

“Regulation is all about controlling risk to human health, animal health and the environment.”

Practice Premises Register opens

Register your premises by 1 April 2009

The new RCVS Register of Veterinary Practice Premises opened for new registrations on 1 November, allowing all those who wish to supply medicines from veterinary practice premises from 1 April 2009 onwards a full five months to comply with the latest medicines legislation.

In order to fulfil its obligations under European law to maintain and improve traceability of, and accountability for, veterinary medicines, the UK Government decided that any veterinary surgeon may only supply veterinary medicinal products (VMPs) from premises registered with the Secretary of State, with effect from 1 April 2009.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is responsible for the inspection and registration of practices under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations. Steve Dean, VMD's Chief Executive, says the new Register will complete the UK information base by bringing veterinary practices into line with other suppliers of veterinary medicines who already have to operate from registered premises. "Regulation is all about controlling risk to human health, animal health and the environment," he says.

The Register will enable the supply of veterinary medicines by veterinary surgeons, including controlled drugs, to be inspected and verified. As a result, DEFRA Ministers and the European Commission can be re-assured that veterinary medicines are being supplied in the UK in accordance with EC legislation.

In discussion with the VMD, we agreed that the RCVS would be the most appropriate body to maintain this Register, not least because we already manage the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme and publish the (voluntary) *Directory of Veterinary Practices*, and so have the necessary systems in place. We will publish the Register on RCVSonline and update it quarterly.

Whilst there will now be a statutory fee levied for each practice premises on the new Register, our existing database framework means we have been able to set this at a relatively low £40 compared to what other bodies might have had to charge after starting from scratch. Practices could appear in the *Directory* for free because the cost of producing it was partially covered by subsequent data sales. However, the new Register will need to be self-funding, as the data it contains will be freely available online and will require more proactive and frequent checking.

Not all practices will have to pay extra, however, as RCVS President Jill Nute explains: "For those practice premises already accredited under the RCVS Practice

continued on page 2

RCVS Register of Veterinary Practice Premises

Important information:

- Register premises by 1 April 2009
 - £40 statutory fee per premises
 - No fee for accredited premises
 - Sign and return forms
- More info: rcvs.org.uk/practicepremises



Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

RCVS, Belgravia House
62-64 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AF

In this issue: 24/7 research, new Trust Director, Corporate Governance, what are premises?, PSS standards review, OFT on prescription charging, SQP status, EMS review, PI report and DC hearings.

Anything to declare?

Recommendations from the new Corporate Governance Group



In June, Council requested the establishment of a Corporate Governance Group to address issues of transparency and openness by considering our existing provisions and best practice elsewhere.

The Group is chaired by Sir Anthony Holland (pictured), recently-retired chairman of the Standards Board for England, which oversees how local authorities promote and improve the ethical behaviour of their members.

The Group submitted a report to Council on 6 November, which highlighted that, “as the guardian of the good standing of the profession,” Council must be scrupulous in terms of its governance, in order to “command the respect and trust of the public and the profession”. In addition, it said, there was a legal imperative arising from the fact that many of our statutory and public functions can be challenged in the courts, for example, on the basis of alleged bias or abuse of process. It was also noted that, as a public

body, the College is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

The immediate need was to consider Declarations of Interest (DoI), including guidance and training to recognise potential conflicts, monitoring of compliance and future sanctions. In delivering the report, Sir Anthony said that the present arrangements were perfectly competent to deal with issues as they arose but that compliance was an area of concern. The report’s recommendations focused on improving compliance and offering guidance to Council members and others to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities to act in accordance with the Nolan Principles on Standards in Public Life, which include selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

“Council must be scrupulous in terms of its governance, in order to ‘command the respect and trust of the public’.”

Sir Anthony said that the Group was sympathetic to the fact that, in a relatively small profession, there was a limited pool of experts and that conflicts of interest may occur. He stressed a common-sense approach, regularly-updated declarations and absolute transparency. He explained the legal position, based on case law, and advised that a successful challenge would need to demonstrate actual bias.

Following debate, recommendations agreed by Council included:

- DoI should be submitted by all those serving on Council and Council Committees
- The current provisions in the *Council and Committee Members’ Handbook* should be reformulated as a *Code of Conduct*, which should be made available to all those standing for election or offered an appointment to sit on Council or its Committees
- DoI should be updated by reporting any changes at meetings, and published on RCVSONline, along with photographs and profiles of Council members
- All DoI should be made available at Council meetings, together with a copy of the *Code* and constitutional information
- Specific powers should be brought in to suspend from Committee membership those in breach of the *Code*; there being no power to make such a suspension from Council, a ‘name and shame’ policy was suggested
- The system would be self-monitoring, but there was no compulsion for Council members to ‘whistle-blow’ on each other
- The Officer team should take forward these recommendations and the existing Group should continue for a year to advise and adjudicate on any breaches of the *Code*

The Group’s recommendations, together with the *Code of Conduct*, can be read in full online www.rcvs.org.uk/councilandcommittees.

Practice premises register opens - continued from page 1

Standards Scheme (PSS), the new statutory fee will be taken from their existing PSS annual fee,” she says. “What’s more, accredited practices will not face additional four-yearly inspections by VMD inspectors (unless there is an investigation for enforcement purposes) as the VMD is confident that the Scheme’s standards will more than meet its needs – saving more money and, potentially, some stress.”

Practice premises that have applied to join the Scheme, but have not yet been accredited, will not face additional VMD inspections either, but will still need to pay the statutory registration fee.

To help practices understand the new requirements and what they need to do before next April, we have produced a range of guidance, including a series of Frequently Asked Questions, available at www.rcvs.org.uk/premisesregister.

“In particular, we hope this guidance will help to explain which premises are likely to be considered ‘veterinary practice premises’ [which will need to be registered] and the difference between those premises and places where medicines might simply be stored or kept,” says Mrs Nute.

“We hope this guidance will help to explain which premises are likely to be considered ‘veterinary practice premises’.”

“It is important to realise that there is a legal requirement to register veterinary practice premises for the supply of medicines, and a professional obligation, set out in the *Guide to Professional Conduct*, to keep a record of where all medicines are stored or kept. This record should avoid the need for additional

registration of car boots, farms and homes.” (See table on page 6 for additional guidance.)

We have recently posted application forms to all practices currently listed in the *Directory* and accredited under the PSS, containing all the practice information currently held. The form for PSS members also asks for details of any non-accredited premises with which the practice is associated that might need to be registered. These might include charity premises from which medicines are prescribed and supplied, or premises for which the practice provides the authority for the wholesale purchase of medicines. These forms must be checked, signed and returned, even if no fee is due.

Separate application forms are available for any non-accredited practice premises not published in the *Directory*, and we have written to all RCVS members to ensure the whole profession is aware of the new requirements.

Doors still open to migrant vets

Veterinary 'skills shortage' listing continues

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) has included veterinary surgeons on its recommended list of occupations for which there is a shortage of skilled workers in the UK.

The list will be used in Tier 2 of the new Points Based System that relates to the immigration of skilled workers from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Under this scheme, employers who are licensed sponsors can bring in migrant workers from outside the EEA to fill vacancies in those occupations listed. The MAC's lists are recommendations to Government; it is up to Government whether or not to accept them.

Although we welcome the inclusion, as the UK profession relies on overseas veterinary surgeons to fill gaps, in reality, it's business as usual. The veterinary profession has been listed by the Home Office as a Skills Shortage Occupation for a number of years. All veterinary

Facts and figures

- Over the last five years, an average of 55% of new veterinary registrations have been from overseas graduates – an average of 702 per year
- Less than 40% of these have been from outside the European Economic Area
- According to the *2006 Survey of the Profession*, only 1% of registered veterinary surgeons was unemployed – a figure that's been consistent for the previous six years

surgeons wishing to practise in the UK, regardless of their nationality or country of residence, must either hold a qualification recognised by us for the purposes of registration, or have passed our Statutory Membership Examination, and be registered with us.

VN solution closer to home

Meanwhile, the MAC decided not to add veterinary nursing to the list. Although it accepted that the occupation is skilled and that practices have some trouble filling vacancies, it felt that the solution could be closer to home: "We consider that there are alternatives for filling shortages other than by employing immigrants, such as improving advertising, increasing pay and addressing a mismatch in expectations between college-trained nurses and practices," advised the Committee.

"Employers of veterinary nurses should look to improve recruitment and retention through addressing domestic issues."

President Jill Nute backed the recommendation: "Our *Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession 2008* highlights the fact that many nurses are dissatisfied with their salary package and although it is not the role of the RCVS to intervene in remuneration issues, I endorse the conclusion that employers of veterinary nurses should look to improve recruitment and retention through addressing domestic issues before looking overseas."

The need for advertising to be improved was further endorsed by a recent investigation from the Sector Skills Council, Lantra, into the recruitment of qualified veterinary nurses (www.lantra.co.uk). Lantra looked at adverts for qualified veterinary nurses in *Veterinary Times* during 2007 and conducted follow-up interviews with a sample of the practices. It concluded, among other things, that more could be done to improve the quality and quantity of information contained in the adverts.



President Jill Nute welcomes those who have passed the Statutory Membership Examination

PEPAS launch

European practical standards for VNs

At the end of October, the RCVS hosted the inaugural meeting for a project that aims to develop a Pan-European Practical Assessment System (PEPAS) for veterinary nurses. An EU-funded project, PEPAS involves eight countries and will help to develop standards for Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) across Europe, endorsing the RCVS format as a model. It will also enable us to further develop the bank of practical tasks available to UK examiners. The next step will be for UK examiners to train their European counterparts at three sessions next year, which will be held in Denmark, Slovenia and Ireland.



Vicky Hedges (right), VN Exam and Higher Education Quality Manager, demonstrating the OSCE system

Support for back-to-work VNs

Guidance for VNs returning to Register

New guidance has been developed for Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) undergoing the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP). Veterinary nurses who have been off the Register for a period of five years or more are required to practise under the supervision of either a veterinary surgeon or an RVN for a 17-week period. This would normally take place in either a Training Practice or one accredited as either a General Practice or Hospital.

The objective of the PSP is to ensure that VNs have the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills under the mentorship and supervision of other registered practitioners.

Guidance developed by the VN Continuing Education Subcommittee was approved at the recent meeting of the VN Council and will be available on RCVSonline in the New Year. It includes tips on getting started, self-evaluation, planning and record-keeping, helpful checklists to assist in the evaluation process and an action plan template. There is also a section for mentors and practices employing PSP VNs.

“No formal assessment is required at the end of the PSP,” highlights Libby Earle, Head of Veterinary Nursing. “This is because as soon as they rejoin the Register, VNs are trusted professional practitioners and the onus is on them to ensure their skills and knowledge are up-to-date.”

Plans are also being developed to offer VNs completing the PSP the option of taking a Return to Veterinary Nursing Practice course, leading to a Certificate in Current Veterinary Nursing Practice. The course time commitment is likely to be 100 hours.

Trust opens 2009 grants round

Quarter of a million to be awarded

The RCVS Trust launched its 2009 grants round in October, featuring a comprehensive and expanded range of research and animal welfare programmes. Offering five programmes this year, including Blue Sky research, Travel Scholarships and Small Grants, the Trust is expecting to release over £250,000 next March.

Cherry Bushell, Director of the Trust, says: “We continue to invest strategically in high quality research and animal welfare work. We have made the application process simple and accessible, and we encourage potential applicants to contact us with any queries.”

Full details of the individual programmes, including regulations and applications forms, can be found on the Trust's website (www.rcvstrust.org.uk) or requested from the Trust Office (020 7202 0741).

Grant programme	Available funds	Closing date
Blue Sky Research	Up to £10,000	5pm, 21/1/09
EMS Vacation Research Scholarships	Up to £1,000	5pm, 31/3/09
Small Grants Programme	Up to £5,000	5pm, 21/1/09
Spencer-Hill Equipment Grants	Up to £5,000	5pm, 21/1/09
Travel Scholarships	Up to £1,000	5pm, 21/1/09

Feeling fleet of foot?

While the RCVS Trust is celebrating its Golden Jubilee this year, it continues to look ahead to ever-more exciting and challenging fundraising campaigns. In so doing, it has managed to squeeze a much-coveted place out of the London Marathon organisers for next year's race, to be held on 26 April 2009.

What better way to spend a Sunday morning than to partake in a little light exercise, take in the sights of our wonderful capital city and raise money for the RCVS Trust, cheered on by thousands of well-wishers and admirers along the way?

So, if you would be interested in pounding out the 26.2 miles of the most famous marathon course in the world, and raising the minimum of £1,500 in aid of this worthy cause, please contact the good people in the RCVS Trust office (020 7202 0743 info@rcvstrust.org.uk). As always, the Trust will be on hand to offer lots of support with your fundraising efforts, along with plenty of encouragement during your training.



Picture courtesy: The Flora London Marathon

Trust picks new Director

Experienced fundraiser to lead the team



We are pleased to welcome Cherry Bushell to the RCVS Trust as its new Director. She brings 16 years' experience in fundraising and charity management, having held development posts at the Royal Society of Arts, children's medical research charity, Sparks, and Macmillan Cancer Support. Most recently, she has been a freelance consultant and interim manager at lone-parent support charity, Gingerbread, and the Mental Health Foundation.

"Cherry joins the Trust at an exciting time, as it celebrates its Golden Jubilee," commented Registrar Jane Hern, "I have every confidence that she will be able to steer the Trust forward into a new period of exciting development".

In recent times, the Trust has persuaded fundraisers to walk over hot coals, jump out of planes and run for their lives – but we hope Cherry doesn't fear for what her initiation may bring...

Standard issue

Practice Standards review

When the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) was launched in 2005, a commitment was made that the standards would not change for five years unless new legislation required it. A review is now underway, with the new standards planned for publication in 2010.

Under the chairmanship of President Jill Nute, the Practice Standards Group has a programme of meetings during which the standards will be reviewed section by section. The Group comprises representatives from all of the key veterinary organisations – including those for VNs and practice managers. If you have any comments on the standards, please either feed them to the Group via your membership organisation, or contact the RCVS directly on 020 7202 0720 or practicestandards@rcvs.org.uk.



Thinking about joining the Scheme? Facing an inspection? If you live in South Wales, you can sign up for one of our free Practice Standards 'surgery' sessions on 27 November in Cardiff, and seek guidance directly from the team – see page 14 for more details. More PSS surgery events will be announced soon, or call us for advice: 020 7202 0767.

"If I was in their shoes..."

Do you think the College's activities and decisions have too much impact on your professional life? Does the general public need to be more aware of the College's existence? Do you think we should be doing things differently? Do you care about the future of your profession?

Challenging questions, perhaps, but answer 'yes' to one or more of them and you might want to consider putting yourself in Council Members' shoes by standing for election to RCVS Council.

Whilst we can't promise you worldwide 'Obamamania', your election to Council would nevertheless give you the chance to have a direct impact on the day-to-day work of the College and its endeavours to uphold and maintain public confidence in the veterinary profession.

Nominations must be received by 31 January 2009. See www.rcvs.org.uk/nominations for full details.

Prescription charges

Since 31 October, vets have again been allowed to charge for writing prescriptions, following the end of a three-year ban. Such charges need to be reasonable. Practices must not charge different fees for other services or veterinary medicines to those who take a prescription and those who do not. It is also illegal for veterinary surgeons to discuss prices they may charge amongst themselves.

For background to the ban and what it hoped to achieve, together with new RCVS guidance, see feature on page 10.

Share Jones lecturer

The Share Jones lecturer for 2009 has been announced. Dr Sue Dyson, Head of Clinical Orthopaedics at the Centre for Equine Studies at the Animal Health Trust, will deliver a lecture entitled: *'Looking and seeing: the art of lameness diagnosis'*.

The Share Jones lectureship is bestowed biennially upon a lecturer of special note in veterinary anatomy in honour of John Share Jones, founder of the Liverpool School of Veterinary Medicine.

The lecture will be held at the University of Nottingham in November 2009 – look out for more details in the June 2009 issue.

Age-barrier removed

The lower age limit for student VNs – previously set at 17 – has been removed, in order to comply with age discrimination legislation. The entry requirements are unchanged: five GSEs at grade C or higher, or five Scottish Standards at grades one to three (including English Language, Maths and a Science subject). Candidates must also have a place with an RCVS-approved Training Practice or on a recognised veterinary nursing degree course.

Lining up for inspection

Check if your home needs to be registered with us

We hope you didn't miss our front page story about the need for practice premises to be registered by 1 April 2009 so that veterinary surgeons can continue to supply veterinary medicines from there.

But it might mean more than just registering your practice. What about your home or car? As a general rule, if there is no registered practice premises at which to record stores kept at a house, the premises to which medicines are delivered should be registered in their own right.

If medicines are stored in a vehicle there is no need to register it as 'premises', but the vehicle should be recorded at a registered veterinary practice premises.

The table below gives guidance on which premises where veterinary medicines might be found should be registered with us. For specific queries, please contact our Registration Department on **020 7202 0744 / 07** or premisesregister@rcvs.org.uk

✓ = Needs to be registered

✗ = No need to register, but must be recorded at registered practice premises.

NB In either case, other legislation and professional obligations relating to medicines remain applicable.

Premises where medicines are stored and...	
veterinary services are provided	✓
they are advertised as a practice	✓
they are open to members of the public to bring in animals for veterinary treatment and care	✓
they are not open to the public but a base from which a vet practises or provides veterinary services to more than one client	✓
delivered wholesale on the authority of one or more vets in the practice	✓
Home where medicines are stored and...	
the stock is for use as part of 24/7 emergency cover	✗
the home is the practice premises or a base for practice	✓
the stock is a small quantity and not for supply	✗
Charity/business premises where medicines are stored...	
in small quantities for later prescription by you or colleagues from your practice	✗
and which are open to members of the public to bring in animals for veterinary treatment and care	✓
and which are not open to the public but are a base from which a vet practises or provides veterinary services to more than one client	✓
and to which the medicines are delivered wholesale on the authority of one or more vets	✓

Taking the stand



New guidance for witnesses

Earlier this year we reported that a new Working Party (WP) had set to work on revising our guidance to assist veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses giving evidence in court (*RCVS News*, March 2008).

Some six months on, the WP members (which included veterinary surgeons and lawyers) recently emerged from their locked room, blinking in the daylight and clutching a new and improved annex to the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*. Following Council approval of the new guidance at its November meeting, the old annex will be replaced on RCVSonline in the near future (www.rcvs.org.uk/guide).

The aim of the guidance is to explain the differences between factual and opinion evidence and the responsibilities associated with acting as a factual or expert witness. It also deals with specific issues

that can arise when professionals are asked to give factual evidence, but, in view of their qualifications, might also be asked for their professional opinion on the factual evidence given. Such witnesses can sometimes be referred to as 'professional witnesses' although no such category exists in court terms.

The principles outlined in the annex are also applicable to both tribunals and arbitrations so will be useful for anyone giving evidence in the context of legal proceedings.

While the guidance provides much information, largely in a Question & Answer format, it is a brief and basic summary (albeit some nine pages long!). Nevertheless, it does provide useful links and references to various websites for additional information. Those veterinary surgeons and nurses who provide expert witness evidence should be familiar with relevant practice directions from the courts.

Guide changes at a glance

Council has approved a number of changes to the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* throughout the year, about which we have notified veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses through these pages and on RCVSonline. However, as 2008 draws to a close, we thought it would be useful to provide an at-a-glance summary.

The changes have been incorporated into the online version of the *Guide* and will be set out in the next update sheet, to be posted to members early next year as an insert to the 2008 edition. The online *Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* will be updated to include amendments made to the veterinary surgeon *Guide*.

If you would like to review the changes made to the *Guide* since 2001, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/guidechanges, where you can download each set of annual changes or all those made in the last eight years.

What's new	Where to find it
From 31 October 2008, a reasonable charge may be made for written prescriptions	Part 1D – Your responsibilities to your clients
A veterinary surgeon must not discriminate between clients supplied with a prescription, and those who are not, in relation to fees charged	
Registration of Practice Premises – description of legal requirements and professional obligations	Part 2H – The use of veterinary medicinal products (see articles on page 1, 2 and 6)
Euthanasia without consent	Part 2D – Maintaining practice standards
Guidance for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses giving evidence in court	Part 3, Annex m – Professional witness (see article on facing page)
Removal of references to BSAVA and BVHA practice standards	Part 2D – Maintaining practice standards
Replacing 'State Veterinary Service' with 'Animal Health'	Part 2E – Running the business
Additional links and information on the types of dog that may be docked (Regulations in England and Wales) Tail Docking (dogs)	Part 3, Annex r – Tail-docking (dogs)

Avoiding conflicts of interest with PPEs

New Advice Note offers guidance

When a veterinary surgeon is asked by a new client to conduct a pre-purchase examination (PPE) on a horse belonging to an existing client, how can a conflict of interest be avoided?

The PPE is an accepted method of assessing a horse, carried out at the request of a potential purchaser to determine, so far as possible by clinical examination, whether the animal is suitable for the intended use. It provides an indication, not a guarantee.

The guidance set out in the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* (Part 2E, 'Examinations on behalf of a third party') already recommends that the vendor's veterinary surgeon should not carry out the PPE, but concedes that for various reasons, they may still be asked to do so. In such circumstances, the guidance states that the danger of a conflict of interest must be avoided by ensuring that:

- the purchaser is made aware that the vendor is also a client and has no objection
- the vendor agrees to permit the disclosure of anything relevant in the case history (if permission cannot be obtained then the vendor's veterinary surgeon should not act)
- it is made clear to both parties that in this instance the veterinary surgeon is acting on behalf of the purchaser and that information derived from the examination is confidential to the purchaser alone

However, following a request from the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) to expand on this guidance, Advisory Committee recently produced a new *Advice Note*, which Council has just approved.

The new *Advice Note* seeks to set out the existing guidance in more detail, and to explore the professional conduct issues that may arise if both the vendor and the person seeking the PPE are clients of the same veterinary surgeon or practice. It highlights some of the common pitfalls in these situations, such as breaching client confidentiality, disclosure of records (of existing conditions), relevance of information and disclosure of findings, and highlights the safeguards that should be put in place beforehand.

Advisory Committee also noted the argument that it was preferable for the veterinary surgeon conducting the PPE to have access to the clinical history of the horse, as

a potential way to minimise the risk of unexpected post-purchase problems. It agreed to set up a working party to review RCVS guidance in this area.

BEVA's guidance on conducting PPEs is available at www.beva.org.uk/node/399 and the new *RCVS Advice Note* can be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes.



You stood up and we counted you...

Progress with the VN Register

Last September, we urged veterinary nurses to 'stand up and be counted' by joining the VN Register. Over 70% of qualified VNs have risen to the challenge. What happens next?

By the end of October this year, we could count 5,771 Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs), which included approximately 1,633 that had transferred voluntarily, leaving 2,388 on the List. This means that just over 70% of eligible veterinary nurses have registered, a figure that should continue to increase.

The UK Register remains a non-statutory initiative - a voluntary step taken by the veterinary nursing profession to indicate its willingness to be considered as a profession in its own right. Earlier this year, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee considered the need for a new Veterinary Surgeons Act, under which the VN Register could be made statutory. The Government agreed with the EFRA Committee that the RCVS and VN Councils should develop proposals for the statutory regulation of veterinary nurses. That was a positive indication, although DEFRA has said that it does not have the resources to take veterinary nursing regulation forward as yet.

A new Veterinary Legislation Group has been established by the RCVS to look at the priorities for change and how they might be tackled, under the chairmanship of Professor Stuart Reid. VN Council member Hilary Orpet sits on the Group, which has a robust schedule of meetings and aims to report to Council in March.

"Plans are on track to introduce a disciplinary mechanism from July 2010."

Meanwhile, a statutory Register has been in place in Ireland since the beginning of this year, which has been "enthusiastically welcomed" by VNs and vets alike, according to Veterinary Council of Ireland's Registrar, Valerie Beatty - see adjacent Guest Column for an overview of this pioneering move.

Continuing Professional Development

RVNs have a responsibility to keep their skills and knowledge up to date by carrying out an average of 45 hours of CPD over three years (about two days a year). If the results of our *Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession 2008* are anything to go by, VNs are not finding it hard to meet this target, registered or not, which is good news.

In fact, respondents to the survey had received an average of 3.1 days of CPD in the previous 12 months and 7% were also involved in giving CPD. The survey suggested that CPD is mostly funded by the employer or practice - 84% per cent of

respondents said this was the case. It was also encouraging that, after books and journals, the most popular method of taking CPD was in-house sessions, which means that VNs are looking at cost-effective ways of sharing knowledge within the practice team, as part of their CPD plan.

RVNs are sent CPD *Record Cards* each year which give guidance on what can be counted towards CPD and how it should be recorded. The cards can also be downloaded from RCVSonline: www.rcvs.org.uk/vnregister

Disciplinary system

Plans are on track to introduce a disciplinary mechanism for Registered Veterinary Nurses from July 2010.

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

When the Register was launched last year, we hosted a series of Question Time meetings for veterinary nurses. A fear that veterinary surgeons would sit in judgment on VNs without VN representation was often raised. However, this will not be the case, according to Head of Veterinary Nursing, Libby Earle: "The Veterinary Nursing Bye-Laws state that three veterinary nurses will sit on the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee - the group that assesses whether complaints should be taken to the hearing stage," she explains. "They would be joined by three members of the veterinary Preliminary Investigation Committee and at least one of that Committee's Lay Observers. The minimum number to investigate complaints at any meeting would be one vet and two VNs."

The VN Disciplinary Committee, effectively the 'court' that hears cases, would comprise a panel of up to five, with a quorum of one veterinary surgeon, one veterinary nurse and one lay person acting as chairman, as laid down in the Bye-Laws. The sanctions available to the Disciplinary Committee would be to remove a nurse's name from the Register - with the nurse eligible to apply for restoration after





10 months or to suspend the nurse, with his or her name returning to the Register immediately after the period of suspension. A veterinary nurse would not be able to carry out Schedule 3 tasks while his or her name was removed from the Register. Neither would they be able to join the unregulated List, which closed to new applications on 1 September 2007.

The College will start officially to take complaints about veterinary nurses from 1 July 2009. At present, we receive about 700 complaints per year about veterinary surgeons – a small number, given the volume of daily client interactions. We expect the number received about VNs to be much lower, not least because there are roughly a third as many RVNs as home-practising veterinary surgeons.

“RVNs should certainly not be unduly worried about the introduction of the disciplinary system. Providing they follow, the *Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*, and keep up their CPD,” according to Head of Professional Conduct, Gordon Hockey.

A period of close to three years was factored in between the introduction of the Register in September 2007 and that of the disciplinary system in summer 2010. This bedding-in period was specifically designed to allow time for RVNs to get to grips with the responsibilities of registration and the requirements of the *Guide*. If VNs are concerned about an aspect of the *Guide*, they should contact the RCVS Professional Conduct Department for advice – **020 7202 0789 / profcon@rcvs.org.uk**.



How has the statutory Register for Irish VNs fared?

Valerie Beatty, Registrar, Veterinary Council of Ireland

Regulation for Irish VNs

The first of January 2008 was a red letter day for veterinary nurses in Ireland, the date that the Veterinary Council became legally obliged to set up a statutory register of veterinary nurses. This power was conferred on the Council following the commencement of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, on 1 January 2006. During the two years up to January 2008, the Council passed regulations relating to the registration of these veterinary nurses, established the educational standards applicable to veterinary nursing courses and visited education providers in order to assess whether the qualifications obtained by students in these colleges met the required standard for registration.

The Act defines veterinary nursing in terms of the procedures that veterinary nurses can carry out, either while assisting and in the presence of, or under the direction of, a veterinary practitioner. The Act also allowed a six-month period for those who qualified to register before regulation commenced. The other significant provision was a ‘grandfather’ clause which allowed those who had not gained a qualification but could prove that they had been practising as veterinary nurses on 27 October 2004, and had continued so acting, to provisionally register as long as they undertook to participate in an approved programme of education within five years.

The key challenge facing us initially was communicating with potential applicants, as there was no comprehensive listing of veterinary nurses in the State. The next challenge was to communicate the time-lines, particularly for those seeking to be provisionally registered, applications for which could not be legally accommodated after 30 June 2008. Unfortunately, a small number missed the deadline.

By 30 June 2008, 233 veterinary nurses had registered, 60% of whom registered in the final four days of June, putting quite a strain on our administration. To date, a total of 320 have registered. Just over 50% are provisionally registered and we now face the challenge of getting these people from where they are now to the successful completion of an approved programme of education, given the variety of their experience and educational backgrounds.

Almost without exception, veterinary nurses have enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity to gain professional recognition and standing in their own right: registering them has been a most satisfying aspect of my job over the past few months. Veterinary practitioners who expressed an opinion are pleased that veterinary nurses are at last having their skills recognised. There are considerable challenges ahead for us, not only in regulating the profession but also in supporting and developing it.

The Veterinary Council of Ireland was established in 1931 and re-constituted on 1 January 2006 under the Veterinary Practice Act 2005. The principal function of the Council is to regulate and manage the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland, in the public interest.

Return to charging

Prescription fee ban lifted



From 31 October 2008, veterinary practices can again charge for prescriptions. Bob MacDowell from the Markets Policy and Remedies team at the Office of Fair Trading explains why the ban was introduced and what vets can do now.

The origins of Hallowe'en, 31 October, date back to the ancient Celtic festival Samhain, which marked the change from summer to winter. Well, this year, it marked a change in the veterinary profession too – a fact that has not gone unnoticed by a large number of consumers – and MPs – who have written to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) about the end of the three-year ban on charging for providing prescriptions. In this time of financial uncertainty and rising household bills, consumers are afraid of what might happen. Will they now have to pay more than they can afford for prescriptions?

First, though, why has the OFT considered this an issue? Our mission is to make markets work well for consumers: we get concerned when consumers complain in their droves about a particular market. And that is what happened in 1999–2001 when many farmers and pet owners complained about high prices of prescription-only veterinary medicines (POMs). The complaints suggested that the market was not working in the best interests of consumers. As a result, we referred the supply of POMs to the Competition Commission in October 2001 for investigation.

Competition Commission findings

The Commission reported in April 2003. It found that consumers were paying too much for POMs, and that prices were higher than in other European countries. The Commission also found that the large manufacturers were failing to supply POMs to pharmacies on terms that would enable them to compete with vets.

Vets were also found to have been:

- Making it hard for animal owners to obtain prescriptions
- Failing to inform animal owners of POM prices or provide itemised bills
- Charging prices that did not reflect the discounts and rebates received from manufacturers
- Pricing POMs to subsidise professional fees

The Commission said that this behaviour by vets could allow them to hide high profits in

drug prices and also said it led to inadequate pressure on manufacturers to maintain competitive drug prices.

The Commission recommended a package of remedies aimed at vets, manufacturers and wholesalers. The RCVS agreed to implement most of the recommendations relating to vets through changes to its *Guide to Professional Conduct*. The former Department of Trade and Industry made the Supply of Relevant Veterinary Medicinal Products Order 2005 (www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20052751.htm). This Order implemented the remaining provisions - those aimed at manufacturers and the recommendation that veterinary surgeons be prohibited from charging for providing prescriptions for three years.

Consumer reassurance

The prescription charging ban has now gone but other rules remain that can provide assurances to consumers. The Order requires that vets must not discriminate between those who are given a prescription and those who are not in:

- The charges for prescription-only veterinary medicines
- The fees charged for supplying veterinary services other than giving a prescription (including, for example, consultation and medicine determination fees)

The *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* was amended to apply remedies recommended by the Commission's report. In particular, vets must have on display in their surgeries the price of their ten top-selling POMs – and they must also have on display a notice in their surgeries which, among other things, says:

Prescriptions are available from this practice.

You may obtain relevant veterinary medicinal products from your veterinary surgeon OR ask for a prescription and obtain these medicines from another veterinary surgeon or a pharmacy.

Your veterinary surgeon may prescribe

relevant veterinary medicinal products only following a clinical assessment of an animal under his or her care.

A prescription may not be appropriate if your animal is an in-patient or if immediate treatment is necessary..... (The full references to include on the poster are in the Guide to Professional Conduct, Part 1 D, paragraph 8)

The purpose of the Order and the RCVS guidance is to make it easier for consumers to shop around for veterinary medicines and, by encouraging pharmacists and other outlets to enter the market, to aid the development of a more competitive market.

Review

Our large mailbag on the prescriptions issue suggests that there is a lot of uncertainty and anxiety among consumers as to the level at which veterinary surgeons might set prescription charges. Many consumers want the option of shopping around for veterinary medicines, especially for repeat medication for long-term medical conditions. We will be monitoring developments and will take whatever action we consider appropriate in the light of our other priorities and our duty under the Enterprise Act 2002 to monitor, enforce and keep under review the effectiveness of the Order.

“Many consumers want the option of shopping around for veterinary medicines, especially for repeat medication for long-term medical conditions.”

We have been advising consumers who express concerns to us about prescription charges that they should, where possible, shop around to find vets who are charging lower or no such fees: we refer consumers to the search facility on RCVSonline (www.findavet.org.uk) to help find a vet in any particular area. And if a consumer is unsure what a fee is for, they should ask their vet to clarify. RCVS guidance requires vets to be clear about what clients are being charged for.

Now that the charging ban has gone, we wait to see whether it has had the desired effect of providing an opportunity for pharmacies to establish themselves more solidly as suppliers of POMs. If it turns out that consumers are no better off, or worse off, then we might have to consider whether some further action is needed – and we can't be specific about what that might be at this early stage. If there are

Suitable behaviour

To SQP or not to SQP

Whether qualified veterinary nurses should seek to become Suitably Qualified Persons (SQPs) in relation to the supply of veterinary medicines has been a hot topic for some time. But confusion exists and VNs may be making career choices based on misunderstandings about what being an SQP entails.

SQPs may prescribe and supply some categories of veterinary medicines (POM-VPS and NFA-VPS). Products falling into these groups are mainly parasiticides and other medicines for the routine control of endemic disease.

SQPs used only to be able to supply medicines from premises approved by VMD and were generally employed by agricultural merchants or saddlers. Now, however, the 2008 Veterinary Medicines Regulations allow them also to supply from registered pharmacies and, with effect from 1 April 2009, from premises in the *RCVS Register of Veterinary Practice Premises*.

Many Listed/Registered veterinary nurses feel that to become SQPs would enable them to extend the range of their practice. Being an SQP would certainly open up avenues for veterinary nurses working independently of a veterinary surgeon, for example, in other approved premises such as a pet shop or in a registered pharmacy, and enable them to supply POM-VPS and NFA-VPS medicines on their own authority.

Regulation

Qualified VNs can become SQPs providing they pass the examinations of an approved training body and join a register. The regulator for SQPs is the Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA) and a list of training bodies is available on its website (www.amtra.org.uk). A modular approach allows SQPs to train for supply to all animals or only for food-producing animals, horses, companion animals or particular species. Top-up courses are currently available for qualified veterinary nurses to ensure previous training is not duplicated.

However, being an SQP should not simply be considered as another VN qualification. In addition to being registered with AMTRA and abiding by a code of conduct, SQPs must undertake continuing professional development (CPD). This has to be specific to the SQP role and would be in addition to any CPD requirements from the RCVS for RVNs.



Medicine supply by VNs

Veterinary nurses do not need to become SQPs simply in order to continue to be involved in the supply of medicines (including POM-V products) under the direction of a veterinary surgeon. A veterinary surgeon who supplies a medicine does not have to be present when it is handed over. The only requirement is that, for medicines other than AVM-GSL, the veterinary surgeon must authorise each transaction individually before the product is supplied and be satisfied that the person handing it over is competent to do so.

So, if you are a Listed or Registered VN working in a veterinary practice, before enrolling on an SQP course it might pay to consider the real benefits, bearing in mind the likely cost of training, registering and carrying out CPD.

For more information on becoming an SQP, visit www.amtra.org.uk.

significant competition concerns to address, possible options might include advising the Competition Commission that the Order should be varied in some way or asking it to undertake a new inquiry. I must stress that we are keeping all options open.

“Vets must not agree between themselves what suitable fees should be.”

I'll end by providing a strong warning about cartel behaviour. Vets must not agree between themselves what suitable fees should be. This is strictly prohibited under competition law. An individual, such as a vet, may be guilty of a criminal offence if he/she dishonestly agrees with one or more other individuals to fix prices. A person guilty of such an offence is liable (on conviction or indictment) to imprisonment, a fine or both.

- Bob MacDowall is responsible, among other things, for monitoring and enforcing compliance with remedies that have arisen out of monopoly and market inquires by the Competition Commission. He has been working in the OFT for a number of years, mostly on competition matters in a number of areas, including beer, petrol, groceries, films, home credit and banking services.

Speed read

- Council agreed the following changes to the Guide in June 2008:

From 31 October 2008, veterinary surgeons may make a reasonable charge for written prescriptions. Prescriptions for POM-V medicines may be issued only for animals under the care of the prescribing veterinary surgeon and following his or her clinical assessment of the animals.

A veterinary surgeon must not discriminate between clients who are supplied with a prescription and those who are not in relation to fees charged for other goods or services'.

- Practices must not agree between themselves what suitable fees should be
- For more information see Advice Note 15 www.rcvs.org.uk/advicenotes
- Public guidance available at www.consumerdirect.gov.uk/before_you_buy/thinking_about/560042/
- Other Competition Commission recommendations remain in force

Greater choice for CertAVP candidates

Nearly 80 modules now available

Have you been contemplating the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP), but couldn't find modules in your area of interest? Waiting for teaching locations closer to home? Help may be at hand: a range of new modules is now available, bringing the total choice to just short of 80. If you've not looked at the options lately, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/modcerts.

In October, we accredited the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and the West of England (in partnership with Hartpury College) to assess modules for the CertAVP. The move has enabled the universities to offer new modules, many of which are now available through more than one university, giving veterinary surgeons a real choice as to how they work towards postgraduate qualifications.

The range now covers most species and many disciplines, including some firsts for the CertAVP – equine modules will be available through both Edinburgh and Liverpool Universities, and Edinburgh will also be assessing modules in equine dentistry, laboratory animal science and cattle and

sheep medicine, amongst others. Glasgow's range includes modules in veterinary public health, as well as emergency critical care, while the University of the West of England's offering includes the key skills modules, and 'B' modules in small animal, equine and production animal practice.

These universities join the Royal Veterinary College and the Universities of Cambridge and Middlesex in being accredited to assess modules. All of the accredited universities provide courses to support candidates working towards modules, including distance-learning options and online support. They must also offer an assessment-only route for those who prefer self-study, or who want to attend courses elsewhere, for example, through other universities or commercial CPD providers.

The modular approach gives candidates the benefit of a mix-and-match style of learning, adding flexibility that was missing from the previous certificates. It's ideal for those who are committed to structured continuing professional development (CPD) but who need

to balance this with busy practice life. It's also good for those whose practice interests change over the enrolment period, or who want to combine study across different species and disciplines to suit their practice caseload.

CertAVP - the system in brief

- The RCVS accredits universities to assess modules
- The universities can run their own courses but must also offer assessment-only options
- Study can involve a variety of short courses, online e-learning, access to electronic libraries, etc
- You can study for a stand-alone module, or take one as part of the CertAVP
- Specified combinations of modules can lead to a CertAVP in a named subject
- You must bank your credits with the RCVS to achieve any of the certificates
- There is a 10-year enrolment period in which to achieve a full qualification
- Visit www.rcvs.org.uk/modcerts for more information, including links to each of the accredited universities

EMS review announced

Review to consider both EMS and clinical education

Recent changes in the way veterinary schools teach clinical and practical skills, coupled with increasing financial pressure on students and new graduates, have triggered a review of Extra-Mural Studies (EMS).

A requirement has been in place for the last 75 years that veterinary students 'see practice' for at least 26 weeks in their clinical years.

"The purpose of EMS [is] to ensure the right mix of practical and theoretical teaching..."

The purpose of EMS has always been to ensure that veterinary students have the right mix of practical and theoretical teaching and understand the realities of commercial clinical practice before they graduate. This objective does not change, but it is now time to look again at what is covered in the clinical curriculum of the undergraduate degree to ensure that our EMS guidelines are kept up to date.

EMS was last reviewed in 1996, but in the interim veterinary schools have introduced new ways of teaching practical and clinical



aspects of the curriculum. For example, Nottingham's 'distributed learning' model involves private practices in the delivery of core clinical teaching. There has also been an increase in the role played by the veterinary schools' own first-opinion practices.

Meanwhile, fifth-year students found themselves lumbered with an average of over £17K of debt three years ago, and no doubt this has risen since (BVA/AVS Survey 2005). Having to carry out EMS not only restricts students' capacity to work during the holidays, but often incurs substantial travel and accommodation expenses.

In addition, the practice of EMS has historically relied on the goodwill of veterinary practices and establishments such as laboratories, farms, abattoirs and kennels.

That said, the majority view – whether vet students, vets in practice or those in education establishments – is that EMS is a unique and valued component of veterinary training and should not be lost.

In October, our Education Policy and Specialisation Committee commissioned a working group to review both EMS and clinical education. The review group, which will be chaired by RCVS Council Member and practitioner Barry Johnson, will start work in January and gather evidence from a broad range of stakeholders. It aims to make a report to Council by the end of 2009.

Visiting times

Nottingham interim visitation team announced

Every graduate from an RCVS-approved UK veterinary school is eligible to register with the College immediately. We therefore need to ensure that the schools are maintaining standards of undergraduate education, and we do this via the visitation process – it's part of our statutory function.

We generally visit the UK schools at least once every ten years, with periodic interim reviews to follow up recommendations, and data returns reviewed annually.

When the University of Nottingham opened its doors to vet students in 2006, it was the first

new UK vet school since 1949. We can't approve the degree course until the first cohort of graduates has gone through the system, but an interim visitation is planned for February 2009 and the RCVS Education Policy and Specialisation Committee has announced the composition of the visitation team.

The team will be chaired by Professor Lance Lanyon and the visit will look at Nottingham's progress in implementing the first three years of the curriculum, as well as its plans for the remaining two years, in preparation for a further visit in 2011.



The visitation team will comprise:

Professor Lance Lanyon (Chairman, pictured)
 Professor Chris Gaskell (Royal Agricultural College)
 Professor Malcolm Bennett (University of Liverpool)
 Professor Frans Smulders (University of Vienna)
 Dr Bob Moore (Large animal practitioner)
 Mr Ray Butcher (Small animal practitioner)
 Professor Tim Skerry (University of Sheffield)

Speedy sign-up to PDP

50% of UK graduates have joined the system

The Professional Development Phase (PDP), the web-based tool designed to help new graduates consolidate their experience, is now in its second mandatory year.

Nearly a quarter of last year's graduates have now completed (most did not sign up for PDP until well into the autumn of 2007), and 50% of the 2008 UK graduates have signed up – a higher figure than this time last year, which may say something about the alacrity with which new graduates have joined the job market in these unsettled times.

Guidance for employers

To help those employing recent graduates, we have produced a new publication - *Guidance on the PDP for Employers*. The three-part document answers frequently-asked questions that employers may have about the PDP, offers guidance on supporting new graduates while on the system and lays out the Year One competences and clinical procedures checklists that users fill out on the PDP.

A copy of the 24-page booklet will be given to all new graduates when they enrol on the PDP, so they can pass it on to their employers. The booklet is also available to download from RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp) or in hard copy from education@rcvs.org.uk.

New Postgraduate Dean

We have also strengthened our team of Postgraduate Deans with the addition of Julian Wells. Julian will join the team of Professor David Noakes and Stephen Ware to help graduates as they progress through the PDP, offering email support and monitoring completion. A Shropshire-based practitioner, Julian is a former President of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association and was part of the original team that developed the PDP, mentoring new graduates through the pilot phase.

Not too late to sign up

The PDP was made compulsory for all new graduates from 2007 and it's not too late to sign up. To view a demo, visit <http://pdp.rcvs.org.uk> and choose 'preview'. New graduates wishing to join should email pdp@rcvs.org.uk for a password.



Celebration time

Results of this year's postgraduate Certificate and Diploma examinations are now available. Of the 201 candidates who entered for Certificate examinations, 109 passed (54%); for the Diplomas, 13 entered and 10 were successful (77%).

Meanwhile, 12 candidates passed the 2008 Statutory Membership Examination (see www.rcvs.org.uk/statexam for the pass list), enabling them to register with the College. It's a rigorous examination. In total, 49 candidates sat the written papers, 27 of whom were stopped after the written papers; 22 then proceeded to the clinical, oral and practical examinations, of whom 12 passed the exam overall – 24% of the initial applicants.

For VNs, an overall pass-rate of 63% was achieved by candidates in the September round of practical examinations (small animal): 282 candidates took the examinations and of the 177 who passed, 152 had already passed their VRQ theory examination and so were immediately eligible to apply to become Registered Veterinary Nurses.

More choice for DipAVN

We have approved the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) to deliver new modules that can be taken towards the Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (www.rcvs.org.uk/dipavn). The RVC is offering three of the core modules and three optional modules in anaesthetic nursing, diagnostic imaging and theatre practice. The RVC modules add to those already available from Myerscough College. Anyone wishing to enrol with the RVC should contact Perdi Welch at vn.school@rvc.ac.uk

Deadline reminder

The final examinations for the old-style RCVS Certificates will be held in summer 2012. Candidates who haven't previously attempted the examination and who think they may need more than one attempt are advised to enter the exam in 2010 in order to allow time for three attempts before the exam is phased out. This means that they will need to apply for their "Final Approval of Experience" by 1 November 2009 at the latest, and will need to think about starting their case logs now, ready to submit next autumn.

The deadline for entries to the 2009 Certificate and Diploma examinations is 1 March 2009 (as this is a Sunday, submissions will be accepted until midday on the 2 March).

Meet the RCVS team



Lizzie Lockett

What's your role?

Head of Communications

What's your background?

I graduated from Oxford in English Language and Literature and took a postgraduate journalism qualification before joining a marketing communications consultancy. I thought I'd give it six months. Eight years later, having helped set up offices in Central Europe, I ended up as Managing Director of the UK business. Following a period of freelancing, where I specialised in the environment, agriculture and animal health, I joined the RCVS as Head of Communications in 2005.

What do you do?

My team is responsible for the external face of the College. We deal with everyone from pet owners to parliamentarians, and our activities include the website, publications (including the one you have in your hands), events, media relations, public affairs and policy.

What's been your biggest challenge?

It sometimes feels as though the RCVS is the body that everyone loves to hate, so our work is challenging every day! In particular, the 'Walks of life' careers DVD was quite testing. On a limited budget our team had to satisfy the needs of two government departments, six veterinary schools and the College, whilst conveying messages about every possible veterinary career to audiences including black and minority ethnic students, those from lower socio-economic groups and boys... oh, and making sure we had a Scottish accent in there too. Not easy!

Surprise us...

I was very close to getting my black belt in Karate before I gave it up, doesn't seem to have much effect on team discipline though!

See for yourself

Spend a day with us

Met the RCVS Days are held on a regular basis at Belgravia House to help members of the veterinary team gain a deeper understanding of what we do for the profession and the animal-owning public.

The day is an excellent opportunity for veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and those involved with the profession to visit our office and see what goes on behind the scenes. Guests will visit each department, meet key members of staff and have plenty of opportunities to ask questions. Here's what some previous visitors have said:

"The entire day was useful, informative and very enjoyable"

*"I liked having the opportunity to ask questions"
"It was good to put faces to names and learn what every department does"*

Our next meeting on Monday 17 November is already fully-booked, but further meetings, which start at 10:30am and finish at approximately 3:30pm, will be held on Monday 16 March and Tuesday 9 June 2009. Guests will be reimbursed for any reasonable UK travel and subsistence expenses incurred and lunch will be provided.

To register your interest, contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or **020 7202 0773**.

Any questions?

The Officer team will be taking your questions at RCVS Question Time, Miskin Manor Hotel, near Cardiff, on Thursday 27 November at 6:30pm.

Places are filling up quickly, but if you would like to attend the meeting, please contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk or **020 7202 0773** to reserve your place.

All those involved in the veterinary profession are welcome to attend, and the evening will begin with a chance to catch up with colleagues over a bite to eat.

Further Question Time meetings will be held near Kidderminster on 26 March and in Cornwall on 18 June. Personal invitations will be sent to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who live within reasonable travelling distance of the meeting venues, nearer the time.

PRACTICE STANDARDS SURGERY

While at Miskin Manor, President Jill Nute, Practice Standards Scheme Manager Eleanor Ferguson and Inspector Pam Mosedale will be holding a Practice Standards Scheme 'surgery' on the afternoon of Thursday 27 November. There are just a couple of time-slots left, so if you are thinking of joining the Scheme or need some help with an upcoming inspection, get in touch now to book your free 30-minute private appointment. Contact Fiona Harcourt on **020 7202 0773** or f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk. If these sessions prove successful, similar events will be held on the afternoon of other Regional Question Times.

Stalwarts in the park

As part of this year's VN Week, which aimed to raise the profile of veterinary nurses and their role in the practice team, members of the British Veterinary Nursing Association and RCVS VN Council were on hand in Kensington Gardens on 1 November to offer advice to owners on how to best care for their pets. Despite the wind and torrential rain, turn-out was good and 40 dogs were given free health-checks by VNs.



Lighting the way at BVNA

Vet Helpline
07659 811 118
Supported by RCVS

Visitors to the RCVS stand at this year's BVNA Congress (11 October), went away enlightened. No, we weren't offering spiritual counselling... just a handy torch.

To raise awareness of the fact that VNs can turn to the Vet Helpline in times of stress, the torch was printed with the helpline number and given free to all visitors, together with a leaflet outlining sources of support available to VNs.

Vet Helpline is run by the Veterinary Benevolent Fund to offer 24-hour support to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses with emotional, addictive or financial problems. To further galvanise its support for VNs, it has agreed to extend its team of trained volunteers to include two veterinary nurses.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR VNS

Vet Helpline: 07659 811 118

Veterinary Surgeons' Health Support Programme: 07946 634 220

BVNA Legal Helpline: 01279 408644
(BVNA members only)

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: 020 7222 2001

www.vetlife.org.uk

VNs in reflective mode

Vetnet Conference in the UK

In September, the RCVS and Warwickshire College played host to the annual Vetnet Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Those involved with VN training across Europe gathered to hear from a range of inspiring speakers under the theme of "Through the looking glass: developing the reflective veterinary nurse."

The programme comprised a mix of speakers and workshops, with topics including educational models, effective communication skills, personal development and practical nursing assessment.

VN Council Chairman Andrea Jeffery addressed the topic of 'Introducing a Nursing Model to Veterinary Nursing Education' and VNC members Sophie Pullen and Hilary Orpet gave papers on 'The Reflective Approach to VN Education' and 'Practical Nursing Assessment and Care Planning' respectively.

From further afield, keynote speaker Dr Pete Bill from the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine in the USA spoke about the challenges faced in VN education, while other speakers shared VN training experiences from the Netherlands, Germany and Italy.



Answer that call!

24/7 research phase in progress

Twenty four-hour emergency cover is perennially a hot topic. As announced in the June issue, we are gathering data as part of a review of our 24/7 guidance. We hope we can rely on your help.

We have contracted independent research firm Cognition Market Intelligence to carry out a survey into how 24-hour emergency cover is handled by practices. A total of 440 interviews are being carried out right now, across a range of types of veterinary surgeon (age, gender, role, area of practice) and practice (location, area of activity, size etc). The number and nature of the interviewees have been carefully chosen to ensure that a representative sample of different experiences is heard.

The questionnaire has been developed by Cognition based on feedback from a series of in-depth interviews with a range of practitioners (if you helped with these, many thanks) and input from the RCVS 24/7 Working Party, which comprises representatives from different veterinary associations.

"If such changes are significant, a period of consultation is envisaged."

The results of the phone survey will be discussed by the Working Party at a meeting in early December, and recommendations about changes to the guidance may then be made to the RCVS Advisory Committee and, if appropriate, RCVS Council. If such changes are significant, a period of consultation – with both the profession and the public – is envisaged.

"Please be as helpful as you can," urges President Jill Nute. "All responses will be treated absolutely confidentially but only if people are forthcoming can we build up a useful evidence base to help the Working Party in their review."

The interview may take up to half an hour. We appreciate that this might seem ironic when the survey asks about time pressures, but hopefully you will agree that the subject matter justifies the time commitment.

Report to Council November 2008

PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill



There have been four meetings of the Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee since the last Council meeting, during which 51 new complaints as well as ongoing complaints were considered. In that time the Committee has:

- referred five complaints to solicitors for statements;
- requested further investigation by the Professional Conduct Department for 14 complaints;
- carried out one announced and two unannounced visits to veterinary practices (the visits included interviewing complainants, veterinary surgeons and witnesses); and,
- referred two complaints to the Disciplinary Committee.

Between May 2008 and the middle of October 2008, 313 complaints were registered and 303 were closed.

The complaint reported to Council is an example of a complaint closed at the case examination stage, the second stage of the investigation process, and is summarised below. It demonstrates that investigations are carried out as necessary between the assessment and case examination stages. Such investigations enable further understanding of the complaint and enable the case examiners to decide whether there is an arguable case against the veterinary surgeon.

Euthanasia without owner's consent

In February 2008, the veterinary surgeon carried out the euthanasia of an eight-month-old horse at the request of the RSPCA and the police, where the owner was unknown. Subsequently, the horse's owner complained to the RCVS.

The RSPCA asked the veterinary surgeon to attend the horse, who, on arrival, found it in lateral recumbency and, in view of the available evidence, considered it to have been down for some time. Further examination revealed classic signs for the clinical stages of tetanus.

Neither the RSPCA inspector nor the police could identify the horse's owner and the animal was not microchipped. The veterinary surgeon said the police officer asked him to proceed with the horse's euthanasia, which he then performed in the presence of the RSPCA inspector. However, the owner complained that the veterinary surgeon had failed to obtain consent for the euthanasia and that the RSPCA knew he was the owner.

On reaching case examination stage, the case manager was asked to investigate the complaint to establish what the RSPCA inspector had known at the time. The RSPCA inspector later confirmed in writing that the veterinary surgeon's account was correct, including that the police had authorised the euthanasia and that the owner had subsequently arrived at the scene and behaved angrily and aggressively. The complainant later apologised for this and confirmed that the veterinary surgeon had explained why the euthanasia was necessary and the importance of tetanus vaccinations.

The case examiners decided that there was **no arguable case** of serious professional misconduct against the veterinary surgeon; he had acted in accordance with welfare legislation to relieve an animal's distress, where obtaining the consent of the owner was not practicable. The complaint was closed.

The full report is available on RCVSonline (www.rcvs.org.uk).

Mr Leslie Higgott

Resumed inquiry concerning: inadequate care/hospitalisation conditions; lack of courtesy to clients; failure to obtain informed consent re off-label medicines; failure to heed College advice re CPD/record-keeping.

DC decision: remove name from Register.

Registration status: name removed on 2 September 2008.

Between 29 April and 2 May 2008, Leslie Higgott appeared before the Disciplinary Committee facing a number of charges regarding his in-patient treatment of a Springer Spaniel; namely, that he had not carried out any or sufficient investigative procedures; had not sought any additional veterinary opinion; and, did not sufficiently observe or monitor the animal. Further, that he did not provide an adequately-sized cage/box for the dog's hospitalisation and failed to ensure that the box was adequately clean. Also that by his remarks and behaviour he had failed to treat his client with respect, courtesy and consideration. In addition, and not withstanding advice from College representatives, he had failed to keep up to date with CPD and kept no clinical notes for animals that he treated between April 2006 and August 2007.

Mr William A Baird

Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register.

DC decision: application granted.

Registration status: restored to Register on 4 September 2008.

On 4 September 2008, the Disciplinary Committee granted William Baird's application for restoration to the Register.

Mr Baird's name was removed in July 2007, after he was found guilty of disgraceful conduct for refusing to attend a 14-year-old German Shepherd-cross bitch, 'Cassie', at the home of clients when she suddenly became unwell. The owners had told Mr Baird that they could not lift Cassie as one had back problems, the other had recently undergone hip surgery and there was no-one to assist. Nevertheless, Mr Baird insisted that he would only see the dog if it was brought into his surgery. Following this, the owners telephoned another local veterinary surgeon, who gave oral evidence at the hearing that when he telephoned Mr Baird he was told: "I am not

The Committee found all charges proved but, as there was insufficient time to conclude the inquiry, postponed its judgment until 28 July 2008 (*RCVS News*, June 2008).

At the resumed inquiry, the Committee decided that the facts as previously proved constituted “conduct which fell far short of that which is expected of the profession”. It then gave detailed consideration to a number of mitigating factors. These included letters and oral evidence in support of Mr Higgott, including from the Mayor of Wallasey, and a petition asking that he be allowed to continue to practise, organised by his family and signed by more than 1,300 people.

“It is clearly in the public interest that veterinary surgeons who are permitted to practise should be concerned to protect and promote the health and welfare of animals in their care.”

The Committee heard of the impact on Mr Higgott and the local community, were his name to be removed from the Register. It also noted that there had been improvements in hygiene in the practice in recent times and

that Mr Higgott had undertaken two CPD courses since the previous hearing. It also heard of ill health suffered by Mr Higgott throughout his career.

Against these factors, the Committee had regard to a number of aggregating features of the case, including:

- the actual suffering of the dog concerned
- the risk of further suffering
- that his misconduct in relation to the inadequate diagnosis of the ailments added to the dog's suffering
- the treatment of the dog whilst in in-patient care
- his refusal to comply with the advice given to maintain proper clinical records
- his refusal to undertake CPD
- his disregard of the College's role and the veterinary profession's regulatory systems
- his lack of insight into the offences found proved against him, and that his conduct did not relate to a single or isolated error

Alison Bruce, Committee Chairman, stated: “The Committee was concerned by the fact that [Mr Higgott] had undertaken only minimal CPD since April 2008. So inadequate

was his treatment of a dog that the Committee considered firstly that the respondent would require very considerable additional training and over a substantial period of time before he could begin to attain the standards of diagnosis and treatment properly to be expected of a competent veterinarian.

“Secondly,” she continued, “it was highly improbable that he would ever undertake the necessary training that would qualify him to accept other than the most routine veterinary work from members of the public.” His reaction to the levelling of these charges against him was, in the Committee's view, “too little, too late”.

In deciding that only the ultimate sanction of removal from the Register would be appropriate, Mrs Bruce said: “The behaviour which was found and proved was fundamentally incompatible with [Mr Higgott] being a veterinary surgeon because of the serious departures from those standards set out in the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct*.”

“It is clearly in the public interest that veterinary surgeons who are permitted to practise should be concerned to protect and promote the health and welfare of animals in their care. The Committee should, by its decisions as to sanction, uphold and maintain the standards within the profession.”

going to do a visit. I don't give a stuff. If you want to go, you go.”

“We recognise his willing acceptance that he breached his clear duty to provide 24-hour cover for his patients.”

Mr Baird was not present or represented at the initial inquiry, but had written to the Disciplinary Committee answering the charges and saying that he wished matters to proceed in his absence. A few weeks after his removal, Mr Baird had written to the *Veterinary Review* complaining of the “injustice” of the College's decision to remove him. Mr Baird produced this letter as part of his restoration application. In this, Mr Baird complained that the words the local veterinary surgeon alleged he had spoken had not appeared in the written documents he had been asked to comment upon, and that as matters had proceeded in his absence, he had not had an opportunity to challenge them.

The Committee considered that a clear and compelling reason had been given why the additional evidence was omitted from the local veterinary surgeon's statement (he had stated that it was such an awful thing for a professional to say). The Committee also said that Mr Baird could have challenged the decision at the Privy Council; that he had not read properly the letter sent to him by the College, and had misunderstood the Appeal Procedure, was a “self-induced misapprehension”.

In his application, Mr Baird made clear that he now accepted his failure to attend Cassie at her owner's home may have caused her undue suffering. He said he realised that he had a moral and professional obligation to attend at the owner's home and he was truly sorry that he had caused so much distress. He admitted that he may have brought the profession into disrepute.

The Committee noted that these comments were at odds with the sentiments Mr Baird expressed via the *Veterinary Review*, which he had produced during the course of the hearing. After questioning, the Committee was however

satisfied that he did have a proper understanding of his obligations in relation to out-of-hours visits and the paramount importance of dealing with an animal's welfare in all situations.

Mr Baird acknowledged that his response that night was entirely unacceptable. He regretted his refusal to attend out of hours for a home visit to treat a distressed and dying dog, and he further accepted that the *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct* stated in clear terms the duties of a veterinary surgeon in such circumstances.

Alison Bruce, Committee Chairman, said: “We consider Mr Baird to have shown a level of naivety in his approach to the original hearing and to this application for restoration.” However, she then added: “We recognise his willing acceptance that he breached his clear duty to provide 24-hour cover for his patients and to attend on his patients personally where such personal attendance at the clients' home was necessitated by the animal's condition and distress level. It is the decision of the Committee that in light of the matters identified it is appropriate to allow this application.”

Mr Lyndon A Basha

Resumed inquiry concerning: clinical competence, clinical record maintenance and false insurance certification.

DC decision: reprimand.

Registration status: remains a home-practising member.

In September 2006, Lyndon Basha was found guilty of serious professional misconduct relating to his small animal practice between 1996 and 2002. The charges concerned his diagnosis and treatment of a total of seven dogs and cats and related to his clinical competence, maintenance of clinical records and certification of insurance claim forms. Following the 2006 hearing, Mr Basha was given time to submit detailed proposals to address his shortcomings and, in November 2006, he agreed to adhere to arrangements set out in a plan. These included: continuing to work in an RCVS-accredited practice; completing a programme of CPD; working with a professional mentor (who reported quarterly to the RCVS); and, making visits to an external practice. On the basis of this plan, the Committee decided, exceptionally, that it would postpone judgement for a period of two years (*RCVS News*, November 2008).

At the re-convened hearing on 2 October 2008, the Committee was required to decide whether it would make a final judgement on sanction or postpone once more. The Committee was of the view that Mr Basha had provided a "considerable body of evidence" which demonstrated that he had "complied completely" with the conditions agreed to in 2006. This included completion of more than 200 hours of CPD, 56 visits by his mentor and 13 practice visits. The Committee also indicated that it was impressed by Mr Basha's openness to staff and clients that he was under a postponed judgement, and was encouraged that Mr Basha had acknowledged the seriousness of the findings against him and done all in his power to address his shortcomings. It also acknowledged the good reports Mr Basha had received from both the external practice owner and his mentor and was encouraged that the latter would continue as a consultant to Mr Basha's practice.

Brian Jennings, chairing the Committee, said: "The Committee is satisfied that Mr Basha is now a clinically competent veterinary surgeon. We are also very impressed that the appointment of a veterinary mentor, which was a key element of our decision to postpone judgement in 2006, has resulted in such a

positive effect on Mr Basha's competence and on the practice as a whole." It decided therefore to take no further action against him in respect of clinical matters.

"Mr Basha is now a clinically competent veterinary surgeon. We are also very impressed that the appointment of a veterinary mentor...has resulted in such a positive effect."

Regarding the false certification of insurance documentation, the Committee recognised that the incident had occurred some years before, whilst Mr Basha was employed in a different practice, and that no such incidents had occurred since the initial hearing or were likely to re-occur in the future. The Committee was reassured by the fact that Mr Basha now employed a veterinary nurse with full responsibility for processing insurance claims. However, the Committee stressed that it took the issue of false certification very seriously, and therefore issued a reprimand to Mr Basha in respect of those findings.

Mr Maurice Kirk

Registration status: name removed from Register on 19 January 2004.

In May 2002, the Disciplinary Committee directed that Maurice Kirk's name should be removed from the Register; since then, it has refused three applications for restoration.

In October 2007, Mr Kirk sought permission from the High Court to judicially review the Disciplinary Committee's decision to remove Mr Kirk's fourth application for restoration from its list. Permission was refused. The High Court at that time stated that Mr Kirk's application was "totally without merit".

"The reality is that he has not changed his attitude, and the RCVS is fully entitled in all circumstances to refuse to re-instate him."

Mr Justice Collins further observed that: "Mr Kirk is incapable of understanding that in order to be re-instated he must ensure that

he has learned from his striking off and has accepted the verdicts of the Disciplinary Tribunal. This he seems incapable of doing. Any adverse decision must mean, in [Mr Kirk's] view, that the decision-maker, whether it be the Judge or an RCVS member, has joined in some conspiracy against him. This is of course nonsense.

"However, the reality is that he has not changed his attitude, and the RCVS is fully entitled in all circumstances to refuse to re-instate him." Mr Justice Collins further stated that: "All that the claimant does is, in intemperate language, to further complain of past decisions."

On 16 June 2008, at an oral appeal lodged by Mr Kirk, Mr Justice Lloyd upheld the High Court's decision, indicating that the RCVS was entitled to protect its procedures from abuse. On the basis that the application has not been made on relevant grounds and has no reasonable prospect of success, the Disciplinary Committee has subsequently declined to list a further application for restoration, lodged by Mr Kirk in July 2008.

Mr Joseph L Holmes

Registration status: remains a home-practising member.

In *RCVS News* (June 2008), we reported that Joseph Holmes had indicated his intention to apply for a Judicial Review of this case (first reported in March 2008). At a hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice on 21 October 2008, with the agreement of both Mr Holmes and the RCVS, Mr Holmes' application for Judicial Review was stayed for the hearing of the Disciplinary Committee to be resumed. A date for this is still to be confirmed but is expected in early 2009.



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

On the lookout for a trusty Trustee

As the RCVS Trust approaches the end of its official Golden Jubilee year, it is seeking to expand its current Board of Trustees. We spoke to current Trustee Tracy Mayne, veterinary nurse partner at Vets4Pets in Redditch, about her responsibilities as a member of the Board and why she got involved in the first place.



What is the remit of the Board of Trustees?

The RCVS Trust is a small but ambitious educational and animal welfare charity which was set up in 1958 by the RCVS to provide two key services to the veterinary profession: an educational grants programme and a Library and Information Service. In a nutshell, the remit of the Board is to deliver and grow these services.

What sort of commitment is involved?

We meet as a Board four times a year and, between us, try to ensure a Trust presence at all the main veterinary conferences. There are often documents to read in-between meetings, but I wouldn't say the work commitment is onerous.

What support do you get?

Each Trustee has a very different professional background which is a support in itself, as it brings a very diverse skills-base to the Board. The Trust also has an induction package for all new Trustees to help bring them up to speed with the different elements of its work.

Is it easy to get a grant?

Grant application is open to anyone within the veterinary field. The current round of grants finishes on the 21 January 2009 at 5pm! [See page 4 for more details.]

Why did you become a Trustee?

I wanted to be a Trustee after learning about the charity's services within the veterinary profession. Being a Trustee allows me to be a part of improving, expanding and delivering the services of the Trust.

For example, 2008 has been our Golden Jubilee year and we have awarded over £1,000,000 to nearly 60 innovative and high-calibre research and animal welfare projects in the UK and overseas. I believe there is no other organisation doing what the Trust does, or striving so hard to give so much to our profession. To be a part of it is a privilege.

On a more personal note, I saw an opportunity to work with and learn from others. The Trustees come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds, including industry and education, and it is a real pleasure to hear them speak with passion about their area of

work. Also, I thought it about time there was a VN on the Board again to shake things up a bit!

What is most rewarding about being a Trustee?

Without doubt the most rewarding part of the work is talking to our grant holders, past and present, about what they have done with their funding. These people are truly inspiring and their work is outstanding. I am often in awe of their drive and passion to learn more about new areas of veterinary science.

I would like to think that, as a Trustee, I can help make a difference to the profession I love and have spent my whole life working in. To listen to those who have used the Trust's services makes me very proud of the work that we do.

What are the challenges you face?

As a Trust, we must strive not only to make sure our work is current, but also to look to the profession's future. We try to see the challenges ahead and ensure we are providing grants that will meet the profession's needs of both today and tomorrow.

In the current financial climate we must also be cautious in terms of how we manage our financial commitments. Next year we plan to give away £250,000 in grants and, as Trustees, it is our responsibility to ensure the funds are available.

Our Library service is one of the largest in Europe and our ever-resourceful Library team assist us in continuing to provide some of the best education resources to the profession. We work hard to stay on top of what our Library users want in order to keep the services current.

What skills and qualities are you looking for in prospective Trustees?

There are lots of skills that we look for in a Trustee. These include: having some understanding of how to generate charitable income, fundraising and marketing experience, financial awareness, and the ability to network and make new contacts for the Trust.

We want to represent the profession's breadth and diversity around the boardroom table, so we need people from all areas of the profession. Without this, the Board will not be able to continue move forward as it has done so successfully in the past.

Above all, I would say a Trustee needs to believe in the Trust's work and have a willingness to look for opportunities to improve its impact in the veterinary world as a whole. They need to be able to think outside the box, and bring fresh ideas to the table. As a Board, we want to move and shake!

What three words describe your experience so far?

Inspiring – I have met many inspiring people through the Trust's work

Educational - I have learnt a great deal about areas of the profession that I would otherwise know nothing about.

Loyalty – Never have I worked alongside such a committed and dedicated group of individuals.

Would you like to know more about becoming a Trustee of the RCVS Trust? If so, please contact Cherry Bushell, Trust Director, for an informal chat (020 7202 0714 / c.bushell@rcvs.org.uk).



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 Registration time

Our Veterinary Practice Premises Register is now open for business. If you handle veterinary medicines, your premises need to be in there.

2 Open all hours?

We're gathering info about how you handle 24/7 and if you want to continue.

I do declare!

Council takes on board Corporate Governance Group's recommendations on Declarations of Interest.

3 Migration patterns

Government advised to keep fast-track route for non-EEA vets.

Europe calling

Funding for European VN practical assessments.

4 Running for research

Could you run the London Marathon for the RCVS Trust?

Nice to have you back

New guidance for VNs returning to the Register.

5 Cherry picked

Cherry Bushell takes over the reins at the Trust.

Barack who?

RCVS Council nominations now open.

6 What's the premise?

Guide to what are veterinary practice premises and what are not.

Swearing in

New annex on Expert Witnesses.

Horse play

Updated guidance on PPEs – who can you act for?

8 Happy Birthday RVNs!

VN Register a year on; progress on disciplinary system.

9 Irish Ayes

The Irish said 'yes' to a statutory VN Register – how has it gone?

10 Re-charge

Vets can again charge for prescriptions. The OFT tells you why.

11 Mind your SQPs

Advice on what being an SQP entails.

12 Get picky

Greater module choice for CertAVP and DipAVN candidates.

Back in my day...

Review of EMS guidelines is launched.

Visiting cards

Visitation team for Nottingham announced.

Do tell the boss

PDP sign-up quicker than last year, and new guidance for employers.

14 Meet the team

Say hello to the Head of Coms – yes, that is her real name.

Come join us...

At the College or in Cardiff – time for your questions.

VNs at large

BVNA Congress, Vetnet, VN Week – they've been out and about.

16 PI Committee

Case involving euthanasia without owner's consent closed at examination stage.

17 DC cases

Mr L Higgott struck off for inadequate care, lack of courtesy, failure to obtain informed consent and poor record-keeping; Mr W Baird restored to Register; Mr L Basha's resumed case concerning clinical competence, record maintenance and false insurance certification is closed with a reprimand; Mr M Kirk's appeal Judicial Review of 2002 decision to remove him from Register is refused; and, Mr J Holmes' application for Judicial Review is stayed, allowing DC hearing to be resumed.

19 Position of Trust

The Trust seeks new Board members - hear from incumbent Tracy Mayne VN about what's involved.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2008

27 November

Practice Standards surgeries and Regional Question Time, Cardiff

24-26 December

College closed

2009

1-2 January

College closed

21 January

Closing date for Trust grant applications

31 January

Deadline for Council nominations

14 February

Closing date for Statutory Membership Exam

1 March

Deadline for entry to Cert and Dip exams

5 March

RCVS Council meeting

16 March

Meet the RCVS Day, London

26 March

Regional Question Time, Kidderminster

1 April

Veterinary practice premises must be registered

4 June

RCVS Council meeting



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