



First-class delivery

New initiative to bring customer service up to date

New Chief Executive Nick Stace announced a 'First-rate Regulator' initiative at the November meeting of Council.

The objective is to benchmark where the College currently sits in terms of regulatory effectiveness, and to develop plans to deliver improvements across the organisation during 2013.

The first phase of the project, he announced, is concerned with building an evidence base. External specialists have been contracted to listen to the profession, the public, other stakeholders and internal audiences (staff and Council) to establish levels of satisfaction with the College as regulator, and better understand where gaps exist between expectation and delivery.

Existing research work that was carried out as part of the rebranding exercise in 2010, and for other purposes, will be fed into this phase of the project, as will findings from desk-based research into how other similar regulators, both in the UK and overseas, tackle the challenges we face.

Phase two, taking place in early 2013, will be an assessment stage, where the external experts, together with Officers and senior staff, will consider how the College currently shapes up, particularly with regard to best practice that exists in other fields, and make recommendations for change.

"Becoming a first-rate regulator is the aim, building on the good things we do, and challenging ourselves to be better where we fall short. This may not be a cost-cutting exercise," explains Nick. "In fact, it may be that investment in structure, staff

and skills will be required in order to deliver the kind of change required of a modern, first-rate regulator."

The third phase will be implementation, and is likely to take place during the remainder of 2013 and into 2014, depending on the nature of the changes required.

"Gathering informal feedback during my first few months in post, I have been pleased to find that the veterinary profession is well respected. The regulatory structure that the College has in place has no doubt contributed to this," says Nick. "However, although the RCVS has a long and proud history, we also need to have a sustainable future as a first-rate regulator," he adds.

"Becoming a first-rate regulator is the aim, building on the good things we do, and challenging ourselves to be better where we fall short."

During the first, evidence-gathering phase of the project, members of the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, together with the public, will be asked to take part in phone interviews. An online survey will also be launched for wider participation. Your help will be vital to this first phase of activity, so please keep an eye on the veterinary and veterinary nursing press, and the RCVS website, for more details of how to get involved.

In this issue: VNC changes, Audit and Risk Committee meets, LRO moves forward, staff changes, VN legislation update, Councils nominations open, new Board moves closer, Christmas charity, CPD for overseas grads, PSS review, CEO's reflections, advice and guidance, new working parties, PDR feedback good, VSA breaches, meetings and events, AMR symposium, PI and DC reports, genome seminar, EBVM event.

Increasing lay membership for VNC

VN Council updates composition



The Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) is set to increase its lay membership, in line with better regulatory practice.

At its October meeting, the VNC agreed to change its composition, and that of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee, and to the formation of a VN Education Subcommittee. The changes will be recommended to RCVS Council at its meeting in March 2013, when more general changes to the College Byelaws will also be considered.

The changes include the addition of a further two lay members to VNC, to bring the total to four. At 25% of VN Council, the move will bring lay membership more into line with that of other regulatory committees. Two veterinary places will be dropped to accommodate the change: one of the appointed vets from RCVS Council and one of the non-Council appointed vets.

Meanwhile, it was recommended that the remit of the existing VN Continuing Education Subcommittee be changed to form a VN Education Subcommittee, which would become responsible for overseeing the approval and ongoing quality monitoring of all educational programmes that lead to registration as a veterinary nurse.

The number of such programmes has grown from three in 2000 to 17 in 2012, and the workload in auditing these programmes, and validating new ones, is considerable. The new Subcommittee will comprise six members of VNC, as well as appointees, to include an independent educationalist and an employer representative.

The Subcommittee will deal with matters on a confidential basis, and general recommendations on approvals, or otherwise, will be reported to VN Council in public.

Finally, VNC recommended changes to the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee, which included an increase in lay membership by replacing one RVN member with a lay member, and that all members should serve a maximum of two terms of three years. The quorum has been amended to ensure that, of the three required to sit, at least one be a lay member.

Register presses stop

Hard copies can be purchased

Printed copies of the Register of Members and List/Register of Veterinary Nurses are no longer being posted free of charge to all veterinary surgeons and VNs.

Although it remains possible to purchase hard copies, we expect that most veterinary practices will instead use the free 'Check the Registers' feature on our website to check whether individuals are registered as veterinary surgeons or are listed or registered as veterinary nurses.

The main benefit to veterinary practices and the public in making these checks online is that, unlike in the printed documents, this information is current, as it is updated daily. There is also an environmental benefit, and a cost saving that has helped us freeze annual fees. Printing and distributing paper copies of the Register and List/Register costs around £150,000 each year, excluding staff time.

Anyone can use 'Check the Registers' to search for information about a vet or veterinary nurse. The search results show an individual's full name, registration number and date of first registration, registerable degree postnominal, the town or

county of the registered address (which should normally be that of their workplace) and their current practising status. The full address and phone number are not shown.

Hard copies of either publication can be purchased by contacting publications@rcvs.org.uk or via the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk/publications).

The 2012 Register of Members costs £25 for members and £40 for non-members, and the List/Register of Veterinary Nurses costs £10. Please note that the Register of Members no longer includes telephone numbers.

Additional postnominals, for example, for RCVS Certificates and Diplomas, will be included in the 2012 Register. However, they will continue to be shown online only until the Advanced Practitioner status is in place (see page 12), and will not be included in subsequent editions of the printed Register. This follows the recommendation of the Specialisation Working Party, as agreed by Council, that postnominals should be simplified.

Risky business

Audit and Risk Committee meets for first time

The Audit and Risk Committee had its first formal meeting on 17 October, under the independent chairmanship of Elizabeth Butler (pictured).

The Committee, which is accountable to Council, was set up on recommendation of the Overspend Review Group. Its role is to support RCVS Council in meeting its governance responsibilities, and includes:

- Monitoring the Council's risk management arrangements
- Approving the internal audit programme
- Advising Council on the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances and internal controls, including internal and external audit arrangements, and on the implications of assurances provided in respect of risk and control

At its first meeting, the Committee gave initial consideration to the College Risk Register and external and internal audit, and considered enforcement of the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee Members. Papers considered by the Committee, and all other RCVS Committees, can be found on the RCVS website (see 'About').

The Committee's membership includes three independent non-Council members, Elizabeth Butler, David Hughes and Judith Rutherford,

and two Council members, Richard Davis and Lynne Hill. The independent members of the Committee were appointed by a panel chaired by Sir David Barnes, Chairman of the Governance Review Group.

In explaining the role of the new Committee to Council at its November meeting, Elizabeth said: "Our purpose is to enhance the control environment within which the organisation operates. We are there to challenge management and advisors on your behalf. However, we can't, and won't, take the responsibility for governance and probity away from Council; our role is to be a critical friend, supporting Council in its role."

"I am pleased that the new Audit and Risk Committee is now in place," says President Jacqui Molyneux. "It should offer reassurance to both members and the public that the framework via which Council's activities are scrutinised is robust."



Simply electable

Candidates sought for RCVS and VN Council elections

It's November, which means it's again time for us to ask veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to consider standing for election to their respective Councils. So, this year, is it your turn to stand up and be counted?

"Last year, a record number of veterinary surgeons showed that, by seeking a seat on RCVS Council, they were willing to help regulate their profession," says Nick Stace, Chief Executive. "The RCVS needs the efforts of willing vets and VNs to ensure that their professions continue to be well regulated. If you've thought about standing 'someday' – why not make someday now?"

There are six seats due to be filled on RCVS Council, and two on VN Council. Those elected will take their seats on RCVS Day next July, to serve four-year terms. Council members will be expected to spend at least six to eight days a year attending Council meetings, working parties and subcommittees (for which a loss-of-earnings allowance is available).

To help those considering standing for election to better understand the role of Council, and what will be expected of them if elected, we will hold a special Meet the RCVS Day on 15 January. This will give those considering standing the opportunity to meet the College Officers and senior staff, and find out what goes on behind the scenes. Please contact Fiona Harcourt for more information, on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.

Each candidate needs to find two proposers; any veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse, except for those presently on the RCVS or VN Council, may propose one candidate each.

Nomination forms, full instructions and guidance notes are available from www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil13 and www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil13.

The closing deadline for nominations to be received is 5pm on 31 January 2013.

D-dates

31 December: veterinary nurses whose retention fees have not been received by this date will be removed from the List/Register. Fees were due on 1 November, so please check that yours have been paid.

31 March: veterinary surgeons' retention fees will be due. Why not set up a direct debit now, as a fuss-free way to pay? This can be done using the direct debit mandate in the *Pocket Guide* to renewing your registration, enclosed for vets with this mailing.

Approaching the 2000 mark

Vets have now passed just under 2,000 modules from the postgraduate RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) – compared with 1,091 module passes at the end of December 2011.

The qualification was introduced in 2009, and the number of module passes currently totals 1,970.

New disciplinary and investigation Committees in sight

Legislative Reform Order goes before Parliament

On the 5 November, the Legislative Reform Order (LRO) to reconstitute the RCVS disciplinary committees separately from Council took its final step towards becoming law, when it was laid before Parliament for scrutiny.

The proposed LRO will amend Part I of Schedule 2 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and will require that the RCVS Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees are made up of veterinary surgeons and lay members who are not RCVS Council members, and who are appointed at arm's length. This will provide regulation in line with modern practice, by ensuring that the same group of people is not responsible for setting the rules, investigating complaints and adjudication, and by bringing lay people formally into the Preliminary Investigation Committee.

"This progression of the LRO to the stage of Parliamentary scrutiny is good news for both the public and the profession."

A further advantage is that the LRO will increase the pool of people available to investigate complaints and sit on disciplinary hearings,

reducing the onerous workload on the current Disciplinary Committee members, whose primary appointment is to RCVS Council.

We have been working on the LRO with Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) officials since late 2010, and the proposals are based on extensive consultations undertaken by the RCVS and Defra. The British Veterinary Association is highly supportive of the LRO.

If, as is hoped, parliamentary scrutiny recommends approval of the LRO before it goes into recess for Christmas, then the LRO will be made early in 2013, and would come into force in April 2013; the first external members would join the committees from July 2013. After a two-year transition period, members of the RCVS Council would become ineligible for membership of the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees.

President Jacqui Molyneux says: "This progression of the LRO to the stage of parliamentary scrutiny is good news for both the public and the profession. The LRO will bring the RCVS into line with regulatory best practice and will improve the perception of the independence of the RCVS disciplinary processes."



Nearly one in three RVNs sports new badge

RVN badge sells well

Just under a third of eligible registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) have purchased the RVN badge, launched at the British Veterinary Nursing Association Congress last October.

As of early October, 2,562 badges had been purchased, with 8,614 RVNs eligible to do so. It has also been awarded to all those who registered since 1 July 2011.



The launch took place during last year's 50th anniversary celebrations for VN training, and formed part of a campaign to raise awareness of RVNs amongst both the veterinary team and the public.

"A year on from the launch, it's great to see that take-up has been good, and continues to grow," says VN Council Chairman, Kathy Kissick. "I hope that RVNs are wearing their badges with pride, as they symbolise that, in the service of animal health and welfare, these nurses are prepared to account for their professional conduct and commit to keeping their skills and knowledge up to date."

RVNs who have not yet got hold of their new badge can download an order form from www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/about-the-vn-register. The badge costs £42.

New veterinary Lord

Lord Trees of The Ross introduced



On 12 July, Professor Sandy Trees was introduced to the House of Lords and became Baron Trees of The Ross in Perth and Kinross.

Professor Lord Trees, a former President and current Council member of the RCVS, is only the second veterinary surgeon, after Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior (centre), to become a Peer. He was appointed as a cross-bencher. The ceremony was also attended by current President, Jacqui Molyneux.

Expert anatomist wanted

Share Jones nominations

Do you happen to know of a lecturer of special eminence in veterinary anatomy? If so, you might consider nominating them for the 2013 RCVS Share Jones Lectureship. This is a prestigious, biennial award whose recipients give a public lecture on a subject agreed with the RCVS.

Topics recently have included the 2011 lecture, 'Who says you can't be big and nimble? The fragility of giant land animals,' given by Professor John Hutchinson, whose expertise includes the anatomy and locomotion of dinosaurs and crocodiles; and 'Sex and Regeneration: Lessons from Nature,' a study of deer antlers, presented by Professor Jo Price.

Nominations will be considered by the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee in February, with decisions made by RCVS Council in March. To nominate a candidate for the lectureship, please email his or her CV, with a letter of recommendation, to Ms Anne Jerney (education@rcvs.org.uk), by 11 January 2013.



New option for VN legislation

The statutory regulation of veterinary nurses

Over the last year, the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Legislation Working Party (VN LWP) has been working tirelessly to develop detailed proposals for a framework for the statutory regulation of veterinary nurses. The VN LWP is chaired by Hilary Orpet and was set up in October 2011 by the Veterinary Nurses Council.

In an interim report presented to the May 2012 meeting of VN Council, the VN LWP recommended that VNs should be subject to a regulatory regime under the umbrella of the RCVS. This regime should protect the title 'veterinary nurse' and ensure that veterinary nurses who are struck off the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses are also struck off the List. This would prevent those found guilty of serious professional misconduct from performing Schedule 3 activities under the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA).

Since then, we have been working together with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to consider how the proposals of the VN LWP could be introduced. On 9 October, a proposal was presented to VN Council as to how the recommended framework could be put in place in an efficient fashion using a short piece of enabling legislation. With a view to the proposal being presented to RCVS Council in November, and to avoid further delays in addressing the regulation of veterinary nurses, an extraordinary

meeting of the VN LWP was called on 18 October and the Working Party offered it strong support to pursuing the option presented.

On 1 November, RCVS Council also gave the proposal the go ahead and we are now working towards presenting a draft Bill to Defra by the end of the year.

"The College will soon be in a position to present proposals to Government for a framework for the effective regulation of veterinary nurses, and the protection of title."

The opinion of Leading Counsel has also been sought and he has confirmed that the proposal would be legally viable and provide a sound footing for the regulation of the profession.

VN LWP Chairman, Hilary Orpet, says: "I'm delighted that the hard work of the VN LWP has started to come to fruition and that the College will soon be in a position to present proposals to Government for a framework for the effective regulation of veterinary nurses, and the protection of title. This represents an important step forward for the profession and will serve to safeguard the health and welfare of those animals cared for by veterinary nurses."

All a-board

New Board structure to streamline decision-making

At its November meeting, Council gave broad approval to draft terms of reference for a new operational Board, which would work alongside a new Committee structure to be agreed at the March Council meeting.

Council will retain full accountability for the organisation but will delegate responsibility to the Board for day-to-day implementation of College business, allowing the RCVS Council to become a more strategic body.

The proposals were developed out of thinking from the 'Past-Presidents + 2' group of five past Presidents and two Privy Council-appointed lay members of RCVS Council, which had been set up to consider decision-making structures within the College.

The new Board will comprise the Officer team (President, two Vice-Presidents and Treasurer), Chairmen of the key committees (including the Veterinary Nurses Council), Chief Executive and Registrar. It will meet around eight times a year under the chairmanship of the President, replacing the current Officer meetings and the

work of the Planning and Resources Committee, which will be disbanded.

The extent to which the Board reports matters to Council, for either information or decision, will depend on the area of business. For example, the Board will present an annual budget to Council and recommend proposed fee changes, will advise Council on corporate governance matters and will present it with an annual strategic plan. But Council will have the ultimate power to decide on governance issues, and whether the strategic plan, fee increases or the budget are acceptable.

The establishment of the Board means that the 42-strong Council, which only meets three times a year, will be less involved in operational decisions, and better able to focus on the development of strategy. Many other regulatory bodies have smaller councils, but the composition of RCVS Council is specified in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

The intention is that the Board will be put in place in time for the next presidential year, which starts in July 2013. Meanwhile, the committee structure, the next layer under the Board, will be discussed at the March 2013 meeting of Council.

Senior staff changes

Registrar / Head of Legal Services confirmed

Gordon Hockey (pictured) has been ratified by Council as Head of Legal Services and Registrar. This is a new role created when the post of Registrar and Secretary was split into two: Chief Executive and Secretary; and Head of Legal Services and Registrar. Gordon will have oversight responsibility for registration and professional conduct.

At the same time, Eleanor Ferguson, formerly Acting Head of Professional Conduct, has been confirmed in the position.

The post of Head of Registration has been made redundant, with a new role of Customer Experience Manager created to ensure that the customer (public and profession) journey improves across the organisation. This position will also report into Gordon Hockey.

There have been other changes on the Senior Team at the College. The post of Head of Corporate Services that had been vacant since the departure of Richard Holford last December will not be filled, and Head of Finance Corrie McCann has been promoted to the new role of Head of Operations, which will incorporate finance, corporate services (IT, mailing, reception) and facilities.

Two other posts have been made redundant: Special Projects Manager and RCVS Charitable Trust Director. A new post of Executive Director

for the Trust will be developed, with a view to taking the Trust through a full strategic review.

"I believe that an engaged and well-purposed team of staff, with a focus on customer service and driving improvements, lies at the heart of any successful organisation," says Nick Stace. "These changes will enable the College to move into the next stage of its development towards becoming a first-rate regulator."

The changes will mean that the Senior Team is reduced from 11 people to seven, being the Chief Executive plus Heads of Legal Services, Operations, Human Resources, Education, Veterinary Nursing and Communications.



Pet insurance ad taken off air

College complained to ASA

A complaint we made to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has contributed to a misleading advert no longer being shown.

In an advert for its pet insurance, Direct Line claimed that 'on average it costs £550 for a trip to the vets'.

The small print at the bottom of the screen said 'Based on our average claims cost 05/10-04/11', but we felt that that a typical viewer would not read the small print, or, even if they did, would not understand that the average of those bills that pet owners chose to claim on their insurance would not be the same as a typical vet's bill. For example, many smaller bills are not claimed for, as they do not reach the excess.

Figures we obtained indicated that the average annual small animal client spend at the vet's was £365, with an average client spend per visit of £65.

This meant that the Direct Line advert was suggesting that a single trip to the vets costs 50% more than the typical annual spend.

"The average annual small animal client spend at the vet's was £365, with an average client spend per visit of £65."

Our concern was that, hearing that a typical trip to the vet's costs £550, owners would think twice about taking their pet for medical treatment that it required, or even registering with a practice. We felt this would have serious animal health and welfare implications, and would also undermine confidence in the profession's ability to provide cost-effective services.

Direct Line has agreed to take the advert off air and will not use it again; it has also been removed from the company's YouTube channel.

Little donkeys supported at Christmas

Christmas Box for Ethiopia's horses and donkeys

The beneficiaries of this year's RCVS President's Christmas Box will be working equines and their owners in Ethiopia, as President Jacqui Molyneux has nominated international animal charity SPANA to be the recipient of the £3,000 donation.

There are approximately 7.5 million working equines in Ethiopia – the largest number in Africa – and they play a crucial role in the daily lives of the majority of Ethiopian people. However, parasites and infectious diseases are prevalent among these equines, which also suffer from other health concerns. Our donation will be used to facilitate new training for key teaching staff at Ethiopia's veterinary schools. This will then help these staff train Ethiopia's student vets in providing appropriate veterinary care for equines.

"We are delighted that the RCVS has decided to donate its Christmas Box to SPANA."

"Having been involved with Rotary in working in developing countries, I have seen at first hand how a relatively small amount of money can have a huge impact if used in an intelligent way," says Jacqui.

"This project particularly appealed to me as it involves training the teachers who train Ethiopia's

vets. As more and more vets are then taught by these staff, this knowledge and skill becomes more widely disseminated – there is a snowballing effect."

Meanwhile, SPANA is grateful for the donation. "We are delighted that the RCVS has decided to donate its Christmas Box to SPANA – it is a very generous donation!" says the charity's Veterinary Director Andy Springer. "SPANA already works closely with one veterinary school in Ethiopia and has provided training to the staff member responsible for teaching undergraduates about

equine medicine and infectious diseases. This undoubtedly improves the health and welfare of equines that come under the care of these vets once they graduate. We are aiming to provide a new training course for the teaching staff at other veterinary schools in Ethiopia next spring."

The RCVS President's Christmas Box is a charitable donation that we have made since 2010 in lieu of sending Christmas cards. Previous recipients have been Hounds for Heroes and the Veterinary Benevolent Fund.



Essential CPD for overseas vets

Joint RCVS, BVA and VDS course

Are you an overseas graduate? Do you employ overseas graduates? In recognition of the fact that coming to work in a new country is not always easy, we have teamed up with the British Veterinary Association and the Veterinary Defence Society to offer a two-day course designed specifically with overseas graduates in mind.

The 'Introduction to the UK veterinary profession – an essential CPD course for overseas vets' is aimed at overseas vets in their first two years in the UK and those considering working here, and is designed to provide not only vital information, but also confidence.

All three organisations wish to reduce the risk that such veterinary surgeons may become the subject of a complaint, and to improve their UK experience and advance their communication skills. The course also aims to help them understand their legal duties as a veterinary surgeon in the UK which can vary significantly from their own country.

RCVS President Jacqui Molyneux said: "Each year we register around 600 overseas graduates –

around 40-45% of our total new members. We appreciate that working in a foreign country can have its challenges – and that regulatory structures and professional expectations can change in different countries – not to mention language and cultural barriers.

"We hope that this two-day course will help overseas graduates better to understand the professional framework in the UK, improving their confidence and ability to deliver an excellent service to their clients and their animals."

"We appreciate that working in a foreign country can have its challenges – not to mention language and cultural barriers."

Vets can attend the two modules separately. The first, 'Key information and skills needed to practise as a vet in the UK', maps out how the UK veterinary profession is organised and includes

information about jobs, employment rights and the support available for when things go wrong.

The second module, 'Master class in communication skills', goes through challenges in the consulting room and how to handle them.

The course runs on 27-28 November 2012 at the headquarters of the BVA in central London. To find out more, please visit www.bva.co.uk/events.



Military working dog celebrated

Army dog posthumously receives PDSA Dickin Medal

The PDSA Dickin Medal – recognised worldwide as the animals' Victoria Cross – was posthumously awarded to Theo, a military working dog, by PDSA Chairman Michael Bolton during October.

The medal was first instituted by PDSA in 1943 and is the highest award any animal can receive in recognition of conspicuous gallantry or devotion to duty while serving in military conflict. Theo's was the first to be presented since 2010, and was accepted by Sergeant Matthew Jones and search dog Grace.

“Theo made 14 confirmed operational finds, the most any arms and explosives search dog in Afghanistan has found to date.”

Theo, a Springer Spaniel, died from a seizure in Afghanistan in March 2011, just hours after his handler, Lance Corporal Liam Tasker, was killed by enemy fire while on a mission in support of the Irish Guards.



Theo was deployed with Lance Corporal Tasker as part of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, 1st Military Working Dog Regiment, during the conflict in Afghanistan in 2010 and 2011. Their role was to provide search and clearance support, uncovering hidden weapons, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and bomb-making equipment. During his time in Afghanistan Theo made 14 confirmed operational finds, the most any arms and explosives search dog in Afghanistan has found to date.

Colonel Neil Smith QHVS (pictured), Director of the Army Veterinary and Remount Service and RCVS Vice-President, said: “The Royal Army Veterinary Corps is honoured that PDSA awarded its Dickin Medal to Theo. Sadly, Theo died just a few hours after his handler Lance Corporal Liam Tasker succumbed to his injuries. This impressive team undoubtedly prevented many soldiers and civilians being killed or injured.

“This award recognises not only a very special dog, but also the contribution that all our dog teams make in detecting IEDs and weapons caches.”

Veterinary emergency tweetathon

Twitter campaign to raise awareness of emergency issues

Next time you find yourself dragged out of bed at 3am to deal with an emergency and feel like shouting to the world that being a vet really isn't all it's cracked up to be, we might just have the answer: a veterinary emergency tweetathon!

As part of our ongoing efforts to raise awareness amongst the animal-owning public of the challenges the profession faces in providing 24-hour emergency cover, and what steps owners should take to plan ahead, we are hoping that the power of social media can help us to promote real-life tales of veterinary emergency endeavours.

With your help, and our twitter account @RCVS_UK, we plan to devote a full 24 hours during National Pet Month (1 April – 6 May 2013) to relate to the twitterverse any and all tails of the unexpected that you might care to share with us.

Emergency caesarean at 4am? Let us know. Cat RTA at dawn? Tweet the outcome! Horse colic ruins quiet evening in? Share the pain with our followers. (Needless to say, all information and/or images should not compromise animal health and welfare or client confidentiality!)

We're aware that many practices, vets and VNs now have their own twitter accounts, so that

should be the easiest way to relate your stories, however you could also email or text us instead (details to follow).

By relating your experiences to our followers, we hope to be able to remind animal owners that veterinary emergencies can happen at any time, that they should plan ahead for such eventualities and should know in advance what to do and where to go. We would also hope to raise awareness of the fact that, as there is no NHS for animals, out-of-hours emergency cover has to be paid for, and so is likely to cost more.

This concept has already been used to good effect by the likes of Greater Manchester Police, who ran a similar campaign in 2010 to promote the variety of calls they receive and problems they have to deal with.

We'll let you know more details in due course, but in the meantime, please let us have your comments and suggestions, and remember to follow us at @RCVS_UK.

Pocket-sized info

New registration renewal guide

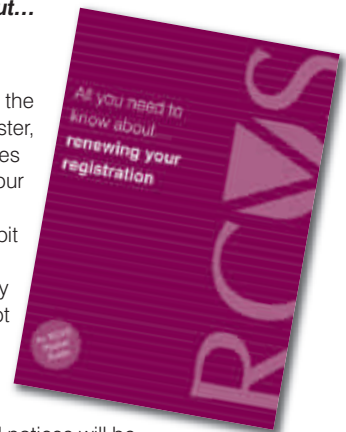
Veterinary surgeons will find enclosed with this issue of RCVS News a handy RCVS Pocket Guide: 'All you need to know about... renewing your registration'.

The booklet outlines the purpose of the Register, registration categories and how to renew your registration, and includes a direct debit mandate to encourage veterinary surgeons who do not already have such an arrangement to set one up.

Registration renewal notices will be issued towards the end of February 2013. The easiest way to pay, and update your details, is online – and the forms will include your RCVS website log-in details.

If your RCVS Pocket Guide is missing, please contact communications@rcvs.org.uk. Please note that this Pocket Guide has only been included for veterinary surgeons, as the veterinary nurse registration renewal requirements differ.

Other Pocket Guides will follow. If you have a topic that you would like to see covered, please let us know.



Inspection feedback

Help us to help you – buy giving us feedback

The Practice Standards Scheme helps veterinary practices meet and maintain high standards, so it's only fair that we also look at how we perform in administering the Scheme.

An important part of this is listening to your feedback. After every inspection, practices are invited to give their views on the process, so that we can continue to improve and make the Scheme run more smoothly. The Practice Standards team reviews all of the post-inspection feedback forms regularly. Where changes can be made easily, they are fed into the annual inspectors' training or passed to the Practice Standards Group; ideas for more strategic changes to the process are fed into the ongoing five-year review.

We are pleased to say that, in the majority of cases, people find the application process straightforward, and are easily able to identify the categories relevant to their practice.

We have received some feedback that there appears to be duplication in some areas of the Standards, which we will address in the current review, but it is pleasing to see that, in general, people find the documentation useful and easy to use.

Although it's probably not something most look forward to – and can be a bit daunting – it appears that practices are finding the inspection a constructive experience, too.

Here are some comments from this year's forms:

“Very constructive and practically-based discussions... comments made by the inspector were helpful in improving our efficiency and [included] good ideas to make future inspections run more smoothly.”

“Although initially daunting... I have found the process invaluable in getting everything up to date and above board and it has added credibility to staff and customers.”

“[The inspector] was excellent, practical and understanding.”

“Preparing for the inspection was quite stressful and took a lot of

time and effort, but actually the inspection itself was very useful. The inspector gave us lots of helpful advice and I feel the experience has definitely improved the practice and bonded the staff.”

“The inspector put all staff at ease. His comments were constructive and helpful – much appreciated by all.”

“When the inspector made a comment, she took time to explain why she had made it and what we needed to do to correct any shortfall.”

“The inspector was more there to assist so that we did things in the right way and ensured a better running practice.”

If you are due an inspection, please do make sure you fill out the form afterwards: it helps make for a better experience for everyone, and ensures that the inspection process is as constructive as possible.

If you have recently had an inspection, we hope your experience was a positive as those above, but if not, please do let us know – we need to maintain our standards just as much as your practice does.

Got your bookmarks yet?

Helping you spread the word in your practice



One of the questions at our recent Practice Standards webinar was around promotion of the Scheme to the public. It's not easy to do this – especially on a limited budget – but practices promoting their accreditation to their clients can really help.

We have produced promotional bookmarks for practices to give to their clients to highlight what RCVS accreditation means.

All accredited practices may order a free sample of 100 bookmarks, and a further 400 free bookmarks are available to practices recently renewing or receiving accreditation. You can order extra bookmarks at www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards.

If you are planning to promote your accreditation with your own posters or leaflets, don't forget to use the updated logos, which can be obtained from PSSlogos@rcvs.org.uk.

For promotional tips, sign up to *The Practice Standard*, our e-newsletter for accredited practices. To subscribe, please email pss@rcvs.org.uk, saying that you wish to sign up to The Practice Standard, and stating your practice name.

Play it again, Pam!

Time to catch up with Practice Standards webinars

If you have missed either of our Practice Standards Scheme webinars, you can catch them again on the Webinar Vet.

The first webinar, broadcast on 16 July, was 'Practising to Core Standards'. It would be useful viewing for any veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse, as it outlines the Core Standards to which all should be practising, according to the new *Code of Professional Conduct*. The webinar includes a useful section on tackling clinical governance, with practical suggestions and ideas.

The second webinar, broadcast on 16 October, was 'No stress PSS', which was developed to assist those facing a Practice Standards inspection, or re-inspection. Targeted at General Practice level, it features questions and answers from webinar delegates, and lots of tips for inspection success.

Both were presented by former Senior Practice Standards Inspector, Pam Mosedale. You can play them again, free of charge, at www.thewebinarvet.com/rcvs-webinars.

Sign up to RCVS e-News (www.rcvs.org.uk/enews) to find out about future webinars.



Time to reflect

Practice Standards review

The Practice Standards Group (PSG), which includes representatives from all of the key veterinary organisations, is considering options for the Scheme's future structure.

This is the second five-year review that has been undertaken – the first resulted in a new Manual and Standards in 2010.

The objective this time is to address some of the perceived shortcomings of the Scheme, for example, that it is a 'box-ticking' exercise; that the Scheme puts too much emphasis on paperwork requirements; and, that it is inflexible, particularly at Hospital level, meaning that, to qualify, practices would have to purchase expensive equipment that they would never use.

"Although the fundamental aim of the Scheme remains to raise and maintain high standards, the PSG recognises that it's important to address criticisms that may be acting as barriers to new members joining," says PSG Chairman, Peter Jinman.

"It is hoped that changes can also be made which will provide a pathway for existing members to attain higher, more meaningful standards, which are directly relevant to animal care," he adds.

A 'concept note' outlining the current thinking of the PSG is available on the RCVS website for comment, and feedback should be sent to Eleanor Ferguson, on e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk, by 20 December 2012.

This feedback will inform the development of more detailed proposals, which will be put out to full consultation in due course.



On the big screen...

We're hoping to produce some promotional material for accredited practices to use on waiting-room display screens, to highlight some of the benefits of the Practice Standards Scheme and the efforts required to become accredited. However, we need to know the most useful format in which to provide this information – PDFs, images, video, PowerPoint etc.

If you could spare a moment to let us know, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/psspoll and complete our quick poll.



Shining a light on what we do

Early reflections from my first two months in post

Nick Stace, Chief Executive

When you arrive in a new organisation, particularly when you are CEO, it is important to listen to your customers, to your staff and to your instincts. It is also important to amass evidence of what is good and what needs to change. That is the summary of my first few weeks and the months ahead.

And that is also where you come in. I am encouraging our customers – the profession and the public – to email me ideas for improvement at nick@rcvs.org.uk; I'm on the road each week speaking to the profession in practices and vet schools around the country (if you would like to invite me to your place of work, please do); and we will be launching an ambitious listening exercise with the profession and the public in a few weeks time. We will also look at other regulators and see how we compare and what we can learn from them.

The full package of reforms to help us become a first-rate regulator will be looked at towards the middle of next year. It sounds like a long way off but it will involve serious consideration for how we fund improvements and how we adapt our culture to what is required. As with all improvement programmes, there will be some low-hanging fruit that we can pick off along the way, but other improvements will undoubtedly take time.

Staff motivation

Staff will be important in helping to identify improvements and will be critical to the change programme to deliver them. That is why I set a lot of stall around having fully engaged and motivated staff. One of the first things I have done at the Royal College is to meet with all staff individually, as well as to launch our first staff engagement survey. A highly engaged staff base is not only a 'nice to have', it is a 'must have'. In commercial companies, what the staff think of an organisation almost exactly corresponds with what their customers think of it – staff engagement scores and net promoter scores (a measure of customer loyalty) are often the same. If you improve one, you can make a big difference to the other.

"Staff will be important in helping to identify improvements and will be critical to the change programme to deliver them."

As for my instincts – I think we do a good job, but we could do better. We expect high standards of the profession; I think we should expect high standards of ourselves as well. We need to be more ambitious around the task of continuous improvement, I believe setting out ambitious plans for becoming a first-rate regulator will help us to do that.

In 1844, the year that the Royal College was founded, many other extraordinary things happened as well. The one I like best is the invention by a Swedish chemistry professor, Gustaff Erik Pasch: he invented the safety match. I would like to think that we are lighting a safety match that will shine a light on what we do and how we should make improvements.

Nick Stace joined the RCVS as Chief Executive in early September. Previously he headed up CHOICE, Australia's equivalent of consumer group Which?. A long-standing consumer champion, Nick also held the post of Deputy CEO at Which?, was a Director at Consumers' International and former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Director of Strategic Communications. He can be contacted on nick@rcvs.org.uk.

Sign on the dotted line

Spotlight on certification

The principles of certification – which essentially safeguard the value of the veterinary surgeon's signature – have been a cornerstone of professional conduct guidance over many years, and continue to be included in the supporting guidance for the new *Code of Professional Conduct*.

The RCVS Certification Subcommittee, which reports to Advisory Committee, is tasked with ensuring that documents produced by other bodies can be signed by veterinary surgeons in adherence with the principles. Examples that they have considered in the past include documentation surrounding the lawful tail-docking of specified breeds.

Such documentation is often electronic these days, and recently the group, chaired by Peter Jinman, has worked with the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), to work through some issues arising out of the introduction of a new computer system in relation to tuberculin testing in cattle (see *RCVS News* June 2012).

This work has been welcomed by the Chief Veterinary Officer, Nigel Gibbens (pictured). "The introduction of the Sam Release 6 computer system raised novel issues around veterinary professional responsibilities for computerised data which went beyond simple electronic certification," he says.



"This included veterinary direction of lay testers. Constructive discussions with the RCVS Certification Subcommittee helped us to understand the applicability of the *Code of Professional Conduct* to these matters. This resulted in improved wording on screen and in key documents with clearer guidance to our Official Veterinarians to address their concerns."

On behalf of the Certification Subcommittee, Peter Jinman said: "I welcome the constructive approach AHVLA took to tackling problems encountered with the new system. The Subcommittee will continue to assist in resolving any problems that the profession encounters regarding certification matters."

The new instructions and an online tutorial showing how to navigate them are available on the AHVLA website: www.animalhealth.defra.gov.uk.

The 12 Principles of Certification can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/certification.

Supporting guidance updates

Council approves changes to Code's supporting guidance

At its recent meeting, RCVS Council approved updates to three areas of supporting guidance to the *Codes of Professional Conduct*, and some new guidance, as follows:



Chapter 14 – Removal of microchips (new guidance)

Following a dog ownership dispute that went to court last year, a veterinary surgeon removed a microchip from the dog because it contained details of the unsuccessful party in the dispute. In closing a subsequent complaint related to this case, the Preliminary Investigation Committee considered that the removal of this chip had been 'unwise', but asked the Advisory Committee to consider whether additional guidance was necessary.

The Advisory Committee emphasised the importance attached to the accurate identification of animals and that, given the potential for fraud, a microchip must only be removed where this can be clinically justified. This justification should be documented and, where required, another microchip or alternative method of identification used.

The Committee also highlighted that the removal of a microchip in any other circumstances would be an unnecessary mutilation. While the insertion of a second microchip may be problematic, this in itself does not justify removal of a microchip and an audit trail of additional microchips/identification must be maintained.

Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wish to seek advice about ownership disputes or related issues are encouraged to contact the Professional Conduct Department.

Chapter 27 – Dog dew claw removal (update)

The Advisory Committee has just approved an update to our current guidance relating to the removal of dew claws in dogs to reflect the introduction of new legislation in Northern Ireland (The Welfare of Animals [Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons] Regulations [Northern Ireland] 2012).

Under this new legislation, dew claw removal in dogs is a permitted procedure which may be carried out as a management procedure by lay

persons, but only before a puppy's eyes are open. Otherwise, the removal of a dog's dew claws is a prohibited procedure and may only be carried out by a veterinary surgeon.

Our current guidance also explains the law as it applies in England, Scotland and Wales.

Chapter 19 – Animal treatment by non-veterinary surgeons (update)

The Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) provides that only registered members of the RCVS may practise veterinary surgery, although a number of exceptions apply which can be found in Schedule 3 to the Act, and a number of specific exemption orders.

The Advisory Committee has clarified our current guidance to explain that all forms of complementary therapy involving acts, or the practice, of veterinary surgery must be undertaken by a veterinary surgeon, subject to any exemption in the Act. At the same time, it is incumbent on veterinary surgeons offering any complementary therapy to ensure that they are adequately trained in its application.

Chapter 8 – Euthanasia at sporting events (update)

The Advisory Committee has approved an update to our guidance on euthanasia of animals, including euthanasia at sporting events and the destruction of injured horses, to reflect a change in the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) Rules of Racing, which apply to BHA-regulated events.

Rule 81 provides that where a horse is, in the opinion of a racecourse veterinary surgeon, so severely injured that it ought to be humanely destroyed in order to prevent undue suffering, the racecourse veterinary surgeon will seek to inform the horse's owner or trainer and obtain a second opinion before proceeding with the humane destruction; but, if it is not practicable to do so, s/he may proceed with humane destruction without reference to the owner or trainer.

Nipping it in the bud

Goat disbudding clarification

We clarified the legal position regarding the disbudding of goats over the summer, following media reports concerning undercover filming on UK goat farms.

The carrying out of any activity which amounts to veterinary surgery is restricted to veterinary surgeons unless there is a suitable exemption that allows other people to do it. The removal of the horn-bud of goats (disbudding) is considered veterinary surgery under the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (the Act).

Schedule 3 of the Act provides certain exemptions to the restriction on carrying out veterinary surgery. However, Schedule 3 specifically provides that these exemptions do not allow non-veterinary surgeons to undertake the disbudding of goats, except the trimming of the insensitive tip of an ingrowing horn which, if left untreated, could cause pain or distress.

There are no other Exemption Orders covering the disbudding of goats and therefore this procedure may only be undertaken by veterinary surgeons.

Whilst a number of separate regulations include disbudding of goats as a procedure which can be carried out for non-therapeutic reasons, this secondary legislation is subject to the above restrictions in the Act. Regulations in Northern Ireland are due to be amended later this year, making it clear that only veterinary surgeons may disbud goats throughout the UK.

The secondary legislation does not explicitly require anaesthetic to be administered when disbudding goats. However, disbudding should be carried out by veterinary surgeons in accordance with good practice and in such a way as to minimise pain and suffering caused to the animal, which should include use of an anaesthetic.

In summary, only a veterinary surgeon may undertake the disbudding of goats and due to the nature of the procedure, veterinary surgeons disbudding goats should administer anaesthetic.



As time goes by

The life of the College measured out in ticks

In the latest in our series to focus on items in our historical collection, veterinary historian Bruce Vivash-Jones and RCVS Charitable Trust Librarian Clare Boulton consider a mantel clock that has a story to tell...

In the Members' Room at Belgravia House sits a mantel clock, together with a commemorative plaque which states that the timepiece stood in the entrance hall at Red Lion Square for over a century. Excluding the historical book collection and documents, it is probably the oldest item in the College's collection: for 151 years it has provided its reassuring tick as a background to the debates, affairs and excitements of the growing profession.

In 1844, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons was created by the granting of the Royal Charter. Five years later, the infant College realised that it needed a permanent home base, and, after deliberation, the lease was acquired, in 1853, of a house in Red Lion Square, London.

At last the College had a home, one which was to be its headquarters for the next 108 years: soon the words 'Red Lion Square' were regarded as synonymous with the veterinary profession. Like any other proud house-owner, the College made sure the property was fitted out and furnished to reflect the status of the growing profession. Then, around 1861, there was a realisation that a house was not really a home until it had a clock. And so a mantel clock was acquired. It's a true example of Victorian horological elegance, made by Cammerer Cuss, a business that started in 1844 (a delightful coincidence with the year of the granting of the Charter): the business is still going strong – just like their clock.

For some 100 years the clock adorned Red Lion Square and then, each time the College moved, journeying to Kensington, Belgrave Square and to Horseferry Road, the clock was carefully packed and moved as well.

Regrettably, most of the other physical features of the College's first home have now been dispersed, except for the mantel clock and a small portion of stained glass from one of the glorious Council Chamber windows. The magnificently ornamental presidential chair dates from 1887, the ceremonial trappings of mace (1903) and presidential badge and chain (1904) all came well after the clock. Maybe this reflects Victorian priorities – good

timekeeping was one of the foundations of an ordered society!

The clock has not only marked the passage of time but also, if inanimate objects can, witnessed both people and events of the RCVS. For over 100 years every President and Council member has passed it by. In 1878, it would have observed President Sir Frederick Fitzwygram reporting that the Highland and Agricultural Society would cease issuing its certificates, thus ensuring that all veterinary surgeons would receive the RCVS Diploma. This decision led to the 1879 Supplementary Charter, and the unification of the profession. It went on to witness President George Fleming accomplish his triumph of pushing the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881 through Parliament.

The clock was there in 1884 when it was recognised that the College's house was disintegrating, and watched the subsequent purchase of the freehold, a move across the Square to temporary housing, demolition of the old and construction of the new Red Lion Square home, which was opened in April 1885 by President J Roalfe Cox. This new house was fitted out with some splendour – magnificent stained glass windows and fitted oak furniture with carved heads of the livestock species in the Council Chamber, and all topped by the College shield and crest on the parapet.

As activities grew, space became a serious issue. However, in 1937, the next door house was acquired and the problem was resolved. All seemed well at last, but in 1939 we were at war and the College activities and valuables (including the clock) moved to Wembley, and then to Harrogate. In May 1941, the building suffered serious bomb damage and remained empty for two years, until repairs were made and the main activities of the College resumed.

Again, all seemed well, but post-war development plans routed a new road where the College was sited. A move had to be made and, in 1961, the Red Lion Square home of the profession was demolished – the magnificent windows lost, the furnishings sold and the rooftop crest destroyed.

But, like an indomitable spirit, the clock survived and moved twice more until it now sits in Belgravia House – 151 years of solid reliable ticking away of not just the minutes, but the years. Years that have witnessed the RCVS move through a difficult infancy and a triumphant coming-of-age, to become a respected member of society.



Welcoming new members

Stat Exam successes recognised

In July, we welcomed to the College 13 overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons who had earned their right to register by passing the RCVS Statutory Examination for Membership. A further two vets with Statutory Examination passes registered separately.

President Jacqui Molyneux hosted a registration ceremony at Belgravia House to mark the occasion. "Your success is remarkable – especially for those whose first language is not English," she said, as she also acknowledged the role played by friends and families in supporting the vets. "The veterinary profession in the UK is small and welcoming, and you will find valuable support offered by the different members of the veterinary team, as well as from professional organisations."

Attending the ceremony was Mr Vahidreza Ardani, who qualified from the Islamic Azad University in Iran, where he practised for ten years as a large animal vet. "It took me nearly three years of study to prepare for the IELTS [English language] exam," he said. "I have also been seeing practice here for the past two and a half years, including at the small animal hospital at the University of Glasgow."

Ms Olga Woolmer, who qualified from Perm State Agricultural Academy, Russia, also attended. Olga saw practice in several UK small animal and equine practices as preparation for the exam,

while also working as an animal technician. "I'm really grateful to all those who let me see practice," she said. "In particular, Burghley Veterinary Centre at Stamford helped me a lot in learning about what veterinary clients in the UK expect and how to sound confident when I give advice – which ultimately is best for the patient. It's great that I will soon be able again to do the work that I've trained so hard for."

The RCVS Statutory Examination for Membership is open to veterinary surgeons with a veterinary degree gained outside the UK that is not recognised by the RCVS. Candidates for the exam must also score at least 7.0 in the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, which is comparable to requirements for entry to UK veterinary degrees and those of other professional regulators.



RCVS President Jacqui Molyneux with new member Matthew Oluremi Ayoola and his family.

Special measures

Two new working parties set up

As part of implementing the recommendations of the Specialisation Working Party, the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee has approved two new working parties.

The Advanced Practitioner Working Party, chaired by Professor Stephen May, will propose the criteria for the new Advanced Practitioner status, which will sit as a middle tier between practitioners and Recognised Specialists. This Working Party will define the qualifications, period of experience and any other criteria to be met to hold Advanced Practitioner status. It will also consider procedures needed to implement this new tier, including a requirement for periodic revalidation.

The Fellowship Working Party, chaired by Professor Gary England, will look at ways to widen the scope of the Diploma of Fellowship. It has been asked to advise in particular on additional routes to the Fellowship that would make it an award achievable by a greater number of practising clinicians, for example, by creating a new route of 'meritorious contributions to clinical practice,' one of the Specialisation Working Party's recommendations agreed by Council.

Both working parties will report to the Education Policy and Specialisation Committee.

Visitation cycle

Monitoring standards of veterinary degrees

A joint visitation was undertaken by the ARCVS, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) to the



University of Sydney in June. RCVS Council members Professor Stuart Reid (pictured), and Lynne Hill attended on behalf of the RCVS. The visitation report will be considered by the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee in December.

The next RCVS visitation will take place from 18 to 23 November to the University of Liverpool veterinary school. This visit will be undertaken jointly with the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), and will be chaired by Professor Reid and Professor Charles Press, of the Norwegian Veterinary School, Oslo.

In 2013 there will be an RCVS visitation to the University of Glasgow from 21 to 26 April. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the AVMA and the AVBC. Observers will also attend from the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) and EAEVE. This visitation will be chaired jointly by Lynne Hill and Dr Sheila Allen, Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia.

Council member Jill Nute, and Professor John Innes, University of Liverpool, will also attend the SAVC's visit to the University of Pretoria in May on behalf of the RCVS.

Vet school in Surrey

An explanation of our role and remit

The University of Surrey has recently announced its intention to open a new veterinary school in 2014, which will be “constructed around the theme that human and animal health is intrinsically linked”.

“It is not within our remit to determine whether a new school is necessary or not.”

At a meeting with Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Christopher Snowdon and his colleagues in October, we were interested to hear the University's proposals to develop the new degree course and will be working with them over the coming months, as we did with the University of Nottingham, to develop a timetable for considering the new programme against our accreditation standards.

That process will take a number of years and ultimately require Privy Council approval. However,

such approval cannot be granted until the first cohort of students has graduated and we are able to judge the quality of the programme as a whole. In the meantime, we will work with the university to oversee student assessments to ensure that students' interests are protected.

Whilst our role is to ensure that any veterinary surgeon registering in the UK has an appropriate qualification, based on the educational merits of that award, it is not within our remit to determine whether a new school is necessary or not. It is up to prospective universities to consider the market they wish to serve and where they want to invest their resources.

From a factual point of view, however, workforce modelling that we carried out based on the number of graduates produced by the existing seven UK veterinary schools indicates that there is likely to be a continuing deficit of ‘home-grown’ graduates until at least 2014.

Competent from day one

New Day One Competences Review Working Party

The Education Policy and Specialisation Committee agreed at its October meeting the remit and composition of a new Day One Competences Review Working Party (WP).

The RCVS Day One Competences are those which all new graduates should have met at the point of graduation and which are regarded as essential for safe veterinary practice.

The competences were agreed ten years ago and have been adopted by accrediting bodies in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and, via the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education, across Europe. Veterinary schools also use these general competences to guide development of their own specific ‘Day One Skills’ lists.

New graduates then spend around a year developing these initial competences (during the Professional Development Phase) until they are deemed to have achieved ‘Year One Competence’ and are able to perform a range of common clinical procedures, or manage them without close supervision, in a reasonable period of time, and with a high probability of a successful outcome.

The RCVS Day One Competences need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that they still meet the standards required for modern veterinary

practice. So, the remit of the WP will be to consider whether they need to be updated to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

The WP will aim to seek external input at an early stage, including particularly the views of vets in practice and of teachers in the veterinary schools. It will also take into account reviews undertaken in Europe and elsewhere of essential veterinary competences.

David Catlow will chair the WP, which will include representatives from the RCVS Council, the British Veterinary Association and the veterinary schools.



Nursing Progress Log takes a trip abroad

Vectar project update

The Vectar (Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record) project has reached the half-way mark. This project, which aims to develop the UK Nursing Progress Log (NPL) for use on the continent, is Leonardo-da-Vinci-funded and led by the RCVS VN team.

The project is on track and adaptations have been made to the skills list and functionality of the NPL, and an online interactive clinical coach training programme has been developed.

“We hope that a finished package will be available from the autumn of 2013.”

The six European partner schools are now well into the second phase of piloting both the revised NPL and clinical coach training package, and, following this academic year of trialling, further refinements will be made.

“We hope that a finished package will be available from the autumn of 2013,” says VN Quality Assurance Manager, Julie Dugmore. “Meanwhile, some of the improvements we have been working on will feed through to the UK NPL soon.”

The focus is now on sustainability, as the project funding ends next year. Interest in this type of system for supporting clinical learning has been received from European schools not currently involved with the project, and also from South Africa. We have also received interest in such a system for veterinary students, as well as nurses.

Diploma exams

The RCVS Diploma written exams will be held on Tuesday, 9 July 2013 at the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF.

Applications up for veterinary degrees

The application deadline for UK veterinary degrees was 15 October – and figures provided to the RCVS by UCAS show that the number of applicants to the vet schools has once again increased. Over the last five years, the application numbers have gone up by 27%.

Intake year	Number of applicants
2009	2,035
2010	2,320
2011	2,325
2012	2,481
2013	2,580

RCVS in 'less hassle' shock!

Good feedback from the new PDR

Over 700 veterinary surgeons and 470 nurses veterinary nurses are now using the free online continuing professional development (CPD) record system, the Professional Development Record (PDR), which was launched in April as an alternative to the CPD record card. There is a version for vets, and a separate one for VNs.

The PDR makes it quicker and easier for vets and VNs to record CPD, and offers extra features for CPD evaluation and planning, such as space to upload and store case notes or course presentations. A bar running across the top of each screen turns from red to green when the RCVS minimum hours requirement has been met.

The main summary page of both PDRs is the only part that we can look at without asking a vet or VN's permission (other than in very rare and exceptional circumstances, such as a criminal enquiry, when we may override the privacy permissions that an individual has set).

The veterinary PDR is linked to a module for new graduates undertaking the Professional Development Phase – to which 374 of this year's cohort have already signed up. Next year, a module will be added for undergraduates to record and reflect on practical and clinical

experience gained at university and on extra-mural work placements. The VN PDR sits alongside the Nursing Progress Log used by students.

Good feedback

The vets and VNs we've spoken to like the new system. Mark Bowen, a British Equine Veterinary Association Council member who teaches equine medicine at Nottingham, was an early convert. He admits that his CPD paperwork used to build up, resulting in "the usual panic to complete the card before an appraisal or Practice Standards Scheme inspection."

He now reports that: "All of this hassle is taken away with the new online system. It's quick and easy to use, allowing you to

record attendance at any number of types of CPD. It is intuitive and it works well." Mark also appreciates that you can access your information anywhere with an internet connection, and can email links to different parts of the PDR to colleagues, if you wish.

Fiona Reid is Head Nurse at A+G Vets, a small animal practice in Falkirk, and a regional coordinator for the British Veterinary Nursing Association. "The VN PDR is great," she says. "There used to be bundles of notes from courses and presentation handouts in our practice's filing cabinet; now I've scanned them all in, together with my course certificates. Those CPD certificates I have from online courses, I've just saved straight to the PDR."

Fiona estimates that it took an hour the first time she used the PDR, as she was recording three years' worth of CPD, and scanning and uploading notes. "But it takes ten seconds now to get into it and to log CPD," she says. "I can access the PDR at home, and in appraisals at work I can just bring up my CPD on the computer screen."

Vets and VNs can try out their respective PDRs by visiting www.rcvs.org.uk and following the links from the homepage.



RVN CPD targets being missed

Audit returns disappointing

The results of the 2012 audit of registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) continuing professional development (CPD) are in – and are decidedly mixed.

The audit took place from July to September, and we received a response from 933 of the 1,090 RVNs whose records we asked to see. Although the vast majority of these had recorded at least 45 hours averaged over the past three years (2009, 2010 and 2011), some 333 nurses had not met our CPD requirements. In fact, 80 RVNs said they had undertaken less than five hours of CPD over the whole three years.

The most frequent reasons RVNs gave for not recording or doing enough CPD were maternity leave and small children, and part-time working. The cost of CPD was also mentioned.

"Veterinary nurses need to undertake CPD so that they keep up to date and remain competent in their roles – clients, their animals and the public depend on competent VNs," says Libby Earle, Head of the VN Department. "The RCVS requirement equates to around two days a year. If an RVN cannot fulfil that, then he or she should consider coming off the Register."

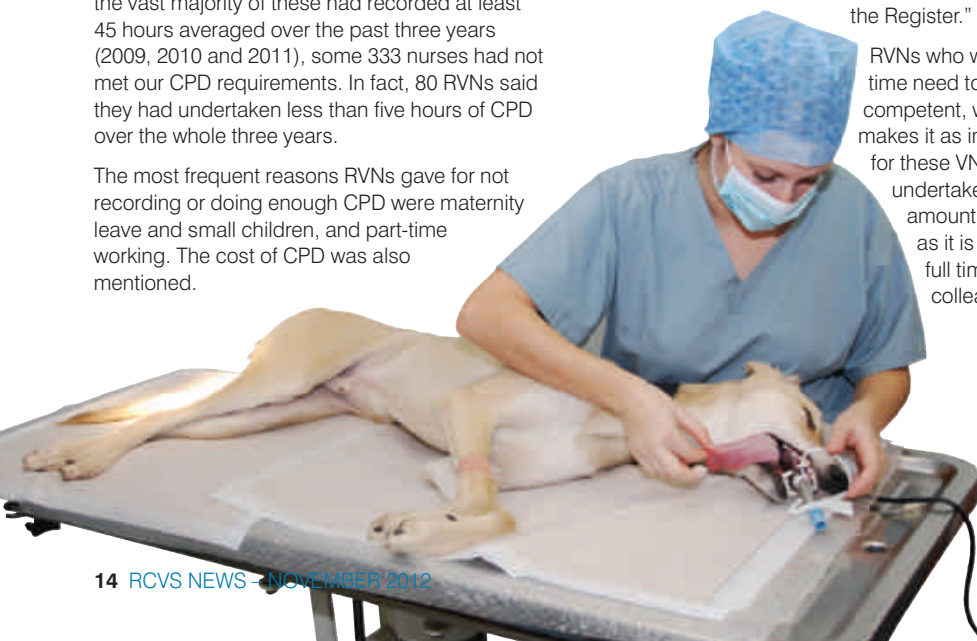
RVNs who work part time need to be fully competent, which makes it as important for these VNs to undertake the full amount of CPD as it is for their full time colleagues.

The RCVS CPD requirement is averaged over three years, allowing RVNs the flexibility to fit hours spent on CPD around periods of maternity leave.

There are lots of CPD options that do not involve expensive courses or study days – the VN Professional Development Record (PDR) lists over twenty types of CPD, only one of which involves attending a lecture. For example, taking part in practice-based study groups, undertaking structured and recorded personal research, or preparing a case presentation, can all count as CPD, may not require time off work, and cost very little.

The majority of RVNs do fulfil their CPD requirements, accepting that CPD obligations are part and parcel of a modern profession. VN Council will consider possible action against the minority who do not.

For ideas and help with planning and recording CPD, VNs can sign up for the free VN PDR at www.rcvs.org.uk/education/cpd-for-vns (and see above for more information).



Once more unto the breach (of the VSA)



How we work with other bodies to protect animal health and welfare

“Why isn't the RCVS doing anything about it?” It seems to be a common call on veterinary fora, at our Question Time meetings and in the veterinary media, often in relation to perceived breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA).

It might be the alleged veterinary treatment of a guinea pig by a lay person, a website illegally selling prescription-only medicines or a non-veterinary surgeon carrying out complementary therapy. You name it, people think it's down to us (and your retention fee money) to sort out. But is it?

Our statutory duty is to maintain the Register of Members – that is, to decide who joins the list, how they stay on it, and when someone ought to be removed from it. The Act is unusual in modern regulatory terms in that it protects both an area of work – veterinary surgery – and also the title ‘veterinary surgeon’.

Strictly speaking, if someone is engaged in veterinary surgery and they are not a veterinary surgeon on our Register, or they are holding themselves out to be a veterinary surgeon and are not registered, this does not fall under our jurisdiction: our control is only over those on the Register.

“We spend a great deal of time assisting other authorities bringing criminals in the veterinary sphere to account.”

However, to put it this simply gives the wrong impression of our activities. Each year our Professional Conduct Department is actively engaged with approximately 25 cases where it is believed that the VSA has been breached, or there has been the illegal import of veterinary medicines, and are working with the appropriate authorities – which may include the police, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Trading Standards, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Health and Safety, the British Horseracing Authority or the RSPCA.

We are not the lead prosecutor in these cases, but, in the interests of animal health and welfare, and of maintaining confidence in the veterinary profession, we will work with the appropriate bodies by providing advice on what may or may not constitute veterinary practice, assisting with raids or interviews, or acting as witnesses.

In our November 2011 issue we described several cases where we had assisted in the prosecution of people holding themselves out to be veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses. But in other cases

the individual makes no such use of the title, they simply carry out illegal acts of veterinary surgery on the animals of the unsuspecting public. Another common example is the illegal sale of prescription-only medicines – often over the internet. Sometimes the case arises out of a call made to us, sometimes the police or other authority contacts the College for advice regarding a case that has come to them.

Ongoing investigations include two into alleged bogus vets diagnosing, supplying medicines for animals, treating, injecting, carrying out euthanasia and castration, and issuing fraudulent prescriptions. We are also investigating a person purporting to be a veterinary homeopath, and have recently investigated and liaised with the police regarding bogus veterinary websites and internet crime.

“As with any criminal investigation, matters can only proceed on the basis of hard evidence.”

Of course, as in any criminal field, some cases are successfully brought to account and others not: the box shows the outcomes of some recent cases.

The contribution of the RCVS in assisting with these cases can be vital, says Cliff Knowles, Defra Investigation Officer, who has worked with the RCVS team over several cases: “My working with Mike Hepper at the RCVS has assisted and developed sufficient information to allow successful prosecutions and formal adult cautions to be administered. The evidence supplied by the RCVS for investigations within Defra Investigation Services (DIS) at the beginning of enquiries has been essential to ensure that enquiries are targeted. The phrase ‘joined up Government’ springs to mind, and these examples show the importance of the RCVS and DIS working closely together.”

“Although it's our work with veterinary surgeons through the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees that is well known, we spend a great deal of time assisting other authorities bringing criminals in the veterinary sphere to account,” adds Mike Hepper, RCVS Senior Case Manager. “It's not only in the interests of animal health and welfare, but also protects the reputation and standing of the veterinary profession.”

As with any criminal investigation, matters can only proceed on the basis of hard evidence, though. Much of the perceived frustration with the RCVS ‘not doing anything’ is in cases where there is nothing but hearsay to support an allegation.

Successful outcomes under the VSA, Veterinary Medicines Regulations or Fraud Act have resulted in:

- Two years' conditional discharge and costs of over £2,000 for illegal possession of veterinary medicines
- Two bogus websites reported and closed down
- Fine of £240 for false representation
- 18 months' imprisonment for breaches of the VSA
- Six months' imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, and 150 hours community service, for breach of VSA
- Two-year supervision order for breaches of the VSA
- 12 months' imprisonment for illegally importing veterinary medicines
- Fine of £600 and £2,000 costs for using the internet to provide diagnoses for animals and humans
- Various references regarding the diagnosing of animals by non-vets required to be removed from websites
- 12 months' conditional discharge for fraud and breach of VSA
- Six-month sentence, suspended for two years, 200 hours community service, £1,000 compensation and five-year ban from owning and caring for animals for fraud, breaches of VSA and cruelty
- Eight-month sentence, suspended for two years, 180 hours' compulsory unpaid work and a 12-month community order for false representation as a qualified veterinary nurse, and theft
- Nine-month supervision order for forging prescriptions
- There have been a number of police and Trading Standards cautions issued for various offences

In order to progress a case it is vital that sound evidence is provided, together with a name or clear identification of the individual.

If you are concerned that someone is in breach of the VSA, please contact us on profcon@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0789.

When you are hiring a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse, always check that they are properly registered or listed. This can be done online at <http://findavet.rcvs.org.uk/check-the-registers>. Even if a third party, such as a past employer, referee or locum agency, has advised that the individual is properly registered, please double-check.

Make your CPD count at the London Vet Show

See PDR demo

If you're heading to the London Vet Show, 15-16 November at Olympia, come and visit the RCVS on stand number H92.

As well as providing advice and information, we will be giving out free calculators – perfect for adding up all those CPD hours – and showing you how to record what you've learnt on the new online Professional Development Record (www.rcvs-pdr.org.uk or www.vnpdr.org.uk).

To start you off, why not attend one of the following RCVS sessions, while at the show.

Thursday 15 November

12.45–13.35: Help! I've had an official complaint. What do I do next? – Gordon Hockey
13.50–14.40: Learning doesn't stop at University PDP, CPD and postgraduate qualifications – Stephen May

Friday 16 November

12.30–13.30 Navigating a foreign land: working in the UK as an overseas graduate - Jacqui Molyneux



School days again

Officer team supports VDS recent graduate events

The Officer team has been back to school this term... attending the Veterinary Defence Society graduate reunions at each of the seven UK veterinary schools – and also in Dublin.

These valuable annual events invite those who have been out in practice for 15 months or so to return to his or her alma mater for a communications-focused CPD event.



Bev Dean, one of the VDS role players

Through a mixture of actor-led role-playing (which, according to Vice-President Jerry Davies, "puts mainstream TV actors to shame!") and interactive sessions, recent graduates are invited to explore the challenges they have faced when putting their undergraduate communications training into practice, and learn how to tackle these issues.

The events, which have been running for several years, are well regarded. "For those vets in practice who are worried about being sued or struck off, having a friendly face from the RCVS at these events helps them realise that we are human, and also enables us to directly answer questions with the facts rather than delegates relying on hearsay," says President Jacqui Molyneux.

"These seminars are very much a two-way street," adds Vice-President Neil Smith. "I hope the participants leave the day feeling more confident; not just because they have learnt something from the excellent role-player scenarios, but because they also realise that there is a wide range of support and information available from the very many organisations who contribute to these events."

Next year, the President and Registrar will continue the academic theme by visiting each of the veterinary schools again, this time to talk to undergraduates about the role of the College, in particular the Professional Development Phase and the complaints process.

Regional Question Time – coming to a venue near you?

Your opportunity to quiz the Officers

On 19 September, new Chief Executive Nick Stace joined members of the Officer team for the first of three Regional Question Time meetings to be held during Jacqui Molyneux's year as President.

A group of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other members of the profession attended the meeting, held at the Erskine Bridge Hotel, near Glasgow. A number of topics was discussed, including the use of social media to better engage with the profession, VN training and different routes to qualification, how to encourage more members to vote in Council and VN Council elections and the new online CPD recording system, the Professional Development Record.

Further Regional Question Time meetings will be held near Oxford on Wednesday, 13 February and Durham on Wednesday, 15 May 2013. All veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses living in the area will receive a personal invitation in the post, and the meetings will also be advertised online and in the veterinary press.

Come to us

If you're unable to attend one of these meetings, but would like to find out more about the RCVS and what we do for the profession, why not attend one of our Meet the RCVS Days?

Meet the RCVS Days are held at our office in London, and are open to all those involved in the profession. They are a great opportunity to see first-hand the work that the RCVS does, meet members of the Officer Team, Senior Team and staff, put faces to names and ask any questions you may have. Refreshments are provided and reasonable travel expenses are paid.

A special Meet the RCVS Day for prospective election candidates will be held on 15 January 2013, and a further event for general attendance will be announced in due course. If you would like to register your interest, please send your name and contact details to Fiona Harcourt (f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk).



Soap vet in College sights

We assist Emmerdale with their enquiries

The most-read articles in our RCVS e-News relate to disciplinary hearings. We suspect there's a bit of 'there but for the grace of god' about readers' interest, which is understandable. So how did those of you who are Emmerdale fans react when resident vet Paddy Kirk received the 'dreaded letter' from the RCVS during September?

We have been working with the Emmerdale team to make the storyline, which revolves around

Paddy's conviction for common assault on a policeman, as realistic as possible.

There may not be many vets and VNs home from work in time to watch, but with an average of 6.5million people tuning into each episode, if the storyline helps the public better understand the role of the College, and what we do to ensure high standards within the profession, then that's no bad thing.



Record-makers at BVNA Congress

Lots of interest in online CPD record

Over 300 veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and other practice staff entered our competition while visiting the RCVS stand at BVNA Congress in October.

We were there to promote our new online CPD recording system, the Professional Development Record (PDR), and our competition continued the theme with a series of questions about record-makers, and breakers. The lucky winner of a £50 iTunes voucher (well, it would have been record tokens in the old days...) was Annie Cartwright RVN, from the Dogs Trust in Loughborough.

Visitors to the stand could view a demo of the new PDR, the online tool that makes planning, recording and evaluating CDP much easier, and pick up a free calculator to remind them of the link: www.vnpdr.org.uk. Feedback was good, and nearly 100 VNs have since signed up.

Annie commented: "I enjoyed Congress, and the free calculator has made totting up the CPD hours earned easier!"

Annie correctly answered three questions about record-makers; if you had a go and are burning to know the answers, here they are:

1. Usain Bolt set a new Olympic record for the 100 metres on 5 August 2012, with a time of 9.63 seconds
2. A registered veterinary nurse is expected to complete and record a minimum of 45 hours of CPD over a three-year period
3. The world's tallest living dog is a Great Dane called Giant George, who measures 1.092m tall.



Slice of history

VN Council celebrates first decade



Chairman Kathy Kissick cuts the cake as VN Council celebrated its tenth anniversary after its meeting in October. The foundation of the VNC marked the first occasion that veterinary nurses could be elected to an RCVS body charged with regulating and developing the veterinary nursing profession.

"The VNC has achieved outstanding work to initiate and advance the veterinary nurse's role as a professional and accountable member of the veterinary team," says Kathy. "This has been a significant journey over a relatively short period of time and is all credit to the VNC over the past 10 years. The most satisfying element of this progress for the VNC, both past and present, is the positive impact that a veterinary team that includes professional nursing input will have on animal welfare."

VPMA/SPVS Congress

We will be at the joint VPMA/SPVS Congress at Heythrop Park in Oxfordshire, on 24-26 January – please visit our stand, and bring your questions. Plus join Pam Mosedale to find out more about Clinical Governance, at 1.15-2pm on Friday 25 January.

SPVS: any questions?

New column responds to queries

Sharp-eyed Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) members may have noticed that we have a new Q&A column in *SPVS Journal*. SPVS members with questions for the column should send them to the *Journal*, and we'll answer as many as we can (office@spvs.org.uk).

The column is, of course, in addition to the usual ways of communicating with us – phone, email, letter, fax or tweet.



Image of petri dishes with cultures of bacteria grown on agar jelly is from *INVISIBLE WORLDS* – 2012 © Copyright M J Richardson and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons Licence Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic

A problem shared? AMR under the

Symposium reviews evidence base under 'One medicine, one problem?' theme



Joint organisers, Professor The Lord Trees and Dr Bharat Patel

In partnership with the Royal College of Pathologists and the Royal College of Physicians, and in association the Health Protection Agency (HPA), we held a one-day symposium on 2 October in London, to debate the priorities, opportunities and challenges in tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in human and veterinary medicine, under the theme: 'One medicine, one problem?' RCVS Research Officer, Dr Rita Jorge, reports on the event.

The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed a revolution in medical care, with the introduction of antibiotics. These 'wonder drugs' are now routinely used to treat both mild and life-threatening illnesses, and healthcare professionals, governments and the public have become increasingly reliant on them. Unfortunately, antimicrobial resistance, a phenomenon whereby micro-organisms that were previously sensitive to antibiotics become able to withstand attack, means these conventional treatments become ineffective. This results in prolonged illnesses and greater risk of death for human and animal patients, and threatens the return to a pre-antibiotic era without (or only with very expensive) treatments for common infections, and where procedures such as organ transplantation, cancer chemotherapy and major surgery are compromised¹.

The issues were set out by the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer and RCVS Council member Nigel Gibbens, who highlighted the need to build a strong evidence base, and not to allow speculation or opinion to overshadow the scientific research. Professor David Walker (on behalf of the Chief Medical Officer, Dame Sally Davies) and Professor David Heymann from the Health Protection Agency explained the interdisciplinary nature of the issue, which implies that responsibility for tackling AMR is shared between veterinary and human medicine.

Some bacteria are known to be limited to animals and some to humans, whereas others may be transmitted from animals to humans (and vice versa). Although delegates felt that the clinical consequences of antimicrobial resistance in purely animal infections are still limited, the same cannot be said for resistant bacteria affecting solely humans, such as human tuberculosis. The acquisition, evolution and transmission of antimicrobial-resistant zoonotic bacteria was debated as, once resistance is acquired, resistant strains can pass from animals to humans (for example, *Staphylococcus aureus*; *E. coli* O157) or vice versa (for example, some MRSA in pets).

Evolution of resistance

Dr Stephen Gillespie, from the University of St Andrews, explained the four main processes involved in the evolution of resistance: acquisition, adaptation, transmission among bacteria, and transmission in the community. Once resistance is established in a new species or strain, the resistance determinant can then be distributed into other species, following certain epidemiological and sociological patterns. Resistance is cumulative and irreversible, and consequently, in the absence of selection pressure, resistant strains will persist and will then be disseminated by global movement, usually by people. For example, the New Delhi clone of metallo-beta-lactamase was also found in Birmingham, where there is a large

presence of population with links to India. This illustrates how the 'biology of human interaction' complicates the considerations of healthcare professionals and policy experts tackling antimicrobial resistance. Any national strategy to tackle antimicrobial resistance in human and veterinary populations needs also to consider measures to reduce, identify (through surveillance) and deal with problems that are imported.

"To reduce the possibility of AMR emergence, it is critical that antibiotics are prescribed and used correctly."

Restrictions

Widespread antibiotic drug use is an important cause of the increased prevalence of antibiotic resistance genes. Voluntary decreases in antibiotic usage by hospitals can be achieved without detriment to health, as shown by the recent surveys from the Scottish NHS, presented by Professor Peter Davey from the University of Dundee. Similarly, Denmark has been successful in eliminating the use of fluoroquinolones in the poultry and pig industries without detriment to poultry or pig productivity. Unfortunately, as was shown by Professor Frank Aarestrup, from the Technical University of Denmark, this significant achievement came simultaneously with an increase in use of the same antibacterial for humans, and an increase in AMR.

When considering restrictions in veterinary use, delegates argued there is a need to take account of the differences that exist between companion animals and livestock. Although companion animals do have a role to play in the transmission of antimicrobial resistance, the threat they present



Report to Council November 2012

PI Committee Chairman Jill Nute

Since the last Report to Council there have been four Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings (June, July, September and October), during which time 43 new complaints have been considered.

Of these, five were closed; 11 were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon (including three complaints closed with strong advice); three were held open; five were referred to the veterinary investigators for visits and interviews (including one potential health case); nine were referred to the Professional Conduct Department for further investigations; eight were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; and, two were referred to the Senior Case Manager to liaise with police and assist with investigations (the cases involved one of tail docking by an unqualified practice employee and one of a veterinary surgeon practising whilst not registered).

The PIC is investigating 53 ongoing complaints, including those referred to solicitors, visits and health cases.

Health Protocol

Two new complaints against veterinary surgeons are being investigated under the RCVS Health Protocol and, in one case, the Senior Case Manager is liaising with the police. In addition, four veterinary surgeons are being considered under the Health Protocol and have agreed to undergo a medical assessment by the Medical Examiner. In total, nine veterinary surgeons are now being monitored / considered under this protocol.

Performance Protocol

The PIC is currently considering one case under the RCVS Performance Protocol. Undertakings have been drafted and sent to the veterinary surgeon and the PIC is awaiting the veterinary surgeon's response.

RCVS Registration

The Professional Conduct Department, with the assistance of the RCVS Registration Department, continues to carry out checks / investigates / reviews the registration status of veterinary surgeons qualified overseas who are the subject of complaints. The checks carried out are to ensure that the respondent veterinary surgeon is entitled to practise veterinary medicine in the United Kingdom and that their names are appropriately registered with the RCVS.

The Senior Case Manager and Deputy Head of the RCVS Registration Department have carried out a number of investigations / checks related to veterinary surgeons requesting registration who have been subject to or pending disciplinary proceedings in another jurisdiction. The Senior Case Manager liaises with other professional regulatory authorities in order to establish the applicant's suitability for RCVS registration. As a result of the checks carried out, one applicant who currently practises overseas and who has come to RCVS attention previously will be offered an interview by the Head of Legal Services / Registrar and Senior Case Manager.

Obtaining informed consent for Cascade use of medicines

We have received certain complaints that veterinary surgeons have not sought consent for the Cascade use of medicines, ie where a product is used in a different species, or when it is used in the authorised target species but for a different condition (which may or may not require a different dose), to that specified on the Summary of Product Characteristics.

The profession is reminded that when supplying medicinal products under the Cascade, the *Code of Professional Conduct* (supporting guidance, chapter 4, paragraph 4.17) advises that client consent is obtained in writing, after they have been given a clear indication of the potential side-effects.

spotlight

to the safety of the food chain is smaller, compared to livestock, and their health and welfare could be seriously jeopardised if limits were imposed on what veterinary surgeons may prescribe.

It was also emphasised that, to reduce the possibility of AMR emergence, it is critical that antibiotics are prescribed and used correctly, with dosages adjusted to the patients' weights (human and animal) and treatment durations observed. Electronic prescribing systems for the veterinary and human fields were also discussed and their benefits highlighted, including, for example, from accurately monitoring large amounts of data which could be shared and interpreted at global level.

Discussion also included what strategies can be developed to make the most of the antibiotics we have today, and what policies can be adopted to find alternatives to the medicines we have, for example, in bringing new antibiotics to market. A near-future scenario was described, where the responsible use of antibiotics could be fostered by providing GPs and veterinary surgeons with rapid bedside/penside diagnostic tools that can distinguish viral and bacterial infections to determine their antibiotic sensitivity.

Collaborative spirit

Participants described the symposium as a "thought-provoking day" with "stimulating, emotive, yet considered discussions." Professor The Lord Trees, who co-organised the event with Dr Bharat Patel of the Royal College of Pathologists/HPA, said it had "shed more light than heat" and that addressing the issue in such a collaborative spirit between professions should be celebrated and fostered for the future.

Several of the presentations from the event can be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk.

¹www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs194/en.

The full report is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/pic.

Mr Gordon Lonsdale

Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register

DC decision: application granted

Registration status: name restored to the Register on 18 September 2012

On 12 September, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) accepted an application for restoration to the RCVS Register by Gordon Lonsdale, who had been struck off in March 2004 for illegally delegating acts of veterinary surgery to insufficiently qualified members of his practice staff.

At the initial Inquiry, Mr Lonsdale, who formerly worked as a sole practitioner in Shropshire, had admitted three separate charges of serious professional misconduct. These included allegations that he had instructed nurses and support staff to undertake dental extractions, dog and cat castrations, the removal of tumours or masses, the induction and maintenance of anaesthesia, lancing abscesses and suturing wounds.

At the hearing, the onus was on Mr Lonsdale to satisfy the DC that he was fit to be restored to the Register, not least in view of his former health

problems and the eight-year period for which he had been off the Register.

He provided the DC with evidence of undertaking continuing professional development, including 130 hours of online courses and seven weeks of seeing practice, letters of endorsement from former clients and testimonials from friends and former colleagues.

“The DC found Mr Lonsdale to be an honest and frank witness who had made a credible attempt to refresh his small animal practice knowledge.”

The DC accepted Mr Lonsdale's evidence that he had successfully addressed his alcoholism, which it recognised as being a contributory factor to his poor decision-making in an isolated working environment. He assured the DC of his intention that, should his application be successful, he intended to work only in a multi-handed, rather than single-handed, practice in future.

The DC found him to be an honest and frank witness who had made a credible attempt to refresh his small animal practice knowledge; it was satisfied that he accepted the findings of the original hearing and that he had put the welfare of animals at risk, and it noted his expression of remorse.

In considering Mr Lonsdale's application, the DC made a number of recommendations, including that he should register for the RCVS Professional Development Phase, undertake certain parts of the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, restrict himself to his recognised areas of competence, investigate communication courses run by the Veterinary Defence Society and continue with the mentoring programme provided by the Veterinary Surgeons Health Support Programme.

Mr Lonsdale stated that he was willing to follow all of these recommendations.

Professor Peter Lees, who chaired and spoke on behalf of the DC, concluded: “In these circumstances, we do not consider that any further period of erasure would be of benefit either to the public or the veterinary profession. Therefore, we direct the Registrar to restore Mr Lonsdale's name to the Register.”

Mr William Bamber Cartmell

Inquiry concerning: “serious allegations” relating to expert evidence, certification, clinical examination of a horse for a prospective purchaser and treatment of a dog

DC decision: charges adjourned on basis of undertakings to leave Register permanently

Registration status: name removed from Register on 11 September 2012

On 11 September, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) agreed to adjourn multiple charges against William Bamber Cartmell – a Hampshire-based veterinary surgeon who first registered in 1950 – following his undertakings firstly to request removal from the RCVS Register and secondly never apply to be restored to it.

At the hearing, Mr Cartmell of Wickham, near Fareham, was due to face seven heads of charge containing “serious allegations” relating to his provision of expert evidence in a case involving the RSPCA; his certification, following clinical examination, of the health of two horses for a prospective purchaser; and, his clinical competence during treatment of a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel called Milly.

However, before the Committee considered any of the facts behind these charges – all of which Mr Cartmell denied – the College submitted an

application suggesting that they should be adjourned, providing that Mr Cartmell agreed to the three undertakings (the third being not to act as an expert witness in litigation in future).

The College also suggested that, should Mr Cartmell subsequently apply to be restored to the Register, the Committee should resume its consideration of the charges, along with his breach of the undertakings.

“We are satisfied that the undertakings offered by the Respondent protect the welfare of animals and uphold the reputation of the profession.”

The Committee was advised that none of the complainants in the case – which could have exceeded four weeks and incurred considerable costs – dissented from the proposed course of action.

It also heard that Mr Cartmell had recently retired from his practice, which was now closed, and his clients dispersed to other practices. In over 60 years of practising, there had been no adverse disciplinary findings against him.

Speaking on behalf of the Disciplinary Committee, its Chairman, Professor Peter Lees, said: “Having carefully considered the matters put before us, we have concluded that it would not be in the public interest to refuse the College's application and proceed with this case.

“We are satisfied that the undertakings offered by the Respondent protect the welfare of animals and uphold the reputation of the profession. [These undertakings also] go beyond any sanction that this Committee could impose at the conclusion of a contested hearing where any of the heads of charge were found proven.

“We do not consider that it would be proportionate for either party to incur the substantial costs of a contested hearing. We have also paid particular regard to the age of the Respondent and to his length of service without any adverse findings having been made against him.”



Dr Awuah Ohene-Gyan

Inquiry concerning: convictions under the Animal Welfare Act

DC decision: remove name from Register

Registration status: has until 14 November 2012 to appeal decision, otherwise name to be removed from Register on 15 November

On 16 October, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that the name of Dr Awuah Ohene-Gyan – a Berkshire-based veterinary surgeon previously convicted of four offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 – should be removed from the RCVS Register.

Dr Ohene-Gyan was convicted at Reading Magistrates Court on 13 June 2012 of offences involving causing unnecessary suffering to three dogs and a cat that he had treated whilst working at Woosehill Vets, Wokingham, between February and October 2011. These offences related to failing to provide adequate or appropriate veterinary care or treatment, or failure to investigate and address an animal's poor condition, and he was sentenced to 21 weeks' imprisonment concurrently for each one.

Dr Ohene-Gyan did not attend the one-day DC hearing and was not represented, although College records showed that he was aware of the dates of the hearing, and had had opportunity to apply for an adjournment. In the absence of any known good reason for Dr Ohene-Gyan's non-

attendance, the DC concluded that it was in the interests of justice that the hearing go ahead.

In considering whether the Respondent's convictions made him unfit to practise as a veterinary surgeon, the DC depended on the findings of the District Judge and the remarks she had made when sentencing.

“The Respondent's actions, motivated by financial gain, caused serious actual injury to the four animals over a prolonged period of time.”

“I found as a matter of fact that some of your actions were taken simply to run up a bill for the owners of pets,” she had said, adding: “You were in a position of special responsibility, trusted by the owners of the animals to treat them appropriately and to alleviate their suffering. You ignored advice from staff. Several animals were affected by your cruel disregard of their welfare. Some of the cruelty arose due to your incompetence. You have demonstrated that you are not fit to be trusted with the care of animals.”

The DC Chairman, Professor Peter Lees, speaking on behalf of the Committee, said: “The Respondent's actions, motivated by financial gain, caused serious actual injury to the four animals over a prolonged period of time. Clients are entitled to expect that veterinary surgeons will treat animals in their care humanely and with respect,

and make animal welfare their first priority. The Committee considers that the care described in the District Judge's findings demonstrated a total disregard for the professional responsibilities of a veterinary surgeon.”

The DC concluded that the removal of Dr Ohene-Gyan's name from the Register was the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case in order to protect the welfare of animals, maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper standards of conduct, and it directed the Registrar to do so.



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

RVN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE



Report to Council November 2012

RVN PI Committee Chairman Lynne Hill

Since the last Report to Council there have been two face-to-face meetings of the Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC), in July and September, during which time one new complaint has been considered.

The RVN PIC is investigating three ongoing complaints. One complaint is held open and two complaints have been referred to the College's Disciplinary Committee; both complaints are waiting to be listed.

Between 8 May 2012 and 19 September there have been six new complaints received against RVNs. Of these, two were closed at the assessment stage (stage one of the complaints investigation process); three are being investigated (the Senior Case Manager is liaising with the police on one complaint); and, one was referred to RVN PIC for consideration.

General advice to the profession

The Committee recently considered a complaint against a registered veterinary nurse where the RVN received a telephone call regarding an injured badger. The RVN advised the caller to take the animal to the RSPCA because the practice did not provide emergency services for wildlife. As a result of the complaint, the practice reiterated its wildlife policy to all members of staff to make sure it provided a service in line with its obligation as set out in the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*.

The veterinary nursing profession must be mindful that the obligation under the *Code* to take steps to provide 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief to animals extends equally to wildlife.

The full report is available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Jubilee genome gathering

New technologies shape future of veterinary science

Vets from around the UK met leading experts in gene sequencing, policy makers and animal charities this June at a Trust-organised conference about developments in gene-sequencing technologies. Although such innovations have largely been driven by demand in human medicine, they are becoming more widely and cheaply available in veterinary medicine – which has real implications for veterinary surgeons in academia and in practice.

The conference also aimed to disseminate more widely some outcomes of the RCVS Charitable Trust Golden Jubilee project, which granted £250,000 to decode the sequences of 50 pathogenic genomes – one for each of the 50 years of the Trust.

This project increased collaborations between veterinary surgeons in clinics and in research institutions around the UK, and offered scope for all those working in animal infection to gain high quality research experience.

“These technologies will undoubtedly help shape the future of veterinary science in areas from breeding to clinical diagnosis and treatment,” says Dr Alan Radford (pictured), senior lecturer in the Department of Infection Biology at the University of Liverpool, who led the Golden Jubilee project and chaired the conference. “Soon, it will cost only around £1,000 to sequence mammalian genomes, and we will more quickly be able to discover new potential pathogens, such as the Schmallenberg virus. By uncovering sequences from the rumen of cattle and sheep, we may even be able to help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

Universities and institutes applied to have one or more pathogens sequenced as part of the project, and four of these genomes featured among the presentations at the conference. These included: the bacteria responsible for Feline haemoplasmosis, a common infectious disease in cats; the bacteria *Streptococcus zooepidemicus*, which in 2010 affected almost the entire equine population of Iceland; and the Wolbachia bacteria, which is vital to the *Onchocerca volvulus* worm that causes River Blindness, a disease affecting 37 million people in sub-Saharan Africa. A progress update on sequencing African swine fever was also given.

For more information, including copies of the conference presentations, visit

<http://trust.rcvs.org.uk/grants-and-collaborations/recent-activities>.

Free copies of the research paper *Analysis of Gene Expression from the Wolbachia Genome of a Filarial Nematode Supports Both Metabolic and Defensive Roles within the Symbiosis in Genome Research*; a bibliography of papers resulting from the Golden Jubilee research; and, the conference presentations, can be downloaded via <http://trust.rcvs.org.uk/grants-and-collaborations/recent-activities>.



Night at the museum

Trust sets challenges for visitors

Veterinary science was brought to life for visitors at the Natural History Museum’s ‘Science Uncovered’ festival, thanks to the Trust and some intrepid students from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC).

Trust staff and RVC students manned a ‘Vet Station,’ where adults and children could try out some veterinary-related challenges. A core skills training machine and the chance to bandage a (model) dog’s paw, were particularly popular, as were games involving feeding a moving model cat through an oesophageal tube, and ‘Brainiest Beast,’ which required players to rank animals in order of intelligence.

Tweeting added to the evening’s excitement, particularly when the Trust got a special mention from *The Times Education Supplement* (Science): “Just met some lovely people from @RCVSTrust who do some great work with and for vets!”



The sceptical vet: eminence or evidence?

Trust-organised symposium explores EBVM

The first ever symposium on evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) in Britain was hosted by the RCVS Charitable Trust in London on 30 October 2012. The symposium aimed to provide information on EBVM (namely its principles and the resources already available), to discuss lessons learned from the evidence-based movement in human medicine and to encourage the setting of a forward-looking strategy to implement EBVM practices across the veterinary profession.

More than 160 delegates, representing veterinary practice, academia, industry, veterinary publishing and veterinary policy organisations, attended the event. Delegates stated that the “broad applicability”, “topical subject”, “diversity of views” and “range of speaker experiences” contributed to the success of the event.

The basic tenets of EBVM were presented by Dr Sally Everitt, BSAVA Scientific Policy Officer, who explained that, “evidence-based veterinary medicine is the use of best relevant evidence, in conjunction with clinical expertise, to make the best possible decision about a veterinary patient. In addition, the circumstances of each patient, and the circumstances and values of the owner/carer, must also be considered when making an evidence-based decision”.

“Veterinary practices must ensure that there is a framework to enable the practice to deliver good quality care.”

Dr Brennen McKenzie, President of the Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine Association (EBVMA) and author of the popular blog SkeptVet gave a compelling overview of the movement in the US, and shared the benefits that the EBVM approach has brought to his small animal practice. In his view, at times, veterinary medicine can overuse the sentence “in my experience”, which can prove somewhat dangerous. This phrase implies the use of uncontrolled individual observation, tradition and extrapolation from basic principles, which – while informative and important – cannot contain the wealth and depth of scientific research evidence (which of course needs to be integrated with experience, expertise, resources, client values and circumstances).

Measures to strengthen the evidence-base in veterinary medicine can be addressed by projects that aim to produce reporting guidelines for randomised control trials for farm animals (REFLECT – Reporting Guidelines for Randomised Control Trials) and for small animals (CARES – Companion Animals Reporting Expectations and Standards).



Further to that, the creation of a centralised structure to define publication standards and to support practitioners by providing them with systematic reviews and critically-appraised topics was also raised as a possible measure to address that gap in the field at the moment.

Human medicine has often been the model for veterinary medicine. Evidence shows that through training in evidence-based medicine, medical doctors are not only gaining knowledge but also positively affecting their working environments and engaging in stimulating discussions that challenge the status quo, ultimately affecting the quality of healthcare provided to their patients.

Veterinary surgeons can use EBVM to obtain better information (since controlled research generates most reliable knowledge) which, in turn, can lead to better outcomes and to meaningful client choice (since informed consent is not possible without accurate information and full disclosure).

Clinical audit

Since the launch of the Practice Standards Scheme in 2005, there has been a requirement for practice teams to have systems to monitor and discuss the clinical outcome of cases. The *Codes of Professional Conduct* for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses now include the requirement that clinical governance should form part of their professional activities. This ultimately means that veterinary practices must ensure that there is a framework to enable the practice to deliver good quality care. Practices which are accredited under the Practice Standards Scheme, for example, “must have a system in place for monitoring and discussing the clinical outcome of cases and for acting on the results”.

All these aspects lead indirectly to an embedded exercise of evidence-based veterinary medicine. Either proactively (by posing adequate clinical questions, searching the literature, critically appraising it and applying it in care), or reactively (for example, by measuring how well a particular procedure achieves the desired outcome),

practices can take ownership of the EBVM movement and voluntarily commit to the guidelines set by the RCVS.

Suggestions were made that organisations such as the RCVS Charitable Trust could have a vital role to play in providing practitioners with access to literature but also in supporting the production of systematic reviews and critically-appraised topics. The Trust’s is the only library open to practitioners that provides access to the majority of veterinary literature. The team provides support to enable effective use of its resources. Some delegates mentioned that indeed the service provided by the RCVS Trust Library is a “worthwhile [resource]” that can bring about “benefit for all the staff of [their] practice” and that therefore “should be available for all the staff in [their] team”.

Support and promotion

Other useful resources were highlighted, including the University of Nottingham’s “Best BETs for Vets” website (<http://bestbetsforvets.org/>) which will launch in 2013 (BET is a ‘Best Evidence Topic’), and the Critically Appraised Topics (CAT) Wiki pages, which are available through the EBVMA website, along with an annual competition being awarded to students for the best CAT submitted. The success of these initiatives can serve as a model framework for other organisations interested in supporting and promoting the EBVM movement.

Delegates, a large part of whom were veterinary surgeons in practice, were urged to inform and educate colleagues, improve the evidence base and to create and contribute to EBVM tools, but most of all to make evidence useful, exciting and accessible. In fact, it was stressed by all speakers that EBVM starts and finishes in veterinary practice. Their contributions are invaluable and cannot be replaced by any other group of professionals involved in veterinary practice.

A full description of the aims, expected outcomes and copies of the presentations are available on the Trust website (<http://trust.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 First place Stace?

New CEO aims to make the RCVS a 'first-rate regulator'.

2 More lays about

VN Council to increase lay membership.

Stop the presses

Hard copy Register only available on request from now on.

Butler's best

Elizabeth Butler to head up new Audit & Risk Committee.

3 New degrees of separation

LRO goes before Parliament to separate DC and PIC from Council.

Election fever

Never mind Obamney – get your nominations in for RCVS and VN Councils elections.

4 Badge of honour

Nearly one-in-three VNs are wearing new badge – have you got yours?

Praise anatomy?

Nominate your favourite veterinary anatomist for the 2013 RCVS Share Jones Lecture.

Orpet reports it

VN LWP Chairman comments on VN statutory regulation developments.

5 Sound Board

Council gives general approval for new RCVS Board terms of reference.

Direct approach

Our complaint to ASA helps persuade Direct Line to remove misleading advert.

6 Box for SPANA

Donkey charity to receive President's £3,000 Christmas donation.

Overworked and over here?

Essential CPD course to help overseas vets working in the UK.

7 Top dog

Military working dog Theo receives posthumous award.

24-hour twitter people

Tweetathon planned to promote out-of-hours vet cover.

8 PSS easy?

Send us your feedback on the Practice Standards Scheme.

Pam's Pam's Pam's Pam's...

...free PSS webinars are well worth choosing from the Webinar Vet menu.

9 Five-year review

Practice Standards Group seeks feedback on future structure of PSS.

Views from the top

New CEO Nick Stace reflects on his first two months.

10 Guidance updates

Changes to guidance on microchips, dew claws, non-vet treatment and euthanasia.

Trimming goat ease?

We clarify legal position on (and difficulty of) disbudding goats.

11 Clocking off

Latest item from our Historical Collection – our 151-year-old mantel clock.

12 Stat's the way to do it

Welcoming successful new Stat Exam candidates.

Advanced Practitioners?

Working Party to consider new status.

13 Surrey status

We hear about the University of Surrey's plans for new vet school.

14 Pretty Damn Remarkable

Our new online PDR has received good feedback – have you tried it yet?

No plaudits from audit

RVN CPD audit reveals disappointing returns.

15 Taking a stand

Just what do we do about breaches of the VSA?

16 The only Show in town

We'll be at the London Vet Show – will you?

17 Getting on your box soap

We've been helping Emmerdale with their veterinary storylines.

18 One medicine, one problem?

A report of our recent antimicrobial resistance joint seminar in London

19 PIC report

Cascade use of medicines? Seek consent.

20 DC hearings

Mr Gordon Lonsdale restored to Register; Mr William Cartmell agrees to adjournment of charges involving "serious allegations" providing he undertakes to remove himself from Register; and, Dr Awuah Ohene-Gyan removed for criminal convictions.

21 Wildlife no different

RVN PIC report emphasises 24/7 cover includes wildlife too.

22 Lovely jubilee

Trust conference discusses gene sequencing and Golden Jubilee project outcomes.

Action vet stations

Trust brings vet science to life at Natural History Museum science festival.

23 Where's your evidence?

Report of Trust symposium on evidence-based veterinary medicine.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2012

15–16 November

Join us at the London Vet Show

27–28 November

Overseas graduate CPD course

20 December

Deadline for comments on PSS review

24–26 December

College closed

31 December

Deadline for VN fees

2013

1 January

College Closed

15 January

Meet the RCVS Day for prospective Council candidates

31 January

Deadline for Council and VN Council nominations

13 February

Regional Question Time: Oxford

7 March

RCVS Council

31 March

Deadline for vet registration renewal

4–7 April

See us at BSAVA Congress



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