

## Telemedicine: examining the digital future

*“We want the UK’s veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to be at the forefront of innovation”*

### Consultation asks how we can best regulate innovation

**E**ncouraging innovation in the UK veterinary sector is vital for it to remain world-leading in terms of animal health and welfare. While regulation is often seen as the enemy of innovation, we have recognised that we can play an important role in encouraging and supporting the veterinary industry to make sure it is not only making use of the latest technology, but actively developing it.

This is why on Monday 13 February we launched a consultation asking for the views of the veterinary and veterinary nurse professions, in addition to those of animal owners, on the use of telemedicine in veterinary clinical practice.

Telemedicine can be defined as any clinical healthcare service that is provided using remote telecommunications services, for example, video-call services such as Skype, wearable technology for pets (similar to a Fitbit) and other online consultation services. This is fast-developing technology with many potential benefits such as the ability to reach animals that may otherwise never come into contact with a veterinary surgeon.

The aim of the consultation is to receive feedback to help the College develop an appropriate regulatory framework for such services in the veterinary sector. Our current *Code of Professional Conduct* and supporting guidance is generally concerned with face-to-face provision of veterinary services. The consultation recognises that telemedicine is a rapidly-expanding field and it follows the example of the General Medical Council in human healthcare and other global veterinary regulators which have also been grappling with the regulatory balance posed by so-called ‘disruptive’ technologies.

The consultation, which is in the form of an online questionnaire, considers issues such as who is responsible for veterinary care if it is provided remotely; how ‘under veterinary care’ is defined in the context of the telemedicine delivery of services; the potential risks as well as opportunities for improving animal welfare that may arise out of new technologies; and the appropriate regulation of veterinary services provided directly to clients using new remote technologies.

We are also looking for the views and experiences of animal owners in terms of what they feel the impact, benefits and issues around the use of telemedicine may be.

For those animal owners who take part in the consultation we will be asking about issues such as who is responsible for providing care for animals if a service is provided remotely via technology, the risks and benefits of using technology versus face-to-face provision and remote diagnosis and prescribing.

Nick Stace, our Chief Executive, said: “We want the UK’s veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to be at the forefront of innovation and to be making use of, and developing, new technology to extend the reach of veterinary services and thereby improve animal welfare.

“However, while the adoption of technology can greatly benefit veterinary services, we also need to develop a regulatory framework that takes into account the questions it poses, for example, in areas such as remote diagnosis and prescribing, to ensure that animal health and welfare is the foremost consideration.”

The consultation questionnaires will be available to complete until Friday 24 March 2017 and can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/telemedicine](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/telemedicine)

**In this issue:** Brexit Principles published, RCVS and VN Councils elections, VN Futures update, blame culture survey, leadership strategy, CEO update, Junior Vice-President elected, new mental health campaign launched, ADR trial update, Schedule 3 survey, CPD pilot events, graduate outcomes project, BSAVA Congress, Wellbeing Awards results, Mind Matters Research Symposium, PI and DC reports, new vet history website

# A principled stance

## College sets out its Brexit policy



**F**ollowing the March meeting of RCVS Council we have now published our three 'Brexit Principles', which constitute a framework for navigating the risks posed to the veterinary industry by the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, while maximising the opportunities it offers. The Principles were formally adopted by Council and will now serve to guide the College's relationship with the Government during the forthcoming Brexit negotiations.

The Principles were drawn up over a series of months by the Brexit Taskforce, set up by our President Chris Tufnell in July 2016, and were discussed in draft form in a number of forums including a 'Brexit roundtable', co-hosted by us and the British Veterinary Association (BVA), at the Palace of Westminster on Friday 24 February.

This event aimed to create a unified voice within the veterinary profession on shared goals. Representatives from the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs were also in attendance and Nigel Gibbens, the Chief Veterinary Officer, thanked us for positively engaging with the Brexit process.

Each Principle is supported by a number of specific policies that we will lobby for in the coming months, all designed to positively engage with the post-referendum reality and with government policy. The Principles are: that vital veterinary work continues to get done; that high standards of

animal health and welfare remain and improve; and, that the RCVS is a global force for good.

The first Principle, that 'vital veterinary work continues to get done', reflects concerns that potential immigration restrictions could cause significant labour shortages in the UK, particularly in the meat industry and in public health. Policies attached to this Principle include lobbying to ensure that EU vets and veterinary nurses currently working in the UK are allowed to remain indefinitely, and in the longer-term ensuring that any reduction in numbers from abroad is offset by an appropriately-funded increase in home-grown talent, while upskilling and extending the role of veterinary nurses.

***"It is crucially important for the College and the profession as a whole to think boldly about the post-Brexit future."***

To promote the second Principle, ensuring that 'high standards of animal health and welfare remain and improve', we will work towards advancing standards of global accreditation, and – once concerns about workforce shortages have been allayed – argue that any restrictions placed on the number of EU graduates registering in the UK should be focused on schools that do not have European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education accreditation.

Regarding the third Principle, that 'the RCVS is a global force for good', we will seek to ensure that: the rights of UK vets working in the EU are preserved; that UK vets working abroad continue to be held up as exemplars of the profession; that our global membership continues to grow; and, to develop a world-leading evidence-based veterinary medicine hub that will transform animal treatment globally.

Commenting on the Principles our CEO Nick Stace said: "It is crucially important for the College and the profession as a whole to think boldly about the post-Brexit future; we cannot expect government to give us all of the answers, instead we must work to find solutions ourselves so as to shape the future of the profession from within."

We have also asked the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to undertake research into the attitudes and intentions of all EU-graduated veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses currently working in the UK. Earlier this month they all received a personalised email from IES with a link to the online survey, and their answers will help inform our approach to Brexit. This research will help us to understand better the impact that Brexit may already be having, how we can support EU veterinary professionals working in the UK, and build an evidence base regarding the potential impact that Brexit may have on the veterinary workforce.

The full text of the Brexit Principles can be found at [www.rcvs.org.uk/brexit](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/brexit)



# Vote online in RCVS and VN Councils elections

## 20 candidates standing in total

**In this year's RCVS and VN Councils elections we are encouraging veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses not only to vote, but to vote online.**

The elections, which are being run by Electoral Reform Services (ERS) Ltd, will feature both a new voting platform and regular, personalised email reminders from ERS that will make it easier to vote online. These emails will include a unique link to the voting platform and the ability to log in securely straight away, without having to remember where you left the ballot paper in order to find your security codes! Using the email address you have provided us with, you will also be able to ask ERS to reissue the security codes if needs be.

There are 16 candidates contesting six places on RCVS Council, including three existing Council members eligible for re-election and 13 candidates not currently on Council. They are:

- Dr Caroline Allen MRCVS
- Miss Sarah Brown MRCVS
- Mr Danny Chambers MRCVS
- Mr John Davies MRCVS
- Dr Chris Gray MRCVS
- Mr David Leicester MRCVS
- Dr Tom Lonsdale MRCVS
- Mr Martin Peaty MRCVS
- Mr Matthew Plumtree MRCVS
- Dr Cheryl Scudamore FRCVS
- Dr Huw Stacey MRCVS
- Dr Christopher Tufnell MRCVS
- Mr Kevin Watts MRCVS
- Dr Trevor Whitbread MRCVS
- Dr Thomas Witte MRCVS
- Mr James Yeates FRCVS

Four veterinary nurses are contesting two places in this year's VN Council elections. Two of these are existing VN Council members eligible for re-election while two candidates are not currently on VN Council. They are:

- Mr Miguel Boralho RVN
- Mrs Susan Howarth RVN
- Mrs Andrea Jeffery RVN
- Miss Marie Rippingale REVN

Ballot papers and candidates' details will be posted on Wednesday, 22 March 2017 to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses eligible to vote, and online voting will open on Friday, 24 March 2017. All votes must be cast, either online or by post, by 5pm on Friday, 28 April 2017.

Once again we invited members of both professions to 'Quiz the candidates' by putting their questions directly to all those standing for election. Thank you to all those veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who submitted questions – the key themes this year included Brexit, complementary/ alternative therapies,

the structure of the veterinary industry, out-of-hours work and veterinary nurse remuneration among others.

Each candidate was invited to choose two questions to answer from all those received, and produce a video recording of their answers. Recordings will be published on our YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos](http://www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos)

The biographies and statements for each

***"The elections, which are being run by Electoral Reform Services (ERS) Ltd, will feature both a new voting platform and regular, personalised email reminders from ERS that will make it easier to vote online."***

candidate in the RCVS Council and VN Council elections are available to view at [www.rcvs.org.uk/vetvote17](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vetvote17) and [www.rcvs.org.uk/vnvote17](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vnvote17)

If you are a veterinary surgeon and have not received your ballot papers by Friday 31 March 2017 then please contact Luke Bishop on [l.bishop@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:l.bishop@rcvs.org.uk) or 020 7202 0784. If you are a veterinary nurse and have not received your ballot papers by the same date then please contact Annette Amato on [a.amato@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:a.amato@rcvs.org.uk) or 020 7202 0713. Please note that if you joined the Register of Veterinary Surgeons or Register of Veterinary Nurses after 31 January 2017 you will not be eligible to vote in these elections.



# Looking to 2020

## VN Futures working parties formed



**VN Futures, a joint initiative between the College and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) launched as a partner project to Vet Futures, has had some exciting developments in recent months.**

The project published the *VN Futures Report and Action Plan* in July last year which contained six main ambitions for where the veterinary nursing profession should be by 2020: creating a sustainable workforce; having structured and rewarding career paths; fostering a confident, resilient, healthy and well-supported workforce; forging a proactive role in One Health; maximising nurses' potential; and creating a clarified and bolstered veterinary nurses role via a reformed Schedule 3.

On 27 January this year the first steps were taken towards turning these ambitions into action by the creation of working parties, each tasked with taking forward a set of actions.

The assigned chairs for these development groups are: Fiona Andrew, BVNA Council member leads creating a sustainable workforce; Renay Rickard RVN, VPMA President, leads career progression; Mary Fraser leads on the creation of a VN Schools Council; Dot Creighton, former president of the BVNA, leads on post-registration; Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council, leads on increasing the number of training practices; and Helen Ballantyne, a medical nurse and veterinary nurse who is also a member of the VN Futures Action Group, leads on One Health.

In fact the One Health Working Party couldn't wait and actually had its first meeting in December 2016!

Those who have expressed an interest in becoming involved in the groups have been contacted and, where possible, assigned to a working party aligned to their expressed interests. The Career Progression Working Party has already had its first meeting, on 27 February, and all the Working Groups will continue to meet throughout the year. We will keep you updated on their progress – watch this space...

In the meantime, to find out more about the VN Futures project, and read the *VN Futures Report and Action Plan*, visit [www.vetfutures.org.uk/vnfutures](http://www.vetfutures.org.uk/vnfutures)

# Tackling blame culture

## Professions surveyed for views

**On 1 March a survey was emailed on our behalf to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to help gauge the extent to which blame culture might be present within the veterinary professions.**

The survey, the responses for which will be anonymous, is being conducted by the Open Minds Alliance over the next two weeks and aims to establish the prevalence of a culture of blame which, we have increasingly recognised, can lead to a culture of fear of making mistakes within the profession. This can have a negative impact both on the mental health and wellbeing of members of the profession and, ultimately, animal health and welfare.

The survey is a major step towards moving to a learning culture which has a greater focus on openness, reflective practice and personal development. By moving towards a learning culture we can also hopefully reduce levels of stress and mental ill-health within the professions

Nick Stace, our CEO, says: "Developing a learning culture is one of the key aims of our Strategic Plan 2017-19 and we have already started to make some progress in this area with our Mind Matters Initiative, for example. This survey will help establish a baseline against which we can measure any improvements over the course of the next three years.

"As a regulator, this is part of our attempt to be much clearer about the kind of culture we would like to see in the professions; one that encourages members of the veterinary team to learn from each other, and from their mistakes, and to be more open about when things do go

wrong in order to better manage public and professional expectations.

"We also hope to reduce levels of stress and mental ill-health within the professions, as practitioners will feel they can be more open about their mistakes and take steps to improve their practice – rather than feeling like they cannot talk about what goes wrong, which can lead to fear and anxiety.

***"It is a common misconception that if you make a mistake then this will be investigated by the College and you will end up in front of a Disciplinary Committee."***

"This is no easy task – particularly when public expectations of what veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses can and should do is increasing – but we hope that by being brave and open about this new ambition, we can galvanise veterinary associations, educators, practices and individual veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses and make a real difference."

The survey will also be asking to what extent members of the profession may feel that we, as the regulator, contribute to any blame culture and where improvements could be made to the concerns investigation and disciplinary process to help combat it.

Eleanor Ferguson, our Registrar and Director of Legal Services, added: "It is a common misconception that if you make a mistake then

this will be investigated by the College and you will end up in front of a Disciplinary Committee.

"However, we recognise that mistakes can and will happen and that expecting 100% perfection is unrealistic. The real professional conduct issues arise when members of the profession try to cover up their mistakes, whether that is to professional colleagues or clients, which often does far more damage than if the person was open and honest about what had gone wrong.

"We do also accept that there is always room for improvement in our own processes and if there are positive steps we can take to make the investigation and disciplinary process less onerous for members of the professions then we would like to hear your suggestions."

The survey will close on Wednesday 15 March. All the data will be handled and analysed by the Open Minds Alliance and only anonymised analysis of the data will be passed back to us.



# Encouraging a new generation of vet leaders

## Strategic focus for 2017-19

**The Vet Futures Report (available from [www.vetfutures.org.uk](http://www.vetfutures.org.uk)) provided a vision for 2030 in which the veterinary profession had taken charge of its future. Underpinning this vision of the future was an ambition that 'the whole veterinary community benefits from exceptional leadership'.**

Leadership has taken a central role in the RCVS Strategic Plan 2017-19 and, to that end, we have started to develop a programme to support the next generation of veterinary leaders and develop leadership opportunities across the veterinary professions. Our veterinary leadership initiative will be wide-ranging and seek to support leadership development within all branches of the veterinary team and at all levels and career stages.

Anthony Roberts, the College's Director of Leadership and Innovation, says: "Whether they realise it or not all vets and veterinary nurses are leaders, their clients look to them as such and

every day they face leadership challenges: complex problems which call for the exercise of judgement. We want to move away from the notion that leadership is for the few and to promote the importance of self-reflection and the development of leadership skills as a key element in the ongoing professional development of all veterinary professionals."

***"Vets and veterinary nurses are leaders, their clients look to them as such and every day they face leadership challenges."***

Following a meeting of the Vet Futures Board late last year work on the leadership programme has begun and three priorities have been identified:

- mapping the leadership environment, the

training that is available, the key touchpoints with the professions and to understand the reasons why the veterinary profession may or may not seek leadership training;

- exploring how the NHS Leadership Academy ([www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk](http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk)) could provide a framework for developing a similar programme for the veterinary professions;
- developing proposals for the launch of an online leadership hub to start the dialogue around the importance of leadership in the veterinary setting, host resources, and to signpost veterinary professionals to the wealth of courses and materials to support their leadership development at all stages of their careers.

We will be publishing further updates on progress on our leadership programme via our website ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)) and our LinkedIn page ([www.linkedin.com/company/royal-college-of-veterinary-surgeons](http://www.linkedin.com/company/royal-college-of-veterinary-surgeons)).

# You're hired!

## New senior College staff

**We are pleased to announce the appointment of a new Head of Professional Conduct and Director of Human Resources at the College.**

Head of Professional Conduct Velia Soames joined the College in February from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants where she had worked as the Director of Professional Standards & Conduct since 2014. The previous year she held the post of Director of Legal Services at the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and from 2008 to 2013 she was the Head of Regulation at the General Osteopathic Council.

***“These are two critical positions that will help us meet our ambitions to reduce the time it takes to process concerns and provide us with senior level strategic support.”***

Kim Cleland will be starting as the new Director of HR in April. She comes to the College after working for global drinks company Diageo for over eight years, acting as Head of HR Global and Europe Functions since 2014 and previously holding positions as Leadership & Development Specialist and Senior HR Business Partner. Her particular expertise lies in delivering strategic direction and operational support.

Of the appointments our CEO Nick Stace said: “We are thrilled to be welcoming Velia and Kim to the College. These are two critical positions that will help us meet our ambitions to reduce the time it takes to process concerns and provide us with senior level strategic support in developing our people and a learning culture across the College and the profession. Being a recognised great place to work is something in which we take great pride and it provides us with the motivation to go further and achieve more.”

## Stay clued with e-news

### Monthly updates

**Our monthly e-news contains updates on all the workings of the College, so we definitely recommend giving it a read! Our January edition, for example, included information about RCVS and VN Council election nominations, as well as details about our mindfulness webinar series and how to apply to become an RCVS Fellow.**

If you are not receiving RCVS e-news for any reason, or would like to join the mailing list, please send your name and email address to [communications@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:communications@rcvs.org.uk).



## New Year, new strategy

### Operational Update

## Nick Stace, Chief Executive

**In the first few weeks of the year we were very pleased to launch the College's new three-year Strategic Plan (2017-19) a challenging and ambitious document which, I feel, takes the College into new territory in terms of its relationship with the professions and the world.**

If the 2014-16 Strategic Plan was about getting the basics right by clarifying our new identity, improving our core functions, setting out our service agenda and strengthening our foundations, then this one is about addressing and taking action on some of the big issues affecting the veterinary team.

The Strategic Plan (available at [www.rcvs.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/publications)) contains 39 actions spread over five overarching ambitions: learning culture; leadership and innovation; continuing to be a First-rate Regulator; global reach; and our service agenda. For 2017 we are planning to tackle 15 of those ambitions and have already made good progress on many of them and other projects besides.

### Leadership and innovation

Making sure that the College has a governance structure that is flexible, adaptable, modern and fit for purpose is one of the key actions under our leadership and innovation ambition. So I was pleased to inform RCVS Council that we are making significant headway with our review of governance which has now been adopted as Government policy. We are now expecting our legislative reform order (LRO), which changes the number and composition of Council, to go before Parliament in September. This LRO will roughly halve the number on Council and give greater prominence to lay and veterinary nurse members.

On the innovation front we have also launched a six-week consultation on telemedicine and new technologies in veterinary practice (see page 1).

We want UK veterinary professionals to be at the forefront of innovation in order to more effectively treat their patients but we also recognise the ethical and professional dilemmas that new technology can throw up – this is why we are very keen on hearing the professions', and public's, views on and experiences of new technology.

In September we will also be hosting an Innovation Symposium with the aim of showcasing such new technologies, and

educational and business models within the veterinary and related fields. More information about this will be sent to the profession in due course.

### Not taking blame

As an organisation we have long been concerned about the prevalence of 'blame culture' in the professions and the role that we, as the regulator, may play in exacerbating this whether by reality or perception. It's recognised that a culture of blame – in which people are afraid to make mistakes and may, in extreme circumstances, try and cover them up – is not good for mental health and wellbeing and is often at the root of many of our disciplinary cases.

At the beginning of the month all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses will have received a survey from Open Minds Alliance, which asks whether there is a culture of blame in the profession and, for those who have had experience of the College's concerns-investigation process, to what extent they feel the College plays a role in this and where improvements can be made.

I cannot stress enough how important it is for people to engage with this survey in a frank, open and honest way – as health professionals you know that you cannot cure a disease until you know its extent and virulence, and the same applies here. The survey is very much anonymous and only anonymised analysis will be fed back to the College so we expect, and encourage, forthright answers.

### International

A final word on our international strategy – you will see in this newsletter that we have now published our Brexit Principles (see page 2) setting out how we will meet the challenges and maximise the opportunities of the United Kingdom leaving the EU. It has been very important that the profession speaks, as far as possible, with one voice on this issue and that is why we have worked very closely with our colleagues at the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and its divisions to align our messaging.

The fact that we have been both unified and constructive in our reaction to Brexit means that our Principles, and the BVA's, have been well-received in Government circles and we hope this stands us in good stead when it comes to how we can influence the negotiations going forward.



# Congratulations to Amanda

## New Junior Vice-President elected

**A**manda Boag has been elected as the College's new Junior Vice-President by her fellow RCVS Council members and will take up her role at our Annual General Meeting in July (see page 13).

At the AGM she will replace the outgoing Junior Vice-President Professor Stephen May who will become President of the College for 2017–18.

Amanda graduated from the University of Cambridge Veterinary School in 1998 and, after graduation, undertook two small animal internships first at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) and then at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States. She returned to the RVC to do a residency and remained there as a Lecturer in Emergency and Critical Care from 2003 to 2008 where she was involved in the running of both the referral and first-opinion emergency

service. In September 2008 she took up her current role as Clinical Director at Vets Now where she oversees clinical and professional standards across the group.

She has been an elected member of RCVS Council since 2012 and has been RCVS Treasurer since 2014. She has also served as a member of the Education Committee and the Preliminary Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Liaison Committee.

***"I am proud of what the College has achieved with the Vet and VN Futures projects and new strategic plan."***

In the supporting statement for her candidacy Amanda said: "All of us care deeply about our profession and the RCVS has a unique role in ensuring it remains healthy and respected into the future. With the many changes occurring currently in society, it is crucial we work hard to maintain our place as a strong and dynamic profession in the 21st century; one which all our members are proud to be part of. I am proud of what the College has achieved with the Vet and VN Futures projects and new strategic plan, and welcome the opportunity to contribute to their delivery ensuring our profession shapes its own future in a positive and robust manner."

She adds: "I am well prepared to take the next step in the leadership structure of the RCVS.

I enjoy listening to different perspectives and building relationships across the full spectrum of the veterinary community. I look forward to working with you all, as well as the wider professions, as we look to the challenges on the horizon."

### New Standards Chair

Meanwhile, RCVS Council member Dr Kate Richards was elected by fellow Council members as Chair of the Standards Committee, replacing the outgoing Chair David Catlow. Kate Richards was elected to Council in 2015 and has been both a practising vet, a veterinary advisor at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and a senior civil servant working in the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Justice, as well as being Principal Private Secretary to three Secretaries of State for Scotland.

In her candidacy statement Kate said: "A member of the Standards Committee for two years, I have found the work extremely interesting. My diverse background enables me to draw from experiences in veterinary, non-veterinary, public, private and charity sectors."

She adds: "I believe my varied experiences and expertise will be an asset for the Chair of the Standards Committee."

At the same meeting Professor Susan Dawson, Head of the School of Veterinary Science at the University of Liverpool, was reconfirmed as Chair of the Education Committee, a position she has held since 2016.



From left: Kate Richards, Amanda Boag and Sue Dawson

## June Council meeting in Northern Ireland

### College Belfast-bound

**R**CVS Council will be crossing over to Belfast for its June meeting, following on from previous Council visits to Edinburgh in June 2015 and Cardiff in June 2016. This will be the first year that Council has ever been held in Northern Ireland.

The Council meeting will take place on Thursday 15 June at the Hilton Hotel and is part of a whole series of events to take place in the city that week, including Practice Standards Scheme surgeries, a Regional Question Time, an Operational Board meeting and a meeting with stakeholders in Northern Ireland.

"It's wonderful that for the third year in a row we've been able to take Council out of London and make the College available to veterinary professionals all over the country," says President Chris Tufnell. "One of the priorities identified in our Strategic Plan for the next three years is to continue to be a first-rate regulator which means remaining transparent and open to the profession, and so we'd really encourage any veterinary nurse or veterinary surgeon to come and observe the meeting."

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 2 June.

## Renewal reminders

### Annual renewals for vets due soon

**We would like to remind veterinary surgeons that the deadline for the vets annual renewal is 1 April this year. Those who pay their fees after 30 April 2017 will be charged an extra £35 to renew their registration while those who have not paid by 31 May will be removed from the Register.**

As part of the annual renewal process veterinary surgeons will also need to confirm their registration details (including their correspondence and registration addresses), confirm that they have met our requirement for continuing professional development of 105 hours over a three-year rolling period and disclose any new or previously undisclosed convictions, cautions or adverse findings.

The annual renewal can be completed by logging into the 'My Account' area of the RCVS website ([www.rcvs.org.uk/login](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/login)) using the security details that have been sent by email to all veterinary surgeons. To those individuals who do not have a valid email address, a form has been sent by post.

Any veterinary surgeons who have not received their annual renewal email or security details for the 'My Account' area should contact our Registration Department on 020 7202 0707 or [registration@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:registration@rcvs.org.uk) as soon as possible.

Those with queries about paying the annual renewal fee should contact our Finance Team on 020 7202 0723 or [finance@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:finance@rcvs.org.uk).

# Launch of '&me' campaign

## Tackling stigma in the medical professions

**At the Palace of Westminster on Tuesday 31 January 2017 our Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) and the Doctors' Support Network (DSN) launched the '&me' campaign, designed to tackle mental health stigma in the health professions by encouraging prominent members to speak out about their own experiences.**

MMI seeks to address mental health and wellbeing issues within the veterinary profession (see a full debrief of its latest work on pages 14 and 15) and the DSN provides peer support for doctors and medical students with mental health concerns. This partnership is particularly beneficial to both parties as the veterinary and medical professions have higher overall rates of mental ill-health and suicide than the general population but also share a culture in which practitioners may be reluctant to seek help because of the impact it may have on their career.

The launch event was sponsored by Kevan Jones MP (Labour, North Durham), who has spoken about his own experiences with depression, and featured first-hand testimonials from senior veterinary surgeons and doctors who have experienced mental ill-health.

One of those who spoke was David Bartram (pictured) Director of Outcomes Research for the international operations of the largest global animal health company and a member of RCVS

Council. He gave his perspective on coming to terms with a mental health condition in a profession that has some stigma attached to it.

***"Stigma is a difficult thing to tackle, but the good news is that changing our minds is within the power of every individual to do."***

A number of years ago David attempted suicide following the breakup of his marriage and explains what happened from there: "I just thought I was stressed – after all, who wouldn't be in those circumstances? But in fact I was becoming progressively more unwell. What started as worry, early waking and palpitations – which I recognised – led to patterns of thinking which I did not recognise as being disordered. I felt trapped and worthless – suicide was the only escape. From a medical perspective, my biological, social and psychological risk factors had converged and tipped me into major depression.

"That was the first of multiple suicide attempts and several prolonged stays in hospital. Over a three-year period I spent 12 months as a psychiatric inpatient. I was treated with antidepressants, antipsychotics, mood stabilisers, talking therapies and electroconvulsive therapy.

"But now thankfully I am well – and I have been for 14 years.... To what do I attribute my recovery? A mixture of medical treatment, psychological therapies, supportive friends and family, rest and time – they all contributed, probably in similar measure."

He added that while his episode of mental ill-health does not define him it has changed him in a positive way and that no one is immune from it.

Further information about the '&me' campaign can be found at [www.vetmindmatters.org/&me](http://www.vetmindmatters.org/&me), or follow the Twitter activity with '#AndMe'.

Closing the event Neil Smith, Mind Matters Chair, said: "This event is just the start... the real challenge is to start to get this message out to the wider professions. Stigma is a difficult thing to tackle, but the good news is that changing our minds is within the power of every individual to do."

Details about how to get involved in the campaign can be found on page 15.



# We've got a plan

## Three-year strategic plan published

**At the beginning of this year we published our Strategic Plan for 2017–19, which outlines our five main ambitions for the next three years with a focus on leadership, innovation and culture change.**

The Strategic Plan was developed throughout the course of 2016 with input from a number of stakeholders including RCVS Council and Veterinary Nurses Council, key committees and College staff.

Most importantly, the evidence for change came from the wide and deep consultations that took place within Vet Futures our joint project with the British Veterinary Association project that aims



to help the veterinary profession prepare for and shape its future and the VN Futures project with the British Veterinary Nursing Association.

This process led to the development of five key ambitions: learning culture; leadership and

innovation; continuing to be a First-rate Regulator; global reach; and our service agenda.

Our CEO Nick Stace said: "Within the new plan there are challenging ambitions and stretching objectives that address some of the big issues affecting the veterinary team, whether that's playing a more global role post-Brexit, the importance of embracing new technology, or the pressing need to consider culture change within the profession to ensure it continues to grow and learn.

***"There are challenging ambitions and stretching objectives that address some of the big issues affecting the veterinary team."***

"I would ask each member of the profession to take a look at the Strategic Plan and I am very happy to receive comments and feedback on the plan by email at [nick@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:nick@rcvs.org.uk)."

To download the Strategic Plan please visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/publications)

## Fee increase

### 5% renewal rise

**Annual renewal fees for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses will increase for 2017-2018 by 5%.**

This increase follows a six-year renewal fee freeze for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, which have remained at £299 (for UK-practising vets) and £61 respectively.

This increase will change the renewal fees for the registration categories as follows:

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

Corrie McCann, Director of Operations at the College, said: "The last few years have seen the College invest in an overhaul of the concerns process and the launch of a new Fellowship structure, as well as a more effective IT system and infrastructure. The fee increase still places the RCVS at the lowest end of fees charged by regulators, and is less than if the College had raised the fees in line with inflation every year for the past six years."

For more information, visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/fees](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/fees)

## Code on the Road!

### Advice and guidance at Congress

**A**t the **British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress (BSAVA)** in **Birmingham from 6-9 April** we will be **trialsing our new 'Advice clinics' service for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who are looking for bespoke advice on the Code of Professional Conduct and its supporting guidance.**

The free, 15-minute surgeries give members of the profession a chance to have a one-to-one session with a member of our Advice Team about any aspect of the *Code of Professional Conduct* and its supporting guidance.

**“Our goal is to support those involved in delivering veterinary services.”**

Robert Pragnell, Standards & Advisory Manager, said: “Many practitioners don’t realise that they can come to the Advice Team with questions for non-judgemental, confidential advice. Our goal is to support those involved in delivering veterinary services so that they are best equipped to deal with any problems or issues they might encounter – no matter what stage of their career they may be at or their area of practice.

“We would encourage anybody in the practice, whether you’re a veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse, practice managers, or student, to come to us with any question you may have. We will see and help anyone who wants to engage with us, and queries are completely confidential – we don’t start up investigations or investigate anything ourselves.”

These clinics will be available throughout Congress and can be booked in advance at [www.rcvs.org.uk/adviceclinics](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/adviceclinics). If you’re not attending Congress, the Advice Team are still always contactable throughout the year during normal working hours (020 7222 2001).

## Musing on mediation

### Updates on the Veterinary Client Mediation Service

**T**he **Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS), administered by Nockolds Solicitors who also administer a similar scheme for the General Optical Council, is now almost six months into its trial.**

Launched in October 2016, the VCMS uses mediation to resolve complaints made by clients about veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses that do not meet our threshold for professional misconduct. As of the end of January this year some 250 people had already contacted the VCMS for mediation.

So far, the cases have been resolved in a number of ways including apologies, explanations, partial refund of fees, or coming to a fee agreement in circumstances where the client had refused to pay.

The VCMS facilitators have access to three small animal and one equine vet as advisers, and Nockolds is actively engaging with all key stakeholders including the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) to continuously improve the scheme.

An Advisory Panel, made up of representatives from VDS and BVA as well as a consumer representative, also meet with the College and Nockolds every quarter to review the trial’s progress.

Complete feedback with full statistics and data will be published once the trial is complete.

If you want to find out more about the VCMS and how to use its mediation services, please visit [www.vetmediation.co.uk](http://www.vetmediation.co.uk)



**“Nockolds is actively engaging with all key stakeholders including the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) to continuously improve the scheme.”**

## What’s in a name...

### Advice on setting up a new veterinary business

**A**re you thinking of setting up your own practice, or becoming a locum? If you wish to register your business as a limited company you may not realise that you need our permission to register the company if its name will include either the word ‘vet’ or ‘veterinary’.

Under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 we have a responsibility to ensure that these terms are used appropriately, and not where they have the potential to be misleading. Practically, this means that those who want to use these terms in their company name will need to request a letter of non-objection from the College. Without this letter

Companies House, the registering authority for limited companies, will automatically reject the application.

Provided that your proposed company name doesn’t breach Advertising Standards Authority regulations, and that it is not misleading, you can use whatever name you choose. There are a few exceptions, however, and we are unable to provide letters of non-objection to the following: the use of a vet’s full name, or initial and surname (although surname only is allowed); and anything with “vet/veterinary” combined with “surgery/surgeons/surgeon” in the title. So, for example, on the one hand Feeney Veterinary Surgery

would not be allowed, on the other hand, Feeney Vets would be fine. We are also unlikely to approve a name using the word ‘veterinary’ where veterinary surgeons are not involved in the company.

Those wanting to register a new company which will need approval from the College should email [profcon@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:profcon@rcvs.org.uk) including the name, the nature of the business, and the details of any veterinary surgeons involved. We receive a large number of these requests and so it is best to get in touch at least a week in advance of the company formation for your own peace of mind!





Want to do  
some research in  
your practice?

## Assessing practice-based research

### Updates on our Ethics Review Panel trial

**The Ethics Review Panel (ERP) is now over halfway through its one-year trial and the Panel would like to encourage practice-based veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses who are considering undertaking research to submit their proposed project for ethics review.**

Ethics review is essential for study credibility and for publication, and following the recommendation of a joint RCVS-British Veterinary Association working party on practice-based clinical research we established the ERP to provide a mechanism of advice and ethics review for those who would not be able to access it through academic or industry connections. The Panel, chaired by veterinary ethicist Professor David Morton CBE, was formed on 1 August 2016, with the trial being endorsed by the BVA, British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) and British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA).

Robert Pragnell, RCVS Standards & Advisory Manager, said: "The ERP is very pleased by the number of research proposals already submitted, and we would very much encourage veterinary professionals with any interest in conducting research to submit theirs for consideration. Applicants do not have to be experienced researchers, and the research project does not even have to involve actual treatment of animals but can instead be paper-based studies such as owner questionnaires."

***"The ERP is very pleased by the number of research proposals already submitted."***

For more information about submitting a research proposal, please email us on [ethics@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:ethics@rcvs.org.uk), or visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/ethics](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/ethics) where you can find an application form and guidelines.

## Spring survey on Schedule 3

### Professions asked for their opinion on potential changes

**Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses should keep their eyes open for a new survey on the subject of Schedule 3, delegation, and the role of the veterinary nurse which is due to be sent this spring.**

The survey is part of the work of the RCVS Schedule 3 Working Party, which is examining whether the role of the veterinary nurse can be bolstered by reforming Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The Schedule allows medical treatment and minor acts of veterinary surgery to be delegated to veterinary nurses, but there is considerable evidence that many veterinary nurses do not undertake Schedule 3 work, or are uncertain as to whether they do.

The survey will be designed to discover what vets and VNs believe Schedule 3 work to include, whether they delegate or are delegated to, and to try to understand the reason why some vets are reluctant to delegate Schedule 3 tasks – and why some VNs prefer not to be delegated to. It will also seek to determine the appetite within the professions for additional veterinary tasks to be available to veterinary nurses, and ask whether the existing RCVS guidance on Schedule 3 is sufficient.

The survey is expected to be published in March or April this year. The Schedule 3 Working Party will then use the evidence base to develop recommendations for the reform of Schedule 3 for consideration by VN and RCVS Councils.

## Making the PSS Awards work for you

### Win a free Assessment Day!

**If you are thinking about applying for the new Practice Standards Scheme Awards and are heading to BSAVA Congress this year, why not join us for a drink at our PSS Awards Reception in Hall 9 of the ICC on Thursday 6 April at 5.45pm?**

As well as RCVS President Chris Tufnell formally presenting a number of practices with their new awards, the Reception will be devoted to demonstrating how the new awards can work best for you. We will have two short presentations from people who have already gone through the awards process, and the PSS team and a number of Assessors will be on hand to answer any questions you might have, over drinks and nibbles.

All guests will be entered into a raffle prize draw, with three free awards assessment days (worth around £400 each) available to win!

To book your free tickets, please visit [www.psseventbsava.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.psseventbsava.eventbrite.co.uk).

### Surgeries

We will also be holding a series of free, 20-minute PSS surgeries on the Thursday and Friday of Congress, for those with any questions about the Scheme. To book a surgery slot (allocated on a first-come, first-served basis), please visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/PSSsurgeries](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/PSSsurgeries)

## PSS manual changes

### Revisions to modules

**We have recently made minor updates to the Practice Standards Scheme's (PSS) modules for accreditations and awards.**

The modules and awards for all species groups (small animal, farm animal, and equine) have been updated with a summary of the changes being found at the back of each of the respective modules.

Pam Mosedale, Lead Assessor for the Scheme, said: "These updates are part of our continuous efforts to ensure we have a flexible Scheme, one that can respond to feedback and constantly reflect the realities of everyday practice."

"We would encourage all PSS-accredited practices to familiarise themselves with the updated modules, especially if they have an accreditation or awards assessment in the near future."

To view the updates, please visit the related documents on the Practice Standards Scheme page of the College's website: [www.rcvs.org.uk/pss](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/pss)

If you want further advice about any of the changes, or want to provide feedback about any of our current awards or accreditation modules, then please contact the Practice Standards Team on 020 7202 0767 or [pss@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:pss@rcvs.org.uk).

## That's handy!

### VN education guides back online

**We have recently republished three guides providing information about our role as a regulator for those providing veterinary nurse training and qualifications.**

The three handbooks are aimed at awarding organisations and higher education institutions; centres and colleges delivering veterinary nurse qualifications on behalf of awarding organisations; and training practices respectively.



Each handbook contains information covering all aspects of how we regulate VN education, including our accreditation process, approval criteria, visitation teams and Day-one Skills and Competences.

The three handbooks, which also include sections on the Veterinary Surgeons Act and international VN accreditation, can be downloaded from [www.rcvs.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/publications)

## Give them credit

### Accreditation updates

**During the week commencing 6 March 2017, the College visited the University of Surrey's School of Veterinary Medicine, a standard preliminary visit conducted in the third year of all new UK veterinary degrees as the first cohort of students reaches the clinical training years.**

The visit was chaired by Professor Norm Williamson, Professor Emeritus of Veterinary Medicine at New Zealand's Massey University.

The Education Department is now starting discussions with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and the Privy Council about arrangements for gaining a recognition order if the University of Surrey meets the required standard at its final visit in 2019.

Between 7 and 11 November a team from the College had also visited St. George's University in Grenada. The visitation report and recommendation is currently being compiled and will need to go to the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee and Education Committee for final approval.

## How will the future develop?

### Piloting a new approach to CPD

**On 28 February and 1 March 2017 we were pleased to host two continuing professional development (CPD) pilot days, training volunteers to trial a proposed new outcomes-based system of measuring and recording learning and development. Some 117 people have volunteered to pilot this new system, of whom over 50 were able to attend the training days.**

In June last year we held a six-week consultation with the profession asking them for their views on this proposed new system of CPD - one that concentrates less on hours logged and more on interactive, reflective learning and measuring the impact that CPD has on the individual's practice and patient health outcomes.

While an overall majority of the 3,357 people who responded to the College's consultation agreed with the proposed changes to the CPD requirement, certain elements received less support than others. The lowest amount of support was received for the 'reflection' component with 35% of respondents disagreeing with it.

With this in mind the RCVS Education Committee and VN Council agreed that a pilot of a new outcomes-based approach should be held during 2017 with a group of volunteers before making a recommendation to RCVS Council, which was approved at its meeting on 10 November.

A veterinary surgeon who signed up for the pilot and works in veterinary industry commented: "I really appreciate the acknowledgement of non-clinical CPD practices, and while I was originally sceptical of the proposed system the pilot day has so far been clear and helpful."

A veterinary nurse who attended the event added: "CPD is such a varied part of a veterinary professional's career, and it very much depends on the person how easy it is to do. I find myself doing a lot of reflection as a natural part of reading articles, and I'm hoping this new system will expand that way of thinking into other areas of CPD."

The volunteers will now pilot the new proposed system and report to Education Committee, VN Council and RCVS Council.



## Guiding the way

### Reviewing guidance and criteria for Advanced Practitioners

**At its meeting on 1 February 2017 the Education Committee gave its approval for a Working Group to be set up to review the criteria and guidance for the Advanced Practitioner status in advance of the re-validation of the first cohort of Advanced Practitioners in 2019.**

The Working Group will review the current criteria and guidance for applying for Advanced Practitioner status so that it is fit for purpose over the next five years, taking into account feedback from the application assessment panel and experience gained since the launch of the status. The group will then report to Education Committee

and recommend any revisions for approval and consequent publication in early 2018.

The Committee also agreed that those who achieve a qualification that makes them eligible to apply for Advanced Practitioner in or after 2017 must have completed an assessed module, or assessed equivalent, in professional key skills prior to application.

Those who achieved an eligible qualification before 2017 will still be able to present a portfolio of their continuing professional development records in place of an assessed module, but they will have to submit this at the time of application.



# More good fellows

## New RCVS Fellowship enters its second year

**T**he second RCVS Fellowship Day will be held on Friday 20 October 2017 at The Royal Institution. The event is expected to include talks and a poster session from the Fellows, as well as an awards ceremony and a keynote address.

The inaugural RCVS Fellowship Day, held on 19 October 2016, celebrated the relaunch of the Fellowship initiative which turned it from an exam-based award into a learned society and created three new routes to Fellowship: meritorious contributions to knowledge; meritorious contributions to clinical practice; and meritorious contributions to the profession.

The criteria for achieving Fellowship includes sustained contribution to scholarship; producing

a body of creative work that has been disseminated to others; indisputable advancement of their subject; providing leadership to the profession; and, advancement of the public understanding of the profession.

Last year there were 56 applications, of which 44 were successful, and we are pleased to say that this year there have once again been 56 applications. All applications will now be assessed and applicants will be told of the outcome following the Fellowship Board meeting on 30 May.

Please visit our website for more information about the Fellowships and the application process: [www.rcvs.org.uk/fellowships](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/fellowships)



Right: Nick Bacon, Chair of the Fellowship Board, introducing last year's Fellowship Day

# Monitoring learning and development

## 2016 CPD audit results

**I**n September 2016 we contacted 1,398 veterinary surgeons and asked them to submit their continuing professional development (CPD) records. Veterinary surgeons are required to engage in a minimum of 105 hours of CPD over a three-year period (averaging 35 hours a year) in order to comply with the Code of Professional Conduct.

Of those contacted 583 did not confirm that they had met our requirement when completing their annual renewal; 400 were a random sample of those who had confirmed they were compliant; 125 had submitted a return in 2015 but fell some hours short of the requirement; 98 had been included in the 2015 CPD audit but had not responded to any subsequent communications from the College; 68 had not responded to any communications regarding the Professional Development Phase; and 124 had selected 'no – they are not compliant' as part of their 2016 annual renewal.

The response rate to our request for CPD records was 87%, compared to 76% in 2015. Out of those who responded to our request some 74% were found to have complied with the CPD requirement.

Out of those who didn't respond to the audit some 23 vets were referred to the CPD Referral Group as they had not replied to requests for their records for three consecutive years. The Group, set up to examine cases of repeated non-compliance, will consider each vet's case and may refer them to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigation, if deemed necessary.

For further information about our CPD requirements and for guidance on the type of activities that may constitute CPD, please visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd)

If you have not already done so, you can also sign up for our free online Professional Development Record, which allows veterinary surgeons to log their learning and development, at [www.rcvs-pdr.org.uk](http://www.rcvs-pdr.org.uk)

# Gauging graduate outcomes

## Review to begin this year

**O**ne of the key aims of our new organisation-wide Strategic Plan 2017–19, as well as the *Vet Futures Action Plan* is to carry out a review of graduate outcomes over the next two to three years. The aim of the review would be to help ensure that prospective veterinary students have a clear idea of the reality and opportunities of a career in veterinary science and assist the veterinary schools in providing support for them.

The wheels for this review were set in motion at the February meeting of the Education Committee when members approved proposals to establish a Working Group which would engage in the initial information and evidence-gathering stage of the project.

Among the issues the Working Group will consider are: the skills and competences that will be needed by veterinary professionals in the future and what this will mean for the structure and content of the undergraduate veterinary degree and postgraduate considerations; the viability and desirability of limited licensure; the purpose, requirements and breadth of extra-mural studies and its financial sustainability; and diversity within the profession in relation to ethnicity, socio-economic background and gender.

***“We have also joined forces with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association to conduct a review of the impact of the Professional Development Phase.”***

The research stage is likely to involve focus group meetings, stakeholder interviews and literature reviews over the course of 2017, with a progress report being presented to Education Committee at its October 2017 meeting.

It is hoped that the next two phases of the project – review and analysis, and implementation – will take place in 2018–19.

Concurrently with this project we have also joined forces with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) to conduct a review of the impact of the Professional Development Phase – the period of supported learning and development to help the transition from student to practitioner – on new graduates. A Working Group to take this project forward was formed at the end of last year.



# Showcasing the veterinary life

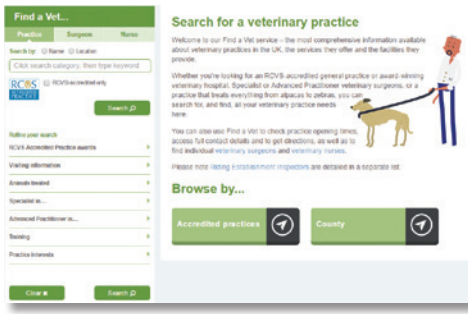
## RCVS at the National Pet Show

**This spring we will be returning to the National Pet Show from 6 to 7 May 2017 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 we will be focusing on promoting our veterinary nurse and veterinary surgeon careers material, as well as our recently revamped 'Find a Vet' search function on our website.

The Find a Vet search tool was relaunched in early 2016, allowing users for the first time to search for a veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse or veterinary practice all in one place. The tool also includes new features such as displaying a practice's visiting information, enabling users to get directions to a practice via Google maps, and displaying a practice's Practice Standards Scheme accreditations and awards so the public can make more informed choices about where they visit.



## And we're live!

### Public outreach

We're pleased to say we'll be attending the second BBC Countryfile Live at Blenheim Palace, from 3-6 August 2017. At last year's event we focused on promoting Find a Vet and the Practice Standards Scheme.



# Our members in the north

## Blackpool and Belfast meetings

**North West England and Northern Ireland will be our destinations for this year's Regional Question Times - the events where we give members of the veterinary team the opportunity to put their questions directly to College officers and senior staff.**

The first event will take place at the Village Hotel in Blackpool on the evening of Monday 15 May and will be hosted by our President Chris Tufnell.

The second will take place at the Hilton Hotel, 4 Lanyon Place, Belfast on Tuesday 13 June –



ahead of the meeting of RCVS Council at the same venue on Thursday 15 June.

Both events will commence at 6.15pm with a buffet supper, followed by an overview of the College's current activities by President Chris Tufnell at 7.15pm. The general question and answer session will then start at 7.30pm, with a final panel discussion at 8.45pm for an approximately 10pm finish.

All members of the veterinary team are welcome to attend the events, which can also count towards your continuing professional development (CPD) requirement. To book your place visit our Eventbrite page on [www.rcvs.eventbrite.com](http://www.rcvs.eventbrite.com)

In the afternoons prior to both events we will be holding Practice Standards Scheme surgeries for those who want to find out more about the Scheme and its awards, are preparing for an accreditation or awards visit, or have any other related queries. The free 45-minute surgeries can be booked by contacting Emma Lockley on [e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk).

# Brimming with ideas in Brum

## What we're doing at BSAVA Congress

**We are pleased to once again be attending the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress next month at the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham, where we will be promoting our Mind Matters Initiative, VN Futures, our CPD pilot and much more besides.**

Our staff will be on hand the entire Congress, Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 April, to answer questions about a range of different projects and initiatives including Mind Matters, the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), and the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*.

The College launched Mind Matters to increase the accessibility and acceptance of mental health support, and encourage a culture that better equips individuals to talk about and deal with stress and related issues. Visitors can impart their own ideas on how to improve veterinary mental health and wellbeing by taking part in our **#wellbeingtip** social media competition in which we encourage delegates to share their tips for a chance of winning a Fitbit Alta.

Staying with the Mind Matters theme, on Saturday 8 April Lizzie Lockett, Director of the Initiative, will be presenting with Catherine Oxtoby, Risk Manager at the Veterinary Defence Society, in a workshop titled 'Blame and shame: lost learning in the veterinary profession' from 8:30am to 10.10am. Later that day, between 4.30pm and 5.35pm, Dr Elinor O'Connor from Alliance Manchester Business School will be giving a talk

titled 'Occupational stressors in veterinary practice in the UK', while from 5.45pm to 6.30pm Richard Dorney MBE, Director of Strongmind Resilience Training Ltd, will be giving a talk titled 'Resilience; What does it really mean?'

And it's not all just about Mind Matters – on Thursday 6 April in Hall 10 from 9.10am to 9.55am Julie Dugmore, our Director of Veterinary Nursing, will be joining British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) President Sam Morgan for a joint talk entitled 'Where do we see the profession in 2025?' The talk will cover the key points from the *VN Futures Report* and an update on how we are working to fulfil the recommendations of the report.

Furthermore, on Friday 7 April we will be hosting a Big Issues Stream in Hall 6 from 8.30am to 10.10am. The event will start with an update from RCVS President Chris Tufnell on our Presidential Taskforce on Brexit, including the recently published Brexit principles (see page 2), with a Q&A session after his presentation. From 9.30am onwards we will then give an update on our current pilot of an outcomes-based approach to continuing professional development (CPD) including a workshop from Shona McIntyre, one of our Postgraduate Deans and a member of the CPD Policy Working Party, on planning and reflecting on CPD for the general practitioner.

More details about our Practice Standards Scheme surgeries and awards event can be found on page 9; with details about our 'Code on the Road' advice clinics on page 8.



# Well, well, well

## Joint Wellbeing Awards celebrate positive practices

**O**ur Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) and the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) were pleased to announce the winners of the inaugural Wellbeing Awards on 27 January at the SPVS/Veterinary Practice Managers Association (VPMA) Congress near Newport.

The MMI aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of those in the veterinary team including students, veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and practice managers. The awards were therefore designed to celebrate those practices that truly support and motivate their staff, recognising that, while it is certainly critical that there is publicity around increased stress and mental health issues in veterinary practice, it is also important to highlight those practices where teams are happy and fulfilled.

The winners (pictured below) and their categories were:

- Large Practice (51 or more staff) – White Cross Vets, which employs 175 people across 16 sites around the country
- Medium Practice (between 16 and 50 staff) – Valley Vets in Cardiff
- Small Practice (up to 15 staff) – 387 Veterinary Centre in Walsall, West Midlands

Nick Stuart, SPVS Senior Vice-President, said: "We were so impressed with all the entries, not just our three winners. Initiatives, such as a hamper for 'the loveliest person of the month', a

day off for people on their birthday, and in-house training on mental health and wellbeing help define the culture of a practice."

Lizzie Lockett, Director of the Mind Matters Initiative and one of the judges for the Awards, praised how "UK vet practices are showing real leadership when it comes to talking the wellbeing of their teams seriously. The work we are doing here to address mental health issues is being held up as a template by veterinary professions in other countries, as well as by those in other professions. And the hard work that's being put in on the ground by practices such as our award-winners is what makes a real difference."

***"If you look after your team you will reduce turnover and that's good for morale, good for your clients and ultimately, good for your profitability."***

Tim Harrison, Managing Director of the large practice category winners White Cross Vets, said: "It's not just about how bosses should behave morally, it makes pure business sense in a people-led profession where there is a shortage of vets and nurses. If you look after your team you will reduce turnover and that's good for morale, good for your clients and ultimately, good for your profitability."

(l-r) Ed Newbould, Hamish and Rachel Duncan, Ryan Jones, Nichi Tanner and Beckie Chandler



## A date for your diary

### RCVS Day 2017



**T**his year's RCVS Day, our Annual General Meeting and Awards Presentation, will take place at the Royal Institute of British Architects (pictured) on Friday July 7.

As well as AGM business and the investiture of the new RCVS President for 2017–18, we will be awarding the RCVS Queen's Medal, the most prestigious honour that the RCVS can bestow upon a veterinary surgeon, to Dr Barry Johnson, and presenting Heather Armstrong DVM(Hon) and Professor Duncan J Maskell BA PhD FMedSci with Honorary Associateships. The VN Council Golden Jubilee Award will also be presented to Kathy Kissick as well as Diplomas for veterinary surgeons.

Furthermore, there will be speeches from the outgoing and incoming RCVS Presidents, Chris Tufnell and Stephen May respectively, our CEO Nick Stace and a guest speaker who is yet to be confirmed.

A limited number of tickets will be available for members and veterinary nurses in early June – please contact Emma Lockley at [e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk) for tickets.





# Bringing together the best research

## Update on latest MMI activities

**Here is an update on the latest activities of our Mind Matters Initiative, set up at the beginning of 2015 to help address mental health issues and promote wellbeing within the veterinary team.**

**The Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) started with quite the burst of energy this year with no less than four major events in the month of January alone – including a symposium attended by close to 100 people, a campaign launch and a stream of mental-health related talks at a veterinary congress – all of which are described in more detail below.**

One thing that is becoming increasingly clear in the two years since MMI was launched is its pan-professional nature, with support coming from a wide variety of organisations including the British Veterinary Association, British Veterinary Nursing Association, the Association of Veterinary Students, the Veterinary Schools Council, Veterinary Practice Management Association and the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons, among others.

There has also been widespread support amongst the profession with a great deal of positive feedback about the fact that, as a regulator, we have put mental health and wellbeing so far up the agenda and strived to help tackle the stigma that surrounds it.

### MMI Research Symposium

The first major event of the year was the inaugural MMI Research Symposium held at

the University of Edinburgh on Friday 20 January and attended by academics and researchers presenting their latest work on veterinary mental health and wellbeing, as well as practising veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wanted to find out more on this subject.

***“It was clear that there is currently no consensus of what constitutes a suicide cluster or how to accurately identify them.”***

The Symposium was organised with Rosie Allister, Chair of the Vet Helpline and Director of Vetlife, and was introduced by Neil Smith, the former RCVS President who chairs the MMI, under the theme of ‘understanding and supporting veterinary mental health’. The overall aim of the event was to bring together academics and researchers working in this area to share their insights and best practice.

After Neil’s introduction the floor was opened to the first of three plenary speakers – Professor Stephen Platt from the University of Edinburgh who spoke about the concept of ‘suicide clusters’, loosely defined as a group of suicides in close proximity whether that be defined by geography,

time-span, profession or otherwise. Consideration was given to how these relate to the veterinary profession as well, although, from Professor Platt’s conclusion, it was clear that there is currently no consensus of what constitutes a suicide cluster or how to accurately identify them.

The next speaker was Professor Debbie Cohen (pictured) from the Centre for Psychosocial Research, Occupational Health and Physician Health at the School of Medicine at Cardiff University, who spoke about disclosing and assessing mental ill-health within the medical profession. She told delegates about a three-month survey she had conducted on issues surrounding disclosure of mental health issues which has led to her developing a tool to support earlier disclosure and empower people to talk about mental health problems.



The third speaker was Chris O’Sullivan from the Mental Health Foundation who spoke about the need to protect and improve mental health at work based on research conducted by his organisation. This research found that there was a clear business case for companies and organisations to provide support to people with mental ill-health in terms of retaining talent and improving performance and, furthermore, pointed out that people with a diagnosed mental health condition were net contributors to the UK economy.

After the plenary speakers the rest of the day comprised a series of four ‘short-talk streams’ in which academics and researchers gave 15-minute talks around their area of study. These talks were the result of a call for papers made by us in November last year and topics discussed included the humour-types evident in UK veterinary practices, the transition from vet student to veterinary surgeon, embedding resilience training into the veterinary curriculum and how veterinary nurses cope with stress in practice.

The day ended in an overview of the discussions and a workshop by Lizzie Lockett, MMI Director, on priorities and suggestions for future research on veterinary mental health. Suggestions included







the impact of physical exercise on mental health, what is 'normal' in terms of perceptions of stress in practice and whether a peer-support programme could work on a national basis.

**“There was a clear business case for companies and organisations to provide support to people with mental ill-health in terms of retaining talent and improving performance.”**

#### Virtual Congress session on mental health

On the very same day of the Symposium we also held a series of talks on resilience and stress reduction as part of the Webinar Vet's International Virtual Congress.

There were three talks in total: 'Managing work stress in veterinary practice' with Dr Elinor O'Connor (pictured), Senior Lecturer in Occupational Psychology at the University of Manchester; 'Veterinary resilience, more good days than bad' with



Dr Jenny Moffett, Managing Director of Skills Tree Ltd; and 'An introduction to mindfulness' with Dr Mike Scanlan, Director of Kind Minds Health.

All three talks are available to listen to again on the Webinar Vet's archive of presentations: [www.thewebinarvet.com/webinar-archive/](http://www.thewebinarvet.com/webinar-archive/)

#### '&me' campaign launch

On Tuesday 31 January 2017 we launched our joint '&me' mental health stigma campaign with Doctors' Support Network.

More details of the event itself can be found on page 7 but the overall aim of the campaign is to reduce stigma by encouraging senior medical and veterinary figures to talk about their own past experiences of mental ill-health, demonstrating that it is possible to continue to flourish in your career if you have a mental health problem. It is hoped that this will encourage those who are not yet seeking help, or who are struggling with their diagnosis, to speak to appropriate people.

The campaign is set to run for a year and we would like to hear from senior veterinary professionals who have had past struggles with mental ill-health and who would be willing to talk on the record about their experiences and have them published on the campaign website and related social media. If you are interested in sharing your story then please, in the first instance,

contact Louise Freeman, Vice-Chair of Doctors' Support Network, to discuss your story on [vicechair@dsn.org.uk](mailto:vicechair@dsn.org.uk).

Keeping everyone safe is our priority and so we are not seeking to publish the personal stories of those who are currently or recently unwell. To find out more about the campaign and read some of the personal testimonies we have already received please visit [www.vetmindmatters.org/&me](http://www.vetmindmatters.org/&me)

#### Mindfulness webinars

And that's not all... on Wednesday 1 February we launched a series of eight weekly one-hour mindfulness-based stress-reduction webinars which aim to improve the wellbeing of all those in the veterinary team.

The webinars run until 22 March and tickets are still available at [www.thewebinarvet.com/mindfulness17rcvs](http://www.thewebinarvet.com/mindfulness17rcvs).

You can either purchase an individual ticket for £40 (plus VAT) or a practice ticket for up to 10 team members for £200 (plus VAT). Those who are not able to listen to every session live can listen to them again after they are broadcast.

#### Support for managers

Finally, we have teamed up with VPMA to offer a course for those in practice management roles. The full-day course was run for the first time in Swindon on 3 February and covered topics including mental health awareness, employment regulations, the role of the line manager, making reasonable adjustments and planning 'return to work'. Feedback was very positive and the training will now be run out across the VPMA's regions, with discounts for VPMA members. Keep an eye on the Mind Matters website ([www.vetmindmatters.org](http://www.vetmindmatters.org)) for dates and venues.





## Report to Council, March 2017

**PIC Chair Andrew Ash**

**S**ince the last report to Council there have been seven Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings – two each in October and November 2016 and one each in December 2016, January 2017 and February 2017.

The total number of cases considered by the Committee was 37. Of these, 14 were closed; four were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon; one case was held open; 11 cases were referred for further investigations; five cases were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; and two were referred to the RCVS Health Protocol.

In total, the Committee is investigating 25 ongoing cases, which include cases referred to solicitors, visits and health cases.

### Health and Performance Protocol

There are currently 11 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or on the RCVS Health Protocol.

There are three veterinary surgeons either under assessment or on the RCVS Performance Protocol. However, one of these has been suspended following a conviction and disqualification order which is currently under appeal.

### Professional Conduct Department

Between 11 October 2016 and 13 February 2017 the total number of cases registered by the Professional Conduct Department was 605. Of these, 340 were enquiry matters and 265 were professional conduct concerns being raised. This compares with 336 concerns being raised in the same time frame in 2015-16.

During the same period 397 concerns were closed. Of these approximately 7% were closed because permission to copy the concerns form to the veterinary surgeon were not received; 83% were closed by the Case Examiner Groups because there was no arguable case; 2% were closed after review; 1% was closed after a period of being held open; and 6% were closed or held open for a specified period by PIC. The remaining 1% was closed by the Disciplinary Committee.

### Veterinary investigators

During the period 11 October 2016 to 13 February 2017, the Veterinary Investigators and Chief Investigator carried out six announced visits, seven unannounced visits, two health-related visits and three review visits. During the visits people raising concerns, veterinary practice staff, third-party witnesses and the respondent veterinary surgeons were interviewed.

### Disciplinary Committee referrals

During the period 11 October 2016 to 13 February 2017, two cases were referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

### Concerns procedure

Between June 2016 and September 2016, an average of 48% of concerns raised with us were closed or referred to PIC within four months, the key performance indicator for this stage of our concerns-investigation and disciplinary process.

For the same period 68% of cases were ones in which PIC reached a decision to close, hold open or refer it to a Disciplinary Committee or the Health or Performance Protocol within nine months, the key performance indicator for this stage.

### Confidential reporting line

**Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wish to talk to a member of our Professional Conduct Department in confidence can do so via the confidential reporting line using the following contact details:**

**Tel: 07599 958294 Email: [reporting@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:reporting@rcvs.org.uk)**

**The line is open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.**

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

### Ms Samantha Giles

**Inquiry concerning: failing to respond to requests from the College to provide continuing professional development (CPD) records**

**VN DC decision: suspended from the Register of Veterinary Nurses for two months**

**Registration status: name will be restored to the Register on 20 March 2017**

On 16 December 2016 the Veterinary Nurse (VN) Disciplinary Committee suspended Gwent-based veterinary nurse Samantha Giles from the Register for two months after she failed to respond to repeated requests for her CPD records.

At the outset of the hearing Samantha Giles admitted that between 1 August 2012 and 21 June 2016 she had failed to respond adequately or at all to reasonable requests from the RCVS to share her CPD records – these requests amounted to 11 letters, two emails and three telephone calls. Of these attempts to contact Ms Giles, she responded to just one email. This was in May 2016 in which she issued an apology (and an explanation that she had moved address) and offered to provide certificates proving that she

### Mrs Lois Hodgkinson

**Inquiry concerning: placing orders for Prescription-only Medication for personal use**

**VN DC decision: name suspended from the Register of Veterinary Nurse for 10 months**

**Registration status: at time of publication name still on the Register due to 28 day appeal period on the Committee's decision**

On 7 February 2017 the VN Disciplinary Committee directed the Registrar to suspend Surrey-based veterinary nurse Lois Hodgkinson from the Register for a period of 10 months.

The allegations against Ms Hodgkinson were that, between 1 September 2013 and 1 April 2015, she placed five orders for Prescription-only Medication (POM) for her own personal use and/or without an authorised prescription using the practice's veterinary wholesaler ordering system.

Specifically:

1. 28 x 30mg Codeine Phosphate tablets, ordered on or about 9 September 2013;
2. 56 x 250mg Naproxen (Naprosyn) tablets, ordered on or about 24 February 2014;
3. 28 x 50mg Amitriptyline tablets, ordered on or about 7 August 2014;



had undertaken CPD – despite the fact that no such evidence could in fact be produced.

During the proceedings the RCVS asserted that Ms Giles had failed to comply with several crucial aspects of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* – namely that all members of the profession are expected to undertake at least 45 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period in order to keep their professional skills and competences up-to-date; that these CPD records should be provided upon request; and that members of the profession must comply with reasonable requests from the RCVS.

In her evidence Ms Giles said that she knew she should have responded to these requests but admitted that she did not originally regard the requests as important and thought that the matter would 'go away' if she did not respond. When it became clear that this was not the case, she said she found it difficult to face up to her obligations. She also admitted that her failures to respond were unprofessional and that she now has an appreciation of the importance of undertaking CPD in terms of keeping up with changing practices and advances in veterinary and nursing practice.

Having found the charges against her proved and finding her guilty of disgraceful conduct, the Committee then considered its sanction against Ms Giles. The Committee took into account the seriousness of Ms Giles' failings in that she made

repeated decisions not to comply with requests from the RCVS over a protracted period of four years.

Professor Alistair Barr, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "Your failures show, inevitably, a disregard for the regulatory responsibilities of the RCVS to police veterinary nurses' obligations to fulfil their CPD requirements."

***"Once you have served your period of suspension you will return to the practice which you say you love."***

The Committee heard mitigating evidence on behalf of Ms Giles including witness statements and letters from current and former colleagues which complimented her communication skills with work colleagues and animal owners and in which it was accepted that she is a "valued member of the veterinary nursing profession."

However, the Committee decided that a suspension from the Register for two months would be the most appropriate sanction. Professor Barr said: "In imposing that sanction we have noted the evidence as to your professional competence and your other professional qualities. The Committee trusts, therefore, that once you have served your period of suspension you will return to the practice which you say you love."

4. 28 x 25mg Amitriptyline tablets, ordered on or about 10 November 2014;
5. 28 x 60mg Codeine Phosphate tablets, ordered on or about 31 March 2015.

The medications for charges (1) to (3) above were intended for her own personal use, as she had previously at various times been prescribed Codeine, Naproxen and Amitriptyline after being involved in a serious car accident in November 2012, as a result of which she suffered from chronic back pain and other problems.

### ***"A number of mitigating factors were put forward in Ms Hodgkinson's defence."***

The medications outlined in charges 4 and 5 were intended for her dog, 'Minnie', but the dosages ordered were incorrect. The medications were never removed from the practice or given to Minnie, but were instead returned to the wholesaler.

From the outset Ms Hodgkinson admitted the charges against her, although she believed that other staff at the practice had placed similar personal orders and that she had been given permission to do so as well. Ms Hodgkinson also accepted that the facts amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

In reaching its decision, the Committee took into account Ms Hodgkinson's assertion that she believed she had been given permission to order

medication through the practice. She did admit however that she must have been mistaken in that belief. The Committee also considered a number of aggravating features were present, namely: the potential risk posed to animal welfare; Ms Hodgkinson's ignorance of fundamental legislative provisions; a breach of trust placed in her by virtue of her RVN status; the fact that the misconduct was repeated over a period of time; and a lack of awareness of professional responsibilities at the time of the conduct.

The Committee then turned to the question of sanction. A number of mitigating factors were put forward in Ms Hodgkinson's defence including the fact that a period of lengthy suspension or removal from the Register would result in her losing an offer of employment, the fact that up to the relevant conduct she had had an unblemished career and the fact that she had made early admissions of guilt and shown insight into her misconduct.

Chitra Karve, who chaired the Committee and spoke on its behalf, said: "Having weighed the matters of personal mitigation against the fact that a rudimentary knowledge of the governing legislation was effectively all that was required of the respondent to ensure that the misconduct complained of did not occur, it is the clear view of the Committee that it would be failing in its public duty were it to do anything less than to impose a period of suspension from practice and the least period of suspension that is appropriate in this case is one of 10 months."

## **Miss Emma Faulkner**

### **Inquiry concerning: allegation that she struck a dog on his head**

#### **DC decision: case dismissed**

#### **Registration status: name remains on the Register of Veterinary Surgeons**

On 5 January 2017 the Disciplinary Committee dismissed the College's case against Nottinghamshire veterinary surgeon Emma Faulkner.

The allegation against Emma Frances Faulkner MRCVS was that, on 7 September 2015, she had acted inappropriately by striking a Shih Tzu/Toy Poodle cross puppy called Arnie on his head. The hearing commenced on Tuesday 3 January 2017 with evidence being given by the owner of the animal ("TC"). However, the corroborating witness, who was also the complainant in the case, failed to attend the hearing to give evidence.

Efforts were made by the College to contact the complainant and remind her that she had been summoned to appear before the Committee – however, she still chose not to attend the hearing to give evidence. In response to her non-appearance the Committee decided that her written evidence was inadmissible as there would be no opportunity to cross-examine her about the discrepancies between her account and that of TC.

Miss Faulkner's counsel then made an application to the Committee that the College had failed to sufficiently prove its case to the requisite standard such that it would not be necessary for her to adduce any evidence in her defence. The Committee granted this on the grounds that there were clear inconsistencies in the evidence given by TC at different stages of the investigation and during the hearing itself.

Chitra Karve, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee was unable to conclude that TC was a reliable witness. Given TC's centrality to the case the Committee is unable to be satisfied so that it is sure that her account of events as outlined in her oral evidence is accurate. Accordingly, the Committee is not satisfied that the College has proved to the requisite standard that the respondent did in fact strike Arnie to the head as alleged."



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

## Dr Tracy Backhouse

### Inquiry concerning: the respondent striking a number of dogs and dragging another across the floor

#### DC decision: no further action

#### Registration status: name remains on the Register of Veterinary Surgeons

On 24 January 2017 the Disciplinary Committee decided to take no further action in relation to the case of Dr Tracy Backhouse, who admitted disgraceful conduct in relation to her striking a number of dogs and dragging another across the floor.

This exceptional course of action was taken following medical evidence being presented to the Committee by two independent psychiatrists.

Dr Tracy Samantha Backhouse MRCVS originally faced seven charges, six of which related to striking dogs with the other related to dragging a dog across the floor while it was in the process of anaesthetic recovery following surgery. The incidents occurred between October 2014 and March 2015 when she was Clinical Director of a practice in Cirencester.

When Dr Backhouse appeared before the Disciplinary Committee she formally admitted all the charges with the exception of an element of the first charge and the seventh charge and accepted that her actions amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. In light of her admissions the Disciplinary Committee found her guilty of serious professional misconduct.

In considering what sanction to impose the Committee took into account that this was, in its own estimation, an exceptional case as the Committee having received jointly agreed evidence from two independent psychiatrists instructed by the College and Dr Backhouse found that, at the time of the incidents, Dr Backhouse had an undiagnosed mental health condition caused by personal issues and work-related stress which wholly accounted for her behaviour at the time.

***“The Committee finds that this is an exceptional... It is completely unacceptable for a veterinary surgeon to hit or frighten or attempt to cow his or her patients into obedience.”***

The Committee also took account of a submission by an accredited cognitive behavioural psychotherapist who is currently treating Dr Backhouse. The psychiatric evidence confirmed that there was no evidence of this mental health condition prior to October 2014, and that the condition “wholly accounted for the respondent’s emotionality and behaviour during the relevant period” and that the symptoms abated once she left her role at the Cirencester practice, meaning that she is now considered “fit to practise as a veterinary surgeon without limitations”.

The Committee also considered that, prior to October 2014, Dr Backhouse had a blameless career as a veterinary surgeon and considered a number of positive testimonials from colleagues

and clients, including her present employer who described her as a “brilliant surgeon”.

Ian Green, in relaying the Committee’s decision and summing up the case, said: “The Committee finds that this is an exceptional case in which it can take an exceptional course. In the course of this decision it has sought to emphasise what should already be clear: that it is completely unacceptable for a veterinary surgeon to hit or frighten or attempt to cow his or her patients into obedience; and that it is not acceptable for a veterinary surgeon to lose his or her temper with a patient in any circumstances.

“The Committee is aware of the stresses and strains of everyday work in a surgery and the pressures they can impose on a veterinary surgeon. But the public and his or her colleagues are entitled to expect that a veterinary surgeon will respond to those stresses and strains in a calm, measured and considered manner.

“But in this case, the Committee has decided, exceptionally, to take no further action in relation to the misconduct. It is satisfied that it has discharged its duty to uphold the standards of the profession. It is confident that anyone taking the trouble to understand the particular circumstances of this case will also understand why it will not do anything to enhance the reputation of the profession to take any step which interferes adversely with the career of a dedicated and competent and fully fit veterinary surgeon whose misconduct had its origin in such an unfortunate episode of ill-health. But, most importantly, the Committee is satisfied that further action in this case is not necessary for the protection of the welfare of animals.”

## RVN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE



# Report to VN Council, January 2017

## RVN PIC Chair Suzanne May

**S**ince the last report to VN Council (October 2016) there have been three meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee in October and December 2016 and January 2017.

The total number of new cases considered by the Committee between October 2016 and January 2017 was two. Of these two cases, one case has been referred to external solicitors for statements to be taken and one case is adjourned pending further investigations.

#### RVN concerns

Between 6 September 2016 and 9 January 2017 there were five new concerns received against registered veterinary nurses. Of these five concerns, four are currently under investigation by the Case Examiners Group (comprising a veterinary and lay

member of RVN PIC and a case manager), while one concern was closed as there was no arguable case.

#### Ongoing investigations

The Committee has six ongoing cases. Of these one is adjourned pending the outcome of a criminal trial which is set to take place in June 2017. The outcome of the trial shall be included in a future report to VN Council.

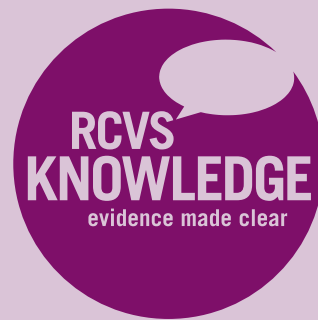
#### Health and Performance Protocols

There are currently no RVNs on either the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols.

#### Referral to RVN Disciplinary Committee

Since the last Committee report no new cases have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.





# Anniversary celebrations

## Veterinary Evidence turns one

**We officially launched our peer-reviewed, open-access journal in February 2016. *Veterinary Evidence* represents the charity's wider mission statement of providing the veterinary community with practice relevant, evidence-based information resources.**

In its first year [www.veterinaryevidence.org](http://www.veterinaryevidence.org) has engaged with an international audience spanning 20 countries, and has published 58 papers which have been downloaded over 34,000 times; helping busy practitioners reach a clinical bottom line which summarises the relevant clinical outcome.

*Veterinary Evidence* currently publishes weekly content, there's no publication fee and it is open access under a CC-BY 4.0 licence, meaning all journal content can be read by anyone, anywhere for free – in keeping with our charitable objectives of advancing veterinary care.

Readers can expect to find content related to all aspects of evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM), ranging from economics to ethics and teaching; anything that will help a clinician in practice. *Veterinary Evidence* also hosts others resources including podcasts for busy

practitioners on the go along with toolkits to guide you through the different facets of EBVM. The toolkits include guidance on scientific writing, how to set up a journal club, links to other resources such as PICO.VET and more.

Most viewed articles include:

- Can I hang? Ideal time to replace isotonic crystalloid intravenous fluids and sets to prevent fluid contamination and blood stream infection
- The evidence behind the treatment of canine idiopathic epilepsy
- Does the use of lidocaine in dogs and cats reduce post-operative tracheitis?
- Which is more effective in altering the intra-gastric pH in dogs, omeprazole or ranitidine?
- In bitches diagnosed with pyometra, is medical therapy using antibiotics alone as effective as combining ovariectomy with antibiotics in reducing morbidity and mortality?

Going forward; in late 2017 the website platform will be overhauled, ensuring practitioners can quickly find articles and easily implement their findings into practice.

*Veterinary Evidence* is currently accepting applications for an Editor-in-Chief to move the journal into its next chapter. The Editor-in-Chief will have a passion for EBVM and engaging with the veterinary community and will help provide readers with the content they need. If you're interested in applying for this role you can view the full job description here: <http://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/work-for-us/>

# Old meets new

## Archives launch new vet history website

**Following on from the release of our online Archive Catalogue last November, we can announce the launch of the next phase of the RCVS Vet History project – the Digital Collections. Material that has already been described on the Catalogue can now be viewed and read on the affiliated Digital Collections site, free of charge, from anywhere in the world.**

To explore the veterinary past online, visit [www.VHdigital.org](http://www.VHdigital.org)

The Digital Collections website, funded by the Alborada Trust, is an exciting new online resource, featuring high resolution digital images of highlights from the library and archive collections.

This previously untapped source of fascinating documents and literature, providing a unique insight into veterinary, scientific and military history, is now available for everyone to see.

Highlights include letters, photographs and notebooks from the collections of army veterinarian Major General Sir Frederick Smith (1857-1929) and beautiful watercolours of horse anatomy, behaviour and care, created by Edward Mayhew (1808-1868) for his publications *Illustrated Horse Doctor* (1860) and *Illustrated Horse Management* (1864).

Individual articles and authors are listed for each issue, helping researchers go directly to content they're looking for. These valuable collections illuminate the early days of the veterinary profession and the developments in practice and politics.

Digital Collections is not merely a static display for historical interest – but can become an active hub for interaction between veterinarians, historians and the general public. Users of the site are also encouraged to comment and suggest tags for images on the site, to forge further connections and help researchers discover more content.

The material currently available is the first wave of many exciting collections to follow.

## Get your priorities right

### Prioritisation project update

**We have asked the veterinary profession for their views on which clinical questions they would like to see answered within *Veterinary Evidence* as part of our prioritisation project.**

These questions were rated in order of priority by attendees at the Veterinary Evidence Today 2016 conference in Edinburgh. The prioritised list has now been turned into PICO (population, intervention, comparator, outcome) questions, covering five Knowledge Group categories of feline, canine, feline emergency, canine emergency and equine.

The full list has been published here: [www.veterinaryevidence.org/index.php/ve/announcement/view/4](http://www.veterinaryevidence.org/index.php/ve/announcement/view/4)

The next step is for these topics to be written as Knowledge Summaries and submitted to *Veterinary Evidence*, to help the veterinary community get vital information to aid clinical practice.

If you're interested in writing a Knowledge Summary, please contact the managing editor of *Veterinary Evidence*:

**Bridget@rcvsknowledge.org**, stating which PICO question you would like to work on.

You will be guided throughout the entire process, and our Library team will be on hand to help with any queries and to help search the literature.

## Feedback please

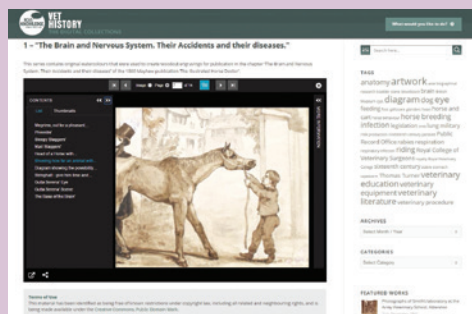
### Annual survey

**Have your say in a service that's right for you.**

This is your chance to tell RCVS Knowledge exactly what kind of service the veterinary profession needs, and to win a free iPad in the process!

Our annual survey will allow us to tailor our activities to better help veterinary practitioners. The information gathered from the survey will be used to build the services we offer – your information won't be passed on to third-party marketing or outside organisations.

Click here to take the survey: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RCVSKSurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RCVSKSurvey)



# 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 Bits and bytes

Regulating telemedicine: what's your view?

## 2 Emergency Brexit

Principles to help navigate risks and maximise opportunities

## 3 X marks the box

Place your votes for new – or familiar – faces on Council

### To boldly go...

VNs take giant steps to the future

## 4 All in it together

Survey looks at extent of blame culture

### Taking a lead

Strategic focus on developing leaders

## 5 New kids on the block

Two new senior staff members on the team

### World's our oyster

CEO outlines international plans

## 6 Groove Amanda

Amanda Boag elected JVP in waiting

### Belfast bound

Joint us in Northern Ireland for June Council

### Fees, please!

We're not foolin' – fees due by 1 April

## 7 &me

Campaign shows that mental illness can affect us all

### Gonna need a plan

New three-year strategy published

### Going up

Fee increase – but still good value

## 8 Hitting the road

Advice surgeries at BSAVA Congress

### Alternative approach

Mediation trial going great guns

### New business? Talk to us!

Don't forget to seek approval for new business names

## 9 But is it ethical?

Take advantage of our ethics review service

### Excelling in Birmingham

Awards for PSS excellence at BSAVA Congress

### First read the manual...

Changes to the PSS manual

### Delegation's what you need

Survey to ask about Schedule 3 and how it works in practice

## 10 Handbooks back

VN handbooks online again

### Roll out the red carpet

A round up of our visitations

### Mirror, mirror

Reflection on the agenda at CPD pilot days

### Advancing the cause

Working Group to review AP criteria

## 11 All Fellows together

20 October date for Fellowship Day

### Vets of tomorrow

Review of graduate outcomes underway

### Plan, do, record

We audit the last bit

## 12 Come and illuminate us!

Blackpool venue for RQT

### Jam-packed Congress

Join us in Birmingham

### Find a vet?

We'll be at National Pet Show and Countryfile Live

## 13 Wellspring of ideas

Wellbeing practices celebrated with awards

### Celebrate with us

Join us for RCVS Day on July 7 at RIBA

## 14 We mind: you matter

Update on series of Mind Matters events

## 16 PIC update

Update on cases in progress

## 16–18 DC hearings

S Giles suspended for failing to respond on CPD; L Hodgkinson suspended for placing orders for POMs for personal use; E Faulkner – case dismissed; T Backhouse – no further action taken

## 18 VNPIC report

Latest report summary

## 19 We are one!

Veterinary Evidence celebrates first birthday with 34,000 downloads

### Making history

Digital archive of vet history launched

### Priorities, please!

Update on Knowledge's prioritisation project

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 2017

#### 15 March

Blame culture survey closes

#### 24 March

Telemedicine consultation closes

#### 1 April

Vets' fees due

#### 6–9 April

Join us at BSAVA Congress

#### 28 April

Council/VN Council votes must be in

#### 6-7 May

We're at the National Pet Show

#### 15 May

RQT and PSS surgeries in Blackpool

#### 13 June

RQT and PSS surgeries in Belfast

#### 15 June

Council meets in Belfast

#### 7 July

RCVS Day at RIBA

#### 3–6 August

Find us at Countryfile Live

#### 20 October

Fellowship Day

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