

*"The DC processes were 'robust, fair and transparent'."*

## Disciplinary process under the microscope

### Disciplinary review to take place in two years

**A**t its March meeting, a motion was put to Council by members Dr Barry Johnson and Mr Roger Eddy that it should consider the establishment of an independent investigation of the disciplinary process of the RCVS within the terms of the existing Veterinary Surgeons Act. The aim would be to reassure the public and the members of the profession that the procedures were fair, efficient, impartial and transparent.

Dr Johnson said that he had come on to Council in 1985 as an "angry young man" intent on changing the complaints process. He had witnessed positive changes in the interim, but felt that more recently there were negative perceptions from both the public and the profession. He was, in his own words, now a "grumpy old man" still trying to change the system.

There followed a wide-ranging and often passionate debate which took in such issues as the length of time taken from receipt of complaint to closure, the restricted sanctions available to the Disciplinary Committee, the view that the system was moving too far in favour of the complainant and that almost half of complaints were dismissed at the first hurdle. Some members felt that public and professional confidence in the complaints process was being lost.

It was frequently pointed out that the hard work, integrity and dedication of the members of both the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) and Disciplinary Committee (DC), were beyond question. It was also considered a positive track-record that in the last decade only seven appeals had been heard by the Privy Council from DC decisions, out of 52 inquiries conducted.

The Privy Council had upheld the decision of the DC in six out of the seven cases and directed a lesser sanction in three cases.

Council also heard from one of the DC's legal assessors, David Pittaway QC, who has extensive experience of working with other professional regulatory bodies. In his view, the DC processes were "robust, fair and transparent". He praised the training undergone by the DC members and said that the Committee's procedures were in line with those of other professions. "Members of the DC can feel a degree of pride," he said. He also advised that the likely outcome of any independent investigation would be a recommendation to separate regulatory from judicial functions. "Under such a change the procedures and processes would remain the same, the only change would be the structure," he cautioned.

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**In this issue:** Sandy Trees elected JVP, VSA update, Trust Golden Jubilee, fake vet arrested, new Working Parties, Return to Practice for VNs, new Veterinary Clinical Research module, EMS in focus, DC hearings, PSS non-member survey results.



# Sandy Trees elected JVP

## New Junior Vice-President keen to further vets' varied societal roles

**Professor Alexander ('Sandy') Trees has been elected Junior Vice-President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, following a vote at the recent meeting of RCVS Council. He will formally take up office at RCVS Day in July.**

Currently Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Liverpool University, Sandy is an Edinburgh graduate, qualifying from the Dick Vet in 1969. After graduation, he undertook a mixture of research posts at home and overseas,



plus a spell in general practice, before completing his PhD in 1976, also at Edinburgh. He was then appointed to Elanco Animal Health, first as Veterinary Advisor for the Middle East, Turkey and Africa, and then as its Head of Animal Science.

***"This is a great honour and a great responsibility, which I shall seek to discharge with vision, initiative, fairness and integrity."***

In the early 1980s, Sandy moved into academia, starting as a lecturer in veterinary parasitology in Liverpool University's Faculty of Veterinary Science, based in the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM); he was awarded a personal chair in veterinary parasitology and became Head of the Parasite and Vector Biology Division in the LSTM in 1994. He was appointed to Dean of Faculty in 2001 and still teaches BVSc, MSc and PhD students.

Sandy's broad veterinary political experience includes spells on the BVA's Veterinary Policy Group and Education Group, President of the

Association of Veterinary Teachers and Research Workers, Vice-President of the European College of Veterinary Parasitology and Chairman of the Heads of Veterinary Schools. Serving on RCVS Council since 2000 as one of the Liverpool veterinary faculty's appointed members, Sandy is a member of both the Education Committee and Research Subcommittee.

Commenting that this wide experience will help him in his new position, Sandy said: "Having worked in practice, industry and academia, I understand the varied roles that veterinary surgeons play in society, and it is the appreciation and furtherance of these roles that will be a major theme of my office."

With his term as Dean drawing to a close this year, Sandy says he will now have the time to devote to his new position. "I'm delighted to have been voted Junior Vice-President of the College. This is a great honour and a great responsibility, which I shall seek to discharge with vision, initiative, fairness and integrity. Tackling the many issues facing the profession will demand energy and commitment which I can promise to provide."

## Veterinary Surgeons Act - a new turn of events

### EFRA Committee inquiry update

**The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee of the House of Commons has now taken oral evidence for its inquiry into the need to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The President, the Senior Vice-President, the Chairman of the Veterinary Nurses Council and the Registrar appeared before the Committee on 18 February to be questioned about the College's proposals. The Minister, Lord Rooker, gave evidence on 3 March.**

The Committee's views will not be known until it publishes its report. It is now clear, however, that the Government will not set in hand work on new veterinary legislation for the time

being. Lord Rooker told the Committee that resource constraints within DEFRA rule this out for the next three years. The Minister recognised that the College might wish to consider pursuing limited changes in the legislation through a Private Member's Bill. Any member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords can promote such Bills, and they can become law if they are uncontroversial and the Government is supportive or at least neutral.

At its meeting on 5 March the RCVS Council took stock of the new situation and commissioned a review of the options open to the College.

### Disciplinary process under the microscope (*continued from cover*)

It was accepted that in recent years there had been more information available about complaints and disciplinary matters. An internal review of the complaints procedure had resulted in recent positive changes to the College's complaints-handling procedures. In addition, last year the DC had published

guidance on the purpose and function of the DC. These documents are all available on RCVSonline - see page 14 for more details.

These documents have been in preparation for some time, with the help of lay observers to PIC and DC legal assessors. They are in part the product of internal reviews that took on board the impact of the Shipman Inquiry on the General Medical Council and how the RCVS might proactively learn from this.

An initial amendment, to broaden the terms

## Trust marks 50th year with £1m grants

**In its Golden Jubilee year, the RCVS Trust has just awarded over £1,000,000 in grants and awards across 58 innovative and high-calibre research and animal welfare projects, with funding going to UK and overseas candidates.**

Gerri McHugh, Director of the Trust, said: "The RCVS Trust is delighted to make this very significant investment in the development of veterinary education and animal welfare at home and abroad. We are particularly pleased to mark our Golden Jubilee year with two £250,000 one-off awards in addition to our ongoing grants programmes. We will supply full details of this year's awards towards the end of March." (see [www.rcvstrust.org.uk](http://www.rcvstrust.org.uk))

of the motion beyond the existing Veterinary Surgeons Act, was agreed, but the motion itself was defeated.

However, there was no sense of complacency. There was no resistance to a proposal that the recently-established changes to the disciplinary system be reviewed in two years, once they had had time to bed in. All being well, this will become the responsibility of newly-elected Junior Vice-President Professor Sandy Trees some time in 2010.

# Register of practice premises comes closer

## VMD to consult on proposed register for 2009

**The Veterinary Medicines Regulations provide for the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to keep a register of premises at which veterinary medicines are stored or supplied. From 1 April 2009, it will be unlawful for a veterinary surgeon to supply veterinary medicines from unregistered premises. The purpose of the new register is to help the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) monitor compliance with the law on medicines (including controlled drugs).**

Last year, RCVS Council agreed that the College should keep the register on behalf of the VMD, subject to further consideration of what kinds of premises should have to be registered. That question has been discussed with the VMD, which is about to consult on the revised regulations which will come into force on 1 October 2008. The consultation is expected to propose that the register should be specifically of veterinary practice premises. The point of the change of wording is to make clear, for example, that it is not necessary to register a client's premises, such as a farm or an equine establishment, simply because a veterinary surgeon supplies medicines there from time to time.

VMD will also consult on a Veterinary Medicines Guidance Note which includes guidance on what "veterinary practice premises" means – see box.

The Regulations will lay down a registration fee to cover the administrative costs incurred by the RCVS in setting up the register and keeping it up to date. The VMD will consult on a proposed fee, and the RCVS has advised the Directorate that an annual fee of £40 for each premises registered would cover the expected costs. The intention is that practices which are accredited under the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme should not have to pay any more than now, because the information that they already supply to the College will cover what is needed for the new register. However, £40 per RCVS-accredited practice premises will be allocated to funding the new statutory register.

***"It is not necessary to register client's premises, such as a farm or an equine establishment."***

The VMD intends that registered premises should be subject to inspection from 1 April 2009, and will consult separately on possible arrangements for inspection. Practices within the Practice Standards Scheme are already subject to inspections, which cover the storage and handling of medicines. The VMD is not expected to want to duplicate inspections carried out within the Scheme.

The proposed VMD Guidance Note will suggest that 'veterinary practice premises' are those:

- from which the veterinary surgeons of a practice provide veterinary services
- advertised or promoted as premises of a veterinary practice
- open to members of the public to bring animals for veterinary treatment and care
- not open to the public, but which are the base from which a veterinary surgeon practises or provides veterinary services to more than one client
- to which medicines are delivered wholesale, on the authority of one or more veterinary surgeons in practice



## VN support

### VN Council to review help available

**A**t its February meeting, the Veterinary Nurses Council discussed the level of support available for veterinary nurses, particularly Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) who will, from 2010, be fully accountable for their professional practice.

Jill Nute, RCVS Junior Vice-President and member of the VNC, was concerned that sources of support should be made available to veterinary nurses who may be suffering from problems such as stress or substance abuse. Agreement was given that VN Council, together with the BVNA and other bodies, looks into existing support and how any gaps might be remedied.

In the meantime, it is worth pointing out that both the Vet Helpline (07659 811 118) and Veterinary Surgeons' Health Support Programme (07946 634220), run by the Veterinary Benevolent Fund, welcome calls from veterinary nurses. The former is a 24-hour, 365-day service run on an anonymous basis by volunteers who offer empathetic discussion of emotional, addictive or financial problems. Callers are referred on for specialist advice where appropriate.

The VSHSP was established to help combat problems with alcohol, drugs, eating disorders and other addictive and mental health issues.

The Scheme is completely confidential and is run by a National Co-ordinator who is a medical doctor. Both services are also there to help the family, friends and colleagues of those affected.

Other sources of support can be found on [www.vetlife.org.uk](http://www.vetlife.org.uk).

# Student VNs in Ireland

## Advice for SVNs with expired enrolment

**W**e ceased to enrol veterinary nurses training in the Republic of Ireland when the College opted not to run the NVQ overseas in 2002. Existing students were allowed to complete their training, however, the enrolment period for those that have not qualified has now expired.

We believe this situation affects approximately 25 students, many of whom have passed their exams but not yet completed their portfolios. We have had several enquires from such students who are seeking to qualify so that they can apply to enter the new statutory Register for veterinary nurses that recently opened in Ireland.

They now face two options. Either they can enrol with an RCVS-accredited course provider in Northern Ireland (or elsewhere in the UK), linking up with one of its accredited training practices to complete their training; or they can contact the Veterinary Council of Ireland to enrol with one of its registered training colleges in Eire.

If you employ a student veterinary nurse affected by this, please contact us for further advice: **020 7202 0788** or [vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk).

## Fraudulent vet - arrest

**The College made a complaint to the police that Russell Lewis Oakes had fraudulently registered as a veterinary surgeon, through the use of forged documents. The police arrested Mr Oakes on Saturday 1 March and are investigating our complaint. In addition to the police action, the College is taking formal steps to address the alleged fraudulent registration.**

# Fair trade on prescriptions

## End of three-year zero-prescription-charge ruling

**O**n 7 March, a meeting was held between the RCVS and representatives of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

The objective was to review the compliance of veterinary surgeons with the "Supply of Relevant Veterinary Medicinal Products Order". The Order ruled that, for a three year period, veterinary surgeons should not charge clients for providing prescriptions or discriminate between clients who take a prescription and those who don't in the prices they charge for medicines or fees charged for other services.

The three-year period ends in October 2008, and the meeting considered what should happen next.

The OFT has received a number of complaints from the public concerning veterinary prescription charges but has not brought any charges in respect of the complaints. It had not informed us of any of these complaints, but has agreed to do so in future.

We have received relatively few complaints over prescriptions during the period and we have resolved all of them by giving advice to the veterinary surgeons concerned.

A number of complaints have arisen as a result of members of the public failing to understand what a prescription actually is and interpreting a requirement for re-examination of a patient before ongoing medication is prescribed as a refusal to provide a prescription.

As to the next phase, the OFT intends to monitor the level of charges for prescriptions being levied by veterinary surgeons but has not specified how this might be carried out. A further meeting is planned for later in the year. In the meantime Advisory Committee will consider what should be contained in the *Guide to Professional Conduct* when the current provisions regarding prescription charges are removed, and whether to reinstate the previous advice that fees for prescriptions must be reasonable.

# Where are you?

## Moving house could result in a different type of removal

**W**e have just removed the names of 484 veterinary nurses from the RCVS List for non-payment of retention fees. They will no longer be legally allowed to carry out Schedule 3 procedures or use the postnominals RVN or VN.

That's a bit of a stark fact, but the harsh reality is that non-payment of retention fees – by either vets or veterinary nurse – leads directly to removal from the Register or List.

It is likely that many of the RVNs and VNs removed did not intend for this to happen, but the communications posted to them by the College were sent to an out-of-date address.

***"We are less draconian now, but it is vital that we know where to contact members."***

Vets and veterinary nurses have an obligation to inform the College of their change of address within 28 days, as Head of Registration, Christine Fraser, explains:

"Back in the 1890s, the College removed members purely for failure to notify of change of address and sued them for non-payment of

fees," she says. "Thankfully we are less draconian now, but it is vital that we know where to contact members. Removal from the Register could still be the end result of a failure to update address details."

The fee-years for vets and VNs are different. Vets should have received their fee notices by the end of February and payment is due by the end of March. If you have not received your notice, please let us know.

You can update your contact details via RCVSonline or by contacting the Registration department on **020 7202 0707** or [membership@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:membership@rcvs.org.uk).

Vets can also change their membership categories online. For example, those over 70 do not need to pay an annual fee if they change their status to 'non-practising over 70' and no longer use their qualification for either paid or unpaid work.



# Finger on the pulse

Online video explains role of Disciplinary Committee



**“A little like ‘justice’, whatever we do, must be seen to be done...” so said Registrar Jane Hern in last year’s *Annual Report*.**

**A**s part of our drive to help members of the public and the veterinary team understand our judicial process, we have recently embarked on a communications programme. It aims to better explain how complaints are handled by the College and the function of our two statutory committees – Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary.

This links to the publication of new guidance and procedures for both committees (see page 14). One of our first activities was the February issue of *RCVS News Extra*, which offered advice on how to avoid ten common areas of complaint.

More recently, we have worked with online TV service Vetpulse.tv to produce a short video outlining the purpose and remit of the Disciplinary Committee, including a look at how the room is laid out for formal hearings. This will be available online from the week commencing 10 March. A further short video on the Professional Development Phase will follow over the next few weeks [www.vetpulse.tv](http://www.vetpulse.tv).

## Take a bow

Award-winning *RCVS News*

**P**at yourself on the back. You have in your hands the latest copy of an award-winning publication and it’s all down to you. Well, those of you who responded to our 2006 reader survey at least...

We are pleased to announce that *RCVS News* was awarded Best Newsletter at the recent MemCom Awards. With the help of design specialists Ocean Insider, we redesigned the publication a year ago on the basis of feedback from the survey, so you can claim some credit for its prize-winning reincarnation.

MemCom is an annual event run with input from the marketing directors of a range of membership bodies. The organisations involved over the last few years represent somewhere in the region of three million members – from the Caravan Club to the Royal Society of Medicine.

The newsletter category was one of the most competitive. The judges particularly noted our “determination to bring RCVS communications into the 21st century” and went on to say: “The comments from vets show it is hitting



all of the right buttons, and giving them just enough reading matter to fit with their busy lives. The ‘news at a glance’ on the outside back cover is a clever and sensible idea. It has a good overall look, is easy to read, with good use of typography, and information boxes.”

So there you have it, and if you’ve read this far, it must be working.

# Party, party, party

## Update on Working Party activities

### Return of the 24/7 WP

**O**ur 24-hour Emergency Cover Working Party (24/7 WP) is to meet again, in the last week of March, to review the provisions for 24-hour emergency cover in the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*. The 24/7 WP comprises members of Council and representatives of the major relevant veterinary associations.

The Advisory Committee has asked for the provisions to be looked at again, following reviews in 2005 and 2007. It was decided that the 24/7 WP should be kept in being in order to keep the advice under review.

A number of issues were raised by the Advisory Committee as potential areas for review, such as:

- whether the profession wished to retain the provision in some form;
- whether there should be more emphasis on the responsibility of owners and carers under new welfare legislation;
- limiting veterinary responsibility to providing 24-hour emergency cover to registered clients;
- opting out of 24-hour emergency cover requirements for specific clients; and,
- whether the provisions are viable in light of the Working Time Regulations.

If you have any comments on the above (or other) areas that you would like to submit for the Working Party's consideration, please email them to Sue Whall ([s.whall@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:s.whall@rcvs.org.uk)) by Monday, 24 March 2008 or post them to the usual address.

### Ask the experts

**A** new RCVS Working Party with a remit to revise the current guidance for veterinary surgeons giving evidence in court, met in January. The difficulties associated with appearing as an expert witness were reported in *Veterinary Times* in February, further highlighting the need for more guidance.

The Working Party comprises representatives from a number of veterinary organisations, including the British Veterinary Association, the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons, the Veterinary Defence Society and the Veterinary Association for Arbitration and Jurisprudence, as well as lawyers and other organisations involved in this work.

Reporting to the Advisory Committee, the Working Party will be responsible for updating the current annex to the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*.

The revised guidance will provide specific information relevant to the profession, such as issues arising from animal welfare legislation. It will also refer to relevant guidance already available from the courts and other expert witness organisations.

### Improving communication

**W**e are set up a new Working Party to consider a number of recommendations arising out of the Lay Observers' Report to Council in June 2007. The report highlighted a significant number of complaints considered by the Preliminary Investigation Committee that involved a failure in communication between veterinary surgeon and client (see also PI Committee Chairman's report on page 14).

The Working Party will consider the wide range of situations where improved communication might help to avoid misunderstandings arising in the first place. Making its recommendations to Advisory Committee, it will be asked to look particularly at the whole issue of consent, the capacity to give consent and the provision of fee estimates.



## Working with EDTs?

**I**n July 2001, DEFRA published proposals for a Ministerial exemption order to make it lawful for suitably trained Equine Dental Technicians (EDTs) to carry out certain procedures that amount to the practice of veterinary surgery.

However, no such legislation has been passed to date and until such time, there is no legal basis for EDTs to carry out these procedures.

In the meantime, the Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee has stated that there is no public interest in taking action against veterinary surgeons who work in conjunction with EDTs provided that a number of conditions are met. Those conditions have been revised recently in light of advances in equine dental knowledge and techniques.

Veterinary surgeons who work in conjunction with EDTs should view the PI Committee statement on RCVSonline ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)).



## Advice Notes – take two

**W**e reported in *RCVS News* (November 2007) that six new Advice Notes would be published on RCVSonline shortly. Depending on whether your glass is half full or half empty, this was either half right or half wrong, as only three of the notes made it onto the website.

Our apologies for this delay, however the Advice Notes on the removal of dew claws and euthanasia, which required further review by the Advisory Committee in January, are now in place at [www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes).

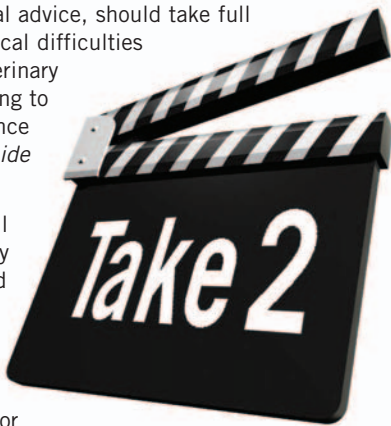
These are accompanied by three new Advice Notes that have also just received Council approval and which provide additional advice on:

- 20. Client confidentiality and reporting criminal offences
- 21. Guidance on product endorsement
- 22. 24-hour emergency cover: attendance away from practice premises

The long awaited Advice Note on the Working Time Regulations has been delayed again as Council decided that it should be considered by the 24-hour Emergency Cover Working Party when it meets in March (see left).

Council was concerned that the note, based on specialist legal advice, should take full account of practical difficulties faced by the veterinary profession in trying to balance compliance with both the *Guide* and the law.

Hard copies of all Advice Notes may also be requested from the Professional Conduct Department (020 7202 0789 or [profcon@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:profcon@rcvs.org.uk)).



## Glossary of terms

The VN Council has recently published a glossary of terms to assist those unfamiliar with the terminology of the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*. It can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/vnglossary](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vnglossary).

The VN *Guide 2008* should be with Registered Veterinary Nurses over the next few weeks and will also be available online.

Going forward, in line with the vets' *Guide*, the VN *Guide* will be updated regularly online, with alerts provided in *RCVS News*. The *Guide* will be reprinted in hard copy every two years.



How have last year's new rules for the docking of dogs' tails been observed by the Welsh public? How has the situation been monitored and what changes might lay ahead?

**Dr Christianne Glossop MRCVS,  
Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales**

## Docking tails in Wales

**W**ith the advent of new laws in Scotland, England and Wales, there are now three separate systems in place to address the non-therapeutic tail docking of dogs. In Scotland, there is a complete ban. In England and Wales, a puppy can be docked if there is evidence that it is likely to be used as a working dog and it is of a specified type. In England, the specified types are spaniels, terriers and Hunt Point Retrieve (HPR) breeds of any type or combination of types. In Wales, following debate in the National Assembly, there is a more detailed list of specified breeds.

To help inform the Welsh public of their new responsibilities, we launched a publicity campaign last December to explain the new tail-docking rules, the breeds that could still be docked and the documentation now required. We distributed leaflets and posters to all practices in Wales with a request that they be displayed prominently in waiting rooms and reception areas.

We were keen to encourage new owners to purchase legally-docked working dogs and also to ensure puppies had the relevant completed paperwork. By helping in this way to ensure that puppies had been microchipped prior to new ownership, we hoped to lessen the certification difficulties faced by veterinary surgeons microchipping puppies that had been docked at another practice. We also asked vets to microchip puppies at the same time as docking, or, if not possible, to encourage breeders to have their docked puppies microchipped prior to them changing ownership.

Whilst welcoming the legislation, however, I personally am disappointed with the numbers of dogs still being tail-docked in Wales. Since the partial ban was introduced, we have been working with local practices to monitor the pattern of docking here. Although the picture is not complete, it is clear that the greatest number of tails docked to date have been in North Wales. Local authorities have been vigilant, however, and the first prosecution in England and Wales under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 took place on a tail-docking case in Wales. Nevertheless, early monitoring results tell us that over 1,100 dogs have been docked since the introduction of this legislation. We therefore remain committed to an evidence-based review of the practice.

To this end, research is being carried out by the Royal Veterinary College (funded jointly by the Welsh Assembly, DEFRA and the Scottish Executive) to determine the occurrence of tail injuries in dogs, to identify major risk factors for tail injuries and to evaluate if docking reduces the injury. The research still has some way to go but the data will add to the tail-docking debate.

Carwyn Jones, the Welsh Assembly Government Minister at the time the Regulations were being made, committed to a review of tail docking being undertaken two years from that time.



# Not too late for PDP

## Good sign-up for new graduate support

**O**ver 80% of vets qualifying in the UK last year have signed up for the Professional Development Phase (PDP). This is encouraging, as 2007 was the first year that the PDP was made mandatory.

The PDP is for all veterinary surgeons in their first year of clinical practice, regardless of whether they qualified at home or overseas – about 10% of those on board so far graduated abroad. It aims to help new veterinary surgeons adjust to life in practice by offering them an online tool via which to record and monitor the development of their skills and experience.

If completed properly, the PDP accounts for the first year of mandatory CPD. The PDP-completion certificate is a prerequisite for enrolment on to an RCVS Certificate and should be a useful tool for recruiters comparing applications.

If you've not signed up yet, it's not too late. To view the Professional Development Phase

website, visit <http://pdp.rcvs.org.uk/> and click on 'preview'. Graduates wishing to register for PDP should email [pdp@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:pdp@rcvs.org.uk) to ask for a password. (Please include your RCVS registration number, date of birth, and the name of the university from which you graduated.)

A short video explaining the PDP will be available on [www.vetpulse.tv](http://www.vetpulse.tv) soon.



## Back to work for RVNs

**E**arlier in the year we invited comment on a proposed Return to Veterinary Nursing Practice course for veterinary nurses returning to the Register following a break of five years or more.

Veterinary nurses who have deregistered for a period of five years or more are required to complete a 17-week Period of Supervised Practice (PSP) before rejoining the Register. This ensures they have the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills under the mentorship and supervision of other registered practitioners (veterinary or veterinary nursing).

To support nurses undertaking the PSP, a sub-committee of VN Council is developing a voluntary Return to Veterinary Nursing Practice course, which will lead to a Certificate in Current Veterinary Nursing Practice. The proposed time commitment for the course is 100 hours, including 30 "contact hours", which may be taught traditionally in a classroom or via online learning. The cost of the course will be determined by course providers.

At the time of going to press, responses had mainly come from individuals rather than organisations. Almost all respondents are in favour of such a course and many stressed the importance of it being widely accessible – distance learning and study days were the most popular. All of the veterinary nurses who replied were keen and felt the draft looked appropriate. Some employers were worried about cost and some said that they would not be prepared to support anyone going through the course other than an ex-employee.

Those course providers who replied were cautious about the potential market for the course, but the enthusiastic response from veterinary nurses would tend to counteract this. A summary of consultation responses will be available on RCVSonline shortly.

## Veterinary career? Walk this way...

### Project to increase diversity of vet school applicants

**O**n 8 May vets, members of the press and those representing teaching and careers organisations, will be taking a walk on the wild side. That's the date set for the launch of a new range of careers materials for the veterinary profession which will take place at the Rainforest Café in Piccadilly. The Café, boasting animatronics of orang-utans and crocodiles, should prove a suitably upbeat setting for the launch of the materials, which aim to educate school students, their parents, teachers and careers advisors about the diversity of the profession.

***"Latest figures for 2008 vet school applications show a rise to 2,049, compared with 1,440 in 2005."***

The materials have been developed as part of the Gateways to the Professions project, the objective of which is to encourage a broader base of applicants to veterinary school, particularly from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, lower socioeconomic groups and boys.

Latest figures for 2008 vet school applications show a rise to 2,049, compared with 1,440 in 2005. However, while the number of applications from boys has increased slightly, it's still a concern that only 356 boys from the UK have applied for a place in 2008 – 20% of UK applications.

The Gateways project has been part-funded by the College, DEFRA, six out of seven of the UK vet schools and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

The suite of careers materials will include a DVD, featuring topics such as "Vets behind the headlines" and "Vets on the high street," and a brochure entitled *Veterinary Science – for all walks of life*. There will also be an online presence and a PR campaign aimed at BME audiences.

If you get involved with local careers activities and would like copies of the DVD and brochure, please email: [l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk).

**Veterinary Science...for all**  
**Walks of Life**



# The practice of research

## Veterinary Clinical Research module assessed by Cambridge

**We have been keen to promote the value of clinical research for some time – notably at events such as the Research Subcommittee's 2005 seminar "Research into practice, practice into research".**

Those in clinical practice may sit on a wealth of information that could be very useful to the profession, but which is often untapped.

A new Veterinary Clinical Research module for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice should help the next generation of clinical researchers to maximise this resource.

We have accredited Cambridge University to assess the new module, adding to the range now available as part of the RCVS postgraduate Certificate.

The module has been developed to help clinical practitioners develop their research skills. Candidates will develop the ability to formulate an answerable research question; design a research project to obtain evidence of the correct answer while avoiding obvious bias and other errors; undertake the research proposed in the project design; and, write up the results to a standard that would pass the veterinary journal peer-review process.

Thanks to the Cambridge Infectious Diseases Consortium's Clinical Research Outreach Programme, which has been created to establish an active network of motivated, research-capable veterinarians working in clinical practice or related roles, the course run by Cambridge to support the module is currently available free to practitioners. The assessment fee will be £450,

and there is an assessment-only route available to those who cannot attend the Cambridge course.

More information about the course, and the Clinical Research Outreach Programme, is available from Dr Mark Holmes at Cambridge University on [01223 335 636](tel:01223 335 636)/[mah1@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mah1@cam.ac.uk).

To help steer would-be candidates through the new options available, we will be hosting a presentation and question session at this year's BSAVA Congress at 12.10pm on Friday 4 April in Hall 6 of the ICC.



## CPD Cards on the table

**We hope you wouldn't dream of driving your car without a valid MOT certificate. So make sure you treat your professional practice in the same way and complete those Continuing Professional Development Record Cards!**

CPD Record Cards for veterinary surgeons were distributed to all home- and overseas-practising members in early February, together with the 2008 version of the *Guide to Professional Conduct*. CPD Cards and Guides for registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) will be issued over the next few weeks.

On a regular basis, a random sample of veterinary surgeons and RVNs are asked to return their completed cards to check compliance

with CPD requirements, which are set at an average of 105 hours over three years for veterinary surgeons and 45 hours over the same period for RVNs.

Completed record cards also need to be submitted with applications for Certificates and Diplomas and for Recognised Specialist status, and will be viewed during inspections for approval under the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme.



# No pause for pregnancy diagnosis

## Bristol to continue PD teaching on university farm

**We reported in November that, following the RCVS visitation to Bristol's School of Veterinary Science in March 2007, the School had been given conditional approval. This included restrictions on the teaching of students on the university farm due to health and safety concerns.**

At its February meeting, the Education, Policy and Specialisation Committee accepted a recommendation from the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee that pregnancy diagnosis could continue to be taught to students on the farm, during its redevelopment. The decision was made following a detailed report from Bristol about steps taken to rectify the problems identified. The Committee was pleased to hear that progress continues to be made at Bristol in meeting the conditions identified by the Visitors.

## Exam dates

Dates and venues for the 2008 RCVS Certificate and Diploma written examinations are as follows:

**RCVS Diplomas** - Tuesday 8 July 2008 at RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

**RCVS Certificates** - either Tuesday 22 or Wednesday 23 July 2008 (depending on subject) at The Emmanuel Centre, 9-23 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3DW

The precise timetable for each Diploma and Certificate subject will be published soon on RCVSonline and candidates will be notified individually. Dates for clinical, oral and practical examinations will be published and notified separately.

## Call in the Specialists

At its March meeting, RCVS Council agreed to the listing of 30 new RCVS Recognised Specialists. This brings the total listed to 261, across 29 specialisms: listing is valid for a period of up to five years before reapplication. Specialists provide an invaluable referral resource for general practitioners and will be the subject of a feature in the June issue of *RCVS News*. In the meantime, deadlines for re-applications and new applications are as follows:

**22 August** - re-applications by Specialists first listed in 1994, 1999 and 2004

**12 September** - new applications

# Seeing practice makes perfect

## An overview of the EMS system and guidance available

**F**or the last 75 years, 'Seeing Practice' for at least 26 weeks has been a requirement for all UK veterinary students.

More recently known as Extramural Studies (EMS), it provides a vital opportunity for veterinary students to put the clinical theory they have learned into context, and to get a hands-on appreciation of softer, but no less critical, subjects such as communications, commerciality, ethics and professionalism. It's essential for the development of graduates' day one competences.

No doubt back in 1932, it was a very informal system. Today things are a lot more structured, to the benefit of student, practitioner and vet school alike. However, one thing has not changed: the system is built on the willingness of practices across the UK to support the vets of the future. Those who commit their time and resources should be thanked on behalf of the whole profession.

EMS comprises two distinct phases: the 'pre-clinical' or animal husbandry phase, a total of 12 weeks; and Clinical EMS, 26 weeks towards the latter part of the degree course. Clinical EMS should include time in abattoirs, laboratories and with the government veterinary services, as well as in clinical practice. These days, students can also spend time working on research projects or attending summer schools.



EMS Co-ordinators Liaison Group Chairman Frank Taylor

### EMS Co-ordination

Each of the UK veterinary schools has an EMS Co-ordinator, who, as members of the EMS Co-ordinators Liaison Group, meet regularly. Co-ordinators have the responsibility to oversee administration of the EMS scheme on behalf of their universities. One of the issues they are keen to tackle is that of communication between the veterinary schools, EMS providers and students.

"We are working hard to improve communications across the board," according to the Group Chairman, Dr Frank Taylor. "It is essential that the schools supply sufficient information to the EMS providers so that they can plan a suitable range of activities for the veterinary student, albeit that they are constrained by their caseload. It is also important that both practice and vet student feed back to the school about their experiences."

According to Frank, the system can break down if record-keeping, such as formative assessment and attendance certification, is poor. Experience shows that it works best where one person at each practice is tasked with supervising EMS students.

***"An electronic recording system which could then link directly into the Professional Development Phase database on graduation would be ideal."***

Through the Liaison Group, the vet schools have streamlined and standardised a lot of the EMS paperwork so that practices can use common feedback forms, regardless of which school they work with, and Frank sees the longer-term goal as developing an e-portfolio for students. "An electronic recording system which could then link directly into the Professional Development Phase database on graduation would be ideal," he says, "Many medical students already have something similar."

### Guidance

In 1999, the EMS Co-ordinators prepared a *Manual for Participating Practices*, which summarises the aims and objectives of clinical EMS. An updated version is now on RCVSonline ([www.rcvs.org.uk/ems](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/ems)).

It offers useful guidelines for practices, such as how to prepare for a student placement, what an Extramural Teacher (EMT) should focus on, and areas such as health and safety and insurance. It also includes a summary of

each vet school's curriculum, so EMTs know roughly what stage the student has reached, and an overview of the schools' EMS systems, together with insurance policies. It's required reading if you're involved with EMS ([www.rcvs.org.uk/ems](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/ems)).



Martin Whitehead believes planning is key for EMS success

There are RCVS requirements for the veterinary schools too, although there is flexibility in how these are interpreted. While each school takes a slightly different approach, the College is keen for a common direction to be developed in terms of recording and monitoring EMS, to ease the burden on the significant number of practices taking students from more than one university.

Bristol University has a 'fostering' system using tried and tested EMS providers as base practices to support its students. One such practice is the Chipping Norton Veterinary Hospital in Oxfordshire, where Dr Martin Whitehead helps look after EMS students.

A mixed practice, accredited as an RCVS Small Animal Hospital, with five full-time equivalent veterinary surgeons, Martin's practice is popular with EMS students and others on work experience. There's not a week goes by without some form of work experience being provided.

### Go for it!

Martin stresses the importance of planning for both student and EMS provider: "Everyone gets more out of the experience if it's planned first," he says, recommending that students come to the practice with a list of areas they wish to cover.

***"Everyone gets more out of the experience if it's planned first."***

He also stresses that students need to be outgoing and grab opportunities. "If they see something they want to have a go at, they must just ask!" he advises.

Providing EMS can be a rewarding experience for the practice too, with students bringing new ideas and techniques: "It's certainly not arduous having students on EMS, you can get a tremendous amount out of it," says Martin.

The Chipping Norton Veterinary Hospital is foster practice to fourth-year Bristol student Alison Roberts, who enthuses about the experience of learning from Martin and the other vets and veterinary nurses at the practice: "It's really helped to keep me motivated. After a whole term of sitting in a lecture theatre, it reminds me of why I want to be a vet," she says. "Going back to the same practice has meant that I've been able to gauge my progress in terms of building knowledge and confidence."

Alison advises students to research the practice before applying by talking to other veterinary students. At Chipping Norton, she has been lucky enough to see a range of cases from hamsters to tigers, and been able to gain a lot of useful experience. However, some of her peer group have been less fortunate: "The non-uniformity of experience gained during EMS worries a lot of students. It's very unnerving to hear about how many bitch spays someone else has performed if you were feeling pleased with yourself for mastering IV injections!" she says. Better feedback from students and EMS providers to the schools would seem to be key here.

### Professional responsibility

At the Veterinary Defence Society's annual graduate reunions, it is shocking to hear the horror stories related by some new graduates in terms of their treatment at the hands of senior colleagues. Statistically these are rare occurrences, yet hearing an individual's tale is no less affecting. One issue that often crops up is where new graduates are asked to certify falsely by their more senior colleagues. This is no example to set and, sadly, it seems that



Bristol student Alison Roberts relishes EMS for confidence-building

this goes back as far as undergraduate days, with several veterinary schools having come across incorrectly certified EMS attendance.

The veterinary schools are working hard to ensure that students understand the value attached to veterinary certification and it would be helpful if this was echoed in practice,

as highlighted by Professor Sandy Trees of Liverpool University's Faculty of Veterinary Science: "The Schools value and appreciate the support that practices can give students in terms of ensuring they claim the correct period for their EMS and that it is signed accordingly."

Most universities now have in place Fitness to Practise procedures that cover veterinary and medical degrees. In the past, anyone passing the relevant academic examinations would have a degree conferred upon them. This included those with problems that might later affect their fitness to practise, such as alcohol or drug dependency, or issues of integrity.

***"The Schools value and appreciate the support that practices can give students in terms of ensuring they claim the correct period for their EMS and that it is signed accordingly."***

Now, the universities are strengthening their procedures such that they can withhold a professional degree if they feel an individual is not fit to practise in a professional capacity, and this could include honesty in terms of EMS certification. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 provides that all UK veterinary graduates with a recognised degree are eligible to register with the College, and thus to practise, so this is an important development.

- If your practice takes, or is willing to take, students for EMS please make sure this is flagged on your Find a Vet entry ([www.findavet.org.uk](http://www.findavet.org.uk)). Many students seek practices via Find a Vet.

### Research career beckoning?

Veterinary students keen to pursue a career in research can apply to the RCVS Trust for a grant to support a relevant EMS project.

Under the EMS Research Vacation Scholarship programme, funding of up to £1,000 is available for what are typically four- to eight-week projects.

The projects can be based in veterinary academic or research institutions within the UK or overseas, and are designed to expose veterinary undergraduates to the importance of research as a career. Students should seek advice from their EMS Co-ordinators.

Examples of recently-funded projects include a study of the epidemiology of Equine Trypanosomiasis in the Gambia, the development of a pathological image database for veterinary students, the effect of surgery on respiratory function in anaesthetised dogs and research into dominance and social grooming in Sulawesi black-crested macaques.

This year's grant application window closes on 14 March but it's an annual opportunity. See [www.rcvstrust.org.uk](http://www.rcvstrust.org.uk) for more information.

## Meet the RCVS Team



Image courtesy: Mike Pattison

### Libby Earle TD BA RGN

#### What's your role?

Head of Veterinary Nursing

#### What's your background?

I qualified as a human medical nurse from St Bartholomew's Hospital in 1976 and, after a period working in theatres and orthopaedics, trained and practised as a midwife before realising a longstanding ambition by becoming a nurse tutor. I worked at various schools of nursing and universities as a tutor and then as a principal lecturer, gaining a degree in law and nurse education and a postgraduate diploma in healthcare philosophy along the way. I joined the RCVS in 1998.

#### What do you do?

I head a team of 12 staff, nine based at Belgravia House and three (external verifiers) "on the road". The VN Department has two functions. The first is to provide support to the Veterinary Nurses Council and its subcommittees, and to be the point of contact for veterinary nurses seeking assistance from the College. Secondly, we operate the RCVS Awarding Body for vocational qualifications in veterinary nursing, which means supporting our nationwide network of 51 approved centres, and running the external VN examinations. More recently, we have taken part in a major European project (ACOVENE) to develop and establish a European accreditation system for schools of veterinary nursing.

#### What's been your biggest challenge?

The establishment of the approved centres for veterinary nurse training: my job throws me lots of challenges, but this was by far the biggest!

#### Surprise us...

I used to be a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical defence instructor in the Territorial Army. Wearing the protective gear was good training for my hobby – beekeeping!

# One world, one disease

## The effects of climate change on animal and human health

**A**bout two-thirds of new infectious diseases that threaten humans come from animals. With global climate change, this looks set to increase. Now, more than ever, it is important that veterinary and medical colleagues come together to discuss disease control strategies. To this end, the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) is hosting a one-day seminar entitled 'One world, one disease', on 24 June 2008.

*"Now, more than ever, it is important that veterinary and medical colleagues come together to discuss disease control strategies."*

The event will examine some of the effects of climate change on patterns of animal health and the impact of this on humans. The

meeting will provide an understanding of the complexity of the global changes that we face, and will work towards the integrated approach needed to manage the serious problems that threaten animal and human health.

Speakers will include RCVS Senior Vice-President Professor Sheila Crispin, who has been instrumental in organising the conference, Caroline Lucas MEP, Professor Bob Watson, DEFRA's Chief Scientific Adviser, the RVC's Professor Quintin McKellar and Lt Col Tim Brookes from the Health Protection Agency, among others.

All are welcome. Tickets are available from the Royal Society of Medicine online at [www.rsm.ac.uk/academ/e10-oneworld.php](http://www.rsm.ac.uk/academ/e10-oneworld.php).

For further information please contact Nicole Leida on 0207 290 3946 or [nicole.leida@rsm.ac.uk](mailto:nicole.leida@rsm.ac.uk)

## Fellows Dinner – book your place now!

**Invitations are now going out for the RCVS Fellows' Dinner on the evening of Friday 4 July (RCVS Day). Places are limited, so Fellows should book early to avoid disappointment.**

The black-tie dinner will be held at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. As well as the Royal College, the venue is home to the Hunterian Museum, which houses John Hunter's writings and specimen collection and highlights his historical ties with the RCVS and the close links between human and veterinary medicine and surgery.

Guests will have the opportunity to view the collection while enjoying reception drinks in

the Museum at 7pm, followed by a three-course dinner, coffee and port in the Council Room.

The dinner has been organised as a result of feedback from a survey carried out in 2006, and it is hoped that this will be a popular and successful event. Fellows are welcome to purchase a ticket for a guest/partner and a seating plan will be prepared on the basis of Fellows' requests.

For further information and to book your place, please contact Fiona Clark in the Communications Department on 020 7202 0773 or [f.clark@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:f.clark@rcvs.org.uk) before Wednesday 2 April.



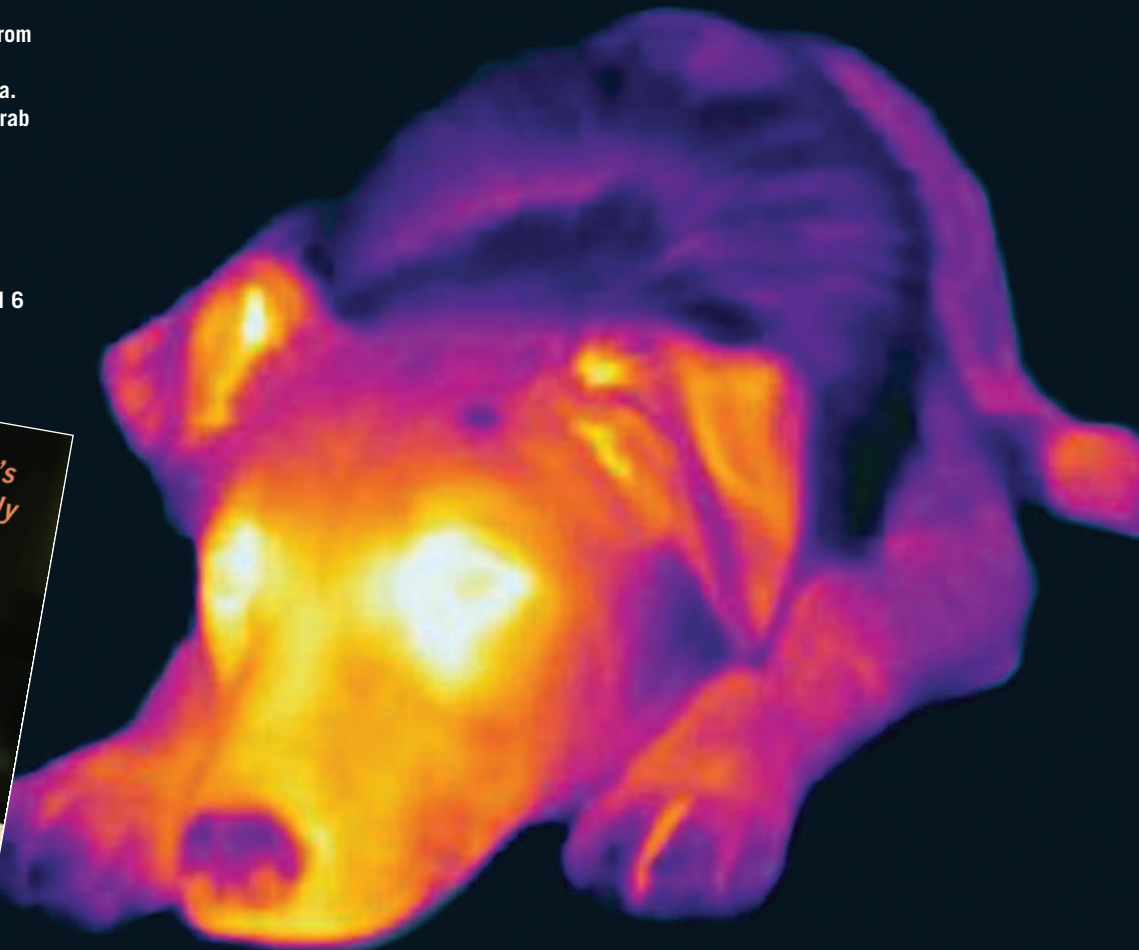
**Full house at AVS Congress:** In February, the RCVS attended the Association of Veterinary Students' Congress at Nottingham University's School of Veterinary Medicine and Science. President Bob Moore addressed an excellent turnout about the importance of the PDP.

# Join us at BSAVA Congress

Join us in Birmingham for BSAVA Congress, from Thursday 3 April to Sunday 6 April, on the RCVS stand (918) in the National Indoor Arena. We're next to the catering point, so why not grab a coffee and come and say hello?

If you would like to hear the results from the Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession 2008, or find out more about the new RCVS Modular Certificate we will be holding information sessions on these subjects in Hall 6 of the ICC on Friday 4 April at 11:10am and 12:10pm respectively.

Come to the session on Friday morning, or visit us on the stand and enter a draw to win a £50 High Street Gift Voucher – perfect for Birmingham's shopping heaven! Look out for the flyer (right) in your delegate bag.



## Questions on home ground

As you are reading this, the RCVS Officer team will have just returned from Nottingham and the latest RCVS Question Time meeting, held on 13 March. The team will be continuing their journey south-west and visiting Ilminster on Thursday 22 May, home ground of RCVS President Bob Moore.

Question Time is an important opportunity for local vets, veterinary nurses and other members of the team to air their views and put their questions to the panel, made up of Officers and members of the Veterinary Nurses Council. This is your profession, and we want to hear about the issues that are affecting you.

Personal invitations will be sent to vets and veterinary nurses within reasonable travelling distance of the meeting venue. For further details or to reserve your place, please contact Fiona Clark in the Communications Department on 020 7202 0773 or [f.clark@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:f.clark@rcvs.org.uk).

## Awards celebration



# One Great George Street

This year's AGM and Presentation of Awards – RCVS Day - will be held on Friday 4 July at One Great George Street, London. The event starts at 10am and all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are welcome to attend.



The day will begin with AGM business followed by the presentation of awards, including Honorary Associateship, Honorary Fellowship, Diplomas and veterinary nursing awards. Jill Nute will formally take up her office as President of the RCVS for 2008-9, and new members will be welcomed to RCVS Council and Veterinary Nurses Council.

We are delighted that veterinary surgeon and TV presenter Steve Leonard will be our guest speaker, sharing with us some of the many adventures he has had travelling the globe, filming wildlife documentaries for the BBC. Guests can then enjoy a fork luncheon in the beautiful Edwardian Great Hall.

We will publish details about how to apply for tickets to RCVS Day on RCVSonline in due course and in the June edition of *RCVS News*.

# Report to Council March 2008

## PI Committee Vice-Chairman Sheila Crispin



**T**here have been four meetings of the Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee since the last Council meeting, during which time 50 new, as well as ongoing, complaints were considered. In that time, the PI Committee has:

- referred four complaints to solicitors for statements;
- referred 18 complaints to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigation;
- carried out nine announced and two unannounced visits to veterinary practices, plus three informal interviews and one formal interview; and,
- referred three complaints to the Disciplinary Committee.

Two of the complaints reported to Council are outlined below. They are examples of those closed at assessment, where it is considered the complaint is not within the College's jurisdiction and the veterinary surgeon complained about has not been asked to respond.

### **Alleged missed-diagnosis/communication failure**

A 12-year-old cross-breed bitch with constipation was admitted for radiographs to be taken of the pelvic area, to eliminate a tumour as a causal factor. The complainant alleged that due to the bitch's age, she was informed that it was safer to perform the radiographs under sedation rather than general anaesthetic. No tumour was diagnosed from these radiographs.

Later, another practice diagnosed the bitch as having a tumour. The complainant questioned whether a radiograph taken under general anaesthetic might have been of better quality. She said she was not told by the first practice that radiographs taken using general anaesthetic were likely to be of better diagnostic quality and detail than those taken under sedation.

The complainant submitted a complaint to the College alleging missed-diagnosis. The complaint was closed on the basis that the missed-diagnosis could not amount to serious professional misconduct. It was accepted that good communication is essential to good veterinary practice but the communication issue identified could not, even if proved, amount to serious professional misconduct.

### **Fees/compensation**

A two-year-old male cat with a high temperature was taken to a practice. A £150 fee was estimated, the cat was hospitalised overnight, fluids were administered and various tests were undertaken. The next day, the complainant said the veterinary surgeon told her he suspected the cat was suffering from a virus, but to identify it would involve high costs. As the cat's temperature had reduced and all its vital organs appeared to be functioning, it was discharged with a five-day course of antibiotics. The final bill was £225.

The cat improved over a period of 10 days, but ultimately lost its appetite again. The complainant took him to another veterinary practice where he was diagnosed with feline immunodeficiency virus. The complainant said she was advised the infection would not improve and elected for the cat to be euthanased.

The complainant complained to the College because she was dissatisfied with paying £225 to the first practice "for nothing" because the illness was terminal.

The complaint was closed on the basis that there was no issue of conduct. The first practice had acted reasonably and the level of the fee was not a matter for the College to resolve.

The full report is available on RCVSonline ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk))

## New disciplinary guidance...

**A**n eight-month review process that began last spring finally came to fruition in December with the Disciplinary Committee's publication of new guidance on its purpose and function, including decision-making, indicative outcomes and sanctions, and reasons for decisions and procedures.

The new guidance aims to ensure transparency and consistency of approach and is in line with similar guidance for the regulation of the healthcare professions. It also refers to the Human Rights Act and the Committee's independence from other RCVS functions.

The Committee was also able to take into account the recommendations made by the Privy Council last October, after the sanction to remove Dr John Walker from the Register was reduced to a six-month suspension on appeal.

We hope the guidance will be of benefit to both the profession and the public. It is available on RCVSonline at [www.rcvs.org.uk/dcguidance](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/dcguidance) or a hard copy may be requested from Lucy Evans (020 7202 0729 or [lucy@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:lucy@rcvs.org.uk)).

## ... and new complaints procedures published online

**A** revised complaints procedure has also recently been published, marking the end of 12 months of drafting and revision from the Preliminary Investigations Committee.

One of the aims of the revised procedure is to make the decision-making processes within it more transparent. There are now protocols for the three main decision-making stages:

- Assessment - where we decide if there is the potential for a case;
- Case Examination - where we decide if there is an arguable case; and,
- PI Committee - where we decide if there is a realistic prospect of proving a case.

Four information packs about the complaints procedure are available, and can be downloaded from RCVSonline – [www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints). These are for complainants, veterinary surgeons who are complained about, those involved in decision-making at the RCVS and additional guidance for Lay Observers who provide independent input to the process.

The revised complaints procedure will apply to all complaints we consider, including current complaints.

## Miss Judith L Kay

### **Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register.**

#### **DC decision: application refused.**

On 29 January 2008, the RCVS Disciplinary Committee (DC) turned down Judith Kay's application to be restored to the Register.

Miss Kay was removed from the Register in January 2007 following her multiple convictions for drink-driving offences, driving disqualification and four-month imprisonment. The original hearing in December 2006 had been adjourned until January 2007 to allow time for Miss Kay, who admitted suffering from alcoholism, to address her personal problems and to satisfy certain conditions that the DC laid down. However, at the resumed hearing, the DC was not satisfied these conditions had been met and heard evidence that Miss Kay had resumed drinking alcohol, despite her assurances to the contrary. Her name was therefore removed from the Register on the grounds that it was unsafe for her to continue to practise.

Following the one-day hearing, the DC said that Miss Kay had presented no substantive evidence that her alcoholism was under control. Although she indicated that she had undergone

two blood tests in December 2007, the results were not available. The DC considered that, in any event, these were too few to be of value in assessing her long-term condition, as they would provide only a snapshot of her condition during her ten-month removal.

The DC was also concerned that Miss Kay had been without professional support or counselling for the past five months, after she cancelled her planned meeting with the Veterinary Surgeons Health Support Programme and stopped attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. It felt that she did not recognise the severity of her condition. Mr Brian Jennings, chairing the DC, said: "We have not been persuaded of [Miss Kay's] fitness to practise and therefore cannot say that animal welfare will be protected and public confidence in the veterinary profession maintained. On that ground alone we would have decided to refuse her application."

Evidence was also provided by four witnesses who had taken animals to Miss Kay for treatment, believing her to be a fully qualified veterinary surgeon. This showed that since being removed from the Register, Miss Kay had continued to practise, (including administering anaesthesia, conducting

consultations and providing veterinary advice as well as dispensing prescription-only medicines). Miss Kay, whilst admitting this, claimed ignorance of the fact that her continuing to practise was a criminal offence, and sought to persuade the DC that some of the work she had undertaken was not that of a veterinary surgeon but constituted advice from an experienced dog owner. This was not accepted by the DC, which found that she had brought the profession into disrepute.

***"Miss Kay claimed ignorance of the fact that her continuing to practise was a criminal offence."***

Mr Jennings, said: "We find that Miss Kay's conduct...is opposite to that which we would expect of a veterinary surgeon. We were neither persuaded that Miss Kay understood her behaviour was reprehensible, nor that it would be safe for her to be restored to the Register.

"Miss Kay must abstain from any act which could be construed as being that of a qualified veterinary surgeon and her application is hereby refused."

## Mr Paul A Evans

### **Inquiry concerning: advice given regarding the administration of norethindrone to a racing greyhound, contrary to NGRC rules.**

#### **DC decision: guilty of serious professional misconduct – no penalty imposed.**

On 13 December 2007, Paul Evans MRCVS was found guilty of disgraceful conduct for advising the trainer of two racing greyhounds, 'Confident Bunny' and 'Checkinpost', that she could race the bitches whilst they were receiving norethindrone (an oestrous suppressant), when he ought to have known that to do so would be contrary to the rules of the National Greyhound Racing Club (NGRC).

The DC noted that Mr Evans described himself as a 'specialist' in the treatment of greyhounds, many of which raced under NGRC rules. As a result, the DC considered that he should have had greater knowledge of the NGRC rules than the average veterinary surgeon in practice.

The DC found that NGRC Rule 217 was unequivocal that at the time of racing a greyhound must be free of medicines, tonics or substances that could affect its performance or well-being. The only permitted exceptions to this rule were products licensed by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate for oestrus control, parasiticides and vaccines. As a veterinary

surgeon specialising in the treatment of greyhounds, the DC felt that Mr Evans should have been fully aware of this rule and the fact that norethindrone – as a product used for oestrus control but without a veterinary product licence – was clearly prohibited under these rules.

***"The DC accepted that he had caused no adverse effect on the dogs' welfare or performance."***

Mr Evans admitted that between 1 January and 31 March 2006 he had treated Confident Bunny and Checkinpost with norethindrone. He explained that the treatment had been chosen as it was not given by injection, and the two bitches in question were particularly nervous and averse to injections. The trainer had been aware of these reasons and Mr Evans had kept a full record of the treatment given.

Mr Evans told the DC he had been unaware that norethindrone was prohibited under NGRC rules and that he had given it to many greyhound bitches during his professional career, many of which had run under NGRC rules. He stated that no concerns had been raised by the NGRC before, although the drug had been named on his and trainers' records, the latter being subject to biannual NGRC inspection.

The DC accepted Mr Evans' explanation that he mistakenly believed the NGRC prohibition did not apply to norethindrone because it was widely used and had previously gone unchallenged by the NGRC, and because he believed it was less detrimental to dogs' welfare and had a lesser effect on performance than licensed alternatives. However, Mr Evans accepted that he ought to have known that the advice he gave the trainer was wrong.

The DC felt that Mr Evans fell far below the standard to be expected of a veterinary surgeon in his position, and found him guilty of serious professional misconduct. However, the DC accepted that he had caused no adverse effect on the dogs' welfare or performance, or on the integrity of racing, neither did he receive any financial or other benefit from his action. In view of this, it decided to take no further action, although it expected Mr Evans to thoroughly familiarise himself with the NGRC rules and conduct his practice accordingly.

Mrs Alison Bruce, DC Chairman, said: "Public confidence requires that all veterinary surgeons who are licensed by the NGRC, or who are involved in regulated greyhound racing, should be entirely familiar with the rules of the NGRC, particularly in relation to the administration of drugs and other substances, and apply them."

## Mr John B Williams

### Inquiry concerning: false certification for horse export.

#### DC decision: remove name from Register.

On 13 November 2007, John Williams was found guilty of serious professional misconduct after admitting he had signed export health certificates for three horses, 'Russel', 'Namur 47' and 'Centos' stating they had received negative test results for the contagious equine metritis organism before these results were actually available. At the time, Mr Williams was working in his capacity as an Official Veterinarian (OV) for DEFRA.

The DC heard that Mr Williams signed the certificates around 9am on 17 October 2006 when attending his client's yard to confirm that the animals were free from signs of clinical disease prior to travelling. The certificates were then released to the client whose staff took them to the DEFRA office in Leicester for countersignature as required for export to the USA. The DEFRA Veterinary Officer (VO) told the DC that she was unable to sign the certificates as no laboratory results were attached. After enquiries to Mr Williams' practice, the results for Centos and Namur 47 were transmitted so that the certificates could be completed. It was discovered, however, that the swab for Russel had never reached the Veterinary Laboratories Agency and so no results were available (though, subsequently, a waiver was obtained from the US authorities to allow the horse to travel).

In claiming that his actions did not amount to serious professional misconduct, Mr Williams explained that he had signed the certificates

because he had knowledge of the horses' breeding histories; because his client was under a tight timescale; and, because he knew anyway that the certificates would have to be countersigned by a DEFRA VO before the horse could travel. He stated that no animal had suffered as a result of his actions.

***“We assessed his attitude to certification as being either irresponsible, or cavalier, or both.”***

The DC, however, took a different view, stating: “The validity of any certificate was essential to transactions which may relate not only to animal health, but also to the proper conduct of commerce. The whole process of exporting or importing animals is complex and detailed and every importing country is anxious to ensure that disease is not brought into that country... Each country has its own requirements which are issued from time to time and are subject to change. The importing country relies upon assurance from the country of origin that all particulars concerning the animal are true and that all of its requirements have been complied with. This assurance is vested in the signature of a veterinary surgeon.”

The DC pointed out that although in many cases a veterinary surgeon may be advising and helping a client, his duty in carrying out the investigation for, and the signing of, a certificate was to DEFRA and to anyone whom he knew might or would rely upon the validity of that certificate.

Chairman of the DC, Mrs Alison Bruce, said: “The RCVS has always given a high priority to the maintenance of accuracy and truthfulness of veterinary certificates. Mr Williams gambled on the likelihood that the results would be negative. This can never be the basis for proper certification.”

Prior to passing judgment, the DC was then shown evidence about previous irregularities in Mr Williams' export certification between 1989 and 2004, for which DEFRA had suspended him from his official duties on three separate occasions. The DC noted DEFRA's written advice to Mr Williams in 2004, which stated: “...the trading credibility of this country is largely founded on a trust in the certification provided and [any] deficiencies put our national reputation at risk. Deficiencies also put at risk the reputation of the veterinary profession at large.”

Taking into account this and previous warnings to Mr Williams to take the utmost care when issuing such certificates, Mrs Bruce concluded: “We have been invited to assess Mr Williams' character and, sadly, we assessed his attitude to certification as being either irresponsible, or cavalier, or both. In order to maintain public confidence in veterinary certification and to reinforce to the profession the importance of accurate certification...we have no alternative but to instruct the Registrar to remove Mr Williams' name from the Register.”

Mr Williams has lodged an Appeal against the DC's Findings and Judgement, which will be heard at the Privy Council at a later date.





## Mr Joseph L Holmes

### Resumed inquiry concerning: non-compliance with terms agreed by the DC.

### DC decision: further postponement (18 months), with conditions, on agreement of suitable training programme.

On 25 February 2008, Joseph Holmes MRCVS appeared before the DC at a resumed inquiry. In October 2006, Mr Holmes had been found guilty of serious professional misconduct for performing inappropriate and out-of-date veterinary treatment. Judgment was postponed for a period of two years on conditions that were put in writing and agreed by Mr Holmes. In September 2007, however, because it appeared that Mr Holmes was not complying with conditions to undergo annual Practice Standards Scheme inspections and to provide six-monthly progress reports, the hearing was resumed at the request of the DC Chairman.

At the hearing, Mr Holmes sought to pursue an appeal against the findings of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, emphasising that this was “a terrible burden” for him to bear and that his reputation in his local community was suffering as a result. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor that they had no jurisdiction to hear such an appeal.

The Committee then considered Mr Holmes’

non-compliance with the conditions of the original postponement, stating that deliberate non-compliance would be viewed seriously. However, it felt that this was an exceptional situation and accepted Mr Holmes had intended no disrespect to the Committee or its earlier findings in not complying; rather, it was a device deployed by Mr Holmes (albeit misguidedly) to try to secure an appeal.

After listening to Mr Holmes’ account of his compliance with the conditions, the Committee was concerned about the sufficiency of the steps he had taken. He could only provide limited information about the CPD he had undertaken via CPD Solutions, the Blue Cross Animal Hospital and the BSAVA Dispensing Course, and did not provide sufficient detail of the text books he had acquired. Nevertheless, the Committee was satisfied that these steps marked an adequate beginning to a programme of updating his current veterinary practice and learning, and that he had acquired some insight into the benefits of a suitably tailored programme.

In these circumstances the Committee considered that Mr Holmes should be subject to a further period of compliance extending to 18 months (rather than the two-year maximum allowed) and invited Mr Holmes to propose a further programme and undertakings for that period. The Committee advised Mr Holmes on particular aspects that he should consider in

this programme including a greater range and breadth to his CPD (not just the diagnosis and treatment of cancer) to address his lack of up-to-date knowledge over wide areas of veterinary medicine; the appointment of a mentor; continued participation in, and annual inspection under, the Practice Standards Scheme; and, provision of six-monthly progress reports.

***“This is a final postponement. Under the Rules there can be no further postponement.”***

The Committee then postponed the hearing pending Mr Holmes’ production of a suitable training programme and stated that the 18-month period would commence once this had been accepted in writing.

Mr Brian Jennings, chairing the DC, said: “We are anxious that Mr Holmes should understand that whether he remains on the Register is ultimately up to him and it is for him to come up with a programme that will satisfy the Committee that he is an up-to-date and knowledgeable practitioner.

“This is a final postponement. Under the Rules there can be no further postponement in the event of non-compliance and, if this case were to be returned before the Committee in those circumstances, it would then be obliged to impose some other substantive sanction.”

## Mr William W Sim

### Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register.

### DC decision: application refused.

On 10 December 2007, the RCVS DC turned down William Sim’s application to be restored to the Register.

The DC heard that in July 2005, Mr Sim admitted that a drink-driving conviction (for which he was sentenced to four months’ imprisonment and disqualified from driving) rendered him unfit to practise veterinary surgery. He also admitted being guilty of serious professional misconduct having been under the influence of alcohol at work on a number of occasions. Judgment at this time was adjourned until January 2006, on the basis that Mr Sim agreed to participate in a treatment programme, and gave an undertaking not to practise as a veterinary surgeon during the adjournment period.

In January 2006, Mr Sim was found guilty of a new charge of disgraceful conduct concerning the truthfulness of information he had provided to the College. The DC then postponed judgment for two years on condition that Mr Sim

did not consume alcohol; provided blood samples as requested as evidence of abstinence; and, continued therapy under medical supervision. He was also required to produce evidence of his continuing professional development.

The hearing, however, was resumed in November 2006 prior to the expiry of the two-year period. The DC heard that Mr Sim had consumed alcohol on at least three occasions since the previous hearing and was concerned that he appeared unable to abstain from alcohol at all times. His name was therefore removed from the Register.

***“We must uphold our duty to ensure the safety and welfare of animals and clients, and to maintain the reputation of the veterinary profession.”***

In his application for restoration, Mr Sim provided the results of eight blood tests, all but one of which showed acceptable levels of biochemistry and haematology values. However, the DC was also provided with evidence (admitted by Mr Sim) of a significant lapse into drinking for the four-week period prior to

13 November 2007. He then submitted a copy of his application for restoration of his driving licence, but when questioned by the DC, admitted that his answers to alcohol-related questions were incorrect, despite his having signed the form.

The DC was concerned that Mr Sim had succumbed to alcohol almost immediately after making this application for reinstatement, and about his apparent lack of honesty when signing the driving licence restoration form. Despite his assurances that he would never drink again, it concluded that there was no sufficient and reliable evidence from which this could reasonably be inferred.

In refusing Mr Sim’s application, Dr Nigel Swayne, chairing the DC, said: “We must uphold our duty to ensure the safety and welfare of animals and clients, and to maintain the reputation of the veterinary profession. We have every sympathy with Mr Sim’s difficulties, but advise him to seek professional help in establishing a structured recovery plan.”

**Full details of disciplinary hearings are available at [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)**

# To join or not to join...

## Survey sheds lights on reasons for non-membership of PSS

**About one in two practice premises are accredited under the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), but membership has slowed down in the last 12 months.**

In preparation for a review of the standards of the Scheme set for 2010, the College recently undertook a survey of non-accredited practices, with the aim of understanding why more practices weren't joining up.

The survey, which was carried out by Cognition Marketing, was issued in late 2007 to all non-Scheme practices, with the exception of PDSA practices (the reasons for their non-membership already being known to the College). A respectable response rate of 38% was achieved.

We were heartened to find that nearly one in five practices responding (just over 100) expressed an intention to seek accreditation within six months, for example, when building works had been completed, the majority within the General Practice: Small Animal category.

Meanwhile, about a quarter of respondents felt that the Scheme would have little or no benefit to them. However, many of these still agreed with a range of benefits statements about the Scheme, such as the fact that it offers a process to help maintain and develop practice standards; it encourages practices to adopt best practice; it helps practices to keep up to date; and, it offers a way of promoting the practice and its strengths.

Others felt that accreditation would entail too much work. Although each practice's circumstances will be different, it is likely that

the anticipated work-load would be greater than the reality in the majority of cases, particularly for those seeking to join at entry-level (Core Standards).

Just under 10% of respondents felt there was no category to suit their practice type, this is likely to relate to pig and poultry practices who are not covered beyond tier one of the Scheme. Practice categories are likely to be included in the forthcoming review. Several respondents felt that the Scheme did not do enough to measure clinical standards: this is another area being addressed by the Practice Standards Group (PSG).

***"We now have a much clearer picture of why some practices choose not to join the Scheme."***

Ten percent of those not intending to join the Scheme felt that it was irrelevant to them: these were largely single-vet, non-clinical or ambulatory practices. Eleven percent of the same group felt that public awareness of the Scheme remained too low to warrant joining. With advertisements in cat, dog, horse and general pet press this quarter, and promotional plans to be reviewed at the March meeting of the PSG, awareness should continue to rise, but with a large and disparate audience of animal owners, this will take time.

Many practices gave more specific reasons for not joining up. Some of these related to a general dissatisfaction with regulation as a whole, or personal criticisms of the RCVS.

"Over complicated", "bureaucratic" and "expensive" were some of the criticisms levelled at the Scheme.

Other practices described factors outside their control, such as operating out of rented premises that could not be modified to meet the requirements of the Scheme. Nonetheless, many gave their backing for the Scheme in principle.

"This has been a useful exercise," commented PSG Chairman Jill Nute. "We now have a much clearer picture of why some practices choose not to join the Scheme. Changing the Standards purely to attract new members would not be fair on existing members, but the planned review will offer us the opportunity to address some of the issues raised by the research. The results will also help to focus our communications activities."

### Who responded?

- 38% of non-member practices responded
- 87% of respondents were partners, directors or principals
- 54% represented small animal practices and the majority of the remainder were from mixed animal practices
- 30% were VN Training Practices, 57% were unregulated
- 18% plan to join the Scheme by summer 2008

# TP standards under scrutiny

## PSS inspections for TPs show some non-compliance

**Inspections are now in progress for Veterinary Nursing Training Practices (TPs) that joined the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) at tier 2 (General Practice) as part of the self-certification phase.**

Although TPs and RCVS-accredited General Practices share many common criteria, the PSS does seek assurances on some issues not regularly inspected as part of the TP evaluation system.

While many TPs are passing their PSS inspections with flying colours, a small but significant number are falling down in important areas such as health and safety, including radiation protection and evidence

of maintenance for key equipment (such as anaesthetic machines and autoclaves).

"The majority of non-compliances relate to basic legal requirements for health and safety and are easily remedied," stresses Head of Veterinary Nursing, Libby Earle. "TPs are responsible for the health and welfare of their students – and of course their other staff – and should take these matters seriously. The PSS provides a useful framework for practices to check they meet legal requirements."

If TPs are concerned about any changes that have taken place since they self-certified, or areas of potential non-compliance, they should call the College for advice on **020 7202 0767**.



# Facing a big test in the Big Easy

“There are no veterinary nurses in America... they call us veterinary technicians instead.”

**S**o reported registered VN Sarah Collins after travelling to New Orleans last September – courtesy of an RCVS Trust Small Grant – in the hope of qualifying to the Academy of Veterinary Critical Care Technicians (AVECCT).

“The AVECCT is a US-based organisation whose members have undergone a rigorous accreditation process, followed by a certifying examination, leading to the veterinary technician specialist qualification in emergency and critical care,” explained Sarah. “Although the VTS(ECC) qualification is mainly aimed at US-style veterinary technicians, the UK veterinary nursing certificate is accepted as an equivalent entrance-level qualification.”

*“The £1,000 funding I received from the RCVS Trust enabled me to travel to the States.”*

Before even thinking about the exam, however, Sarah needed to pass the first stage of the accreditation process – something that occupied much of the preceding 12 months. “I had to keep a case log of at least 50 emergency and critical care cases I’d seen in one year, and write up four of these as case reports,” she said. “I then had to submit these to the Accreditation Committee, along with supporting evidence of experience, including my employment history, CPD attendance and letters of recommendation from two veterinary diplomats.”

Working in the Intensive Care Unit at the University of Bristol’s Department of Clinical



Veterinary Science helped Sarah to meet these stringent criteria, and her application to sit the certifying examination was successful. But she still needed to get to the International Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Symposium (IVECCS) in the USA, held annually each September, where the exams were to be held. “The £1,000 funding I received from the RCVS Trust enabled me to travel to the States, not only to take the examination, but also to attend the conference,” said Sarah.

Two hundred multi-choice questions on subjects such as triage, anaesthesia, blood gas analysis and pharmacology might not be everyone’s idea of how best to spend three hours in the

Big Easy, but Sarah was accompanied in her travels by 29 other candidates – mainly from Canada, but also from the USA. “I was the only British veterinary nurse,” she said proudly.

The exam over, Sarah was then able to benefit from the “top-class” CPD available throughout the four-day conference. “The scientific programme covered a wide range of subjects relating to emergency and critical care, with two of the nine streams available just for VNs.” Comparing the programme level to that of the BSAVA Congress, but concentrated just on emergency and critical care, Sarah added that many of the speakers were internationally recognised. “I made the most of my chance to visit this conference by attending many lectures on subjects ranging from blood gas analysis to fluid therapy, monitoring oxygenation, cardiac drugs and ECGs, amongst others,” she said.

Receiving her results in December, Sarah was delighted to have passed the exam and become only the third British member of the AVECCT – she is now Sarah Collins DipAVN(Medical) VTS(ECC) RVN to her friends. As a new member of the Academy, she has been encouraged to take an active role. “I have been asked to write questions for future exams and articles for their newsletter. I also have to provide evidence of at least 60 hours CPD in my first five years’ membership in order to be able to apply for re-certification for a further five years,” she explained, adding, “I feel this will tie in well with the new regulations for registered veterinary nurses.”



## Critical support for black rhinos

**A**s well as providing grants for individuals, the RCVS Trust is also keen to support other organisations with complementary interests and objectives. This it did last year with the **Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust (SBRT)** – a small registered charity that strives to support the **Midlands Black Rhino Conservancy** in Zimbabwe in its efforts to protect the area’s last few remaining members of this critically endangered species.

Between 2004 and 2006, poachers killed almost 60% of the 47-strong rhino population, prompting the Conservancy to take the drastic measure of catching and dehorning the remaining animals. Despite these efforts, two more were killed later that year.

Since then, the SBRT has appointed a second conservator to help the existing team with their anti-poaching and monitoring activities. Whilst no rhinos were shot during 2007, and three calves were born, poachers have since increased their use of wire snares. Last November alone, 295 snares were recovered and one male rhino was found dead, its leg trapped in a cable wire.

SBRT Chairman John Gripper MRCVS said the Trust’s funds have been used to buy accommodation and a 4WD vehicle for the new conservator, to improve the radio system and to provide wages for additional guards and rhino monitors. “This support

has played a significant role in improving the protection of these rhinos, which is undertaken despite Zimbabwe’s economic and political difficulties,” he added.



# 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 2010 for disciplinary review

Council agreed to review processes when recent changes have bedded in.

## 2 Trees fells competition

Sandy Trees elected JV-P.

## VSA on hold

No new VSA for three years says DEFRA.

## Big money

Trust grants worth a cool £1 million.

## 3 Premises plans

VMD due to consult on revised regulations for premises registration.

## Help at hand

Sources of support for VNs.

## Who should stay? You decide

RCVS Council and VN Council elections are open. Vote now by post, phone or online.

## 4 Irish SVNs unlucky?

How SVNs enrolled in Ireland can complete their training.

## Moving experience

You must tell us within a month if you change address or you might end up removed as well as moved.

## Fake vet arrested

Vet who registered with faked degree certificate arrested.

## Fair trade

Prescription charge ban ends October, where next?

## 5 Fame at last

Online TV to show DC in situ and talk about complaints process.

## A trumpet sounds...

RCVS News won first prize at MemCom awards.

## 6 Wait all year for a party...

... then three come along at once. Working Parties on 24/7, expert witnesses and communication.

## From the horse's mouth

Conditions to meet if you're working with Equine Dental Technicians.

## 7 Take note

New advice notes on the reporting of criminal offences, product endorsement, and OOH domiciliary visits.

## You what?

Online glossary of terms for VN Guide.

## Tails from Wales

Update on tail docking from CVO for Wales: good start, but more to be done.

## 8 PDP progress

80% sign-up rate and not too late to join.

## I'll be back

Positive response to Return to Veterinary Nursing Practice Course consultation.

## Best foot forward

Veterinary science – for all walks of life: new careers materials ready soon.

## 9 Research in practice

New Clinical Veterinary Research module from Cambridge for CertAVP.

## What's on the cards

CPD Cards out now for vets and soon for VNs. CPD: you probably do it, don't forget to write it down.

## 10 EMS in focus

We talk to those involved for an update on the system.

## 12 Meet the team

Libby Earle – she's been a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence instructor. Be afraid...

## It's a small world...

...but the diseases that affect man and animals are growing. 'One world, one disease' will explore the impact of climate change on disease patterns.

## 13 Be at BSAVA

Join us on the stand; hear VN Survey results and learn about the CertAVP.

## It's RCVS Day

It may be Independence Day but we're dependent on you coming to RCVS Day on 4 July. AGM, Awards, Steve Leonard... how could you say no?

## 14 Say it, say it again...

PI Committee stresses the importance of good communications; new complaints procedures and DC guidance.

## 15 DC cases

Mr Sim's application for restoration refused – DC not convinced he has drinking under control; Miss Kay's application for restoration refused on same grounds plus evidence of practising veterinary surgery while removed from the Register; Mr Williams struck off for false certification; Mr Evans found guilty of professional misconduct for administering drug banned under NGRC rules, no penalty imposed; Mr Holmes' inquiry resumed due to non-compliance with DC terms, judgement postponed for further 18 months with conditions.

## 18 Raising standards

TPs on the Practice Standards Scheme come under scrutiny as first inspections take place; results of survey of non-PSS practices - nearly 20% of respondents plan to join in six months.

## 19 Technical support

Trust supports VN in qualifying to the Academy of Veterinary Critical Care Technicians; plus funding for rhino charity in Zimbabwe.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 3-6 April

Join us at BSAVA Congress

### 28 April

VN Council election closes

### 2 May

RCVS Council election closes

### 8 May

Gateways careers launch

### 22 May

Question Time, Ilminster

### 5 June

Council meeting

### 24 June

'One planet, one disease' seminar, RSM

### 4 July

RCVS Day; Fellows' Dinner

### 8 July

Diploma written exams

### 22 or 23 July

Certificate written exams

### 22 August

Deadline for Recognised Specialist re-applications

### 12 September

Deadline for new Recognised Specialist applications



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