On 20 February, RCVS President Jill Nutewas interviewed by ITV’s flagship current affairs programme ‘Tonight’, and faced a series of questions about the regulation of the veterinary profession, the Practice Standards Scheme, veterinary fees and certain Disciplinary Committee inquiries.

As RCVS News went to press, the programme, entitled ‘Pets undercover’, was due to be broadcast at 8pm on 16 March 2009, having been moved from its original slot a week earlier. Inevitably, Jill’s hour-long interview will be cut down to just a couple of minutes of actual airtime, making it difficult to predict the direction ITV will choose to follow. However, we are pleased to have received the broadcaster’s reassurance that the footage used will not be misleading or factually incorrect.

High vet bills were a main theme of presenter Jonathan Maitland’s questions. However, although he asked Jill to comment on the results of the Tonight team’s mystery shopping visits and animal owner survey, it was unfortunate that no details of these studies had been made available beforehand, or since. Nevertheless, Jill agreed that most animal owners were right to be concerned over whether there was sufficient regulation of veterinary fees, but maintained that this was largely down to the control of market forces, not the RCVS. She emphasised that the College could step in where high fees might constitute serious professional misconduct, but cautioned that the Office of Fair Trading would take a very dim view of a professional regulator attempting to introduce price-fixing. This was not in the public’s interest.

Mr Maitland then questioned the validity of the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) considering it was voluntary and included “only” over 50% of the UK’s practice premises. Jill pointed out it was still in its early years, having only been launched to the public in 2006, but that new applications were coming in all the time: some 42 since the beginning of the year. Whilst the College had no power to make it mandatory, it was the closest thing available to a veterinary practice quality assurance scheme. Holding aloft a PSS plaque for the camera, Jill encouraged all animal owners to ‘look for the logo’ when choosing a veterinary practice.

Using the much publicised disciplinary inquiry into Mr Ranes Sanyal as an example, Mr Maitland then accused the College of not doing enough to protect the public against problem vets. Jill asserted that, generally speaking, the College was doing a “fair job” in the circumstances, but that it could always do better, even though the numbers of complaints against vets was comparatively very low. She drew Mr Maitland’s attention to the severity of the College’s original sanction against Mr Sanyal, including the acute stigma and severe financial penalty of being struck off, but reassured him that the Disciplinary Committee would not reinstate a vet to the Register who they honestly did not consider to be fit to practise.

“I would suggest that Mr Sanyal’s application to join the PSS (which occurred after the complaints had been received) showed that he

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Peter Jinman elected JVP

New Junior Vice-President looking to the future

Peter Jinman was elected Junior Vice-President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons at the March meeting of RCVS Council. He is due to take up office on RCVS Day in July.

A graduate from the Royal Veterinary College, Peter set out in practice in Broadway in Worcestershire, and is currently Senior Partner in a four-vet mixed practice in Herefordshire.

Peter has an active veterinary political life and was awarded the OBE in 2004 for services to the profession. He was President of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) in 2002-3 and currently holds the roles of Chairman of the TB Advisory Group and Vice-Chairman of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee. He is a member of both the England Implementation Group for the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy (EIG) and the Vets and Vet Services Working Group.

Elected to RCVS Council in 2005, Peter has been a member of the Disciplinary, Advisory and Public Affairs Committees, and has chaired the Certification Subcommittee and Communication and Consent Working Party. In addition to his RCVS duties, he is currently Chairman of the BVA Ethics and Welfare Group.

“The College has a key part to play in ensuring that the profession is fit for purpose and able to meet tomorrow’s challenges.”

“I am honoured that Council was prepared to elect me to the position of Junior Vice-President, even though I am up for re-election to RCVS Council this time. I hope their faith in my re-election is repaid,” said Peter, who is keen to bring his varied experience to bear on his role in the RCVS Officer team. “My work with the BVA, EIG and the Vets and Vet Services Working Group in particular has brought me into contact with practitioners up and down the country,” he says. “So I am aware that there are issues to be tackled regarding the role of the profession in the delivery of UK-wide animal health and welfare.

“Grill the candidates, cast your vote

It’s that time of year again…birds are nesting, trees are budding, spring flowers are waking, you’re forgetting to vote in your Council elections…

Or perhaps not. Whilst the importance of voting in the RCVS Council and VN Council elections remains undiminished, voter turnout has continued to fade to just 17% and 9% last year, respectively. To try to generate a little more interest in the process in general, and the candidates in particular, we have introduced one or two new ideas this year.

Firstly, for both elections, there’s a special edition of RCVS News Extra to get stuck into, containing candidate biographies and their manifesto statements, together with the all-important contact details so you can put any questions to them directly. Veterinary surgeons and nurses should look out for their little Extra and ballot paper which will have arrived with this edition of RCVS News.

Secondly, we have teamed up with the online vet and VN community websites www.vetsurgeon.org and www.vetnurse.co.uk in order to facilitate direct discussions between you and the candidates. Go online to read more about them, pose your own questions, and see what others have to say.

Remember, you can vote by post, over the phone, or online, right up to the deadline of 5pm, Friday 1 May 2009. Voting instructions can be found on the back of your ballot paper or at www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil09 and www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil09.

So, next time you see a host of golden daffodils, remind yourself to have a read through the manifestos, ask yourself: “Are their Words-worth the paper they’re written on?” question them to find out, and then use your vote.

Wishes granted

Good response to Trust grants round

The RCVS Trust has received around 170 grant applications this year asking for a total of £885,067 from a range of research and animal welfare programmes. Grants will be awarded in the following categories:

• Blue Sky Research, for veterinarians to explore and test innovative ideas which may be risky and therefore unlikely to attract funding from traditional sources;

• Spencer-Hill Equipment Grants, to provide funds for clinical equipment specifically for the treatment and care of animals within the context of teaching veterinary undergraduates in UK veterinary schools or other educational/charitable institutions;

• Small Grants Fund, for projects that meet well-defined objectives in veterinary science and medicine, animal care and welfare, veterinary education and/or professional development;

• Travel Scholarships, to enable veterinary surgeons to attend international veterinary conferences or pursue themes of clinical or non-clinical research involving short-term visits to veterinary or medical centres or research institutes abroad;

• EMS Vacation Research Scholarships, to enable undergraduates to undertake a research project during a vacation.

We will accept new applications for EMS Vacation Research Scholarships received before the deadline of 5pm on Tuesday 31 March (see www.rcvstrust.org.uk). All other grant application deadlines for this year have now passed and we are considering the applications we have received. We will contact grant applicants at the end of March to let them know our decisions. Applications to be considered for the 2010 grants round will be accepted from the end of September this year.
Liz Branscombe has been confirmed as the next Chairman of the Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC), the body that oversees veterinary nurse regulation and, via the RCVS Awarding Body, VN training and qualifications.

First elected to VNC in 2006, Liz has been Vice-Chairman for the last year and will take over from Andrea Jeffery on RCVS Day in July. She will lead a Council that comprises eight elected veterinary nurses, three members of RCVS Council, three veterinary surgeons, two lay members and a Lantra representative.

Liz qualified in 1986 and has worked in small and mixed animal practice, specialist referral practice and as a senior surgical nurse at the Royal Veterinary College.

She has worked at Davies Veterinary Specialists in Hertfordshire since its inception in 1998.

There are currently 54 full- or part-time Registered Veterinary Nurses employed at the practice, where Liz is Nurse Training Coordinator, providing both training and support for the nurses. She is also responsible for organising and directing the continuing professional development programmes for all members of the nursing team.

“I am feeling slightly apprehensive about succeeding Andrea as Chairman as she has been so conscientious and committed to her role, but I am looking forward to having the opportunity to continue taking our profession forward,” says Liz.

“We have seen a steady increase in the number of Registered Veterinary Nurses since the launch of the non-statutory Register in 2007: approximately 70% of our profession are now registered. Next year, the Register becomes fully operational and one of our challenges will be to continue to inform and reassure VNs who may still be uncertain about its impact,” she says.

Liz welcomes any questions about the role of VNC and how it functions – she can be contacted via our Veterinary Nursing Department on vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0788.

**Encore!**

RCVS publications win another award

It’s the season for fancy frocks, red carpet poses and tear-jerking speeches. OK, so the MemCom Awards, the membership organisation community’s annual gongs, are not quite in a league with the Oscars. But we were excited enough to win what the judges described as a ‘highly competitive’ class this year with our Annual Report.

The category was one of nine, which drew entries from a broad range of membership organisations. RCVS News took the newsletter award last year.

As we hope you noticed, with the help of our design consultants Ocean Insider, we radically revamped our Annual Report last year, splitting it into two. In RCVS Review (www.rcvs.org.uk/review), those involved with, and affected by, our activities told their side of the story.

Meanwhile, statistics previously embedded in the lengthy narrative were given greater prominence in RCVS Facts (www.rcvs.org.uk/facts), designed to complement RCVS Review in two-colour for cost-effectiveness. We printed a short run, making it largely available online, thus reducing our carbon footprint. Online publications are likely to be the way forward in the coming years, as we are constantly asked by members to reduce our environmental impact.

The judges felt the publications were easy to read, and praised the cross-referencing to further material on the web: “A great improvement on the previous year, certainly achieving the key goals of readability and being environmentally-friendly. Someone who knows nothing about the RCVS can get an instant understanding of the goals of the organisation,” said the citation.

We will be working on the 2009 Review and Facts soon – look out for them in your June mailing, plus your chance to tell us what you think of the format.

**Police charge Russell Oakes**

Merseyside Police have charged Russell Lewis Oakes with 84 offences relating to fraud by false representation as a medical doctor, fraud by false representation as a veterinary surgeon, deception, sexual assault, cruelty to animals, perverting the course of justice and attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Mr Oakes, aged 42, of Shore Road, Hesketh Bank, Preston, has been bailed to appear at North Sefton Magistrates Court on 20 March 2009. A condition of his bail is that he does not practise as a veterinary surgeon.

The Disciplinary Committee of the RCVS considered an allegation of ‘fraudulent registration’ against Mr Oakes on 18 April 2008 but decided it was in the public interest to adjourn the proceedings, in the light of the ongoing police investigation (as reported in RCVS News, June 2008).

The alleged offences relate to a period between October 2006 and March 2008.
VetMed: an informed resource

New service from the Library

The information you need at your fingertips. No, it’s actually not an advertising slogan but the idea behind the VetMed Resource produced by CABI Publishing, now available free to RCVS Trust Library members.

VetMed is an internet resource specifically designed to meet the needs of working veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and academics for professionally-relevant information and convenience. It includes a veterinary science database with over a million articles extracts drawn from more than thirty years of research, many of which link directly to the full article. There is also a collection of peer-reviewed articles that cover current aspects of veterinary medicine – these are in PDF format so you can print them for later reflection.

Busy vets and VN’s can draw on ‘In Brief and In Depth’, a collection of articles and common literature searches on popular topics without wasting precious time on Google, or navigating the vagaries of other libraries’ locations and opening hours.

For large animal practitioners, the Animal Health and Production Compendium is a comprehensive source of information on the health and production of pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and other ruminants, and includes a drug database. There is also a handy calendar of upcoming veterinary conferences and events.

You can subscribe directly to VetMed through its website, however, if you join the Library, we are able to include access to VetMed in your membership – which works out cheaper for you. For example, for a two- or three-vet practice, an annual Library membership, including VetMed, is £140. It’s even better for veterinary nurses – they can join the Library, including VetMed access, for free.

So, whether you are studying for CPD purposes, slaving over a PhD, or simply need to know more about the species you deal with on a daily basis, this online resource is worth a look (www.cababstractsplus.org/veterinarymedicine).

Pet campaign

National Pet Month supports RCVS Trust

This year, the RCVS Trust will be one of several animal-related charities to benefit from National Pet Month. The month-long campaign is aimed at veterinary practices, as well as pet-lovers and those who work with animals. It aims to raise money for animal-related charities and promote responsible pet ownership by asking people to put on local events.

“It’s fantastic to be one of the charities that will benefit from this year’s National Pet Month,” says Cherry Bushell, Director of the RCVS Trust. “We hope that lots of practices will put on fundraising events.”

“It’s fantastic to be one of the charities that will benefit from this year’s National Pet Month.”

Events can be designed around any of the responsible pet-ownership themes of National Pet Month, which leaves plenty of scope for practice teams to have some fun and raise money for good causes.

National Pet Month runs from 4 April to 4 May. If you’re interested, why not find out more via www.nationalpetmonth.org.uk where you will find details about how to sign up, free event packs, posters and advice. You can also use the website to help promote your practice’s fundraiser by uploading photos and details of your event.

Funds raised for the Trust can be safely donated through: www.justgiving.com/rcvstrust.

Veterinary legislation - new strategy

Update on progress from the Veterinary Legislation Group

In June last year, RCVS News reported that RCVS Council had commissioned fresh advice on how to make progress toward updating the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had announced that it did not intend to devote resources to this in the immediate future. Council therefore decided to set up a Veterinary Legislation Group to take a fresh look at the changes that are most pressing and how they might be achieved without Government legislation.

The Group, chaired by Professor Stuart Reid (pictured), Dean of the Glasgow Veterinary School, includes members of RCVS Council, a member of the Veterinary Nurses Council and three outside members to give a wider perspective. Nicky Paull, the President of the British Veterinary Association, has attended meetings as an observer.

In 2005, Council adopted far-reaching proposals to put the regulation of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses on to a new footing. The Veterinary Legislation Group has hended in on the changes that are most urgently needed. The number one candidate for attention is the constitution of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee, which, under the present Act, has to be composed entirely of Council members.

The 2005 package envisaged transferring its functions to an independent Conduct and Competence Committee with a new jurisdiction and more flexible powers.

“There number one candidate for attention is the constitution of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee.”

There are limits to what can be done without the Government taking new legislation through Parliament. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons suggested last year that a Private Member’s Bill, introduced by an MP who is not a member of the Government, might be used to change the disciplinary arrangements. Another possibility for some of the changes under discussion is an order under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006. Such an order would have to be made by a Minister, but it would be much less time-consuming than introducing a Government bill. The College has discussed with the Department what could in principle be done through a regulatory reform order, and a new constitution for the Disciplinary Committee looks like a good candidate.

The issues are complex and we need to get this right. A draft report from the Veterinary Legislation Group has been discussed in RCVS Committees and a final report is expected to go to Council for its meeting on 4 June.
Actively seeking fundraisers

Runners and jumpers: the Trust needs you!

We are looking for 12 people to take part in the British 10K London Fun Run on 12 July and raise money for the RCVS Trust. Setting off from Hyde Park Corner, it’s a chance to take part in one of London’s major sporting events, and get a taste of what awaits the 2012 Olympic athletes - as much of the course you will run will be the same as the route for the London Olympic Marathon.

Places are limited – and we’ve already had some applications – so if you think you can raise the minimum of £300 and want to help out, please contact Bonnie Fernley at b.fernley@rcvstrust.org.uk or on 020 7202 0743 for more details.

If you’re more head-in-the-clouds than feet-on-the-ground, why not raise your sights and take part in our sky-diving fundraiser? This year we’ve teamed up with Skyline Parachuting to ask our more adventurous supporters to jump out of a plane – all in the aid of a good cause.

No experience is required - would-be parachutists simply need to be between 18 and 55 years old, meet medical restrictions and weigh less than 15 stones. There are 20 British Parachute Association-approved centres around the UK from where you can make your jump; and if you raise more than £400, Skyline Parachuting will let you jump for free.

So if you’ve always fancied falling through the air with the greatest of ease, then please get in touch with Bonnie Fernley, details as above.

Ladies and gentlemen, your parachutes await.

Under EAEVE’s guidance

List of evaluated EU veterinary schools published

We are often asked whether we can prevent the UK registration of EU veterinary graduates if we feel their degrees would not meet our usual visitation criteria. The short answer is no, we cannot.

We only have control over which UK and non-EU qualifications we accept, and have to recognise all the European qualifications that are officially listed in an EU directive that has been directly transposed into UK law.

The College did lobby Brussels to point out that some of these qualifications have been found to be deficient but the legislation affects all professions and the veterinary voice is but a small one.

However, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) provides some help for employers. It carries out a programme of non-statutory evaluation and approval of European veterinary schools, using the same criteria that we use for UK university visitations.

Employers can visit www.rcvs.org.uk/eaeve to see which vet schools have been approved, which may help to inform choices about which candidates to employ. EAEVE plans to visit another 13 schools this year.

Tonight’s the night (continued from front cover)

recognised that some of his practices fell well below the standards of what was expected and he needed to do something to put his house in order,” she said.

“The programme was not designed to make the veterinary profession look good,” commented Jill after the recording, “and some tough questions were asked. But all professions come under the microscope from time to time and the current economic climate has no doubt exacerbated that.”

Share a date with your diary

The 2009 Share Jones lecture will take place at 6pm on 24 November at Nottingham University’s School of Veterinary Medicine and Science.

Dr Sue Dyson, Head of Clinical Orthopaedics at the Centre for Equine Studies at the Animal Health Trust, will deliver a lecture entitled: ‘Looking and seeing: the art of lameness diagnosis’.

Entrance will be by free ticket – see the June issue for details.

Increase in student VNs

Good news for those who have trouble filling veterinary nurse vacancies in practice: enrolment figures for student VNs are on the increase. Enrolments rose by nearly nine percent last year, to 1,131, compared with 1,039 in 2007. Over the next two to three years this should result in an increase in RVNs in the workforce.

There has also been a slight increase in signed-up Training Practices, from 1,536 in 2007 to 1,547 in 2008.

New investigators

The Preliminary Investigation Committee has appointed four veterinary surgeons to assist with its investigation of complaints and ensure the independence of such investigations.

Info swap in Europe

We are helping to pilot a new online system that facilitates communications between European regulatory bodies.

The Internal Marketing Information system (IMI) is an information exchange network developed by the European Commission to support day-to-day administrative cooperation between competent authorities. It identifies contact points within member states, provides a list of FAQ and offers a full translation facility.

Pilot projects under the Professional Qualifications Directive for accountants, doctors, pharmacists and physiotherapists have proved promising, and we are to participate in a pilot phase under the Services Directive.
Over 70% of eligible veterinary nurses have now joined the Register. To get on, they have to have a registerable qualification; to stay on, they have to be accountable for their professional conduct and maintain their skills and knowledge; but what about coming off the Register?

The Veterinary Nurses Council agreed to a period of nearly three years between the opening of the Register and the College putting in place a disciplinary mechanism that might result in the removal of a VN from the Register. This was to give RVNs time to get used to their new rights and responsibilities. Plans are now in place to introduce a disciplinary system from September 2010.

“Disciplinary cases are usually heard by a panel of at least three and up to five, drawn from the wider Committee.”

From this point, charges could be brought against veterinary nurses on exactly the same basis as for vets, that is, if found guilty of fraudulent registration, criminal convictions which render him or her unfit to practise as a veterinary nurse, or allegations of disgraceful professional conduct.

The sanctions would be the same as currently exist for veterinary surgeons, ie to remove a nurse’s name from the Register (with the nurse eligible to apply for restoration after 10 months), or to suspend the nurse, with his or her name returning to the Register immediately after the period of suspension. A veterinary nurse would not be able to carry out Schedule 3 tasks while removed from the Register. Neither would they be able to join the unregulated List, which closed to new applications on 1 September 2007.

Complaints

Complaints would initially be dealt with by the Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee (VN PIC), which would assess whether the complaints should be taken to the hearing stage. At its February meeting, VN Council agreed that three RVNs will sit on this Committee. They will be joined by three members of the veterinary PIC, including either the RCVS President, or one of the Vice-Presidents, and one Lay Observer. The three RVNs to sit on VN PIC will receive training and be given an opportunity to observe the process.

Meanwhile three RVNs will join existing members of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee (DC) to form a VN DC, to adjudicate on charges against a veterinary nurse. These individuals will not currently sit on VN Council. Disciplinary cases are usually heard by a panel of at least three and up to five people, drawn from the wider Committee. If the case is against a VN, the sitting panel would include at least one veterinary nurse, one veterinary surgeon and a lay person acting as Chairman. A legal assessor would also sit with the Committee to offer advice.

If a case concerns both a veterinary surgeon and a veterinary nurse, the preliminary investigation would be carried out in tandem but with separate disciplinary hearings. No one who has been a member of the PIC (essentially the prosecution) is allowed to sit on the DC for a period of at least three years, to ensure fair hearing of a case.

Advice

One of the functions of the RCVS Professional Conduct Department is to offer advice and guidance to VNs, veterinary surgeons and members of the public. Last year alone it took over a thousand calls from individuals seeking advice. If you are concerned about any aspect of professional conduct or ethics, please contact the team at: profcon@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0789.

Applications are invited for RVNs to sit on the new VN Preliminary Investigation or Disciplinary Committees. Any one who would like further information should contact Lesley Evans, Manager, Executive Office (l.evans@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7222 2001) by 31 May 2009.
Forms of assistance

Revised guidance on communication and consent

At its March meeting, Council approved a revised annex to the Guide to Professional Conduct entitled ‘Communication and consent’. This annex, together with revised specimen forms of consent for ‘Anaesthesia, clinical and surgical procedures’ and ‘Request for euthanasia’ will replace the existing annex on RCVSonline.

A Working Party was set up to consider recommendations arising out of a report by the Lay Observers who sit with the Preliminary Investigation Committee that additional guidance to veterinary surgeons might reduce the number of complaints involving communication issues.

In their report to Council in 2007, the Lay Observers stated:

“Poor communication continues to be a major area of concern as is informed consent for procedures undertaken as well as the failure to provide estimates before treatment begins and when costs escalate. It would be beneficial to all parties if more focus were given to these critical areas by practices, as it would significantly decrease the dissatisfaction being expressed by members of the public.”

While the intention is for the guidance to address the concerns expressed by the Lay Observers, we believe that, by and large, most practices do a satisfactory job, as the number of complaints is low in comparison to the number of consultations that take place in veterinary practice every day.

“Poor communication continues to be a major area of concern as is informed consent for procedures undertaken.”

The annex expands on the guidance contained at Part 1D of the Guide that ‘good communication skills in professional and support staff are essential to good veterinary practice’ and covers:

- the contractual relationship in the provision of veterinary services
- the provision of copies to be provided to those signing the consent forms
- the importance of knowing who the client is
- ensuring as far as possible the client understands what has been said
- the issues surrounding capacity to consent
- the importance of effectively communicating to clients throughout a case on continuing treatment options, as well as any escalation of fees

The specimen forms included in the annex may be downloaded from RCVSonline www.rcvs.org.uk/guide. Explanatory notes accompany the forms.

A new breed of advice

Revised advice notes on breeding techniques

In January this year, the Advisory Committee revised both Advice Note 1 – Artificial Insemination of Mares and Advice Note 10 – Artificial Breeding Techniques Including Embryo Collection and Transfer in order to reflect the recent legislative changes within these areas.

Both Advice Notes received Council approval at the recent March meeting and will be available to download from RCVSonline at www.rcvs.org.uk/advice notes.

Advice Note 1 has been re-titled ‘Artificial Insemination in Mares and Cows’ as the new legislation represents a consolidation of previously separate regulations on equine and bovine artificial insemination.

The legislative provisions set out in Advice Note 10 (which deal primarily with bovine embryo transfer) have not changed, however, an additional Advice Note aimed specifically at equine embryo transfer is being prepared in light of the rapid growth within the industry.

Guide update - have you had yours?

Veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses should by now have received the annual updates to their respective Guides to Professional Conduct, which were posted in February. The updates take account of all changes approved by Council during 2008, which have been previously announced in RCVS News and incorporated into the online Guide. If you have not received your copy, please contact the Professional Conduct Department (profcon@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0789).
Practice Premises Registration –
deadline approaching

Registration due by April 1 2009

The current Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMRs), which came into force on 1 October 2008, include a requirement that all veterinary practice premises from which medicines are supplied, or at which they are stored, are registered with the RCVS (see RCVS News – November 2008).

The Regulations make each veterinary surgeon responsible for ensuring that when supplying medicines from practice premises, they only do so from registered practice premises. If they supply from practice premises that are not registered, they could be liable to prosecution by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

Veterinary surgeons convicted of criminal offences are also considered by the College’s Preliminary Investigation Committee, which would decide whether the conviction would affect the individual’s fitness to practise and if the case should be referred to the College’s Disciplinary Committee.

If you have not yet registered your premises then you should do so as soon as possible and by 1 April 2009 at the latest.

A registration form is available on RCVS online at www.rcvs.org.uk/premisesregister, together with information describing the types of premises that should be registered.

If you wish to check whether particular premises are already registered, please email premisesregister@rcvs.org.uk stating the full address of the premises including the postcode. Please don’t telephone to make this type of enquiry.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the RCVS and the VMD has been agreed, the purpose of which is to set out responsibilities of the two bodies in respect of registration and inspection of veterinary practice premises.

In addition to ensuring their practice premises are registered, veterinary surgeons should also keep a record of other places where medicines are stored, so these can be considered during an inspection (such as veterinary surgeons’ homes, cars or charity premises from where veterinary work is carried out and where medicines are stored). Such records will not be published, although some of those premises may need to be registered in their own right.

Practices accredited under the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme will be inspected by the RCVS. The VMD will carry out inspections of other registered premises to ensure compliance with the VMRs.

Promoting the Guide

There’s a wealth of advice and guidance available, providing you know where to look

We’re continuing our promotional drive this year with the help of the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons. SPVS Journal Editor Harvey Carruthers has kindly agreed to publish a series of columns from Advisory Committee Chairman Neil Gorman, featuring certain aspects of the Guide and some real-life examples of problems encountered in practice. The first of the five-column series is due to appear in the March edition (pictured) and features our guidance on client confidentiality.

Further advice

An extension to the Guide, although not strictly part of our formal guidance, comes by way of a series of Advice Notes available on RCVSonline. Covering a range of subjects in a level of detail not possible in the Guide, new additions are made to the list (see box) on a regular basis, based on the feedback we received from members, nurses and the general public.

1. Artificial insemination in mares
2. Negligence
3. Serious professional misconduct
4. Veterinary surgeons’ professional fees
5. Blood transfusions
6. Micro-chipping
7. Prosthetic testicles
8. Canine surgical artificial insemination
9. Joint RCVS and Home Office advice on the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act and Veterinary Surgeons Act interface - flow chart
10. Artificial breeding techniques including embryo collection and transfer
11. Vaccination of companion animals
12. The use of new technology tests
13. 24-hour emergency cover and the Working Time Regulations
14. Pregnancy in veterinary practice
15. Prescription charges
16. Removal of dew claws
17. Euthanasia
18. Veterinary nurses and dentistry
19. Maintenance and monitoring of anaesthesia
20. Reporting alleged criminal activity
21. Product endorsement
22. Domiciliary visits
23. Ensuring restricted access to controlled drugs
24. Certification
25. Veterinary Medicines Regulations - Frequently Asked Questions
26. Equine pre-purchase examinations
Apathy or antipathy?

Nick Goodman, Managing Director, Membership Engagement Services

Increasing voter turn-out

Are you voting? The answer, I'm afraid, is probably not! Unless it's for X-Factor...

Membership Engagement Services advises organisations on how they can encourage their members to develop a sense of ownership and engagement with their organisation and deal with the recent decline in voter numbers.

It is common for a professional organisation's voting levels to be lower than 20% - for larger organisations it can drop below 10%. Those who do vote comprise two key groups: core membership, who read everything and are active long-term members, and the passive voters, who may or may not take part. They may be newer members, interested in a specific topic or who just happen to have opened the voting pack. Clearly it is the latter group organisations need to target, whilst not forgetting their core.

The message is always what is most important; what the organisation stands for, what the candidates believe, what committees do, why the governance is there and what it does...

Why voting matters...

From research carried out, members do want to hear from their organisations. Voters tell us that if they are polled regularly by their member organisation for their views they may feel more inclined to vote in the actual election. It also prevents voters feeling that they are only contacted when their vote is needed.

Despite the best of intentions, people often genuinely simply forget to vote. Eye-catching voting packs help, and newer technology can now be incorporated into the voting process; web, telephone and text reminders before and during an election can be very useful, although we try and keep them to a minimum to avoid irritation!

Candidate statements play a big part. Bland paragraphs in which the candidate tells us that they enjoy playing tennis and reading are over. Short webcam statements give members a genuine feel for the candidates. Also, if all candidates are given the same set of questions, what they did for the body over the past year, what their goals are and what they believe the organisation is there for, it makes the job of comparing candidates easier for voters.

Barack Obama successfully engaged first-time voters from traditionally politically apathetic age groups and backgrounds. He used texting and social networking, which, though valuable, reinforce the belief that the option to vote by text or online is the main way to attract voters. I believe that the key to Obama’s success lay in his clear exposition of the issues at stake, rather than the ease of voting – the same is true in any election, not just a Presidential one! For a potential voter, the message outweighs the medium every time.

Membership Engagement Services is a subsidiary company of Electoral Reform Services, which has run the RCVS elections for the past decade. For more information, or to contribute to MES research into voting behaviour, contact Nick at nick.goodman@membra.co.uk or 020 3008 5305.

Latest progress on 24/7 review

In November 2008 issue of RCVS News, we reported that the data gathering exercise had begun for the review of 24-hour emergency cover. A total of 440 interviews were carried out during October by an independent market research firm, Cognition Market Intelligence (now Noesis Market Intelligence), across a variety of veterinary surgeons and practices.

On 3 December, the findings and Noesis’ conclusions were reported to the 24-hour Emergency Cover Working Party (24/7 WP). The 24/7 WP’s report, together with the papers considered by Advisory Committee in January and the minutes from that meeting can be found on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk).

Based on the data-gathered, the Committee concluded that the profession still aspired to provide 24-hour cover and that the principal issue was no longer whether the profession should provide it, but how. The Committee agreed that the issues identified by the 24/7 WP needed to be resolved.

These issues relate mainly to compliance with the Working Time Regulations, clarification on the rare circumstances when a domiciliary visit might be required and exploring practical ways in which to alleviate the potential barriers to outsourcing or sharing of 24-hour cover, so that the profession works as a whole to provide the service.

Council agreed with Advisory Committee Chairman Professor Neil Gorman’s proposal that the implementation of 24-hour cover should be discussed by RCVS Council in June. The aim of that discussion will be to suggest potential solutions to the practical difficulties of providing 24-hour emergency cover.

Late for court?

After a longer delay than we’d hoped, our revised guidance for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses on giving evidence in court is now available on RCVSonline as an annex to the Guide to Professional Conduct (www.rcvs.org.uk/guide).

As previously described in RCVS News (November 2008), this replaces the existing annex and provides guidance relevant to UK courts and tribunals, covering both the practical and technical issues arising from giving evidence in court. There are also a number of useful links to additional guidance provided on other websites.

Emergency services

RCVS NEWS - MARCH 2009
More support for PDP

Additional Postgraduate Dean joins the team

Dr Agnes Winter, formerly an RCVS Council member appointed by Liverpool University, has joined the team of Postgraduate Deans supporting new veterinary graduates on the Professional Development Phase (PDP).

Agnes, an RCVS Recognised Specialist in Sheep Health and Production, joins Stephen Ware, Julian Wells and Professor David Noakes, and will offer online help to those completing the PDP.

The PDP is mandatory for all new graduates entering clinical practice. It is designed to help bridge the gap between the ‘Day-one competences’ gained within university and those ‘Year-one competences’ a new graduate is expected to achieve after about a year in practice. The system, which is web-based, offers a structured framework in which graduates can reflect on their experience, learn from mistakes and take steps to develop in areas identified as requiring focus.

Take-up

Over 76% of 2008 graduates have now signed up for PDP and, so far, 32% of the 2007 cohort have completed. Evidence of completing PDP is required before anyone graduating since 2007 can enrol for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice. We would also urge employers to check the PDP status of new or recent graduates they are considering taking on.

Seeing practice – hearing your views

Evidence considered in review of EMS

As announced in our November 2008 issue, we have convened a Working Group to review Extra-Mural Studies (EMS) and clinical education. The move was catalysed by changes in the veterinary schools’ clinical teaching arrangements, and ongoing financial pressures upon students which are exacerbated by the need to complete at least 26 weeks’ EMS in their clinical years.

The first action for the Group, which is chaired by past-President Dr Barry Johnson, was to gather evidence from a broad range of stakeholders, including students, recent graduates, employers and veterinary schools. Respondents were urged to consider the strengths and weaknesses in the system; problems and possible solutions; and what should be retained and what could change.

Next, some individuals and organisations will be invited to discuss their views in person with the Working Party on 7, 8 and 9 April. Draft recommendations will then be developed for any change in the system, which will be considered by the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee in due course.

It’s not too late to have your say. If you missed the call for evidence, let us have your views as soon as possible on education@rcvs.org.uk – the Working Group next meets on 18 March.

Great Dane training

PEPAS project starts in earnest

In the last issue, we announced the launch of a project that aims to develop a Pan-European Practical Assessment System (PEPAS) for veterinary nurses. The project, for which our VN team secured EU funding, involves eight countries and will produce standards for Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) across Europe.

The exams will be based upon the UK model and two of our team – Julie Dugmore, Awarding Body Quality Assurance Manager, and Vicky Hedges, VN Exam and Higher Education Quality Manager – recently commenced a series of ‘train the trainer’ sessions. The first round was at Hansenberg School in Kolding, Denmark, where Julie and Vicky spent four days training teaching staff from Italy, Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Part of the training concentrated on writing new exam tasks, of which four are now completed and a further five are to be researched, written and trialled. “One of our objectives was to develop new tasks that could be added to the UK bank,” explains Julie. “We videoed the four new tasks being carried out and it is hoped that we will be able to trial them during our next UK examiner training sessions and at the next PEPAS training, scheduled for Dublin in April.”

Following Dublin, there will be a further training session in Slovenia, later in the year.
Don’t just do it – record it

New CPD Record Cards available – and audit planned for RVNs

Professional accountability is not just about doing the right thing, but being seen to do it. And that often means clearly recording what you do – for example, meeting Continuing Professional Development targets.

Last month, all veterinary surgeons and Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) received their Continuing Professional Development Record Cards on which they should record how they meet their CPD targets – an average of 105 or 45 hours over three years, respectively.

This spring, a random sample of around 500 Registered Veterinary Nurses will be asked to submit copies of their last two years’ Record Cards so that we can audit how well this requirement of registration is being complied with. Some may then be followed up with requests for supporting information. As with veterinary surgeons, poor compliance with CPD obligations would be taken into account in any complaint arising against an RVN.

Completed Record Cards also need to be submitted with applications for Certificates and Diplomas and will be considered during Practice Standards Scheme inspections.

Copy cats put down

Antiplagiarism software tracks down cheats

Things might sometimes sound familiar in RCVS News. We have a “tell ’em, tell ’em and tell ’em again” approach, particularly in areas of important policy. However, a sense of déja vu is much less welcome in the academic field, and for that reason, we have invested in software that can detect plagiarism in written examination submissions.

The program checks written work against a huge bank of online sources, including textbooks and academic journals. We intend to run a random 10% of case-book submissions through the system to check that non-original material is properly referenced. Candidates found not to have properly attributed the work of others will not be allowed to continue with their examinations.

“The program checks written work against a huge bank of online sources.”

Exam dates

Dates and venues for the 2009 RCVS Certificate and Diploma written examinations are as follows:

Certificates:
Tuesday 21 July 2009 and Wednesday 22 July 2009 at the Emmanuel Centre, 9-23 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3DW

Diplomas:
Tuesday 7 July 2009 at the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

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

At its March meeting, RCVS Council agreed to the listing of 16 new RCVS Recognised Specialists. This brings the total listed to 275, across 29 specialisms.

Just visiting

Recent and upcoming visitations

Nottingham
A team led by Professor Lance Lanyon has just completed an interim visitation to the University of Nottingham’s School of Veterinary Medicine and Science. It won’t be possible to consider Nottingham for full RCVS approval until 2011, when the first of its students will graduate. However, the interim visitation is designed to check whether the degree course is on track. The visitation team’s report is likely to be submitted to the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee in the autumn.

Murdoch
Meanwhile, the first joint RCVS, American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) visitation will take place at Murdoch University in September. The Perth-based veterinary school is currently subject to conditional approval from us, following concerns over the lack of access to production animals.

Queensland
Staying in Australia, we have concurred with action taken by the AVBC and agreed that the School of Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland should be placed on conditional accreditation, which allows it a period of two years to rectify problem areas identified in an AVBC visitation, or risk losing RCVS and AVBC approval.

Bristol
Closer to home, this year will see a revisit to the University of Bristol’s School of Veterinary Science. Also subject to conditional approval, following a full visitation in March 2007, concerns centred on farm animal and clinical areas. The visitation team, again chaired by Stephen Ware, will check on progress in the intervening two years.

London
Looking further ahead, the Royal Veterinary College will be subject to a full visitation towards the end of February 2010. The team will be chaired by Professor Stuart Reid.
Meet the RCVS team

Corrie McCann

What’s your role?
Head of Finance

What’s your background?
After graduating from Queen Mary College, University of London, with a degree in Microbiology, I qualified as a chartered accountant with a medium-sized firm in London. Working in practice I had a wide range of clients from chocolatemanufacturersto antiquedealers specialisingin17th century French furniture. After having children I moved into the ‘not for profit sector’, initially working in London and then for Surrey County Council where I was seconded to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service as the Accountant. I joined the RCVS in September 1993.

What do you do?
The Finance Teamisresponsibleforpreparing annualbudgets,maintainingtheaccounting records and preparingthe management and annualaccountsoftheCollege.Theseroles include preparing submissionstothePrivy Councilforincreasesinregistration, annual retention and statutory membershipexam fees. We are also responsible for providing financial advice on a wide range of issues, ensuring regular risk reviews are undertaken and putting appropriate financial controlsinplace.

What’s your biggest challenge?
The latestchallenge was theintroductionof the new RegisterofVeterinaryPracticePremiseson behalfofthe VeterinaryMedicinesDirectorate, which involvedpreparingcostings and implementing financial systemsrequired to cope with the new Register.

Surprise us…
In my spare time, I enjoy making pots - but am still working on my masterpiece!

RCVS Officer team to visit Worcestershire…

Question Time on the road again

If you live in Worcestershire or the surrounding area there is still time to book your place at RCVS Question Time, on Thursday 26 March – contact Fiona Harcourt now, via the details below.

All veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others involved in the profession are welcome to attend the evening meeting, which will take place in the Manor Suite at the Stone Manor Hotel, near Kidderminster.

The evening starts at 6:30pm with a buffet supper and a chance to catch up with colleagues. RCVS President Jill Nute will open the meeting at 7:15pm, then it’s your chance to put questions to the panel, made up of the Officer team and Veterinary Nurses Council members. Questions are welcome on any veterinary topic and we hope to get a lively debate going. The meeting will finish at 10pm.

Following the success of our Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) ‘surgery’ in Cardiff, we will be holding a similar surgery on 26 March, from 11am–5pm at the Stone Manor Hotel. If you have any questions or concerns about the PSS, Jill Nute and PSS Inspectors will be available for free 45-minute private appointments to answer your queries.

There are just a few time-slots left, so please contact Fiona Harcourt if you would like to make an appointment.

…and Cornwall
For those of you living in Cornwall, Thursday 18 June is a date for your diary. The RCVS Officer team will be visiting the county for the next RCVS Question Time meeting. The venue is still to be confirmed, but personal invitations will be sent to those living within reasonable travelling distance nearer the time. Again, if you have any issues regarding the Practice Standards Scheme, Inspectors will be holding a PSS Surgery during the day to help answer your queries. Look out for further details shortly.

Corrie McCann, Head of Finance

For more information, or to register for any of these events, contact:
Fiona Harcourt, RCVS Communications Officer
T: 020 7202 0773  E: f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk

An inspector calls – are you ready?

Join us at BSAVA Congress

We will be occupying our regular space at BSAVA Congress (2-5 April) this year – stand 918 in the National Indoor Arena, opposite the catering stand – where staff will be on-hand to answer all your questions.

If you are concerned about medicines inspections and would like further information about complying with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) Register of Veterinary Practice Premises, we will be holding a free Masterclass offering practical guidance on the requirements, on Saturday 4 April.

Suitable for veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and practice managers, the interactive session will be held from 10am–12noon, with presentations from VMD and the Chief Inspector of the Practice Standards Scheme, followed by group discussion and plenty of time for questions and answers.

Attendance at the Masterclass, which will be held in Hall 6 of the ICC, is free to those attending BSAVA Congress, and will include a coffee and Danish. Tickets are available from Fiona Harcourt.

To be in with a chance to win one of two £50 Amazon gift vouchers, see our competition in the BSAVA Congress delegate discountbook, available at Congress.
An invitation to Belgravia House

Join us for a Meet the RCVS Day

Have you ever wondered what goes on inside Belgravia House? Would you like to see where your registration fees go? Maybe you would like to find out how complaints are handled, or meet the people who answer the phone when you call the RCVS?

We regularly hold ‘Meet the RCVS Days’ at Belgravia House to give members and those involved in the profession the chance to meet members of the Officer team and key members of staff, and see what goes on behind the scenes.

Guests who attended our last Meet the RCVS in November said:

• ‘Seeing the RCVS as a small, friendly team rather than a scary organisation is very valuable and to be recommended.’
• ‘Wish I had done it years ago.’

• ‘I now have a better understanding of the challenges facing RCVS.’

The next Meet the RCVS Day will take place on Tuesday 9 June. The day begins at 10:30am with coffee and a welcome from the President, followed by tours of the College departments and plenty of opportunities to ask questions, finishing around 3:30pm. Lunch and refreshments are provided and reasonable travel expenses will be paid.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Fiona Harcourt (see box), or register online at www.rcvs.org.uk/events. If you can’t make 9 June, we will be holding more meetings later in the year, so why not register your interest and send Fiona your details now.

We look forward to meeting you.

Diversity push

Update on veterinary careers project

In May of last year, we launched new careers materials for the veterinary profession that had been produced as part of the Government’s Gateways to the Profession project. Through them, we aimed to broaden the base of applicants to veterinary school, particularly boys, and those from ethnic minority and lower socioeconomic groups.

Over the last 10 months we have been working to get the materials – a DVD, brochure and interactive website produced under the banner ‘Veterinary science – for all walks of life’ – in front of as many people as possible, including school students and their parents, careers advisors, veterinary surgeons and other influencers. We mailed copies to every secondary school and sixth-form college in the UK, posted the brochure to every UK practice and have uploaded the videos on YouTube. Yes, that’s right, the RCVS is on YouTube! (www.youtube.com/vetcareers)

It’s too soon to tell whether the materials have had an effect on student applications, but feedback so far has been very positive. We have received requests from more than 350 individuals for more information and copies of the materials, and nearly 2,700 views on the YouTube channel.

Comments have included:

• “I thoroughly enjoyed it [the DVD] and am sure it will be of interest to careers teachers.” (teacher)
• “It’s refreshing to see that you don’t have to be a straight-A student to get into veterinary school and my daughter has found career options she didn’t even know about.” (parent)
• “It’s a good idea to make the brochure inclusive, our patrons can relate to the images.” (Bangladeshi Community Education and Training Centre, Birmingham)

If you are involved with careers activities and would like to receive copies of the DVD and brochure, please contact info@walksoflife.org.uk or 020 7202 0791.

Meanwhile, government activities in this area continue. We have submitted evidence to the Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP, who has been tasked, via his chairmanship of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, with assessing the processes governing recruitment into the professions so that fair access for all can be achieved.

By George, RCVS Day returns!

AGM and awards presentation

We are pleased to announce that this year’s AGM and Awards Presentation will again be held at One Great George Street, London.

RCVS Day will take place on Friday 3 July 2009 and follow the same format as last year, with the AGM at 10am and Awards Presentations at 11am. This will be followed by a talk illustrating the role of the veterinary profession in monitoring wildlife health in the UK, including some of the successes and challenges, from our guest speaker Mr Victor Simpson FRCVS. Then lunch will be served in the Great Hall.

As well as recognising our colleagues’ veterinary achievements, Professor Sandy Trees will take up his office as President of the RCVS for 2009-10, and new members will be welcomed to RCVS Council and the Veterinary Nurses Council.

The meeting is open to all members and veterinary nurses. Look out for further details nearer the time.

News for PSS members

We will soon be launching a new quarterly e-newsletter for those in the Practice Standards Scheme.

If you are in an accredited practice and wish to stay up to date with developments on the Scheme, receive tips to help with upcoming inspections and find out more about the team behind the scenes, then sign up. Email your name and practice to practicestandards@rcvs.org.uk, quoting ‘e-news’ in the email header.
Calling on an Inspector

Expecting an inspection? Find out what happens

Pam Mosedale is a senior Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) Inspector. We asked her what it’s like to be the person behind the clipboard.

Like all of the PSS Inspectors, I am a vet, and in my case, I’ve been qualified for almost 30 years. I started out in mixed practice and after spending eighteen years as a partner in a small animal hospital I sold my partnership and now work as a locum.

I generally visit practices for inspection that are within a day’s travel of my home in Buxton, but sometimes I do go further afield. When I’m asked to carry out an inspection, the first thing I do is to check that I don’t have any connection with the practice, such as having worked there or knowing any of the partners well – even though I think I’d be objective it is important to make sure there is no apparent conflict of interest. Once I’ve checked – and there have been a couple of occasions when I have said ‘no’ to a proposed inspection – the practice is sent a copy of my Declaration of Interest and asked if they are happy for me to visit. If the practice agrees, we set up a convenient date.

I phone a couple of days beforehand to confirm the details and give practice staff chance to ask any last-minute questions about anything – particularly the paperwork – that might not be clear. I try to arrange to arrive about 10am so people have chance to get ready.

“The inspection isn’t an exam but more of a process which you can use to pick up and share ideas with your peers.”

On the day, I start by sitting down with the practice team to introduce myself and talk through what I need to do – and generally have a cup of tea since practice staff are a hospitable lot. People can be nervous about what to expect, particularly if it’s the first time that they’ve applied for accreditation, so I try to be reassuring. The inspection isn’t an exam but more of a process which you can use to pick up and share ideas with your peers. During the day I like to chat to staff as this can help me understand how things work in a particular practice.

People can be anxious about what will happen should things suddenly get very busy. Please don’t be. Inspectors know what practice life is like and can work around you. If the x-ray is in use, well then we will just have to wait! Try not to worry about it and feel that you have to be perfect on the day.

There is a lot of paperwork for practices and it is worthwhile getting it ready well before the inspection. Most people say it is a useful process – it’s not just a paper exercise but it encourages people go through their systems and get things up to date. People often tell me that although preparing for an inspection is hard work, it’s also good for team morale and a chance to reflect on how much they have achieved. I know one senior vet who bought all the practice nurses flowers, although most teams seem to celebrate getting through the inspection day with cake.

In many cases there are areas that practices need to put right to gain accreditation, so do go through the compliance requirements carefully before the inspection – and ask the Practice Standards team if there is anything you are unsure about. A list of the most common areas that people need to address is at Figure 1. However, if the inspection picks up something that has slipped past your checks, don’t worry, you can usually resolve this without another visit by sending in evidence to show what has been fixed – a photo of a floor repair, or photocopy of a CPD Record Card, for instance.

Sometimes I arrive and find the practice could probably achieve the next tier of accreditation and suggest that we go through the inspection process for that tier. If they decide to do this and miss accreditation by a little bit, they can make any small changes asked for in the report, and send in the evidence. Less often I find that a practice aiming for one of the tiers is unlikely to achieve it and suggest that they apply for a different level – so there is some flexibility in the system.

People also don’t always realise that different branches of a practice can be accredited at different tiers – you can apply for, say, Small Animal Hospital status for the main premises, and go for Core Standards for the branches, or any combination appropriate to your practice.

Keeping decision-making consistent is important to us. Although it is frustrating, we cannot let practices have the decision on the day as reports may be referred for a Practice Standards Review Group decision. Inspectors also have to attend at least one training meeting a year and this year the Animal Medicines Inspectors from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate joined us for the first time as they will be carrying out medicines inspections for non-PSS practices on the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises (RVPP). We want to make sure that the medicines part of the inspection is consistent in both cases. We have another training meeting planned and they will be buddy ing up with us to get a feel for veterinary practices.

“I can see from my practice visits that it has encouraged a general raising of standards.”

There has been an increase recently in practices applying for PSS accreditation (see Figure 2) which may partly be due to practices deciding that if they have to be inspected on medicines compliance they may as well be inspected across the board and get an accreditation at the end of it. Certainly, to gain Core Standards accreditation it shouldn’t be much more painful being inspected under the PSS than it would be under the RVPP. Anecdotally, having accreditation also seems to be useful in recruiting staff – one vet I spoke to felt his practice needed accreditation to attract newly-qualified veterinary surgeons.

Figure 1: where practices slip up – ten common areas of non-compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autoclave</td>
<td>No written scheme of examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>Damaged floor-covering or decoration making it difficult to keep clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electrical testing of building not done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical governance</td>
<td>Not documented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing professional development (CPD)</td>
<td>Insufficient records produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSH)</td>
<td>Incomplete assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Safety</td>
<td>No review of policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-patients</td>
<td>No Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or client information for overnight care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>Controlled drugs not stored securely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No temperature monitoring for medicines storage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have a second hat in regard to PSS – I am also the BSAVA representative on the Practice Standards Group, which comprises representatives of all of the key veterinary bodies. When the RCVS brought in the Scheme in 2005, it promised to make no major changes – other than any required by law – for five years and then review the Scheme. This review is currently ongoing and we expect to launch the new standards in 2010. Although it is unlikely that they will contain any major changes, veterinary practice has moved on over the past five years – for example, some practices now use digital radiography – so some changes have been made to reflect these new alternatives. Some changes have also been made to align the standards with updates to the Guide to Professional Conduct and practices seeking or renewing accreditation have been made aware of these.

Overall, I think that the Scheme is working well. At a minimum it helps make sure that some basic things – such as contracts for all staff – are in place. But I believe it has achieved far more than that: I can see from my practice visits that it has encouraged a general raising of standards. For practices, the most obvious benefit is a means to showcase the practice’s quality to their clients, however, it can also be a way of recognising the achievements of the whole practice team.

There have been four meetings of the Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee since the last Council meeting, during which 29 new complaints, as well as ongoing complaints, were considered. In that time the Committee has:

- referred seven complaints to solicitors for statements;
- requested further investigation by the Professional Conduct Department for four complaints;
- carried out three announced visits to veterinary practices (the visits included interviewing complainants, veterinary surgeons and witnesses); and,
- referred one complaint to the Disciplinary Committee.

Between 1 April 2008 and 24 February 2009, 613 complaints were registered and 640 were closed, compared to 625 and 654, respectively, in the same period last year.

The case reported to Council was closed at the Preliminary Investigation Committee stage (the third stage of the investigation process) and is intended to highlight the importance of following the guidance in the RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct.

Responsibilities to clients

The complainant visited the veterinary practice with her tortoise and, during the consultation, agreed it would have an abscess removed. She then paid a deposit of £200. It was agreed that the operation would take place that afternoon and the veterinary surgeon explained the hospitalisation charges should the tortoise need to be kept in overnight.

Due to emergency cases arising in the practice that day, the procedure could not be carried out as scheduled and the complainant was informed of this by telephone. She was unhappy with the delay and indicated that she would collect her tortoise. The practice said that free boarding was offered, but that the complainant declined it.

The complainant was refunded £149.50; the practice saying that it had charged £50 for the consultation and 50p to post the cheque to the complainant. The complainant alleged being told the £50 charge was for the nuisance she had caused.

The veterinary surgeon said he had asked the complainant about the past and ongoing care for the tortoise, but that the complainant had been rude and evasive. The veterinary surgeon said he had been concerned for the tortoise’s welfare and later discussed the case with the RSPCA.

The complainant said that after making a number of telephone calls to the practice and threatening legal action to secure a fee refund, she was told to go away or she would be reported to the RSPCA.

The complaint was referred to the PI Committee and further investigation was carried out before it considered the case. The investigation indicated that the complainant had been rude and unpleasant to practice staff and that the veterinary surgeon had contacted the RSPCA, informally, but not made a formal complaint.

The Committee decided that, even at its worst, the complaint could not amount to serious professional misconduct because the veterinary surgeon’s actions had put animal welfare first. However, the veterinary surgeon was advised to reflect on the case with reference to Part 1D of the Guide (‘Your responsibilities to your clients’).
**Mr Iwan W Parry**

Inquiry concerning: false certification of TB tests  
DC decision: one-month suspension  
Registration status: name suspended from Register on 5 March 2009

The Disciplinary Committee ordered a month’s suspension for a veterinary surgeon from Dolgelau, for dishonest certification of bovine tuberculin testing in the Gwynedd area in early 2007.

At a hearing that concluded on 30 January 2009, Iwan Parry, a partner of The Veterinary Surgery, Bala Road, Dolgelau, and an Official Veterinarian, was charged with serious professional misconduct for certifying on eight separate occasions that he had tested and inspected cattle for clinical signs of bovine tuberculosis (TB), when he had not done so. At the outset of the hearing, Mr Parry denied the charges.

The Committee heard that Animal Health had discovered irregularities in TB testing paperwork from Mr Parry’s practice. These included two locum veterinary surgeons, who were not Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVIs), having carried out TB pre-movement testing, but the relevant paperwork being signed and certified by Mr Parry. It therefore suspended him from LVI duties and lodged a complaint with the RCVS.

The Committee heard that, at the time, Mr Parry’s practice was in difficulty as all eight of his assistant veterinary surgeons had recently left and he was struggling to maintain services. It was also reported that the incidence of bovine TB in Mr Parry’s area was very low.

Under questioning, Mr Parry admitted that he had not done the testing, but had allowed non-LVI veterinary surgeons to do so and then signed the certificates himself. Denying the charge of dishonesty, he maintained that he had thought his actions were legitimate, providing he questioned the veterinary surgeons afterwards and checked their results. However, he told the Committee he now deeply regretted this “honest mistake”, made at a time of great personal pressure, and that it would not be repeated.

The Committee also heard evidence from a number of character witnesses, including Mr Elfyn Llwyd MP, testifying to Mr Parry’s good character, integrity and good standing in the local community and agricultural sector.

“The integrity of veterinary certification [is] of the utmost importance, and... no veterinary surgeon could possibly be in any doubt about that.”

Nevertheless, in view of Mr Parry’s long experience as an LVI, his understanding of the importance of routine herd testing and accurate veterinary certification and his reputation for keeping up to date with legislative and professional developments, the Committee decided that his actions were not just inappropriate, but were the result of conscious impropriety on his part. It found that he was not only guilty of dishonesty, but also of allowing non-LVIs to perform TB testing, both of which amounted to serious professional misconduct.

In passing judgment, the Committee emphasised that the integrity of veterinary certification was of the utmost importance, and that no veterinary surgeon could possibly be in any doubt about that. This was especially so when carried out on behalf of the Government, as any loss of confidence in veterinary certification in these circumstances could have severe consequences for animal health and international trade. It also felt that, in view of his long experience as an LVI, Mr Parry could not have failed to have been fully aware of what he was signing and that he should not have done so. Further, the Committee was mindful that in asking non-LVI veterinary surgeons to undertake LVI work, Mr Parry was placing young colleagues in a compromising situation.

It was, however, prepared to take account of some exceptional mitigating factors in this case, including the low risk of TB spread following Mr Parry’s actions and that Animal Health had taken no steps to trace or re-test the cattle in question; that no financial gain had been sought or received by him; his unblemished character and uprightness of conduct to date; the esteem in which he was held in the farming community and the potential (financial) impact on that community if he were to be removed from the Register (therefore unable to practise) for a significant period of time. Also, there was no evidence that the tests had been carried out other than competently by the locum veterinary surgeons concerned.

Nigel Swayne MRCVS, chairing the Disciplinary Committee, concluded: “We are reminded that the primary purpose of any sanction is not punishment, but the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and to uphold professional standards of conduct.

“Whilst only a reprimand is not an appropriate sanction where dishonesty and false certification have been found proved, and such findings would normally attract at least a long period of suspension, given the wholly exceptional circumstances of this case and the strength of the mitigating factors, we direct that Mr Parry should be suspended for one month.”

**Mr Seamus M Fegan**

Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register  
DC decision: application granted  
Registration status: restored to Register on 27 February 2009

A veterinary surgeon from County Down was restored to the Register following a hearing of the Disciplinary Committee on 26 February 2009.

Seamus Michael Fegan, of 16 Bridge Road, Warren Point, County Down, had been removed from the Register in March 2003, having been judged unfit to practise owing to criminal convictions.

The convictions were incurred when Mr Fegan was practising in South Armagh: he was charged with 31 counts of conspiracy to defraud the Ministry of Defence (MoD). He was convicted of falsely certifying that he had carried out post-mortems on farm animals which, it was claimed, had died as a direct impact of MoD helicopters flying over land owned by his clients. Army activity in the area at the time was such that compensation payments were in place.

However, the MoD said that during a 12-month period from 1 April 1994, of 20,769 animals that were said to have died by reason of helicopter operations, certificates for 17,000 had been provided by Mr Fegan’s practice. He claimed to have carried out over 9,000 post-mortem examinations during the period, earning fees of around £150,000.

Mr Fegan had been required to pay £14,000 and was sentenced to 15 months’ imprisonment for each charge, to run concurrently: he served seven months. At the time of the 2003 adjudication, the Committee had heard that Mr Fegan was suffering from alcohol dependency and depression. He had accepted that his actions had brought the profession into serious disrepute and that his professional status had enabled him to be party to the conspiracy to defraud the MoD.

At February’s meeting, the Committee was pleased to hear reports from a consultant psychiatrist that Mr Fegan’s mental and physical state had improved considerably and it was impressed by the high quality of the testimonials provided in support of his restoration.
Dr Janos Nemeth

Inquiry concerning: fraudulent registration
DC decision: remove name from Register
Registration status: name to be removed from Register on 31 March 2009, unless appeal lodged

On 25 February 2009, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Dr Janos Nemeth be removed from the Register for fraudulent registration.

Dr Nemeth was charged with fraudulently entering his name in the Register, and dishonestly representing that a letter submitted with his application for registration was written and signed by Dr Sandor Mille, President of the Hungarian Veterinary Chamber (HVC).

Dr Nemeth is a Hungarian national who qualified as a veterinary surgeon in Hungary in 1988 and practised there for many years. Veterinary surgeons holding an appropriate European qualification are eligible to register with the RCVS, allowing them to practise legally in the UK. However, amongst other things, applicants for registration must provide documentation from a competent registration authority of an EU member state – in this case the HVC – confirming current membership and good professional standing. It was the authenticity of this document, known as a Certificate of Good Standing, which concerned the Committee.

Dr Nemeth had registered with the College on 5 December 2006, providing what appeared to be relevant documentation. In February 2008, an anonymous caller to the College questioned Dr Nemeth’s standing as a veterinary surgeon. Following investigation, the authenticity of the Certificate of Good Standing was brought into question, leading to a charge of fraudulent registration.

The Committee heard that when asked to produce the original Certificate for a meeting that he attended at the College on 10 March 2008, Dr Nemeth had been unable to do so; he had also failed to provide an original Certificate the following week. The HVC had confirmed that no Certificate had been issued on the date carried by the alleged forgery, and that the number on the Certificate could not have been generated within its system. An email from the HVC to Dr Nemeth that originally had only one attachment was forwarded to the College by Dr Nemeth with an additional attachment, which turned out to be the forged Certificate of Good Standing. Dr Nemeth alleged that both Certificates had been attached to the email received from Hungary. The Committee was able to establish that this was not the case.

Dr Nemeth claimed that the Certificate was not a forgery, and that furthermore he would have had no need to produce a forgery as he could have legitimately gained a Certificate. However, the Committee heard evidence that Dr Nemeth was not in fact a member of the HVC at the time of applying for RCVS registration, having been removed from the HVC Register for non-payment of fees over a 12-month period. It was therefore by no means clear that he would have been entitled to a Certificate of Good Standing.

It was further established that Dr Nemeth must have produced a convincing forgery of an original Certificate of Good Standing at the Registration Ceremony in order to have been able to proceed to registration.

In mitigation, Dr Nemeth stressed that neither in England nor in Hungary had there at any time over 18 years been any complaint against him. He further said that he and his family were integrated into his local community, and that they planned to make the UK their home. Nevertheless, the Committee concluded that the evidence that the Certificate was a forgery was ‘overwhelming’.

Mrs Alison Bruce, Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, said: “Having considered all of the evidence in the case with great care, the Committee is driven to the conclusion, so that it is sure, that the Respondent did know at all relevant times that the Certificate of Good Standing was a forgery, and that he did dishonestly represent to the College that the forged document was genuine as the College alleged. Accordingly, the Committee finds that the entry of the Respondent’s name on the Register was fraudulently made, and that the allegation made by the College is proved.”

The Committee therefore decided to instruct the Registrar to remove Dr Nemeth’s name from the Register.

Mr Kfir Segev

Inquiry concerning: dishonest representation of clinical condition and recommendation of unnecessary treatment
DC decision: inquiry adjourned due to lack of time
Registration status: name remains on Register

The Inquiry into Mr Segev is scheduled to resume on 23 March 2009 and is listed for five days.

Full details of disciplinary hearings are available at www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary
African Horse Sickness – prevention is key

In the first of an irregular series looking at some of the issues likely to loom large in the coming months, Past-President and Council member Professor Sheila Crispin considers the identification and control of African Horse Sickness, the spread of which is linked to both climate change and the impact of human activities.

African Horse Sickness (AHS) is a notifiable vector-borne viral disease with a mortality rate of 70-95% in vulnerable horses, such as those of Europe. As the name suggests, it is a disease of African origin, but there have been major outbreaks in other parts of the world. In the 1950s, a major epidemic spread from India to the Near East, and the 1980s saw incursions of AHS into Spain and Portugal.

It has long been recognised that human activities and climate change will have a major influence on disease patterns and the recent introduction of bluetongue (BT), a closely related disease of ruminants, into the UK from Continental Europe has moved the debate about how to manage vector-borne diseases from the theoretical to the practical. Both AHS and BT are transmitted by Culicoides midges and the emergence of BT into previously unaffected parts of Europe is probably linked with climate change, an associated northerly shift of the traditional vector (C. imicola) and involvement of novel vectors such as C. obsoletus and C. pulicaris.

African Horse Sickness most commonly affects horses, mules, donkeys and zebra; the infection, whilst severe in horses and mules, is often mild in donkeys, and zebra are highly resistant to the disease. Horses are regarded as accidental or indicator hosts, whereas zebra and, possibly, donkeys, might act as reservoir hosts, and species such as elephants and camels act as occasional hosts. Potentially-infected asymptomatic vertebrate hosts and their movements may be an important aspect of the epidemiology and less well understood than the potential long-distance movements of midges. The disease has also been reported in dogs that have eaten infected horse meat and, whilst it can be fatal in this species, there is some evidence of persistent infection in apparently healthy dogs in endemic regions.

What to look for

The clinical signs depend on the susceptibility of the vertebrate host, the virulence of the causal serotype and the dose of virus received. In horses with acute AHS, respiratory signs predominate, the incubation period is some three to five days and animals present initially with pyrexia followed by respiratory signs that may include spasmodic coughing, a frothy nasal discharge, rapidly progressing hyperpnoea, respiratory distress and death in some 90% of affected animals. In less acute cases, the incubation period lasts one to two weeks and is followed by fever, subcutaneous oedema is the most prominent clinical feature and swelling of the head and neck is especially obvious. Affected horses are frequently restless and may exhibit signs of colic; about 50% of affected animals die. Other clinical features of AHS tend to be terminal and include cyanosis, petechiation and frank haemorrhage. Suspect cases should be isolated immediately and a Defra Divisional Veterinary Manager notified.

Control

Nine serotypes of AH SV are recognised and, although equidae that survive infection will have solid immunity to the causal serotype, they remain susceptible to the other serotypes. Polyvalent vaccines are used as a means of preventing serious losses in endemic areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa. When disease occurs in endemic areas, there is additional use of monovalent vaccine once the serotype has been identified, with movement restrictions on equidae and vector controls.

Occasional introductions of this disease into non-endemic areas are usually managed by the slaughter and disposal of affected animals, but with the obvious caveat that, should infection become established in insect vectors, slaughter of indigenous vertebrate hosts would be pointless. Additional measures include movement restrictions, the establishment of a protection zone of at least 100km and, beyond that, a surveillance zone of at least 50km, vector controls and vaccination of non-infected equidae. None of the current live attenuated vaccines is licensed for use in Europe, although the European Commission has established a Community reserve of monovalent attenuated live vaccine (serotypes 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8) for emergency use.

African Horse Sickness is a highly distressing disease for both horse and owner and the UK equine industry is worth well in excess of £3 billion, so preventing the introduction of disease must be at the heart of control policies, backed up by a well-planned and rehearsed emergency response for any incursions of disease.
Books to the future

Preserving the RCVS Trust Library

The RCVS Trust Library has a well-thumbed collection of some 25,000 contemporary texts useful to veterinary practitioners, students and academics. It also holds a nationally-recognised archive of around 3,000 antiquarian books that are gold-dust to historians, including an eighteenth-century printed landscape folio Anatomy of the Horse, by the artist George Stubbs, who is said to have hung dead horses from the rafters of his Midlands house to produce his drawings.

More than a mere curiosity is the oldest book in the collection, a 1514 edition of Libri de re Rustica, a Latin compendium of four books by Cato, Varo, Columella and Palladius, discussing the husbandry, agriculture and management of a country estate. The art and science of veterinary practice is tracked from this volume, through the collection on its journey up to the present day, by historians such as Norman Comben, honorary advisor to the collection.

The emphasis in the historical collection on equine medicine gives an insight into the development of veterinary medicine and the value horses have held through the ages. Although we cannot yet know which of today’s books will in the future be rare and special enough to add to the historical collection, they will no doubt be equally revealing of the current shape of the profession and societal views of the animals in our care.

It is largely due to the generosity of our members and their families in donating and bequeathing books that the Library has grown from a small miscellany of popular texts to a nationally-important collection. However, to make sure that the Library continues to hold a healthy selection of books for both today’s practitioners and tomorrow’s historians, it needs your help.

We have a ‘wish list’ of specific texts we need to keep our collections up to date, and an ‘Adopt-a-Book’ scheme for members to contribute funds to conserve books in the historical archive. If you know a veterinary author – or are one yourself – who could be persuaded to donate a book or few, we would be extremely grateful.

If you have unneeded books you might be able to donate – or are buying books and could manage to squeeze an extra one for the Library into your budget - please contact Clare Boulton, Librarian, on 020 7202 0710 or c.boulton@rcvstrust.org.uk. Books donated or bought with donations will have supporters’ names added to the bookplates as an acknowledgement of our thanks.

Marathon effort from Noelle

Help the RCVS Trust gain from twenty-six point two miles of pain

“I’m eager to raise as much money as I can for the Trust – my target is at least £1,500.”

It seems easier to get a camel through the eye of a needle than a charity runner entered into the London Marathon, as competition for places is so fierce. However, this year the RCVS Trust has done it, and achieved one of the coveted charity places. Noelle Lowry, a veterinary surgeon from Poolhouse Equine Clinic in Lichfield, will be our brave runner. We catch up with Noelle as she prepares for 26 April.

So, why run a marathon?
This will actually be the second marathon I’ve run – I ran New York last November and really enjoyed it. It’s a great buzz with all the crowds and people cheering you on – and really healthy too. I’m particularly looking forwards to seeing London without all the traffic!

Why did you pick the RCVS Trust as your charity?
The Trust is something all vets can use, whether it’s the excellent Library or applying for one of the different grants that it offers. It’s really up to us to support it.

How’s the training going?
I love training – it’s addictive. It’s good to have a goal like the marathon though, to stop you just going home after work and sitting on the sofa - especially in winter when it’s cold and dark.

Nervous or excited?
Excited. I’m eager to raise as much money as I can for the Trust – my target is at least £1,500 – and I also want to beat my New York time of 4h 32.

How can we spot you on the telly – are you dressing up?
I shall have the RCVS Trust logo on my vest – so you can look out for me.

How can people sponsor you?
It’s easiest to log onto www.justgiving.com/noellielowry - if you are a UK tax-payer this also means the Trust can get your tax back. Or, you can get a sponsorship form from Bonnie Fernley (b.fernley@rcvstrust.org.uk or 020 7202 0743) and send a cheque.

Inspired to get out your jogging shoes? Check out the details of RCVS Trust fundraising places available for the British 10K London Run on page 5.
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. TV times
ITV Tonight programme due to look at fees.

2. New boys and girls
Peter Jinman is elected Junior Vice-President and Liz Branscombe will take over as Chairman of the Veterinary Nurses Council.

3. Taking us for granted
RCVS Trust received 170 grant applications this year.

4. Vote of confidence?
Voting for RCVS and VN Councils opens 13 March – can we rely on your vote?

5. And the winner is…
RCVS Review and Facts scoop Annual Report award.

6. Be resourceful
VetMed – new online resource for RCVS Library members.

7. Pet subject
Run an event for National Pet Month – the RCVS Trust could benefit.

8. Where legal eagles dare
What’s new from the Veterinary Legislation Group.

9. Do drop in!
Trust seeks daredevil fundraisers for skydiving challenge.

10. Continental style
Update on EADEV European vet school approvals.

11. Complaints handling
New RNV complaints and disciplinary procedures in the pipeline.

12. Consenting adults
New annex to the Guide on Communication and Consent, including specimen forms.

13. TV times
ITV Tonight programme due to look at fees.

14. Don’t knock us til you know us...
Join a Meet the RCVS Day at Belgravia House to find out what makes us tick.

15. Standards of inspection
Find out how a Practice Standards Inspector spends her day.

16. DC cases
Mr I Parry suspended for false certification of TB tests; Mr S Fegan restored to Register following previous criminal conviction; Dr J Nemeth struck off for fraudulent registration; and Mr K Segev’s hearing into dishonest representation of clinical condition and recommendation of unnecessary treatment adjourned due to lack of time.

17. What’s that coming over the hill?
African Horse Sickness is on the horizon – notes on diagnosis and prevention.

18. Historic achievement
The Trust’s historic book collection needs your support.

19. Cool running
Vet Noelle Lowry runs the London marathon for the Trust – open your wallet and show her your support.

20. Blotting your copy book
Our antiplagiarism software will catch copy cats in the act.

21. Meet the team
Our Finance Director has a pot habit – don’t worry, it’s strictly ceramic.

22. Any further questions?
The Officer team will be taking your questions in Worcestershire and Cornwall – do join us.

23. Inspector clues
Coming to BSAVA? Join our Masterclass on medicines inspection criteria.

24. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1. 26 March
Regional Question Time, Kidderminster

2. 31 March
Deadline for Trust EMS vacation research scholarship applications

3. 1 April
Veterinary practice premises must be registered

4. 4 April
Join us at BSAVA

5. 4 April – 4 May
National Pet Month

6. 1 May
Your vote must be in by 5pm

7. 31 May
Application deadline for VN PIC and DC members

8. 4 June
RCVS Council meeting

9. 9 June
Meet the RCVS Day

10. 18 June
Regional Question Time, Cornwall

11. 3 July
RCVS Day

12. 7 July
Diploma written exams

13. 21 and 22 July
Certificate written exams

14. 24 November
Share Jones Lecture