

Stakeholder perceptions of RCVS



July 2019

Objectives, methodology & eligibility criteria



OBJECTIVES



Objectives

- In 2013, RCVS undertook research amongst key stakeholder organisations in order to understand the professions' perceptions of RCVS; its strengths and weaknesses and thoughts on future direction.
- Six years on, the RCVS wishes to re-visit these views to see where changes may have occurred and ensure it will remain fit for purpose over the coming years.



Methodology

- 17 executive in-depth telephone interviews, each lasting up to 1h 30 minutes, took place in June and July 2019.



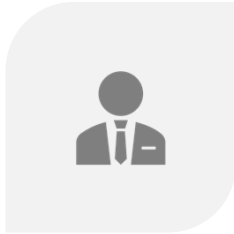
Eligibility criteria

- Where appropriate, interviews were conducted with permanent members of staff, rather than those in more transitory roles, in order to provide greater clarity on any changes in their organisation's relationship with RCVS, since the last survey was conducted
- Organisations and contact details supplied by RCVS

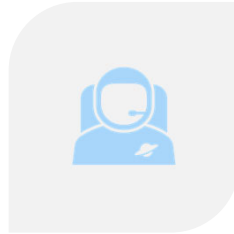
SUMMARY
AGENDA
RESUME
PRESENTATION
CONCLUSION
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SUMMARY

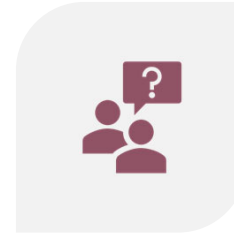
Areas discussed...



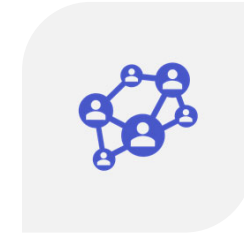
ROLE OF RCVS



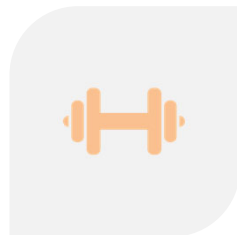
RCVS MISSION



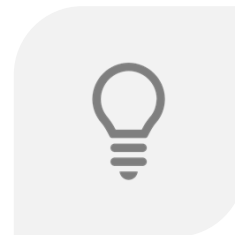
RCVS PURPOSE



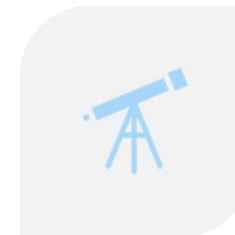
RCVS PEOPLE AND
YOUR INTERACTIONS
WITH THEM



RCVS STRENGTHS
AND WEAKNESSES



SUGGESTED
IMPROVEMENTS FOR
RCVS



SUGGESTED
PRIORITIES FOR THE
FUTURE OF RCVS

Summary: Improved



Image personified

- Could be equally male or female, middle-aged, professionally dressed, present, interacting

Role

- Would benefit from continued clarification amongst stakeholders, and in particular, amongst the public and the profession

Regulator and Royal College

- Pros and cons of being a combined Royal College and Regulator were discussed

Remit

- RCVS works well within its remit although this remit was considered to be “huge” by some with the risk of there being too many areas of focus resulting in actions being slower to be taken and / or implemented and / or the risk of crowding out other stakeholder organisations

Summary: Improved



Mission

- In general, the mission was well-understood by stakeholders and the balance in focus between the public, animal health and welfare and the profession was generally considered to be about right

Purpose

- Understanding in relation to RCVS purpose was good with RCVS largely delivering on its stated purpose but that it was more difficult to judge in relation to “advancing” standards than in relation to “setting” or “upholding” standards

People

- Frequency, quality of interactions and channels of interactions with RCVS were very positive, although inappropriate tone of interactions, lack of proactive and timely communications and slow speed of resolution were raised as issues by some in relation to the disciplinary process and the slow speed of progress from the committees, by a few

Summary: Improved



Strengths & weaknesses

- Strengths were many and included Mind Matters Initiative, Vet Futures, keeping pace with changes in the industry, engagement, regulation and modernisation.
- Despite being strengths, many of these areas would continue to benefit from greater communication and engagement, a review of the disciplinary process and continuing to keep pace with industry changes

Improvements

- The strengths identified in 2013 were considered to remain strengths in 2019.
- Improvements had been seen on all areas of weakness identified in 2013, although further improvement could still be made in terms of antiquated processes, proactivity and communication

Greatest achievements

- Many but mainly Mind Matters Initiative, Vet Futures, quality of interactions, inclusion of VNs and modernising.
- There were no single, frequently mentioned areas of under-performing

Summary: Improved



Initiatives

- RCVS initiatives including Mind Matters Initiative, Vet Futures, Innovation and Leadership reflected positively on RCVS, in particular, the Mind Matters Initiative and Vet Futures.
- The Innovation and Leadership modules were generally less well-known. Some raised concerns in relation to being both regulator and provider of education

Priorities for RCVS

- Priority areas from 2013 had been largely achieved across all areas, although all could still be priority areas for change.
- The main priorities for RCVS going forward were considered to be continuing to horizon-scan in a rapidly changing environment to ensure that regulation keeps pace with the speed of change and also to consolidate the current initiatives

Comparison to 2013 summary: Stakeholder organisations' views



Caution: research is not directly comparable between years as conducted by different agencies, using different methodologies and with different objectives

2013	2019	Summary
The key issue for most stakeholders is openness and collaboration. There is a perception that the RCVS has not been good at this in the past, although improvements have already been observed	Relationships between RCVS and stakeholders were very positive and as stakeholders would want the relationship to be	Improved
Many want to separate out its functions (of regulator and Royal College), in line with other professions (such as doctors, dentists and pharmacists)	Although there was potential for conflict between the two roles, benefits were also appreciated	Stakeholders can generally see pros and cons of being both Royal College and Regulator
Some stakeholders want the RCVS to demonstrate a stronger focus on animal welfare, with a feeling that this is not always as high in RCVS' mind as it should be	Most felt that the balance in focus between the profession, animal health & welfare and the public was about right	Improved

Comparison to 2013 summary:

Stakeholder organisations on contact with RCVS

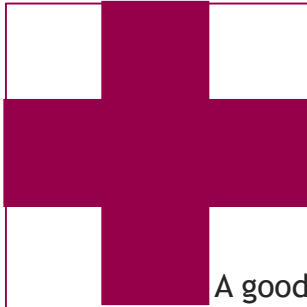



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2013	2019	Summary
Most stakeholders report good contact with the RCVS and perceive the individuals they deal with to be: professional, helpful, dedicated, intelligent, good to work with, available when required, and efficient	Remains very positive	Very positive
Areas for improvement arise from perceptions that the RCVS is slow in its responses, has a tendency to be reactive rather than proactive, errs on the side of caution in its advice/opinions, and is sometimes considered to have an arrogant attitude towards stakeholder engagement	The RCVS was considered to respond in a timely manner, be proactive and treat stakeholder organisations as equals. Exceptions to this, for some, were in relation to the disciplinary process which was deemed too slow and also responses / decisions coming out of the committees	Mainly improved although would benefit from continued attention in specified areas
There is a desire for a more collaborative and open style of working (e.g. sharing of databases with some key stakeholders)	Most stakeholders cited good collaboration and good working relationships with RCVS. Collaboration could be improved further with some of the species groups and with organisations who are also evolving their ways of working. Transparency was mainly good	Improving

Comparison to 2013 survey: Strengths & weaknesses - 2013



	
A good regulator	Antiquated processes and attitudes
A good communicator	Not open and transparent enough
Maintains standards throughout the profession well	Not sufficiently engaged with public, profession and stakeholders
A respected, professional and dedicated organisation	More reactive than proactive
Good staff	Communication could be improved
Practice Standards Scheme	Journey to disciplinary processes not transparent enough
Good work accomplished in the Health and Performance Protocols	

Comparison to 2013 summary: Strengths & weaknesses and role of RCVS



Caution: research is not directly comparable between years as conducted by different agencies, using different methodologies and with different objectives

2013	2019	Summary
Strengths & weaknesses identified - see previous slide	Strengths maintained, weaknesses improved upon, although further progress could be made in terms of antiquated processes, being proactive and communication	Improved
Many identified a need for the RCVS to separate its role as a regulator from that of a Royal College (in line with other professions), with some stakeholders speaking passionately about the need for an end to self-regulation in a belief that the RCVS is not currently impartial. The LRO will go some way to support this, but further change is needed. The expense of a separation is another consideration	The subject of preference for RCVS being both, and / or Royal College was not directly addressed in 2019 but rather stakeholders were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach. Although the potential for conflict was raised as an issue, benefits were also cited	Not comparable between years
Stakeholders seek greater clarity over RCVS' roles, as this is an area of confusion for the public, the profession and within RCVS	Although some improvements seen, the public and to some degree the profession would still benefit from greater clarity over the role of RCVS; the public in relation to complaints procedure and the profession in relation to the role of RCVS outside of graduation and disciplinary action	Some improvement
There is some concern that the RCVS takes on roles that are outside of its remit - particular concern about Scientific Review Body role, which some feel is only acceptable under the Trust, which is independent	The RCVS was considered to be working within its remit, although the remit was considered by some to be (too?) wide-ranging. Offering training on Leadership was flagged as a possible deviation from the remits. There was some concern that RCVS might start to crowd-out other stakeholder organisations (to the detriment of the industry)	Improved

Comparison to 2013 survey: Values 2013



RCVS Values	Stakeholder views 2013
Open	Improvements still needed
Fair	Considered to be fair
Understanding	Varies according to stakeholder
Forward-thinking	Improvements still needed
Accountable	Improvements still needed - the “overspend” issue often quotes
Consistent	Considered to be consistent
<i>Suggested new value: Compassionate</i>	<i>Some would like a commitment to animal welfare specifically reflected in the values</i>

Comparison to 2013 summary: RCVS Mission & Values



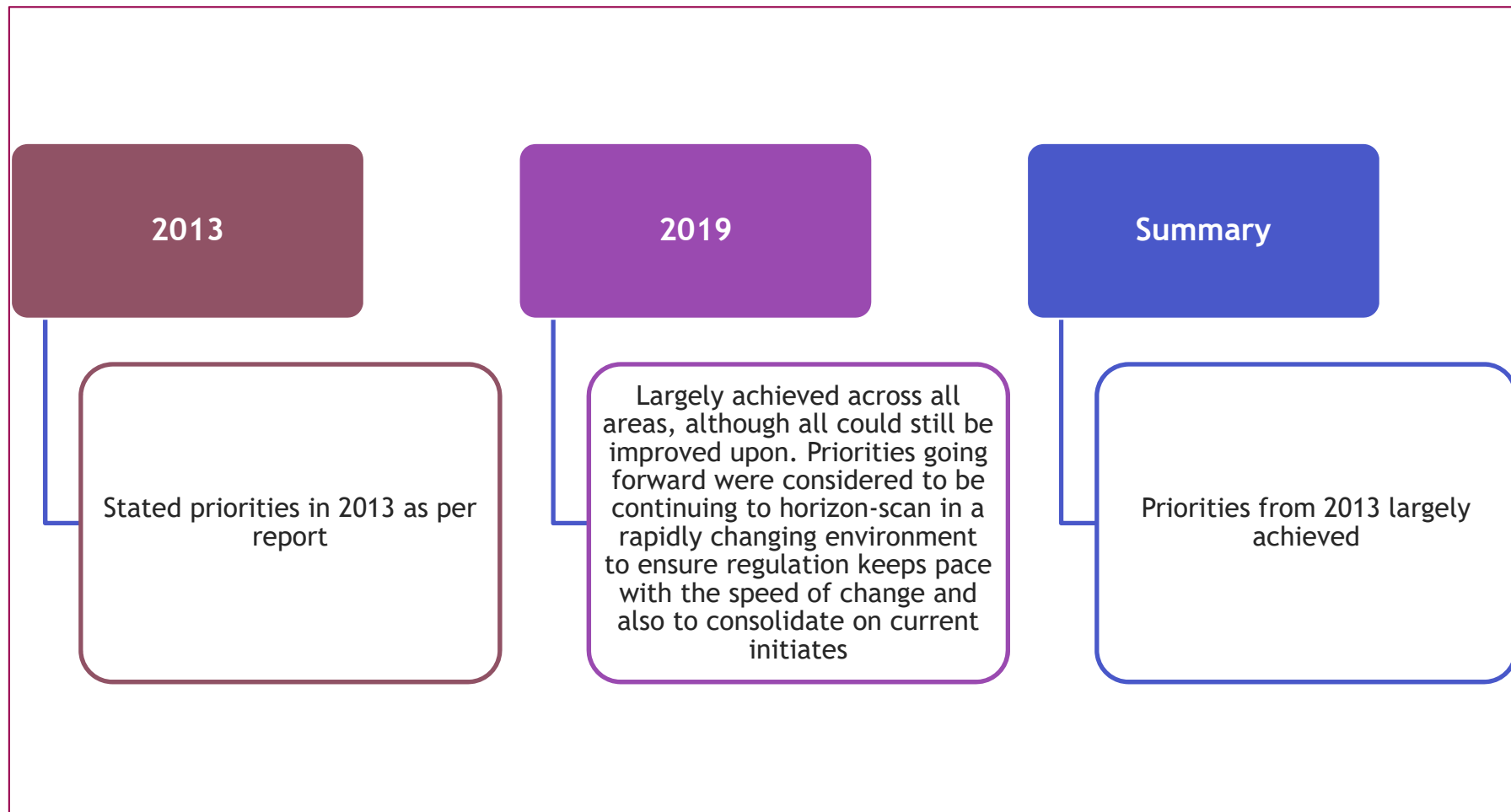
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2013	2019	Summary
Veterinary Surgeons Act: Differing views on this. Some stakeholders want to see more radical changes and think this can only happen if the Act is changed. Others are not keen to open up the Act - fearing opening 'a can of worms'. Either way, there is a drive for a definitive decision on whether or not the RCVS will seek to change the Act.	Veterinary Surgeons Act not addressed in 2019 research	*
There is broad support for the RCVS' mission statement, except for the final sentence - 'an impartial source of informed opinion' - which caused controversy. Many feel that it is not possible for RCVS to be an 'impartial source' if it is also the regulator.	The mission was largely accepted and the balance of focus between the public, animal health & welfare and the profession considered, on reflection, to be appropriate	Improved
Some would like to see a greater emphasis on the health and welfare of animals. There is a view that this is being achieved almost as a bi-product of other activities (monitoring standards etc.), but it is not in the forefront of everything the RCVS does.	Mainly considered to have the balance about right overall	Improved
Values: As per previous slide	Not directly addressed in 2019 research	*

Comparison to 2013 summary: RCVS Mission & Values



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Considerations moving forward:



- Celebrate the many improvements and achievements made over the last six years including:
 - Continuing to develop positive stakeholder relationships
 - Achieving an appropriate balance between the profession, animal health & welfare and the public.
 - Working within its remit
 - Modernising
 - Improving on the previously-identified weaknesses
 - Making advancements on previous-identified priorities
 - Implementing the RCVS Initiatives, in particular, Mind matters Initiative and Vet Futures

Celebrate



Considerations moving forward:



- Consolidate and continue to communicate with all stakeholders on the good work to date, whilst remaining proactive as an organisation, yet mindful of the role of other stakeholder organisations, within the rapidly changing industry

Consolidate



Considerations moving forward:



1. Horizon planning to ensure regulation keeps pace with the rapidly changing environment

2. Improving communications, particularly in relation to

The profession e.g.

- The breadth of role of RCVS, not just the regulator
- Those going through the disciplinary process (N.B. speed, frequency & tone)

The public (refer to recent RCVS survey on pet owner attitudes (2019))

- Awareness of RCVS
- Awareness of the Practice Standards Scheme
- Clarification on the disciplinary process

3. Improving the disciplinary process experience for professionals

- Keeping at the heart of all interactions: Innocent until proven guilty of gross misconduct
- Increasing speed of resolution of cases brought

**Centre attention
on**



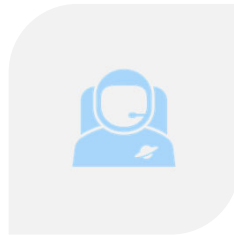


MAIN REPORT

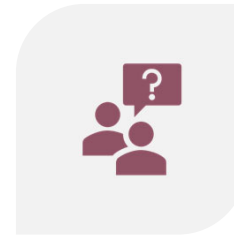
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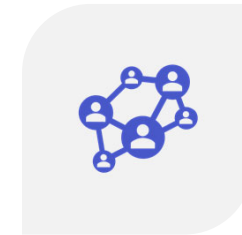
ROLE OF RCVS



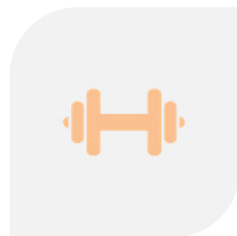
RCVS MISSION



RCVS PURPOSE



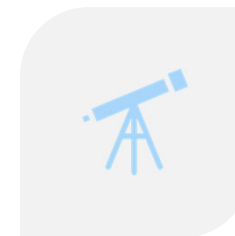
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RCVS STRENGTHS
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SUGGESTED
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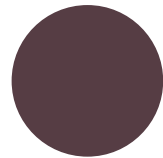
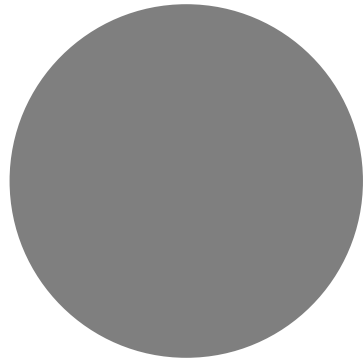


Personification

RCVS as an organisation...



- Could be equally male or female
- Middle-aged
- Professionally dressed
- Responsible, sensible, likeable, not the life and soul of the party
- Present at the party (not centre, not hiding away), interacting, sometimes acting as a confidant



Role of RCVS



The role of the RCVS, as laid out in its Charter, is to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in the interests of the health and welfare of animals and in the wider public interest.

RCVS Role...



A good reflection of their understanding of the role of RCVS for approximately half. The remainder raised some areas of potential confusion



Role of the RCVS understood by RCVS and organisations. Role understood partially by the profession and not at all by the public



To what extent do you feel that the current positioning is understood by...?

The RCVS - Variable depending on role

- Good understanding amongst staff but level of understanding variable amongst Council Members

Stakeholder organisations - Good understanding

- Good understanding of role of RCVS within organisations amongst those who interact with RCVS

The profession - Role of disciplinarian

- The breadth of the role of RCVS sometimes underestimated by the profession. Post-graduation, fees are paid to RCVS but contact with the College is limited for many and feared by some as contact = disciplinary action

"Less well, I think there is still a strong body within the veterinary profession and vet nurses who see the RCVS as or perceive the RCVS as being there to take disciplinary action against vets and therefore are feared."

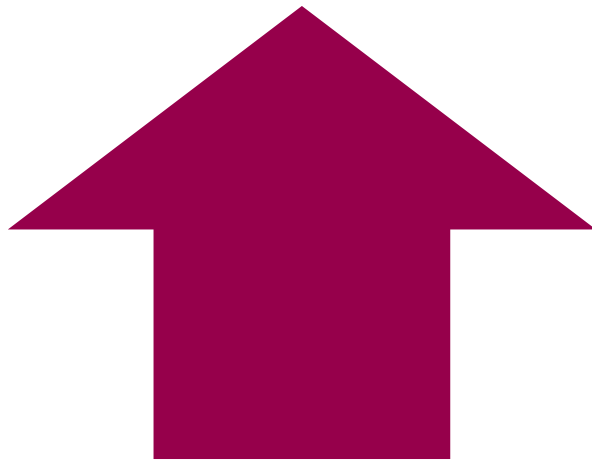
The public - Largely unaware

- Limited awareness of the role of RCVS unless they need to make a complaint
- *"I think until somebody has a complaint they're probably not aware"*

RCVS as both regulator and Royal College

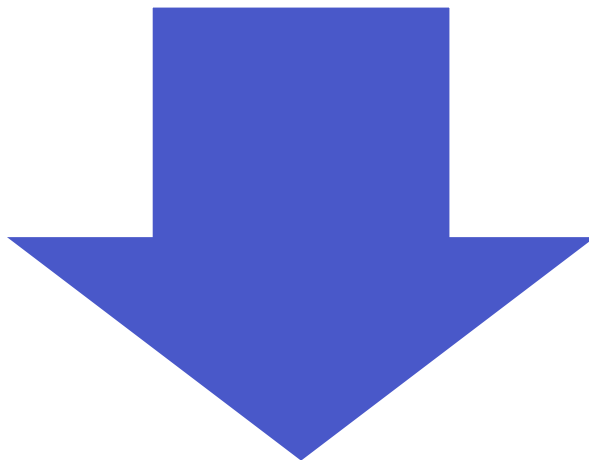


RCVS both regulator and Royal College, could be a conflict of interest but also provides benefits



Benefits

- Better overview of the whole industry i.e.
- The Royal College can influence regulation and inform decision-making
- RCVS can inform the future direction of the industry
- Disciplinary findings are more likely to be fair and reasonable (deeper understanding of the context)
- RCVS has more power / influence due to the size of the organisation
- Offers cost savings in terms of increased efficiencies
- RCVS can make a positive advancement in the profession in addition to being a regulator



Concerns

- Considered to be a difficult role to be both Royal College and regulator: potential conflict of interest / cannot serve two masters / self-regulation can lead to accusations of having a vested interest in any regulation / outcomes
- RCVS could become inward-looking
- Confusion about the role of RCVS; Easier for the public to understand the two roles of RCVS if the organisation were separate
- Members fees paid to regulate members. Conflict?
- Potential lack of focus as remit too broad, processes take longer, statutory issues could take priority over other issues so progress is slowed down
- RCVS could crowd out other organisations which perform a valuable role in terms of providing input / push-back / support to the College
- Positive advancements of RCVS could be tarred by any negative regulatory elements of the College

RCVS largely works within its remit, although remit possibly too broad to manage in a timely way?



The majority felt that RCVS did work within its remit.

“I think overall it appears to work within its remit and I haven’t seen anything that sort of suggests to us that they go outside their remit.”

That said, a few commented that the remit was *“huge”* which could lead to the impression that *“everything at the College is slow”* e.g.

- Disciplinary process
- Decision-making e.g. CPD and PDR website
- Issuing guidance to members e.g. Brexit, telemedicine

RCVS largely works within its remit, although remit possibly too broad to manage in a timely way?



With its broad remit, there were some concerns that the RCVS could start to encroach on the roles of others e.g.

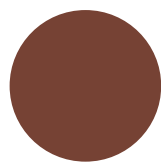
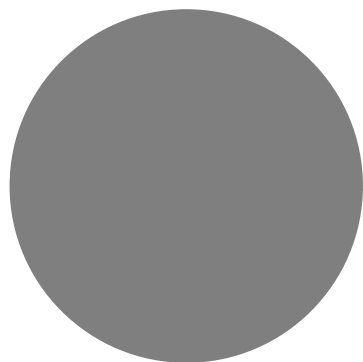
- Initiatives such as Mind Matters and Vet Futures were well-received but considered by a few to perhaps not be / should not be within the role of RCVS

“I think The Charter allows it to do many, many different things and I think it’s almost the case of The College and RCVS Council being mindful of that and exercising a bit of self-awareness and self-restraint about not trying to do absolutely everything that it has the legal powers to do.”

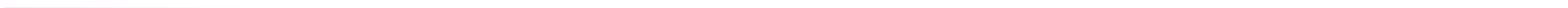
- The representative bodies - whose role is it to make statements about Brexit?
- CPD providers - conflict of interest in terms of setting standards in education and delivering standards in education as leadership courses provide training rather than stating *“what good training is”*.

Minor comments

- RCVS is currently focussed on companion animal practice to the detriment of farm animal practice e.g. RCVS currently lacks expertise / gravitas in terms of certification of animal products / animal medicines regulations / compliance issues



RCVS Mission



The RCVS enhances society through improved animal health and welfare.

It ensures the public has high levels of confidence,

because veterinary professionals are

highly competent, up to date and trusted.

RCVS Mission...



A good reflection of their understanding of RCVS Mission. Qualifications raised by a few

The RCVS enhances society through improved animal health and welfare.

It ensures the public has high levels of confidence, because veterinary

professionals are

highly competent, up to date and trusted.

Statement should include all three aspects; animal health, animal welfare and public health and

“Public”

- Limited awareness of role of RCVS
- Limited awareness that RCVS polices misconduct- only so owners are left dissatisfied and vets are left feeling stressed and aggrieved
- Public perception of the profession decreasing?

“Highly competent”

- Some vets are not up-to-date
- Some vets do not practice using latest evidence e.g. homeopathic vets “*pseudo science*”
- Misconduct is investigated but not patterns of consistent poor performance and or negligence

RVCS Mission: The balance between the public, animal health and welfare and the profession was generally considered to be about right



Minor comments on the balance included...



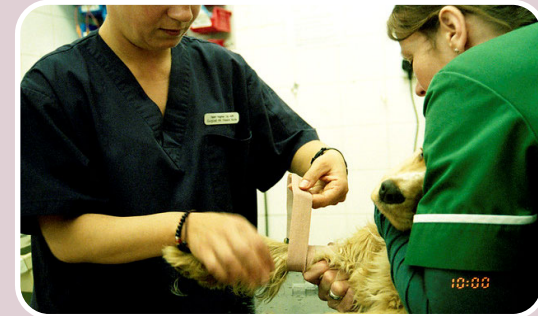
Public

- Too much in favour of the public
- RCVS investigates in cases when it is not misconduct
“certainly when it comes to the complaints side of things, it is skewed towards the members of the public.”
- More could be done to raise awareness of RCVS amongst the public



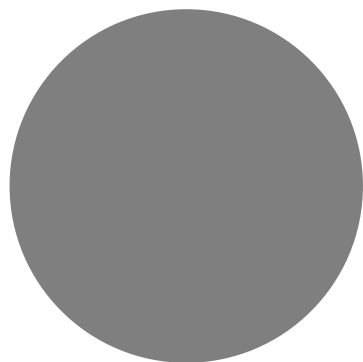
Animal welfare

- Too much focus on process and detail of how it is achieved rather than on animal health & welfare



The profession

- 24/7 obligation poor for vet welfare
- Need to consider the context that vets are working in when passing judgements “a really harsh way to judge people”



RCVS Purpose

RCVS Purpose...



RCVS sets, upholds and advances veterinary standards.

➤ **Setting standards**

- Undergraduate/vocational education and for professional conduct while practising

➤ **Upholding standards**

- Discipline and registration: robust, prompt and fair

➤ **Advancing standards**

- Leadership in the profession, voluntary Practice Standards Scheme, mental health and wellbeing. Promote and advance knowledge, standards and expertise

RCVS Purpose...Good understanding of RCVS Purpose.

Largely delivering on its stated purpose



Setting standards -largely delivering on its purpose	Upholding standards - largely delivering on it's purpose	Advancing standards - largely delivering on its purpose but perhaps more difficult to measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •RCVS considered to be setting standards in terms of graduates being permitted to join the Royal College, (graduate outcomes work), the Practice Standards Scheme (should be compulsory?), guidance and interpretation of Schedule 3 •Some room for improvement for a few in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •RCVS's remit only relates to gross misconduct and some vets are not considered to be competent but are able to practise - when hiring a vet, there is currently no way of knowing if that vet is competent seeing their work first-hand •How to regulate within a corporate environment when owners may not be regulated by RCVS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •RCVS considered to be upholding standards in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Regulation / disciplinary procedures •Partnerships •CPD •Some room for improvement for a few in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •RCVS lacks the power to enforce CPD requirement •Some experiences of working in practice with <i>"Slightly dodgy vets"</i> or vets with <i>"Flawed understandings of the way they apply their knowledge."</i> •RCVS have no powers to enter a practice to inspect it •Outcomes of RCVS Disciplinary process can leave both vets and the public unhappy •RCVS could perhaps do more to remind members of the standards expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •RCVS considered to be advancing standards in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation of education •Leadership courses •Innovation •Practice Standards Scheme •Mind Matters Initiative •Some room for improvement for a few in terms of accelerating the rate of progress on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensuring all species are covered adequately on the syllabus to ensure there are adequate numbers of species-competent vets in the future •Implementing new technologies <i>"Not being bullied by more conservative elements of the profession who are resistant to change."</i> •Protecting the title of Veterinary Nurse •Reviewing the one-year RCVS Presidencies vs four-year term for the Federation of Veterinarians in Europe - <i>"It feels a bit stop start."</i> •Regulating paraprofessionals •How to regulate the ethics of what is fair and reasonable in terms of new treatments and procedures to ensure they are inline with the Animal Welfare Act •Questioning to what extent the Practice Standards Scheme has advanced animal welfare vs the economic impact on the business



RCVS People

RCVS People: Frequency, quality and channels of interactions were very positive



Frequency

- Stakeholders felt that the frequency of communication with RCVS was, on the whole, about right. They...
- Acknowledged that the staff at RCVS were accessible to them
- Appreciated the opportunity to meet with RCVS at least once per year and for some organisations, more frequently. Visits from senior staff at RCVS would be well received
- Welcomed consultations / advanced warning on issues which might affect them and for some, this could be improved still further

Quality of interaction

- RCVS staff were considered to be: Professional, they listened, were helpful, used an appropriate tone of voice, generally responded in a timely manner and had good judgment
- "I think their interactions between my board and the RCVS executive team and officers is always really positive, you know, we haven't shied away from tackling tricky issues. I know that I can pick up the phone and speak to Eleanor or Lizzie and straightaway they will either be able to respond immediately or will get back in a very timely fashion. So, at the executives level really good, at the officer level really good."*

Channels of communication

- The channels of communication used were deemed to be appropriate
- "I think the number of meetings is an appropriate number and dealing with them, either via email or face to face both ways is easy."*
- "Oh, it's good, we receive emails from them on a regular basis, most are for information only, but if we do need to set up a meeting it's always worked really and they've always been really accommodating"*
- "Absolutely fine, so yeah, I think the meetings are useful...they're productive and it's valuable time spent together, so yeah, it's fine."*

RCVS People: Stakeholders appreciate the quality of interactions with RCVS staff



Areas for improvement, raised by individual organisations



Disciplinary process

- Inappropriate tone of written correspondence to vets at the initial stage of an investigation
 - *“officious and upsetting...the language used is there to appease the complainant...without recognising or taking into account the upset that that language will cause the veterinary surgeon who in fact is not being found guilty of any professional misconduct.”*
- Low frequency of communication during the process
- Slow speed of process to resolution

Interpretation of the Code of conduct

- When vets call the RCVS for advice, they sometimes have the Code read to them verbatim rather than RCVS helping them with interpretation (although it is recognised that being too prescriptive would also not be helpful)

Committees

- Issues going through committees are sometimes slow to resolve (due to frequency and structure of committee meetings), the committee can rely overly on the input of well-known [possibly not well-informed] personalities or those at the end of their career or career politicians rather than typical vets and documentation emerging from committees is sometimes perceived as not reflecting the outcome
 - *“rely heavily on political players...as opposed to the word of the vets at the coal face”.*
 - *“things sometimes disappear into committees and then reappear with a very unusual spin on them”*
- Further consideration should be given to who should be discussing an issue, who has a vested interest, who is best informed rather than who is available

Outcomes

- Implementation of outcomes could be somewhat variable, with issues being raised around occasional...
 - Lack of follow through on actions, assumed to be due to other organisations taking priority or possibly lack of communication in relation to the reasons for any delays.
 - Issues appearing to be slow to get through “a raft of committees” and revised proposals
- Guidelines being drafted without consultation to relevant organisations, resulting in incorrect information (junior member of the team)
- Confusion in terms of roles within RCVS working parties and the role of representatives - is the representative participating in the thinking or agreeing as a representative of an organisation
- Releases of information via the press before the information has been released to its stakeholders

Our people...



RCVS people are
highly skilled and motivated in a strong service culture.
They are in-touch, compassionate, straight-talking, forward-looking and
have good judgement

Two thirds of
stakeholders
agree that the
RCVS people
live up to the
stated values

"I think everyone I've ever interacted with, be it officers or members of staff have all, yeah, have brought in many of those attributes and I couldn't really fault any of them in terms of that"

"Absolutely no complaints."

"The people I've had contact with, yes, I think that fits fairly well."

"I think they are all of those things...I have a lot of time and respect for the people at the top of the RCVS."

"I'm pleasantly surprised by... the quality of people they get to work for that organisation...responsive, they're articulate, they are deep thinking and consider things carefully, they are open and transparent in their dealings with you and they just seem to manage to recruit really good people."

The remaining
third feel RCVS
people mostly
live up to the
stated values,
with a few
exceptions

Professional Conduct...remote but inevitable, trying not to be

- *"... where problems do occur it would tend to be it's a little bit ivory tower and I know they don't have that intention at all, ivory tower is probably the wrong phase, there is a physical separation between what they're doing and those at the coalface."*

High standard set - no specific major shortfalls

- *"[Mostly achieving the standard]"It's lots of little things, the standard you've described is a very high one and it'll be lots of little things that just build up that impression, which makes you go, do you know what, I think it's mostly."*

Not a service culture (transactional), would welcome a partnership (collaborative) approach

- *"So we're not customers of the RCVS in a sense, I don't see us as that, I see us more as partners, so I don't feel that we have such a kind of customer service relationship with them...Ideally I suppose it's more collaborative and less transactional."*

Frontline staff - not in touch

- *"[variable]...people that are dealing with frontline enquiries aren't...as well informed and connected about the veterinary profession...[but] I think generally they do a difficult job very well."*

Six years ago...



“Individuals at RCVS are professional, helpful, dedicated,
intelligent, good to work with, available when required and
efficient”

Over three-quarters of stakeholders agree that RCVS has retained its previously identified values

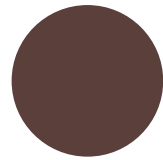
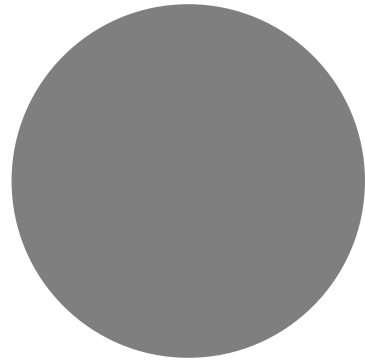
A few suggested areas for improvement

Values remain true in 2019 for over three-quarters of stakeholders

- *“Yes, I’d say that’s a good reflection.”*
- *“Yeah, very much so, yes.”*
- *“Yes, I’d say that’s still true.”*

Values only mostly remain in 2019 for less than a quarter of stakeholders

- Professional Conduct slow to provide advice
 - *“I think if you need advice on professional conduct, I think you need to get it rapidly, not wait a week for a response.”*
- Lack of proactive communication when delays occur in the disciplinary process
 - *“Because when somebody is being investigated by a professional regulator, a vacuum in the process creates fear.”*



**Strengths,
weaknesses,
improvements**

RCVS Main strengths: Many e.g. RCVS initiatives, it is forward-looking and engaging, regulation



Mind Matters Initiative & Vet Futures

- *"I suppose Vet Futures and Mind Matters are sort of highlights, it's really basic, but it makes a big difference."*
- *"I think certainly the whole Mind Matters project has been incredibly positive and successful."*

Keeping up with changes in the profession / tackling controversial issues (telemedicine, compliance around CPD)

- *"I think they are working hard to tackle the controversial views...they're not shying away from that and I think that's the most important thing."*

Engagement & communications

- *"It feels like it's functioning well, at an operational level, the communications are regular and good, it is listening, it feels like it listens to us and feels like it is looking forward."*
- *"I think it's really positive what they are trying to do to improve engagement and communication."*

Regulating the profession / setting standards

- *"[Re day to day maintenance as a regulator] I think it's doing very well...it's doing a very thorough job of looking at future regulatory questions. Those are probably the key things."*
- *"Looking to keep making improvements on the Practice Standard Scheme."*

Modernising RCVS

- *"I personified them as middle-aged, but they're young middle-aged and dynamic at the moment and I'm thinking of the staff there, there's a lot of energy about the place, so yes, I'm very positive about it."*
- *"I think it's sort of modernisation, so it's improved so many things over the last five or ten years."*
- *"Work around improving diversity."*



RCVS Main strengths: Many e.g. RCVS initiatives, it is forward-looking and engaging, regulation



Minor mentions

- CEO - The comments received in relation to the CEO were only positive
 - *"They've got a strong CEO, I think, and she has done an awful lot to help change perceptions of the College and try and probably make people more aware that it's not just the regulatory function, it is doing other stuff as well...I think because she has a lot of presence, so you know, she's willing to engage with members of the profession who want to know more and she's very open in that respect and she's put herself out there a lot and attended lots of things herself, she was a real driver for the Mind Matters, because that was her role before she was CEO and so, you know, she's communicated a lot, she's quite good with her communication and she's put herself on social media and sort of, you know, twittering and things, so I think she's just done that well and I think she had to try and make people understand it's not just the regulations."*
 - *"I do admire Lizzie a lot, I think she puts her heart and soul into her job and what she does and I think that's really paid off. If you look at her predecessors, they weren't bad, but I just think she's an awful lot more effective at getting messages out there and driving stuff, than they were and I'm sure a lot of that comes down to the personal effort and energy she puts into it."*
- Achieving the RCVS stated role, mission, purpose
- Changes to the complaints process
- Charter for nurses
- Consulting the profession
- Ethics Committee
- International engagement, particularly in Europe
- Leadership
- Listening
- Business operations (running efficiently)
- Proactive
- Profile of RCVS
- RCVS Knowledge
- Setting standards
- RCVS website



RCVS Areas for improvement: Fewer in number than strengths.

Communication & engagement, the disciplinary process, keeping pace with change



Communications & Engagement

- With vets in practice
- With species groups
- Keeping stakeholders abreast of progress against current initiatives
- Publicising Practice Standards Scheme to the public
 - *"I think there's room for a bit of, a bit more recognition or promotion of what it does for the profession, i.e. it's Royal College and perhaps expansion in that role into things that have a more direct impact on health and welfare."*
 - *"I suppose if I was in their position I'd be looking just to promote their standards to the public, I'm not sure the public particularly understand PSS and probably to promote the fact that they exist for the purpose of regulating veterinary surgeons, so I don't think the public are perhaps as au fait with that as perhaps they are with other regulatory bodies."*

Disciplinary process

- Speed of investigations
- Improved transparency of process
- Too much focus on the process rather than animal welfare
- Using disciplining the individual as a way of improving standards within the whole profession
 - *"Of late there seems to have been more individual animal, clinical cases being taken to a full disciplinary hearing and there is sometimes a feeling that individuals are being used as examples, held up as examples to try and improve standards, rather than more proactively trying to improve standards, so carrot rather than stick"*

Keeping pace with changes in the industry

- *"just because the world is moving forwards significantly faster than the College is, that I think there is a risk of unregulated or poorly regulated activities developing"*

Single mentions

- Committee processes slow
- Continued work on tackling a culture of blame
- Officers term too short
- Too few Council members
- Structure of VN Council



Comparison of strengths in 2013 vs 2019: Strengths maintained. Some would welcome a review of Health & Performance protocols



Strengths in 2013

A good regulator

A good communicator

Maintains standards throughout the profession well

A respected, professional and dedicated organisation

Good staff

Practice Standards Scheme

Good work accomplished on the Health and Performance Protocols

Current position (2019)

Maintained as a strength

Maintained as a strength

Maintained as a strength

Maintained as a strength

Maintained as a strength

Minor mention - Some communication goes directly to species Board members and some goes through the office. Process would be improved by always cc'ing in Secretariat

A few mentions that the protocols need "a radical review" as it is outdated and focuses on physical illness and / or addiction rather than a range of mental health issues

Comparison of weaknesses in 2013 vs 2019:

Improvements seen on all areas with some not recognising any or most of these areas to be current weaknesses



Weaknesses in 2013	Current position (2019)	Verbatims
Antiquated processes and attitudes	<p>Mainly improved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary process could be improved further by better use of technology and the layout of the room could be less combative 	<p>Antiquated processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the disciplinary hearings have improved... but I think there’s still scope to do more in that area, video links have been used, but the technology is still not as good as it could be.” • “I think the format and the layout of the way that the actual hearings are conducted is still pretty combative for the respondent.”
Not open and transparent enough	<p>Improvements made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency could be further improved e.g. Council meetings could be more open 	
Not sufficiently engaged with public, profession and stakeholders	<p>Sufficiently engaged with stakeholders and possibly the profession (although still a fear factor) but not with the public</p>	<p>Proactivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think they are very much more on the front foot of things now than they have been.” • “I think Mind Matters...started them in a new direction in a lot of ways.” • “They work hard to be proactive, they have to be reactive in some cases, but they work hard to be proactive. “
More reactive than proactive	<p>Seen as proactive e.g. Vet Futures, Mind Matters Initiative</p>	
Communication could be improved	<p>Generally considered to have improved but still with room for improvement in terms of communicating outcomes from Council discussions and frequency and tone of communications during the disciplinary process</p>	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So, there are areas [of communication] in which it could be better, but I would say that it has been getting better and efforts have been made and stakeholder to stakeholder, communication between the two is absolutely fine.”
Journey to the disciplinary process not transparent enough	<p>Process transparent but considered to be too long</p>	

RCVS: Many achievements, no one single area of under-achievement



Greatest achievements

- Mind Matters Initiative
- Vet Futures
- Soft skills e.g. being more approachable, collaborative
- Inclusion of VNs
- Modernising - better reflecting the profession and issues faced by the profession
- Minor mentions
 - Changes to Council structure
 - Communications
 - Maintaining a high profile (RCVS)
 - Practice Standards Scheme
 - Regulatory reform
 - Veterinary Client Mediation Scheme (VCMS)

Areas which hold RCVS back

- No single frequently-mentioned areas.
- Minor mentions on:
 - RCVS as regulator
 - Ensuring regulation keeps pace with change
 - Assessing the competence of veterinary surgeons
 - Clarity & guidance on Schedule 3
 - Working in partnership with other organisations e.g. in terms of regulating paraprofessionals
 - RCVS as Royal College
 - RCVS general
 - Increased communication / updates to stakeholders, the profession and the public
 - Consider the role of all vets not just those in clinical practice
 - Council to reflect the views of the population of vets with an appropriate level of contribution from corporates
 - Being more open and transparent

Initiatives: Well-received and reflect well on RCVS, particularly the Mind Matters Initiative and Vet Futures.



Mind Matters Initiative

- RCVS taken the lead
- Feedback very positive
- Timely initiative, working well, appreciated, making a difference



Vet Futures

- Well received and a positive collaboration
- Future considerations
 - Greater engagement with stakeholders
 - Engagement with the public
 - VN Futures feels like a side-publication, "gone rather moribund" but recently reinvigorated
 - Recognise other countries in UK / unique aspects



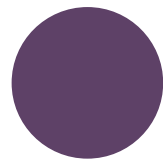
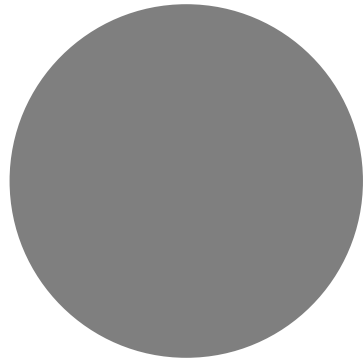
Innovation

- Less well-known, less engagement with this initiative
- Slow uptake?
- Minor comments that is this the role of RCVS? / potential to crowd out other organisations?
- "I don't see a huge amount of innovation coming out of the College"*

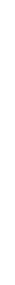


Leadership

- Less well known
- Minor comments
 - Should this be the remit of RCVS?
 - Some concern that the remit of RCVS should be to set standards for education rather than to be the educator



Priorities



RCVS priorities for the future: A mix of horizon planning in a rapidly changing environment and consolidation



Horizon-scanning to ensure the profession is fit for the future

- Including areas such as:
 - Ensuring regulation keeps pace with the changing environment e.g.
 - The role of telemedicine / “under your care” “remote prescribing” and Artificial Intelligence
 - Nurse prescribing
 - Regulation of corporates
 - 24/7 obligation
 - Relevance of veterinary medicine syllabus / Day-one Competencies / sufficient vets to cover each species group
 - Retention rates / improve access to veterinary degrees
 - Brexit - Ensuring sufficient numbers of vets, ensuring vets are fit to practise in UK (vets from vet schools in Europe which are not recognised by RCVS) and that standards are retained e.g. to safeguard public health

Consolidate current position

- Especially in a time of uncertainty, focus on consolidating current initiatives
 - *“Carry on doing what they’re doing, which most of it they’re doing very well, but I think it probably, it comes down to the issue around sustainability of the veterinary profession and identifying the different routes to support that.”*
 - *“I think consolidate the improvements that have been made and keep moving forwards with them, it’s not job done. Some of them do still need further work, but the direction of travel is right, so consolidation and enhance what’s there.”*

Health of the profession

- Continue to support Mind Matters Initiative

Minor mentions

- Disciplinary process
 - Better communicate the disciplinary process to vets
 - Triage complaints more quickly in the process in order to close cases more quickly
- Practice Standards Scheme
- Discuss bad practice
- Seek to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act to enhance enforcement powers with a view to entering veterinary premises for inspection purposes

Suggested priorities six years ago...



- Clarity about the role of RCVS
- More collaborative working and openness (for the RCVS to take the initiative, to be more visible and responsive)
- Greater engagement with the profession and public; and putting animal welfare at the heart of all decisions
- More proactive, forward-thinking and modern in its approach (no gowns/wigs, greater use of email)
- Greater support to VN department to enable VN profession to develop

2013 priorities: Largely achieved in all areas



“I think they work really hard in all of those and I would say the direction of travel is great.”
“I think a lot of those have been, have actually been worked on quite well over the last six years, I’m quite impressed, actually.”
“I think yeah, I think they’ve made progress on all of those.”

Clarity about the role of RCVS

- Mostly improved vs 2013
 - Minor mentions
 - For some, still more clarification required - *“it’s pretty defined on paper, but not really very well understood.”*

More collaborative working and openness (for the RCVS to take the initiative, to be more visible and responsive)

- Collaboration between RCVS and stakeholders had improved since 2013 and was held in high regard
 - *“Yeah, I think that that’s definitely improved.”*
 - *“I think they do collaborate well.”*

Greater engagement with the profession and public; and putting animal welfare at the heart of all decisions

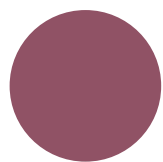
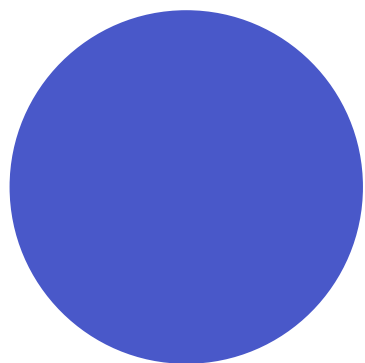
- Improvements made, the Practice Standards Scheme helps this, but still more could be done, for a few, in terms of engaging with the public
- Minor mention to continue to be seen to have animal health & welfare at the heart of all decision-making
- *“I think animal welfare is at the heart of all decisions, but I don’t know that that message is always received.”*

More proactive, forward-thinking and modern in its approach (no gowns/wigs, greater use of email)

- Improvement seen in terms of being proactive / progressive, in terms of being less formal and in terms of use of email

Greater support to VN department to enable VN profession to develop

- Improvements made in terms of regulation of veterinary nurses and having VNs on Council
- However, minor mentions
 - Still some limitations in terms of the regulatory framework
 - All communications on VN Futures have to be “run past” the comms department which can slow progress
 - Speculation that VNs might be better served by having their own organisation and that RCVS would lack focus if it became broader than veterinary surgeons (e.g. VNs, paraprofessionals etc)



Appendix



RCVS at the party...

Probably male, middle-aged, formally dressed, drinking wine, present and interacting



Gender	Age	Clothes / attributes	Drink	Location	Action	Other organisations
Regulator male	Older	Formally dressed "Draconian"	Wine	In the room	Interacting, guarded "People would be wary about what they were saying to them."	Industry group Talking to similar looking people
Leadership female	"Much younger"		Wine	In the centre of the room	"Quite extrovert" "Keen to talk to people" "Keen to listen to ideas" "People would feel quite happy interacting with them."	
Male	50's	Suit	Red wine	In the corner	"Fairly serious" "They know what they want and they're not going to bother with anything else." Chatting	Industry group Drinking in a corner
Male	Over 50, maybe over 75, Vicar	Dressed as a Vicar	White wine	Centre of the room	"Engaged in conversation"	At the edge of the room
Male	Late middle aged	Conservative dressed but with a "Loud suit and tie."	Dry white wine	"Not in the middle of the room, but not with their back against the wall, either."	"Listening a lot, I would say and responding to questions, probably, rather than being proactive."	Talking to RCVS, female and less conservative
Female	Middle aged	"Smart casual, not quite business suit, because it's a party, but orthodox smart casual." "A responsible grown-up."	Prosecco	"In the main throng, round the edges, moving round the edges and talking to lots of people."	"They're pleasant, they're approachable, they're friendly and they're interacting with a large number of people at the party...easily interacting with lots of different people."	Similar

RCVS at the party...

Could be either male or female, middle-aged, present and interacting



Gender	Age	Clothes / attributes	Drink	Location	Action	Other organisations
Male	Middle aged	Smartly dressed	Wine		"I would say not quite centre of attention, but mixing in with people." "Listening"	At the edge, socialising
Female	Middle-aged, "Process-driven" "Educated"	Conservative	Gin & tonic	Towards the outside	"They would be interacting with other people at the party, but not the central hub."	"Probably in our own, probably again, probably like the RCVS, slightly towards the outside, but with our own sort of, with our own gang."
Female	45y	Professional dress, suit	Fizz	In the middle	"Chatting...I would say professional subject areas, but not all serious, you know, just general conversation around the profession."	As "In the middle with them, not necessarily talking directly with them, but you know, similar sort of engagement."
Female	Mid 50's	"Slightly overly-formally dressed"	Wine	"In the thick of things, networking and chatting to people."	"Attempting to be friendly and down to earth and maybe not quite pulling it off. ...because I think that the way that they are trying to be and would like to be seen is not quite yet the reality of how they really are...I think they're on a journey and I think they're making good progress on their journey. I think they have come from a place where they were probably old fashioned, stuffy and definitely feared by the profession to becoming, you know, more down to earth, more informal, friendlier and trying to be all those things, trying to be less scary, definitely making some progress on that journey, but not quite there yet."	"Doing the same." "Working the room a bit."
Male	50's	"Grey...formal, crumpled work suit."	A cocktail		"Present, but not in the centre spotlight, not in a corner, not a wallflower, but yeah, they're there and you can see them, but they're not in the centre of things, they're not leading the dance or anything like that." "In conversation."	"Dancing around within the room" "A hostess, almost a servicing staff, starting around, checking everyone's drinks are filled and they're being looked after, they're kind of hold it altogether, making sure everyone else is having a good time, that kind of role."

RCVS at the party...

Could be either gender, professional, towards the corner, confidant?



Gender	Age	Clothes / attributes	Drink	Location	Action	Other organisations
Female	Over 50	<p>"A responsible headmistress, but still slightly remote...and certainly not somebody that you want to mess around with."</p> <p>"Definitely the figure of authority, they're the person you go to for reliable advice, so they're not some skittish young thing, they're a responsible grown up person."</p>	Gin & tonic	"In one corner, because they're having conversations and they've moved to a corner, they're not in the middle, but when they're there, people are circulating around them."	"She's in a group of people listening to peoples problems, because people see her there and it's a bit like being a vet at a party, people tell you all about their animals. She's a person at the party that people want to go and have a word with, I must have a word with."	In the kitchen
Male	Middle-aged	Suited, professional, "Not the most vivacious."	Whisky	Standing in a corner	Waiting for someone to make conversation with them	In the middle of the party, probably in the kitchen
Not sure		<p>Smartly dressed, well-briefed, have done their homework, armed with objectives, present the party line</p> <p>"They wouldn't be life and soul of the party, I think they'd behave themselves very well, no more than two glasses of wine."</p>	Gin & Tonic	"Standing towards, I'd say it's not the centre, but offset a little bit and just chatting, yes."	"Talking to lots of people, probably the centre of a lot of attention...[conversation can] but it can switch between serious and business and pleasure."	Similar
Female	Early fifties	Elegant		Kitchen		
DK	Mid forties to fifty	Conservative, suit no tie or shift dress, neutral colours			"They're probably more quiet and reserved and talking quietly to a few other people in a group, possibly in the kitchen, rather than dancing."	Talking to them

With thanks to...

Government

- Defra
- Scotland Government
- Welsh Government
- DAERA (Northern Ireland)
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)

Representative associations and groups

- Association of Veterinary Students (AVS)
- British Veterinary Association (BVA)
- British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)
- British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)
- British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA)
- British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA)
- Major Employers Group (MEG)
- Veterinary Management Group (VMG)
- National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)
- Veterinary Defence Society (VDS)

Other

- Vetlife
- Veterinary Schools Council (VSC)



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