

# RCVS news

RCVS NEWS / SEPTEMBER 2018

*Text-only version of  
RCVS News email*

# RCVS voices concern over a 'no-deal' Brexit scenario

We have issued a position statement detailing a number of our concerns regarding the potential risks to animal welfare and public health from a 'no-deal' scenario, due to its impact on the veterinary workforce.

The statement highlights the potential impact of 'no-deal' on the veterinary workforce in light of the fact that EU graduate vets make up around half of the UK's annual intake of new registrants and are over-represented in fields such as public health and academia, as well as playing a significant role in clinical practice.

Other concerns include increased barriers to veterinary recruitment and a need, therefore, for vets to be placed on the Shortage Occupation List in order to offset the impact of immigration restrictions.

Commenting on the position statement Amanda Boag, RCVS President, said: "We are aware of arguments in recent months that suggest a 'no-deal' scenario would be an acceptable outcome in terms of the veterinary profession's role in protecting animal health & welfare, and public health, in the UK. Given the information contained in the government's recent Technical Notices, alongside the recent recommendations of the Migration Advisory Committee, we are far from convinced that this is the case."

# RCVS Council agrees extension to Mind Matters Initiative

This investment will allow the initiative to continue to address and improve mental health and wellbeing within the veterinary profession.

Council met on Thursday 27 September 2018, and Professor Stuart Reid (pictured right), Chair of Mind Matters, put forward the bid for the Initiative, initially given five years of funding (2015-2019), at £200K per annum, to switch to a rolling three-year agreement. Council, voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.

As now, Mind Matters will continue to donate £100K per year to independent charity Vetlife, for its Health Support service. The remaining £150K will be spent on other initiatives, which include providing training, research and a culture-change programme.

The Mind Matters Initiative, in order to address mental health within the veterinary team, is seeking to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health related concerns, and to reduce the incidence of stress and mental ill-health.

The initiative has already garnered much support and collaboration from stakeholders on its Taskforce, including joint mental health awareness courses run with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, mental health for managers courses with the Veterinary Management Group, the joint Wellbeing Awards with the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS), and supporting students with the Association of Veterinary Students. The initiative also launched the destigmatising campaign “&me” with the Doctors’ Support Network, at the House of Commons in January 2017.

Since its inception, Mind Matters has run 45 mental health awareness courses, spoken at or organised speakers for over 50 external conferences and events, and hosted Mind Matters conferences and Symposiums, among many other activities. During this time there has been a 500% increase in calls to the Vetlife Helpline, demonstrating that the stigma of seeking help is now reducing.

This further funding will ensure the Mind Matters Initiative can continue to build on its success, highlighting the importance of individual wellbeing and seeking to ‘prevent, protect and support’ all members of the veterinary team.

Professor Stuart Reid, Chair of Mind Matters, said: “I’m both delighted and immensely grateful that Council has demonstrated their support for Mind Matters unanimously and so generously. Their commitment to our mission will allow us to take the initiative to the next level and, importantly, continue to assess the impact of our work.”

# Innovation project celebrates first anniversary

The College's landmark innovation project ViVet is celebrating its first anniversary with the publication of a new regular feature highlighting innovators and influencers in the veterinary and animal health sector.

We launched ViVet at our Innovation Symposium at the Warwick Business School in The Shard in September 2017, featuring a wide range of speakers drawn from the world of technology and innovation in areas such as healthcare, scientific research, business and finance and, of course, veterinary science.

The ViVet programme itself grew out of the recommendations of the Vet Futures research project and is designed to ensure veterinary professionals are engaged with innovation and technological development in the animal health sector.

Since it launched last year, this website has been publishing blogs and case studies and the team, led by RCVS Council member Chris Tufnell and Director of Leadership and Innovation Anthony Roberts, has been talking to audiences both within and without the veterinary professions about the project and veterinary innovation in general.

Events spoken at have included the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Conference in Brussels and the Veterinary Public Health Association/ Association of Government Vets 'Embracing Innovation' Conference.

To celebrate the year since the project started, ViVet has now launched a brand new resource called ViVet Bites which are short interviews with innovators who are making waves in the profession through technological development, new business models and other inspiring ways of working.

The first person to be interviewed for ViVet Bites is Sam Joseph, co-founder of StreetVet, which has some 300 volunteer veterinary surgeons and nurses providing free veterinary care to animals owned by the homeless community in a number of cities across the UK.

In his interview Sam talks about how he and Jade Statt started StreetVet, his thoughts on the future of veterinary innovation and how vets can use their problem-solving skills to become innovators.

Dr Chris Tufnell, who is leading the ViVet project, said: "We are delighted that Sam has agreed to be our first ever ViVet Bites interviewee and his story demonstrates that innovation isn't just about new pieces of equipment or software, but is about new ways of thinking about how veterinary services can be delivered – including to some of the most vulnerable in society.

"I am also very proud of the work that the ViVet project has been undertaking in the year since it has launched. Throughout the year, together with Anthony Roberts I have met many people working in the innovation and healthcare space, learning about current and future trends in innovation and providing regulatory advice and support.

"We have a very exciting year to look forward to with some upcoming events and competitions. Make sure to regularly check in on this website and to subscribe to the ViVet e-newsletter for news and events and to keep up-to-date with the latest blogs, case studies and ViVet Bites."

A podcast and a webinar featuring Chris Tufnell and Anthony Roberts speaking about the ViVet project and what it means are also available to download from the resources section of the ViVet website.

# College welcomes new Director of Education

At the RCVS Council meeting on Thursday 27 September members and staff said farewell to our outgoing Director of Education and officially welcomed her successor to the role.

Christine Warman, who joined the College as Head of Education in 2013 and became Director of the Education Department in March 2015, retires on October 12 this year.

In her tenure as Director of Education Christine has been involved in a huge range of projects, including the launch of the revamped Fellowship, a shift towards an outcomes-focussed concept of continuing professional development and the Graduate Outcomes project, a consultation for which will be publicly launched later this year.

Christine said: "I've had a wonderful five years at the RCVS – it's been a real privilege to have the chance to work with so many talented people and to contribute to a number of exciting and challenging projects. I've been proud to lead the Education Department and I'm delighted to be handing over to Linda and wish her, and everyone at the College, every success in the future."

Dr Linda Prescott-Clements joined the RCVS as Christine Warman's successor as Director of Education in August 2018, having previously worked in senior roles related to the education of health professionals within both the NHS and Higher Education sector. These roles encompassed developing competency and quality assurance frameworks as well as assessment programmes in undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education.

Speaking of her appointment to the RCVS Linda said: "I'm absolutely delighted to be joining RCVS at such an exciting time, when proposals for meaningful and positive educational initiatives are being discussed in consultation with the profession, to address the challenges around ensuring new graduates feel confident and well prepared for their career as a veterinary surgeon and moving towards a supportive, learning culture. I look forward to working with an exceptional team to support our Education Committee and Council in ensuring the best possible education for the profession."

Lizzie Lockett, RCVS CEO, added: "Chris has been a huge asset to the RCVS and will be much missed by all those who have worked with her. She has directed a range of innovative projects that have contributed to the UK being known for some of the highest veterinary educational standards in the world.

"As we welcome Linda to the team, excited about all the skills she will contribute to our work going forward, we are sad to lose Chris, and wish her every happiness in her retirement."

More information about the Education Department and its priorities can be found on the website.

# President Amanda Boag welcomes new MRCVS

These new vets needed to pass this examination in order to become members of the RCVS and therefore practise in the UK, as they gained their veterinary qualifications from universities that are outside the UK and that are not recognised by the College.

## **This year's successful candidates were:**

- Camila Abad Gonzalez, Austral University of Chile, Valdivia, Chile
- Pierce Edward DurovDVM, St George's University, St George's, Grenada
- Tawanda Lee-Roy Gambanga BVSc, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
- Rebecca Ann Kageler BVSc, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
- Elham Mahmood DVM, St George's University, St George's, Grenada
- Samantha Elizabeth Millette DVM, Ross University, Basseterre, St Kitts
- Mary Elizabeth Nelson DVM, St George's University, St George's, Grenada
- Shahram Nour Mohammadzadeh DVM, Tehran University, Tehran, Iran
- Ilaboya Victor Ogedegbe DVM, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria
- Lionel Edward Wells DVM, St George's University, St George's, Grenada
- Kate Charlotte Williams DVM, St George's University, St George's, Grenada
- Khurram Ben Zahid DVM, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Thirty candidates sat the exam, with 12 passing. The exam consisted of both written papers and clinical, oral and practical examinations. The clinical oral practical was held at Nottingham Vet School, with the written exams being held at Central Hall Westminster.

On Wednesday 29 August, alongside their friends and family, eight of the 12 successful candidates joined Amanda and Lizzie for a ceremony at the RCVS offices in Belgravia House, followed by drinks and food.

During this ceremony, all candidates made their professional declarations in which they promised to pursue their work with integrity, accept their responsibilities to the public, clients, the profession and the RCVS and ensure the health and welfare of animals in their care. The full declaration is available on the College's website.

Before taking the registrants through their professional declarations, Amanda Boag welcomed the candidates and their families. Speaking after the event she said: "It takes a great amount of hard work and determination to be able to pass the Stat Exam and so it is a very proud day for me as RCVS President to get the opportunity to welcome the successful candidates to the Register and take them through their declarations in front of their friends and family."

## **One of the successful candidates and new MRCVS, Shahram Nour Mohammadzadeh, commented on the day:**

"The exam was very challenging, but I'm so happy I've passed and feel so privileged to be able to work in the UK. I've always had a love of animals; my uncle in Iran was a vet, so he encouraged that passion in me. My wife is British, and I moved to the United Kingdom six years ago, so I wanted to take this exam. The atmosphere is very friendly here at the College, and I have met many people that I wouldn't have expected to. We've all exchanged numbers too, so it's been great networking."

## **A fellow new member, Tawanda Lee-Roy Gambanga, added:**

"It has always been a goal of mine to pass this exam and become an MRCVS. To be honest, it has also been the goal of everyone who went to my university in Zimbabwe! Looking to the future, my passion is in small animals, medicine and some surgery, too."

# Wellbeing Awards looking for UK's happiest practice

In partnership with the Society for Practising Veterinary Surgeons, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' Mind Matters Initiative is looking for the happiest practices in the UK for this year's Vet Wellbeing Awards.

The Awards are now in their third year, having been started in 2016 in recognition of the fact that there were relatively high levels of work-related stress and poor mental health within the veterinary professions.

The aim of the Awards has been to highlight the positivity of the profession by identifying examples of veterinary workplaces that were demonstrating their commitment to improving staff wellbeing through initiatives, management systems and other forms of staff engagement.

In the intervening years the Awards have evolved and, this year, they are placing a renewed emphasis on practices that take a holistic approach to wellbeing, with the Award judges looking for evidence that workplaces are devoted to improving wellbeing across the board.

Lizzie Lockett, Director of MMI, explains: "This year we aren't just looking for practices that have nice initiatives such as fresh fruit bowls or free staff massages – although these are, of course, contributors to wellbeing – but want workplaces to show us evidence of practice-wide protocols, policies and initiatives that really do enhance wellbeing.

"What we are particularly keen to showcase with these awards is that wellbeing isn't a bolt-on luxury that only practices with lots of money, time and staff can invest in but that it's something that practices of all sizes can engage in and that there is a very strong business case for doing so as it improves retention rates, reduces stress and improves team cohesion."

There are three award categories that practices can enter depending on the number of employees: small practice (15 or fewer full time equivalent team members (FTE)), medium practice (16 to 50 FTEs) or large practice (51 or FTEs).

The Award application form covers six key aspects of work that, if well-managed, can promote wellbeing and reduce the risk of work-related stress, and the Award judges will be looking for evidence of commitment to enhancing wellbeing for each of these.

## These are:

- Work demands
- Workload and work scheduling
- Relationships at work
- Career development
- Communication at work
- Promoting physical and psychological health at work
- Further information and examples of the type of evidence and initiatives that the Awards are looking for in each of these areas are available on the Vet Wellbeing Awards website and in a booklet available for download from the resources section of the Mind Matters website.

The Awards' entry form can also be found on the Vet Wellbeing Awards website in addition to case studies of winners from previous years.

Throughout the application period the RCVS will also be publishing a series of podcasts featuring interviews with previous years' award winners, talking about their own initiatives and how improving staff wellbeing has benefitted their business.

Nick Stuart, former SPVS President and Vet Wellbeing Awards Coordinator, says: "In the previous two years we have had some excellent and very deserving winners who have some outstanding stories to tell about the steps they've taken to improve wellbeing and the difference it's made to their teams, their business, the clients and the animals they treat.

"We look forward to seeing more excellent entries this year. If practices make this a team effort, brainstorming and sharing ideas and generating feedback then the entry process itself can be an exercise in engagement and provide a

useful audit of wellbeing.

The closing date for entries is Friday 23 November 2018. The prize for each category includes two registrations and banquet tickets for SPVS/Veterinary Management Group (VMG) Congress 2018 where the winners will be announced to the media and will be available for interview.

You can also follow the awards on Twitter @vetwellbeing and Facebook /vetwellbeingawards/.

# Knowledge Awards: Quality Improvement in Practice

We are delighted to bring you the Knowledge Awards for 2018/19, this year focused on continuous quality improvement (QI).

## Who can apply for this award?

This award is open to anyone who works within a veterinary setting. We are particularly interested in applications from a practice setting including, but not limited to, those from the administration team, veterinary nurses, practice managers and surgeons at all levels.

## What is the award for?

Have you or a member of your team taken a lead on implementing an improvement in your work? We would like to recognise you for this. The awards will highlight the outstanding examples of QI in practice, rewarding those that are continuously striving towards a more efficient and enjoyable practice environment.

## What's involved?

To apply for yourself or on behalf of your practice team: please complete the application form 'Apply for a QI award – application form' and fill in the case study.

To nominate a colleague: please complete the form 'Nominate a colleague or your team for a QI award – application form' and fill in the case study. You might have been involved in the improvement and therefore have enough information to fill these forms in yourself, or you might need to ask your colleague who led the improvement for some information.

You will also need to familiarise yourself with the Terms and Conditions of the award.

All the documents you need are also available to download at the bottom of this page.

Please send your completed application form to [ebvm@rcvsknowledge.org](mailto:ebvm@rcvsknowledge.org).

## Help with your application

We have been working with a cross-section of the veterinary profession to put together a suite of resources and courses to support veterinary teams in their continuous quality improvement projects. Improvements are wide ranging; some examples are:

- how you have decreased congestion in the waiting room
- implemented a surgical safety checklist
- how you have used benchmarking results for neutering to put a new guideline in place

## There are so many ways that you can get involved.

The resources and courses are available in the quality improvement section of our website. If you are new to QI, we have a three-minute video to introduce you to the subject.

We are constantly adding more resources to support you with your application. If you would like to stay up-to-date with new tools as they become available, please send an email to our Grants Executive, Kate Jefferies.

## What happens if my application is selected to win?

If your application/nomination is successful, the applicant/nominee/leader of the QI initiative within the practice will become a Knowledge Champion and could be in for a £250 prize, plus we will cover your costs to join us at our next big event. All applicants are welcome to opt-in to work with Knowledge to share their experiences in applying QI, be it through our blog, publishing in our journal Veterinary Evidence, or maybe even presenting at one of our conferences!

## Deadlines

This award became available on 19th February 2018. Deadlines to submit your applications are 1st November 2018. We anticipate that this will give you some time to initiate an improvement in your workplace setting (if you haven't already) and to gather enough information to see if the change has made a difference. As well as positive impacts, you may find that some changes have a negative impact that you weren't expecting. That's ok. Quality improvement should be continuous; it's all about making a change, seeing how well that change does and then improving on it again, and again.

# RCVS saddened to learn of the death of former President

Amanda Boag, current President of the RCVS, commented: "Brian had a remarkable career, having a truly significant impact on the veterinary profession, and he will be remembered for his dedication and positive contributions to the field.

"During his time as RCVS President, Brian pushed forward the development of veterinary specialisation, defining the means by which specialisations can be organised, as well as the type of postgraduate training and qualifications that will meet the requirements of the profession. He also helped fundraise towards a huge £165,000 target for the RCVS Library, which is still a much-loved and well-used resource.

"Brian was also a co-founder of BSAVA, one of the most esteemed organisations for small animal vets which held its first meeting at the Royal Veterinary College on March 7, 1957. The association was set up to 'promote the cultural, scientific, and professional interests of veterinary surgeons and practitioners engaged in small-animal practice, teaching and research' and, as a member, I can say that it has been successful in this regard.

"BSAVA's annual congress is now one of the largest annual veterinary gatherings in the UK, and I can personally hold testament to the remarkable work it does, and the impact Brian's efforts continue to have all these years on, with the organisation now holding over 10,000 members.

"He will be missed by his many colleagues and acquaintances from the veterinary world, and our sympathies are with his family and friends. Brian's work has been a true inspiration to all veterinarians who are seeking positive change in our ever-changing veterinary landscape."

# Brexit

Since 24 June 2016 when the UK voted to leave the European Union, we have been working to create a unified voice for the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, preparing for the risks and opportunities that Brexit may bring.

Here you can learn how we're working to ensure the best possible outcome for animal health and welfare, public health and the veterinary professions post-Brexit.

## Webinar

In November 2017 President Stephen May, Senior Vice President Chris Tufnell, and BVA Senior Vice President Gudrun Ravetz hosted a webinar to update the veterinary profession on Brexit work. You can watch a recording of this webinar for free through Webinar Vet.

## Latest news

- 20 September 2018 - Statement regarding the migration report
- 13 September 2018 - Statement on Defra Brexit strategy
- 28 June 2018 - Over 1,600 EU vet professionals respond to second RCVS Brexit survey
- 5 February 2018 - Government asked to exempt overseas veterinary students in UK from immigration targets
- 8 November 2017 - Strong case for vets to be on shortage occupation list
- 7 November 2017 - European vets call on Brexit negotiators to secure animal welfare, surveillance and medicines
- 27 October 2017 - Profession-wide project formed to assess potential impact of Brexit
- 13 June 2017 - College calls for certainty around the rights of EU nationals working in the UK

## FAQs

You can find a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the impact of the EU referendum on our Registration page.

You can also view our leaflet summarising the key facts, and our principles and policies.

## Brexit Principles

We have now published our three 'Brexit Principles' which will serve to guide our relationship with Government during the forthcoming Brexit negotiations. RCVS Council formally adopted the Principles at its meeting on Thursday 2 March 2017.

### They are:

- that vital veterinary work continues to get done;
  - that high standards of animal health and welfare remain and improve; and,
  - that the RCVS is a global force for good.
- You can read more about the Brexit Principles on our dedicated Brexit Principles page.

## Presidential Brexit Taskforce

On 26 July 2016 we held the first meeting of our Brexit Presidential Taskforce with the central purpose of putting the veterinary profession in charge of its future. The members of the Taskforce are:

Senior Vice-President, Stephen May  
Council member, Chris Tufnell  
CEO, Lizzie Lockett  
President, Amanda Boag  
Operations Director, Corrie McCann  
Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson  
Chair of Education, Susan Dawson  
Director of Education, Linda Prescott-Clements  
Council member, Stuart Reid  
VN Council member, Liz Cox

## Brexit roundtable

On 24 February 2017 we co-hosted a 'Brexit roundtable' with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) at the Palace of Westminster.

The event aimed to create a unified voice within the veterinary profession on shared goals, and to ask for the approval of our Brexit Principles from the BVA and its divisions.

Representatives from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and many other veterinary associations were also in attendance, and Nigel Gibbens, the Chief Veterinary Officer, thanked the RCVS for positively engaging with the Brexit process.

### **Brexit survey**

In early 2017 the Institute for Employment Studies sent a confidential survey on our behalf to 5,572 veterinary surgeons registered UK veterinary surgeons who graduated from a vet school in the EU (excluding the UK), as well as around 100 non-UK EU-trained veterinary nurses.

### **The survey asked a wide range of questions about how these individuals felt:**

- that the vote to leave the EU had affected them
- about their future working in the UK veterinary sector
- the College had dealt with the issue of Brexit
- You can find a summary of the results in the full report.

### **Letter to the Prime Minister**

On 18 October 2016 we and the British Veterinary Association sent a letter to the Prime Minister outlining how we want to work with the government to ensure the best possible outcome for animal health and welfare, public health and the veterinary profession post-Brexit.

You can read the full letter, as well as the response.

For more information please email Ben Myring at [b.myring@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:b.myring@rcvs.org.uk).

# We need to talk about veterinary diversity

**Amanda Boag - RCVS President**

In an ideal world, if everyone simply treated each other as individuals, I would not feel the need to be starting this conversation. Sadly, I don't believe we live in an ideal world and as I have got older, I have become more aware of the structural elements in society that act to provide hidden barriers, as well as the fact that out-and-out discrimination, where individuals are prejudged on the basis of some characteristic or other, still exists. I don't think that's healthy for our professions and for some people within them.

So let's start talking, and more importantly listening, about this. Earlier this month, Lizzie Lockett and I were delighted to have a meeting with Navaratnam Partheeban MRCVS, Senior Lecturer in Livestock Production at the Royal Agricultural University and one of the founders of the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDS), a group founded to celebrate, promote, educate and support people from all backgrounds on ethnicity and diversity within the veterinary professions.

Partheeban told me about the discrimination, both explicit and implicit, he had been subjected to by both clients and professional colleagues during his career. I am sure others have similar stories and experiences. The aim of BVEDS therefore is to provide a voice for people to celebrate and appreciate diversity, share their experiences and support people regarding issues around ethnicity and diversity and it's important that we support them to open up a dialogue around these issues.

We should all play a part in flagging whenever we see or hear things, whether from clients or other professionals, that are discriminatory. But let's also start thinking and talking openly about what structural elements might exist to hamper equal career opportunities for those already within the profession and/or prevent younger people from thinking about veterinary work (both veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing) as a good career option for them. There will of course be a diversity (!) of opinions on how important and relevant this is and what we can do.

I look forward to hearing yours.

# Addressing the emotional impact of veterinary practice

Schwartz Rounds provide a safe, reflective forum for clinical and non-clinical staff to come together and discuss the emotional aspects of their job. Following the success of Schwartz Rounds in the NHS, the Mind Matters Initiative is currently developing a pilot to explore their effectiveness in a veterinary context.

Here, Amy Martin writes about how a Schwartz Round helped identify and address themes of guilt and anger among colleagues at her veterinary hospital group.

### **Amy Martin BSc (Hons) RVN, DipAVN, DipHE CVN NCert(BusDev) MBVNA General Manager.**

Amy is a Registered Veterinary Nurse with 12 years management experience. Her passion is the wellbeing of staff, it is her belief that happy staff deliver phenomenal patient care.

### **Addressing the emotional impact of veterinary practice**

Back in 2017 we decided that Schwartz Rounds would be useful for our organisation, a veterinary hospital group of three practices. Schwartz Rounds are a unique forum that enables clinical and non-clinical staff to come together to discuss the emotional and psychological impacts of our work. As an organisation focused on the wellbeing of its staff this seemed like a good fit for us.

This Round, our fifth, was called 'Bad Endings' – a title that was sure to inspire a powerful Round, but just how powerful was a surprise to me. The stories were very different but it quickly became apparent during the group discussion that many of us had not reflected on our emotions with regards to euthanasia and death in our patients. Operating as we do in a busy first opinion practice, taking both emergencies and referrals, it can be hard to take any time between cases to examine the emotional impact what we have just witnessed has on us as people.

Themes emerged, such as guilt over calling the right time for euthanasia, anger with the situation and ultimately sadness that we had to let another one go. Deep bonds are formed with our patients over many years. We first see them as babies and let them go as (mostly) as old pets. What also emerged was the bonds we also form with the owners of our patients and when we lose a patient this can often mean saying goodbye to old friends.

All our staff, clinical and non-clinical, have been invited to Rounds and we have had good attendance from all disciplines. It has helped us to see our work from one another's point of view and has already begun to effect change in our organisation as a ripple from the issues discussed during Rounds.

Facilitating is not an easy job and this time I found myself swept away remembering stories from my own clinical practice and shed tears along with a number of other staff members. The great thing about this is that I didn't feel awkward, I felt as though I was among friends. Hopefully showing my vulnerability has helped to indicate that no matter what your position these feelings are normal, can and should be discussed and acknowledged.

We have noticed during other Rounds, in our short history of running them, that euthanasia is a topic which has been revisited many times and we have a feeling this will continue in future Rounds. It will be important to keep exploring this to enable us to continue to be compassionate caregivers. The support and encouragement from The Point of Care Foundation has been invaluable as we embark on being the first veterinary practice to offer Rounds to its staff.

Amy Martin, August 2018

### **What are Schwartz Rounds?**

Schwartz Rounds are a safe, confidential, voluntary, reflective forum for all staff, both clinical and non-clinical to come together to discuss the emotional and social aspects of their jobs. Rounds follow a standard model determining how they should be run, ensuring that they can be replicated across different settings. They normally take place once a month, for an hour at a time, usually at lunch time with food provided. The basic format of a Round is that a panel of three or four staff members from different disciplines present stories of personal experiences, based on a topic or case. After the stories have been told, two trained facilitators open the discussion to the audience, inviting audience members to reflect on the stories and their own experiences. Rounds are purely reflective, and the intention is that outcomes or solutions are not discussed.

The Rounds are licensed by The Point of Care Foundation who provide assistance and training in embedding Rounds with organisational practice.

For more information on Schwartz Rounds contact [schwartz@pointofcarefoundation.org.uk](mailto:schwartz@pointofcarefoundation.org.uk)

# Events

## **RCVS Fellowship Day - tickets still available!**

5 October - The Royal Institution, London

## **BVNA Congress**

12 - 14 October - Telford International Centre, Shropshire

## **Emergency & Critical Care Veterinary Congress**

8 - 9 November - The Majestic Hotel, Harrogate

## **Practice Standard Scheme Awards - Celebrating Success**

15 November - Crowne Plaza London Docklands, London

## **Introduction to the UK veterinary profession**

20 - 21 November - London

# No finding of disgraceful conduct for Cheshire-based vet

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Paul Stuart Thomason MRCVS took place from 6 to 9 August 2018 and concerned the pre-purchase examination (PPE) of a horse named Reba.

On 8 April 2016, Dr Thomason undertook a PPE of Reba, and the charges raised against him related to a potential or actual conflict of interest between Dr Thomason and the vendor and a failure to inform the prospective buyer of this conflict.

Dr Thomason initially denied both heads of charge, but on the third day of the hearing (8 August 2018) he changed his plea and admitted the charge in its entirety.

The first part of the charge related to the fact that the vendor of Reba was a client of Dr Thomason's practice and a personal friend of his, and he therefore had a potential and/or actual conflict of interest. The professional and personal relationship was not disclosed by Dr Thomason to the prospective purchaser before the vetting took place on 19 April 2016. The prospective purchaser only discovered Dr Thomason's client relationship with the Vendor when reading the vetting certificate at home, and stated that, in the past, she had had a similar experience in which the horse was then found to be lame. She later found out the extent of the personal relationship, when invited to join the Vendor on a social media site.

The Committee found that, in this set of circumstances, Dr Thomason should not have undertaken the PPE at all, and, at the very least, disclosed his personal and professional relationship with the vendor.

The Committee also found that, although Dr Thomason did have a system in place to inform any prospective purchasers if the vendor was a client of his practice, this failed to work on this occasion and neither the practice nor Dr Thomason told the prospective buyer that the vendor was a client before booking the PPE. Dr Thomason had no similar system in place to disclose any close friendships with vendors.

Dr Thomason did not consider there was a conflict of interest as he felt confident he could carry out the PPE impartially. In addition, it was his belief that the vendor had been alerted to the conflict through a system in place at his practice, implemented to safeguard against this type of error. He stated that he in no way attempted to hide his relationship with the vendor to the prospective purchaser.

It was not alleged that Dr Thomason had acted dishonestly.

Ultimately, the Committee found Dr Thomason not guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said:

"Whilst the Committee concluded that the respondent's view of his obligations to disclose both the professional and personal relationships he had with the vendor was mistaken, it did not find any improper motivation on his part. It has already noted that he sought to disclose to the prospective purchaser through his system the fact that the vendor was a professional client of his.

"The Committee has weighed all these matters very carefully. It is for the client to determine whether or not to proceed with a PPE when in possession of all relevant facts in relation to any potential conflict of interest, and not for the veterinary surgeon to decide. The autonomy of the client must be respected.

"The Committee was firmly of the opinion that a failure to comply with the Code is very serious. However, taking into account the particulars of this case, the Committee does not consider that the actions of the respondent amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

Please note: this news story is to assist with understanding the circumstances of the case and the Committee's decision, it does not form part of the findings or decision. The Committee's full findings and decision is the only authoritative document.

# Disciplinary Committee suspends overseas-based vet from the Register

The Disciplinary Committee has decided to suspend an overseas-based veterinary surgeon for a period of 12 months.

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for James Hugh Alexander Crawford MRCVS took place on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 August 2018 and concerned a fabricated email, which Dr Crawford claimed was from a veterinary officer at the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), now known as the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Dr Crawford sent the email to his client, Mrs X, on 15 July 2014, the day on which Mrs X's horse was due for insemination using horse semen supplied from a horse in Germany. However, the semen had arrived without the Intra Trade Certificate, a requirement for intra-EU inseminations, and so Dr Crawford proceeded to contact the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for alternative authorisation.

Just after 4:30pm on that day, Mrs X received a text from Dr Crawford advising her that he had received authorisation from the AHVLA, and would forward to Mrs X the AHVLA authorisation email. It later transpired that that the email had in fact been fabricated by Dr Crawford using an email that he had previously received from the AHVLA regarding another matter.

## **Dr Crawford faced the following charges:**

1. Fabricating an e-mail purporting to be from the veterinary officer at the AVHLA, authorising use of semen from a horse for insemination, when in fact he had not received such authorisation.
2. Dishonesty in relation to the e-mail described above
3. His conduct gave rise to spread of infectious disease which had the potential to affect equine animal health and welfare in the region

Dr Crawford admitted the first two charges, but denied that his actions had given rise to the risk of disease.

The Committee found the first two charges proved, and moved on to determine the facts of the third charge. They took into account that Dr Crawford had received verbal confirmation that the semen was safe, and that the health papers had been stamped accordingly. He had not, however, seen a copy of this certificate and so there was no guarantee that the semen was safe to use at the time he sent the fabricated email. On consideration of the facts, the Committee found this charge proved, as Mrs X's mare could have been infected and subsequently could have adversely affected equine animal health and welfare in the region.

They also found that his entire course of action had fallen far short of what is expected of a veterinary surgeon, and that it amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

When determining sanction, the Committee took into account a number of aggravating factors, namely the risk of injury to animals, an element of pre-meditation, a disregard for the role of the AHVLA, impersonating a fellow veterinary surgeon, and intending to deceive a veterinary surgeon as well as a member of the public.

It did also, however, take into account the mitigating factors – that there was no injury to the animal, and that it was a single isolated incident from which Dr Crawford did not stand to make any financial gain.

The Committee therefore decided to order the Registrar to suspend Dr Crawford's registration for 12 months.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee did consider whether to remove Dr Crawford from the Register. However, in light of the significant mitigation in this case, the fact that this was an isolated incident in an otherwise unblemished career, together with his acceptance from the outset that he had been dishonest and his assurance that he would never behave in this way again, the Committee decided that in all the circumstances to remove him from the Register would be disproportionate."

Dr Crawford can lodge an appeal with the Privy Council within 28 days of being notified of the Disciplinary Committee's decision.

Please note: this news story is to assist with understanding the circumstances of the case and the Committee's decision, it does not form part of the findings or decision. The Committee's full findings and decision is the only authoritative document.

# Reprimand and warning issued to Essex-based vet convicted of harassment

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Donald Stuart Bremner MRCVS took place from Wednesday 22nd until Thursday 23rd August 2018, and concerned his conviction on 31st October 2017 at Colchester Magistrates Court for harassment of his ex-wife, as well as perverting the course of justice by sending his daughter an e-mail, pressuring her to ask her mother to withdraw the charges against him.

The Respondent pleaded guilty to both of the charges against him, and stated that he did not understand the conditions of his bail being that he could not contact his ex-wife. In addition to this, he expressed shame and remorse at his actions, and explained that his behaviour was triggered by extreme anger, grief and stress.

In relation to the charges, the Respondent was committed to prison for 12 months, suspended for 12 months, ordered to comply with a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement within 12 months, and ordered to pay £85 in costs and £115 as a surcharge to pay for victim services.

The Committee found the facts proved based on the certified copy of the certificate of conviction, as well as the Respondent's admissions to the facts of the charges. It was satisfied that the Respondent brought the profession into disrepute by the seriousness of his convictions. In addition, the Committee regarded the Respondent as having deficient insight and a need to fully accept personal responsibility for his actions and their consequences.

The Committee was also satisfied that the nature of the communications sent by the Respondent which led to the convictions and the breach of bail conditions, coupled with deficient insight amounted to serious professional misconduct and rendered him unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

The Committee considered various mitigating factors including the fact that no actual harm occurred to any animal, there were no concerns raised about the respondent's practice, that he has a long and unblemished career, and that he showed some insight into his offences which continues to develop.

The Committee also took into account that preventing the Respondent from practicing could mean the loss of jobs for 33 or so employees, which weighed heavily on their decision. The Committee also agreed with the RCVS's submissions that there was a very low likelihood of repetition of the offending behaviour. Aggravating factors included the emotional harm caused to the Respondent's ex-wife, and that the harassment was a course of conduct sustained over a period of five months.

Therefore, when taking into account the particulars of this case, the Committee decided to impose a reprimand and warning on the basis that it would be proportionate to maintain public confidence in the profession in light of the serious nature of these charges.

Chitra Karve, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee was of the view that the conviction for intending to interfere with the course of justice was particularly serious, in light of the need to maintain public confidence in the profession, because it involved a disregard of proper criminal process.

"However, a particular feature of this case is the risk to the jobs of 33 or so employees if the Respondent were to be prevented from practising as a result of the Committee's imposition of a sanction. It is this mitigating factor which weighed most heavily with the committee and they therefore concluded that both a Reprimand as to this conduct and a Warning as to any future conduct is sufficient and proportionate in this case to meet the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper standards."

Mr Bremner has 28 days in which to make an appeal about the Committee's decision to the Privy Council.

Please note: this news story is to assist with understanding the circumstances of the case and the Committee's decision, it does not form part of the findings or decision. The Committee's full decision and findings are the only authoritative documentation.