

## Fit for the future

*“Making us more fleet of foot and better able to respond to the needs of the profession and the public.”*



### Governance proposals receive overwhelming support

**A**fter two years of debate and consultation with the profession and other stakeholders, there was overwhelming support from RCVS Council at its March meeting for wholesale reform to the College’s governance arrangements. These changes reflect our unique position of being a royal college that regulates, while addressing issues such as the efficiency and accountability of decision-making processes.

The main change would be that the number of Council members would be almost halved, as well as formalising lay and veterinary nursing representation on Council.

Under the approved proposals there would be a Council of 24 members comprising 13 elected veterinary surgeons (constituting a majority of Council), six appointed laypeople, three members appointed on behalf of the UK veterinary schools and two veterinary nurses. Furthermore, there would be the flexibility to appoint another member on behalf of any allied professions that RCVS Council may choose to regulate as associates of the College.

The recommendations followed a consultation conducted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), which ran between 29 October and 24 December 2015 and sought the profession’s views on several different options for reform. These options had, in turn, been developed by a governance panel set up by Council in March 2015 and chaired by our Senior Vice-President Professor Stuart Reid.

The majority of the 52 responses garnered by the consultation – which included a submission from the British Veterinary Association – were broadly positive about the direction of travel.

Speaking after the Council meeting Professor Reid said: “I am delighted that Council so fully supported our proposals for a new structure.

The new composition will ensure that both veterinary nurses and laypeople have a guaranteed place at the Council table, as well as maintaining a majority of elected veterinary surgeons and important input from the veterinary schools.

“The proposal recognises the unique nature of the RCVS and will allow us to expedite our decision-making process, making us more fleet of foot and better able to respond to the needs of the profession and the public. It has also been constructed to allow Council to evolve its position, ensuring it remains relevant into the future.”

Liz Cox, the Chair of VN Council, particularly welcomed the changes in respect of veterinary nursing representation on RCVS Council, adding: “It is an historic decision for veterinary nurses and one that has been long awaited. It is only right that those who work so closely alongside veterinary surgeons in practice should have a direct input into regulation that affects us all.”

Now that Council has approved the proposals, Defra will run a short informal consultation to provide those who responded to the initial consultation the opportunity to comment on the proposed reforms. Assuming no issues are raised during this process Defra officials will seek approval from the Government to proceed and, by doing so, clear the way for a legislative reform order (LRO) to make the necessary changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act. The LRO would also be scrutinised by parliamentary committee and voted on in both the House of Commons and House of Lords.

If all goes well, the changes could come into force as soon as March 2017. Council has agreed to a transitional implementation of the reforms, so that its numbers would be gradually reduced over a period of three years, and has also agreed to encourage the appropriate Minister of State to continue to support the reform process.

**In this issue:** Council in Cardiff, CPD Champions, RCVS and VN Councils elections, ethical review trial, Queen’s Medal, new Vice-President elected, VN Futures launch, CEO update, language testing, VN title campaign, ADR trial, fair trading guidance, fitness to practise for student VNs, microchipping, annual renewal fees due, positive start for new PSS, education roundup, new Fellowship, Mind Matters Initiative, Vet Futures Action Group, meetings and events, PI and DC reports, launch of *Veterinary Evidence*.

## Welsh date in June

### Council heading to Cardiff

**R**CVS Council will be heading to Cardiff for its 2 June meeting – following the precedent set by the June 2015 meeting, which took place outside London for the first time, in Edinburgh.

The meeting will take place in the Council Chamber at Cardiff City Hall and is part of a series of RCVS events to take place in the city that week, including a Regional Question Time (to be held at the SSE SWALEC Stadium, see page 17), a Mind Matters Mental Health Awareness course, a meeting with stakeholders and a meeting of the Operational Board.

**“While in Wales we will also take the opportunity to meet with local vets, nurses and other stakeholders so that we can better understand the issues on the ground.”**

“I am delighted that we are taking Council out of London for a second time,” says President Bradley Viner. “It’s really important that our activities are as transparent as possible, and so I would welcome any vet or nurse with an interest in the governance of their profession to come and observe the meeting.”

“While in Wales we will also take the opportunity to meet with local vets, nurses and other stakeholders so that we can better understand the issues on the ground, and keep the veterinary community up to date about our current activities.”

The Council meeting is open to all, on an observer basis, and anyone who wishes to attend should please notify Dawn Wiggins, on [d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk) by Friday 20 May.



## You are the champions!

### New blog focuses on CPD

**A**t the beginning of the month we launched a new blog written by and for members of the profession to encourage colleagues to engage with continuing professional development (CPD).

The CPD Champions blog ([www.rcvs.org.uk/cpdchampions](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/cpdchampions)) features submissions from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses talking about a range of issues related to CPD, including how to engage with it, how to make use of it in practice, how to record it, what type to undertake and balancing it with work and personal life.

The first two CPD Champions to feature on the blog are Vicky Williams MRCVS (right), a mother of two young children who works part-time in small animal practice, whose article examines the balance between CPD, work and family life; and Rosa Ragni MRCVS (left), who is originally from Italy and has worked in the UK since 2002 – her piece looks at the benefits of mentoring for both mentor and mentee.

Commenting on why she wanted to become a CPD Champion, Vicky Williams said: “I feel strongly that CPD is very important to maintain the skills, knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm of vets and also to maintain public confidence in veterinary surgeons.”

“It can be tricky fitting in the required number of hours of CPD annually when working part-time with a young family, like myself, and many women in the profession are in a similar position, so I wanted to take part in this RCVS initiative to help share with others how I manage and maybe find out what other vets do in my situation.”

Rosa Ragni added: “I decided to take part in the blog because I love learning, and wanted to communicate my enthusiasm to my colleagues. If we engage in CPD not only can we help our patients better, but we can make our work more interesting (for instance, trying something new or noticing something that had escaped us previously), and also less stressful. A diagnosis can sometimes be a challenge, and CPD helps in connecting the dots.”



Under the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct veterinary surgeons are expected to undertake 105 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period, while veterinary nurses are expected to undertake 45 hours in the same period.

Christine Warman, Head of Education at the RCVS, says: “We hope that these CPD Champions blog posts will help other members of the profession to think about continuing professional development by sharing ideas and good practice, highlighting ways in which CPD can have an impact on day-to-day work and giving tips and pointers on different types of learning.”

“It is important to note that CPD does not necessarily have to be expensive and time-consuming, it comes in many different forms, including mentoring, webinars, clinical audit and work-based observation – the real value of CPD is how you use it and put it into practice.”

Further information about CPD for veterinary surgeons, can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd). The equivalent information for veterinary nurses can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/vncpd](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vncpd). We will be regularly updating the blog with articles from members of the profession. Any veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who are interested in participating and becoming CPD Champions should contact Luke Bishop, Senior Communications Officer, on [l.bishop@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:l.bishop@rcvs.org.uk) with their ideas.

## Registrar to leave

### Gordon Hockey departs

**G**ordon Hockey has decided to leave the College after 16 years’ service.

Gordon served first as Assistant Registrar/Head of Professional Conduct, and, since 2012, as Registrar/Director of Legal Services.

“We wish to thank Gordon for all his hard work and wish him every success in the future,” says Dr Bradley Viner, RCVS President.

“He has been a key figure at the RCVS for many years, and has brought about much positive change in the organisation, particularly with respect to reform of our disciplinary processes and the introduction of our new Charter, in February 2015.”



# Your vote counts

## RCVS and VN Councils elections opening soon

**We are pleased to announce the candidates standing in the 2016 RCVS Council and Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council elections.**

There are eight candidates contesting six places in the RCVS Council election, including four existing Council members eligible for re-election and four new candidates. They are:

- Ms Amanda Boag MRCVS
- Mr Christopher Barker MRCVS
- Dr Melissa Donald MRCVS
- Miss Lucie Goodwin MRCVS
- Mr Thomas Lonsdale MRCVS
- Professor Stephen May FRCVS
- Dr Cheryl Scudamore FRCVS
- Dr Christopher (Kit) Sturgess MRCVS

Biographies, manifesto statements and contact details for each RCVS Council candidate are now available on the RCVS website at [www.rcvs.org.uk/vetvote16](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vetvote16).

Six veterinary nurses are contesting two places in this year's VN Council elections, all of whom are new candidates. They are:

- Mrs Stacey Bullock RVN
- Miss Racheal Marshall RVN
- Mrs Wendy Nevins RVN
- Mr Matthew Rendle RVN
- Mrs Samantha Thompson RVN
- Miss Helen Tottey RVN

Their full candidate details are available at [www.rcvs.org.uk/vnvote16](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vnvote16).

Ballot papers and candidates' details are due to be posted to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses eligible to vote during the week commencing 14 March, and all votes must be cast, either online or by post, by 5pm on Friday, 29 April 2016.

Successful candidates in either election will start their four-year terms of office at RCVS Day on Friday 15 July.

### Your questions answered

To help you decide who to vote for, we are once again inviting all candidates to participate in 'Quiz the Candidates' where, in a video, they will answer two questions from those that have been submitted to us by veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. These videos will be published on our website on Thursday 17 March.

"Last year, all election candidates produced videos for the first time and, with over 3,500 views in total, it seemed a popular way for voters to find out more about the individuals who were standing," says our Chief Executive Nick Stace.

"Providing a way for all vets and vet nurses to put their own questions to the candidates is now an integral part of the elections, and one which we hope will continue to encourage people to get involved and have their say."

## Ethical review

### Trial to launch this summer

**Our Ethics Review Panel is aiming to start accepting applications for ethical review of practice-based clinical research from 1 August this year, following Council's approval, in principle, of a one-year trial at last November's meeting. The trial will be limited to research projects in cats and dogs in the first instance, with the possibility of expanding to other species if the trial is extended or the service made permanent.**

The trial has come about following a joint working party established by the RCVS and the British Veterinary Association (BVA), which reported on ethical review of practice-based research in the UK. One of the key recommendations was that the RCVS should consider establishing a committee for ethical review of practice-based research.

The report indicated that an increasing amount of clinical research is being conducted by veterinary surgeons based in private practice. Unlike those based in veterinary schools and institutes, private practitioners may not be so familiar with the regulations and best practice associated with research, particularly with reference to ethical review.

Ideally, researchers are advised to develop a relationship with veterinary institutes so as to be able to submit research proposals to their ethical review committees. The aim of the trial will be to provide ethical review to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wish to undertake practice-based research but would not normally have access to a means of ethical review through university or industry connections.

The availability of ethical review should encourage more practice-based clinical research; avoid veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses inadvertently breaching associated legal or professional conduct responsibilities; and ensure that any clinical research carried out can be published (without ethical review, publication in peer-reviewed journals is unlikely).

The trial has been endorsed by the BVA, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Nursing Association, with the latter two offering to provide mentors to assist veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, respectively, to provide guidance on planning and structuring research projects prior to submitting ideas for ethical review.

We will be recruiting a number of panel members shortly and there will be further details on our website in due course. It is anticipated that the final composition of the panel will include veterinary surgeons (including those with experience of clinical research in the following areas: medical, surgical and qualitative) as well as a veterinary nurse and a lay member. If you have any questions about recruitment to the panel, or about submitting an application to it, you can email these to [ethics@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:ethics@rcvs.org.uk)

# Practice standards for all?

## Council gives clear steer

**Council agreed that the College should work towards some form of compulsory practice standards, following a vote during an 'in committee' (private) session at its meeting on 3 March.**

The vote brought regulation of veterinary practices, as well as those veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who work within them, one step closer, although there is much work to be done before this could come to fruition.

Although the *Codes of Professional Conduct* for vets and VNs state that individuals must work within practices that adhere to the Core standards of the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), or their

equivalent, there is currently no power of entry for the College to inspect this. In addition the requirement is laid upon the individual rather than the organisation itself.

"I am delighted that Council has given such a clear steer on this issue," said President Bradley Viner. "The PSS itself is going from strength to strength but it remains a voluntary scheme: for standards in practices to be truly raised across the board, some set of basic standards – not necessarily the current scheme, with its aspirational aspects – needs to be compulsory. With Council's blessing, we will now consider in more detail how such regulation, and the legislation required to support it, might work."

# Queen's Medal recipient

## A big fish in the world of aquaculture

**A** respected academic who has dedicated his professional life to pioneering the importance of fish health and welfare is the recipient of this year's Queen's Medal – the highest honour that the College can bestow upon a veterinary surgeon.

Professor Randolph Richards CBE is an Emeritus Professor at the Institute of Aquaculture at the University of Stirling, a member of the editorial board of the *Veterinary Record* and Vice-Chairman of the Moredun Foundation, a charity that promotes high standards for animal health and welfare through research and education. He was previously Director of the Institute of Aquaculture for 13 years, from 1996, currently serves on numerous veterinary committees and advisory groups, and is a trustee and director of several companies and organisations.

He was nominated for the honour by fellow veterinary surgeon Peter Jeffries, Chief Executive

for the Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed), based in Edinburgh. His nomination was supported by Professor Julie Fitzpatrick OBE, Scientific Director and Chief Executive of the Moredun Research Institute, and Peter Wells, an Honorary Professor of Veterinary Pharmacology and Therapeutics at the University of Nottingham, Chairman of Moredun Scientific and Chairman of GALVmed.

Peter Jeffries, who, at the start of his career, had Professor Richards as a postgraduate supervisor while he was studying for an MSc at the University of Stirling, said: "Randolph's entire professional life has been dedicated to pioneering the importance of fish health and welfare within the broader veterinary world.

"His input into the field of aquaculture, fish health and welfare is immeasurable, reflected by the involvement and influence he has had in representing the veterinary profession, industry,



academia and international associations in committees, delegations and inspectorates, and the respect in which he is widely held.

"As a recognised expert in the diagnosis and control of fish disease, Randolph has more than 150 published papers to his name."

Speaking of his accolade Professor Richards added: "I'm absolutely delighted and feel incredibly honoured to be the recipient of the RCVS Queen's Medal. It is particularly satisfying to receive this recognition from my veterinary peers."

Professor Richards will receive the Medal at this year's RCVS Day – our Annual General Meeting and Awards Day – which takes place on **Friday 15 July** at the Royal Institute of British Architects – see page 15 for more details.

## Associate status

### Working party set up

**F**ollowing discussions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), we are continuing to explore the possibility of creating a new framework within which professions associated with veterinary surgery or animal welfare might be brought under our regulatory 'umbrella'. This will be linked to a review of the various Exemption Orders to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, which allow certain acts of veterinary surgery to be undertaken by non-veterinary surgeons.

The new regulatory framework could involve some 'allied professions' becoming associates of the College, with the groundwork for this being laid by our new Royal Charter which came into force in February 2015. Possible new associates could include the various groups who practise elements of veterinary surgery under exemption orders; people professionally involved in animal care, but not practising veterinary surgery; and people involved with veterinary surgeons in maintaining public health.

In February, we met with representatives from Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and other stakeholders to discuss the key issues surrounding associate status and determine a way forward.

A Working Party, chaired by President Bradley Viner, has now been established to examine in detail how the regulatory framework could function and what the criteria for admission to associate status could be. This Working Group will make proposals to RCVS Council in due course.

## New Junior Vice-President elected

### RVC Professor gets the job

**P**rofessor Stephen May has been elected as the next Junior Vice-President of the College by fellow RCVS Council members and will take up his role at this year's RCVS Day, in July.

At RCVS Day he will replace the outgoing Junior Vice-President Chris Tufnell, who will become President of the College for 2016-17. Stephen, who was an appointed member of RCVS Council from 2001 to 2010 and has been an elected member since 2012, is expected to serve as RCVS President for 2017-18.

**"Education, at all levels, underpins the achievements of Vet Futures' goals."**

Stephen graduated with a degree in veterinary medicine from the University of Cambridge in 1980 and, after graduation, spent time as a large animal house surgeon at the University of Liverpool and in general practice. He studied for a PhD at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), followed by a return to the University of Liverpool as a Lecturer in Equine Orthopaedics. He was recruited to the RVC in 1993 and in 1997 became Head of the Farm Animal and Equine Clinical Department. Between 2000 and 2013 he held the role of the RVC's Vice-Principal for Teaching and is currently Deputy Principal.

In the supporting statement for his candidacy, he said: "I would... argue that my skill set makes this timely. I have considerable knowledge of governance reviews, and also committee chairmanship/operations. I am a straightforward

communicator (as you know) and feel that as a new member of Operations Board, elected from outside, I can help bridge the 'Council/Board divide' as we look at the governance transition.

"Education, at all levels, underpins the achievements of Vet Futures' goals. We need to better understand the needs of the public and the issues around supporting primary care. This is an area I am passionate about and will be one focus for my three years on the Presidential team. Finally, my election will maintain the traditional, healthy balance of academic and practitioner inputs on that team."

### New Education Chair

Meanwhile, RCVS Council member Professor Susan Dawson, Head of the School of Veterinary Science at the University of Liverpool, was also elected by fellow Council members as Chair of the Education Committee, to replace the outgoing Chair Professor Jo Price who leaves the position, and RCVS Council, this summer (see page 6). Professor Dawson has been an appointed member of Council since 2011 and has served on the Education Committee for five years.

In her supporting statement, she said: "With publication of the report from the Vet Futures project, and the development of the RCVS Education Strategy, this is an exciting period of opportunity for veterinary education. I would welcome the chance to chair the committee and would be committed to doing this to the best of my ability."

At the same meeting David Catlow was reconfirmed as Chair of the Standards Committee, a position he has held since 2014.

# Future scoping for VNs

## New Action Group set up

**T**he veterinary nursing profession now has its own 'Futures' project.

One of the recommendations of the Vet Futures report (*Taking charge of our future: a vision for the veterinary profession for 2030*) was to "encourage veterinary nurse leaders to develop a report and recommendations which are directly relevant to veterinary nurses and their future...".

Following a joint meeting between the RCVS VN Council and the Council of the British Veterinary Nursing Association in October 2015, it was decided that a 'VN Futures' project would provide the relevant leadership and engagement to achieve this.

An initial meeting with a broad range of stakeholders took place at the RCVS on 7 January 2016, and, following this, a VN Futures Action Group has been established to take the project forward, with the aim of delivering an action plan at the Vet Futures Summit on 4 July (see page 15).

The group includes a mix of individuals involved in the training, representation, regulation, employment and management of veterinary nurses. The biographies of the team are available at [www.vetfutures.org.uk/vnfutures](http://www.vetfutures.org.uk/vnfutures).

The timeframe under consideration for Vet Futures is until 2030, however, it was considered that a five-year timeline may be more appropriate for veterinary nursing, given that it's a younger profession, the retention rate is lower, and the training cycle is shorter.

### Get involved

The VN Futures project is running a series of evening meetings to engage with VNs and those involved in the profession, as follows:

- **14 March**, University of Bristol, Langford, Bristol BS40 5DU
- **18 April**, the College of Animal Welfare, Topcliffe Close, Capitol Park, Tingley, Leeds WF3 1DR
- **11 May**, Edinburgh Napier University, Sighthill Campus, Edinburgh EH11 4BN
- **17 May**, Nottingham Belfry Hotel, Mellors Way, Notts NG8 6PY, this will be a discussion stream within an RCVS Regional Question Time meeting
- **31 May**, SSE SWALEC Stadium, Cardiff CF11 9XR, this will be a discussion stream within an RCVS Regional Question Time meeting

For more information and to register, please visit:

[www.vnfutures.eventbrite.com](http://www.vnfutures.eventbrite.com)

Please do join us to have your say on the future of your profession, and don't forget that your participation could count towards your CPD.

For more information about VN Futures, contact Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing, on [j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk)



## Looking to the future

### Operational update

## Nick Stace, Chief Executive

**It's not often that the words 'IT project', 'on time' and 'under budget' are found together, so I was delighted to report to Council at its March meeting that not only has the upgrade of our iMIS database been completed, it has indeed been delivered to schedule at a cost lower than anticipated. Furthermore we have skilled up our internal IT team to enable them to evolve the system in-house to meet our future needs.**

I was also very pleased to announce that our charitable partner, RCVS Knowledge, has successfully launched *Veterinary Evidence*, a new online publication to champion evidenced-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) within the profession. Although only in its infancy, I look forward to this becoming the go-to place for all those interested in EBVM, and a key resource to take this important movement forward (see page 23 for more information).

Progress with our trial of an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) service was also reported to Council. We have been seeking feedback from those who have engaged with the service and the fact that 91% of those raising concerns rated it as a positive addition to the RCVS complaints process has been heartening. We will continue to review the current trial, and also consider other options, before making recommendations to Council in June.

### Strategically speaking

The New Year is a good time to start thinking ahead, and, during January this year, our Education and Standards Committees, together with our Veterinary Nurses Council, took time to think about what they wanted to achieve longer term. These 'blue sky' days were invigorating for all of us and will help us to develop a wish-list of future activities to feed into both the College's new Strategic Plan (our current plan ends this year) and also the Vet Futures Action Plan (see page 15). At all of these meetings the much-improved staff-Council relationship was in evidence, with staff members playing a key role in the discussions.

Our schedule for developing the new Strategic Plan includes meetings with the Operational Board, Senior Team and Council, as well as seeking input from members of staff at our Away Day in June. Our current plan focuses on becoming a First Rate Regulator. Now, especially in view of our new Charter being granted last year, we want to challenge ourselves to consider how we can become a First Rate Royal College, too. As well, of course, as a Great Place to Work.

Finally, I was delighted to be able to tell Council about the successful launch of the new Practice Standards Scheme, which took place on 20 November 2015, at the London Vet Show. Since the launch applications to join the new Scheme have been four times higher than for the same period in 2014-5, a real indication of how keen practices are to embrace the new approach, and the benefits that it can bring in terms of differentiating them from the competition.

This covers just a small selection of the many innovative projects underway at the College – you can read my full report to Council as part of the March meeting paper bundle, at [www.rcvs.org.uk/council-march-16](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/council-march-16).

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

## RAU move for Professor Price

Our congratulations to Council member Professor Jo Price, who has been appointed new Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) at Cirencester. Professor Price is currently an appointed member of RCVS Council, in her role as Head of the Bristol University Veterinary School and Head of the Department of Clinical Veterinary Sciences, a position she took up in 2009. She will continue to sit on Council, and the Operational Board (as Chair of the Education Committee), until the summer.

## Save the date!

'People, cats and vets through history' is the title of a one-day symposium, to be held in London on 10 June 2016 at the behest of RCVS President Bradley Viner, who has a long-held interest in the historical interaction of humanity and the feline world.

A joint initiative between RCVS Knowledge, International Cat Care (ICC) and the Veterinary History Society, the symposium will cover all types of cats from pedigree to wild; our changing relationship with cats from Ancient Egypt onwards; the relationship between cats and vets; the history of, and importance of research in, feline medicine; and, a look to the future of the human-cat bond and feline veterinary care.

Further information, including ticket details, is available from Claire Bessant at ICC ([claire@icatcare.org](mailto:claire@icatcare.org)), but in the meantime, please save the date!

## Accreditation down under

Representatives from the College took part in a meeting of the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG) in Melbourne, Australia, on 11 and 12 February this year to discuss a number of topics including visitations and accreditation procedures.

Representing the College were Senior Vice-President and Principal of the Royal Veterinary College Professor Stuart Reid, Chair of Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) Lynne Hill and Christine Warman, our Head of Education.

The wide-ranging agenda covered a review of joint visits since the last IAWG meeting, updates on reviews of education policies and accreditation procedures, a look at Day-one Competences, potential for engagement with other international accrediting organisations, a look at potential to further harmonise standards and agreement on recommendations to parent accrediting bodies. A report of the meeting will be discussed at the next meetings of PQSC and Education Committee.

# Learning the lingo

## English language testing on the cards

**F**ollowing last year's consultation by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on changing the law to introduce English language testing for veterinary surgeons who have qualified from elsewhere in the European Union, we are now in the final stages of implementing new procedures to introduce this testing process.

Language testing would be an option where we have 'serious and concrete doubts' about an applicant's ability to communicate in the English language before an individual joined the Register.

The consultation results demonstrated broad support for the proposals, which followed a change to the European Directive concerning the recognition of professional qualifications. Some respondents to the consultation called for the RCVS to be given tougher powers to test all EU applicants for their language ability; however, such a blanket testing policy is expressly disallowed by the Directive.

Under the current proposals, EU-registered applicants will be required to self-certify that the applicant's English language ability is sufficient to work as a veterinary surgeon in the UK, and provide appropriate evidence to support their claim.



Should the College have 'serious and concrete doubts' at this stage, or during their visit to the College to join the Register, our Registrar would have the right to suspend a candidate's registration until they have passed the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) level 7, or spent an appropriate period of time working in a role or roles with English as the main language.

The necessary changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act have now been made in order to allow the Registrar to use the new procedures. We are now awaiting confirmation from the European Commission that the new procedures are compliant with the Directive and we expect to be able to formally implement them early this year.

In the meantime, issues regarding prospective applicants' English language skills will be assessed on a case by case basis by the Registrar.

# Transplantation debate

## Standards Committee to consider Council views

**A**t the March meeting of RCVS Council, members debated the legal and ethical issues around feline renal transplantation, following a review of our current guidance on the procedure by both the Standards Committee and the Science Advisory Panel (SAP).

Guidance on feline renal transplantation was introduced in 2003 but was suspended pending a review in 2013. Standards Committee began the review process, with Council approval, and in light of major changes to animal welfare legislation. External legal opinion was sought which confirmed the legal difficulties around feline renal transplantation in terms of animal welfare legislation.

Separate to the legal issues, Standards Committee asked the SAP to consider relevant scientific and ethical aspects of feline renal transplants with a view to preparing a report. This included hosting an evidence-gathering session on 11 May 2015, with invited witnesses giving oral and written evidence.

The SAP concluded that it would be unethical for the RCVS to support using living cats for renal transplantation, while the external legal advisors also concluded that such a position would be illegal. This view was endorsed by members during the March Council meeting.

However, the SAP did recommend that there was no scientific or ethical reason for the College not to permit, with suitable safeguards, renal transplantation from pre-euthanasia cats – defined as animals under terminal anaesthesia before undergoing euthanasia for an unrelated condition. This view was not wholly endorsed by the Standards Committee because of the legal complications and, when brought before Council members, there was a general consensus that, in the case of feline renal transplantation, pre-euthanasia transplantation was not acceptable, and only dead animals should be used as source animals.

Speaking at the meeting, David Catlow, Chair of the Standards Committee, said: "I think there is a very clear steer in some areas about pre-euthanasia transplantation that does reflect the concerns raised by the Standards Committee."

Following the feedback from Council members, Standards Committee will discuss the issue at its April meeting, with a view to making a final recommendation on the guidance at the June meeting of RCVS Council.

When discussing the recommendation to make to Council, Standards Committee will carefully consider the impact that any decision may have on other types of tissue or organ donations, including in different species.

# Protection of title update

## Tens of thousands back campaign

**Our petition to the Government to legally protect the title veterinary nurse has now closed, with an amazing 36,863 people having supported our campaign by signing it.**

The campaign was launched in August 2015 and called upon the Government to legislate to ensure that only those who are qualified and registered as veterinary nurses can refer to themselves as such and to criminalise improper use of the term by unqualified people. The campaign was supported by the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) who agreed with us that the use of the term 'veterinary nurse' by unregistered individuals is misleading, with the potential to endanger animal welfare.

The current Government has a deregulatory agenda, and therefore it was always going to be a challenge to persuade it to protect the title. In January 2016 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs responded to the petition to say that, while it recognised the important role that veterinary nurses have in animal care, it did not recommend that Parliament should give legal protection to the title.

**“Good veterinary nursing can make a huge difference to the outcome and experience for both the animal and the client, we do a great job and we need to tell the public.”**

However, we were heartened by the amazing level of support the campaign received not only from veterinary nurses but also veterinary surgeons, practice teams, members of the public and Members of Parliament. This is demonstrated by the fact that the animated video we produced for the campaign about the role that veterinary nurses play in practice has received around 100,000 views via YouTube and Facebook.

While Defra's decision was disappointing, we will be working with the Department to find new ways of bolstering the role of veterinary nurses and safeguarding animal health and welfare. This will include reviewing Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Our VN Futures project (see 5) will also look at issues around raising awareness of the profession.

It is also worth noting that we have also increased protection for the title via the *Codes of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses* which state that both veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses must not hold out a colleague as a veterinary nurse unless they are registered as such.

In the meantime, we would like to give special thanks to those veterinary nurses who assisted in promoting the campaign, especially on social media, and the Members of Parliament of all parties who supported it both in writing and in the House of Commons itself.

Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council, adds: "While the RCVS and membership organisations campaign at a national level, it is important that both VNs and veterinary surgeons continue to promote and explain veterinary nursing to clients. Good veterinary nursing can make a huge difference to the outcome and experience for both the animal and the client, we do a great job and we need to tell the public."

We will continue to make the argument that the title should be protected.

### Review of Schedule 3

Defra has suggested a full review of Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1996; this is the part of the Act that allows the delegation of minor acts of veterinary surgery to veterinary nurses. We hope that this will include expanding the role of veterinary nurses in assisting with anaesthesia, as agreed by RCVS Council in November 2015. It might also include simplifying the language of Schedule 3 to give veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses more confidence in delegating and undertaking Schedule 3 activities, respectively.

We are currently planning to undertake several pieces of research, linked to the VN Futures project, to better understand how veterinary nurses view Schedule 3 and what it means to them in practice. We will then commission a working party to form a settled view on how Schedule 3 might be reformed before entering into further discussions with Defra later on this year.



# Alternative options

## Update on ADR trial

**We are currently in the process of assessing the success of our alternative dispute resolution (ADR) trial in order to make a recommendation on its future to Council at its June meeting.**

The trial was started in November 2014 in order to look at ways in which concerns raised about a veterinary surgeon that do not meet our threshold for serious professional misconduct might be otherwise dealt with. The free, voluntary trial has been run by Ombudsman Services (OS), an independent, not-for-profit complaints resolution organisation, and, to date 106 cases have been referred, of which determinations have been made in respect of 80.

Although OS is still dealing with new cases, we are also focusing on gathering feedback from participants and put together a feedback form, with the assistance of the ADR Advisory Panel, which asked questions about the process and outcome of the cases.

Some 73 people (both vets and complainants) have taken part in the survey. The headline results are as follows:

- 91% of vets felt the process was fair and reasonable, compared to 40% of complainants
- 91% of vets felt the outcome was fair and reasonable, compared with 17% of complainants
- 44% of vets felt that ADR had helped to resolve their dispute, compared with 19% of complainants
- When asked whether they felt ADR was a positive addition to the RCVS concerns investigation process, 91% of complainants said they felt that it was.

CEO Nick Stace said: "As well as assessing the success of Ombudsman Services' ADR trial we are also looking at possible alternatives to present at the June Council meeting, so that Council is able to make a fair assessment of the options that may work for the profession, the public and the College.

"It is quite possible that we will be proposing a further trial of another system, so that when the final decision is made we have detailed points for comparison."

We will be reporting on Council's decision on the future of ADR in the June edition of *RCVS News*.

### Acting Registrar

Eleanor Ferguson, Head of Professional Conduct, has been made Acting Registrar.

### New role for Royle

Nick Royle, Executive Director of RCVS Knowledge, left for pastures new during January. We wish him all the best in his new role. Recruitment for a replacement is underway.

## Reporting suspected illegal imports

### New confidentiality guidance

**In response to frequent queries from the profession about what they should do when presented with an animal they suspect has been illegally imported, we have updated supporting guidance to the Code chapter 14 ('Client confidentiality') to include more information on these situations.**

In terms of what to look out for, a foreign microchip isn't evidence in itself that an animal has been illegally imported – the microchip may have been purchased and implanted in the UK, or the animal may have been legally imported into the UK and rehomed. However, situations that may invite suspicion of an illegal import include those where there are anomalies in the animal's import paperwork (ie the paperwork pertains to a different animal than the one presented, or where it is not compliant with pet travel rules); where paperwork does not exist; or where rabies vaccination requirements have not been met.

When making a decision on whether to report, please bear in mind that if the animal has, or you think it may have, a notifiable disease, then there is a legal obligation to inform the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). More information on notifiable diseases can be found on the UK government website at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/notifiable-diseases-in-animals](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/notifiable-diseases-in-animals).

Otherwise, if you have no such suspicions, there is no legal or professional obligation to report, but veterinary surgeons may choose to do so. Such situations should be treated like any other suspected breaches of the law encountered in practice – that is, considered on their individual circumstances and with regard to the two situations where breaching client confidentiality could be justified: in the interests of animal welfare, and/or where it is in the public interest to do so.

**The RCVS will support vets and nurses who believe they are acting on the basis on one of the above two grounds, and can justify acting in those terms. We will also, however, support a vet or nurse who does not wish to report for various reasons.**

In situations where the animal owner has purchased it from a breeder or seller in good faith, oblivious to the origins of the pet and the implications for them as an owner, you may wish to encourage them to report the matter themselves, as they will have the relevant details and first-hand evidence to pass on to the authorities.

If you wish to report your concerns you should contact your local Trading Standards office, if you are outside London. If you are within Greater London you should report to the City of London Animal Health and Welfare team.

In all circumstances where a notifiable disease is suspected, you should report the matter to APHA.

The new guidance can be found on our website at [www.rcvs.org.uk/confidentiality](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/confidentiality)

## Play fair!

### CMA guidance on veterinary medicines

**A**vid readers of *RCVS News* might recall that, from time to time, we highlight our Fair Trading Requirements which we agreed with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) as an alternative to legislation under the Fair Trading Act. Fundamental to these requirements is the client's entitlement to a prescription (as appropriate) and their right to choose where they purchase veterinary medicines.

The OFT's role is now performed by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and we meet them regularly to discuss relevant issues. At our meeting in November 2015 with representatives from the CMA's Remedies Monitoring Team and Intelligence Team, we agreed that now was a good time for another reminder of the requirements that veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses should be familiar with – these being:

- Inform your clients of their entitlement to a prescription, their ability to buy medicines from another veterinary surgeon or pharmacy, and your general policy for repeat prescriptions. You should have a large and prominently displayed sign to advise your clients of their rights.
- Prescription charges should be reasonable. Individual veterinary practices must determine independently how much to charge for a prescription.
- The Supply of Relevant Veterinary Medicinal Products Order 2005 makes it unlawful to discriminate between clients who are supplied with a prescription and those who are not, in relation to fees charged for medicines and other veterinary services.

Very occasionally, our Standards and Advice Team receive enquiries from members of the public who ask if they are entitled to a prescription,



sometimes because they have had difficulty obtaining one.

The CMA's Intelligence and Remedies Monitoring Teams have also encountered concerns, as Bob MacDowall, Manager of the Remedies Monitoring Team, explains: "Occasionally we hear from animal owners who have faced what they regard as large bills for prescription fees. Sometimes, they conflate this with concerns about the overall size of the vet's bill, but it is the prescription fees issue that encourages them to seek advice from us. Whilst the CMA cannot advise on what amounts to a 'reasonable' charge, we would be concerned if charges are set at a level so as to deter clients from seeking medicines from a supplier of their own choosing.

"Over the last few months we have also seen some information to suggest that not all pet owners are aware they can get a prescription from a veterinary surgeon and have it fulfilled at a pharmacy. The RCVS Fair Trading Requirements aim to ensure that animal owners are clear that prescriptions are available, as appropriate."

For further information, please see chapter 10 of the *Code's* supporting guidance at [www.rcvs.org.uk/fairtrading](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/fairtrading)

## Fitness to practise for VN students

### New publication sets out responsibilities

**M**embers of VN Council, the British Veterinary Nursing Association and representatives from veterinary nursing training providers have developed a new publication aimed at helping student veterinary nurses prepare for life as a registered professional.

The publication, entitled *Fitness to Practise: A Guide for UK Providers of Veterinary Nursing Education and Student Veterinary Nurses*, also provides guidance for training providers on how to recognise and address fitness to practise concerns.

It sets out the broad principles of fitness to practise that student veterinary nurses should follow, and which training providers should

expect and uphold. While we have no regulatory jurisdiction over student veterinary nurses, we hope this will prepare them for having to abide by the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* and becoming a member of a regulated profession.

The publication, which covers topics such as appropriate use of social media, private and student life, practice life and protecting privacy, will soon be available to download from [www.rcvs.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/publications)





## Delegation guidance

### Advice on unqualified staff and procedures

**A**t its meeting in January 2016, Standards Committee approved additions to chapter 19 ('Treatment of animals by unqualified persons') of the supporting guidance to the Code to better promote our advice on delegating to unqualified practice staff. We are frequently asked for advice on this topic and for many years have advised on the basis of guidance published in a 2010 edition of *VN Standard*. The Committee agreed that given the frequency with which questions on this topic arise, it would be sensible to have more prominent guidance.

The Committee agreed that the guidance remains sound and so the principles are the same. In brief, veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses should understand that unqualified practice staff have no legal dispensation to undertake delegated medical treatments and surgical procedures – they do not have the same privileges that Schedule 3 grants to veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses, for example. This remains the case regardless of any training or experience such staff members may have.

**“We would encourage members to delegate no more than the type of ‘minor medical treatment’ an animal owner could legally undertake.”**

We recognise, however, that sometimes practitioners will wish to delegate certain tasks to unqualified practice staff, and we would encourage members to ensure that any such delegations are well-considered. Veterinary surgeons will remain professionally responsible for such decisions and so should be able to justify them.

Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis and all relevant factors considered, including the nature of the task, the individual animal and the qualifications and experience of the staff member. We would encourage members to delegate no more than the type of 'minor medical treatment' an animal owner could legally undertake as this was seen as a sensible gauge of what is reasonable to delegate to unqualified practice staff. Typical examples of 'minor medical treatment' would include the administration of uncomplicated oral medication and subcutaneous injections.

The decision will always be a matter for professional judgement in each individual case and, as such, it is not possible or sensible for us to publish a list of what is acceptable to delegate. We do, however, consider that there are certain tasks that should not be delegated to unqualified practice staff, including intravenous and intramuscular injections, and invasive procedures such as the introduction of an IV or urinary catheter.

The new guidance can be found on our website at [www.rcvs.org.uk/unqualified](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/unqualified)

## ‘Veterinary care’ guidance

### New sections now online

**I**n January 2016, Standards Committee approved amendments to chapter 2 of the supporting guidance ('Veterinary care'). This was part of our ongoing commitment to carry out a rolling review of the supporting guidance to ensure it remains appropriate and reflects current practice.

The now expanded guidance covers topics such as communicating investigation and treatment options to clients, hospitalisation and in-patient care, responsibilities when discharging animals, and advice on restricted procedures and mutilations. The aim was not to produce prescriptive clinical guidelines – it would be inappropriate for us to take on this role – but the Committee agreed that some more general advice on veterinary care may be helpful and appropriate for the profession.

The new guidance can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcare](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcare)

## Compulsory microchipping – an update

### Regulations come into force next month

**I**n the last edition of *RCVS News* (November 2015), we included a short piece on compulsory microchipping in England. At that time, we had not seen the regulations for Scotland and Wales. However, these have now been published and are available as follows:

*The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015* – [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/108/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/108/contents/made)

*The Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016* – [www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/58/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/58/contents/made)

*The Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015* – [www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2015/1990/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2015/1990/contents/made)

Chapter 29 ('Microchips, microchipping and animals without microchips') of the supporting guidance has been updated to include reference to each set of regulations. This is available at [www.rcvs.org.uk/microchipping](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/microchipping)

All the regulations oblige keepers of dogs to get their animals microchipped where they are over the age of eight weeks old and not already microchipped. This obligation takes effect in all parts of the UK from **6 April 2016**. Each set of regulations includes a 'health' exemption from the general obligation to microchip, stipulations as to who can implant microchips in dogs, an obligation to report adverse reactions to microchipping and various offences.

Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses should familiarise themselves with the regulations applicable in their part of the UK as, despite the broad similarities, there are some very slight differences to be mindful of. Each set of regulations has slightly different stipulations as to what details should be recorded on a database, for example, and the health exemptions are worded slightly differently. Furthermore, while each set of regulations includes an obligation to report adverse reactions and microchip failure, the Scottish regulations impose a 21-day time limit on this notification.

We take the opportunity to reiterate the advice of the Standards Committee (published in November's *RCVS News*) that, after 6 April 2016, a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse who discovers that a dog has not been microchipped will not be obliged to report this to the authorities. However, they may wish to advise the dog owner of the new regulations and encourage them to comply.



# Emails away

## Online annual renewal this year

**T**he annual renewal notices reminding veterinary surgeons to renew their registration for 2016-17 have this year, for the first time, been sent to the vast majority of the profession by email.

Emails have now reached all members of the profession, except those for whom we don't hold email addresses or those who are unable to receive these communications electronically. If you have not received any of these emails, then please check your 'junk folder' in the first instance and, if it can't be found, contact our Registration Department using the details below.

Another first is that we will be reminding members about paying their fees using an automated text message service.

The easiest and most convenient way of paying your annual renewal and confirming your registration is via our online My Account area ([www.rcvs.org.uk/login](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/login)) where you will also need to confirm your registration details, confirm you are compliant with our continuing professional development (CPD) requirement and disclose any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings.

Please remember that failure to declare CPD compliance may result in our Education Department auditing your records, and failing to disclose any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings may result in you being referred to the Preliminary Investigation Committee for further scrutiny.

If you have a Direct Debit set up to pay the annual renewal fee, or your practice is paying, you will still need to confirm your registration details, whether online or by post, as is required under the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons* ([www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode)).

It is worth noting that we currently have around 400 members with incorrect address details on the Register. As per the Veterinary Surgeons Act, these members can be removed after six months which we would very much like to avoid.

For further advice on any of the above, please contact our Registration Department on 020 7202 0707 or [registration@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:registration@rcvs.org.uk).

Please remember that you should pay your annual renewal fee on or before **31 March**. If you pay your fee after **30 April** you will have to pay an additional £35 on top of the annual renewal fee. Those who have not paid by **1 June** will be removed from the Register.

### Practice fees due

We have recently sent invoices to all practices that are not accredited under the Practice Standards Scheme to remind them that their fees to remain on the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises (RVPP) for 2016-17 are due by 1 April.

# Almost 700 VNs removed from Register

## Removals for non-payment increase

**S**ome 692 veterinary nurses had their names removed from the Register on 1 January 2016 for failing to renew their registration – although, to date, 205 have subsequently applied for restoration.

A number of different communications were sent to registered veterinary nurses to remind them that the fee was due – including via email, text, letter, the veterinary press and in a previous edition of *RCVS News*.

We have published a list of veterinary nurses who were removed from the Register but who were not, at the time, subsequently restored at [www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/about-the-vn-register](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/about-the-vn-register)

We also recommend that practices use our Check the Register search tool ([www.rcvs.org](http://www.rcvs.org)).

([www.rcvs.org.uk/checkregister](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/checkregister)) to see if veterinary nurses they employ still have their registration status, and are thus legally allowed to have procedures set out under Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act delegated to them.

Worryingly, a number of those who had been removed from the Register told us that they were continuing to undertake Schedule 3 work and use the postnominal RVN – despite not being registered veterinary nurses. We would like to remind the profession, including vets who are delegating work to staff, that it is a breach of the Veterinary Surgeons Act for unqualified and/or unregistered staff to undertake Schedule 3 procedures. More information about delegation to veterinary nurses and Schedule 3 can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/delegation](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/delegation).

# The 'go to' place to find a vet

## New Find a Vet to feature new data, new design and new tools

**W**ithin the next few weeks, the 'Find a Vet' service on our website will be undergoing nothing short of a transformation, with a whole suite of improvements designed to make finding a veterinary practice, veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse quick, simple and as informative as possible.

So, whether you're a member of the veterinary profession looking to find a vet or VN colleague, or an animal owner looking to find a veterinary practice, the 'go to' place online to find a vet will soon be none other than the RCVS website!

### What's new?

Even in its current form, our Find a Vet service continues to be one of the most popular areas of the whole website, receiving around 30,000 views every month. The new service should hopefully knock the socks off those statistics, though, as it will provide a lot more information to help animal owners, in particular, choose a practice that is right for them.

For example, every practice will be able to display its opening hours (including weekend opening), parking facilities and disabled access; the species treated and the clinical staff who work there, including any Advanced Practitioners and/or Specialists; whether it's a vaccination clinic, a referrals-only practice or only provides ambulatory services; and, of course, contact details, website and social media channels.

Practices accredited under the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) will be able to display more information about all their accreditations more prominently, together with any of the new PSS awards they receive following their introduction last November.

In addition to lots of filter options to help users find out exactly what's available, there will also

be a comprehensive map and directions facility displaying search results on a map, and providing instructions on how to reach each practice on foot, by car or on public transport.

The other main feature of the new Find a Vet service will be how it combines the existing 'Check the Register' function into the same search facility, enabling users to find individual veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, check their registration status and, for those working in clinical practice, ultimately link to the practice they work in (providing the individual has consented to this information being displayed).

***"Find a Vet service continues to be one of the most popular areas of the whole website."***

All vets and VNs on our Register will soon have their own profile page on the RCVS website, which will display certain statutory information including: name, qualifications, Register status, location (town/county only), reference number and registration date; and some additional voluntary information, including Specialist and/or Advanced Practitioner status, field of work and, in time, place of work.

### Update your details

The first phase of the new Find a Vet is due to go live on 1 April, with the individual/practice links being implemented later in the spring/summer. In the meantime, we would encourage all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to ensure their individual details are as up to date as possible, by logging in to the My Account area of the RCVS website and making the necessary updates. Veterinary practices will be able to update their details online via a dedicated My Account area for practices from the beginning of April.

# Positive response to new PSS

## Four-fold increase in accreditation applications



**F**ollowing the launch of the new Practice Standards Scheme at the London Vet Show to a packed room of over 200 people last November, we have seen a remarkable uptake of new applications for RCVS accreditation with levels over four times higher compared to the same period last year.

Since November, all assessments have been carried out under the new Scheme and by our new team of employed and professionally-trained assessors. All previously RCVS-accredited practices have automatically transitioned to the new Scheme at their existing accreditation level.

We have also seen considerable interest in the new PSS awards with more than 50 practices having applied for awards so far in different areas. The feedback on the new assessors and modules has also been very positive amongst those practices involved in trialling the new Scheme and those that have recently undergone inspections.

***“It was our chance to show an external person the knowledge and training of our staff and how we strive for best practice.”***

### Stanley – online administration tool

When we launched the new Scheme, we also held a competition for 20 practices to receive free assessments for the awards, or to join the Scheme, in return for helping us with the final-stage testing of ‘Stanley’ – our online administration tool which aims to streamline the accreditation and awards process.

One of Stanley’s key benefits is that it allows practices to upload documentation required for accreditation prior to the assessment, meaning that our assessors can spend more time focusing on the practice’s behaviours and outcomes.

Holly Charlton (pictured below), Practice Manager at the Watkins & Tasker Veterinary Group, said: “The dragging and dropping of files on Stanley was straightforward. The Practice Standards assessment was a lot easier from our point of view, having an assessor wander around and not be buried in paperwork gives a truer opinion of our practice. It was our chance to show an external person the knowledge and training of our staff and how we strive for best practice.”

***“We’re compiling a new PSS communications toolkit to help practices share their accreditation news.”***

However, the ‘beta-testing’ process has identified a number of technical issues that require further work before we would be happy to release the system to the profession, as well as areas where the user experience could be enhanced.

We are continuing to work with our external IT developer on both of these areas and, once our suggested changes and improvements have been implemented, we will be distributing log-in details to practices.

In the meantime, to enable practices to assess the new awards and accreditations, we have developed a stop-gap system that will allow practices to upload the documents required for accreditation via our website. We will also be offering all practices a £50 discount on the joining fee and the awards assessments until Stanley is operational.

### Fee changes

All RCVS-accredited practices should now have received an invoice reminding them to pay their annual fee to remain in the PSS. This fee incorporates the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises (RVPP) fee and needs to be paid before **Friday 1 April**.

The annual PSS fee has also increased to £413.20 (including VAT) for main or standalone practices and £113.20 (including VAT) for branch practices. These fee increases are to allow the College to better deliver some of the benefits of the new Scheme.

If you have not received your invoice, or have any queries about it, then please contact the PSS Team on 020 7202 0767 or [pss@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:pss@rcvs.org.uk).

### Marketing materials

To help accredited practices promote their hard-won accreditation and any awards, we are developing a range of new marketing materials which will be



available to order through a bespoke online store. In the first instance, this will include new posters, leaflets, accreditation and awards plaques, window stickers, lapel badges and the popular (but revamped) bookmarks. We’ll also be producing digital graphics for use on practice websites and social media accounts and updating the promotional videos and waiting room slideshows with the latest information about the new Scheme.

In addition, we’re compiling a new PSS communications toolkit to help practices share their accreditation news. It will contain guidance on writing for different media, advice on setting up interviews, what to prepare for film crews, photography ideas, press release templates, social media top tips and ideas for additional marketing.

Finally, we’re also overhauling our online Find a Vet service and giving greater prominence to the accredited practice and awards logos in the listings of practices within the Scheme (see 10 for details).



# It's educational!

## Roundup of the February 2016 Committee meeting

**O**ur Education Committee, currently chaired by Professor Jo Price of the University of Bristol, met on 3 February 2016 to discuss a wide range of issues relating to the education and continuing professional development (CPD) of veterinary surgeons. Here is a roundup of some of the issues discussed and decisions made.

### Year-one Competences

The Committee approved a number of recommendations made by the Year-one Competences Working Group, chaired by RCVS Council member Tom Witte, which was formed in 2015 to update the current competences. These represent the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours veterinary surgeons are expected to have met after approximately one year in practice.

The Group developed a revised list of competences, covering a range of areas including general professional skills; practical and clinical competences; and knowledge and understanding of veterinary medicine, legislation and research methods, among other subjects. This draft list was put out to consultation with recent graduates and representative organisations in September 2015. It was further revised using the consultation feedback, and the new Competences and Clinical Procedures checklist was approved by the Committee with minor revisions. This list is now available to view at [www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/pdp-competences-checklist](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/pdp-competences-checklist)

The aim of the revisions was to bring the competences closer into line with the Day-one Competences for veterinary students and the Professional Development Phase (PDP), the period of structured learning and development that graduates should complete within their first three years in clinical practice.

One area that the consultation explored was a change of name from Year-one Competences to something that better reflected the fact that there was now a three-year period in which to complete the PDP. The Working Group has now decided to rename Year-one Competences to Professional Development Phase (PDP) Competences.

### Professional Development Phase

The Committee approved the development of a new form for UK veterinary graduates, asking them to identify their career plans and whether they intend to go into clinical practice, a non-clinical role or work overseas. The form, which would be part of the registration process, would allow the Education Department to follow up on those who had said they intended to enter clinical practice but had not yet signed up to the PDP.

The Committee also felt that, as it had been over three years since the PDP became a mandatory requirement, it was reasonable to enforce the requirement more rigorously, particularly with the around 20 per cent of graduates who do not voluntarily engage with the PDP. This will involve targeted communications to those who do not

sign up and, in the case of persistent failure to engage, referring non-respondents to the CPD Referral Group for further investigation.

Some minor changes to the PDP process for overseas graduates were also approved in order to close potential loopholes and make sure that overseas and UK vets were treated equally.

### Advanced Practitioners

Some 144 veterinary surgeons applied for Advanced Practitioner status during the 2015 application period (from June until the end of October), of which seven were declined. Thirty-four of these were processed early, as they were received in June and July.

In a move towards a more 'open' application system, we are already accepting Advanced Practitioner applications for 2016, and the window will remain open until 31 October 2016. Please visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/advanced](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advanced) for details on how to apply.

***"The Committee approved the development of a new form for UK veterinary graduates, asking them to identify their career plans and whether they intend to go into clinical practice, a non-clinical role or work overseas."***

### Specialists

Some 404 applications were received for Specialist status last year, all of which have been accepted after being processed by the Specialist Subcommittee.

The Committee heard that the large number of applications this year was due to changes to the *Code of Professional Conduct* stating that veterinary surgeons should not hold themselves or a colleague out as a specialist or similar unless on the List of Specialists. It was also noted that many of the applicants held European Diplomas awarded by European Colleges.

### CPD audit

Last year's CPD audit for veterinary surgeons found that, although the majority of veterinary surgeons met the requirement of 105 hours of CPD over a three-year period, there are many vets who are not fulfilling their professional responsibilities in terms of undertaking CPD or responding to the College's requests to submit CPD records.

In total, 931 veterinary surgeons, broken into three groups, were asked to share their CPD records for 2012 to 2014, and an overall response rate of 75% was achieved. The first group consisted of a random sample, across all postcodes, of 400 vets who had confirmed they were compliant during the 2015 annual renewal process and, of these, 9% were found to be non-compliant.

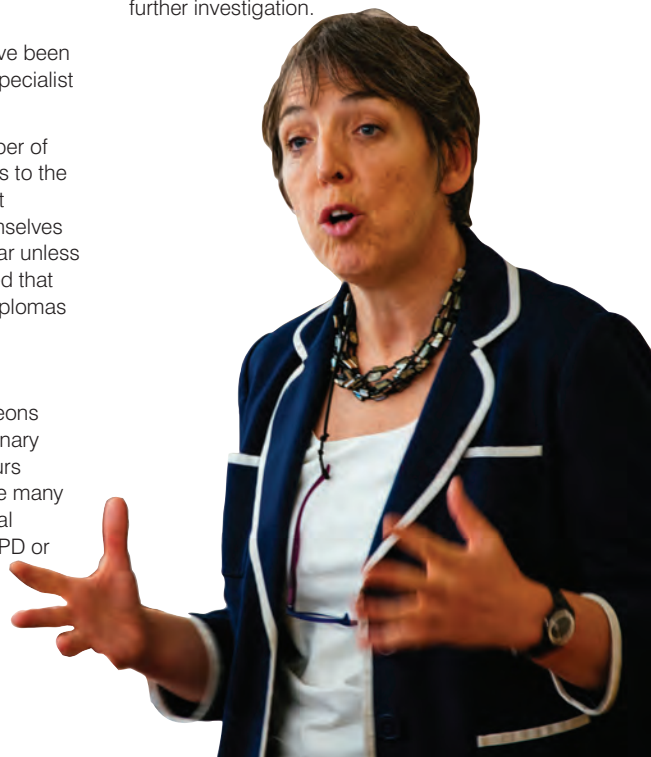
The second group were 488 non-respondents from last year's audit who also failed to confirm their compliance upon registration renewal. Only 58% of these responded and, of those who did contact us, 34% were not compliant.

The third group consisted of 43 graduate vets who did not respond to any communications about the PDP, of whom 91% responded and, of those, 31% were non-compliant.

The main reasons given for non-compliance included maternity leave, illness, difficulty in finding time for and affording CPD, working part-time and/or being retired from clinical practice and not keeping CPD records for all the audited years.

The Education Department also contacted 5,568 vets who did not tick the box confirming they met the CPD requirement and 184 vets who confirmed they were non-compliant in the 2015 annual renewal. These groups were not asked to share their records but were asked to confirm that they were CPD-compliant.

We would like to remind practising veterinary surgeons that CPD is not only good practice but is also a requirement under the *Code of Professional Conduct* and that non-compliance and lack of engagement are taken seriously. This is why we have recently set up a CPD Referral Group which will make decisions on whether to refer those who persistently fail to engage in CPD to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigation.



# End of an era

## RCVS Awards closure

**On Tuesday 1 December 2015 a special gathering was held to mark the end of RCVS Awards, our former awarding organisation for veterinary nursing qualifications, which closed at the end of November.**

Over 50 people attended the reception, many of whom had played a prominent role in setting up RCVS Awards in 1997, its administration and the delivery of veterinary nursing qualifications through its associated centres.

***“What I have seen over the years is increased professionalism and better standards.”***

The decision to close RCVS Awards was made by VN Council in 2011 as it represented a conflict of interest with the College's role as the regulator of veterinary nursing education and professional conduct. The last cohort of students were enrolled on to RCVS Awards in 2012 and, in 2014, a formal surrender of recognition was submitted to, and accepted by, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

Neil Smith, a Past-President of the RCVS who formerly served as Chair of the RCVS Awards Board, said: “In some ways this is a sad day, but it is also a day on which we can be very proud. What I have seen over the years is increased professionalism and better standards, not only in the Veterinary Nursing Department and RCVS Awards, but throughout the profession as a whole and, with regards to the awarding organisation, we have now passed the baton to others.”



# Making progress with NPL

## Over a thousand respond to survey

**Our efforts to improve the Nursing Progress Log (NPL), the module of the Professional Development Record which can be used by student veterinary nurses to log their learning and development, are continuing apace.**

Last year we carried out a survey that asked NPL users where they felt improvements could be made. Some 1,415 people responded, of whom 60% were students, 37% clinical coaches at Training Practices (TPs) and 3% internal verifiers responsible for monitoring the quality of training at TPs on behalf of awarding organisations.

There was positive feedback about the visuals of the NPL and its convenience for tracking progress. There were also suggestions for improvements such as the addition of a percentage progress bar, the addition of a search tool, the facility to edit and delete entries, increasing character limits within text boxes and being able to log cases farther back than two weeks from the date of entry.

The NPL Review Group met at the end of February to consider the feedback and has made a series of suggestions to the platform's developers. It is hoped that a new and improved NPL will be launched later this year.

# Skilled from day one

## New Day-one Skills List for VNs

**The Veterinary Nurse Education Committee has developed a revised list of skills and procedures in which newly qualified veterinary nurses must be proficient upon joining the Register and entering clinical practice.**

The revised list brings the skills and procedures up-to-date with, and ensures they are reflective of, current practice to make it more consistent and have a clearer focus on effective clinical skills. For example, microchipping has now been added.

This followed a consultation last summer which asked both vets and VNs to comment on a provisional list that had been developed by the VN Education Committee in conjunction with our VN Department. Many of the 303 responses we received fed directly into the revised list, which was approved by the VN Education Committee in November 2015.

In addition, the Committee asked the College to develop further guidance for each skill and procedure listed. The list, plus guidance, will be brought back before the VN Education Committee later this month for approval, and then to VN Council in May.

# New fellas

## Fellowship gearing up for re-launch

**The new RCVS Fellowship is expected to be re-launched this spring with a new ethos, routes to entry and governance structure.**

RCVS Council approved plans in June 2015 to radically alter the Fellowship to turn it from an exam-based award, to a learned society open to those who can demonstrate meritorious contributions in one of three different routes: to clinical practice; to the profession; or to knowledge.

Simon Wallace, Fellowship Officer, said: “The overall aim of the new Fellowship is to advance veterinary standards and improve our capability to make more of the collective knowledge and experience of our members. Furthermore, by acknowledging the significant achievements of veterinary surgeons in a range of different fields, we hope to encourage more members of the profession to engage in original research and achieve high-level qualifications.”

***“The overall aim of the new Fellowship is to advance veterinary standards and improve our capability.”***

The redevelopment includes a brand new governance structure, comprising a governing Fellowship Board and a Credentials Panel to assess applications to the Fellowship. There will be three Credentials Panel Chairs, each with responsibility for one route to entry and for coordinating Credentials Panel members in the assessment of applications.

At the time of publication we are in the process of appointing a Chair and Vice-Chair to the Fellowship Board, as well as the Credentials Panel Chairs. Ahead of its re-launch, more details about the new RCVS Fellowship will be made available on our website.

# Considering EMS

## Survey receives over 170 responses

**We have received over 170 responses to a survey that asked recent graduates about their experiences with extra-mural studies (EMS).**

Early indications suggest that students feel EMS is a valuable and worthwhile addition to their education. The results will be analysed and discussed by the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee and Education Committee, which will decide whether any further review of EMS policy should be considered.

We would like to thank those who took the time to share their opinions and we will report on our findings later this year.

# Mind Matters – ‘a big step forward’

Alastair Campbell praises initiative



Neil Smith (third from right) flanked by Alastair Campbell and Claudia Hammond and other members of the panel at SPVS/VPMA Congress

**A**ccording to Alastair Campbell, mental health advocate and Tony Blair's former media strategist, our Mind Matters Initiative is "a big step forward for a profession still trying to come to terms with mental health issues and their impact on working lives across the sector" (*Veterinary Business Journal*, March 2016).

Mr Campbell was speaking following his involvement with the joint Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS)/Veterinary Practice Management Association (VPMA) Congress at the end of January, where he had opened proceedings with a frank and engaging speech about his political career, personal mental health issues and life growing up as the son of a veterinary surgeon.

**"A big step forward for a profession still trying to come to terms with mental health issues and their impact on working lives across the sector."**

He also featured on the panel of the opening session of the Mind Matters stream at Congress, which was chaired by Radio 4's Claudia Hammond, and also featured heartfelt contributions from two veterinary surgeons who had suffered with mental health issues, and a practice manager who had helped her colleagues cope with a mental health issues within the team. This 'lived

experience' proved a revelation to many in the audience, who greatly appreciated the speakers' courage in sharing their personal stories.

Other sessions during the stream included Claudia Hammond talking about her research into the science of emotions, and Emma Mamo, Head of Workplace Wellbeing at the mental health charity Mind, offering tips about coping with, and helping to reduce, mental health and wellbeing issues in the practice.

#### Virtual wellbeing

Wellbeing had been on the agenda at a Mind Matters webinar stream earlier in January, hosted by the Webinar Vet as part of its International Virtual Congress. The session, which attracted over 500 delegates (on a Friday evening!) and has been 'watched again' by many more, was chaired by RCVS Council member Neil Smith, Chair of the Mind Matters Initiative, and featured talks from veterinary surgeons Carlyne Crowe and David Bartram, talking about how to cope with work-related stress and enhancing your personal mental wellbeing, respectively. Human-centred nurse Mike Scanlon gave an introduction to mindfulness-based stress management. All three sessions are available free of charge at [thewebinarvet.com/rcvs-webinars](http://thewebinarvet.com/rcvs-webinars).

#### Mental health awareness

Since our last update, in the November 2015 issue of *RCVS News*, we have run a series of six mental health awareness courses, in Winchester, Wrexham, Newcastle, Coventry and Inverness (two courses, as part of the Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme conference).



These are small group training courses (up to 24 delegates), which aim to give individuals an overview of common mental health issues, and the skills and knowledge to talk to someone they feel may be in difficulties and to signpost them to sources of help.

We will be holding further courses during 2016, which will be publicised via the veterinary press and our soon-to-be-launched website ([www.vetmindmatters.org](http://www.vetmindmatters.org)). You can also follow us via Twitter on [@vetmindmatters](https://twitter.com/vetmindmatters).

#### SPVS/Mind Matters Wellbeing Award

At SPVS/VPMA Congress in January we announced a partnership with SPVS around the new SPVS/Mind Matters Wellbeing Award.

This award aims to raise standards within practices around wellbeing, reward those achieving great things and, longer term, build up a database of wellbeing best practice that veterinary businesses can dip into for inspiration. More details of the Award, and how to enter, will be announced at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress in April – and do come and visit us on our stand (105) at the event to find out more about Mind Matters activities.

#### Vetlife Helpline – stick to it

If you are a UK-practising member or a registered veterinary nurse, within this copy of *RCVS News* you will find a sticker displaying the Vetlife Helpline number. Please place this on the controlled drugs cupboard in your practice to help reach out to people who may be in crisis. The stickers have been distributed as part of the Mind Matters project.



For more information about Mind Matters, email Project Director Lizzie Lockett on [lizzie@vetmindmatters.org](mailto:lizzie@vetmindmatters.org).

# Action stations for Vet Futures

## Project enters action phase



Sean Wensley, BVA President, and Bradley Viner, RCVS President, taking part in a Vet Futures webinar

**The Vet Futures report – *Taking charge of our future: a vision for the veterinary profession for 2030* – was published at the British Veterinary Association (BVA) Congress, inside the London Vet Show, in November 2015. The publication was launched by a well-attended panel discussion about the future of the profession, chaired by the then Association of Veterinary Students President Helena Diffey.**

The aim of Vet Futures, a joint project from the RCVS and BVA, is to help the profession prepare for and shape its future. The report contains 34 recommendations, organised under six ambitions: animal welfare, vets' wider roles, mental health and wellbeing, veterinary careers, sustainable veterinary business and leadership.

***“The Group’s members were selected to ensure a balance that reflects the profession at large.”***

An Action Group has now been convened, tasked with developing the report's recommendations into an action plan. Members of the Action Group were chosen from over 80 applicants – a level of interest that demonstrated excellent engagement from the profession. The Group's members were selected to ensure a balance that reflects the profession at large, as well as embodying the experience required to rise to the challenge at hand.

They comprise:

- **Dr Clare Allen** MA VetMB PhD MRCVS – Senior Teaching Associate for curriculum and innovation in the Department of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Cambridge
- **Helena Diffey** – Senior Vice-President of the Association of Veterinary Students UK and Ireland
- **Simon Doherty** BVMS MRCVS FRSB – Owner and Director of Blackwater Consultancy and animal science expert for the Agri-Tech Organisation of UK Trade & Investment (UKTI)
- **Daniel Hogan** RVN – Operations Manager at Dick White Referrals



## VETFUTURES



- **Dr Liz Mossop** BVM&S PhD MRCVS – Associate Professor of Veterinary Education and Sub-Dean for Teaching, Learning and Assessment at the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham
- **Gudrun Ravetz** BVSc MRCVS – BVA Junior Vice-President and Veterinary Consultant to Pet Health Plans from Denplan
- **Dr Kimberley Schiller** BVetMed MRCVS – Manager in Healthcare Practice at Accenture, the global consultancy
- **Dr Huw Stacey** BVetMed DipAS(CABC) MRCVS – Director of Clinical Services at the Pets at Home Vet Group (PAHVG)
- **Dr Mary Thomson** BVMS MRCVS – small animal veterinary surgeon in Devon, Vetlife Board member and RCVS Postgraduate Dean
- **Dr Chris Tufnell** BSc (Hons) BVMS MRCVS – RCVS Vice-President and Director of Coach House Vets, a small animal and equine practice in Berkshire
- **Dr Bradley Viner** BVetMed MSc(VetGP) DProf MRCVS – RCVS President and Principal of Blythwood Vets, a group of small animal practices in North West London
- **Sean Wensley** BVSc MSc Grad DMS MRCVS – BVA President and Senior Veterinary Surgeon for Communication and Education at the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA)
- **Dr James Yeates** BVSc BSc DWEL DipECVS(AWBM) PhD MRCVS – RSPCA Chief Veterinary Officer, a visiting Fellow at the University of Surrey, an honorary lecturer at the University of Bristol and an active member of the animal welfare research community.

The Action Group will launch its report at the Vet Futures Summit, which will take place on Monday 4 July at the Royal Veterinary College in Camden. Anyone is welcome to attend the event, and tickets (£20, to cover catering) can be purchased at [vetfuturesummit.eventbrite.co.uk](http://vetfuturesummit.eventbrite.co.uk)

Meanwhile, a new 'VN Futures' project has been launched, to help lead the veterinary nursing profession into its next phase of development – see page 5 for more information, including an invitation to attend one of our roadshow events.

# Prick up your ears

## Listen again to our webinars

**A number of recent RCVS webinars hosted by the Webinar Vet are now available to listen to again via our website ([www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars)) covering a range of topics.**

On 24 November 2015, Jacqui Molyneux, the Chair of the Practice Standards Group, and Anthony Roberts, Senior PSS Manager, presented a webinar about the benefits of the new Scheme, including its new awards structure, team of assessors and accreditation processes.

On 7 December, Registrar Gordon Hockey and RCVS Council member Niall Connell presented 'Who ADRs wins' – a presentation about our alternative dispute resolution trial (see page 7), how it has gone so far and possible options for the future.

Finally, on 17 January 2016, President Bradley Viner and Sean Wensley, President of the British Veterinary Association, held a webinar about the Vet Futures project, looking at how the priorities outlined in the recent Vet Futures report ([www.vetfutures.org.uk/report](http://www.vetfutures.org.uk/report)) will be turned into actions over the coming year.

# Gearing up for a celebration

## RCVS Day 15 July: save the date

**This year's RCVS Day – our AGM and Awards Presentation – will take place on Friday 15 July at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).**

As well as AGM business and the investiture of the new RCVS President for 2016-2017, we will be awarding the RCVS Queen's Medal, the most prestigious honour that the RCVS can bestow upon a veterinary surgeon, to Professor Randolph Richards (see page 4).

Also at the event, Honorary Fellowships will be bestowed upon:

- Professor Martin Hugh-Jones for his work in the field of veterinary epidemiology
- Ian Wright for his contribution to the advancement of equine surgery.

And an Honorary Associateship will be given to:

- Professor David Lane for services in education and professional development.

The VN Council Golden Jubilee Award will also be presented, as well as Diplomas for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

A limited number of tickets will be available for members and veterinary nurses in early June – please see the June issue of *RCVS News*, and the veterinary press, for more details.

## Brumming with pride

### Join us at BSAVA Congress

If you are heading to the **British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress in Birmingham (7–10 April)**, please come and find us on stand 105 in the Barclaycard Arena, where the team will be on hand to answer your questions about the new **Practice Standards Scheme (PSS)**, our **Mind Matters Initiative** and the **Vet Futures and VN Futures projects**. Members of our **Standards and Advice Team** will also be able to provide information on how to get involved in our upcoming ethical review trial (see page 3)

Visitors to the stand will be able to join in our 'Practice Standards Awards game' and be in with a chance of winning an iPad mini.

#### Lectures

We will be holding two lecture sessions on Friday afternoon at the Kingston Theatre, Austin Court. The first will be about the PSS (from 2.05pm to 2.50pm), with an update and Q&A on the new Scheme and its awards. Then, from 2.55pm to 3.45pm, there will be an interactive workshop in which delegates will have the opportunity to provide feedback and ideas on how to strengthen and advance the veterinary nursing profession by reviewing Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

RCVS Council members will also be involved in two sessions during the 'Big Issues Stream' on Friday, also at the Kingston Theatre. David Catlow, Chair of Standards Committee, will be taking part in a panel discussion from 9am to 10.10am looking at what the term 'informed consent' means and how the profession can achieve it in practice. Later that day, between 4.50pm and 6.30pm, Kit Sturgess will be involved in a discussion with representatives from the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS), corporate employees and recent graduates about how to develop experienced vets.

Finally, on the Saturday, our President, Bradley Viner, will be taking part in a session on ethical review during the *Journal of Small Animal Practice / Petsavers Stream*, between 3pm and 3.45pm.



## Showing off our Scheme

### PSS and concerns at SPVS/VPMA Congress

At the **Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons/Veterinary Practice Management Association (SPVS/VPMA) Congress at Celtic Manor in January** we took the opportunity to promote the new **Practice Standards Scheme** as well as talk to delegates about our concerns procedure.



Pam Mosedale, the Practice Standards Team Acting Lead Assessor, highlighted the benefits of the new Awards structure to delegates with a talk entitled 'Do you offer 'Outstanding' client service?' which looked at how practices can prepare for awards assessments, with a focus on the Client Service Awards. She also held a number of workshops for equine and large animal practices on how to prepare for the awards and assessment process.

Concerning concerns, Eleanor Ferguson, our Head of Professional Conduct, led a session on how practices can take a team-based approach to the RCVS disciplinary procedure looking at what they can do to reduce the chance of complaints being made and how they can engage with the process when a concern has been raised.

There was also a very popular and well-attended mental health stream, as part of our Mind Matters initiative, more details on which can be found on page 14.

We also took part in the exhibitors' competition, where each organisation exhibiting contributes a question and a prize to a joint quiz. Our prize, a luxury hamper, was won by Anice Norman (pictured), Finance Manager for Clinics at the Animal Health Trust.

## Support for overseas vets and VNs

### Spring date for CPD course

We will be holding our popular CPD course for overseas graduates on 11 and 12 May at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Leeds.

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

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

For the first time, we will also be inviting overseas-qualified veterinary nurses who have registered with the College over the last two years to attend.

The first day of the event (11 May) is free, and will include the following topics:

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

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

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

## Students looking ahead in Liverpool

### AVS Congress

One of our Education Officers, **Grace Conteh**, attended the **Association of Veterinary Students (AVS) Congress in Liverpool in February** to talk to delegates about the importance of the **Professional Development Phase (PDP)** in the transition from student to practice life.

The delegates were also interested in our other ongoing initiatives, such as Mind Matters and Vet Futures, and we were pleased that many questions related to the routes towards becoming an Advanced Practitioner or RCVS Specialist on graduation.



# Ask away!

## Question Times in Nottingham and Cardiff

**The RCVS team will be back on the road in May, hosting two of our popular Regional Question Times.**

On Tuesday 17 May we'll be at the Belfry Hotel in Nottingham, while on Tuesday 31 May we're at the SSE Swalec Stadium, Cardiff.

Both evenings will begin with a buffet supper at 6.30pm, giving delegates the chance to relax and enjoy a bite to eat while chatting with their colleagues and our staff and officers.

The discussions, which will be chaired by President Bradley Viner on both occasions, will then start at around 7.15pm. Members of our Officer Team and VN Council will also be there to answer questions and contribute to topics raised.

There will also be VN Futures discussion streams at both meetings, where we want to hear from members of the veterinary nursing team, and those involved in the education, training, regulation and employment of nurses, about their priorities, hopes and ambitions for the profession.

Registration is now open for both meetings via [www.rcvs.eventbrite.com](http://www.rcvs.eventbrite.com) and email invitations will be sent to all vets and VNs within reasonable travelling distance of Nottingham and Cardiff, although all members of the practice team are welcome to attend.



# Alright, pet?

## National Pet Show London

**We will be returning to the National Pet Show London (formerly known as the London Pet Show) on 7 to 8 May at the Excel Centre in London.**

As the largest consumer pet show in the UK, exhibiting provides us with an excellent opportunity to meet members of the public and explain our role in regulating veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses and enhancing animal welfare by setting, maintaining and advancing standards.

This year our focus will be promoting the new Practice Standards Scheme to attendees from the point of view of what it means for animal owners and veterinary clients. We will also be talking to attendees about our new and improved Find a Vet search tool and how this can be used to quickly and conveniently find the veterinary practice they need, as well as answering the ever popular questions about how one can become a vet or veterinary nurse!

# A profession on the move

**Professor Darrel Abernethy, Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Pretoria, offers an insight into what's on the mind of the veterinary profession in South Africa.**



**I was suffering: the smell of the barbecue wafted across to where I was seated with academic colleagues and students, the sunset was typically African and glorious and I could hear the grunts of buffalo and zebra as they passed by on the other side of the electrified game fence. Suffering? Not! The location was a research facility of my faculty situated within the boundary of the Kruger National Park, South Africa; the occasion was a routine visit and the setting idyllic. But this is Africa and thus a continent of challenges and contrasts. The surrounding area – in common with many wildlife areas in Africa – is one of economic deprivation and hardship for many local people. Bovine tuberculosis in the Park is a complex challenge to wildlife management, while poaching of rhinoceros continues despite the efforts of park authorities. Outside the Park, rabies threatens both people and animals and tick-borne diseases constrain livestock production. Our research programmes included all these tough issues but it was tempting to ignore them and simply absorb the grandeur of the night sky as darkness encroached.**

I have been Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria, for just over eighteen months. A product of a typical 'colonial' family, my birthplace was in Zambia, my upbringing a mixture of Northern Ireland and South Africa. After graduating from Onderstepoort in 1985 I returned to my paternal roots in Belfast for almost thirty years, much of it spent within the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture researching the epidemiology of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis. But my blood is African and I returned to my alma mater four years ago. Here I discovered a country, university and faculty in transition. Twenty years after democratic elections, much has been achieved; however, the national challenges are huge in a country with great expectations but limited resources and a dwindling economy. Economic inequality and rural poverty abound, raising profound questions of the role of veterinarians and our faculty in addressing the need for support and research in areas such as food security, food safety and economic upliftment of smallholder farmers.

I am privileged to be part of a faculty with a proud tradition, international accreditation and world-class facilities. Our graduates are eligible to register with the RCVS and Australasian Boards without the need for registration examinations. We have approximately 1,000 undergraduate and 300 postgraduate students and, as the foremost faculty in Africa and only veterinary faculty in South Africa, are highly regarded. But, this is Africa and thus there are challenges and contrasts! As we move forward to meet national expectations, we are placing greater emphasis on livestock production and our graduates need to be more aware of One Health, food security and antimicrobial resistance. We must address national needs and ensure we adapt our curriculum accordingly, whilst keeping pace with international trends.

We identify with the vision and ambition captured in the RCVS/BVA Vet Futures report, showing that such values and aspirations transcend international boundaries. But there are challenges that are specific to Africa and the developing world and the veterinary profession must be able to deal with these issues. Parts of South Africa are experiencing terrible drought, raising welfare challenges for attending state veterinarians; cultural values have profound effects on how farmers view livestock and veterinary interventions; and veterinary penetration of the deep rural areas is often limited and not cost-effective for the private veterinarian. But the profession is resilient and adaptable! I have little doubt it will rise to meet such challenges, thereby meeting the Vet Futures vision and ensuring we play an indispensable and valued role in our society.



## Report to Council, March 2016

### PIC Chair Andrew Ash

**S**ince the last report to Council there have been five Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, in October, November and December 2015, and January and February 2016.

The total number of cases considered by the Committee at these meetings was 74, of which 18 were closed; 12 cases were closed with advice issued to the vet; six cases were held open; 17 cases were referred for further investigation; 18 cases were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; and three cases were referred to the RCVS Health Protocol.

In total, the Committee is investigating 58 ongoing cases, including those referred to solicitors and for visits and, health cases.

#### Health and Performance Protocol

There are 14 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol and four veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

One veterinary surgeon was discharged from the Health Protocol at his request after five years of successfully complying with undertakings and making significant progress. Due to the number of ongoing cases, their relative complexity and the need for detailed monitoring and oversight of ongoing cases, a subgroup of PIC has been set up to ensure that ongoing matters such as compliance with undertakings, updated reports and reviews are

kept under scrutiny. The subgroup meets every two months to discuss cases and provide updates to the Committee.

#### Professional Conduct Department

In the period 10 October 2015 to 12 February 2016, the total number of concerns registered was 334, compared to 304 in the same period in 2014/15. During this same period 269 cases were closed.

#### Veterinary investigators

During the period 10 October 2015 to 12 February 2016, the three Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator / Case Managers carried out 16 announced visits, three unannounced visits and nine review visits. During these visits people raising concerns, veterinary staff, third-party witnesses and the respondent veterinary surgeons were interviewed.

#### Disciplinary Committee referrals

During the period 10 October 2015 to 12 February 2016, the PIC referred three cases relating to three veterinary surgeons to the Disciplinary Committee.

#### Concerns procedure

Between May and September 2015 an average of 70% of concerns raised with the RCVS were closed or referred to PIC within four months. For the same period 69% of cases where PIC reached a decision were closed, held open or referred to the Disciplinary Committee or to the Health or Performance Protocols within nine months.



## Report to VN Council, January 2016

### VN PIC Chair Lynne Hill

**S**ince the last report to VN Council (in October 2015) there have been three meetings of the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee (VNPIC) in October and December in 2015, and January 2016.

Between 22 September 2015 and 18 January 2016 there were 16 new concerns received by the Professional Conduct Department against registered veterinary nurses. Of these concerns, 10 are currently under investigation by the Case Examiners Group; four concerns were closed by the Case Examiners Group as there was no arguable case; and two cases were referred to VNPIC.

#### New cases considered

The total number of cases considered by VNPIC between October 2015 and January 2016 was four, of which, two cases were referred to external solicitors for statements to be taken and two cases were adjourned pending further investigations.

One case that had previously been adjourned for further investigation was returned and considered by the Committee at its December 2015 meeting. The Committee closed the concern with advice to the veterinary nurse to ensure that, in future, when medicines are ordered and supplied by the practice this is done under the authority of a veterinary surgeon or with a written prescription, and that medicines supplied by the practice are properly labelled.

#### Ongoing investigations

The Committee has one ongoing investigation, which is adjourned pending the outcome of criminal court trial against the veterinary nurse. The trial date has been scheduled for April 2016 and the outcome will be given in a future report.

#### Health Protocol

There are currently three veterinary nurses being considered by the RCVS Health Protocol.

The full reports are available at [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

#### Judicial review

On 5 November 2015, the RCVS was subject to a Judicial Review in the High Court of Justice – Queen's Bench Division, Administrative Court. The claimant, John Davies, had three grounds for review in relation to a decision made by the College relating to a concern he had raised in 2013. The College successfully opposed two grounds but agreed with the High Court of Justice in its ruling on the second ground for review. As a result of this decision the original concern was referred back to VNPIC for further consideration.

## Mr Robert Alun Merfyn Evans

### **Inquiry concerning: misconduct relating to tuberculin testing and failing to register the births and deaths of cattle**

### **DC decision: suspend name from the Register for six months**

### **Registration status: name suspended from Register as of 17 March 2016 if no appeal received**

On 11 February 2016, the Disciplinary Committee directed that Robert Alun Merfyn Evans, a Ceredigion veterinary surgeon, be suspended from the Register for six months after he admitted to misconduct relating to tuberculin testing for cattle he owned and failing to register the births and deaths of cattle.

Mr Evans appeared before the Committee on Thursday 11 February 2016 where he admitted the two heads of charge of misconduct against him.

The first head of charge related to the fact that, between 24 June and 29 June 2013, he deliberately failed to bring to attention of Wyn Lewis MRCVS, an Official Veterinarian (OV) and fellow director of Mr Evans' practice in Cardigan, the cattle on his farm requiring intradermal comparative tuberculin tests; that he tested certain of the cattle himself despite not being the OV for those tests and having a conflict of interest; and that he provided inaccurate and incomplete information to his practice for the completion of a report on the testing to be sent to the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA). This misconduct was then repeated the following year between 19 June and 1 August 2014.

The second head of charge against Mr Evans related to breaches of the Cattle Identification (Wales) Regulations 2007 between 4 July 2005

and 20 June 2014, namely the fact that he failed to register the birth of five calves and the death of nine cows. These were accepted as being specimen charges reflecting a much larger total number of breaches over the whole nine-year period.

Mr Evans' misconduct first came to light when a late return was sent to the AHVLA in August 2014 regarding the TB testing of 51 live animals on his farm in June 2014. When the report was scrutinised the AHVLA noticed that 26 animals shown on the return as dead were still registered, while 20 animals that were tested were not registered. When the AHVLA investigated, Mr Evans immediately admitted that he had misled Mr Lewis on two occasions and carried out his own testing despite not being the OV.

The Committee heard that he did this because he did not want it to be found out that he had unregistered cattle on his farm. Regarding the unregistered cattle, the Committee heard that this stemmed from a mistake made by Mr Evans in 2005 or 2006 whereby he mislaid a batch of around nine bovine passport application forms sent to him to register the birth of calves on his farm, a legal requirement for the purposes of animal health, disease control and safeguarding the food chain.

As a result of poor IT skills and being profoundly deaf, Mr Evans felt unable to seek support online or by telephone, was too embarrassed to tell others and, furthermore, felt that it was impossible to correct his mistake without being in breach of the law. So, for a period of nine or 10 years, he failed to register the birth of calves on his farm. His failure to register the deaths of cattle, was also caused by administrative failings. His breaches of the cattle registration regulations were subject to criminal proceedings and on 14 October 2015 he plead guilty at Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire Magistrates Court to 14 offences for which he was given a conditional discharge for 18 months and ordered to pay costs of £1,000.

The Committee considered that a suspension from the Register would be in line with the seriousness of the charges against Mr Evans. Professor Alistair Barr, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee agrees that the lengthy period over which these offences took place, his betrayal of his colleague, and the undermining of the reputation of the profession and of the system of disease control, taken together with his dishonesty, make it impossible to impose a lesser sanction than suspension.

"The Committee finds that the respondent, who is a man of good character, has fully accepted his guilt, and has real insight into the seriousness of his conduct. He cooperated fully with the investigations and with the County Council who prosecuted him in the Magistrates [Court], and with the College. He made an open and frank admission about his misconduct from the outset.

"The course of conduct on which he embarked and which has led to these charges was the result of a simple mistake at a time of considerable stress to him. He was not guilty of deliberate misconduct at the outset but... what started as an innocent mistake took on a life of its own and led him to deliberate and dishonest misconduct because he did not know how to get himself out of the predicament he was in."

Professor Barr also said that there was no financial gain in Mr Evans' actions and that animal welfare had not been compromised as the cattle were well cared for and in good health and that Mr Evans' actions in carrying out the tuberculin tests on the unregistered cattle himself demonstrated that he was concerned about identifying any disease in his herd.

He added: "In all the circumstances the Committee has decided a proportionate sanction is that the respondent's registration should be suspended for a period of six months."

## Mr Kirk Franklyn Thompson

### **Inquiry concerning: offences of manslaughter, assault and drug possession**

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

### **Registration status: name removed from Register on 4 March 2016**

On Friday 26 January 2016, the Disciplinary Committee directed that the name of Kirk Franklyn Thompson, a Newcastle-based veterinary surgeon, be removed from the Register of Veterinary Surgeons after he was found unfit to practise veterinary surgery following a Crown Court conviction for offences of manslaughter, assault and drug possession.

Following a trial at Newcastle Crown Court in April 2014, Mr Thompson was convicted of the

manslaughter of Mr K at Mr Thompson's flat during the night of 1 to 2 March 2013. He was also convicted of assault causing actual bodily harm (also on Mr K) and possession of methylamphetamine, a Class A controlled drug, both offences occurring on the same night. Mr Thompson was subsequently sentenced to a total of 15 years' imprisonment.

Whilst the RCVS opened a case against Mr Thompson in February 2014, it only received confirmation from the Supreme Court of the final conclusion of his subsequent (and ultimately unsuccessful) appeals against his conviction and sentencing in October 2015. The Disciplinary Committee therefore served a Notice of Inquiry on Mr Thompson in November 2015.

Mr Thompson admitted the convictions but did not attend the hearing, due to his current imprisonment, nor was he represented at it; he also declined the opportunity to attend by video link. After due consideration, the Committee

decided that the Notice of Inquiry had been properly served and that it was in the interests of justice to proceed in Mr Thompson's absence.

The Committee was satisfied that Mr Thompson had been convicted of the three offences listed in the charges and concluded that he was not fit to practise as a veterinary surgeon.

Speaking on behalf of the Committee, its chairman Professor Alistair Barr said: "[We are] satisfied that the type and nature of [Mr Thompson's] criminal conduct falls seriously below the standard expected of a member of the profession. [We have] noted that Mr Thompson recognises the disrepute his actions have brought on the profession... and consider that [his] conduct is fundamentally incompatible with being a veterinary surgeon.

"In the circumstances, [we have] concluded that, in the public interest, there is only one proportionate sanction that could be imposed, namely the removal of Mr Thompson's name from the Register."

## Dr Duncan Davidson

### Inquiry concerning: clinical failings in relation to the treatment of a cat and poor and misleading clinical records

#### DC decision: case dismissed

#### Registration status: name remains on Register

On 22 January 2016, the Disciplinary Committee dismissed a case against Dr Duncan Davidson, a South London veterinary surgeon accused of clinical failings in relation to his treatment of a cat and of keeping poor and misleading clinical records.

The Committee heard the case against Dr Davidson, who was the sole practitioner and owner of Mitcham Veterinary Clinic until his retirement from clinical practice in November 2014, at the disciplinary hearing between Monday 18 and Friday 22 January 2016.

The first charge against Dr Davidson alleged that, between 7 November 2013 and 13 December 2013, he had failed to provide adequate care to Ameira, an Egyptian Mau cat. The charge was in four parts: that he had inappropriately administered corticosteroids; had failed to administer adequate fluid therapy; discharged the

cat to its owner suggesting a referral when he should have suggested or arranged a same-day referral; and that he failed to communicate the urgency of referral/further investigation of the cat's condition to her owner.

The second charge was that, between 7 November 2013 and 17 January 2014, he dishonestly made retrospective alterations to Ameira's clinical records and failed to keep clear, accurate and detailed clinical records.

From the outset Dr Davidson, who attended the hearing, did not admit the charges against him and denied that his conduct, if found proven, constituted serious professional misconduct.

A summary of the circumstances of the case were that the cat had been admitted to Dr Davidson's practice on 8 November 2013 with poor appetite and a piece of thread in its mouth. The cat was later admitted, on 21 November, with dehydration and was diagnosed with a linear foreign body (ie the thread) on 25 November 2013. Dr Davidson continued to treat Ameira with corticosteroids and rehydration fluids at the practice but a second opinion was sought by Ameira's owner from a nearby veterinary practice. This practice referred the cat to the Royal Veterinary College for treatment. Surgery to remove the linear foreign body was undertaken on 13 December 2013,

albeit with a poor prognosis, and Ameira subsequently suffered two cardiac arrests and died on 14 December 2013.

***"The Committee does not consider that on the facts of this case the administration of corticosteroids amounted to disgraceful misconduct."***

In terms of its findings on the first charge, the Committee heard from an expert witness, Mr Hurst, regarding the use of the corticosteroids which were administered to the cat by Dr Davidson on 22, 27 and 30 November 2013 and 5 and 12 December 2013. Although Mr Hurst said that a minority of veterinary surgeons may have provided corticosteroids when the cat was first presented to Dr Davidson on 8 November; when it was determined by Dr Davidson's colleague Mr Holden that the cat's condition was due to it having ingested thread, the use of corticosteroids was inappropriate from then on and would be considered contra-indicated. The Committee found this charge proven.

The Committee did not find the charge against Dr Davidson that he failed to provide adequate fluid therapy proven. When the cat was presented

## Mr Ian Beveridge

### Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register of Veterinary Surgeons

#### DC decision: application dismissed

#### Registration status: name remains off Register

On 20 November 2015, the Disciplinary Committee dismissed an application to be restored to the Register of Veterinary Surgeons from former Wirral-based vet Ian Beveridge.

In May 2013 the Committee had asked the Registrar to remove Mr Beveridge from the Register following a four-day hearing in which he was found guilty of serious professional misconduct after finding that he had treated clients badly, kept inadequate clinical records, was dishonest in his dealings with the RCVS and that animals in his care were placed at risk.

In June 2013 Mr Beveridge, who was not present or represented at the original hearing, then appealed the decision. The appeal was withdrawn in May 2014 which was when Mr Beveridge was formally removed from the Register.

Then, in April 2015, Mr Beveridge applied to be restored to the Register. The Disciplinary Committee met to consider his application in June 2015, however, this hearing was adjourned after new evidence was served to the Committee

concerning allegations that Mr Beveridge had ordered prescription-only veterinary medicines when he was not authorised to do so. He was subsequently interviewed by police who took no further action.

***"The Committee takes the view that the unauthorised use of a veterinary surgeon's drugs account for which he carries the ultimate responsibility is a very serious matter."***

In deciding whether Mr Beveridge was fit to be restored to the Register, the Committee heard evidence in regards to the circumstances in which the prescription-only drugs were ordered using his account and delivered to his former practice address which had been taken over by Medivet after he sold the premises to the company.

During the course of the hearing, Mr Beveridge admitted that his account had been used to buy the drugs, but that a part-time member of his staff, who was neither a veterinary surgeon nor a veterinary nurse, had done so without his prior knowledge or approval.

In relation to this evidence Ian Green, chairing and speaking on behalf of the Committee, said:

"The Committee takes the view that the unauthorised use of a veterinary surgeon's drugs account for which he carries the ultimate responsibility is a very serious matter and, of itself, demonstrates that the applicant has at best a cavalier attitude to his work which of itself means that he remains unfit to be on the Register.

"This attitude is further demonstrated by the fact that, even after the first orders were placed in late April and early May 2014, the applicant did not seek clarification from the College of his status following the withdrawal of his appeal against the original Committee's findings."

In addition to this, the Committee also considered the seriousness of his original failings, the fact that Mr Beveridge's acceptance of these failings was 'qualified', that he had been off the Register for 20 months and the fact that his efforts in terms of continuing professional development had been inadequate and not focused on those areas in need of improvement, among other factors. In mitigation it did consider that Mr Beveridge had demonstrated genuine remorse about previous actions and noted a petition and a large number of letters in support of him from former clients of his practice.

However, the Committee felt that this did not detract from the seriousness of the original failings and, in conjunction with the subsequent unauthorised ordering of veterinary drugs, that the application for restoration must be dismissed.

to the practice on 21 November 2013 suffering from dehydration, fluid rehydration was given but not administered intravenously. The Committee concluded that intravenous hydration was not necessary because the clinical records from both Dr Davidson and the Royal Veterinary College indicated that Ameira was only moderately dehydrated.

Regarding the referral of Ameira, the Committee could not be sure that the cat was sufficiently unwell on 23 November that she required immediate referral. Dr Davidson had sent Ameira home with her owner on that date on the basis that she was stable and that he would arrange a referral for her on 25 November. There was conflicting evidence from Dr Davidson and Ameira's owner on the matter of whether, on 23 November, Ameira's owner was advised that the cat's condition was critical or that a referral was urgently required. Dr Davidson accepted that he did not seek to make an urgent referral. The charge was not proven.

Regarding the communication of the urgency for further investigation of Ameira's condition, the Committee found that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that Dr Davidson did not adequately communicate with Ameira's owner after the diagnosis of a linear foreign body was made on 25 November. According to Dr Davidson, he explained the risk of further damage to the

oesophageal and gastrointestinal tract and offered further radiography. This was strongly contested by Ameira's owner. However, ultimately the Committee were unable to be satisfied as to which version was correct to the necessary standard of proof required.

***“The Committee has already emphasised the importance of making legible handwritten records but it does not consider that the failure to do so in this case amounts to disgraceful misconduct...”***

Regarding the retrospective amendment of clinical records, the Committee found that although there were some “troubling aspects” about the case, particularly evidence of a telephone call with the RCVS Professional Conduct Department in which Dr Davidson said that no retrospective alterations had been made, it was unable to be satisfied so as to be sure of his motivation for changing the records. His contention was that changes had been made as he was concerned he would be subject to civil litigation by Ameira's owner. However, the Committee found the charge not proven, also taking into account Dr Davidson's

good character and unblemished professional record over 40 years.

However, the Committee did find that Dr Davidson's clinical records were illegible. Dr Davidson recognised the poor quality of his handwriting, which the veterinary surgeons to whom Ameira was referred were unable to understand. The Committee found this charge proven.

Taking into account the charges it found proven, the Committee then considered whether they constituted serious professional conduct either individually or cumulatively. Judith Webb, who chaired the Committee and spoke on its behalf, said: “The Committee does not consider that on the facts of this case the administration of corticosteroids amounted to disgraceful misconduct.”

She added: “The Committee has already emphasised the importance of making legible handwritten records but it does not consider that the failure to do so in this case amounts to disgraceful misconduct... The Committee has found that Dr Davidson was wrong to make retrospective entries in this case without making it clear when such alterations were made. The Committee does not consider that in this case the making of those alterations was capable of being disgraceful misconduct. The case is dismissed.”

## Ms Lindsay Newell

### **Inquiry concerning: unlawful possession of veterinary medicines and failing to give regard to animal welfare**

### **VNDC decision: remove name from the Register of Veterinary Nurses**

### **Registration status: removed from Register on 24 December 2015**

On 18 November 2015, the Veterinary Nurses Disciplinary Committee directed that veterinary nurse Lindsay Newell be struck off the Register after she was found guilty of the unlawful possession of veterinary medicines and failing to give regard to welfare in respect of six animals.

The hearing for Ms Newell, who did not attend and was not represented, took place from Monday 16 to Wednesday 18 November 2015 and related to two main charges against her. The first charge was that, on 29 November 2012, she was found in possession of a number of veterinary medicines without lawful permission.

The Committee heard that the RSPCA and police officers had attended Ms Newell's home on that day, where they found veterinary medicines, including controlled drugs, stored in an insecure cabinet within an insecure shed. It heard that during a police interview, she agreed that she was not allowed to possess some of the drugs and

subsequently accepted a police caution, which the Committee took as an admission of the offence and therefore found the charge proved.

The second charge was that, between 1 and 29 November 2012 at the Burton Wildlife and Rescue Centre in Etwell, Derbyshire, she failed to give any or sufficient regards to the welfare of six animals in her care. These charges relate to an RSPCA investigation of the rescue centre on 29 November 2012 which found two animals dead and the rest of the animals emaciated and in poor physical condition.

The animals included a male lamb found dead in its pen, a ‘furry-faced’ lamb which died just over a week after the investigation took place, a female goat which died 12 hours after being taken to a veterinary practice for treatment and a pig which died during the investigation process, as well as an adult ewe and a pony which both survived. The charge against her also cited her failure to supply an adequate diet, obtain any or any adequate veterinary attention and explore and address the cause of the weight loss for these animals.

The Committee found all parts of the second charge proved and was satisfied that Ms Newell failed to give sufficient regard to animal welfare as is required by the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*.

In deciding its sanction, the Committee considered a number of aggravating factors in this case. It found that, in respect of both

charges, the misconduct was “sustained over a period of time rather than being a single and isolated incident” and that, in respect of the second charge, that there was “actual harm caused to animals, which resulted in the deaths of four out of the six animals.”

The Committee felt that this constituted reckless disregard for animal welfare rather than deliberate acts but, nevertheless, said that these animals unnecessarily suffered for a period of at least four weeks due to inadequate diet and that, as rescue animals that were already vulnerable, the expectation was that they would be given the appropriate level of care. It also found that Ms Newell had demonstrated limited insight into her behaviour. Furthermore, it considered that a Magistrates' Court had also disqualified Ms Newell from keeping sheep, goats, pigs, and equines for a period of five years.

In mitigation it considered that Ms Newell did show some insight into her behaviour in relation to the first charge by making admissions during her police interview, as well as the fact that the animal sanctuary, which opened in 2008, had no complaints or cause for concern prior to 2012.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: “The Committee is of the opinion that removal of Ms Newell's name from the Register of Veterinary Nurses is the only appropriate sanction based upon the severity of the facts found proved.”

## Mr Dermot Costelloe

### Inquiry concerning: being dishonest with a client and falsifying clinical records regarding treatment of a dog

### DC decision: suspend name from the Register for 10 weeks

### Registration status: name suspended from Register as of 17 March 2016 if no appeal received

On 9 February 2016, the Disciplinary Committee directed that Shropshire veterinary surgeon Dermot Costelloe be suspended from the Register for 10 weeks after he admitted being dishonest with a client and falsifying records about the treatment of her dog.

Mr Costelloe appeared before the Disciplinary Committee on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 February 2016 with four heads of charge against him. These were that:

1. On 31 October 2014 in a telephone call to his client Mrs Green, he dishonestly indicated that Scruffy, her Border Terrier/Collie cross, was still alive, despite knowing that the dog was dead, and told her that the practice had taken positive steps to treat and/or care for Scruffy throughout the previous night despite knowing this was false;
2. On 31 October 2014, during a meeting with Mrs Green, acted dishonestly by indicating the above account was correct and failing to inform her it was incorrect;
3. On 19 November 2014, during another meeting with Mrs Green, once again acted dishonestly by indicating that the original false account was correct;
4. Between 30 October and 4 December 2014 dishonestly created a hospitalisation record for Scruffy which, for 31 October 2014, included records of observations and/or treatment and/or care which he knew had not been made or given and provided this false hospitalisation record to Mrs Green.

At the outset of the hearing, Mr Costelloe, a partner at a veterinary practice in Market Drayton, Shropshire, admitted all heads of charge against him.

Scruffy had been brought to Mr Costelloe for a consultation on 27 October 2014. He carried out a physical examination and arranged for radiographs and routine blood tests while also prescribing anti-inflammatory tablets for spondylosis. Scruffy was brought back to the practice on 30 October 2014 following the deterioration of her condition. Further assessment took place and an abdominal scan was arranged for the next day. She stayed at the practice overnight, but died at some point during the night of 30 to 31 October 2014.

A telephone call between Mrs Green and Mr Costelloe took place shortly after 8am on 31 October during which he told her that "they had struggled with Scruffy all night" and that,

as they were speaking, Scruffy was on oxygen and struggling to breathe.

After Mrs Green said she wanted to come to the practice to be with her dog, Mr Costelloe told her to wait and that he would call her back in two minutes. He did so and told her Scruffy had died five minutes ago, when in fact she had died at some point between 11pm on 30 October and 8am on 31 October.

Mr Costelloe continued the deception at meetings with Mrs Green on 31 October and 19 November 2014 and she was given the falsified clinical records on 4 December 2014. Another meeting took place on 14 January 2015 where Mr Costelloe finally admitted his deception to her. This resulted in Mrs Green submitting a formal complaint to the RCVS on 23 February 2015. He admitted his deception to the College in writing on 4 August 2015.

The Committee decided that all four heads of charge amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect as his actions contravened several sections of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons* in relation to being open and honest with clients; keeping clear, accurate and detailed clinical records; and not engaging in any actions or behaviour that would likely bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.

***"The Committee does not condone what the respondent has done. It considers that the public interest requires that there has to be confidence that veterinary surgeons do not fabricate accounts or documents, no matter what their intentions."***

The Committee noted that, in his statement, Mr Costelloe gave a number of reasons for his conduct, including concern over Mrs Green's reaction to the death of her dog and concern for the young vet who was on duty when Scruffy died. However, the Committee considered that the need to be open and honest with his clients should have been put above the needs of his practice.

In considering its sanction against Mr Costelloe, the Committee heard mitigating evidence from four character witnesses called on his behalf, as well as a number of written testimonials, and also had regard to his evident remorse, shame and insight into his behaviour.

However, it also considered a number of aggravating factors, including the fact that the misconduct had premeditated elements, was sustained over a period of weeks, and constituted a clear breach of client trust.

The Committee decided that the most appropriate sanction was to suspend Mr Costelloe from the Register for a period of 10 weeks. Chitra Karve, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "It [the Committee] concluded that this was the appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case. The Committee took the view that the likelihood of repetition of dishonest conduct was very low. It had found no 'attitude of dishonesty' in the respondent. There were no risks to the welfare or health of animals. The respondent was a good veterinary surgeon and he had shown considerable insight regarding his dishonesty, for example, by actively seeking out Ms Green to tell her the truth.

***"The Committee decided that the most appropriate sanction was to suspend Mr Costelloe from the Register for a period of 10 weeks."***

"The Committee does not condone what the respondent has done. It considers that the public interest requires that there has to be confidence that veterinary surgeons do not fabricate accounts or documents, no matter what their intentions."

She added: "The Committee has therefore determined that suspension for a period of 10 weeks is proportionate in all the circumstances to mark the nature and gravity of the case and is sufficient to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour, and directs the Registrar accordingly."



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

## Conference call

### Veterinary Evidence Today 2016

**T**he biennial 2016 EBVM Network Conference is an unrivalled event within the veterinary calendar, where the international veterinary community can meet to share progress and overcome challenges in evidence-based practice. The conference will be held at the Assembly Rooms, in the heart of beautiful Edinburgh, between 1 and 3 November 2016.

We are expecting over 300 delegates from all sectors of the profession and from all around the world. They will include veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses, paraprofessionals, industry representatives, and indeed anyone with an interest of passion for the subject.

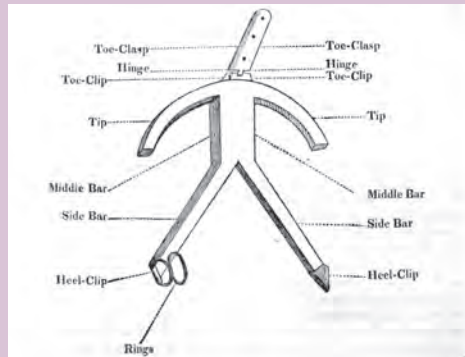
Tickets will be going on sale soon: visit [knowledge.rcvs.org.uk](http://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk) for the latest information, or join the EBVM Network to be the first to hear about offers and bursaries.

Speakers and sessions will be announced later in 2016, but to get a feel of what kinds of sessions to expect, view the EBVM 2014 programme – available on the website.

In 2017 we are holding the first Veterinary Evidence Today Tour – a series of in-depth one-day CPD workshops which will be travelling around the UK. We would love to know your opinion about where we should visit, and what topics we should cover. Have your say here: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/2RMDQJN](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/2RMDQJN)

## Archive and Digitisation Project

### Major scanning process underway



**T**hanks to the support of the Alborada Trust and Companion Care/Vets4Pets, amongst other donors, we at RCVS Knowledge have secured funding to embark on a five-year project to catalogue and digitise the priority parts of the College's historical collection and archive.

The Archives Project is well under way. Whilst Lorna Cahill – the Archivist – is surveying the collections in preparation for cataloguing, Adele Bush has been recruited as our archive and digitisation assistant and is currently scanning volumes of *The Veterinarian*.

Running from 1828 to 1902, *The Veterinarian* was one of the first veterinary journals to be published in the UK and we hold a complete set of the periodical bound by volume. Adele has digitised five volumes so far and has found some very interesting case studies and comments on the profession at that time. Now that the long task of digitisation has begun, the archives team are trialling Digital Asset Management systems to store and manage these images, and later this year make them accessible to the public online.

If you are interested in our collections you can follow the library blog: [www.rcvsknowledgelibraryblog.org](http://www.rcvsknowledgelibraryblog.org), or the hashtag #vetarchives on the RCVS Knowledge Twitter account (@RCVSKnowledge) for updates, fun discoveries and more.

You can contact the Archive team at: [archives@rcvsknowledge.org](mailto:archives@rcvsknowledge.org)

### Marathon effort

Adele will also be running the Virgin London Marathon with the aim of raising £1,850 for RCVS Knowledge. To sponsor her please visit <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/adelesmarathon>

## Veterinary Evidence is go!

### New EBVM publication for practitioners

**W**e are thrilled to announce the official launch of *Veterinary Evidence* – a new resource uniting those who are interested in promoting and using the principles of evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) within practice.

*Veterinary Evidence* ([www.veterinaryevidence.org](http://www.veterinaryevidence.org)) – supported by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons – represents RCVS Knowledge's wider mission statement of providing the veterinary community with practice-relevant, evidence-based information resources. Papers and publications are now available for use and are completely open-access.

The site will host a wide range of material – from randomised controlled trials to case studies, Knowledge Summaries and interviews. The content is designed to educate readers in research techniques, responding to the desire amongst many veterinary professionals to become involved in effective practice-based research – including critical

appraisal and clinical audit. As the new Practice Standards Scheme rolls out, practices will find much in *Veterinary Evidence* that will enable them to promote and maintain the highest standards of veterinary care and demonstrate the areas in which they excel through the Scheme's optional awards.

Jacqui Molyneux (pictured), Chair of the RCVS Knowledge Board of Trustees, said: "As a practising veterinary surgeon I, along with many others, recognise the emerging importance of evidence-based veterinary medicine and I believe it will become more and more important as time goes on.

We all wish to do the best for our patients but how do we find out what the current 'best' is?

That's where this portal will become so useful; collecting and publishing articles that directly help practising vets and nurses to answer that question."

Bradley Viner, President of the RCVS and a Trustee of RCVS Knowledge, said: "The College was very happy to support our charity partners at RCVS Knowledge in launching this excellent new resource which will be relevant to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in clinical practice. Furthermore, clinical governance is now firmly established as an important principle in the *Code of Professional Conduct* for both professions and so, by encouraging practitioners to undergo a continuing process of reflection, analysis and improvement, *Veterinary Evidence* will also be helping them fulfil their professional responsibilities."

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

*Veterinary Evidence* is funded by a generous donation from the RCVS, and Dr Richard Evans is heading the project as Editor-In-Chief ([editor@veterinaryevidence.org](mailto:editor@veterinaryevidence.org)).



# 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 Fleet of foot for the future

Council approves major changes to College governance.

## 2 Iechyd da

RCVS Council to meet in Cardiff in June.

## Exemplary behaviour

New CPD Champions blog launched.

## 3 This is a political broadcast...

RCVS and VN Councils elections opening soon.

## Check your ethics

Ethical review trial launches this summer.

## 4 No small fry

Respected fish vet gets the Queen's Medal.

## May he succeed in his endeavours

RVC Professor elected Vice-President.

## 5 I have VN the future

VN Futures project launched in conjunction with BVNA.

## IT works!

CEO's post-Council update on iMIS, ADR and the Strategic Plan.

## 6 Language skills

Update on EU language testing procedures.

## Feline renal transplantation

Council members debate ethical and legal issues.

## 7 Brilliant support

Update on our campaign to protect the veterinary nurse title.

## ADR assessment

Update on the ADR trial and next steps.

## 8 A fair price

Competition and Markets Authority guidance on prescription medicines.

## Feeling suspicious?

New guidance on reporting suspected illegal imports.

## 9 Let us qualify that

Revised advice on delegating procedures to unqualified staff.

## Microchipping mutts

Scottish and Welsh microchipping regulations now published.

## 10 The search is over!

New Find a Vet service launching in spring.

## Post-post

Annual renewals sent mostly by email for first time this year.

## 11 A good PSS

Positive response to the launch of the new Practice Standards Scheme.

## 12 On me Ed... Committee

A roundup of decisions at the Education Committee including PDP, CPD and Year-one competences.

## 13 End of RCVS Awards

College awarding body for VNs closed last December.

## New Fellowship

New learned society gearing up for launch this year.

## 14 Putting a good spin on it

Successful events for Mind Matters and future plans.

## 15 I love it when a plan comes together

Launch of the Vet Futures Action Group following landmark report.

## A day to celebrate

Details for RCVS Day 2016.

## 16 Big issues at BSAVA

What we're up to at the Birmingham Congress.

## Days of learning

CPD courses for overseas vets and VNs now open.

## 17 Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika

Letter from... South Africa.

## 18 PIC reports

Read the latest reports from the PIC and VN PIC.

## 19 DC hearings

Robert Evans suspended from the Register for six months; Kirk Thompson removed from Register following conviction for offences of manslaughter, assault and drug possession; DC dismisses case against Duncan Davidson; Ian Beveridge restoration application dismissed; Lindsay Newell removed from Register of Veterinary Nurses for unlawful possession of veterinary medicines and failing to give regard to animal welfare; Dermot Costelloe suspended from Register for 10 weeks.

## 23 Here's your evidence!

RCVS Knowledge launches new EBVM focused publication.

## Scan it!

Project to digitise veterinary archives underway.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 2016

#### 14 March

VN Futures roadshow: Bristol

#### 31 March

Vet renewal fees due

#### 1 April

PSS and RVPP fees due

#### 7-10 April

Join us at BSAVA Congress

#### 18 April

VN Futures roadshow: Leeds

#### 29 April

Voting deadline for elections

#### 7-8 May

Visit us at National Pet Show

#### 11 May

VN Futures roadshow: Edinburgh

#### 11-12 May

Overseas grads CPD course

#### 17 May

RQT Nottingham, inc VN Futures

#### 31 May

RQT Cardiff, inc VN Futures

#### 2 June

RCVS Council meets in Cardiff

#### 4 July

Vet Futures Summit

#### 15 July

RCVS Day, at RIBA, London

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