

“We want to highlight the huge variety of excellence that exists across all shapes and sizes of veterinary practice and offer a pathway to improvement for aspiring practices.”

Are you ready for launch?

New Practice Standards Scheme launching in November

After more than two years of consultation, discussion and planning, we will be launching the new Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) on 20 November at the London Vet Show.

It's now a little over ten years since the PSS was first rolled out and, in keeping with the original pledge to ensure it was continually updated and improved, this is the second time the Scheme has been overhauled. The main changes, based on feedback from the profession and all the veterinary and veterinary nursing organisations represented on the Practice Standards Group (PSG), will make the Scheme more accessible for those who aren't yet members, and even more rewarding for those who are already accredited. Our overall aim is to get as many of the country's 5,437 practices on board as possible.

“Over 2,911 veterinary practice premises are already RCVS accredited, which is great for a voluntary scheme, but we'd really like to increase this figure,” says Jacqui Molyneux, chair of the PSG. “I hope that the changes and exciting new elements that we've developed will convince more people of the benefits of being in the Scheme and encourage more people to join.”

“We want to highlight the huge variety of excellence that exists across all shapes and sizes of veterinary practice in a way that the general public can understand, and offer a pathway to improvement for aspiring practices.”

Whilst the underlying accreditation requirements have not changed significantly, a new modular structure helps to make the Scheme more flexible and ensure all types of veterinary practice – from ambulatory services to veterinary hospitals – can join. This structure also recognises the contributions of the whole practice team, helping to raise standards across the board.

Once accredited, practices can apply for a range of optional awards that focus on outcomes and behaviours in specific areas. Designated at either 'Good' or 'Outstanding', these awards should help clients understand where a practice excels, and what skills and services are on offer, enabling them to make choices based on their needs and preferences.

We have also recruited and trained a new team of assessors, who will be more focused on listening to practice staff rather than just checking paperwork and equipment, and we've developed an online administration and support system – christened Stanley – to provide document storage, a calendar and a self-assessment tool, which should make the whole accreditation process much quicker and easier to manage.

More details about all these developments are available on page 11, and in our series of 'Countdown to Launch' emails available to read again at www.rcvs.org.uk/pssc Countdown. And if you're heading to the London Vet Show, do join us for our breakfast launch event at 8.30am on Friday 20 November or visit us on stand C50 (details on page 16).

In this issue: English language testing, ADR trial update, CEO overview, VNs and anaesthesia, RCVS and VN Councils nominations, ethical review panel trial, President's Christmas Box charity donation, governance consultation, VN title campaign, Mind Matters initiative, controlled drugs and veterinary medicines, new microchipping guidance, VN registration changes, introducing PSS awards, new Fellowship, Specialist status, Vet Futures report launch, events update, Letter from America, DC reports, new publishing platform for RCVS Knowledge.

VN Council out and about

First meeting outside London

Taking a leaf out of RCVS Council's book, VN Council had its first ever meeting outside of London when it met in Telford in October, ahead of BVNA Congress.

A range of issues was discussed at the meeting including VNs and anaesthesia, English language testing, the Ethical Review Panel trial and VN registration rules.

Also discussed was VN Council's strategic plan, which was developed out of a strategy planning day held in January to focus on the Council's future priorities, including considering what is important to the profession, where it should be in three to five years' time and how to get there.

The Council decided that veterinary nursing as a profession needs to feel more empowered, have a greater clarity of role, recognition and value and be more proactive, with greater equality with other professions. Therefore, the focus of the strategy will be better engagement with veterinary nurses by the RCVS and raising awareness amongst the public to increase recognition of the role and skills of the profession.

VN Council was followed by a very constructive joint VN and BVNA Councils Vet Futures session.



Rewarding leadership in veterinary nursing

Changes to Golden Jubilee Award

From the end of November we will be inviting nominations for the 2016 Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award, which recognises those veterinary nurses who are playing a leadership role within the profession and raising its profile with the public.

The award was launched in 2011 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first veterinary nursing training course. Previous winners include Jean Turner (2011), Sue Badger (2012), Hayley Waters (2014) and Dot Creighton (2015) – pictured. No award was given in 2013.

“All Golden Jubilee Award winners will now be given a speaking platform at the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress.”

This year, however, VN Council has agreed a number of changes to the award. These include restricting it to veterinary nurses only (previously it was open to veterinary surgeons and lay people) and refining the aims of the award so that it is more focused on recognising those individuals who are acting as ambassadors for the profession and taking a leadership role within it.

If this sounds like someone you know, please make sure to nominate them. From the end of November the nomination forms and associated guidance will be available to download from www.rcvs.org.uk/goldenjubilee.

VN Council also decided to make changes to the timings of the award. For 2016 the nomination



Dot Creighton (right) with VN Council Chair Liz Cox

period will run from the end of November 2015 to the end of January 2016, with the award being presented at RCVS Day in July 2016.

The award will then be aligned with the nomination period for our other Honours (such as the RCVS Queen's Medal). This means that the nomination period for the 2017 award will run from July 2016 to September 2016.

Furthermore, all Golden Jubilee Award winners will now be given a speaking platform at the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress, which takes place every October.

If you have any questions about the nomination form, please contact the Veterinary Nursing Department on 020 7202 0788 or vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

End of the advice line

Three-month trial reveals little demand for service

Following a three-month trial of an extended telephone advice line for the profession and the public, we have concluded that there is insufficient demand for such a service.

Running between 5pm and 7pm five evenings a week from June until the end of August, the Advice Line was staffed by a member of our Advice Team to take calls from the profession and the public on professional conduct issues and our guidance on professional responsibilities.

We promoted the trial via our own newsletters and social media channels and through the veterinary press, however, uptake of the service was low, resulting in just 59 calls between 5pm and 7pm, compared to the 2,286 calls received during normal office hours over the same three-month period.

In addition to the low call rate, the queries raised tended to relate to existing concerns or how to raise concerns, rather than advice queries, which subsequently had to be referred to the Professional Conduct Team during normal office hours.



ADR trial: an update

Decision on scheme next year

As a result of our year-long voluntary trial of alternative dispute resolution for the veterinary profession (RCVS News, November 2014), two models for a fully fledged scheme are now being investigated and will be considered by Council in March 2016.

Possibilities include a scheme administered by Ombudsman Services (the independent not-for-profit dispute resolution organisation that has been administering the trial) or a scheme run by an external organisation set up by the RCVS.

From the outset, the aim of the trial was to determine uptake for the scheme from members of both the profession and public, satisfaction with outcomes for both groups, how quickly cases are resolved and the types of cases that are (and aren't) satisfactorily resolved.

Looking at language testing

Defra consultation and Code changes

In July, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a formal six-week consultation on a proposed change to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 in regards to giving the College statutory powers to withhold registration from European Union-qualified vets and VNs on the grounds of lack of ability in the English language.

Mutual recognition of the veterinary profession has been compulsory between EU Member States for many years (and also applies to veterinary nurses in some cases), but language testing was considered unacceptable under EU law. Furthermore, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 does not currently allow the RCVS Registrar to withhold registration from EU-qualified vets on the grounds of language ability.

However, a new European Directive allows a registrant to have their English language skills tested where a regulator has 'serious and concrete doubts' about their language ability and it is in response to this that Defra launched its consultation.

Once the results of the consultation have been published and considered, we will work with Defra to decide what form of language test is most appropriate, and to establish the necessary procedures as part of the registration process. To bolster these potential changes, RCVS Council approved a number of amendments to the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons* this month. VN Council approved equivalent changes for veterinary nurses in October.

Previously the *Codes* required members of the profession to communicate effectively with clients, but had no express requirements in relation to ability to speak or write the English language. The *Code* changes now specify that effective written and spoken English is a requirement for all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses when communicating with clients and colleagues.

We have also made changes to Chapter 11 ('Communication and consent') of the supporting guidance to sit alongside the new *Code* requirement. To read this, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/communication.



Big results require big ambitions...

Strategic Plan update

Nick Stace, Chief Executive

We may be a modern, forward-thinking regulator (with Council members even beginning to shed their traditional gowns...), but that doesn't mean we can't take inspiration from the past. "Big results require big ambitions," said Heraclitus, and now that we are two-thirds of the way through our three-year Strategic Plan, our ambitious approach is beginning to pay off, with some major progress being reported to Council at its November meeting.

One of our most ambitious projects has been Vet Futures, where, jointly with the British Veterinary Association (BVA), we have been considering how the profession can take charge of its future. Our aim has been to ensure that the profession is in the best possible shape to serve animal health and welfare, public health, the public good and, of course, those veterinary professionals who work within it. Our Vet Futures report, which includes over 30 broad recommendations, under six ambitions, will be launched at the London Vet Show (LVS) on 20 November. This will mark the start of the next phase of the project, which will be to develop and, all-importantly, to implement, a more detailed action plan (see page 15).

The LVS will also see the launch of the new Practice Standards Scheme, with a new modular approach, awards to aspire to, and a new online administration system – which we've called Stanley – which will take the pain out of the paperwork and make the whole process much quicker and easier to manage.

As anyone who has been through an IT development will know (and we know only too well) that delivering on time and on budget is certainly ambitious. So I am proud to say that our database upgrade is on track to be delivered ahead of time and under budget.

Another ambition within our plan for this year has been maintaining high levels of staff engagement. Putting our staff at the heart of what we do has huge positive effects on our ability to serve our members and the public. Last year, our Great Place to Work 'Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work' score was 91%. Despite our commitment to continuing improvement, I will admit that I was worried it would be hard to beat this (especially after our huge jump from 52% in 2013), but we did, moving up to 93% agreement with the statement.

We have also presented a paper to Council about progress on the alternative dispute resolution trial. So far, 95 cases have been referred to the service, so we are close to our 100-case goal. A paper outlining how such a service might work on a more permanent basis will be discussed at our March meeting.

A trial really is just that – it's not a way of slipping in a new service by the backdoor. And our trial for an extended-hours advice line showed that the service was not widely taken up and we will therefore discontinue it.

This covers just a few of our ambitions for 2015. You can find a full update, together with our objectives for 2016, at www.rcvs.org.uk/council-nov-15.

Returning to Heraclitus, he said: "There is nothing permanent, except change." With great results on our priorities this year, and an ambitious list that will continue our journey of reform next year, positive change is likely to remain the hallmark of RCVS for some time to come.

Watch my post-Council videos at www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos, read my blog at www.nickstaceblogs.org, or follow me on [@nickstacetweets](https://twitter.com/nickstacetweets).

Extending the role of VNs in anaesthesia

Proposed amendment to Schedule 3 of VSA

At its November meeting Council approved, in principle, a proposal to amend Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA) to extend the role of registered veterinary nurses to allow them to assist in all aspects of anaesthesia, including induction and maintenance.

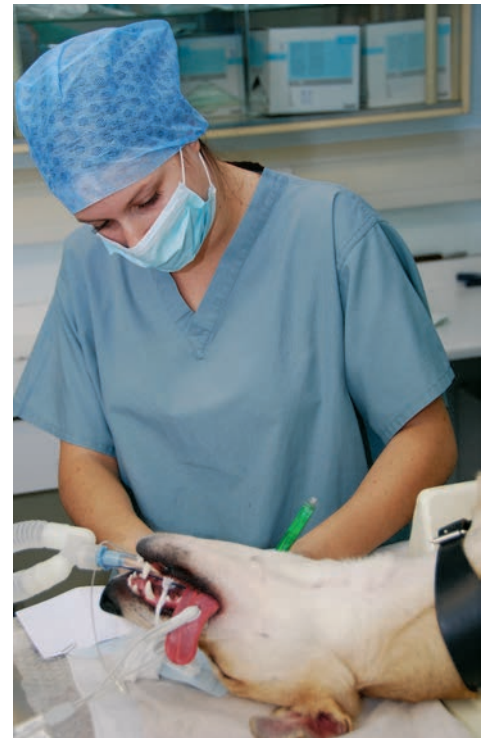
Although the proposed changes will now need approval from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), if agreed they will significantly enhance the role of registered veterinary nurses in anaesthesia, with the caveat that key clinical decisions such as whether the animal needs to be anaesthetised, whether the animal is fit enough to undergo anaesthetic and the nature of the anaesthetic regime, are for a veterinary surgeon alone.

However, the proposals state that, within the anaesthetic regime itself, certain decisions may be made by the veterinary nurse, under the direct supervision of a veterinary surgeon who must remain responsible for the procedure as a whole and must be on hand to intervene immediately, if needed.

The proposed changes to Schedule 3 also specify that, before delegating any part of the anaesthetic regime to a veterinary nurse, the veterinary surgeon must be satisfied that the nurse is sufficiently qualified, experienced and competent to conduct the anaesthesia, taking into account the species of animal and type of procedure for which anaesthesia is required.

The proposals also make provision for student veterinary nurses, stipulating that they must be under direct supervision not only from a responsible veterinary surgeon but also a registered veterinary nurse who is sufficiently qualified, experienced and competent in this area, and is able to intervene, if necessary.

The final proposals that were submitted to Council had been agreed by Standards Committee and VN Council following consultation with, and broad agreement from, a number of stakeholder organisations, including the British Veterinary Association (BVA), British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), and the Association of Veterinary Anaesthetists (AVA).



Following approval by Council, discussions will now take place with Defra to finalise the wording of the amendment to Schedule 3. Council will have the opportunity to approve the final proposed legislation once agreed with Defra.

The RCVS & Associates

Consideration of a 'Veterinary Services Council'

When the new Royal Charter was implemented in February, it created a new 'associate' status for the College to underpin the regulation of veterinary nurses, while allowing for the creation of new associate professions.

If the College was to regulate other professions related to veterinary surgery, it would bring us into line with best practice and the way other healthcare professions are regulated. The General Dental Council, for example, in addition to regulating dentists, also regulates seven other associated dental professions. It would also dovetail with the conclusions of the Vet Futures project, which calls for a 'team approach' to animal health and welfare.

If we were to regulate other professions as associates, we would need to consider the establishment of a 'Veterinary Services Council' to oversee professions related to veterinary surgery. This new Council could sit alongside the Veterinary Nurses Council, and report to RCVS Council.

The impetus for considering possible new associate professions came in June, when the Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI) wrote to our Registrar requesting associate status for its members. Meat inspectors work closely with veterinary surgeons within slaughterhouses. In addition, the Department for Environment, Food

and Rural Affairs (Defra) has asked us to take a lead in establishing a framework to determine which activities constitute veterinary surgery and which of those could be considered suitable for delegation to a suitably competent layperson. Such delegations include the Schedule 3 rights given to veterinary nurses, and the exemption orders currently applicable to some non-veterinarians (such as for blood sampling, TB testing, and artificial insemination).

Any new associate status would carry with it a title and entry into a register held by us, and the RCVS would set standards of training and education and would be empowered to remove individuals from such a register if standards of conduct were not met. Such registers would be voluntary and registration could be tied to specific exemption orders.

In addition to meat inspectors, possible new associates could include the various groups that currently practise elements of veterinary surgery under exemption orders; people professionally involved in animal care, but not practising veterinary surgery; and people involved with veterinary surgeons in maintaining public health.

Before granting associate status, we would need to be confident that any such group would contribute in a positive way to the reputation of

the College and help to uphold and maintain confidence in us as a regulator.

It would also have to contribute to the College's purpose to: "set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in the interests of the health and welfare of animals and in the wider public interest."

No new classes of associate would be created unless it was possible to enforce standards of conduct, and the associated profession was numerous enough to support the costs of regulation. Any new associate class would have to be approved by the College's membership at our Annual General Meeting.

We will meet with Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, the British Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Nursing Association in January to discuss the next steps.

Commenting on the developments, Gordon Hockey, our Registrar, said: "The issues of delegation, a veterinary team approach and regulation of all those who provide veterinary related services for animals are not new; what is new is that the College, with the new Charter, has the means to achieve this if the major stakeholders, including the profession, agree this is the right way forward."

Aiding animal welfare internationally

President's Christmas Box supports Worldwide Veterinary Service

The international animal welfare and veterinary care charity Worldwide Veterinary Service (WVS) has been chosen by Dr Bradley Viner as the recipient of this year's RCVS Christmas Box – a £3,000 donation to the charity of the President's choice.

Since 2002 the WVS, which is based in Dorset, has been sending out veterinary teams to assist NGOs and animal charities in places where there are very limited veterinary resources, with the aim of championing and improving both animal and human health and welfare. For example, this summer it equipped a new veterinary clinic in Malawi with supplies, including stethoscopes, autoclaves and other such equipment, and in May it sent an emergency response team to Nepal to help treat livestock injured in the earthquake.

Speaking of his reasons for choosing the charity, Bradley said: "The WVS does fantastic work overseas, such as its Mission Rabies programme in India, which is making a very significant impact on both animal and human health through vaccinating dogs and providing training, medicine and equipment for Indian veterinary surgeons. This is particularly needed in a country where tens of thousands of people die of rabies every year, many of whom are children.

"I am also very supportive of their training work, which helps to promote best practice in animal welfare and improve the clinical skills of veterinary surgeons across the world."

As part of its ongoing project to provide training for veterinary professionals across the world, in 2010 the charity founded its first International

Training Centre (ITC) in Tamil Nadu, South India. Since its foundation it has since trained over 1,000 vets in safe and competent surgical techniques. This year the charity launched its second ITC in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, which our donation will help support.

"We're hugely grateful for this support and very proud to be a part of such a brilliant profession that bridges countries, cultures and attitudes."

Luke Gamble (pictured, catching a stray dog as part of Mission Rabies), Chief Executive Officer and Founder of the WVS, said: "A donation such as this from the RCVS is huge honour for WVS and we'll make every penny count. This donation couldn't come at a better time to help get our ITC in Thailand off the ground, as it will help build a whole prep room!

"We're hugely grateful for this support and very proud to be a part of such a brilliant profession that bridges countries, cultures and attitudes, uniting us as a global body, championing both animal and human welfare through a shared vocation. Thank you so much for such a fantastic Christmas present!"

The President's Christmas Box donation is made every year in lieu of sending out RCVS Christmas cards. Previous recipients have included Mind, Canine Partners, Hounds for Heroes, SPANA and the Veterinary Benevolent Fund.



Election time is upon us

Put yourself forward as a candidate

Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are now eligible to stand as candidates for RCVS Council and VN Council respectively in next year's elections.

These elections will not be affected by the current Defra consultation on the College's governance arrangements (see page 6) so, as always, six seats will be contested for RCVS Council, while two places are available on VN Council. Successful candidates are expected to serve four-year terms and will take up their places at RCVS Day in July 2016.

The nomination period for both RCVS and VN Councils runs until 5pm on Sunday 31 January 2016. In order to stand, candidates for either Council will need to complete a nomination form, submit a short biography and personal statement and supply a high resolution digital photo.

Each candidate will also need to have two nominators. For RCVS Council candidates, these should be veterinary surgeons who are on our Register but are not current Council members; for VN Council candidates, the nominators must be registered veterinary nurses who are not currently on VN Council.

"Six seats will be contested for RCVS Council."

The election period will start around mid-March and run until 5pm on Friday 29 April 2016. Ballot papers will be sent to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who are eligible to vote and, once again, we will also be sourcing questions from the professions to put to the candidates.

Nomination forms, guidance notes and frequently asked questions for prospective RCVS Council candidates can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil16 while the equivalent documents for VN Council candidates are available at www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil16.

Pay us a visit

Prospective candidates for either Council are also invited a 'Meet the RCVS Day' at our offices in Belgravia House on Tuesday 15 December 2015, where they will have the opportunity to find out more about the role of the College and RCVS and VN Councils. RCVS President Dr Bradley Viner and Chair of VN Council Liz Cox will also be on hand to answer questions about the duties and responsibilities of members of the respective Councils. If you are interested in attending, please contact Emma Lockley, Events Officer, on e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773.

We also have two short videos, produced in 2013, outlining what is involved in being a member of Council. These can be found at www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos.

Protect the VN title

Campaign gathers pace

Our campaign to achieve legal protection of the title 'veterinary nurse' (see *RCVS News* June 2015, cover) continues to garner support from both the public and the profession.

The campaign has been embraced on social media and gained many thousands of likes, shares, comments and retweets, together with around 4,000 supporters adding a promotional 'twibbon' to their profile pictures on Facebook and Twitter. In addition, our specially-commissioned animated film, which explains the role and responsibilities of a veterinary nurse, and why it's so vital for animal health and welfare that the title is protected, has now been viewed over 8,200 times on YouTube and over 82,000 times on Facebook!

We are grateful to the many people who have taken the opportunity to contact their MP to request their support, using the template letter available on www.rcvs.org.uk/vntitle. As a result we have already received notifications of support from MPs from across the political spectrum.

The www.parliament.uk petition that we created in August has received nearly 20,000 signatures, and the government is expected to respond soon. It is already clear that the campaign has given a huge boost to the profile of the veterinary nursing profession, among both the public and politicians.

Thus far our discussions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have indicated that the Department is considering a number of measures that would bolster the role of the VN profession. These could include simplification of Schedule 3 to make it clearer what tasks veterinary nurses can and cannot perform. It could also include amendments to the Schedule to increase the role of VNs in areas such as anaesthesia (see page 4 for details).

Ethics on trial

Ethics panel trial approved

At its November meeting, RCVS Council approved, in principle, plans for a year-long trial of a panel to provide ethical review to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wish to undertake practice-based research.

In early 2013 a joint working party established by the RCVS and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) recommended that we should set up a standing committee to carry out ethical review of practice-based research.

In its report, the working party cited the fact that unlike veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses attached to universities and research institutions, those in private practice may not otherwise have access to ethical review and that having such a body reviewing their proposals would encourage more practice-based research. Also, access to ethical review should enable members of the profession to avoid inadvertently breaching legal and professional conduct responsibilities, and ensure that such research can be published.

As a result of this report, it was recommended to Council that an Ethical Review Panel be established on a trial basis. This plan has been endorsed by the BVA, and both the British Small Animal Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Nursing Association have offered to provide mentors to assist veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, respectively, to consider research proposals and the ethical issues prior to submission to the RCVS for ethical review.

The trial will aim to establish levels of interest in practice-based clinical research and the types of research being undertaken by veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Membership of the Panel will largely be drawn from existing ethics committees attached to UK veterinary schools and other veterinary research establishments, although its exact composition is yet to be finalised.

At its next meeting in December the RCVS Operational Board will be considering the detail of the trial, which is expected to start next year.

Governance consultation

Defra seeking views on reform of RCVS Council

On 29 October, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a consultation on reforming our governance arrangements, following a period of discussion between the College and Defra on how we might best modernise RCVS Council.

The consultation gives the public and profession the opportunity to have their say on what reforms would best prepare the College for the future. Among the issues it considers are the size and composition of Council – including the proportion of elected members; how veterinary schools should be represented; increasing lay membership; and ensuring that there is appropriate veterinary nurse representation.

It also examines how flexibility can be built into the reforms in case of future changes, such as the possibility of new categories of associate members. Responses to the consultation will inform our work with Defra to determine the precise details of any new governance arrangements.

Any reform should meet the unique requirements of the RCVS as a Royal College that regulates, and the criteria already agreed by the College. For instance, Council's decision-making role would be strengthened by increasing the number of Council meetings per year. This would remove the need for a separate Operational Board, removing a layer of governance and strengthening accountability. Any reforms would also ensure that Council has sufficient members to populate the College's committees and the presidential team.

Consideration of the College's governance began in 2009, with a formal consultation with the profession and a series of recommendations to Council made by the RCVS Veterinary Legislation Working Group. Further impetus was given by our First Rate Regulator initiative, which was completed in 2013. This report gave recommendations on how we could reform in order to operate more efficiently and in the best interests of the public and the profession. This also led to the inclusion of an

objective to review our governance arrangements in the RCVS 2014-16 Strategic Plan.

Discussions with Defra revealed an appetite for reforming RCVS governance. In light of this we determined to take the lead on proposing how such reforms might work, and, since March 2015, we have worked with Defra to develop the consultation document.

At its meeting on 5 November, Council also began to consider how the transition between the current governance arrangements and any reformed model might be managed effectively.

RCVS President Bradley Viner said: "I am delighted that Defra is consulting on RCVS governance and the minister has the full backing of RCVS Council in so doing. This consultation is an opportunity to hear the voice of profession and the public about an appropriate structure and oversight for the RCVS, reflecting the uniqueness of being a Royal College that regulates. Consulting on this important issue is in keeping with our desire to become first rate in what we do, building on other measures to modernise and improve the workings of the College."

The consultation can be found at <http://bit.ly/1LEphqW>. The deadline for the submission of responses is 24 December 2015.



Mind: the gaps

Latest from the Mind Matters Initiative



Our most recent Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) event was held in conjunction with Maudsley Learning at its state-of-the-art facility in South London, on 28 October. Entitled *Medical Minds Matter*, the one-day seminar brought together those with an interest in mental health in the medical professions – particularly veterinary, dentistry, human medicine and pharmacy – to help understand the mental health landscape in each of the professions, where there are gaps in our knowledge and where there may be opportunities for collaboration.

Feedback from the event, which also included delegates from the worlds of law and architecture, has been very positive, and an action plan will be drawn up to help capitalise on the areas of potential collaboration identified. A report from the meeting will be available over the coming weeks, or you can catch up on headlines we posted on the day via our Twitter account [@vetmindmatters](#) [#medminds](#).

Researchers come together

Meanwhile, another gap-identifying exercise is planned for next year. In summer 2016, we plan to hold a conference for researchers specifically involved in veterinary mental health to encourage networking within this important research community, help share new and in-the-pipeline findings, and identify as-yet-unanswered questions. One of our objectives will be to launch a call for proposals to answer one or more of these questions, using MMI funding, following the event.

International network

One of the speakers at the Maudsley event was vet Dr Brian McElean, who runs the Onelife suicide prevention programme for the Australian Veterinary Association in Western Australia. His presentation highlighted the universality of many of the issues faced by the profession. On this theme, we will shortly be relaunching an online network for those involved in all aspects of veterinary mental health and wellbeing – for example, research, education, awareness-raising and support. The network will enable the pooling of information, research, case studies and tips, together with providing a safe environment in which thoughts about how to tackle the issues can be explored.

Helping you help others

Between now and the end of the year we will be trialling different trainers, formats and times of day for training that will help you to help others. The training aims to help individuals better understand the signs and symptoms of mental ill-health and know how to communicate with people they are concerned about. It's not a counselling course, but provides basic information about how to manage important first conversations, and understand how to point people to relevant sources of professional help.

The trials will be running as follows:

- 23 November, 2-5pm, Winchester
- 27 November, 1.30-4.30pm, Wrexham
- 30 November, 9-5pm, Newcastle
- 8 December, 6-9pm, Coventry

Practices within reasonable travelling distance of the venues have been invited to participate in the trial. We would ideally like two people from each participating workplace to attend, with one being a senior person within the organisation.

These four courses are free to attend as they are part of a trial and we will require quite detailed feedback from the delegates. Following the trial we will assess which course/format/length worked best and roll out a series of courses across the UK next year. The 2016 courses will attract a charge but this will be subsidised to enable as many people as possible to access the training.

Please let us know if you would like to take part, and help us to evaluate this training, by emailing Lizzie on l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk.

Where to find us

Mind Matters Chair Neil Smith is speaking at the London Vet Show, alongside Sir Anthony Seldon, under the title: "Too much, too young: Mental health and wellbeing in the veterinary profession

and beyond," on Friday 20 November. You can also come to the RCVS stand (C50), where Mind Matters Project Director Lizzie Lockett will be able to tell you more about our activities.

We also will host a stream at the upcoming 4th International Webinar Vet Virtual Congress, which takes place on 8–9 January 2016.

The session will focus on how to develop and improve your wellbeing, and will take place at 7-9pm on Friday, 8 January. Please visit www.theinternationalwebinarvet.com/rcvs for more information.

"The training aims to help individuals better understand the signs and symptoms of mental ill-health."

Finally, Mind Matters has collaborated with the Society for Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) and the Veterinary Practice Management Association (VPMA) to support a stream on mental health and wellbeing at their joint Congress (Celtic Manor, new Newport). The session, on Friday 28 January, kicks off with a keynote speech from Alastair Campbell on the 'Dangers of Stigma'. Emma Mamo, Head of Workplace Wellbeing at the charity Mind, will be covering 'Mental Health in Practice' and the session will be chaired by Claudia Hammond, presenter of BBC Radio 4's 'All in the Mind' (see page 16 for more information about what's else we are doing at the Congress).

New website

There are lots of other activities in the pipeline as part of the project. The best way to keep up to date with them will be via our new website www.vetmindmatters.org, which will be live by the end of the year. You can also follow us on Twitter [@vetmindmatters](#).



Wear your brightest clothes on Blooming Monday to banish the stigma of mental ill-health

Blooming Monday

Finally, don't forget that it's Blooming Monday on 19 January 2016. This is the day when folk are encouraged to don their brightest clothes and cheer up what is otherwise known as 'Blue Monday' (the third Monday in January), in order to raise funds for, and awareness of, mental illness. The RCVS team have had to put on their sunglasses against the glare of lairy outfits for the last two years in a row, and are planning to do so again. Please join us! For more information, visit www.mentalhealthresearchuk.org.

Getting involved

The Mind Matters Initiative is led by the RCVS with the aim of addressing mental health and wellbeing issues in the veterinary team. If you would like to contribute to the project, either as a case study subject (and many thanks to those who have already volunteered), or by offering us space in a newsletter or at an event to raise awareness of the issues, or if you would like to join our emailing list, please contact Lizzie Lockett on l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk.

A spoonful of advice...

Overview of our work on veterinary medicines

Over the past year or so, our Standards and Advice Team has been very busy working with a wide variety of external agencies, as well as within the College, on a range of issues relating to veterinary medicines – from prescription misuse to controlled drugs. In this article we give a brief overview of progress.

Safe management of controlled drugs

Recently, we've been considering how the safe management and use of controlled drugs (CDs) by the UK veterinary profession is currently being promoted and what more could be done. This included meeting representatives from the British Veterinary Association (BVA), the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS), the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), the Home Office, the Police and the Care Quality Commission to seek preliminary views on areas for further consideration. These discussions resulted in the following actions:

- **New consolidated CD guidance** – We will soon produce a new document that looks at the most common areas for advice and draws together the key parts of existing legislation and guidance for reference. This will supplement the current complex legislation, which details how CDs must be managed in practice and those with which veterinary professionals are expected to be familiar. Organisations with responsibility for enforcing various aspects of the legislation have published additional advice to clarify the legal requirements.

“The VMD considers each reported case of misuse, and outcomes could include a warning letter to the offender for a first offence.”

- **Working with other regulators** – Controlled drugs are now considered as a standing item at the RCVS / Practice Standards Scheme / VMD bi-annual meetings. This ensures that any issues arising from inspections are regularly discussed and, where appropriate, further guidance can be issued. An RCVS representative will also be joining the Home Office on a compliance visit to observe how its inspections are conducted.

- **Strengthening relationships with police forces** – We have been developing relationships with Controlled Drugs Liaison Officers (CDLOs) from various police forces to ensure any useful information is shared with the profession. A group of CDLOs, including an Officer from the Homicide and Serious Crime Command Drugs Directorate of the Metropolitan Police, has reviewed our new guidance on storing ketamine in cars.

- **Veterinary teams and leaders** – We have strengthened our supporting guidance on veterinary teams and leaders (www.rcvs.org.uk/vetteam), including the advice relating to medicines, particularly CDs. For example, it stipulates there should be an appointed senior veterinary surgeon responsible for monitoring company procedures by which controlled drugs are obtained, stored, administered, sold or supplied, and disposed of by veterinary surgeons. The Home Office confirmed their continued endorsement of our controlled drugs guidance.

Changes to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations

The Home Office recently made changes to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations, most of which came

into force on 1 June 2015, save for certain delayed provisions. Home Office Circular 019/2015 details the amendments, which we highlighted in *RCVS News* (June 2015). The changes of relevance in England, Scotland and Wales include:

- **Written prescriptions** – Veterinary surgeons are now required to include their RCVS reference number on prescriptions made for Schedule 2 and 3 controlled drugs.
- **Rescheduling of ketamine** – From 30 November 2015, ketamine will be rescheduled from Schedule 4 to Schedule 2 of the regulations.
- **Mandatory requisition forms** – From 30 November 2015, there will be a mandatory form that must be used when requisitioning Schedule 2 and 3 controlled drugs. The Home



Chips ahoy!

New microchipping guidance

At its September meeting, the Standards Committee approved the consolidation of our existing advice on microchips and microchipping into a brand new chapter of supporting guidance – ‘Microchips, microchipping and animals without microchips’ – to our *Code of Professional Conduct*.

This chapter, which can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/microchipping, includes new guidance on the compulsory microchipping regulations that come into force from April 2016 in England*, as well as guidance on dealing with lost or stray companion animals that do not have microchips or other forms of identification.

The Committee discussed the issues that may arise from the new microchipping regulations, including the issue of owner non-compliance, and considered that, after 6 April 2016, a vet or veterinary nurse who discovers that a dog has not been microchipped will not be obliged to report this to the authorities. However, they may wish to advise the dog owner of the new regulations and encourage them to comply.

The Committee also felt that vets and veterinary nurses should not be expected to routinely scan



dogs that come into the practice to check for microchips. As currently set out in the supporting guidance to the *Code*, vets and veterinary nurses may scan for a microchip where, for example, the animal has been lost or is a stray; it is suspected that the animal has been stolen; or, where a client is unaware that the animal has been microchipped. The Committee added that there may be other situations when a vet or veterinary nurse may wish to scan for a microchip, for example, on first presentation at the practice in order to add details to the records; at annual boosters and/or prior to travel in order to check that the microchip is working properly; and, prior to implantation to check for an existing microchip.

**We understand that similar provisions will apply in Scotland and Wales but do not have confirmation at time of publication.*

“Vets and VNs are reminded that any form of veterinary prescription misuse can be reported online to the VMD.”

Reporting prescription misuse

We regularly receive calls from veterinary surgeons on the issue of prescription misuse, usually prompted by concerns about prescription fraud or tampering in relation to online pharmacies. Examples include changing the date the prescription was signed, changing the quantity of the product, supplying the same prescriptions to multiple retailers for supply, or forging the signature of a vet or Suitably Qualified Person.

Vets and VNs are reminded that any form of veterinary prescription misuse can be reported online to the VMD via www.gov.uk. The VMD considers each reported case of misuse, and outcomes could include a warning letter to the offender for a first offence, or the case being sent to Defra Investigation Services with a view to prosecution. Reporting such cases is usually in the public interest and, in most cases, would be a justifiable breach of client confidentiality.

Online retailers amending a prescription amounts to ‘tampering’ and is an offence. If the prescription needs to be updated, it should be sent back to the original prescribing veterinary surgeon.

Other medicines issues

Following regular meetings with the VMD, we would also like to highlight that:

- Vets prescribing products authorised in the UK for human use must do so in line with the Cascade – see www.rcvs.org.uk/vetmeds. If products are to be obtained from a human pharmacy, pharmacists will require a written veterinary prescription before the product can be supplied.
- Veterinary surgeons who wish to import medicinal products for veterinary use under the Cascade must apply to the VMD for the appropriate Special Import Certificate. This applies even where the product is for the veterinary surgeon's own animal.
- There are strict legal restrictions on advertising POM-V medicines – see VMD guidance note at www.gov.uk/guidance/advertise-veterinary-medicines-legally.

More help with resistance

AMR reference materials

Since 2012, our supporting guidance on antimicrobial and anthelmintic resistance in our *Code of Professional Conduct* (Chapter 4, ‘Veterinary Medicines’) has stated:

“The development and spread of antimicrobial resistance is a global public health problem that is affected by use of these medicinal products in both humans and animals. Veterinary surgeons must be seen to ensure that when using antimicrobials they do so responsibly, and be accountable for the choices made in such use. Resistance to anthelmintics in grazing animals is serious and on the increase; veterinary surgeons must use these products responsibly to minimise resistance development.”

At its September meeting, Standards Committee agreed that this guidance should be augmented to help signpost members of the profession to existing materials on antimicrobial resistance.

This will include the British Veterinary Association's information on responsible use (www.bva.co.uk/News-campaigns-and-policy/Policy/Medicines/Antimicrobials/), as well as advice from species divisions, including British Small Animal Veterinary Association's PROTECT posters and supporting material and British Equine Veterinary Association's PROTECT ME toolkit.

The guidance can be viewed at www.rcvs.org.uk/medicines.

Review of certification principles

Subcommittee to consider changes

Our Certification Subcommittee is currently undertaking a review of existing guidance on certification, which includes the **12 Principles of Certification**.

The principles have been in place for a number of years and we want to look at whether they remain fit for purpose. Added to this, we have in recent years seen an increased number of enquiries relating to certification from government agencies, industry and the profession. Some examples include questions about remote certification, electronic certification and reliance on statements from non-veterinary surgeons such as Animal Health Officials.

As part of our review, we will be considering the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe's (FVE) *10 Principles of Veterinary Certification* to consider whether some of the issues contained therein could be addressed in revised and updated guidance.

We are also consulting relevant stakeholders such as the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and species divisions, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Animal and Plant Health Agency, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland, the Food Standards Agency, the UK Export Certification Partnership, the Veterinary Defence Society and other relevant industry bodies and organisations. Any recommendations for change will be referred to the Standards Committee in due course.

Good breeding

Dog breeder inspections

In August 2015, members of the Standards Committee met with representatives of Care and Respect Includes All Dogs (CARIAD), the Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) and the Kennel Club to discuss a number of issues related to dog breeding. High on the agenda was the role of the veterinary surgeon in the inspection of breeding establishments.

Breeding establishments must meet the criteria of the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 as amended by the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 (details available at www.legislation.gov.uk). Under the current licensing regime, a veterinary inspection is required before a local authority can grant a first licence to a dog-breeding establishment. The ultimate decision rests with the local authority, but the inspecting veterinary surgeon may make recommendations and vets should not underestimate the value attached to their report.

Licensed breeding activity affects tens of thousands of dogs each year. The veterinary profession can take a proactive role in raising standards and promoting good welfare practices. The aim should be a consistent level of inspection across the country, with a real focus on welfare.

“Under the current licensing regime, a veterinary inspection is required before a local authority can grant a first licence to a dog-breeding establishment.”

Vets who undertake this type of inspection work, or who are considering getting involved in this type of work, must keep within their area of competence as set out in the *Code of Professional Conduct*. They should also be familiar with the relevant breeding legislation and animal welfare legislation, as well as the licensing regime, so as to properly understand and carry out their duties.

We would also encourage vets to have regard to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's *Model Licence Conditions and Guidance for Dog Breeding Establishments* (www.cieh.org/CIEH-Model_Licence-Conditions-Guidance-Dog-Breeding-Establishments.html), which sets out good practice under the current legislation in England. Contributors to this guidance include the BVA, the BSAVA and the Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding, and Defra has promoted it to all local authorities in England.

Vets practising in Wales may wish to look at the *Welsh Government publication Dog Breeding Establishments – Guidance for Local Authorities* (gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/150512dbguidanceen.pdf).

Change of address?

New My Account facility

Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who wish to change their registration address can now do so through our online 'My Account' area.

If you have lost or misplaced your My Account login details, please contact the Registration Department. Remember, thanks to changes to the registration regulations passed last year, you can choose either your personal or work address for the Register.



Changes to VN registration rules

Clearing up inconsistencies

In November, Council approved changes to the existing registration rules for veterinary nurses, in order to clear up inconsistencies and discrepancies. These had already been approved by VN Council in October.

One of the changes will mean that all veterinary nurses registering in the same renewal year, 1 November to 31 October, will be treated the same. The previous rules had disadvantaged veterinary nurses joining between 1 November and 31 December, who had to pay the renewal fee at the beginning of the next renewal year, while those who joined between 1 January and 31 October did not. This also brings the rules into line with the system for veterinary surgeons.

From now on veterinary nurses who join the Register in the second half of the renewal year (1 May to 31 October) will also receive a discount on their annual renewal fee – as with veterinary surgeons.

The rules were also changed with regards to restorations to the Register. Those veterinary nurses who apply to restore their names to the Register in the first half of the renewal year (1 November to 30 April) will pay the full renewal fee; while those seeking to be restored in the second half will pay half of the fee. All applicants will still have to pay the restoration fee in full.

Please contact the Registration Department if you have any queries about the changes.

How to contact us

Please contact the Registration team on 020 7202 0707 or registration@rcvs.org.uk

Please contact the Finance team on 020 7202 0723 or finance@rcvs.org.uk

Outstanding fees, please

VN fees due by year end

Veterinary nurses are being reminded that they must pay their annual renewal fee by the end of this year or their names will be removed from the Register.

All registered veterinary nurses were contacted in September either by email (the first year in which we have done so) or, where we don't have an email address and for first-year registrants, by post, to ask them to complete their annual renewal and pay their fee of £61. Although payment was due by 31 October, the final deadline is 31 December 2015.

The annual fee can be paid by credit or debit card online via the 'My Account' area of our website (www.rcvs.org.uk/login) or by cheque, bank draft or bank transfer.

Veterinary nurses also need to confirm their Register details, compliance with our continuing professional development requirement of 45 hours over a three-year period and declare any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings.

If you are concerned that you have not received an annual renewal fee email or letter, then you should contact our Registration Department. If you have any concerns or queries about paying the annual renewal fee, then please contact our Finance Team.

Email reminders

Renewal fees for vets

Next year the majority of veterinary surgeons will be contacted via email to remind them that their annual renewal fee is now due or that they have a Direct Debit set up.

Emailing these reminders will significantly reduce our environmental footprint – it's a saving we have already made as part of our veterinary nurse renewal process.

Vets for whom we do not hold an email address will receive letters.

If you are a veterinary surgeon and have not yet shared your email address with us, please contact our Registration Department). Remember – the email address should be unique to you and should not be a generic or practice one.

If you would like to pay next year's fee (due by 31 March) by Direct Debit, please contact our Finance Department before the end of 2015 to set it up.



Introducing the new Practice Standards Scheme

An overview of the new PSS, its exciting new benefits and how to enrol



With the launch of the new Practice Standards Scheme just a few days away as RCVS News goes to print, we take a look at the reasons behind the changes, what the new Scheme has to offer practices and their clients, and how we hope to help practices promote their RCVS accreditation.

It's been a decade since we launched the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), first to the profession and then to the public and, while it's been very well received to date, with over 50% of all veterinary practice premises now RCVS-accredited, we'd like to welcome as many more practices on board as possible.

In 2012 we asked for feedback on how the PSS could be improved and found that the profession wanted a more flexible Scheme that allowed all types of practices to join and progress; a move away from 'box-ticking' during inspections; and, a means of recognising and awarding excellence. Since 2013, College staff and representatives of all the veterinary organisations on the Practice Standards Group (PSG) have been working hard to address this feedback. Now we are proud to be launching a new Scheme that's still run by the profession for the profession and for the benefit of animals and their owners.

Flexible structure

We would like practices of all types, shapes and sizes to be able to thrive within the Practice Standards Scheme and enjoy the benefits it can bring to the practice team, clients and their animals. Whilst the current accreditation levels will remain as Core Standards, General Practice, Emergency Service Clinic and Veterinary Hospital, there will be flexibility within these to allow all types of practices to join the Scheme. Overall, there is a greater focus on how practices use their resources to create a positive outcome for patients and clients, rather than just premises and equipment.

Awarding excellence

The new awards system is one of the major innovations of the new PSS and a direct response to the critical feedback we received about the existing PSS taking too much of a 'one-size-fits-all'

approach and not allowing practices to demonstrate excellence.

There will be 16 awards in total, split amongst the three different species types and covering many areas of practice, from client experience to in-patient service. The aim is that they will allow accredited practices to explicitly demonstrate the specific areas where they excel.

"The new awards system is one of the major innovations of the new PSS and a direct response to the critical feedback we received."

Practices at all levels of accreditation can apply for awards with an assessor determining whether the practice meets the award criteria at 'Good' or 'Outstanding' level – terms familiar to the general public due to their use by other national accreditation bodies, eg Ofsted.

Awards assessment will concentrate on behaviours and outcomes in practice and the impact these have on the level of service offered to clients and patients. Once achieved the awards themselves (examples pictured) will be available to order in variety of promotional formats, and the artwork provided for use on practice websites, social media and stationery, as well as across our own Find A Vet website.

New assessor team

We have recruited a new team of 18 assessors, most of whom are new to the PSS inspection process, while others are former inspectors who have transitioned from the existing Scheme. The shift from 'inspectors' to 'assessors' has been much more than a change of name and faces – it represents a significant overhaul of the way we

conduct assessments and the criteria for assessing practices. Central to these changes is a move towards an inspection regime that is focused more on behaviours in practice and less on paperwork.

The new assessors will begin assessments in earnest at the start of next year, by when they will all have undertaken around six days of intensive training combining both theory and practice, with additional training online, and each one would have undertaken at least two buddied trial assessments. This represents a considerable increase on previous training levels.

Stanley – your online assistant

Stanley is what we've called our new online administration and support system to facilitate all aspects of the PSS for both accredited practices and those applying for accreditation. Developed over the course of the past year, Stanley offers a variety of tools, including document storage, self-assessment and scheduling, to streamline the processes of accreditation and Awards applications and allow speedier and more convenient communication between you, your designated assessor and the PSS Team here at Belgravia House.

A lot to shout about

We're kicking off the new Scheme with a breakfast launch at the London Vet Show on 20 November, where we'll be playing our new promotional video for the first time. We've also been sending a series of 'Countdown to launch' emails to all veterinary practices over the past few weeks with details about all the changes – you can find these at www.rcvs.org.uk/pssc Countdown.

Over the coming days, weeks and months, accredited practices can look forward to receiving additional help with promotion of their RCVS accreditation and any awards with a new print-on-demand service for bespoke leaflets and posters; a marketing and communications toolkit; improved layout and functionality of practice listings on our Find A Vet service; and content and graphics for use across social media channels.

Once the new Scheme has had chance to bed in, we will also be running a communications campaign amongst the animal-owning public to help raise the profile of RCVS-accredited practices and the new PSS awards.

Get in touch

If you would like to find out more, enrol on the Scheme or apply for any of the awards, please get in touch via 020 7202 0767 / pss@rcvs.org.uk or visit our website www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards.

Moving the Fellowship forward

Join our Credentials Panel

Next year we will be launching the new RCVS Fellowship, following significant changes to the routes to entry to our highest award level that were agreed by Council in June.

These changes should open up the Fellowship to a greater part of the profession, particularly those in clinical practice, with new entry routes for those who have made significant contributions to the veterinary profession, veterinary knowledge and clinical practice. The overall aim is to move away from it being an examination-based award to a more formal learned society, meaning that the Fellowship by thesis and Honorary Fellowship routes have been closed.

In preparation for the re-launch, we are in the process of putting together an Appointment Group which will, in turn, decide the membership of the Fellowship Board, which will be responsible for governing the Fellowship, and the Credentials Panel, which will consider applications for the honour.

“The overall aim is to move away from it being an examination-based award to a more formal learned society.”

The Appointment Group currently comprises former RCVS President Lord Trees as chair, RCVS President Dr Bradley Viner, current Fellowship Subcommittee Chair, Professor Gary England, and BVA President Sean Wensley. Interviews will shortly take place for an additional independent veterinary surgeon member of the Group.

We are also currently looking for experienced veterinary surgeons to serve as members of the Credentials Panel and to review applications to the newly restructured Fellowship. Panel members will be appointed for a three-year period and will mostly carry out the role remotely by receiving applications and submitting reports electronically or by post. A full job description is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/workforus.

While this process is ongoing, all applications to Fellowship have been suspended as of 1 August 2015. However, all applications received before this date will still be considered under the previous set of rules. Furthermore, all those who have joined the Fellowship either by thesis or by Honorary Fellowship retain their status.

For more information about the new Fellowship rules or for an informal chat about applying to become a member of the Credentials Panel, please contact Dr Simon Wallace, Fellowship Officer, by email on s.wallace@rcvs.org.uk.



European networking

Vetnet conference in Portugal

The Veterinary European Transnational Network for Nursing Education and Training (Vetnet) held its 2015 conference in September in Porto, Portugal.

This year's conference, entitled '20 Years and Going Strong' saw delegates working with experts from across Europe discussing some of the big issues facing veterinary nursing educators today. Topics included how to motivate students, making the most of your teaching skills and overcoming some of the common issues faced within the educational environment, such as using intake tests to dictate course choice, counselling methods and course delivery.

Our very own Victoria Hedges, Examinations Manager, provided an insight into OSCE models and materials for practical teaching and assessment. She presented a 'show and tell' style session looking at the innovative models and manequins she has developed for the RCVS Pre-registration Examination, including a model to assess the use of a stethoscope. The model utilises a bluetooth speaker installed into the chest of a toy dog which plays pre-recorded heart and lung sounds that can be operated remotely by the examiner.

As a special 20th anniversary treat, delegates also had the opportunity to make a model suitable for using in OSCE/practical assessments to take back to their establishments for use in examinations.

Membership examination review

Looking at exam assessment methods

At its May meeting, the Education Committee agreed plans to review our Statutory Examination for Membership. This exam must be undertaken and passed by individuals whose veterinary qualifications we do not recognise, before they can join the Register.

This exam has existed largely in its current form for over 30 years, so the aim of the review is, initially, to bring it into line with the current Day-one Competences (which we revised in 2014). The review will also help us to ensure that we use the most appropriate assessment methods to test the candidates' knowledge and skills to ensure that they can work in the UK.

The review process, which is being undertaken by the Statutory Membership Examination Board, will be based on a variety of different methods, including focus groups, consultations with veterinary educationalists and looking at similar examinations amongst other regulators. We hope that these methods will help answer the key questions of the review: the appropriateness of the existing examination as a test of fitness to practise in the UK; if and how the current examination

could be changed; and, an exploration of methods to best prepare candidates for success.

“The review will also help us to ensure that we use the most appropriate assessment methods to test the candidates' knowledge and skills”

The Examination Board aims to present the findings of the review and any proposals for change to the October 2016 meeting of the Education Committee. If approved, it is expected that any changes will be implemented by the end of 2017/ beginning of 2018. Those intending to take the examination in 2016 and 2017 should not be affected by this review.

If you have taken this exam, or have worked with someone who has or will do in the future and would like to be involved with the review, please contact Victoria Hedges, Examinations Manager, on v.hedges@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0782.

VN Day-one Skills

Over 300 consultation responses

This summer we launched a consultation as part of a wholesale review of our 'Day-one Skills' for veterinary nurses – the list of skills and procedures in which new members of the profession must be proficient to demonstrate their competence.

Prior to the consultation, the VN Education Committee and our Veterinary Nursing Department had developed a revised list of Day-one Skills with the aim of making them more consistent and more reflective of everyday practice, as well as having a clearer focus on safe and effective clinical skills.

It is this revised list that we asked members of the profession to comment and provide feedback on.

In total we received 303 responses to the consultation, 49% of these were veterinary surgeons and 48% were veterinary nurses. The remainder were from representative bodies, awarding organisations and colleges.

A new Day-one Skills list incorporating some of this feedback will now be going to the VN Education Committee for approval later this month (November 2015) and then to VN Council in February 2016 for final approval.

Graduate resources

New video helps navigate the PDP

The benefits of the Professional Development Phase (PDP) and the support it provides for new veterinary graduates have been highlighted in a recent video we have produced.

The video demonstrates how the PDP helps new veterinary surgeons build their clinical competence and confidence through structured self-assessment and helps graduates develop the core skills and knowledge that they need for life in practice.

You can view the video on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos.

To find out more about the PDP go to www.rcvs.org.uk/pdp or email pdp@rcvs.org.uk for information and advice.



RCVS Awards on target for closure

Wrapping up at end of year

Under our Royal Charter we are the awarding body for the Certificate in Veterinary Nursing, the 'licence to practise' qualification for veterinary nurses that enables them to enrol on the Register as a member of the VN profession.

Historically, the Certificate was awarded to those students enrolled on qualifications we delivered and who passed the exams we set. Over the past decade, however, with the introduction of a Register for the profession and *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*, our role has evolved into that of a regulator of veterinary nurses, responsible for setting standards of education and professional conduct, rather than a qualification provider. This evolution has changed the nature of the Certificate and the circumstances in which it is awarded.

In 2011, VN Council made the decision to relinquish its awarding body function, known as RCVS Awards, in order to concentrate on this regulatory

role. Subsequently, in March 2014, we submitted a surrender of recognition of these qualifications to the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), along with a detailed plan of withdrawal. The closure of RCVS Awards is due to take place on 1 December 2015.

Over the last 18 months, RCVS Awards has communicated and liaised with its affiliated centres to ensure that those students enrolled on our qualifications understand how the closure affects them and to provide the necessary information, should they need to transfer to another awarding organisation. At the time of publication, there are just two students still affiliated with RCVS Awards who will be transferred.

As the professional regulator, we will continue to issue the RCVS Certificate in Veterinary Nursing and RVN badges to those who have successfully completed registerable qualifications provided by higher and further educational establishments and who meet the RCVS Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules 2014.

Are you on the specialist list?

Specialist Code changes

We're reminding veterinary surgeons that, as of April 2016, we will be enforcing changes to our Code of Professional Conduct, stipulating that members of the profession will no longer be able to refer to themselves or a professional colleague as a specialist unless they are on our List of RCVS Specialists.

The changes to the *Code* also prohibit the use of terms such as 'specialising in' a certain area of practice unless the individual is on the List. However, an individual can say they have a 'special interest in' a certain area of practice, even if they are not on the List of RCVS Specialists. Detailed guidance on the use of the term 'specialist' in the context of advertising and referrals can be found in Chapter 23 ('Advertising and publicity') of the supporting guidance to the *Code of Professional Conduct* – www.rcvs.org.uk/advertising.

If you are a European Specialist and have not already applied to be listed, please contact Duncan Ash, Education Officer, as soon as possible on 020 7202 0703 or d.ash@rcvs.org.uk.

Further information about the application criteria and related documents can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/specialists.

A competent consultation

New vets' knowledge and skills

Thank you to the 170 or so individuals and organisations who responded to our recent consultation asking for the profession's views on a proposed new set of Year-one Competences – the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that we believe a veterinary surgeon should possess upon the completion of the Professional Development Phase (PDP).

Our proposals covered a range of different areas including general professional skills; practical and clinical competences; and knowledge and understanding of veterinary medicine, research, legislation and so on.

The feedback seems mostly positive, although suggestions were also made, particularly in terms of changing the name from Year-one Competences to reflect the fact that new graduates now have up to three years to complete the PDP.

A working party headed up by RCVS Council member Dr Tom Witte will now consider the feedback and present its recommendations for revised Year-One Competences to our Education Committee in February 2016.

Accreditation updates

Recent and upcoming visitations

The University of Cambridge's veterinary degree has been recognised for a three-year period following a visitation undertaken in March 2015, which found that the Department of Veterinary Medicine, overall, demonstrated compliance with our standards.

The University submitted a response with details of actions to be taken to address the broad range of issues, recommendations and suggestions within the visit report and, at its October meeting, Education Committee agreed that a full visit should take place in three years' time to check progress on these actions.

Also discussed at the Education Committee was the accreditation status of James Cook University in Queensland, Australia, which had been subject to a joint visitation by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) and the RCVS in May 2015. Following this visit, which was attended by former RCVS Council member Professor Malcolm Bennett (pictured left), a number of serious concerns were raised and it was agreed that the school was non-compliant overall with our veterinary degree standards.



The Education Committee agreed that the University would be placed in 'Accreditation may be denied' category, giving it a chance to rectify the highlighted issues by the time of the next visitation. If it does not rectify these issues it may have its accreditation withdrawn. This visit is scheduled to take place in July 2016 and RCVS will once again be represented by Professor Malcolm Bennett.

This month will also see a visitation to the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh which will be co-chaired by RCVS Council member Professor Stephen May and Deborah Kochevar from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), with representatives from AVBC and European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) also in attendance.

In March next year a full RCVS visitation will be undertaken to the University of Liverpool chaired by David Wadsworth, a member of our Primary Qualifications Subcommittee.

Early bird gets the status

New names added to Advanced Practitioner list

Some 36 veterinary surgeons who applied to become Advanced Practitioners in June and July this year have been added to the List ahead of schedule.

This year we decided to have an extended application window for the new status (which was launched in 2014) running from mid-June until the end of October. As an additional incentive to apply early, our Education Committee agreed to ratify those applications received in June and July at its October meeting, with those names being added to the List with immediate effect.

We have received a total of 135 applications this year. The remaining 99 will be considered by the Advanced Practitioner Panel and the successful applicants will be ratified by the Education Committee in February 2016.

"Our Education Committee agreed to ratify those applications received in June and July at its October meeting."

Professional key skills

At its October meeting, the Committee also considered the results of a small survey of the 458 Advanced Practitioners who will need to

complete additional continuing professional development (CPD) by the time they are due to re-accredit, in order to meet our professional key skills requirements in areas such as communications and veterinary ethics.

Of the 238 people who responded, 26 said they would be undertaking the 'A' module of the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP); 26 said they would be undertaking the BSAVA professional skills course; nine said they would be using 'other' modules; 44 said they would be submitting a mixture of CPD evidence; while 99 said they haven't yet decided.

The Advanced Practitioner application rules from 2017 onwards were also amended to introduce a requirement that anyone who achieves a qualification which makes them eligible to apply for the status in or after 2017 would have to complete an assessed module on professional key skills prior to application. Those who had gained a qualification before 2017 would still be able to present a portfolio of CPD in place of an assessed module but would have to do so at the time of application.

If you are an Advanced Practitioner who needs to fulfil this requirement, you are welcome to contact Duncan Ash, Education Officer, on 020 7202 0703 or d.ash@rcvs.org.uk.

Make sure to document it!

Change in CPD policy brought in next year

We would like to remind both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses that, from the beginning of next year, all continuing professional development (CPD) must be documented, whether that's on paper or via our free online Professional Development Record (PDR).

Earlier this year our Education Committee decided to end the policy that allowed vets and VNs to record up to 10 hours and five hours, respectively, of **undocumented** private study every year. The aim of this change was to encourage all members of the profession to document their studies, while still recognising that private study is an important component of CPD encompassing a wide range of activities.

"We are looking for people who are enthusiastic about the benefits of CPD and who are able to give tips on the types of learning available."

Although you can still use the hard-copy record cards to document your CPD, we would highly recommend that you sign up to the PDR – not only is it free, but it also comes with an array of features,

including the ability to upload documents and put together learning plans, as well as a nifty calendar tool. Veterinary surgeons can sign up to the PDR on www.rcvs-pdr.org.uk, while VNs can do so on www.vnpdr.org.uk.

For further advice on CPD and using the PDR, please contact Jenny Soreskog-Turp, Education Officer, on j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0701.

Are you a champion?

We are also looking for particularly keen members of the profession (both vets and VNs) to come forward as CPD Champions. You don't need to be doing 200+ hours of CPD every year to be a champion, but we are looking for people who are enthusiastic about the benefits of CPD and who are able to give tips on the types of learning available, how to record it and how to fit it in around work and everyday life. We're particularly interested in those who want to talk about how they have put what they have learnt into practice. Our thanks to those who have already volunteered.

We aim to start a CPD Champion blog on the Education section of our website early in the New Year – so if you are interested, please contact Luke Bishop, Communications Officer, on l.bishop@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0784.

Taking charge of the future

Vet Futures project report nears launch

On the 20 November, the joint RCVS/BVA Vet Futures project will publish its report and broad recommendations, the culmination of a year-long programme of research, engagement and analysis.

The project was conceived in order to help the veterinary profession shape its own future, considering a time-line of 2030. It was clear from the outset that this wouldn't be a question of the two organisations sitting together in a darkened room with a crystal ball. The process was designed to be very inclusive, involving:

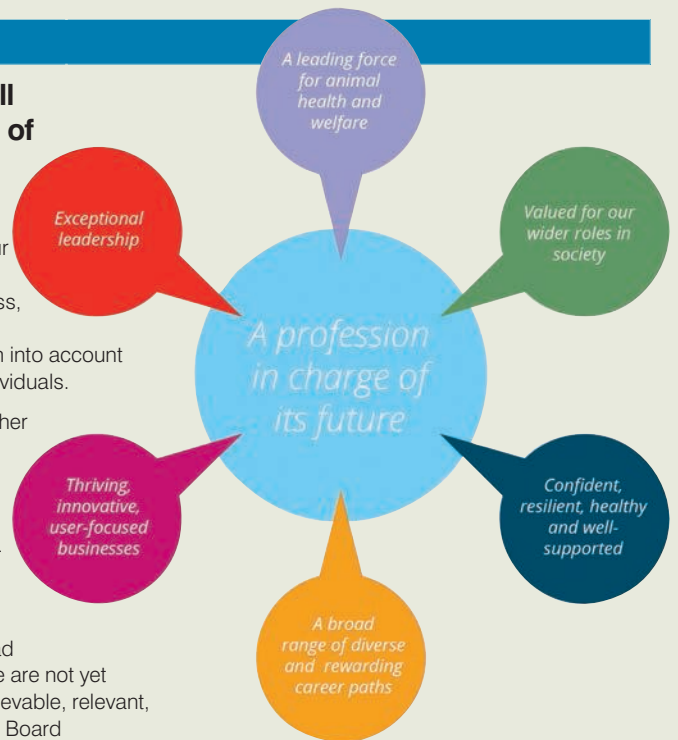
- Lively and stimulating discussions with around 450 vets, veterinary nurses and other interested parties at a roadshow of six dedicated meetings, alongside sessions at other meetings and congresses
- Three meetings of the Vet Futures Group, which comprised representatives of key stakeholder organisations
- Two focus groups with BVA Council members, one with RCVS Council members and one with the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council
- Meetings with major employers and the Veterinary Schools Council
- A seminar with the Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)
- Two focus groups with pet owners
- Phone interviews with 46 vets and VNs, and stakeholder representatives
- Survey responses from more than 600 members of the BVA 'Voice of the Veterinary Profession' survey panel, almost 2,000 recent graduates (up to eight years qualified) and nearly 900 student vet
- A public omnibus survey of 2,000 members of the public from across Great Britain.

From all of this information emerged six themes for action – our ambitions. These actually began to take shape quite early in the process, although they have become more nuanced and rich as we have taken into account the views of different groups of individuals.

Short forms of our ambitions, together with our unifying vision, are illustrated in the diagram. The report includes these ambitions in full, and puts them into context, together with the evidence base for their importance and relevance to the future of the profession.

Also included in the report are broad recommendations for action. These are not yet SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) objectives, the Project Board recognises that. But they are ambitious and very much born out of what we have heard and seen throughout this process, not only from members of the veterinary team, but also external experts, such as Dr Vincent Mak, from the University of Cambridge Judge Business School, who shared his thoughts on consumer behaviour of the future with the Vet Futures Group in April.

The extent of our engagement throughout the process sets it apart from previous attempts to map a sustainable future for the profession. But the big difference will be what happens next, in that both the BVA and RCVS are entirely committed to seeing through change that is relevant, substantial and achievable.



“The first step after the launch of the report will be to bring together a Vet Futures Action Group to help us to develop the broad recommendations into a range of specific actions.”

We will not do it alone – the first step after the launch of the report will be to bring together a Vet Futures Action Group to help us to develop the broad recommendations into a range of specific actions. We envisage this group will report back mid-2016, at a meeting with wide participation, and thereafter that various groups and individuals within the profession will take up the baton and translate the plan into action.

If you are visiting the London Vet Show on 20 November, please do join us at the launch of the report (Pillar Hall, within BVA Congress, 1.20pm), where RCVS President Bradley Viner and BVA President Sean Wensley will outline the ambitions of the project, and what happens next, in more detail. This will be followed by a panel event where veterinary surgeons from practice, academia and public health will consider what the report means and take questions from the floor (see page 16 for more information).

Meanwhile, a separate project considering how the veterinary nursing profession can best articulate its own future, both within the context of the ambitions of the Vet Futures project and through identifying its own goals, will commence in January 2016.

Blog spots

Opinions were also gathered via our dedicated Vet Futures website (www.vetfutures.org.uk) through our monthly, sometimes contentious, blogs, together with polls and comments on articles and research resources. Since launch, our independent bloggers have considered the following questions:

- Veterinary business leadership: an unsuitable job for a woman?
- Mental health: to help our colleagues, do we need to change ourselves?
- Should VAT on vet fees be scrapped?
- Do vets have a role across the food chain?
- How can we be united and forward thinking on ethnicity and culture?
- Will hospice care become a standard part of practice?
- Does a business approach to practice management damage the profession's reputation for care and compassion?
- Could we work collaboratively with those we think of as competitors?
- Are we animal welfare advocates or profit seekers?
- Where are all the VNs? Is there a need for another training option?
- Should vets be as comfortable reading balance sheets as blood results?

It's not too late to read and comment on these at the blog archive (www.vetfutures.org.uk/discuss), and the Vet Futures project board extends its thanks to all those who took the time and trouble to put their heads above the parapet and make their cases!



Join us at Olympia

Two major launches at LVS

Join us at the London Vet Show (LVS) in the Grand Hall, Olympia, on 19–20 November, for two major launches: the new Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) and the Vet Futures report.

The new PSS will be officially launched by Jacqui Molyneux, Chair of the Practice Standards Group, on Friday at 8.30am in the Business Theatre. Croissants and tea/coffee will be available at the launch, where we will be showing, for the first time, our new video explaining the changes made to the Scheme and their benefits. Those who wish to come along to the session are asked to register their attendance in advance on www.rcvs.org.uk/forms/practice-standards-scheme-launch (NB you will need a ticket to the LVS in order to attend).

Throughout Friday, we will also be running free Practice Standards Scheme Surgeries with Pam Mosedale, Acting Lead Assessor. This is a chance for anyone who has questions about the Scheme – whether already accredited or thinking of joining – to chat one-to-one with an Assessor. Sessions run for 45 minutes and can be booked by contacting Emma Lockley on e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0773.

The Vet Futures report will also be launched on the Friday at 1.20pm at BVA Congress. This is the culmination of a year of research, engagement and analysis conducted by the RCVS and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) as part of their joint Vet Futures initiative, which aims to help the veterinary profession prepare for and shape its future. The launch will be followed by a debate about the initiative entitled 'Vet Futures – Where are we going?', which will last until 3.20pm. On the debate panel are RCVS President Dr Bradley Viner, RCVS Treasurer Amanda Boag, RCVS Council member Professor Gary England, BVA President Sean Wensley, Chief Veterinary Officer for Northern Ireland Robert Huey and BVA West Midlands Representative Ally Anderson.

The College team will be on stand C50, where delegates can talk to staff about a variety of issues and have the opportunity to win an iPad Mini by taking part in our PSS launch game, complete with novelty rosettes (pictured)!

RCVS on the road

Join us for debate

Our next Regional Question Time (RQT) meeting will take place at the Hilton Hotel, Watford, on Tuesday 24 November.

The evening begins with a buffet supper at 6.30pm, your chance to relax and enjoy a bite to eat while chatting with the RCVS team and other members of the profession. The discussion will begin at around 7.15pm and will be chaired by Dr Bradley Viner, RCVS President.

As well as enabling us to answer questions from delegates, the event will also provide an opportunity for an update on the new Practice Standards Scheme and the chance to share headlines from our Vet Futures report, both of which will have been launched the week before the meeting, at the London Vet Show.

Members of the RCVS presidential team and VN Council will also be attending to answer questions and contribute to topics raised.

Invitations have been sent to all vets and VNs within reasonable travelling distance of Watford, although all members of the practice team are welcome. Please sign up at www.rcvs.org.uk/watford by Monday 16 November.

If you can't make it, you can still keep track of the topics being discussed by following us on

Twitter ([@RCVS_UK](https://twitter.com/RCVS_UK)) where we will summarise the evening using the hashtag [#RCVSRqt](https://twitter.com/RCVSRqt).

“The event will also provide an opportunity for an update on the new Practice Standards Scheme and... headlines from our Vet Futures report.”

Practice Standards surgeries

In the afternoon before RQT in Watford, we will also be holding a number of free 45-minute Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) surgeries with Acting Lead Assessor, Pam Mosedale. The surgeries take place between 12 noon and 5pm and are available for those who want to find out more about the new Scheme or are preparing for an upcoming inspection.

To book a PSS surgery, please contact Emma Lockley, RCVS Events Officer, on 020 7202 0773 or e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk.

Next year, we will be holding RQTs in Nottingham on 17 May and Cardiff on 31 May. More information will be in our March issue of *RCVS News*, and *RCVS e-News*, and invitations will be sent to all those living locally to the venues.

Throwing shapes

Vet Futures and protection of title at BVNA Congress

As always, we had an excellent reception at this year's BVNA Congress in Telford in October, with many members of the profession coming to our stand to sign our online petition to protect the title 'veterinary nurse' (see page 6), sign letters to their MPs in support of the campaign and take part in our Vet Futures shapes challenge.

The person who completed the challenge in record time was Jennifer McFarlane (pictured), a registered veterinary nurse who works at Broadleys Veterinary Hospital in Stirling. Jennifer is now the proud recipient of a Kindle Fire for her efforts.

“I believe veterinary nursing is improving for the better with the implementation of the Register making us responsible for our actions.”

Speaking of her win and the future of the profession, Jennifer said: “I was extremely pleased to have won as there were a lot of competitive people at Congress, including myself!

“I believe veterinary nursing is improving for the better with the implementation of the Register making us responsible for our actions. There does



seem to be an extreme shortage of qualified and registered nurses at the moment, with the growth of more new practices combined with nurses leaving the profession. So I hope that we can encourage more 'new blood' into the profession to fill the demand.”

During the course of the Congress we also held a declaration session, led by Chair of VN Council Liz Cox, and a Q&A with Liz, Julie Dugmore, our Head of Veterinary Nursing, the then BVNA President Fiona Andrew and the incoming President Samantha Morgan.

Student sessions

Talks and Congress

We'll be kicking off our annual round of vet school talks on 8 February 2016, with a visit to the University of Bristol.

The talks, from the President, Registrar and a Postgraduate Dean, provide an opportunity to learn more about the role and functions of the College and gain an insight into how the Professional Development Phase helps the smooth the transition from life as a veterinary student to working in clinical practice. We usually see students in their penultimate year.

We will also be at the Association of Veterinary Students Congress, which is being held on 5-7 February 2016, at the University of Liverpool.

See us at the Celtic Manor

Conduct on the agenda

We will be on the road again in January, at the Veterinary Practice Management Association (VPMA) and Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) joint Congress.

Held at the Celtic Manor Resort, near Newport, Wales, on Friday 29 and Saturday 30 January, the event is for all those working in the practice team. Members of RCVS staff will be on hand to answer your questions on stand 65 in the exhibition area.

As part of our Mind Matters Initiative, will be sponsoring a mental health and wellbeing stream on the Friday – see page 7 for more information.

In addition, Eleanor Ferguson, Head of Professional Conduct, will be leading a session on the 'Team Approach to RCVS Complaints Procedures' at 11.15 on the Saturday morning, and Pam Mosedale, Practice Standards Team Acting Lead Assessor, will be running a series of practical Practice Standards workshops for equine and large animal practices. Pam will also be running a session called 'Do you offer 'Outstanding' Client Service?' at 12.15, which will cover the new PSS Awards and focus on the Client Care Award.

Open house

Join us in London

Would you be interested in finding out more about what goes on in Belgravia House? Why not join us on Thursday, 4 February, for Meet the RCVS Day.

If you would like to spend the day at the RCVS, meet the teams, visit departments and put your questions directly to members of the Operational Board, please contact Emma Lockley (e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk, 020 7202 0773). Reasonable travel expenses are paid, and lunch is provided.

Meanwhile a special Meet the RCVS Day is being held in December for those thinking of standing for RCVS or VN Council – see page 5 for more details.



Economics high on the veterinary agenda

Dr Chris Gray, Director of Michigan State University Veterinary Medical Center, and RCVS Council member, offers an insight into what's on the mind of the veterinary profession in the USA.

Despite moving across the pond to become Director of Michigan State University Veterinary Medical Center I am still very proud to be a member of the RCVS, and more so to continue in my role as an elected Council member. As we become more globalised, the College is looking at how it should develop its international presence and better serve its 2,855 members abroad. Indeed, having been in the USA for nearly two years, I would say there is a strong appetite from overseas vets to be associated with the RCVS. There is a deep-seated respect not only for the history of the profession in the UK but also for the way in which we regulate.

By and large there are many similarities between the professions on both sides of the Atlantic. In the USA, regulation is on a state-by-state basis, with Michigan being the last state not to enforce compulsory continuing education! (There is currently a push to get this through state legislature...but things may get snowballed by Donald Trump et al, and the associated hype of presidential elections!)

Recently I attended the American Veterinary Medical Association's Economic Summit – joined by a mixture of practitioners and representatives from academia, industry, local and national bodies. The day was a combination of high level economic modelling/prediction and useful reflection. On the doom side, there seems to be a growing consensus that indicators are pointing to the next recession hitting in 12-18 months (although not nearly as deep as in 2007-8), so time to 'squirrel away some savings', and maybe wait a year or two to make that next capital purchase! On the positive side, studies indicate that most practices are not working at full capacity, which means that there is an opportunity to increase the number of active clients, patients and visits, and improve compliance, to increase revenues and profit. That will, however, take change and work.

As in the UK, the American profession is recognising the need to innovate and create value through customer service, new value-added products, opportunity (the penetration of pet insurance is less than 5% in the USA, and this is an area where the UK is looked to as an example), and through leveraging the unique relationship animal owners have with their veterinarian (yes, that is one of many Americanisms I have found myself using!).

At the same conference there was much discussion of student debt, with economic supply and demand curves showing that approximately half of the 4,200 veterinary graduates will have debt in excess of \$172K, with a \$65K gap between tuition fee debt and total debt. Much discussion struggled to square the circle, and this is a problem that is common to the UK and the USA. It was commented that statistics will only go so far and that veterinary education is neither a commodity market, nor a perfect competition. There is a need to study demand choice factors in terms of student recruitment, and then to look at what the market is willing to pay for a differentiated final product.

Finally, over lunch, there was a presentation about the potential economic costs of zoonotic disease, using the current Avian Influenza outbreak for some of the modelling. The price of eggs has doubled of late, and turkeys are going to be expensive this Thanksgiving!

I do believe that the RCVS has strong relevance overseas. I am honoured to be an elected member of Council and involved with the regulation of the profession in the UK, as well as being an ambassador overseas.



Report to Council, November 2015

PIC Chair Andrew Ash

Since the last report to Council there have been four Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings, in June, July, August and September.

The PIC is investigating 51 ongoing cases. Of the 33 new cases considered in this period, three were closed; seven were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon; two were held open; eight were referred for further investigation; 10 were referred to solicitors for formal statements to be taken; and three were referred to be considered for the RCVS Health Protocol.

During the period between 15 May and 9 October 2015, the PIC also referred four cases, relating to five veterinary surgeons, to the Disciplinary Committee.

Health and Performance Protocol

There are 19 veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol, and five veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

One veterinary surgeon's case was discharged from the Health Protocol after he had made significant progress and had been cleared as fit to practise free of any undertakings. Another veterinary surgeon was recommended for discharge from the Health Protocol but asked to remain under the protocol slightly longer as the support continued to assist with recovery.

Professional Conduct Department

Since the last Council meeting, the total number of concerns registered was 415, compared to 386 in the same time period last year. During this period, 290 cases were closed.

Veterinary Investigators

During the period between 15 May and 9 October 2015, the three Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator carried out

12 announced visits and one unannounced visit to gather information about concerns that had been raised. One visit related to a case previously held open, and one to a registration query.

During the visits, people who raised the concerns, veterinary staff, third-party witnesses and respondent veterinary surgeons were interviewed. There were also four health-related visits and 20 review visits.

Reported concerns

One case considered by PIC was felt to illustrate a pattern of cases that had arisen, and the Committee felt it should be reported to Council and the profession for further consideration.

The case related to a degu that had been admitted for enucleation of the eye. The procedure was without incident but the animal deteriorated within two hours, with a significant drop in body temperature. When the owners arrived to collect the animal, efforts were being made to restore the body temperature, which was around the time the practice was closing. The practice decided to discharge the animal and the owner was provided with a thermometer and hot water bottle and advised to keep the degu warm and check its temperature regularly. The owner was instructed to contact an out-of-hours provider should there be any more concerns.

The Committee commented that, while veterinary surgeons must exercise clinical judgement with respect to discharging animals, care must be taken and it must be considered that owners are unlikely to have professional expertise. Where clinical observation and supportive measures are still required, discharge is likely to be inappropriate.

Specifically in relation to this case, consideration should have been given to other possible factors and complications that may have accounted for the animal's decline having, earlier, recovered well from the procedure.

RVN PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE



Report to Council, October 2015

RVNPIC Chair Lynne Hill

Since the last report to VN Council (May), there have been two meetings of the Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (VNPIC), in June and September 2015.

Between 1 May and 21 September 2015 there were 14 new concerns received by the Professional Conduct Department against registered veterinary nurses. Nine cases are under investigation by the Case Examiners Group; three have been closed because there was no arguable case; and two are currently being assessed by Case Managers.

New cases considered

The total number of new cases considered by the Committee between May and September 2015 was six. Four cases were closed by the Committee (two of these were with advice given to the registered veterinary nurse) and two cases have been adjourned, pending further investigations.

One case that had previously been referred to external solicitors for formal statements was considered by the Committee at its September meeting and was closed with advice.

Ongoing investigations

The VNPIC has three ongoing cases. One case is adjourned pending the outcome of a criminal court trial, while two are adjourned pending further information being obtained.

Health Protocol

There is currently one registered veterinary nurse on the Health Protocol and one who is being considered for it.

Referral to VN Disciplinary Committee

Since the last report the VNPIC has referred one case to the VN Disciplinary Committee.

The full reports are available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Mr Mpho Donald Lesolle and Mr Georgi Cheshmedzhiev

Inquiry concerning: dishonesty with clients and the RCVS about clinical procedures

DC decision: suspend names from Register for four months and two months, respectively

Registration status: names suspended from Register on 26 October 2015

On 22 September 2015, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) suspended Mr Mpho Donald Lesolle and Mr Georgi Cheshmedzhiev from the Register after finding them guilty of lying to clients and the RCVS about the circumstances of a castration procedure which led to the death of a dog.

At the conclusion of the two-day hearing, the DC suspended Mr Lesolle and Mr Cheshmedzhiev from the Register for four and two months respectively, following surgery undertaken on Benson, a two-year-old male Labradoodle belonging to Mr and Mrs Grayson.

During the proceedings, the DC heard that, on 6 August 2013, Mr and Mrs Grayson had taken Benson to the Swinfen Veterinary Centre in Stafford, where Mr Lesolle was the Practice Principal and Mr Cheshmedzhiev was his assistant, for the operation undertaken by Mr Cheshmedzhiev. Mr Lesolle did not directly supervise the procedure, telling the DC that he was confident his colleague could carry out the castration, having permitted him to do so on previous occasions.

“Having taken the calculated decision to deceive the College as to what had occurred, he [Mr Lesolle] abused his position of responsibility to obtain support for his deceit by involving a junior employee, without any proper consideration of the effect of that decision upon her.”

The DC heard that, after the operation, a nursing assistant, Ms Bell, had noticed that there was blood on the bedding and that Benson had a swollen scrotum. Mr Lesolle then performed a scrotal ablation on Benson, who was discharged later that day.

On the morning of 8 August 2013, Mrs Grayson discovered that Benson had died during the night. An independent post-mortem concluded that he had probably died of intra-abdominal bleeding which caused circulatory collapse.

The charge against Mr Lesolle related to his actions following the operations and during the

investigation. The four parts of this charge were that he failed to be sufficiently open with Mr and Mrs Grayson on the circumstances of Benson's surgery; that, in September 2013, he wrote to the RCVS indicating that he had in fact performed the castration and failing to state that there had been two operations; that, on 23 January 2014, he informed Pam Mosedale, a Veterinary Investigator employed by the College, that he had carried out both procedures; and that, on the same day, he also encouraged his veterinary nursing assistant Ms Bell to be dishonest with the College's investigators.

“The DC found the charge against Mr Lesolle amounted to serious professional misconduct, falling far short of what was expected of a professional.”

Mr Lesolle, who was present at the hearing, admitted all parts of the charge against him. He told the Committee that he decided to take responsibility for Mr Cheshmedzhiev's operation out of a desire to protect his colleague, whom he regarded as vulnerable and lacking in self-confidence. He also accepted that he had encouraged Ms Bell to lie during her interview. He told the DC that he had persisted with the deceit until 15 January 2015, when he gave a full account of what had occurred.

The three parts of the charge against Mr Cheshmedzhiev, who was not in attendance or represented at the hearing, were that in a letter to the RCVS sent in September 2013, he indicated that he had not undertaken the castration procedure on Benson; that on 23 January 2014 he had denied carrying out the operation while being interviewed by Pam Mosedale; and that, on 19 June 2014, while being interviewed by a solicitor instructed by the RCVS, he said that Mr Lesolle had carried out both procedures.

The DC found the charge against Mr Lesolle amounted to serious professional misconduct, falling far short of what was expected of a professional. It highlighted the protracted nature of his deceit and the fact that he encouraged another member of staff to participate in it. However, it did accept that his motivation was to protect Mr Cheshmedzhiev.

In deciding on the sanction for Mr Lesolle, the Committee considered the aggravating and mitigating factors. Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: “Having taken the calculated decision to deceive the College as to what had occurred, he [Mr Lesolle] abused his position of responsibility to obtain support for his deceit by involving a junior employee, without any proper consideration of the effect of that decision upon her.

“Instead he continued with the deceit until he was presented with incontrovertible evidence that he

had not carried out both procedures on the dog. In the Committee's view he showed a wilful disregard for the College's investigatory process.”

However, in mitigation, it also accepted that he was protecting a colleague and that there was no financial gain. It also considered his personal circumstances, the fact that he was sole principal of a small mixed practice, which provided his sole source of income, and that the rented accommodation also provided a home for his wife and two children.

Taking all factors into account, the DC imposed a sanction upon Mr Lesolle of four months' suspension from the Register.

Turning to Mr Cheshmedzhiev, the DC did not find the part of his charge relating to the letter sent in September 2013 to be proven but, in respect of the other two parts of his charge, found that his conduct fell far short of what was expected of a professional. It highlighted his willing participation in the deceit over a protracted period and his failure to take responsibility for his own involvement in the operation on Benson.

In deciding the sanction, the DC said that the fact that Mr Cheshmedzhiev had lied to the College's investigators on two occasions and did not admit that he had carried out the castration and apologise for his actions until February 2015, after he had returned to his native Bulgaria, was an aggravating factor.

“Mr Cheshmedzhiev accepted the obligations contained in the Code of Professional Conduct when he registered as an MRCVS, which included an obligation to cooperate honestly with the College's investigatory process.”

Ian Green added: “The Committee accepts that he allowed himself to be persuaded by Mr Lesolle to provide a dishonest account of what had taken place to the College's investigator Mrs Mosedale, and solicitor, Mr Hudson. It also accepts that he has been described by Mr Lesolle as a vulnerable person, lacking in self-confidence in his ability to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the United Kingdom.

“Nevertheless, Mr Cheshmedzhiev accepted the obligations contained in the *Code of Professional Conduct* when he registered as an MRCVS, which included an obligation to cooperate honestly with the College's investigatory process. It has also noted that he has expressed a present intention not to work in or visit the United Kingdom again.”

Taking into account all factors, the DC decided the appropriate sanction was to suspend Mr Cheshmedzhiev from the Register for two months.

Mr Ian Beveridge**Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register****DC decision: hearing adjourned****Registration status: name remains off Register**

On Monday 15 June 2015, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) adjourned a hearing into an application to be restored to the Register by Mr Ian Beveridge, as new evidence came to light which was relevant to his application.

A few days before the hearing was listed to start, the RCVS brought forward new evidence alleging that veterinary drugs were ordered by or on behalf of Mr Beveridge in the period after which his name was removed from the Register.

Although Mr Beveridge accepted the evidence, he wished to rely on evidence from two witnesses regarding the circumstances of these events. Neither of these witnesses was able to attend the hearing in person.

Noreen Burrows, chairing the DC and speaking on its behalf, said: "We must apply the rules of natural justice to these proceedings and we are of the view that we must adjourn this hearing to give Mr Beveridge the opportunity to call the witnesses he wishes to."

Note: This hearing will resume on 20 November 2015.

Mr David John Porter**Inquiry concerning: failure to communicate courteously and respectfully with colleagues; deficient clinical standards; and, failure to respond adequately to RCVS communications****DC decision: remove name from Register****Registration status: name to be removed from Register on 23 November 2015 unless DC decision is appealed by 22 November 2015**

On Wednesday 21 October, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) directed that the Registrar strike veterinary surgeon David John Porter from the Register after finding him guilty of serious professional misconduct.

Three charges were found against Mr Porter. The first charge (charge A) concerned failure to communicate courteously and respectfully with colleagues and related to four incidents, as follows:

- A1: On 3 November 2011, whilst on duty at the Seadown Veterinary Hospital in Southampton, he was rude and/or threatening and/or aggressive to two veterinary surgeon colleagues.
- A2: On 11 June 2012, whilst on duty at Clent Hills Veterinary Group, Worcestershire, he said

to an assistant practice manager and receptionist that British veterinary surgeons and practice managers were untrustworthy.

- A3: On 12 June 2012, when on the telephone with the practice manager of Clent Hills, he was rude and/or used inappropriate language; and stated that a lot of British vets were "bloody awful", liars and cheats.

"Deliberate attempts to thwart the College's enquiries into complaints must, in our judgment, come at the top end of the spectrum of gravity of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

- A4: In January 2013, during the course of an Employment Tribunal hearing in relation to his time as a locum at Clent Hills Veterinary Group in June 2012, he raised his voice aggressively and/or shouted at the Clent Hills practice manager.

In finding him guilty of this charge, the DC referred to his "wholly unacceptable exchanges with other veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses and ancillary practice staff members with whom he was working on the dates in question."

Ms Philippa Ann Rodale MBE**Inquiry concerning: standards of practice and a test for Intradermal Comparative Tuberculin****DC decision: accept respondent's undertakings to request name be removed from Register and to never apply to be restored to it****Registration status: name voluntarily removed from Register on 31 July 2015**

On 17 August 2015, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) agreed to accept undertakings from Philippa Ann Rodale MBE, in which she requested that her name be removed from the RCVS Register of Veterinary Surgeons with effect from 31 July 2015, and undertook never to apply to be restored to it.

The DC resumed the hearing after it had been adjourned on 20 July to allow Ms Rodale, who is based in Dorset, time to submit formal responses to the charges against her and indicate whether she agreed with them. In the event, as outlined by a letter from her solicitors received by the College on 14 August, Ms Rodale declined to

comment on the charges and did not admit to any of them.

Ms Rodale did not attend the hearing on 17 August, however, the DC decided to continue in her absence, on the understanding that, as evidenced by her solicitors' letter, she was fully aware of the hearing and had voluntarily waived her right to be presented and represented.

"The Committee is satisfied that the undertakings offered by the Respondent protect the welfare of animals since the Respondent has now retired and is no longer in practice."

The original charges related to Ms Rodale's standards of practice (in relation to issues such as biosecurity, hygiene, in-patient facilities, drug storage and the disposal of hazardous waste, among other things) and also to a test for Intradermal Comparative Tuberculin. The charges relating to her standards of practice did not have complainants, as the RCVS raised the matters itself. With respect to the Tuberculin test

charge, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, as the relevant body, raised no objection to the proposed course of accepting undertakings.

In accepting the undertakings, the DC felt that a contested hearing, which could take up to seven days and involve up to eight witnesses for the College and up to three for Ms Rodale, would not be in the public interest. Furthermore, since the 20 July hearing, Ms Rodale had retired and closed her practice. The DC also noted that there had been no previous disciplinary findings against her, in what was otherwise a long and unblemished career.

Ian Green, chairing the DC and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee is satisfied that the undertakings offered by the Respondent protect the welfare of animals since the Respondent has now retired and is no longer in practice. It is also satisfied that the reputation of the profession is upheld since the undertakings offered go beyond any sanction which the Committee could impose at the conclusion of a contested hearing, were any of the Heads of Charge to be found proved. It considers that it would not be proportionate or in the public interest for there to be a lengthy contested hearing."

The second charge for which he was found guilty (charge C) concerned what the DC called “his seriously deficient clinical standards when treating animals under his care”, in particular that:

- C1: Between 31 October 2011 and 4 November 2011 at Seadown Veterinary Hospital he used inadequate levels of hygiene when conducting surgery by failing to scrub up and/or wash his hands before surgery, including abdominal surgery.
- C2: On 26 April 2013 at the Stanhope Park Veterinary Practice he used surgical spirit to clean the ear canal of a dog.
- C3: On 27 April 2013 at the same practice, he unreasonably refused to euthanase a dog.
- C4: On 28 April 2013, at the same practice, he used a ratchet gag on a rabbit without having first administered sedation or anaesthesia.

Within charge C, Mr Porter was cleared of two further parts of the charge: first, that he failed to discuss euthanasia with a client in relation to a kitten and failed to provide the client with sufficient advice and instructions regarding after-care; and, second, that he prescribed steroids to treat a kitten for muscle strain at a time when it was recovering from surgery.

The third charge for which he was found guilty (charge D) related to Mr Porter's failure, between 7 February 2013 and 31 October 2014, to respond adequately to communications from the RCVS. In particular that:

- D(i): Between 7 February and 21 December 2013 he failed to respond constructively or at all to correspondence from the College.
- D(ii): From July 2014 he failed to respond to specific requests for details regarding his qualifications and experience.

As to the conduct found proved in relation to charge D, the DC set out its findings of fact and declared: “What Mr Porter chose to do was to attempt to obstruct the College in its attempts to investigate the complaints laid against him and, thereafter, its attempts to bring him before the Committee to answer the charges preferred against him. In short, he has directly questioned, and then disregarded and thwarted, the legitimate role of his professional regulatory body.”

“Wholly unacceptable exchanges with other veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses and ancillary practice staff members with whom he was working.”

The DC's reasons for taking a serious view of such conduct were expressed in the following words: “Both the public and other members of the profession must be entitled to rely on the expectation that all veterinary surgeons, as responsible professional persons, will co-operate fully and promptly to all proper enquiries made

of them by the College. This is the wider public interest factor which means that deliberate attempts to thwart the College's enquiries into complaints must, in our judgment, come at the top end of the spectrum of gravity of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.”

During the course of the hearing, which began in June 2015 and was adjourned three times, Mr Porter was cleared of charge B against him which concerned alleged refusal to undertake out-of-hours work for the Clent Hills Veterinary Group, having previously indicated he would undertake such work.

In making the decision on the sanction in this case, Judith Webb, chairing the DC and speaking on its behalf, said: “In reaching our conclusion as to the sanction which is merited in this case we have taken into account the totality of Mr Porter's conduct and failings. We consider that the conduct pertaining to Charges D(i) and (ii), even when viewed separately, demand the imposition of a direction for the removal of Mr Porter's name from the Register.

“When that conduct is considered in conjunction with the other misconduct found proved in relation to Charges C1 to C4, which identify his clinical failings, and Charges A1 to A4, which demonstrate unprofessional behaviour in the workplace, we unhesitatingly conclude that there is no other sanction that could be considered sufficient, other than that of erasure.”

Mr Matthew Douglas Morgan

Inquiry concerning: application for restoration to the Register

DC decision: application granted

Registration status: name restored to Register on 18 September 2015

On 15 September 2015, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) restored Matthew Douglas Morgan to the Register after finding him fit to resume practising, having previously been convicted of fraud.

Mr Morgan had pleaded guilty to four counts of fraud in July 2013 having fraudulently claimed over £200,000 in pet insurance claims between November 2009 and December 2012. In August 2013 he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, for which he served 12 months before being released on licence.

Following his conviction and sentence, his case was brought to the DC in February 2014 where it directed that his name should be removed from the Register. When his licence period expired on 18 August 2015, Mr Morgan applied for restoration to the Register.

During the course of the hearing, the DC heard evidence from Mr Morgan, who accepted the

Committee's findings, describing the evidence as 'fair' and acknowledging the seriousness of his actions.

The DC felt that Mr Morgan's criminal conduct was very grave, as reflected in his custodial sentence and the fact that, as an Australian citizen, he had been issued with a deportation notice by the Home Office. It also felt that his crime had struck at the heart of public confidence in a profession for which honesty and integrity is expected.

“The Committee considers that the applicant has demonstrated sufficiently that he has learned the lessons required and is now fit to be restored to the Register.”

However, the DC considered that Mr Morgan, if restored, would pose few risks in respect of protection of the public, having no concerns about his competence as a veterinary surgeon, and accepted that he would pose little future risk to animal welfare. It also felt that, since his release from prison, Mr Morgan had taken extensive steps

to rehabilitate himself, had undertaken continuing professional development and had been working as a veterinary care assistant at two veterinary practices to keep up to date with current practice. Furthermore, the DC was satisfied that there was public support for Mr Morgan continuing as a veterinary surgeon given the references and testimonials submitted on his behalf.

In conclusion, the DC reiterated the seriousness of Mr Morgan's criminal offending, saying that this had caused the Committee “the greatest concern”. However, it also felt that issues of rehabilitation needed to be considered.

Professor Alistair Barr, chairing the DC and speaking on its behalf, said: “The Committee cannot emphasise enough the fact that veterinary surgeons who commit acts of fraud in the exercise of their practice can expect severe consequences, both in the criminal courts and within their own College, and there can be no doubt that the decision to remove the applicant from the Register was a proper reflection of the seriousness of his offending.

“Given all of the matters referred to above, however, the Committee considers that the applicant has demonstrated sufficiently that he has learned the lessons required and is now fit to be restored to the Register.”

Ms Adele Lewis

Inquiry concerning: failure to pass on information about a horse's clinical history to a potential buyer during a pre-purchase examination

DC decision: reprimand

Registration status: name remains on Register

On 15 October 2015, the Disciplinary Committee (DC) reprimanded Ms Adele Lewis, a Gloucestershire veterinary surgeon, after she admitted to failing to pass on information about a horse's clinical history to a potential buyer during a pre-purchase examination.

Ms Lewis, Sole Principal of the Cotswold Equine Clinic in Lechlade, carried out the examination of a pony called Luke on 13 February 2014.

Luke was owned by Mrs Booth who was a long-established client of Ms Lewis, both at her previous practice, Bourton Vale, and at her current practice. The examination was carried out on behalf of the prospective purchaser, Mrs Grieve.

Upon examination, Ms Lewis certified that, in her opinion, Luke's veterinary history did not increase the risk of purchase. Following the purchase of Luke, Mrs Grieve attempted to obtain insurance for him and found out from a pet insurance company that a claim had been made by Mrs Booth in September 2013.

"The DC noted that Ms Lewis had since put in place a practice management system and had shown insight into her actions, by taking active steps to comply better with her obligations under the Code of Professional Conduct."

She subsequently found out that, following concerns expressed by Mrs Booth and her trainer about Luke's movement and their wanting an expert opinion, Ms Lewis had referred him to Dr Kold, a Specialist in Equine Orthopaedics, in September 2013. Dr Kold had diagnosed Luke with lameness and had given him intra-articular medication. Luke had also had a follow-up appointment with Dr Kold about four weeks later in October 2013.

At the outset of the three-day hearing, Ms Lewis admitted several parts of the charges (charge A and charge B) against her. In regards to charge A, she admitted that she had failed to inform Mrs Grieve that, when she examined Luke on 24 September 2013, his then owner Mrs Booth had complained first that Luke was "not tracking up and going forward" and, second, that he had improved significantly when put on a Phenylbutazone trial. She also admitted that she had referred him to Dr Kold for a poor performance

investigation and that she ought to have informed Mrs Grieve of these matters.

In regards to charge B, she admitted that she completed a Certificate of Veterinary Examination in which she had declared that Luke's veterinary history did not increase the risk of purchase and allowed the vendor's declaration to include assertions that there had been no previous lameness and no intra-articular medication given in the last 12 months. Ms Lewis admitted that she ought to have known that her declaration that Luke's veterinary history did not increase the risk of purchase was incorrect.

"The Committee continues to emphasise the importance of maintaining the integrity of veterinary certification in any aspect of practice."

However, Ms Lewis denied being aware that Dr Kold had diagnosed lameness, administered an intra-articular corticosteroid to Luke and examined and noted a problem with his breathing, including upper airway disease and possible lower airway disease. Furthermore, she denied dishonesty in regards to the charges against her and in relation to vendor declarations made on the Certificate of Veterinary Examination regarding previous lameness and intra-articular medication.

During the course of the hearing, Ms Lewis told the DC that she had not received the reports about the two consultations by Dr Kold (despite their having been sent to her by letter and, with respect to the second report, also by email) and that she was therefore unaware of his findings when she carried out the pre-purchase examination. She also stated that she had not been informed of these by Mrs Booth. During her evidence, Ms Lewis also admitted having entered inaccurate information on a veterinary report to assist with an insurance claim.

The DC did not find Ms Lewis to be an impressive witness, citing the fact that her "explanations as to her practice showed a worrying absence of probity in the completion of veterinary reports for the purposes of insurance claims, and an absence of any effective practice management, consistent with acceptable practice."

However, the DC felt it did not have the evidence to conclude that Ms Lewis had acted dishonestly during the pre-purchase examination. It cited the fact that her actions, when informed by the purchaser Mrs Grieve of Dr Kold's examination, did not appear to be those of someone trying to cover their tracks.

In regards to charge A, the DC also found that the "apparently chaotic manner in which Ms Lewis ran her practice, and her own opinion that the pony was sound, would appear to have led her to wrongly disregard these matters from disclosure."

In making its decision on her conduct and sanction, the DC said that Ms Lewis' failure to fully communicate to Mrs Grieve all the relevant

information about Luke's veterinary history fell far short of the conduct expected from a veterinary surgeon. It also cited the utmost importance of a complete and accurate certification process, as made clear in the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct* and the *Twelve Principles of Certification*.

Chitra Karve, chairing the DC and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee continues to emphasise the importance of maintaining the integrity of veterinary certification in any aspect of practice. Mrs Grieve told this Committee that if she had been fully informed about Luke's veterinary history she would not have purchased the pony. It is clear from the evidence that it affected Mrs Grieve's ability to insure the pony.

"Ms Lewis has accepted that the information about Luke's veterinary history, not having been disclosed, was capable of affecting the risk of purchase. The public are entitled to rely upon veterinary surgeons providing complete and accurate information, when certificates and reports are prepared."

In mitigation, the DC paid regard to Ms Lewis' inexperience at running her own practice and found no issue with her competence or clinical ability as a veterinary surgeon. It concluded that she had acted out of character and that there was no financial motivation for her actions. It also found it "highly relevant that the facts admitted and found proved related to a single pre-purchase examination."

The DC noted that Ms Lewis had since put in place a practice management system and had shown insight into her actions, by taking active steps to comply better with her obligations under the *Code of Professional Conduct*. She had also made early admissions of guilt and made a full apology to both Mrs Grieve and the RCVS both at the outset of the hearing, and in her evidence.

Chitra Karve added: "Having had the opportunity of observing her demeanour at this hearing, the Committee believes that it is unlikely that she will repeat her conduct... The Committee has concluded that an appropriate and proportionate response in this case is to reprimand Ms Lewis."



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

RCVS Knowledge launches new digital publishing platform

New EBVM resource for practitioners

Here at RCVS Knowledge we are delighted to announce the launch of *Veterinary Evidence*, a new digital resource for veterinary practitioners that brings together the work our International EBVM Network and combines the best parts of journals and digital libraries. Funded by a generous donation from the RCVS, *Veterinary Evidence* opened for submissions at our Skills Day at the end of October.

Veterinary Evidence will promote and publish peer-reviewed research to aid the practitioner – from randomised controlled trials to case studies, reviews and knowledge summaries. It represents our wider mission statement and the core element of our vision of providing the veterinary community with easily accessible, evidence-based and practice-relevant information resources.

Veterinary Evidence is supported by a growing global network of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and allied professionals which make up our Knowledge Groups – such as canine orthopaedics, zoology and wildlife. Authors will write Knowledge Summaries in their areas of special interest and on topics and themes suggested by *Veterinary Evidence*, based on surveys of practitioners already underway. The open-access policy allows for a large international audience, whilst a Creative Commons copyright allows authors to keep ownership of their work. *Veterinary Evidence* is peer-reviewed, and the open peer review model provides the opportunity for academic debate.

Under the editorial control of Dr Richard Evans (pictured), *Veterinary Evidence* will promote lively discussion of EBVM through both opinion and methodological articles. Content is also designed to educate readers in research techniques – responding to the desire amongst many members of the professions to become involved in effective



Dr Richard Evans is heading the journal as Editor-in-Chief. He is a former Associate Professor of production/animal medicine at Iowa State University, and is now adjunct professor of orthopaedic surgery at the University of Missouri and President-elect of the Veterinary Orthopaedic Society

practice-based research – and will include critical appraisal and clinical audit. As the new Practice Standards Scheme rolls out (see page 11), practices will find much in *Veterinary Evidence* to enable them to respond effectively to the new challenges posed.

Prospective authors can download primary-research-paper templates, alongside the submission site at www.veterinaryevidence.org. *Veterinary Evidence* is expected to launch early in the New Year.

How to publish in *Veterinary Evidence*

Knowledge Summaries provide concise and accessible information created for and by veterinary professionals. For guidance, follow our five core steps to publication:

1. Write your Knowledge Summary
2. Register as an author
3. Follow the online submission process
4. Upload your manuscript
5. Respond to reviewer comments

For more details, download our handy online guide at

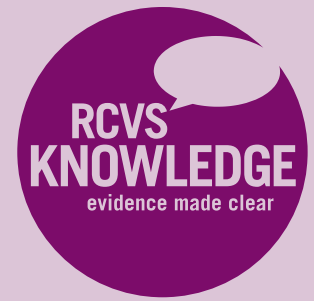
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Digitisation of RCVS archive

Making our historic collection available

Thanks to the support of the Alborada Trust and Companion Care/Vets4Pets amongst other donors, we have secured funding to embark on a five-year project to catalogue and digitise the priority parts of the RCVS's historical collection and archive.

We look forward to updating you as this very exciting project unfolds, but for the most recent notifications, you can follow our progress via the Library blog at www.rcvsknowledgelibraryblog.org.



The Evidence Awards

Recognising high-quality EBVM

We're pleased to announce the Evidence Awards – celebrating excellence in the theory and practice of Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM). The Evidence Awards will be made to particularly high-quality papers submitted and published in *Veterinary Evidence*, the go-to EBVM resource for the veterinary profession (details above).

Only papers published by *Veterinary Evidence* during the preceding year will be eligible. Papers will be judged on their originality, their contribution to EBVM in general and to the chosen subject in particular. See: www.rcvsknowledge.org/evidenceawards for more details.

Launch of Discovery

One-stop-shop for resources

Lunched during the summer, *Discovery*, our new search platform, makes it even easier for Library members to search and access articles, papers and electronic resources in one place.

Clare Boulton, Head of Library and Information Services at RCVS Knowledge, says: "We're thrilled to have the opportunity to offer this world-class search tool. We're confident that it will save our members' time and prove to be a useful tool for both practitioners and researchers in the veterinary community worldwide."

Professionals who join the RCVS Knowledge Library and Information Service will have access to the best available evidence and support from our team of Information Specialists. Members have access to the full text of articles from hundreds of online journals, and can set up subject alerts to keep them up to date with the latest research.

To sign up for library membership visit www.rcvsknowledge.org/joinlibrary/.

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 PSS up at a vet show

New Practice Standards Scheme launch imminent

2 No ringing after-hours

Advice line trial ends

Gold that glitters

Changes to Golden Jubilee Award format

3 Anglais s'il vous plait

Code changes on English language competency

Big it up

CEO outlines big ambitions for next strategic plan

4 Night nurse!

Veterinary nurses and anaesthesia update

Me and my associates

Consideration of a 'Veterinary Services Council' for associate professions

5 International aid for animals

President donates Christmas charity fund to WVS

Step up!

Call for RCVS and VN Councils nominations

6 Ethics in action

Ethical review panel trial to start next year

Moving towards reform

Government consultation on changes to RCVS Council

7 Mind Matters is a wonderful thing

The latest from our mental health and wellbeing initiative

8 The right medicine

Our recent work on controlled drugs and veterinary medicines

9 D'you want advice on your chips?

New guidance on microchipping

Resistance is futile

Resources for antimicrobial resistance

10 Licence to breed

Guidance for vets inspecting dog breeding establishments

Ironing out inconsistencies

Changes to VN registration rules

11 Awarding good practice

New PSS accreditations and awards

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Review of our Membership Examination assessment methods

Come along Fellows

Update on our new Fellowship scheme

Pet-a-Porto

Veterinary nursing education conference in Portugal

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RCVS Awards set to close in December

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Undocumented CPD no longer accepted from next year

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Mpho Lesolle and Georgi Cheshmedzhiev suspended from Register for dishonesty; Ian Beveridge restoration hearing adjourned; Philippa Rodale voluntarily removes her name from Register; David Porter struck off for failure to communicate courteously with colleagues, deficient clinical standards and failure to respond to College communications; restoration application for Matthew Morgan granted; Adele Lewis reprimanded for failing to pass on clinical information following an equine pre-purchase examination.

23 The knowledge is yours

New digital publishing platform for practitioners

A world of Discovery

New search programme for the profession to access articles

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2015

19-20 November

Join us at London Vet Show

23 November

Mind Matters: Winchester

24 November

RQT: Watford

27 November

Mind Matters: Wrexham

30 November

Mind Matters: Newcastle

8 December

Mind Matters course: Coventry

15 December

Meet the RCVS Day for prospective Councils candidates

31 December

VN fees due

24 December

Deadline for Governance consultation

24-28 December

College closed

2016

1 January

College closed

8 January

Mind Matters stream at Webinar Vet Virtual Congress

19 January

Brighten up for Blooming Monday

29-30 January

Join us at VPMA/SPVS Congress



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