% were closed because permission to copy the concerns form to the veterinary surgeon was not received from the complainant and 1% were closed by the Disciplinary Committee.

Veterinary Investigators

During the period 13 February 2016 to 3 May 2016, the Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator/Case Managers carried out six announced visits, four unannounced visits, one health-related visit and 12 review visits. During these visits people raising concerns, veterinary staff, third-party witnesses and respondent veterinary surgeons were interviewed.

Disciplinary Committee referrals

During its two meetings in February and May, PIC referred one case to the Disciplinary Committee.

Concerns procedure

Between October and December 2015 an average of 51% of concerns raised with the College were closed or referred to PIC within four months. In the same period, 91% of cases in which PIC had reached a decision were closed, held open or referred to a Disciplinary Committee hearing or to the Health or Performance Protocols within nine months.

Commonly-encountered issues: amending clinical records

While the Committee acknowledges that there are occasions on which it is necessary or justified to amend records, for example, to provide greater detail or correct information recorded previously, it stresses that it is vitally important that any such amendments are clearly marked as such to avoid giving rise to allegations of dishonesty or cover-up. While such matters can often be explained satisfactorily, clearly labelling and explaining any amendments may avoid further investigations and audit enquiries being necessary.

Ms Kerstin Vockert

Inquiry concerning: conviction for offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006

DC decision: remove name from the Register of Veterinary Surgeons

Registration status: name removed from the Register as of 22 June if no appeal received

On Thursday 19 May 2016 the Disciplinary Committee directed that the name of a Dorset veterinary surgeon be removed from the Register after she admitted animal welfare offences.

During the two-day hearing the Committee heard that, on 30 April 2015 at Bournemouth Magistrates' Court, Ms Vockert was convicted under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, upon her own admission, of failing to protect two dogs she owned from pain, suffering, injury and disease, by not adequately grooming them.

“In such circumstances, the respondent’s conviction fell far below the standard to be expected of a veterinary surgeon and therefore renders her unfit to practise veterinary surgery.”

The prosecution had been brought by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) after one of her dogs, a Shih Tzu named Happy, was taken into care by the local Council in September 2014 as a stray. The dog was examined by Chris Devlin MRCVS who reported at the time that the dog’s coat was in an “appalling state, with multiple mats of hair all over his body” and with “evidence of faecal and urinary soiling on the fur around the rear end”, which constituted clear signs of neglect. The dog was anaesthetised and treated by Mr Devlin for an eye condition and was also given a full body shave. The dog made a full recovery after these operations.

Council employees discovered that Happy belonged to Ms Vockert and referred the matter to the RSPCA who started an investigation into his condition. When two RSPCA inspectors visited Ms Vockert’s home in September 2014 they observed a Cocker Spaniel named Millie which had severely matted fur. There were no concerns about any of the other dogs owned by Ms Vockert.

The two inspectors visited Ms Vockert’s home the next day by appointment and were told by Ms Vockert that Millie had been euthanased. Millie’s body was subsequently taken to Professor Kenneth Smith MRCVS and Claire Muir MRCVS for a post-mortem examination. In their report following the post-mortem, they observed Millie’s hair coat to be “extensively matted and given the growth of hair over the collar and claws, it is likely that the hair has not been clipped for an extremely

long period... and is likely to have restricted the dog’s ability to walk. In addition, a large amount of faecal material has become matted within the hair coat and this finding strongly suggests that this dog was neglected.”

As a result of her prosecution by the RSPCA, Ms Vockert was fined £620, ordered to pay costs of £300, a victim surcharge of £62 and a deprivation of animal ownership order was made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

“The Committee had decided that removal from the Register is appropriate and proportionate in this case.”

The Disciplinary Committee considered that the failure to groom extended over a period of months and that any conviction on the part of a veterinary surgeon relating to animal welfare was an extremely serious matter.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: “The College submitted that the conviction of a veterinary surgeon for an animal welfare offence, of necessity has the potential to undermine both the reputation of the profession and public confidence in the profession.

“In such circumstances, the respondent’s conviction fell far below the standard to be expected of a veterinary surgeon and therefore renders her unfit to practise veterinary surgery.”

In considering Ms Vockert’s sanction, the Committee took into mitigation her long and otherwise unblemished career both in the UK and Germany, her guilty plea to the RSPCA conviction and the fact she made no attempt to challenge the College’s submissions in relation to her fitness to practise.

However, it also took into account a number of aggravating features, particularly the fact there was “actual neglect of the welfare of two animals, over a protracted period of time, which resulted in pain, suffering and discomfort. This aspect of the case is made more serious because the two animals in question belonged to the respondent, who is a practising veterinary surgeon with access to the drugs and equipment necessary to groom the dogs.”

Ultimately, the Committee decided that the only appropriate sanction was to direct the Acting Registrar to remove Ms Vockert’s name from the Register.

Ian Green, summing up, said: “The Committee considers that the respondent’s conduct which led to the conviction, involved a departure from the most basic and pivotal principle of the Code [of Professional Conduct], which states that the first consideration when attending to animals is health and welfare.

“Accordingly, the Committee had decided that removal from the Register is appropriate and proportionate in this case.”

Case studies from the Advice Team

Those of you who are UK-practising veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses will notice that this edition of includes a special RCVS News Extra with case studies from our Standards and Advice Team covering some of the commonly raised topics and queries they receive.



Covering issues from microchipping and tail docking to client confidentiality and emergency first aid and pain relief, the publication is intended to help members of the profession navigate some of the challenges and dilemmas that can occur in practice.

David Catlow, Chair of Standards Committee, says: “For this edition of *RCVS News Extra*, we have chosen to publish some case studies based on typical queries answered by the Standards and Advice Team. We do this to demonstrate how we might be able to help you one day and we have purposely selected some of the more frequently-asked questions. The story outlines are for illustrative purposes only and you may be able to spot the inspiration for the various character names!

“We hope that you find this edition of RCVS News Extra informative.”

If you have any professional conduct queries please contact our Standards and Advice Team on 020 7202 0789 or profcon@rcvs.org.uk



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

Mr Warwick Seymour-Hamilton**Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register of Veterinary Surgeons****DC decision: application dismissed****Registration status: name remains off Register**

On Friday 18 March, the Disciplinary Committee dismissed an application to be restored to the Register of Veterinary Surgeons from former Kent-based vet Warwick Seymour-Hamilton.

Mr Seymour-Hamilton was originally removed from the Register in June 1994 for failing to maintain his equipment and facilities such that it evidenced a total disregard of basic hygiene and care for animals, thereby bringing the profession into disrepute.

The restoration hearing in March was Mr Seymour-Hamilton's fourth application for restoration, with previous applications being submitted but refused in July 1995, June 2010 and January 2015. However, as the Committee made its decision on the merits of the case before it, those previous applications were not admitted as relevant to its decision.

Mr Seymour-Hamilton told the Committee that he currently works as a herbalist and naturopath for humans and wished to be restored to the Register so he could include animals in his research. He had completed a course in herbal and naturopathic medicine at the College of Naturopathic Medicine in Dublin in 2010, and told the Committee that he believed that being restored to the Register would lend credence to his endeavours to secure funding and other support. He stated that he did not intend to work again in a veterinary practice.

"This Committee's obligations and duties are to see that the interests of animal welfare are properly protected by ensuring that only those who are properly trained, knowledgeable and experienced are permitted to treat animals."

However, the Committee rejected his application on a number of grounds, including the impact on animal welfare should Mr Seymour-Hamilton be

restored to the Register; the length of time he had been off the Register and the fact that he was therefore not up-to-date with contemporary veterinary practice and professional conduct; and that his efforts to keep up-to-date in terms of knowledge, skills and developments in practice were insufficient.

Judith Webb, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee is concerned about the length of time that has passed since he last practised and the paucity of the evidence he has provided to establish that, if permitted to return to practice, he would be able to attain the professional standards required of a modern veterinary practitioner, either as regards surgical capabilities/competence or as regards his knowledge of currently available veterinary medicines."

She added: "This Committee's obligations and duties are to see that the interests of animal welfare are properly protected by ensuring that only those who are properly trained, knowledgeable and experienced are permitted to treat animals and that public confidence in the standards of the profession are maintained. The risks attendant on a restoration of this applicant to the Register are, in the judgement of this Committee, plain and obvious. Accordingly, this application is refused."

RVN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

**Report to VN Council, May 2016****RVNPIC Chair Lynne Hill**

Since the last report to Council there has been one meeting of the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee (VNPIC) in April 2016.

Between 12 January 2016 and 18 April 2016 there were 11 new concerns received by the Professional Conduct Department about veterinary nurses. Of these new concerns, six are currently under investigation by the Case Examiners Group and five of these concerns relate to investigations by our Chief Investigator Michael Hepper for failing to provide the College with CPD records when requested.

New cases considered

One new case was considered by VNPIC between January 2016 and April 2016. This case was closed with advice issued to the veterinary nurse.

The Committee had previously adjourned one case for an investigation visit to be carried out. These investigations have

now been completed and the Committee will be holding an extraordinary meeting to consider this case.

Ongoing cases

In total the VNPIC has three ongoing cases. Of these three, one is adjourned pending the outcome of a criminal court trial against a veterinary nurse, another has been referred to the College's external solicitors for statements and the third case is awaiting further information from a third party.

Health and Performance Protocols

There are currently three veterinary nurses being considered for the College's Health Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

Since the last report, VNPIC has not referred any new cases to the VN Disciplinary Committee.

The full reports are available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Get your evidence today

EBVM conference this November

Veterinary Evidence Today – The 2016 EBVM Network Conference is an unrivalled event within the veterinary calendar, where the international veterinary community can meet to share progress and discuss the opportunities and challenges of applying evidence-based principles in practice.

The conference will be held in the heart of beautiful Edinburgh, Scotland, from Tuesday 1 to Thursday 3 November 2016. We are expecting over 250 international delegates from all sectors of the profession to attend. The programme will include a mix of plenaries, breakout sessions and interactive workshops. Tickets are on sale now on

the Veterinary Evidence Today conference website at www.vetoday.org.

RCVS Knowledge is committed to making our conferences accessible and to celebrating those in veterinary community who are helping advance evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM). We therefore have a range of bursaries and awards available for the conference.

At the conference we will be handing out our **Evidence Awards**, which celebrate excellence in the theory and practice of EBVM. All awards and prizes will be presented at the annual Evidence Awards ceremony and this year's inaugural event is being held as a gala dinner at Veterinary

Evidence Today 2016. We are proud to be presenting a range of awards:

- The Dame Olga Uvarov Award for Best Article published in our online resource *Veterinary Evidence*
- The Graham-White Award for the best Knowledge Summary produced by a primary care practitioner published in *Veterinary Evidence*
- The Reginald Snelling Student Essay Competition in which we invite students to submit an essay addressing the question: "Discuss the impact that EBVM has had on veterinary medicine and how you expect this to change with the growth of evidence-based practice."

Be sure to join us for the Evidence Awards to find out if you are one of our winners! The awards ceremony takes place on Wednesday 2 November in The Hub; located at the top of Edinburgh's famous Royal Mile. The award ceremony will include a drinks reception and a three course meal, and ends with a traditional Scottish Ceilidh.

Each Award is entered through submission to, and publication of, high quality papers in *Veterinary Evidence*. The prizes consist of full access-all-areas tickets to Veterinary Evidence Today 2016, plus travel and subsistence expenses. Articles and papers submitted before Monday 15 August will be considered. For full terms and conditions, visit the event webpage: www.vetoday.org

We hope to see you in Edinburgh!



Asking for seconds

Second issue of *Veterinary Evidence* now live

After the success of the first issue, we are delighted to announce that the second issue of *Veterinary Evidence* is now available.

Veterinary Evidence is our new open-access resource, uniting those who are interested in promoting and using the principles of EBVM within practice or academia. *Veterinary Evidence* – supported by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons – represents RCVS Knowledge's wider mission statement of providing the veterinary community with practice-relevant, evidence-based information resources.

We are continuously publishing open access content – if you wish to be notified every time new content is added to *Veterinary Evidence* then please sign up for content alerts and follow us on Twitter (@VeterinaryEv) to see all our latest news and updates.

We accept submissions from all professions, as long as they make a contribution to EBVM. *Veterinary Evidence* will consider a range of

material for publication, from research articles, commentaries, clinical audit, multimedia and more! You can be part of the advancement of EBVM by submitting your Knowledge Summaries or articles to *Veterinary Evidence* for free – find out more in the FAQs on the *Veterinary Evidence* website (www.veterinaryevidence.org).

“You can be part of the advancement of EBVM by submitting your Knowledge Summaries or articles to *Veterinary Evidence* for free.”

The site compiles easy links for the practitioner, including the Clinical Audit Toolkit, Guidance on Scientific Writing, the EBVM Toolkit, PubMed for Veterinarians and EBVM learning. Over time the site will expand to include forums, conference details and many other useful EBVM resources.

26 miles for RCVS Knowledge

Archivist runs London Marathon

On the 24 April, Adele Bush successfully completed the Virgin London Marathon in aid of RCVS Knowledge.

We are all so proud of her hard work and dedication. Thank you Adele – you are #oneinamillion!

It's not too late to sponsor! Visit www.virginmoneygiving.com/adelesmarathon to help her reach her final fundraising target of £1,850. She is so close, with just £100 to go!



Digitise that

RCVS Archives project update

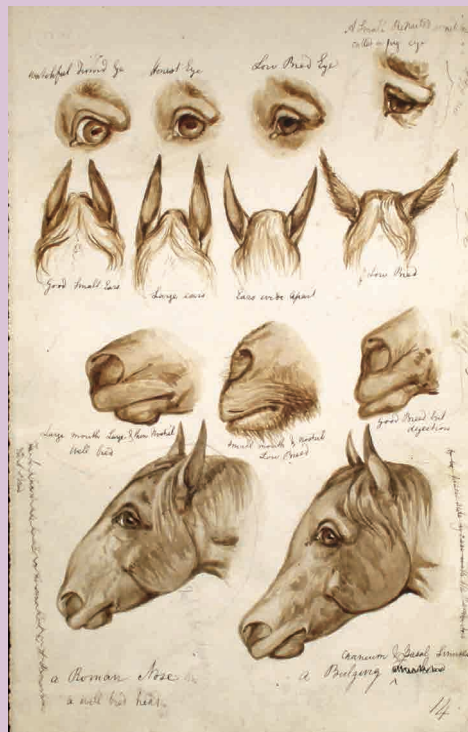
The Archives Team here at RCVS Knowledge have had a busy few months, with progress made in lots of different areas.

Lorna Cahill – our Archivist – has finished reviewing 49 boxes of papers from the Major General Sir Frederick Smith collection, and has begun cataloguing the material. The collection includes research notes, photographs, case books, diaries and lots of correspondence. The completed catalogue will be available for the public to search later this year.

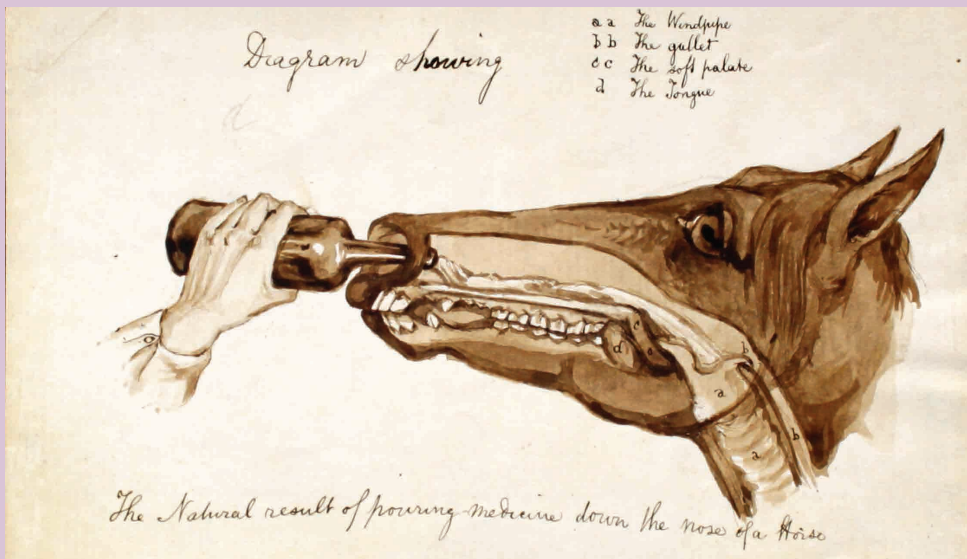
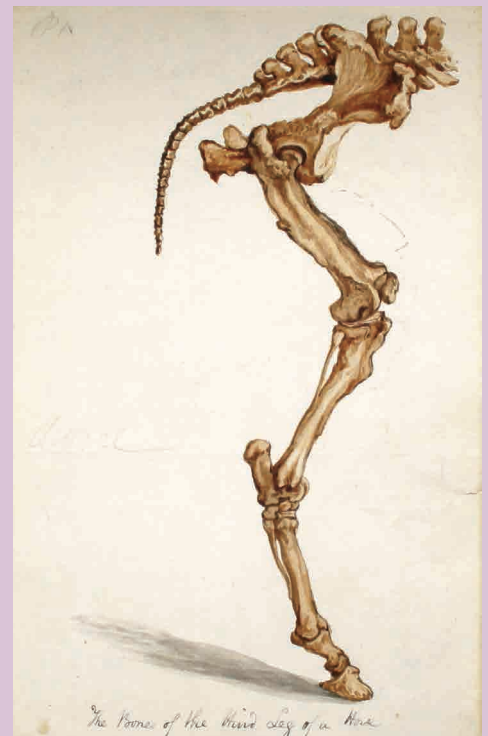
Adele Bush – our Archive and Digitisation Assistant – has digitised the Edward Mayhew watercolours and, along with selected items from across the historic collection, these will be added to a dedicated iPad to be kept in the Members' Room

at Belgravia House. Visitors will be encouraged to browse the digitised content, and see inside the archives and library's treasures like never before. The team is also continuing the development of a new and improved archive website, which will launched soon.

Using the Twitter hashtag **#VetArchives** has enabled the team to demonstrate the amazing range of material held in our collections. Recent highlights include photographs of mysterious veterinary equipment, beautifully illustrated books of birds' eggs and nests, and an animation of horse puzzle pieces found amongst Major General Smith's papers.



Top left and bottom right images from Major General Sir Frederick Smith collection. Other pictures from Edward Mayhew watercolours.



“Using the Twitter hashtag #VetArchives has enabled the team to demonstrate the amazing range of material held in our collections.”



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 A reflective summer

Consultation to launch on how we evaluate CPD

2 The people have spoken

RCVS and VN Councils election results

All right, Guvner?

Update on our governance reform process

3 The report of the year

Annual report to be available soon

Conducting ourselves

Changes afoot at our Professional Conduct Department

4 The Midas touch

Golden Jubilee Award recipient announced

Problem (re)solved

New alternative dispute resolution trial on the horizon

5 Well done on wellbeing

SPVS wellbeing award nominations welcome

You've been served...

CEO outlines how investing in resources will improve service

6 Medalin' with the RCVS

Nomination period for RCVS honours opens next month

On to pastures new

Barry Johnson retires from Council after 30 years

All guns firing

Council meeting in Cardiff City Hall

7 Tales from the office

RCVS wins Great Place to Work Award for second year

We're reviewing the situation

Schedule 3 review update

Find Wally (MRCVS)

New Find a Vet service is launched

8 O frabjous day!

RCVS Day programme announced

9 Guiding principles

New principles of certification and accompanying guidance

Feline transplants

Decision made on renal transplantation

Prescription for success

New guidance on directing prescriptions and freedom of choice

10 Preferred referrals

New guidance on incentives and referrals

Let's review, shall we?

Ethics Review Panel – call for papers/ projects

11 Insuring fair prices

Fees and insurance guidance

Phonic knowledge

Telemedicine review due later this year

Rise of the internet

'My Account' area and renewals

Non-renewal, non-registered

Vets removed from Register

12 PSS(t)...we have feedback!

Increase in take-up of PSS accreditation

13 Accreditors assemble!

New training for visitors, and revisions to accreditation practice

The audit's a' comin'

CPD audit taking place in the autumn

Penny pinching

Blog: CPD on a budget

14 And advance!

Deadline extended for Advanced Practitioner applications

Fellow feeling

Dozens of applications for new Fellowship

Let us list the ways...

Day-one Skills List gets update

Rest assured

College applies for European Association for Quality Assurance accreditation

15 Join us at the summit

Vet Futures Action Plan launch in early July

Don't stress

Mind Matters Initiative update

16 Coursing back to overseas

Overseas CPD course to be held in September

A Halloween VN team

PSS on the cards at BVNA Congress

Play it again, Webinar Vet

Listen to past Webinars online

Filing up to attend

RCVS will be at Countryfile Live

Free throws and free-for-alls

BSAVA Congress and BEVA roundup

17 Throwing it all in

What we were up to at the National Pet show

Looking up from down under

Letter from... Australia

18 Don't be fraudy

Advice on insurance fraud from the experts

19 Let us investigate

PIC report to Council

20 Disciplinary Committee hearings

Kerstin Vockert struck off for animal welfare failings; Warwick Seymour-Hamilton restoration refused

21 VN Preliminary investigations

VNPIC report to Council

22 Follow the data

2016 EBVM Conference in Edinburgh

Please sir, can I have some more?

Veterinary Evidence publication releases second issue

Born to run

Archivist runs the London Marathon

23 Mayhem from Mayhew

Latest from the RCVS Knowledge Archives Team

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2016

4 July

Vet Futures Summit, Royal Veterinary College, London

15 July

RCVS Day, Royal Institute of British Architects, London

4–7 August

Countryfile Live, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire

7–10 September

BEVA Congress, The ICC, Birmingham

8–9 September

Two-day overseas CPD course, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

7–9 October

BVNA Congress, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

10 November

RCVS Council meeting, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

17–18 November

London Vet Show, Excel, London Docklands

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