

# RCVS news

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*Text-only version of  
RCVS News email*

# RCVS outlines plan for ‘under care’ review

The RCVS is today (13 September 2019) publishing further details about its plans for a wide-ranging review of its guidance to the veterinary professions on ‘under care’ and out-of-hours emergency cover, including a broad timetable for the review’s three key phases of evidence gathering, policy drafting, and public consultation.

The review, announced earlier this year, was recommended to RCVS Council by its Standards Committee following its lengthy and detailed exploration of the implications of new technologies for both animal health and welfare and veterinary regulation. The main areas under consideration include the provision of 24-hour emergency cover and the interpretation and application of an animal being under the care of a veterinary surgeon.

The initial stages of this review had been drafted for Standards Committee to consider at its meeting on 9 September, where the outline timetable was also discussed. Commenting on its significance, Standards Committee Chair Melissa Donald (pictured right), said:

“This is set to become one of our most fundamental reviews of RCVS guidance in recent years.

“Considering the complexity of the issues in question, and their importance to animal owners and the professions alike, it is vital that we allow ourselves enough time to ensure this review is as thorough and comprehensive as possible.

“We have a clear responsibility to seek, understand and, where we can, accommodate the opinions and experiences of as many different people from within and around the professions and the public as possible. I would urge my fellow vets and vet nurses to please find some time to consider these issues very carefully over the coming weeks and months, and to send us their views.”

The review will comprise several key stages and is expected to take around 12 months to complete. The outline timetable, which may be subject to change, is as follows:

October – January: six-week Call for Evidence, followed by independent qualitative analysis of all evidence received  
February – March: Select Committee-style meetings and independent qualitative analysis of additional evidence gathered [NB this stage is subject to Standards Committee requirements, depending on the evidence gathered.]  
April – June: Consider all evidence and draft any new policy  
July – August: six-week public consultation on draft policy  
September – October: independent review of consultation responses, and production of any proposals for change  
November: Finalise any proposals for change and publish any new guidance.

To support and promote the various stages of the review the College is also planning a programme of stakeholder engagement, and will also provide regular updates on progress to both Council and the wider profession.

Members of the professions and the public will be able to follow the progress of the review via its dedicated webpage.

# Thirty new Fellows welcomed at fourth RCVS Fellowship Day

At the fourth annual Fellowship Day on Friday, 20 September, the RCVS Fellowship welcomed some 30 new veterinary surgeons who were joined by many existing RCVS Fellows for a day of scientific excellence which showcased the breadth and depth of veterinary knowledge.

Furthermore, the occasion also saw Professor John Innes welcomed as the new Chair of the RCVS Fellowship for a three-year term during which he will be responsible for meeting the initiative's strategic aims and setting its priorities.

The day was opened by Professor Nick Bacon, outgoing Chair of the Fellowship, who welcomed Professor Innes before reflecting on his three year term as Chair.

In his opening speech, Professor Bacon said: "As I come to the end of my three-year term, I look back with immense pride about everything that has been achieved by the initiative in this relatively short time-frame. We have welcomed over 150 Fellows under the three new routes to Fellowship since 2016, and developed a three-year strategic plan to support the Fellowship in achieving its aim of becoming a thriving learned society."

He also introduced the launch of the new Directory of Fellows, adding: "I am also delighted to announce that our new online Fellowship Directory is launching today, which will give members of the public and the profession a greater insight into who is in the Fellowship and why, as well as promoting the Fellowship as a repository of veterinary knowledge and expertise.

"In the fullness of time, every Fellow will be listed on the Directory and their profiles will showcase how they are promoting scientific excellence, furthering professional skills and practice, or enriching public discourse about veterinary science."

Following this the new Fellowships were awarded. In total 30 new Fellows were welcomed to the Fellowship on the day – 19 for meritorious contributions to clinical practice; 5 for meritorious contributions to knowledge; and 6 for meritorious contributions to the profession. A full list of those welcomed to the Fellowship this year is available to download from our Fellowship page.

The platform was then handed to Dr John (Iain) Glen, the day's keynote speaker, who gave a presentation titled: 'Try, try and try again: some personal reflections on the development of the anaesthetic propofol'. In his presentation he detailed his ground-breaking work at AstraZeneca where he discovered and developed propofol – one of the most common anaesthetic drugs in use today.

Following Dr Glen's speech the second annual 'Fellows of the Future?' competition took place, in which eight current students, who were a mix of undergraduates and postgraduates, presented their current research to the delegates and a judging panel comprising Professor Nick Bacon, Dr Glen, Professor John Innes and Dr Niall Connell.

The winner of the competition was James Statton, from the University of Nottingham, with his presentation on his research examining students; transition into veterinary education, and whether their expectations match their experience. His prize was a £200 book voucher.

The presentation by undergraduate student Luke Gunter, of the Royal Veterinary College, on the effects of FSTL3-deletion on trophoblast migration was judged highly commended by the panel, and he was awarded a £100 voucher.

"The Fellows of the Future competition this year was fantastic, with a variety of well thought-out presentations from talented vet students," said Professor Bacon.

"The competition is a great way to encourage engagement with the Fellowship from those at the start of their veterinary careers and also highlights the amazing breadth and quality of research being undertaken by veterinary students across the UK."

There then followed 'Fellows in Focus', a series of six 10-minute talks from new and existing Fellows on a topic of their choice, with the aim of shining a light on fascinating areas of work currently to be found within the RCVS Fellowship. These were:

'Nature's wings and their passengers' by Brian Coles HonFRCVS

'High mortality in a sheep flock caused by tick-borne diseases – a diagnostic challenge' by Dr Roger Daniel FRCVS, Farm-animal Pathologist at the Wales Veterinary Science Centre

'One Pain: how pets contribute to translational research' by Dr Duncan Lascelles FRCVS, Director of the Comparative Pain Research and Education Centre at North Carolina State University

'The hidden curriculum: why it matters' by Professor Liz Mossop FRCVS, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Student Development and

Engagement at the University of Lincoln

'Bridging gaps through distance mentoring: training, career development and outreach' by Dr Nicola Parry FRCVS, an independent veterinary pathology consultant based in the United States

'Rare or well done?' by Professor Stuart Reid CBE FRCVS, Principal of the Royal Veterinary College

RCVS President, Niall Connell, then addressed the crowd and presented outgoing Chair Professor Bacon with scroll for his contributions during his tenure as Chair.

Professor Bacon then welcomed the new Chair, Professor Innes, to the stage to close the day.

On his new appointment as Chair, Professor Innes said: "I am greatly looking forward to working with my fellow Fellowship board members, the RCVS team at Belgravia House who so ably support the initiative, and the members of the Advancement of the Professions Committee and RCVS Council who provide the vital oversight of the initiative.

"I also hope I can bring to bear the knowledge of my 22 years in academia and my current experience in a national role for a large veterinary practice group, and provide insight in to veterinary practice in all domestic species for Fellows, the wider veterinary professions and the public."

For more information about the Fellowship – and to find out how to make an application to join – visit our dedicated Fellowship page.

Videos and written reports from the Fellowship Day will also be available in due course.

# Second Mind Matters Research Symposium focuses on the international evidence-base

Delegates from across the international veterinary profession attended the Second Mind Matters Research Symposium at Church House in Westminster on Tuesday 24 September, where the focus was on the evidence-base for mental health problems in the veterinary profession, and how to best prevent and treat mental ill-health and poor wellbeing.

The event was opened by Lizzie Lockett, the Director of the Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) and RCVS CEO, who welcomed the almost 100 delegates who had come from across the UK and as far afield as Canada, the United States and the Netherlands.

She then handed over to Professor Stuart Reid CBE, Principal of the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) and, until July, Chair of the Mind Matters Initiative. In his plenary speech Professor Reid gave an overview of the highlights of the first five years of MMI including the fact that it had:

delivered around 60 mental health awareness training courses, many in conjunction with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association;

financially supported the Vetlife charity, in particular its Health Support service and its helpline for veterinary professionals in distress; launched &me – a joint mental health destigmatisation campaign with the Doctors' Support Network aimed at health professionals; run two series of online mindfulness courses with the Webinar Vet as well as a series of webinars about sleep which had nearly 500 delegates across 13 countries;

hosted a 'Medical Mind Matters' conference with members of the veterinary, pharmacy, dental and medical professions, to talk about how the health professions can share best practice on mental health and wellbeing;

launched the joint MMI and Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) Vet Wellbeing Awards which showcases veterinary practices that have staff wellbeing at the heart of all they do and are now in their fourth year;

produced and published numerous marketing materials and publications including pens, badges, booklets and stickers; and supported a number of other projects including the student-led VetKind initiative and the Vet NI peer support network in Northern Ireland.

Professor Reid estimated that, taking into account all the various different strands of the initiative, MMI had come into direct contact with around 5-10% of veterinary profession but, through its destigmatisation, wellbeing and awareness-raising work, potentially many more members of the professions.

Professor Reid said: "One thing which I think we can all reflect on and appreciate is how different the conversation is around mental health from even five or six years ago. There is a greater openness from all parts of the profession around talking about their own mental health and thereby encouraging workplaces to put in place preventative wellbeing and mental health policies and persuading those who may be experiencing mental ill-health or distress to seek help.

Lizzie Lockett, giving an example of the Initiative's impact, added: "There was a recent article about the fact that there was a 500% increase in calls to the Vetlife Helpline despite all that's being done around mental health. But I think we should look at this in a positive way – there has been an increase in calls because of all we're doing with Vetlife, Mind Matters and other projects and so people feel more confident and supported to seek help before they reach a crisis point."

The event then split into two streams of research presentations – these were:

Dr Rebeca Garcia Pinillos from the Association of Government Vets on the organisation's research into government vet wellbeing;

Dr Kate Stephen, a behavioural scientist at the SRUC Epidemiology Research Unit in Inverness, on the positive and negative mental health impacts of livestock vet practice;

Dr Rosie Allister, one of the Symposium's key organisers and manager of the Vetlife Helpline, presented her research on how aspects of work influence new graduate mental health and opportunities for intervention;

Health psychologist Dr Nienke Endenburg from the University of Utrecht presented on the World Small Animal Veterinary Association's (WSAVA) mental health survey and how the Vets in Mind app will support the issues identified;

Dr Colleen Best, a researcher at Ontario Veterinary College in Canada, spoke about her research on improving resilience in veterinary students; and

Carolyne Crowe, a vet and training consultant with VDS Training, gave a presentation on evaluating workplace wellbeing and culture in the veterinary profession through practice surveys.

After the research sessions the delegates assembled for the second plenary talk from Dr Alexandra Pitman, an Associate Professor in Psychiatry at University College London, who spoke about the sensitive topic of the impact of suicides within the veterinary profession on colleagues. After giving an overview of rates of suicide and their impact on colleagues, family and friends across the general UK population, she focused on some of the specific issues and challenges with veterinary suicides.

She hypothesised that factors relating to suicides amongst vets specifically might include work overload, unrealistic client expectations and complaints, practice/ business responsibilities in addition to clinical work, and co-occurring life events such as bereavement, and relationship problems.

She also gave advice to veterinary professionals on suggested approaches to suicide prevention, how best to intervene if a colleague is feeling suicidal, and how managers should approach staff wellbeing in cases where a colleague has sadly taken their own life. For the latter example she emphasised that support must be offered to all practice staff, as well as key clients that may have had long-standing friendships with the colleague, and arranging a reflective event in which all staff can talk about what has happened and to gauge how they wish to be supported.

At the event's lunch two poster presentations were then available to view. The first was from Jo Kelly, a small animal veterinary surgeon based in the North East of England, which detailed her qualitative research into the reasons given by small animal veterinary surgeons for their intention to leave practice to pursue alternative careers.

The second was from Rachel Malkani, a PhD student at the University of Surrey's School of Veterinary Medicine, and Professor Sarah Wolfensohn, Professor of Animal Welfare at the same school, on whether the Animal Welfare Assessment Grid (AWAG) tool could help veterinary surgeons make well-reasoned and ethically-justified decisions regarding end-of-life treatment for animals.

The third plenary speaker was Professor Neil Greenberg, a former psychologist in the Armed Forces and now Professor of Defence Mental Health at King's College London, who spoke about the evidence-base for how to best sustain resilience at work. He said that research suggests that while work is probably a positive factor for wellbeing, work pressures and stressors can also be a significant source of poor mental health and wellbeing.

Professor Greenberg said that, while a range of mental health issues can impact everyday working life, there are significant barriers such as stigma and lack of available services and it is therefore important for workplaces to look seriously at prevention. Preventative measures that he recommended include having a clear policy that sets the culture, outlines responsibilities, and details support; training leaders so that they understand the issues and how to best support staff in these circumstances; and forging mutually supportive teams, as he said that resilience is often formed between individuals rather than within them.

He also weighed into current debates around 'pre-screening' of individuals for resilience before they join or train for certain professions and said that there is no evidence of correlation between certain personality types and incidence of mental ill-health and no evidence that any sort of screening is effective in this regard.

Following Professor Greenberg's plenary speech, the delegates once again split into two separate research streams. The research presentations held in the afternoon were:

Dr Randall Nett, from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in the United States, who presented his research on suicides and deaths of undetermined intent amongst US veterinary professionals from 2003 – 2014;  
Senior consultant John Volk, of Brakke Consulting in the US, who presented the key findings of a recent MSD Animal Health Veterinary Wellbeing Study;  
Dr Colleen Best on recent results of a mental health survey conducted with Canadian veterinarians;  
RCVS Council member and mental health researcher Dr Joanna Dyer with her research on burnout in veterinarians – a critical review of the prevalence, contributory factors and interventions;  
Mental health researcher Dr Linda Hoinville on the relationship between psychosocial work environment and mental health in veterinary practitioners; and,  
From the RVC, Dr Tierney Kinnison, Lecturer in Veterinary Education, and RCVS Council member Professor Stephen May, RVC Senior Vice-Principal, presented their research on how unease and stress can become confidence and harmony through engaging in CPD in non-technical competencies.

Following these final research presentations the delegates reassembled for a closing speech from Professor Susan Dawson, Head of the Institute of Veterinary Science at the University of Liverpool, and Professor Reid's successor as Chair of the Mind Matters Initiative.

Speaking after the event, Professor Dawson said: "This event demonstrated that, both within the UK and internationally, we are starting to see the evidence being gathered about the causes of mental ill-health and poor wellbeing in the veterinary professions, but also around what works in terms of increasing wellbeing and preventing poor mental health outcomes as well as intervention and treatment.

"Although there is plenty more work to be done to build up the evidence base and to reach out to the profession to encourage further awareness and destigmatisation, we also shouldn't be afraid to celebrate what we have achieved so far within a relatively short space of time.

“These achievements have largely been because of collaboration amongst organisations and educational establishments – there is no space for competition in such a critical area as we are all in this together. I have also been struck by the benefits we can get from bringing in people from other professions and looking at the issues internationally so that we can learn from some of the similarities and continuities, as well as some of the key differences.”

The full agenda from the day is available to view on the Mind Matters Initiative website and videos of the proceedings, as well as a full written report of the day, will be made available on the website in due course.

# Nomination period for 2020 Awards now open

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2020 RCVS Honours & Awards, celebrating the achievements of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and laypeople who are doing extraordinary work for the benefit of animal health and welfare, the veterinary professions and public health.

The College is seeking nominations this year for all six of its awards, all of which will be presented to the successful nominees at Royal College Day 2020, which will take place at 1 Great George Street in July 2020. These awards are:

**The Queen's Medal:** the highest honour that can be bestowed upon a veterinary surgeon for a highly distinguished career with sustained and outstanding achievements throughout.

**The Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award:** this award is for veterinary nurses who have had a sustained and distinguished career, who can demonstrate a leadership role within the profession and who can act as an ambassador for the value of veterinary nurses and their work.

**RCVS International Award:** this award is for vets, vet nurses or laypeople who work internationally, from either within or without the UK, in making an outstanding contribution to, for example, raising veterinary standards, veterinary education and improving animal health and welfare.

**RCVS Impact Award:** this award is for vets or vet nurses who have recently, or are currently, undertaking a project, initiative or similar that has a significant impact on the profession at large, animal health or welfare, or public health. Such impact could have been made through any field of veterinary endeavour, including clinical practice, research, education or veterinary politics.

**RCVS Inspiration Award:** this award is for vets or vet nurses at any stage of their career who have demonstrated the ability to inspire and enthuse others consistently throughout. It is open to those who have inspired and motivated individuals anywhere within the profession and recognises those who have gone 'above and beyond' what may normally be expected from a professional colleague.

**Honorary Associateship:** this honour is conferred to a small number of laypeople each year, in recognition of their special contribution to the veterinary sphere. It recognises the full range of individuals who contribute to the veterinary and animal health sector including scientists, lecturers, journalists, charity-workers, farriers, farmers and those involved in the commercial field.

Niall Connell, RCVS President for 2019-20, said: "2019 was particularly fruitful in terms of the number of nominations that we received for some of these awards, including the Queen's Medal and the Impact and Inspiration Awards. In fact, those of us who had to compile the shortlist really struggled because of the sheer quality of the nominations we received and the people who were nominated.

"We hope that this will be repeated this year, and I would ask the profession to give some extra thought to making a nomination for Honorary Associateship, an award which is conferred on laypeople who are going above-and-beyond for animal welfare and the veterinary professions.

"In my veterinary career I have met many of these people: the biochemistry lecturers at vet school who gave me a passion for the science behind clinical veterinary medicine; the receptionists who were experts at talking to clients with empathy and kindness, often during distressing situations; and the volunteers who give up their precious free time to help with the smooth running of our PDSA hospital.

"I would urge everyone to have a think about who might be suitable for any of these awards, to find out more about making a nomination on the RCVS website."

To make a nomination, visit our Honours & Awards webpage and click on the link for the specific award. As with last year, applications can be made either through an online application form or by downloading a PDF application form and emailing or posting it to us.

The deadline for nominations is Friday 10 January 2020. All awards will be conferred at Royal College Day 2020.

For an informal talk about the awards and how to make a nomination you can contact Susie Tomlin, Executive Secretary, on [s.tomlin@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:s.tomlin@rcvs.org.uk) or 020 7202 0761.



# President welcomes new MsRCVS and RVNs

Niall Connell, RCVS President, welcomed new vets and VNs who were trained overseas to the Registers of Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses at a ceremony on Monday 2 September 2019.

These new vets and VNs needed to pass examinations in order to practice in the UK, as they qualified outside the European Union and/or do not hold RCVS-recognised veterinary or veterinary nursing qualifications.

For veterinary surgeons, the exam that they need to pass is the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination, which consists of both written papers and clinical, practical examinations.

This year's successful candidates were:

Mr Mohamed Gamal Sayed Mahmoud who graduated from Cairo University, Egypt in 2005

Miss Gemma Louise Cockram who graduated from St George's University, Grenada in 2018

Dr Scott Alexander Young who graduated from Ross University, St Kitts in 2018

Miss Francesca Marriott Mateluna who graduated from Universidad Mayor, Chile in 2018

Ms Lindsay Anne Leonard who graduated from Ross University, St Kitts in 2019

For VNs, the exam they need to pass is the RCVS VN Pre-registration Examination, where candidates are required to complete a series of clinical skills, all of which are taken from the RCVS Day One Skills for VNs.

This year's successful candidates were:

Mrs Monica Hall who earned her certificate in veterinary nursing in Australia

Miss Nicola Jane Stuart who earned her diploma in veterinary nursing in New Zealand

Ms Maike Engelhardt who earned her certificate in veterinary nursing in Australia

On Monday 2 September, alongside their friends and family, seven of the eight successful candidates joined Niall and Lizzie Lockett, RCVS CEO, 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.

This year is the first time that both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses have attended the same ceremony. Previously, VNs who pass the pre-registration exam were welcomed to the register on VN Day, held at London Zoo, with the newly graduated vet nurses.

Before taking the registrants through their professional declarations, Niall Connell welcomed the candidates and their families. Speaking after the event he said: "It takes a lot of determination and preparation to pass these exams and it was incredibly humbling for me to have the opportunity to welcome the successful vets and vet nurses to the registers. It has been a great ceremony – truly inspiring to lead the new vets and VNs through their declarations in front of their friends and family, and I can't wait to see how they support our UK professions."

One of the successful candidates and new MRCVS, Frances Pia Marriot Mateluna, commented on the day: "I am really proud of myself, because the exam is very hard and there can be a lot of ups and downs. It's really nice to be able to say that we can start the next chapter of our lives."

A fellow new member, Lindsay Anne Leonard, expanded: "It was exciting to be here today. It's finally like that chapter is finished, because you spend so much time studying. I don't want to say that you are in a standstill, but you kind of are in something like this, and now that it's over you can start planning and get excited for next steps."

Successful VN candidate, Monica Hall who had recently moved back to the UK from Australia added: "It was lovely to be at the ceremony – it was quite emotional. I felt very proud."

More information for internationally trained veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses can be found online.

# RCVS and BVA to co-host 2020 FVE General Assembly in London

The RCVS and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) will be co-hosting the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) General Assembly in June 2020.

The FVE General Assembly is a biannual event in which the organisation, an umbrella body for veterinary associations and regulators from 40 European countries, meets to hear reports from its various committees and working groups and make recommendations on veterinary policy.

Former RCVS and BVA President, the late Peter Storie-Pugh CBE, was a founder member of FVE serving from 1975-1979 as its President. Through the RCVS and BVA, the UK has remained a member ever since, and recently instigated the successful VetFutures Europe project based on the UK's own programme to shape the future of the veterinary profession.

The 2020 event will be taking place from Thursday 4 to Saturday 6 June at Church House in Westminster and will include a reception for delegates to be held at the House of Lords and hosted by Professor the Lord Trees. It is the first time that the UK has hosted an FVE General Assembly since the FVE met in Belfast in 2002.

Highlights of the event will include an address from Rens van Dobbenburgh, FVE President for 2019 to 2021; updates from working groups such as Animal Welfare and Statutory Bodies; and reports from the FVE sections which represent different aspects of the pan-European profession. These include the European Association of State Veterinary Officers (ESAVO), EVERI which represents vets employed in education, research and industry, the Union of European Veterinary Hygienists (UEVH) and the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP). Representatives from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) will also be attending the General Assembly.

Further details about the agenda will be made available closer to the General Assembly.

Niall Connell, RCVS President for 2019 – 2020 (pictured above), commented: "We are delighted and proud to be joining the BVA in hosting next year's FVE General Assembly and welcoming our friends, colleagues and peers from across Europe to the UK to discuss matters of importance to the continent's thousands of veterinary professionals.

"The fact that the UK is hosting next year also sends an important message that, whatever the wider political situation between the UK and its neighbours, we want to continue to work collaboratively with our European colleagues to improve veterinary standards, animal welfare and quality of life for veterinary professionals across the continent."

Simon Doherty, BVA President, said: "BVA is really looking forward to co-hosting this prestigious event, which brings together veterinary professionals from across Europe to share learning, celebrate achievements and explore the challenges and opportunities ahead for the sector.

"It feels especially timely to be holding the Assembly in the UK in 2020, highlighting that however things pan out politically over the coming months, vets from across the broader European veterinary community recognise the importance of continued collaboration and support for the benefit of animal health and welfare and public health."

More information about FVE can be found on its website.

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# Personalities that shaped the profession

## Abstract

As part of the RCVS' 175th anniversary celebrations, the college's charity partner and custodian of its historical collections, RCVS Knowledge, takes a look at the influential roles four individuals played in the early formation of the profession.

This year the RCVS is celebrating its 175th anniversary, offering the perfect opportunity to look back at the history of the profession and draw parallels to where we are today.

RCVS Knowledge has spent the past four years surveying, cataloguing and digitising a swathe of fascinating material. The collections illustrate the long story of progress within the profession, with much of this progress down to the endeavours of some specific outstanding individuals.

The following series of vignettes sheds light on the stories of four such individuals, all of whom brought forth significant and lasting change despite, with one exception, not holding an official position of power within the RCVS.

The origins of the RCVS can be traced back to the actions of Thomas Mayer and his son Thomas Walton Mayer, who petitioned for support from veterinary surgeons across the country to improve the standard of veterinary education. Their memorial (as the petition was also known) stirred the profession into action, eventually culminating with the introduction of the first Royal Charter, and hence the founding of the RCVS. It's apt that 2019 has also seen the Royal Veterinary College – to whom the Mayers presented their memorial back in 1840 – ranked as the top veterinary school in the world.

As evidence of how closely aligned the goals of the RCVS are and have been to those of the profession as a whole, an early RCVS president, George Fleming, led a similar charge to the Mayers by campaigning to protect the title of 'veterinary surgeon' in the late 19th century. His story is what underpins the professional status of modern-day vets, and his work has much in common with the more recent move to afford the same level of recognition to veterinary nurses.

It's not just veterinary professionals who have had (and can have) a positive impact on the profession. A lawyer by trade, Fred Bullock spent nearly 40 years of his life as RCVS secretary and registrar. His commitment to all aspects of the college's work and his depth of involvement in its day-to-day functions was so extreme that it is very difficult to separate his professional work from his private life.

Then there is the story of Aleen Cust, the woman whose passion for veterinary medicine underpinned her never-ceasing battle for acceptance from her veterinary peers, before the legal admission of women into the profession was won. A lot can be learned from Cust, not least that the biggest challenges can be overcome and that those who believe or have been told that 'people like them' do not become vets are now welcome.

Across these four stories, there is a strong theme of collaboration, as all of these individuals achieved progress with assistance from others inside, and outside, the profession.

Their successes are no less relevant in the 21st century, and are proof that all people, regardless of their position within the profession, can have a major influence on the profession's continuing history of bettering itself.

## Thomas Walton Mayer and his role in founding the RCVS

The Mayers of Newcastle-under-Lyme were a family of farriers and veterinary surgeons whose work, over four generations, spanned the transition from provincial farriery to the profession of veterinary surgery.

It is the family's two generations of veterinary surgeons – Thomas Mayer and his son Thomas Walton Mayer – who played a pivotal role in the founding of the RCVS.

To trace the Mayers' influence we need to go back to the founding of their alma mater, the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), then called the London College.

Following the death of the RVC's first professor, Charles Vial de St Bel, in 1793 – just two years after the RVC was founded – the London College was dominated for the next 45 years by its second professor, Edward Coleman.

The years Coleman was at the helm saw an increasing sense of dissatisfaction among the profession, much of which was played out in the pages of *The Veterinarian*, edited by William Youatt. No friend of Coleman, Youatt wrote a series of articles and editorials giving impetus to the call for reform at the London College.

Following Coleman's death in 1839, the Mayers – father and son – joined the call for reform and began to be actively involved in bringing it about. In an attempt to initiate change, they composed a memorial (or petition) to the governors at the RVC. The draft of the memorial shows that they had help from at least one other person – a certain William Youatt, who swiftly added his comments just four days after receiving it on 4 February 1840.

The memorial suggested changes to the teaching and administration of the RVC, which the authors believed would improve the status of the veterinary profession. The Mayers paid for the memorial to be circulated to the 700 or so qualified veterinary surgeons whose addresses were known. Around 400 letters of support were received and 267 of these have been digitised and made available to read on RCVS Knowledge's Digital Collections as part of the RCVS' 175th anniversary celebrations.

The memorial was presented to the governors of the RVC in June 1840; however, the Mayers had failed to realise that the college was a private institution and, as such, they had no right to try to interfere with its management. The governors simply decided no changes were needed.

While the memorial itself may have been a failure, it had marshalled the emerging veterinary profession into a force with one aim in mind: to create a professional identity with legal standing.

The next step was to petition the Privy Council in the hope of obtaining a Royal Charter that would grant the privileges and exemptions (eg, from jury service) enjoyed by other professional bodies. A committee was formed with Thomas Walton Mayer as secretary – he arranged meetings, organised deputations, drafted petitions and collected the subscriptions.

During the process, the Privy Council made it clear that it would not consider granting a charter unless the three professors of the RVC and William Dick of the Edinburgh School (now The Royal [Dick] School of Veterinary Studies) put their names to the petition. It fell to Walton Mayer to ensure that they did this before presenting the petition to the Privy Council.

In March 1844 the Royal Charter for the Incorporation of Veterinary Surgeons was granted by Queen Victoria, with the Mayer family contributing £100 of the £1000 cost of its acquisition.

Mayer was a signatory to the Charter and both he and his son became examiners and served on the RCVS council. Walton Mayer served as vice-president five times.

As well as their contribution to political matters, the Mayers both contributed papers to the professional journals of the time on clinical matters, while continuing to run their practice in Newcastle-under-Lyme with its purpose-built 'veterinary infirmary'.

In 1855, seven years after the death of his father, Walton Mayer left Newcastle for the Crimea. On his return he pursued an army career, retiring from the army in 1871. In 1876 he was appointed professor of veterinary medicine and surgery at the Royal Agricultural College, retiring from there four years later.

In August 1883 he wrote to *The Veterinarian* asking for personal support (money) from the profession and subsequently set up the Mayer Fund.

The amount raised was clearly not sufficient, as the following year he wrote directly to the RCVS asking that the money he had contributed to start the college building fund be returned to him; this appeal was refused. He died in 1887.

#### George Fleming and how he protected the profession

In late 19th century, a key issue to be tackled by the RCVS was to help the public distinguish between qualified and unqualified practitioners.

This was led by the man who became president of the RCVS in 1880, George Fleming. He made it his priority to secure protection of the 'veterinary surgeon' title, by means of a Veterinary Surgeons Act.

The son of a farrier, Fleming was born in Glasgow in 1833 and obtained the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland Certificate (a recognised veterinary diploma at the time) in 1855. He then joined the Army Veterinary Service and served in Crimea, China, Syria and Egypt.

Fleming became more involved in the profession when he joined the RCVS council in 1868, and even more so when he founded *The Veterinary Journal* in 1875.

As president of the RCVS, he made a strong case for the necessity of legal protection of the title 'veterinary surgeon',

persuading the right people, including Lord president of the Privy Council Earl Spencer, and RSPCA president Lord Aberdare, who promised to introduce the bill to the Lords.

However, RCVS council members Thomas Greaves and Matthew Harpley argued that the bill must include some recognition for unqualified men who had been making a living as 'veterinary surgeons' for decades and that the bill would likely not pass without this concession.

This led to the creation of a list of 'Existing Practitioners' to stand alongside the register. This would list unqualified men who had been practising veterinary medicine and surgery continuously for the five years previous to 27 August 1881. They would not be classed as members of the RCVS but they would be protected from the penal operations of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1881.

Despite a last-minute objection from members of the RCVS council that it was futile and unnecessary, the bill successfully passed through parliament. Then began the work of deciding who would make it onto this new list.

Around 1000 men paid a fee of three guineas to apply, and a committee of president Fleming and eight members of council decided that 863 were eligible. The applications typically included a statutory declaration of their five years of veterinary experience and a signed testimony by someone who believed them to be 'a person of good moral character and integrity'.

RCVS Knowledge holds all but five of the successful applications in the RCVS archives. In some cases there are additional documents, which shed light on the popularity (or not) of a man in his community. For example, the RCVS received 'letters of protest' regarding John Lloyd of Montgomeryshire, accusing him of being illiterate and 'nothing more than a travelling quack'. However, this complaint, like almost all of them, was from a member of the RCVS who could be said to have a conflict of interest. Lloyd was approved for the list by the committee. These records are a fascinating snapshot of veterinary work in Britain in the late 19th century, and a milestone in the story of the professionalisation of veterinary medicine.

The list of 863 existing practitioners gradually diminished as the men passed away. It last appeared in the 1952 register, when Henry Frost Sparrow and Martin Thomas Sparrow, both of Essex, were the final two surviving men.

Recognition of the importance of Fleming's efforts to secure protection for the profession probably contributed to him being re-elected as president four more times. It is suggested that Fleming even covered the expenses of the Act himself. Whether this is true or not, his passion and persuasion made this happen as quickly as it did, at a time when the process of changing legislation could lose momentum and take years to come to fruition.

In 1900, shortly before his death, Fleming donated his library of more than 900 works of veterinary literature to the library of the RCVS. That work now sits in the historical collections, maintained by RCVS Knowledge.

Aleen Cust: first in all her classes

Aleen Cust (1868-1937) was born into a wealthy aristocratic English family in Tipperary, Ireland, before moving to England at 10 years old when her father died.

Aleen had numerous friendships with vets and probably received private education alongside her brothers, so she is likely to have been exposed to more natural sciences than girls typically were at the time.

Despite disapproval from her mother, she was helped by family friends to move to Edinburgh in 1894 to gain the entry qualifications for vet school. Cust somehow convinced William Williams, the principal of the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh, to admit her as the first woman in a British veterinary school.

She registered as a student under the pseudonym Arno Custance, possibly to prevent embarrassment to her family, specifically her mother who was now part of Queen Victoria's household.

Cust was said to be 'first in all her classes' by a fellow student and gained the Gold Medal for Zoology in her first year. However, when she applied to sit the first professional examination in 1897, the RCVS was unsure how to handle this unprecedented situation, and so sought legal counsel (on the understanding that it was not bound to act on it).

Once the veterinary press reported on an application from a female vet student, the reaction from the profession was somewhat varied, and often passionate. It was widely believed that women were not fit for the veterinary profession, and that it would be improper for women to castrate animals or attend calvings and foalings. There were also concerns about increasing competition within an overcrowded profession. The counsel's response to the RCVS was that as the Act only

referred to men, a change in law would be necessary, and so Cust would need to take the RCVS to court to prove that female students had the same rights as male students. For unknown reasons, Cust did not pursue this, but Williams, who had earlier admitted her as the first female student, did sue the RCVS for damages. This action was taken through the Scottish Courts, but it was subsequently decided that Scottish law had no jurisdiction over the RCVS. This saw an end to the question of women as members of the RCVS for the time being.

Cust continued her studies but didn't apply to sit the RCVS exams again. After finishing the course, and on a recommendation by principal Williams, she found a post as assistant to William Byrne, a vet in Roscommon, and commenced a successful career without the MRCVS post nominal. She worked as a veterinary inspector for Galway County Council from 1905 and took over Byrne's practice after his death in 1910. During the First World War, Cust contributed to the war effort in France as part of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and then Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps.

An increase in women campaigning to join other professions finally resulted in the introduction of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919. This law meant professional organisations could no longer refuse admission to persons based on their sex or marital status, and this forced the RCVS to change.

An editorial in *The Veterinary Record* at the time did not think this would be a great concern to the profession, 'for it is not likely that women will offer themselves in sufficient numbers to be of serious moment'.

But another female student, Edith Gertrude Knight, was midway through her studies at Liverpool Veterinary College, and had herself applied to sit the RCVS examination in previous years. The change in law would allow her to sit her final examinations in 1923, and she was on course to become the first legally recognised female veterinary surgeon in Britain. However, news of the changed circumstances made it too late for Cust, and she applied to sit the final RCVS exam in December 1922.

Finally, at age 54, Cust received her diploma from the president of the RCVS on 21 December 1922 and thus became the first legally recognised female vet in Britain. She soon afterwards retired from practice, and moved to the New Forest in Hampshire.

**Fred Bullock: A model RCVS registrar**

Fred Bullock was born in Staffordshire in 1878, educated at Stafford Grammar School and then at the Université de Caen.

In 1907, he was appointed registrar and secretary of the RCVS, at a salary of £250 per year. He served the RCVS for nearly 40 years and oversaw a number of significant changes, not only at the RCVS but also within the wider profession. Upon Bullock's death, the then RCVS president A. B. Mattinson described him as the personification of the profession.

Astutely surmising that a knowledge of the law would assist with his work as registrar, Bullock entered Gray's Inn as a student. He took the intermediate LLB (Bachelor of Laws) in 1924 and the final LLB in 1926, being called to the Bar that same year. He completed his legal training in 1928 when he obtained the Doctorate in Law. Bullock's thesis was later published as 'The Law Relating to Medical, Dental and Veterinary Practice', which, coupled with his earlier publication, 'The Handbook for Veterinary Surgeons', provided veterinary surgeons with a reference on aspects of the law as it related to veterinary practice.

Bullock served the RCVS through changing times in the wider profession. In the early period of his tenure, there was a decline in student numbers due to concerns about the impact that increased mechanisation – with the consequent decline in the number of working horses – would have on veterinary practice as a career. As the main source of RCVS income at that time was student fees, this left the college on a precarious financial footing, which remained until the introduction of the annual registration fee in 1920.

He was also in post through two world wars. During the Second World War he oversaw the relocation of the RCVS, first to Wembley and then to Harrogate. With a much-reduced workforce, he carried the bulk of the 'business as usual' workload.

At the end of the war, Bullock was heavily involved in the discussions regarding the future of veterinary education and was responsible for drafting the new Veterinary Surgeons Bill. For two decades leading up to the 1948 Veterinary Surgeons Act, Bullock responded to concerns from members of the RCVS about the rise in unqualified practice, particularly carried out by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA). Bullock's efforts to remedy the situation involved appealing to the Prince of Wales to withdraw his personal patronage of the PDSA.

As well as his legal work for the college, Bullock put his talents as a linguist and historian to full use. He took on the role of RCVS librarian, using his many connections throughout Europe to add to the collections. He collaborated with Major

General Sir Frederick Smith on his four-volume Early History of Veterinary Literature, editing the fourth volume following Smith's death.

He was involved in the organisation of both the 1914 International Veterinary Congress (which was abandoned on the second day due to the outbreak of the war) and the 1930 congress, when he served as general secretary. He also served as secretary of the Victoria Veterinary Benevolent Fund for over 30 years.

Bullock's contribution to both the RCVS and the wider profession was recognised by the Central Veterinary Society, which made him an honorary fellow in 1929 and awarded him the 'Victory' Medal in 1944. On receiving this medal he said he had never sought honours for himself; he had always regarded himself as the servant of the profession in whose guardianship was the honour and dignity of the RCVS.



# Original Veterinary Surgeons Act to be studied

A collaborative doctoral award between RCVS Knowledge and the University of Kent will delve into the professional roots of veterinary medicine by examining archives relating to the first Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881.

Analysing how and why the medical treatment of animals came to be professionalised, the project seeks to understand the reasons for and effects of the 1881 Act, which formally established the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' (RCVS) authority to distinguish between qualified and unqualified practitioners.

The doctorate will draw on the rich archival material maintained by RCVS Knowledge, the charity partner of the RCVS and custodian of its Historical Collections.

"The archives team are excited for this opportunity to work closely with an academic and draw out fascinating and valuable insights from veterinary history," said Lorna Cahill, RCVS Knowledge's Archivist.

"The unique primary sources we have spent the past five years cataloguing will undoubtedly provide an enhanced understanding of the circumstances surrounding the Act, and a deeper appreciation of its impact on us today."

The PhD will be undertaken by veterinary nurse Jane Davidson, a prominent blogger and recent appointee to the VN Council.

Known to many through the online community #planetrvn, Jane said:

"I'm very excited to be undertaking this PhD with RCVS Knowledge and the University of Kent. It's the opportunity of a lifetime to work with the newly catalogued archives."

"I hope to be able to provide a window into our past and improve understanding of the nature of our original legislation."

Neatly beginning in the same year as the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) celebrates 175 years since it was granted the foundational charter in 1844, the doctoral research will consider the following questions:

How were the interests of the RCVS and its leading members involved in the drawing up and implementation of the 1881 Act?

What was the background and status of the people who practised veterinary medicine at this time, and what was the nature of their practice?

How deliberate was the process of professionalisation, and what was its significance to the RCVS? If it was seen as important, why?

What was the experience of the RCVS following the implementation of the Act? Was the College committed to ensuring adherence to the Act?

Did the Act lead to an improvement in the standard of veterinary education, and how did it change the role of the vet within society?

Charlotte Sleight, Professor of Science Humanities at the University of Kent, said the PhD constitutes one of the first times this early period of the profession has been investigated:

"The history of veterinary medicine has been very little studied by professional historians and so I am very excited that Jane will be doing this original and important research.

"The stories that she uncovers about non-professional veterinary practitioners will have great relevance for the marketplace of animal medicine today, in both developed and developing countries."

Follow Jane's real-time updates from the PhD with the Twitter hashtag #PhDbytheSea

Whether you are a historian, researcher or a layperson, you can view the Digital Collections: [www.rcvsvethistory.org](http://www.rcvsvethistory.org)

# RCVS and SPVS launch Vet Wellbeing Awards 2019

The Society for Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS), in partnership with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' Mind Matters Initiative (MMI), is looking for practices that are going above and beyond to support staff wellbeing for this year's Vet Wellbeing Awards.

The Awards, now in their fourth year, recognise and address the fact that there are relatively high levels of work-related stress and poor mental health within the veterinary professions. They aim to highlight positivity within the professions by sharing stories and initiatives from veterinary workplaces that are demonstrating their commitment to improving staff wellbeing.

The Awards also aim to support all practices to take a structured approach towards evaluating their own wellbeing support systems.

Liz Barton, SPVS Board Member, explains: "Going through the entry form and evaluation process is valuable for every vet practice, even if they don't feel they're ready to enter the Awards just yet. Sitting down as a practice team for a few hours and working through the questionnaire is a highly useful exercise for facilitating celebrating areas where your practice is doing well for wellbeing, and also highlighting some areas for improvement for years to come."

"We recommend all practices get into the habit of going through the process annually and choosing areas to focus and improve on, to build towards better wellbeing across all areas for all staff."

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:

- Promoting physical and psychological health at work
- Relationships at work
- Communication at work
- Career development
- Workload and work scheduling
- Work demands

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

This year, for the first time, feedback will be provided to practices that enter on areas where they are doing well and also areas where they can improve. It is hoped that this update to the Awards process will further help practices to view wellbeing support as an area of continuous development.

Winning and Highly Commended practices will receive a dedicated logo and certificate for display. The winners in each category will also receive two registrations and banquet tickets for SPVS/VMG Congress 2020.

"The Vet Wellbeing Awards celebrate the positive initiatives that practices are running to improve wellbeing in their workplaces, as well as celebrating a strong focus on wellbeing overall. They aim to highlight practical examples of how wellbeing is integrated into the successful running of practices," says Mind Matters Manager, Lisa Quigley.

"The importance of making a concerted effort to improve wellbeing within the veterinary professions cannot be understated and we hope that these awards motivate practices to boost their wellbeing efforts with great examples from across the UK."

In addition to the Wellbeing Awards, the RCVS and SPVS are also running the Practice Star nominations, which are open to all veterinary practices.

These nominations aim to support practices to thank someone in their team who has gone the extra mile to make the

practice a happy place to work, whether this be through introducing an initiative that makes everyone's work life better, going out of their way to support a colleague going through a tough time, or simply making everyone smile.

The nominations are an opportunity to get together as a team, reflect on the great things that are being done together to help practice wellbeing and nominate one person who particularly deserves thanks.

There is no judging process for these nominations. To enter, practices need to send in their nominee's name, job title and contact details, and a short paragraph explaining why they have been chosen. They will then receive a certificate congratulating them for being nominated as the practice's very own 'Practice Wellbeing Star'.

The closing date for both the Wellbeing Award entries and Practice Star nominations is Friday 22 November 2019.

In the lead up to the closing of nominations SPVS and MMI, in partnership with the Veterinary Management Group, are running Vet Wellbeing in Practice roadshow events. These aim to support businesses to understand the importance of looking after their teams and feature three speakers, each with their own expertise and background on wellbeing in the work place.

Tickets are still available for one of the events, on Wednesday 18 September, in Solihull, for £85. More information can be found [online here](#).

# Blog

## Diversity and inclusion in the veterinary professions

Niall Connell - RCVS President (2019 - 2020)

It's no secret that the veterinary professions are overwhelmingly white with a high proportion of people coming from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds. However, it's also no secret that this is not the background of the UK population at large and it has been increasingly recognised that it is beneficial for professions to reflect the ever-more-diverse society they serve.

In my first address as RCVS President, at Royal College Day this year, I mentioned that one of the key focuses of my presidency is increasing diversity and inclusion in the veterinary professions.

As this is an issue that I am both personally and professionally passionate about, I want to take this opportunity to expand on what this means, and what this looks like with regards to the RCVS.

So, what are diversity and inclusion?

Diversity, in its essence, is about empowering people and respecting what makes them different – whether this be their ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental health, or religion. It is about bringing together a range of people and ideas, informed by varying backgrounds, experiences and ways of life.

Inclusion is about putting in place the organisational and systemic conditions that enable a more diverse workforce. A significant shift, such as increasing diversity within a profession, does not just happen naturally and without intervention, and this is why it is so important that we and our partner organisations make a concerted effort to increase systemic inclusion.

Why are diversity and inclusion so important for the veterinary professions?

The population of the UK is becoming more diverse, as is the animal owning public.

As such, it is important that the veterinary professions reflect the wider society that they serve. This means that, ideally, diversity should be reflected not only in the makeup of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses but also in representative bodies, veterinary governance and other such groups. Not only could this result in improved and more relatable customer service, but it may also encourage more people to seek veterinary care for their animals where they may not have otherwise.

Diversity within professions also supports innovation and positive change, as there are an increased range of ideas and world views to foster new ideas. A profession that can tap into this varied and diverse breadth of knowledge and experience is better placed to develop new services and processes to meet diverse demographic needs. As we want to see the veterinary professions advance, we cannot neglect the crucial role diversity has to play in this evolution.

There is also a strong moral case for diversity – particularly with regards to equity. To achieve equity we either have to make changes to the system, or provide those who are disadvantaged with support to have an equal chance at succeeding. In the veterinary context this means making changes to reach out to and support groups who otherwise would not be able to consider the veterinary professions as a viable career option – due to ethnicity, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, physical or mental health condition, or other factors.

What role does the RCVS have to play in supporting diversity?

One of the key functions of the RCVS under our Royal Charter is to uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance veterinary medicine, in the interests of the health and welfare of animals and in the wider public interest.

As increasing diversity would advance the professions and their ability to meet the interests of a diverse wider public, the RCVS has a responsibility under our Charter to focus on this area through key initiatives.

As the regulator for the professions, and with the Register of Veterinary Surgeons and Register of Veterinary Nurses, we are also well placed to harness the wealth of this data about the profession and take a lead role in researching the issue. For sustainable change to take place, it needs to be evidence-based – and having a good understanding of our professions through data is a crucial building block for this.

In addition to the above reasons, I believe that we all have a responsibility to improve diversity in the professions we are in and serve. We know that, as a society, we are not there yet with regards to sufficiently addressing systemic factors that contribute to inequity and a lack of diversity across many professions, including the veterinary professions. It is therefore, in my opinion, the responsibility of each and every one of us, including those at the RCVS, to strive to improve and increase diversity and inclusion.

So, what is the RCVS doing to address diversity and inclusion?

To ensure a focused approach to this important issue the RCVS has set up the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, which held its first meeting in April this year.

The Group aims to break down barriers with regards to selection, recruitment and retention to encourage more diversity within the professions – including, but not limited to, ethnic, socio-economic and sexual orientation diversity. This Group will be the driving force with regards to the RCVS' role in this.

To increase the diversity in the professions will require a significant shift as it is a multi-factorial and complex issue and it will take time to get it right. It is crucial that any initiatives and interventions we put in place to address the lack of diversity in the veterinary professions are underpinned by evidence. As such, I want to stress that this is a process – to have the greatest impact and mitigate the risks of unintended consequences, we want to ensure we make the right decisions regarding interventions from the start.

We know that we need to create a diverse workforce by encouraging people from different backgrounds into the professions – and that this starts from a young age.

We know that we need to ensure that there are systems in place to support a diverse profession – including a systemic commitment to listening to, and incorporating, different perspectives.

We know that we need to continue to strive to have diverse leaders in place throughout the professions. As I said in my first speech as RCVS President, quoting American activist for children's rights, Marian Wright Edelman, "It's hard to be what you can't see".

Our Diversity and Inclusion Working Group has been formed to further progress these aims and objectives – and this starts with better understanding the long-term structural, societal and cultural barriers to entering the veterinary professions. Without knowing exactly where we currently stand, we can't map out what we need to do to reach our goal of diverse professions.

With that being said, there are some more immediate actions we are looking to take in this space. For example – we are actively looking to share leadership journeys and stories from diverse leaders across the professions.

We are also looking to implement school outreach programmes – where diverse veterinary leaders will go into schools to encourage children from all walks of life to consider veterinary career options.

This is just the start.

Why now?

We have been talking about diversity for a few years and now, with the Working Group in place, we are in a strong position to work towards ensuring these changes are made effectively.

In an ideal world there would be diversity in the professions already – but we know that this is not the case. So why now? Because now is the best time.

There is a Chinese proverb which says 'The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is now'. Some people may think we're late to the party, but better now than never.

What's next?

The Diversity and Inclusion Working Group will continue to gather information to better understand where we are today and what we can do to improve diversity into the future. You can expect to see more and more information coming from the group as an evidence-based plan is drawn up and kicks into action. Watch this space!

Published on 15 August 2019

# Blog

## Jolyon Martin PhD

Dr Jolyon Martin is one of the founders of PetMedix, a Cambridge-based start-up taking the cutting edge of human medical science and using it to develop species-specific antibody therapies for dogs and cats. His PhD research underpins the company's technology, and he has presented his findings in the UK, USA, and China.

Life has a funny way of steering our course. As a researcher passionate about animal health, I needed to find a new PhD project at very short notice when, fortuitously, Professor Allan Bradley explained to me his plan to bring the latest human medical science to bear for companion animals. Allan pioneered the field of mouse transgenics and its use to develop therapeutic monoclonal antibodies – my PhD focused on applying this research to dogs. Fast-forward five years and here I am with PetMedix, working hard to develop therapeutic antibodies for dogs and cats.

I grew up surrounded by dogs and the importance of their health and wellbeing was ingrained from birth. My mother made up one of her cavaliers as a show champion just hours before giving birth to me, much to the surprise and confusion of the midwife-trained head judge. She always emphasised the importance of factoring in heart scores and syringomyelia test results into her breeding, much more than type or show results.

What are you most proud of and why?

Professionally, it has to be being a co-founder of PetMedix alongside the experienced and highly-successful serial entrepreneurs Allan Bradley and Tom Weaver. Our investors really believe in transforming animal health and we have an incredible team of scientists whose combined expertise is helping to bring this dream to fruition. Plus, it's great fun!

Personally, I was a ballroom dancer as a student and the proudest moment was captaining my university team to national champions as part of an undefeated season. The way everyone pulled together, both in training and competition, was incredible to be part of.

What innovation has got you to where you are today?

The species-specific monoclonal antibody approach of PetMedix relies on the cumulative efforts of many scientists over a number of decades, rather than on one single innovation. The entire process, from platform development through to drug discovery, relies on novel applications of methods and tools from molecular biology, genome engineering, immunology, artificial intelligence, and a range of other fields. This is partly why it hasn't been done before, in spite of the obvious need and huge potential benefits. The breadth of knowledge required to develop and apply the PetMedix platform is substantial, but by using this approach it will be possible to develop therapies with far greater health benefits to patients than antibodies developed by older, simpler approaches.

What innovation has the greatest opportunity to change the health and welfare of animals?

I do truly believe that therapeutic antibodies will have the same transformative effect on animal health as they have had in human medicine. There are more than 80 FDA-approved antibody therapeutics in human health, treating a wide range of diseases that are held in common with dogs and cats, and this is a real chance for veterinary medicine to benefit from three decades and billions of dollars of R&D effort in human pharma. We know what works; we just need to apply that now.

What changes do you see in the animal health industry, and how might they impact veterinary medicine?

There are two themes that come up consistently: the changing nature of our relationship with our pets, and the changing attitude within the industry towards innovation. There is a greater demand from owners for higher quality animal care – and a combination of young start-ups and industry giants are starting to address this. Beyond novel therapies, innovations in diagnostics (be it genetic testing or otherwise) and an increased focus on quality of life are driving things in a direction that can only stand to benefit the animal, and by extension their owners and the vet team who care for them.

What can we look forward to next from PetMedix?

We are at the research and development phase so are a little way off approved therapies, but are actively looking to engage with the veterinary community throughout the process.

PetMedix has also commissioned a survey of vets to find out where the real unmet needs are, and we are always happy to hear from vets throughout the industry so we can work together to improve pet health.

# Graduate reunions providing Code refresher for new grads

The Veterinary Defence Society (VDS), in partnership with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and supported by other key veterinary organisations, is running a series of Graduate Reunions over the upcoming months.

These reunions, aimed at vets who qualified in the UK or Ireland in 2018, are held at graduates' corresponding vet schools and provide an opportunity for CPD and a Code of Conduct refresher.

The events enable attendees to connect with veterinary professionals and experts, gaining tailored advice and support. They are also an ideal opportunity for new vets to catch up with each other, discuss what experiences they may have shared in their first year of working and hone their non-clinical skills.

The day is led by a member of the VDS Training team. In addition to this, representatives from the following veterinary organisations will be in attendance to answer graduate questions:

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)  
British Veterinary Association (BVA)  
British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)  
British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)  
The Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS)  
Veterinary Management Group (VMG)  
Vetlife

Graduates will also be treated to a series of performances by professional actors posing as clients and vets, giving them an opportunity to improve their practice by drawing on their own experiences in a fun, interactive and non-confrontational setting.

In addition to this, the day will include a number of discussions around the difference between negligence and misconduct, being asked to falsify documents, out of hours work, aggressive clients, and making mistakes, where various representatives will be called upon for their expertise.

"The VDS Graduate Reunion Day is always worthwhile, providing a fantastic opportunity to not only catch up with friends and share stories from practice, but also to develop new skills. The actors play out realistic (and amusing) scenarios which stimulate discussion about a wide range of issues, with the graduates being able to discuss things, get advice from a range of senior figures and share their experiences in a safe space. The last event featured conversations about personal safety, lone working policies, contracts, OOH and informed consent among others," says RCVS President, Niall Connell.

The upcoming reunions are scheduled as follows:

University of Nottingham – Saturday 5 October  
University of Liverpool – Saturday 26 October  
University of Cambridge Veterinary School – Saturday 2 November  
University College Dublin – Saturday 16 November  
University of Bristol – Saturday 23 November  
The University of Edinburgh – Saturday 7 December

The day's workshop awards seven hours of CPD (which is equivalent to 5 Continuing Veterinary Education credits for UCD). The events are followed by a dinner and some drinks, then a ceilidh/ disco to which attendees can bring a partner for an additional cost.

Tickets can be reserved by contacting the VDS Training Team at [info@vds-training.co.uk](mailto:info@vds-training.co.uk). Tickets cost £75.

More information on these reunions can be found on the VDS website.



# 'Precision veterinary medicine' the theme for second ViVet Innovation Symposium

The RCVS landmark innovation initiative ViVet will focus on how rapidly developing technology and data-driven practice will transform the veterinary professions and the care they provide for its second-ever Innovation Symposium this autumn.

The ViVet Innovation Symposium takes place on 1 October at The Lowry Theatre in Salford, Greater Manchester, and will see a number of guest speakers explore, with delegates, how artificial intelligence (AI), big data and genomics are and will be changing the profession by putting more information in the hands of the veterinary practitioner than ever before.

The ViVet programme grew out of the joint RCVS and British Veterinary Association (BVA) Vet Futures project which had, as one of its core aims, the establishment of a project to help encourage veterinary innovation and entrepreneurship and, through case studies and thought leadership, help the profession understand and thrive in the changing environment.

To this end, this year's keynote speaker will be Nancy Rademaker, an IT professional with first-hand experiences straight from the places where technology is shaping our future. She will cover the impact of digitization on customer behavior and how that affects the way organisations should interact with customers while giving insights into how the veterinary professions can prepare for and thrive in the future.

Nancy has over 20 years of experience in how technology is transforming society, working for different IT companies, amongst which five years for Microsoft in the Netherlands and Europe. She loves to share her passion for technology and combines that valuable inside information with her experience in training and education.

Other speakers confirmed for the day include:

Kathy Turner, Corporate Vice President and General Manager for IDEXX Laboratories' Europe, Middle East and Africa Companion Animal Commercial Operations who will be speaking about changing customer attitudes and preventative veterinary medicine.

Matthew Smith, Director of Business Development at Microsoft, who will be speaking about AI and agriculture.

Iain Maclaren, Senior Market Development Manager in Agrigenomics, Food and Consumer Genomics at Oxford Nanopore Technologies Ltd who will be speaking about low-cost and accessible genomic sequencing.

During the course of the event we will also be hosting the ViVet Student Veterinary Innovation Competition final, which sees three finalist teams going head to head presenting in front of a panel of industry professionals including BVA President Simon Doherty.

Anthony Roberts, RCVS Director of Leadership and Innovation, said: "Since our inaugural innovation symposium in 2017, innovation and technology adoption in the wider animal health and welfare sector has accelerated. In the longer term it is clear that technology will fundamentally change the role of the vet and how veterinary services are delivered.

"It is ViVet's role to ensure veterinary professionals can navigate this transition and remain at the centre of animal health and welfare. It does this by providing insights as to what the future could look like, and supporting veterinary professionals to develop the skills they need to take charge of and to shape that future, by leading innovation.

"This event provides an extraordinary opportunity for any vet or veterinary nurse who wants to understand how to adapt and use these new developments, learn about precision veterinary medicine, what it means for the future of veterinary care, and learn about new roles for vets being produced by these changes."

Tickets for the event can be secured through the Innovation Symposium's dedicated Eventbrite page with discounted tickets available for veterinary students and veterinary nurses.

More information about the ViVet project, as well as videos and reports from the 2017 Innovation Symposium at which the project was launched, can be found on the project's dedicated website.

# Events

## **ViVet Innovation Symposium 2019 – Precision Veterinary Medicine: A Vision for the Future**

Tuesday 1 October, The Lowry Pier 8, The Quays, Salford M50 3AZ

## **RCVS Knowledge event - Clinical management of hip dysplasia: using quality improvement to impact outcome**

Wednesday 9th October, Holiday Inn London, Povey Cross Road, Horley, Gatwick, RH6 0BA

## **Practice Standards Scheme Awards Ceremony**

Friday 11 October, BVNA Congress, Beckbury Suite, Telford International Centre, St Quentin Gate, Telford TF3 4JH

## **Veterinary Nurses Day – October 2019**

Thursday 17 October, Prince Albert Suite, ZSL London, Outer Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY

## **RCVS Knowledge event - The future of equine practice: practical examples of how we're improving outcomes for our patients**

Tuesday 22nd October, Rosssdales Equine Hospital and Diagnostic Centre, Cotton End Road, Exning, Newmarket, Suffolk CB7 7NN

## **Introduction to the UK veterinary professions – a key CPD course for overseas vets and VNs**

Tuesday 29 to Wednesday 30 October, Brownsfield Suite, Crowne Plaza Manchester City Centre, Shudehill, Manchester M4 4AF

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

Thursday 7th to Friday 8th November 2019, Royal Armouries, Armouries Drive, Leeds, LS10 1LT

## **London Vet Show 2019**

Thursday 14th to Friday 15th November, Excel Lond

# DC reprimands Midlands-based vet for alcohol-related incidents

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Disciplinary Committee has issued a reprimand and warning as to future conduct to a Midlands-based veterinary surgeon for serious professional misconduct in relation to drink driving convictions and being under the influence of alcohol whilst on duty as a veterinary surgeon.

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Dr Lynn Jo Ann Davies MRCVS took place on Wednesday 7 August 2019 in relation to five charges against her, and was a resumed hearing of an inquiry which was originally adjourned on 23 January 2018 and thereafter on 30 July 2018. The decision was made, at both of the 2018 hearings, to postpone the final decision on sanction having regard to undertakings which the respondent was prepared to enter into.

The first two charges against Dr Davies related to convictions for drink driving on March 2014 and October 2015 for which she received driving bans for 17 months and 45 months respectively.

The third charge related to her breaching a number of undertakings she had entered into as part of the College's Health Protocol, including her consuming alcohol on four occasions between May 2015 and January 2016 and missing a pre-arranged appointment with a consultant psychiatrist appointed.

The fourth and fifth charges related to being under the influence of alcohol on three occasions while she was on duty as a veterinary surgeon in December 2016 which was also in breach of her undertakings under the Health Protocol.

At Dr Davies' first Disciplinary Committee hearing on 23 January 2018 she admitted all five charges against her and also accepted that her conduct was disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. The Committee accepted her admissions and found, with the exception of one allegation, that her conduct was disgraceful in a professional respect.

At the conclusion of its hearing on 23 January 2018 the Committee, having considered both aggravating and mitigating circumstances, decided to postpone its decision regarding sanction for six months on the basis of Dr Davies' entering into undertakings, including not to practise veterinary surgery and to remain abstinent from alcohol during the period of postponement and to undergo blood and hair tests for alcohol consumption every two months.

At the resumed hearing on 30 July 2018, Dr Davies' Counsel submitted on her behalf that she wished to return to practise and the Committee reviewed evidence that she provided to demonstrate she had complied with her undertakings.

However, the Committee retained concerns about her return to practise with regards to her ability to receive support from a mentor. The Committee therefore required Dr Davies to identify a veterinary surgeon who would agree to act as her mentor, noting that the mentor would have to be acceptable to the College as someone suitable to act in that capacity.

The Committee also required the continuation of the requirements for abstinence from alcohol and the programme of blood and hair testing.

A further requirement of the Committee was that Dr Davies should make a disclosure to any new employer of her appearances before the Committee in January 2018 and in July 2018 and of the decisions it made. The final requirement of the Committee was that the respondent should not accept a 'sole charge position' at any time during her employment during this next period of postponement of sanction. The Committee then directed that the hearing be postponed for a further 12 months.

On Wednesday 7 August 2019 the Disciplinary Committee resumed its inquiry. Dr Davies submitted documentary proof and medical records to demonstrate she had complied with all her undertakings given at the last hearing. The Committee also heard from Dr Davies' appointed veterinary mentor who provided a statement that concluded that she no longer needed monitoring or supervision.

The Committee then considered what sanction to impose on Dr Davies, having regard to the nature of the charges which she admitted at the original hearing and also considering the mitigating factors submitted by her Counsel.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The view of the Committee is that the respondent has to date overcome her addiction to alcohol and, given that her competence as a practising veterinary surgeon is not disputed, that she should therefore be permitted to return to her chosen profession. However, in the judgement of this

Committee the seriousness of the offences to which the Respondent has pleaded guilty means that a sanction of “No Further Action” cannot be justified.”

The Committee therefore decided that the most proportionate sanction was for Dr Davies to be reprimanded as to the conduct she admitted at previous hearings and that she be warned as to her future conduct.

“The respondent must understand that she has been given an opportunity to prove that, for the remainder of her time in practice, she can meet the high standards expected of all registered veterinary surgeons from both other practitioners and from members of the public who entrust the care and treatment of their animals to members of this profession,” added Ian Green.

Please note: this news story is published on behalf of the Disciplinary Committee with the aim of helping the public and profession understand the case and the Committee’s decision and it does not form part of the decision itself. The Committee’s full facts and findings are the only authoritative documentation.

# DC suspends York-based vet for falsifying clinical records

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Disciplinary Committee has suspended a York-based veterinary surgeon from the Register for two months, for making dishonest entries in horse passports and subsequently making dishonest entries in the same horses' clinical records.

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Dr Michael Richard Jones took place from Monday 19 August to Wednesday 21 August 2019 in relation to three charges against him.

The first and second charges were that, on 21 March 2018, Dr Jones made signed entries in the passports and made corresponding entries in clinical records of four horses indicating that he had administered an influenza vaccination booster to each horse on 15 March 2018 and in relation to another horse a tetanus booster, when in fact he had administered the vaccination boosters on 21 March 2018 and that, in relation to each entry, his conduct was misleading, dishonest and undermined the integrity of a vaccination process designed to promote animal welfare.

The third charge was that, on or around 21 March 2018, Dr Jones failed to make any entries in the clinical records for a horse in relation to an examination on 21 March 2018.

At the outset of the hearing Dr Jones admitted the facts in the first and second charges, and accepted that his actions were misleading, dishonest and that they undermined the integrity of a vaccination process which was designed to promote animal welfare.

With regards to the third charge, Dr Jones did not admit the charge explaining that he did not remember examining the horse on 21 March 2018 as alleged. However, the respondent disputed certain aspects of the written statements of the College's witnesses. In particular he wanted his conduct to be taken in the context of the pressures that he was working under on that day, primarily that he was in a stressed state having had to euthanase a valuable stallion at the conclusion of his previous client appointment.

In the light of Dr Jones' admissions to his conduct alleged in the first and second charges, the Committee found them proven.

Regarding the third charge, the Committee heard evidence from the horse's owner who said they were present during the examination taking place and the Committee was satisfied that the respondent did examine the horse on 21 March 2018 and that he had a duty to make a brief clinical note on the examination. As Dr Jones admitted that he made no such note, the Committee found the charge to have been proven to the requisite standard.

Having found the charges proven, the Committee then went on to consider whether or not Dr Jones' proven conduct amounted to serious professional misconduct. The Committee, having considered the aggravating and mitigating factors, found that Dr Jones' conduct as found proved in relation to both charges one and two, did constitute serious professional misconduct. However, with regards to charge three, the Committee accepted that the respondent simply forgot that he had examined the horse and, therefore, the Committee was not satisfied that the failure to compile a record entry covering the horse's examination constituted serious professional misconduct.

The Committee then considered what sanction to impose on Dr Jones in relation to the facts found proven in charges one and two. In doing so it took into account the 78 written testimonials and 4 character witnesses called on behalf of Dr Jones.

Ian Green, who chaired the Committee and spoke on its behalf, said: "The Committee's decision on sanction has been based on an acceptance that the respondent's conduct on this occasion was out-of-character, as the evidence of his character witnesses and the contents of the letters submitted in his support by his clients and other veterinary colleagues assert. The Committee also accepts that the respondent self-reported himself to his employer and to the College and has made a full and frank admission of his wrongdoing.

"Consideration was given to whether the sanction of a reprimand and/or warning as to future conduct would adequately reflect the gravity of the misconduct, however, after careful reflection it was concluded that such a sanction could not be justified. The reason is that acts of falsification involve acts of dishonesty by a professional person acting in a professional

capacity, and the gravity of the matter arises not simply from the dishonesty but also from the possible consequences of the false certification. It should be clearly understood by members of the veterinary profession that, in appropriate false certification cases, the sanction of removal from the Register is one which may well be imposed.”

The Committee therefore decided that suspending Dr Jones from the Register for two months would be the most appropriate sanction.

Dr Jones has 28 days from being informed in writing of the outcome of the hearing in which to make an appeal to the Privy Council.