

Council Meeting

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 20 November 2025 at 10:00 am in the Rooms 4a and 4b at 1 – 2 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RB

Agenda	Classification ¹	Rationale ²
1. President's introduction	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2. Apologies for absence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. Declaration of interests	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4. Minutes of previous meetings		
i. 22 September 2025 – classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
ii. 2 October 2025 – unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
iii. 2 October 2025 – classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
5. Matters arising		
a. Obituaries	Unclassified	n/a
b. Council correspondence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. CEO update	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
6. Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)		
a. PIC / DC Liaison Committee – updates to Terms of Reference and proposed change of Committee name	Unclassified	n/a
b. The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC) commitments	Unclassified	n/a
c. Draft Risk Appetite Statement	Unclassified	n/a

7. Reports of standing committees – to note <u>Please note:</u> all unclassified minutes from standing committee meetings will be found as part of the <i>following</i> meeting's papers for the respective committees, see: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/who-we-are/committees/ and navigate to the specific committee from there.		
a. Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Audit and Risk Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Education Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
d. Finance and Resources Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
e. Registration Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
f. Standards Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
g. Veterinary Nurses Council	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
h. PIC/DC Liaison Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
8. Reports of statutory committees – to note		
a. Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
b. RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
c. Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee <u>Please note:</u> details of disciplinary cases are found on the website, see: Disciplinary Committee hearings - Professionals and navigate to the individual cases from there.	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
9. Notices of motion	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
10. Questions	Oral report Unclassified	n/a

11. Any other College business (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
12. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
13. Date of next meeting Thursday, 22 January 2026 10:00 am (reconvening in the afternoon) to be held remotely via MS Teams.	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
14. Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)		
a. Major projects – update	Oral report Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
b. Legislative reform	Oral report Confidential	1
c. Competition and Markets Authority	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
d. Budget 2026	Confidential	1, 2, 3
e. Recruitment of Legal Assessors	Private	1, 5
15. Any other College business (confidential items)		
a. Comments on classified appendices	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
b. Other business	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
16. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
17. Training session	Confidential	1, 3, 4
Dawn Wiggins Secretary, RCVS Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk		

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Terms of Reference**The vision of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [as agreed in the current strategic plan]**

1. Our vision is to be recognised as a trusted, compassionate and proactive regulator, and a supportive and ambitious Royal College, underpinning confident veterinary professionals of whom the UK can be proud.

Role of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [derived from the Charter]

2. The objects of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, as laid down in the Supplemental Charter granted on 17 February 2015 to the Royal Charter of 1844, ie:

- a. 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.
- b. The Charter also recognises those functions provided for in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, in terms of the regulation of the profession, and also recognises other activities not conferred upon the College by the Veterinary Surgeons Act or any other Act, which may be carried out in order to meet its objects, including but not limited to:
 - i. Accrediting veterinary education, training and qualifications, other than as provided for in the Act in relation to veterinary surgeons;
 - ii. Working with others to develop, update and ensure co-ordination of international standards of veterinary education;
 - iii. Administering examinations for the purpose of registration, awarding qualifications and recognising expertise other than as provided for in the Act;
 - iv. Promulgating guidance on post-registration veterinary education and training for those admitted as members and associates of the College;
 - v. Encouraging the continued development and evaluation of new knowledge and skills;
 - vi. Awarding fellowships, honorary fellowships, honorary associateships or other designations to suitable individuals;
 - vii. Keeping lists or registers of veterinary nurses and other classes of associate;
 - viii. Promulgating guidance on professional conduct;
 - ix. Setting standards for and accrediting veterinary practices and other suppliers of veterinary services;
 - x. Facilitating the resolution of disputes between registered persons and their clients;
 - xi. Providing information services and information about the historical development of the veterinary professions;
 - xii. Monitoring developments in the veterinary professions and in the provision of veterinary services;
 - xiii. Providing information about, and promoting fair access to, careers in the veterinary professions.

The purpose of RCVS Council [derived from the Charter]

- 3. It is laid down in the Charter that the affairs of the College shall be managed by the Council as constituted under the Act. The Council shall have the entire management of and superintendence over the affairs, concerns and property of the College (save those powers of directing removal from, suspension from or restoration to the register of veterinary surgeons and supplementary veterinary register reserved to the disciplinary committee established under the Act) and shall have power to act by committees, subcommittees or boards and to delegate such functions as it thinks fit from time to time to such committees, subcommittees or boards and to any of its own number and to the employees and agents of the College.
- 4. The Council is also responsible for the appointment of the CEO and Registrar, and the ratification of the Assistant Registrars. Appointment of all other staff members is the responsibility of the CEO and relevant members of the Senior Team.

5. A strategic plan is developed and agreed by Council to facilitate the delivery of these activities and to ensure ongoing development and quality improvement.
6. A delegation scheme that outlines how Council's functions are managed via system of committees and other groups is agreed annually by Council.

How Council members work

7. In order to enable the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to fulfil its vision, and to discharge its functions under its Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, RCVS Council members will:
 - a. Abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life;
 - b. Work in the best interests of the public, and of animal health and welfare and public health;
 - c. Respectfully listen to the voices of the professions, the public and other stakeholders, and reflect them in discussions where appropriate, ensuring they are put into context;
 - d. Neither be answerable to, nor represent, any group of individuals;
 - e. Support the College's vision and work towards the success of the College and its functions;
 - f. Live the College's values;
 - g. Act at all times in a constructive, supportive and compassionate manner;
 - h. Exercise a duty of care to the staff employed by the College, working through the CEO and Registrar;
 - i. Recognise the importance of a collegiate atmosphere where robust discussion is welcomed in the formation of policy and multiple points of view are listened to and respected;
 - j. Respect and support the decisions made by Council when communicating externally;
 - k. Communicate College activities and positions to relevant stakeholders;
 - l. Abide by the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members.

Summary

Meeting	Council
Date	20 November 2025
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2025
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2025
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

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Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 2 October 2025 at 10:00 am in Rooms 4a and 4b at RCVS, 1 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RB

Professor T D H Parkin (in the Chair)

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Professor D C Barrett

Miss L S Belton

*Dr S E Bennett

Dr S R Bescoby

*Mr D Bray

Dr A L Calow

Mr J M Castle

*Ms J Clift

*Mrs O D R Cook

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mr P J Gordon

*Dr D L Greenberg

Mr T M Hutchinson

Professor M D Jones

Dr Z J Kennedy

Professor C M Loughrey

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

*Dr A J McLeish

*Dr S Paterson

Mr T J Walker

Mrs K Young

*Denotes absent

In attendance:

Mr I A Holloway

Ms L Lockett

Ms C L McCann

Mr B Myring

Ms C L Paget

Mr A Quinn-Byrne

Mr S Wiklund

Director of Communications (DoComms)

CEO

Director of Operations (DoO)

Head of Policy, Insight, and Public Affairs (HoPIPA)

Registrar

Governance Manager (GM)

Assistant Registrar / Head of Legal Services – Education and Registration (AsstReg)

Guests:

Ms E Brown

Ms A Gray

Ms K Mantell

Dr L Mullineaux

Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer (DCVO), Defra

Veterinary Record (open session only)

CEO, RCVS Knowledge (open session only)

Senior Vice-President, British Veterinary Association (BVA) (open session only)

Mr B O'Halloran

Mr V Olowe

Mr P B Robinson

Mr C Simpson

Policy and Public Affairs Officer, BVA (open session only)

Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

MRCVS (open session only)

Veterinary Times (open session only)

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed Council and guests and outlined the order of the meeting.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:

- Dr Bennett
- Mr Bray
- Ms Clift
- Mrs Cook
- Dr Greenberg
- Dr Paterson
- Dr Middlemiss (Observer)

3. Dr McLeish was not in attendance.

4. Miss Brown, DCVO, attended the meeting as Observer in Dr Middlemiss' absence.

Declaration of interest

5. There were no declarations of interest to report.

RCVS Knowledge update

6. The CEO, RCVS Knowledge introduced a presentation to Council to highlight work carried out over the past year and to introduce the RCVS Knowledge's Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029.

New Strategic Plan

Vision: healthier animals, people and planet;

Mission: to advance the quality of veterinary care for the benefit of animals, the public and society;

Purpose: to empower and support veterinary teams to provide evidence-based, quality care and improved animal health and welfare outcomes.

Strategic Pillars

Support veterinary professionals today: be the go-to place for veterinary teams to find the knowledge, skills and tools needed to continuously improve the quality of care;

Shape the future of veterinary care: influence and inspire broader change that advanced evidence-based veterinary practice in a way that benefitted animals, people and the planet;

Celebrate veterinary history: curate and raise awareness of veterinary history, sharing insights from years gone by so that veterinary care today and in the future was built on knowledge of the past.

Support veterinary professionals today

7. The collection of free resources had been expanded and refined:
 - new online learning modules;
 - a box set on quality improvement to support quality improvement (QI) in practice;
 - antimicrobial stewardship.
8. Library and Information Service (LIS): remained the 'bedrock' of work around evidence-based veterinary practices and provided scientific literature to members; it was much more than just having access to the information, it was about having tailored and personalised support.
9. Production of *Journal Watch*: had more than 10,000 subscribers – a review of over 100 different sources of veterinary research; the top five issues went through a review process of the most likely to have an impact on clinical practice and were shared to enable people to get quick access to the most relevant information.
10. Production of *Veterinary Evidence*: an open access, peer-reviewed journal that continued to gain strength with increased users and page reviews:
 - 78,000 readers worldwide;
 - 13% growth – users;
 - 5% growth – page views.
11. Recent news was that it had been accepted into PubMed Central – a free digital repository that archived open access full-text scholarly articles that had been published in biomedical and life sciences journals, which would increase its visibility and impact. Thanks were given to the Editorial Board and volunteer editors that contributed to it.

Shape the future of veterinary care

12. This area was about the things that were outside the control of an individual team member or veterinary practice about the care being delivered.

Contextualised care research

13. Using co-design and mixed-methods research with veterinary professionals and pet owners to find out:
 - what were the barriers and facilitators for contextualised care?
 - what did it look like when done well?
 - what needed to change to support it, and who needed to be involved?
14. Engagement of a wide range of stakeholders:

- two events each with >65 people from across the veterinary sector and pet owners;
- surveys of >400 vets / vet nurses and >700 dog / cat owners;
- Interviews and focus groups.

15. Output: would be a roadmap to support the delivery of contextualised care in the future. A report would be published later in 2025 with support from Battersea Research.

National audits and registries

16. Canine Cruciate Registry:

- groundbreaking national registry incorporating Client-Reported Outcome Measures;
- data for 2,400 surgical reports, from 170 surgeons and over 100 different breeds of dog.

17. National audit for small animal neutering:

- data from 78,000 cats, dogs and rabbits;
- 310 veterinary practices taking part;
- resource hub with evidence, articles and resources to help improve outcomes.

Plowright Prize

18. A £100,000 prize was awarded every two years for an individual who had made a significant contribution to the control, management or evaluation of infectious diseases and animals.

19. In 2024, the prize was awarded to microbiologist and poultry health specialist Professor Fiona Tomley. The prize money was being used to create an international mentoring network for early stage One Health researchers, which was launched in September.

20. The call for nominations was open for the 2025 / 2026 prize period; the deadline for submissions was at the end of January 2026.

Celebrate veterinary history

RCVS archive and historical collections

21. The vet history website had been re-launched: <https://vethistory.rcvsknowledge.org> This held a collection of digital images scanned from the archive collections, with more to follow over coming months.

22. Historical stories had been shared, such as that of Dame Olga Uvarov, the first female President of the College, who was a trailblazer in the profession with a multifaceted career that shaped and influenced practice of today.

23. Now that the College had moved into its new premises, more of the collections could come back in-house to engage and share with the professions.

24. In conclusion, thanks were given for the staff, Council, and the hundreds of people working in a voluntary capacity to assist RCVS Knowledge in its work.

25. It was asked, given there were 78,000 readers of *Veterinary Evidence*, what was target to increase the numbers of readers – the trajectory – and whether there was there a finite number? It was confirmed that the trajectory was upwards, which was encouraging, with veterinary professionals from the UK, the United States, and further abroad accessing the information; RCVS Knowledge was looking incrementally to increase numbers but there was no finite number. What was considered to be more important in terms of measuring impact was the work being undertaken to develop an impact frame across all of RCVS Knowledge; to obtain evidence of how people had used what had been published in the journal to follow in practice.
26. On behalf of Council, the President thanked the CEO, RCVS Knowledge for the update.

Minutes

27. Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes, and classified appendices of the meetings held on 5 June, 4 July, and 28 August 2025 and the remote confidential decisions of 1-3 July and 15-20 August 2025, and they were before Council for approval.
28. There were no comments or questions. Council voted by a show of hands:
- | | |
|----------|----|
| For: | 15 |
| Against: | 0 |
| Abstain: | 2 |
29. The unclassified minutes and classified appendices for the meetings and remote decisions were approved by a majority vote.

Matters arising

Obituaries

30. Council noted the passing of the following members:
- Professor James (Os) Jarrett – Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University of Glasgow Veterinary School;
 - Neal King HonFRCVS – past-President of the RCVS 1994-95, who had also presided over the BVA and Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS);
 - Timothy King – a University of Edinburgh appointee on RCVS Council from 2014-18;
 - Geoff Lane FRCVS – who had been instrumental in developing the ‘no touch’ technique in surgery and was President of the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) in 1989;

- Professor Sandy Love – first Director of the Weipers Centre and who was central to developing veterinary education in Glasgow;
- Robert (Bob) Moore – past-President of the RCVS 2007-08, a rural practitioner at heart who knew that veterinary professions were important to animal health and welfare, local livelihoods and communities;
- Professor Maxwell Murray HonFRCVS – former Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine, Glasgow University, who contributed to research, teaching and international development.

31. Council and guests stood for a minute silence for all members of the professions who had passed since the last meeting.

Council correspondence

32. The President reported the following:

King's birthday honours

33. The following members received Order of the British Empire in the recent honours list:

- Professor Stephen May FRCVS for services to veterinary education and animals in science;
- Dr Kulin Patel MRCVS for services to animal health and international trade.

34. Congratulations had been passed to them.

New RCVS branding

35. The College's updated brand and visual identity was welcomed; it was being officially launched that day across a number of different channels, both physical and digital, following Council's approval in June. A brief video was shown to provide Council with a 'snapshot' of the changes.

36. The aim of the brand review was to make it easier for people to understand the College's purpose and the unique role as a Royal College that regulated.

37. The new strapline – 'Inspiring confidence in veterinary care' – looked to maintain animal health and welfare at its heart, and to connect veterinary professionals and animal owners to that purpose.

38. On behalf of Council, thanks were given to the Communications Team – in particular Jo Stetzel and Jacob Cook – who had been leading on that work.

Reception

39. A reception would be held on the evening of Wednesday, 5 November 2025 – it used to be an annual event, but due to the College not having a permanent home, it had not been held for the past two years so would be a combined 'three President thank you' to various stakeholders. Council was reminded to look out for invites from the Events Team in due course and that, as it was a social event only, Loss of Earnings and expenses were not claimable.

Fellowship Day

40. The forthcoming Fellowship Day would be held on Thursday, 27 November 2025 at One Great George Street, Westminster; registration for the event was open on the event page on the RCVS website.

Agenda

41. The agenda for the meeting appeared to be quite light; that was due to committee meetings having only very recently been held, and that the College had been expecting the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Provisional Decision Report (PDR) in September and space had been allocated to discuss the PDR at Council. That the publication had been delayed to mid-October was not known until after the agenda had been finalised.

42. The updates were noted.

CEO update

43. The CEO reported that it had been a busy summer, with much work being undertaken in relation to the CMA investigation into veterinary services for household pets; legislative reform; creation of the College's Operational Plan (a paper for decision later in the meeting); and engagement activity with the professions – one of the key themes under the new Strategic Plan 2025-2029 was working together with those members the College regulated.

44. Further items highlighted:

- Regional Question Time (RQT) had been held in Salisbury during September. Topics discussed included: the CMA; new legislation; and private prosecutions. There was a good attendance and lively debate;
- the Veterinary Nursing (VN) Team had continued to run engagement sessions for the VN Visions project; looking at the future direction of nursing professionals;
- a series of webinars looking at actions from the Workforce Action Plan; updating the professions on issues affecting them, including publishing resources around reasonable adjustments in practice;
- updates to the Vet Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) platform in response to feedback from users;
- a new presentation and quality assurance process for postgraduate qualifications;
- under the theme of building bridges and engagement, a series of events in Washington in July was attended: the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Congress; the World Veterinary Association (WVA) Congress; and the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG) meeting. It was always interesting to learn about what was happening globally; there were attendees from New Zealand, Australia, United States; Canada and

Europe; the AVMA had also put out strong statements to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), which was positive;

- two new RCVS Academy courses had been launched: the role of the appointed senior veterinary surgeon; and responsible advertising and social media use;
- the VN registration renewal period had been launched;
- events leading up to Christmas included:
 - o British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress;
 - o British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) Congress;
 - o New Scientist Live;
 - o London Vet Show;
 - o Vet Schools Council (VSC) Conference;
 - o Research Symposium – marking 10 years since the launch of Mind Matters;
 - o Regional Question Time (RQT) – to be held at Hardwick Street on the evening of 15 October 2025;
 - o International Postgraduate Education Symposium;
- thanks were given to Council members that had completed the RCVS Academy course 'From farm to fork', that had been created with the assistance of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA) and Defra to support decision-making around food standards certification. It had been requested that a tailored version be launched to the wider veterinary profession, which had been agreed and would include the feedback provided;
- there had been many requests in recent years from the FSA in relation to registration requirements to support workforce. There was positive news in that at the recent six-monthly catch up with the FSA Team, the College was informed that the FSA was no longer reliant on the special measures allowing overseas graduates to join the Temporary Register under the Temporary Registered Novice Official Veterinarian (TRNOV) Scheme to work within the meat hygiene field under the supervision of a full MRCVS, and who had Level 5 English language, with the intention to work up to the requisite Level 7 within a specified time period. At its peak, 50% on the Scheme were working as TRNOVs, there were now just three members, and credit should go to the FSA for its hard work to reduce reliance on the Scheme;
- the Hardwick Street building had been well used since Council last met in June, there had been disciplinary hearings; symposiums; internal and external meetings; lots of requests for rental of spaces so consideration was being given to resourcing needs and how that could be approached; and brand work with visuals inside and outside of the building and that celebrated a lot of 'firsts' – female member, female President, black member of Council, etc. with supporting stories were very interesting to read as you traversed between the floors.

45. Comments and questions included:

- were readouts shared of what was discussed at RQTs?

- not currently. Many years ago, there had been a detailed document c.25 pages long produced, however, it was felt that few members actually read it, so it had evolved into a brief readout that was circulated via Twitter ('X' as it was now known); the College had since ceased using Twitter. It was suggested that a short summary be prepared going forwards, acknowledging that there had to be a balance of publicising the items discussed whilst ensuring that members of the professions had a 'safe space' to raise concerns or questions without attention being drawn to them the following day;
- it would be useful to have a bullet point list for reference;
- noted.

46. The update was noted.

Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)

RCVS Operational Plan

47. The CEO introduced the paper and stated that, after the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 had been approved in March 2025, a lot of work had been undertaken with committees, staff, Officers, committee Chairs and the College's Senior Team to consider how it was 'operationalised' as a way to achieve the ambitions contained within the Strategic Plan 2025-2029. The version before Council addressed issues raised by the public and the profession and looked to continually improve on the full breadth of what could be done as a Royal College that regulated in a holistic manner.
48. It was noted that the document was currently arranged by ambition and action and would have individual actions numbered in the future for clarity. Focus was on deliverables and impact under the 'stronger together' theme, and there would be a written report to Council in January, June and September annually. Council was also reminded that the substance in the Strategic Plan was not everything staff did, there was:
- 'business as usual' – the items to fulfil the College's statutory responsibilities;
 - strategic activities – where the College wanted to advance, to improve, and to continue to meet society's expectations as a regulator and the public segmentations of the professions with the Royal College role;
 - matters put upon the College outside of its control that, as a public body, it needed to respond to – CMA; work towards a new Veterinary Surgeons Act; XL Bully ban; Ukraine war where unexpected support was needed with regards to animal health; etc.
49. It was further noted that the draft plan was to the end of 2027 and external forces might have an impact that required the College to be flexible; time spent on the projects would not be wasted, but could be delayed, subject to what had priority at the time.

50. Comments and questions included:

- it was agreed that the College had to continue to work and not wait for external forces to happen from a reporting perspective. Could the report be more interactive? There were status columns and areas of the organisation involved in items; it would be useful to have a filter and sort function not just a static format;
 - o noted. It could be exported to MS Excel or another suitable programme; there would also be versions for the different committees;
- how would Council track the plan in terms of the measurements to get a sense of progress?
 - o there would be the status of the project, what the staff were working towards delivering; and, what would be migrated once it had been delivered along with its impact moving forward – some might be easily accessible data, such as compliance with Continuing Professional Development (CPD); whereas some might be more subjective as the main work would be through the committee structure, to be managed as it progressed. Sometimes impact was difficult to measure, but the action was the right thing to do, morally, and ethically;
- it was good to note there would be a form of measurement. How did the staff team connect to the strategy to make them understand that they were making a contribution to the strategic objectives?
 - o Senior Team was tasked with meeting the objectives, which in turn flowed down to departmental staff teams. Staff had performance planning on an annual cycle from January, and meetings would commence once the draft plan was approved – objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were always an inexact science because of the impact of external factors; focus was also given to values within the organisation with regards to an appraisal process, however, junior level employees were able to see a clear line of sight to the organisation's outcomes'; furthermore, the staff had been engaged with putting the draft plan together.

There had also been consideration of a piece of work called 'strategy to me' – on the ground, day-to-day work, and how it impacted the veterinary profession;
- considering Mind Matters and other areas that spoke about achieving a better workforce and increased culture, was there any space for Council members to be involved in the stages before completion so that they could input into what it looked like, specifically because it was about veterinary culture?
 - o that area of work was overseen by the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC). Work would also be undertaken by the new Council Culture Working Group (CCWG) that would report directly to Council; a meeting would be scheduled for that group in the New Year. It should also be noted that, as there was a smaller Council than the College used to have, there was a clear Delegation Scheme providing structure and

clarity so that members did not have to attend every committee, although if people wanted to feed into work they were always welcome to do that via the relevant chair;

- [I] liked the structure and wanted to flag page 109 of the bundle, section 5, in that there was a lot under artificial intelligence and technology and to develop a set of standards that were risk-based. However, it was, in fact, a lot about helping animal health and welfare, and owners, so the College should be mindful of the wording used when considering encouraging the profession to use new technology; consideration should be given to mental health as well as animal health, for example, if everyone was connected to Whatsapp, there should also be discipline of being respectful of individuals' time so there was not pressure to respond outside of working hours, nor unintended consequences of 'spam bombing' by digital messaging;
- were there opportunities for external communications to show how the Operational Plan was making improvements by quarterly update logs or pictorials for example?
 - o there had been case studies at the back of the last Strategic Plan outlining success of that plan, but Council had not felt it was appropriate to include similar in the new plan. It was agreed there could be a 'snapshot' of progress. There had also previously been a regular blog on strategy, which could be revitalised;
- when Council members attended Congress to be a physical presence, they could make use of statistics to talk about the good work the College did; to encourage people to speak to staff and members on the stand as, currently, the stand just said RCVS and there had to be active engagement to find out what had been going on. There was a great opportunity to talk about the work being undertaken;
 - o it could be as simple as a list stating 'come and talk to us about...' to provide a 'trigger' to encourage communications;
- re: section A1: vets and nurses unable to renew their registration unless they were CPD (or VetGDP) compliant: it was acknowledged that the College had to wait on new legislation before that could be an option, but had there been any alignment of CPD requirements recorded with registration as there was some confusion?
 - o CPD was a professional requirement, not a legal requirement for registration; the College could not prevent a person from registering on the basis of incomplete CPD requirements. The College was considering how to encourage people to do their CPD and to understand what it was and how to record and reflect upon it; the RCVS Academy sessions on CPD were still the most popular and, having spoken to other regulators, the College was not alone in having that issue. Although non-compliance could not automatically affect registration status it could lead to a conduct issue, that might lead to disciplinary action.

51. The discussion was brought to a close. Before taking the vote, it was noted that by voting 'yes', that it did not mean that there was no further opportunity to amend the Operational Plan if matters impacted the College, be they internal or external.

52. Council was asked to approve the draft Operational Plan for implementation. An electronic vote was taken:

For:	17
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

53. The draft Operational Plan was approved by a unanimous vote.

Active prevention of sexual harassment

54. The People Director introduced the paper, which explained what sexual harassment was; the behaviours; who it impacted; and why the topic was raised. Data received from the government Equalities Commission showed that:

- 72% of the UK population had experienced sexual harassment at some point in their work;
- only 26% reported their experience;
- 7% were men;
- a Trades Union Congress (TUC) poll indicated 70% of the LGBTQ+ community had experienced some form of sexual harassment at work;
- in the first six months of the new Equality Act amendments, calls to the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service (ACAS) increased by 164%;
- it was acknowledged that the statistics related to employees, but it was important that Council members actively prevented sexual harassment in any environment, particularly when representing the RCVS.

55. It was noted that the paper was intended to highlight a change in law from April 2025 and to provide members with the relevant details; it was not a policy and was for Council and committee members, not the veterinary profession. It was explained that an employer must now take all reasonable steps to actively prevent it, and that it was not necessary for someone to object first before conduct could be described as unwanted.

56. The RCVS was committed to raising awareness in meetings such as Council meetings; there would be signage at events; it would demonstrate a zero tolerance; and there would be training. The paper outlined guidance to follow if a person saw, or were the recipient of, sexual harassment and what the College would do in support if a concern was raised; as well as what would happen if a Council member was an alleged perpetrator.

57. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:

- the matter was law for employees; how did it relate to veterinary schools or universities?
 - o it was being looked at for employees internally and from a third-party perspective, so the question would have to be asked of the universities themselves;

- speaking for Bristol Veterinary School, it had been made aware of the new legislation and training had been scheduled on the topic;
- the Scottish Rural College (SRUC) also had a section on the 'Emily Test' – a framework established in memory of a Scottish law student who lost their life due to gender-based violence, to tackle such violence in educational settings;
- there were students, staff, and employees so the training applied between the different cohorts was different, but it would apply to all with regards to support;
- the query was more about the student dynamic than employees within the schools and [I] wanted to know that, as a Council member, the College was doing everything it could for veterinary students and if that could be looked into;
- was there an opportunity to have a confidential concerns line?
 - o that was already in place for employees and would be investigated whether it could be extended to Council members;
- the legislation extended the duty of the employer beyond what was within its direct control i.e. to other employees, board members, third parties, etc.; so the College did need to consider scenarios where people representing the RCVS was going out into third party environments or dealing with third party organisations – by virtue of being there they had a duty of care to keep people safe;
- in an education context, [I] would expect to see it built into the accreditation standards framework;
- why was there a specific document for Council and committees rather than part of the overall workplace?
 - o Council and committee members *were* included in the documented policies for staff. It was stressed that it was not directed at any particular person nor had there been any concerns raised, but rather that it was important to also bring it directly before Council for information and discussion; it was to improve cultures and cascade them down, which should have been stressed more in the communication;
- there was still one area of concern in relation to veterinary students – Extra-Mural Studies (EMS) – when students went to placements with third parties where the universities had no control;
- it was hoped that all of the things that encompassed Council and committee members would be included in the Governance Handbook that would go before Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) in due course. What was also important, was how matters applied to the veterinary professions and the members of the public that they dealt with;

- there was a quarterly standing item on the Senior Team meeting agenda to ensure nothing had been missed that the College was concerned about; the reality was that there were risks when staff teams attended external events, particularly when alcohol was present, for example, at a conference, and the College had to meet its legal responsibility;
- re: paragraph 11 of the paper, that '*...Council or committee members who witnessed any sexual harassment should speak with the relevant parties in the first instance...*', could there be guidance on examples of what to say to a potential victim to establish whether they had been assaulted?
- it could be added to the work of the CCWG to debate what it felt the College needed to do.

58. The discussion was brought to a close, and the paper was noted.

Notices of motion

59. There were no notices of motion to report.

Questions

60. There were no questions to report.

Any other College business (unclassified items)

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

61. It was questioned if there was an enterprise option whereby Council members could run a meeting pack through AI. It was confirmed that staff were currently trialling AI to assist with minute-taking and other areas, so that could be considered. However, the main issue was entering confidential papers into an AI system – internally the College used CoPilot, which was somewhat 'ring-fenced' but it was still cautious and did not include confidential items. It was acknowledged that when Adobe Acrobat was opened it automatically noted long documents and asked if you wanted to run it through AI; it was requested that Council resist doing so. Once the trial had concluded there would be further consideration to enterprise-level options; tests were currently focussed on what worked and what did not. There was also an AI policy for staff that could be circulated to Council members.

Governance

62. Regarding promoting the profession (see page 121, section 5 of the meeting pack) and engagement with people from different backgrounds; did the College have retention statistics on the demographics of the profession? It was confirmed that the College held a certain amount of information, but it was not complete, for example, around declared ethnicities.

63. It was noted that it was not about diversity statistics but whether there was a certain demographic that had a high retention rate. The CEO responded that there were two issues: the data related to ethnicity was incomplete and, in reality, was still very small within the profession so it would miss significant trends given the small number. What would be noted was that the vast majority of people that stayed in the profession were white, middle class, because that was the majority of members. Recent work had been undertaken on an exit survey around the reasons people were leaving the profession; that data would be reported through Registration Committee shortly. Vet schools also collected some data but, again, they relied on declarations of individuals. The question was regularly asked at the Committee as it wanted to be able to measure and benchmark retention.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)

64. There were no items raised to add to the College's Risk Register from the open session of the meeting.

Date of next meeting

65. The next scheduled meeting of Council was Thursday, 20 November 2025 commencing at 10:00 am with a scheduled end time of 4:00 pm, to be held at the Hardwick Street offices.

Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)

Update on major projects

66. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 11.

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) update

67. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 12 – 15.

Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) update

68. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 16 – 18.

Legislative reform

69. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 19 – 34.

Review of revised Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and risk appetite

70. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 35 – 38.

Vital signs

71. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 39 – 42.

Harper Keele Veterinary School

72. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 43 – 50.

Veterinary Council of Ireland Memorandum of Understanding (VCI MOU)

73. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 51 – 56.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Classified appendices from Council or committee meetings

74. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 57.

Other business

75. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 58.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

76. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 59.

77. The meeting was brought to a close.

Summary

Meeting	Council
Date	20 November 2025
Title	Recommended changes to Terms of Reference for, and name of Preliminary Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee
Classification	Unclassified
Decisions required	To approve the recommended changes
Attachments	Annex A – extract from Delegation Scheme with tracked changes
Author	Lizzie Lockett, CEO

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Recommended changes to Terms of Reference for, and name of Preliminary Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee

Background

1. Each year in June, Council is asked to approve recommendations for change from committees with respect to their Terms of Reference (ToR). This comes to Council in the form of an updated version of the College Delegation Scheme – the document that outlines how Council formally delegates business to its range of committees.
2. Sometimes committees get out of synch, and changes are suggested at other times of the year. The Preliminary Investigation Committee / Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee is one such committee, and it reviewed its ToR at a meeting on 9 October. At that meeting, it carried out a gap analysis of its ToR and what work it was performing. Where these two things were not aligned, discussion took place to assess if the ToR needed to change, or the activity of the Committee (or both).

Terms of Reference

3. Some changes to the ToR were recommended, as outlined in the extract from the Delegation Scheme in annex one. The Scheme can be found in full on the website here:
<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/delegation-scheme-2025/>

Name change

4. There was also a recommendation that the name of the Committee be changed, as the complaints-handling landscape that it oversees has changed since the Committee was first established, with the addition of the Veterinary Client Mediation Service, the Charter Case Committee and Private Prosecutions. (It has also always been a very unwieldy name!) The suggestion was the Professional Conduct Liaison Committee.

Decisions required

5. Council is asked to approve:
 - a. The recommended changes to the Delegation Scheme
 - b. The name change to the Professional Conduct Liaison Committee

Annex A – extract from Delegation Scheme as approved on 5 June 2025, with tracked changes

~~Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee~~ Professional Conduct Liaison Committee

1. The ~~Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee~~ Professional Conduct Liaison Committee shall include the chair of the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC), the chair of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC), the chair of the Disciplinary Committee (DC), at least two members of Council one of whom is a member of the Officer Team, the chair of Standards Committee (SC). The member of the Officer Team to undertake the role of chair of the (liaison) committee for a three-year term, usually incoming Junior Vice-President in the year that the role becomes vacant.

2. The ~~Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee~~ Professional Conduct Liaison Committee shall serve as a channel for communication between the Preliminary Investigation, Charter Case and Disciplinary Committees and Council, discussing policy issues in connection with the supervision of professional conduct. It will also oversee the work of the Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS), and review reports about any Private Prosecutions the College may take. These shall include the following ~~its activities will include the following:~~
 - ~~a. The setting and monitoring of key performance indicators and monitoring processes;~~

 - ~~b.a. Periodically reviewing the w~~ Working methods of both the Professional Conduct team and the relevant committees, including the setting and monitoring of key performance indicators and monitoring ;processes;

 - ~~e.b.~~ Monitoring costs and resources related to the committees, the VCMS and private prosecutions;

 - ~~d.c.~~ Arrangements for the recruitment of members of the statutory c ~~Committees~~ (with the relevant Chair consulted in the process of specifications being drawn up), including deciding the membership of the independent selection panel and overseeing the process (final decision on successful candidates to be ratified by Council), appraisal of their performance and the process for selection for chairs;

 - ~~e.d.~~ Arrangements for the appointment of legal advisors (including legal assessors) in connection with the professional conduct function; and,

 - ~~f. Planning for a public review of the implementation of the legislative reform order; and,~~

Commented [LL1]: To be removed, this was a Defra duty, the College would support if necessary.

~~g.e.~~ Facilitating a 'feedback loop' between DC and CCC decisions, outcomes of the PIC and RVN PIC, the SC and the ~~Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS)~~.

3. The ~~PIC/DC Liaison~~[ProfCon](#) Liaison Committee shall also monitor the impact of the protocol for private prosecutions against unqualified individuals, which commenced on 1 April 2023.

Summary

Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	20 November 2025
Title	The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC) commitments
Summary	Following approval by the Advancement of the Profession Committee, this paper sets out an approach to meeting the UKHACC commitments on climate change, as the core of an RCVS Environment & Sustainability Plan.
Decisions required	Council is asked to approve the approach set out in the paper.
Attachments	
Author	<p>Mark Sundhu Policy and Public Affairs Officer m.sundhu@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Ben Myring Head of Policy, Insight, & Public Affairs b.myring@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) commitments towards tackling climate change

Introduction

1. Following consideration by the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC), this paper sets out how, via an Environment & Sustainability (E&S) Plan, we may address aspects of the College's stated ambition in section C of the RCVS Strategic Plan 2025 to 2029 – 'Stronger together with society at large', and the objective "To champion the role that veterinary professionals play in One Health and public health, take a leadership role on environmental sustainability and biodiversity, and continue to look beyond our domestic horizons to have a positive impact upon the world around us".
2. The RCVS is a member of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC), which has produced a set of guiding principles for health organisations to demonstrate leadership and take steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These commitments¹ provide a list of actions that organisations can take, adapting them as required to suit individual circumstances and recognising that different organisations are on different stages of the journey, each with their own individual priorities.
3. UKHACC will also be producing 'How To' guides over 2025-26 to support members in delivering each of the commitments. RCVS has agreed to keep UKHACC informed of our progress from the perspective of a member not directly focused on human healthcare. A core aim for the College is to protect the public interest by ensuring animal health and welfare and public health, but we may encounter different considerations in looking to adopt any/all of the commitments than other UKHACC members; UKHACC understand this.
4. Following the previous APC meeting, this document will explore further the eleven UKHACC commitments, along with details of any RCVS actions that meet the commitments, and/or suggestions for how we might do so.

UKHACC's commitments

Declare that the climate emergency is a health emergency

5. *Making a declaration is a public statement that your organisation agrees that the climate emergency is a health emergency that requires urgent action.*

¹ <https://ukhealthalliance.org/about/our-commitments/>

What is the evidence base to support this, and is it an animal health emergency as well?

6. With 2024 officially declared the hottest year on record, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a statement on 11 June, 2025 - that the climate crisis is a health crisis.
7. Dr Hans Henri P Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe cited a range of trends as evidence to support the WHO statement, including the average global temperature remaining at 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels for 12 consecutive months, over 100,000 deaths from heat-related causes in 2022 and 2023, and warmer environments supporting the emergence of mosquito and tick-borne diseases in central and northern European countries not previously recorded - such as dengue, malaria, West Nile fever and tick-borne encephalitis.
8. In the context of the One Health approach, which recognises the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, the effects of climate change can lead to an increased risk of zoonosis. Extreme weather events in conjunction with gradual shifts in temperature and precipitation patterns, can alter ecosystems which in turn, can influence the survival and distribution of hosts, vectors (e.g. mosquitoes and ticks), and pathogens.
9. The World Organisation for Animal Health's (WOAH) 2025 'The State of the World's Animal Health' report, shares some key points on how animal health impacts human health highlighting that between 2005 and 2023, 68% of the notifications to WOAH for emerging diseases were considered to have zoonotic potential.

What is the role of RCVS and the potential impact of supporting the World Health Organization (WHO) position?

10. The RCVS strategic plan 2025-2029 section C encourages the RCVS to support One Health and champion the role veterinary professionals play in One Health and public health, to take a leadership role on environmental sustainability and biodiversity, and continue to look beyond domestic horizons to have a positive impact globally.
11. The College should note that the World Health Organization (WHO) is a highly respected and trustworthy source on climate change and its impact on global health, furthermore the UK's Health Security Agency also recognises climate change as a major threat to human health and wellbeing in the UK. The UK Parliament and its various committees, like the Climate Change Committee, also acknowledge the WHO's authority and regularly refer to their findings and recommendations on climate change and health.
12. Declaring that the climate emergency is a health emergency would be a strong and credible starting point should RCVS decide to develop its own E&S Plan, in addition to ensuring the contribution of the veterinary sector is recognised and contributes to the wider policy agendas on climate change.

A declaration would also be in line with the College's position on One Health and the strategic plan, and aiming for promotion of excellence with its environmental aims.

13. **Next Steps:** If the College agrees to move forward on this it would involve a public declaration. We could also add our name to the Health Declares website; Health Declares Climate and Ecological Emergency is a grassroots, voluntary group of health professionals and organisations from across the UK, who recognise that the climate and ecological crises we face are also a health emergency. The list of organisations who have already declared the climate emergency is a health emergency include the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and the Royal College of Physicians.
14. If Council agrees to the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)'s recommendations that the College declare an emergency then the Policy, Insight & Public Affairs Team will work with the Communications team on messaging, timing, and the most effective channels for broad reach and engagement. Some prior stakeholder engagement may be advisable.

Publish a plan to get to net zero

15. *Publish a plan for your organisation to get to net zero with actions and targets measured, monitored, and reported annually.*
16. A plan for the RCVS to reach Net Zero will involve several stages. First the College's carbon output must be measured, and then reduced as much as possible. This can be achieved via our work with Investors in the Environment (iIE). In order to reach Net Zero, any remaining carbon footprint could be offset via a formal scheme.

Status update with Investors in the Environment (iIE)

17. The RCVS works with Investors in the Environment (iIE), an environmental accreditation scheme designed to help businesses reduce their environmental impact, raise awareness amongst colleagues and save businesses money on their energy costs where possible.
18. The RCVS has already achieved Bronze level membership – currently paused due to the move to Hardwick Street - which is recognition that the College has successfully introduced a robust environmental policy and established processes to measure the organisation's use of resources, including gas and electricity.
19. With the move into Hardwick Street, in addition to making the space fit-for-purpose in line with the College's strategic ambitions, the building has also been designed to reflect our commitment to sustainability, with features such as recycled materials, repurposed fittings, a revised procurement policy, and solar panels. From the outset of the project, the development criteria required that full

use should be made of all opportunities to reduce or minimise the impact that the redevelopment imposed on the environment, as far as was reasonably practicable.

20. Moving forward, to work up to Silver level the College will need to build upon existing actions across a range of accreditation criteria which includes environmental policy, measuring resource use and setting targets and performance.
21. Specifically, to move up to Silver and beyond this will also include additional actions such as the adoption of a travel plan developed to encourage staff to make informed and more sustainable choices for their travel arrangements. By understanding staff needs and limitations, the College will be expected to introduce guidance, support and incentives that make the process of change easier for staff or those making travel decisions.
22. **Next Steps:** If viewed as a roadmap, the College's work with iiE can be seen as the start of a process which will develop and inform a detailed RCVS environmental sustainability strategy plan that allows the College to eventually adopt all UKHACC commitments and specifically with iiE to work up to Silver level and further.
23. The iiE process aims for organisations to develop their own Environmental Management System, with the framework focusing on four key areas of sustainable development: Leadership & Governance, Climate Change, Nature & Natural Resources, and Pollution & Waste.
24. To achieve Silver, the College needs to develop organisational change by analysing data, making measured improvements through performance tracking, and working towards wider sustainable development. This involves:
 - a) Setting & achieving targets to reduce resource use
 - b) Establishing a travel plan
 - c) Minimising waste
 - d) Improving the environmental management system
 - e) Reducing the carbon impact of operations
 - f) Engaging people in sustainability improvement
25. To ultimately move up to Green, iiE expects organisations to deliver success and measured impact, driving wider sustainable development throughout the organisation and value chain preparing for net zero and beyond. This involves:
 - a) Broadening the focus of environmental action
 - b) Managing the impact of work-related travel
 - c) Assessing supply chain and greening procurement

- d) Setting ambitious carbon reduction targets
- e) Undertaking impactful projects
- f) Reporting progress to stakeholders

If the RCVS publishes a plan to get to Net Zero what are the pros and cons of carbon offsetting?

- 26. Carbon offsetting is the process of compensating for emissions by taking part in activities that reduce the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Carbon offsetting schemes are frequently used to help organisations achieve net zero carbon emissions.
- 27. According to a UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) 2024 report titled 'Carbon Offsetting and Pricing', in the UK, our built environment is directly responsible for 25% of national greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, for organisations there are other factors to be considered such as employee behaviours.
- 28. A 2023 article by the Guardian revealed that more than 90% of rainforest carbon offsets by Verra - the world's leading carbon standard were 'worthless'. There are also other general criticisms of carbon offsetting which range from organisations using it to greenwash their operations to allowing pollution through fossil fuels to continue uncontested.
- 29. However, advocates cite advantages to carbon offsetting which include providing significant environmental and social benefits such as biodiversity conservation, improved water management, and economic development for local communities.
- 30. It's useful to note that carbon offsetting is not a substitute for reducing emissions at the root. It should be used as part of a mix of other initiatives such as using a sustainable supply chain, improved energy efficiency, using renewable energy, and achieving emissions and waste reduction.
- 31. Therefore carbon offsetting is not a panacea, but organisations in the built environment can use it to complement their approach to sustainability.
- 32. Below are some examples of reputable carbon offsetting schemes. A future paper to APC will set out a fuller range of options:
- 33. *Trees for Life* - established in Scotland in 1993, led by a team of conservationists and ecologists, the work is run by volunteers and is funded by donors via a subscription model. The initiative is highly successful, with over 2 million trees planted, securing long-term carbon sequestration while enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. <https://treesforlife.org.uk/>
- 34. *Woodland Carbon Code (WCC)* - Established in 2011, the UK Woodland Carbon Code work by certifying woodland creation projects which will absorb CO₂ over time, usually involving afforestation or reforestation. Credits are validated to ISO standards and government backed. The

code is delivered by Scottish Forestry on behalf of the governments of the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. <https://www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/>

Is this the responsibility of the RCVS?

35. Publishing a plan to get to net zero which may or may not include carbon offsetting aligns with section C of The RCVS strategic plan 2025-2029 (see paragraph 1) and with the College's position on One Health in aiming for promotion of excellence in our environmental aims with regards to reducing our organisational environmental footprint and promoting sustainable working.
36. **Next Steps:** It would be prudent for the College to start on the premise that carbon offsetting is not a substitute for reducing emissions at the root. It should only be used where emissions cannot be eliminated. It would be critical to choose a reputable carbon offset scheme. To take this forward would be the responsibility of the Policy, Insight and Public Affairs Team (PIPA) working with the Green Team (a voluntary group of RCVS staff members). If Council approves, a paper would be brought to APC setting out a range of possible offsetting options.

Campaign on mitigating and adapting to the planetary crisis

37. *The climate and ecological emergency represent the greatest global threat to health, and health professionals can be powerful advocates for efforts to reduce emissions and promote positive actions that benefit both planetary and human health.*

Working with UKHACC

38. As highlighted in the previous paper preparing and adapting to the changing climate is critical to minimise and manage its impact on our ability to deliver functions which support health and wellbeing. Adaptations in relation to health are actions or processes that reduce mortality and morbidity associated with climate change and strengthen the sector's capacity to provide a high standard of care despite the changing climate.
39. The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) 2025 report to Parliament on adapting to climate change noted that the UK's preparations are inadequate and that progress in implementing adaptation measures is too slow or has stalled. The report also highlighted that there is now unequivocal evidence that climate change is making extreme weather in the UK, such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall, and wildfire-conducive conditions, more likely and more extreme. The costs of these impacts are already being felt, and the risks will continue to grow even if international targets to limit global warming are met. Urgent action is needed whilst we still have the opportunity to address these risks in a way that is both cost-effective and timely.

40. As members of UKHACC we have already contributed directly to reports that aim for policy change with the UK Government across a range of areas including just energy transition, building a resilient food system and mitigating the carbon footprint associated with surgical practice.

Providing support to the professions

41. The RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) has environmental sustainability requirements to incorporate sustainability and to encourage and support the professions to lead the way in addressing the global climate crisis.
42. Furthermore, the College is committed to empowering vets and nurses to champion sustainability within their own sector. Also, factoring in the College's position on One Health in the updated strategic plan, it is within our remit to campaign further on this issue should the opportunity present itself.
43. **Next Steps:** The Policy and Public Affairs Team (PIPA) can liaise with UKHACC and have this commitment ticked off as we have already contributed directly to reports that aim for policy change with the UK Government across a range of areas. Furthermore, though not campaigning per se, the College can also point to the influencing role it plays via environmental sustainability requirements for practices.

Embed sustainability in governance, structure and culture

44. *Without good governance and leadership, an organisation is set to fail in implementing its policies.*

Towards a RCVS Environment & Sustainability Plan

45. As noted earlier in this document, E&S features strongly in the current RCVS Strategy Plan. E&S is the responsibility of the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC).
46. Internally, the Green Team have in the past supported the College in various green initiatives such as helping to plan staff engagement events and projects around sustainability and environmental issues, such as celebrating Earth Day and running sustainable Christmas competitions. Also, encouraging staff to reduce power use, improve waste and recycling, and make travel more sustainable.
47. **Next Steps:** A detailed RCVS environmental sustainability plan would be needed, for agreement by APC and RCVS Council. This paper is a step towards such a plan.

Develop a plan for sustainability in your specialist area

48. *Organisations can develop plans for sustainability in their specialist areas of practice and work with health systems to implement these.*

Working with others and sharing resources to build up the College's knowledge and keep informed on how climate change is impacting the animal health community.

49. As a Royal College that regulates, the RCVS is committed to recognising its own environmental impact as an organisation, and promotes the importance of this to those on our Registers and to practices through the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS).
50. As the College drives forward towards becoming more sustainable it may serve us strategically to consider working with other external stakeholders in addition to iE and UKHACC. Especially, if we develop a sustainability plan where we need further expertise on key areas such as mitigating climate change through emissions reduction and adaptation, minimising waste and promoting resource efficiency, and enhancing nature recovery, including addressing social and economic aspects of sustainability such as health and well-being (human and animal).
51. Several organisations in the UK are working to address climate change within the veterinary field. For example, Vet Sustain which supports veterinary professionals to drive change towards a more sustainable future outlines a clear mission to enable and inspire veterinary professionals to continually improve the health and wellbeing of animals, people and the environment.
52. Working with others and sharing resources will allow the College to keep informed on how climate change is impacting the animal health community for example, the recent emergence of bluetongue serotype 3 in Europe has sparked concern among farmers and veterinary professionals alike. According to WOA, the spread of bluetongue from North Africa to Southern, Central and Northern Europe is an example of how climate change, vector habitat suitability, animal population density, distribution and movement interact to shift disease patterns.
53. **Next Steps:** It will be logical to explore the opportunity of working more closely with an organisation within the veterinary sector who are working to help tackle climate change. By developing partnerships with for example Vet Sustain and others would allow the College to develop position statements with experts across a range of topical areas from regenerative agriculture to the ecological risks associated with parasiticide use.
54. Furthermore, before exploring and developing strategic partnerships we can set ambitious goals such as setting a target for a Net Zero profession by 20XX. This work could be led by RCVS Fellowship with support from PIPA and APC as required.
55. A paper would be prepared for APC summarising existing initiatives (e.g. Vet Sustain) and identifying where RCVS can add value.

Educate members on the links between climate and health

56. *Educating health professionals on the links between climate and health is critical to enabling health professionals to deliver change, influence decisions, and communicate effectively with patients and colleagues.*

Developing our own intelligence framework to disseminate accurate information to stakeholders

57. As highlighted earlier, the College could also bring together external experts and hold regular symposiums to develop and enhance our own knowledge base on the effects of climate change on animal health, whilst also building up an intelligence framework in the longer term. RCVS Academy have discussed a course on sustainability which could address this matter, course content and planning TBC.
58. **Next Steps:** This commitment crosses over with the preceding UKHACC commitment on developing a plan for the profession, and the later commitment on educating on the link between climate change and inequality. More work is needed to consider how the commitments might be met.

Disinvest from fossil fuels and support the fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty

59. *Transformative action is needed to completely phase out fossil fuel production and transition to renewable energy.*

Reducing fossil fuels is an act of public health

60. As highlighted in the previous paper, the fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty is a proposed treaty to explicitly stop the expansion of fossil fuel exploitation and manage a just transition away from coal, oil and gas to clean energy.
61. At present, the College has divested from all fossil fuel businesses because of their contribution to the climate crisis. The College has no direct investments in fossil fuels, but retains some indirect exposure via pooled investments.
62. The College has also divested from metallurgical coal (unlike thermal coal, metallurgical coal is not considered as a fossil fuel).
63. Endorsing the treaty would demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and climate action for the RCVS. Reducing fossil fuels is an act of public health, as they are the primary driver of climate change, contributing to 67% of global Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
64. **Next Steps:** If agreed, the College could move forward on this by completing a form on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative website, which would list RCVS as having endorsed the Fossil Fuel Treaty proposal <https://fossilfueltreaty.org/>.

Acknowledge the link between climate change and inequalities

65. *Any measures taken to decarbonise economies also need to understand and address inequalities, to ensure the mitigation and adaptation measures put in place do not negatively impact the most vulnerable but seek to address social inequality.*
66. The direct and indirect impacts of climate change will likely widen existing health inequalities. In a global context, as natural disasters continue to worsen and increase, millions of vulnerable people face disproportionate challenges in terms of loss of jobs, extreme events, health effects, food, water, migration and forced displacement, loss of home, shelter and community ties, and other related risks.
67. **Next Steps:** More thought is needed in this area. For the College it may be that acknowledging the link between climate change and inequalities is best achieved in tandem with the commitment to 'educate members on the links between climate and health', for instance by noting the disproportionate impact on those in poverty of growing food prices while drawing attention to the impact of climate change on livestock production.

Develop and implement a travel policy for members and staff

68. *Organisations can take multiple steps to reduce their contribution to carbon emissions, while also promoting and facilitating healthier ways to travel for staff and visitors.*
69. The previous paper listed useful examples for organisations to help achieve this, and it was noted the College encourages public transport use and incentivising care-sharing with an enhanced cost-per-mile, but has yet to yet to develop a formal travel policy that minimises carbon.
70. As an example, the University of Edinburgh relies on international collaboration to achieve the best standards in teaching and research. This means staff and occasionally students, fly more than 80 million kilometres per year, or about halfway from the Earth to the Sun.
71. Realising that this was both financially and environmentally unsustainable, Edinburgh University developed a travel policy which includes an approach known as Climate Conscious Travel.
72. Climate conscious travel is:
- a) choosing not to travel when virtual collaboration tools will adequately fulfil the purpose of travel (e.g. for meetings where a video link would suffice)
 - b) ensuring unnecessary travel is not undertaken (e.g. sending the minimum number of individuals required to fulfil the purpose of travel)
 - c) being aware of the environmental impacts of travel and choosing a method of travel that reduces these (e.g. by train rather than plane or not upgrading to a higher flight class)

73. Where emissions from travel cannot be removed, the University has committed to sequestering carbon in order to reach their goal to be net zero by 2040. To ensure that the sequestration activity is robust, the University restores forests and peatlands in Scotland itself via 'directly controlled' or in 'active partnership schemes', a form of offsetting where the client has a significant amount of control and visibility over the activities undertaken. This programme is intentionally designed to maximise the co-benefits for biodiversity and local communities whilst generating research, teaching and learning opportunities.
74. Please refer to paragraphs 20-28 for our iiE obligation in this regard.
75. **Next Steps:** A pragmatic approach is needed, as how staff get to work is not within the remit of the College unless it is travel the College is paying for.
76. As a baseline the College can build on its existing policy to encourage public transport use and focus on what has been noted previously in this report on working with iiE to first establish a travel plan and then manage the impact of work-related travel. This will be the responsibility of the Green Team and PIPA to move it forward.

Prioritise plant based and sustainably sourced food

77. *Health organisations can lead in the transition to sustainable diets by committing to prioritise healthy, sustainable food.*
78. As noted in the previous paper, a key recommendation from UKHACC's 'Plant-powered Planet: Building a healthy & sustainable food system' policy report is to develop a new national food strategy to promote and support reduced meat and dairy consumption in favour of fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and nuts.
79. The British Veterinary Association's (BVA) "less and better" policy encourages the veterinary profession to promote the concept of "[less and better](#)", in which people reduce their consumption of animal-derived products whilst maintaining proportional spend to buy better, higher quality goods. Veterinary surgeons are uniquely placed to work with farmers on questions of sustainability, including the need for 'less and better' consumption of animal products, thereby benefiting biodiversity, animal welfare, and human health.
80. The RCVS has yet to develop a policy in this area, though did contribute to UKHACC's 2023 'Biodiversity, Climate Change and Health Policy Report', The report makes seven recommendations including ending subsidies and investment in fossil fuel, reducing plastic waste, supporting marine ecosystems and increasing knowledge around the environmental impact of pharmaceuticals in water bodies, as well as protecting, restoring and regenerating nature and

biodiversity, and the prioritising and promotion of plant-based and sustainably sourced food by reducing but not eliminating meat and dairy consumption and reducing food wastage.

81. In a report published by the Sustainable Food Trust earlier this year titled 'Grazing Livestock: It's not the cow but the how', the report highlights public confusion about the impact on climate change of ruminant animals in general and cows in particular. This has led to a widespread view that all cattle are unsustainable, though as the report shows – by properly accounting for different types of emissions; the sequestration of carbon; and a broader range of indicators relevant to the measurement of carbon footprints – grazing animals can play a key role in a food system that delivers benefits for the climate as well as the environment and human health.
82. This is another area where the College could work with external experts to gain better insight whilst developing internal policy in this area, including keeping abreast of the Government's reform of the sustainable farming incentive which the Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs recently stated that funding for the environmental land management schemes will increase to £2 billion per annum by 2028-29, and also noted how now there are 'more farmers than ever in nature-friendly farming schemes'.
83. Internally the College uses a company who are certified under the Rainforest Alliance Scheme which aims to ensure that farms, forests, and tourism enterprises meet environmental and social standards, and the green tourism certification programme, a globally recognised scheme that assesses and certifies tourism businesses based on their commitment to sustainable practices.
84. **Next Steps:** At the last meeting of APC, it was agreed to propose to Council that daytime events could be meat-free in order to make a marked contribution towards prioritising plant based and sustainably sourced food. Exceptions could be made to account for special dietary needs. In terms of the catering for evening events welfare should still be a consideration.

Switch to a green bank and encourage members to switch

85. *Switch your organisation's bank account to a greener bank and encourage individual members to do the same.*
86. Many organisations and individuals already bank fossil free, including the British Thoracic Society and Association of Clinical Psychologists. Moving your money from the banks that invest in fossil fuels to those that don't is a means to reduce the ability of these banks to lend to large oil, coal and gas producers, while also demonstrating your commitment to a fossil-free future.

87. RCVS currently banks with Lloyds who according to a 2025 study by the climate thinktank, the Leave It in the Ground Initiative (LINGO)² revealed that Lloyds, among other UK banks, has funnelled over £75 billion into companies developing major fossil fuel projects.
88. If the College was to consider switching banks it would require careful consideration including creating a small working party to oversee the project – either internal or external and costing the piece of work.
100. The process would also involve identifying banks that could meet the needs of RCVS and that have a good credit rating. This is vitally important, a bank's credit rating is an essential indicator of its financial strength and reflects stability and creditworthiness.
101. The two organisations highlighted in the previous paper who already bank fossil free the British Thoracic Society and Association of Clinical Psychologists are much smaller than the RCVS and this can present operational challenges such as our current links to other software and products. For example, RCVS has direct debits and credits for payments and for collecting fees. In order to get service user numbers (SUNS) to set up direct debits/ credits you need to be sponsored by a bank who are effectively taking the risk in the event of problems, Lloyds currently sponsor RCVS. All the direct debit details would have to be changed with suppliers and those paying us.
102. **Next Steps:** Changing banks would require the following steps:
 - a. Creating a small working party to oversee the project – either internal or external and costing the piece of work; FRC to agree this and any associated costs.
 - b. Identify the drivers for change
 - c. Drafting a tender document identifying the scope and needs of RCVS -this may require external support to cover all the elements
 - d. Identifying banks that could meet the needs of RCVS and that have a good credit rating
 - e. The tender exercise
 - f. Discovery phase
 - g. Planning the transfer
 - h. Documents with Lloyds, BACS, PTX, SAGEPAY to be approved by RCVS Council and deeds to be signed and sealed
 - i. Communication to relevant parties

² <https://knowesg.com/investors/uk-banks-linked-to-gbp75bn-in-fossil-fuel-projects-abroad-05052025>

j. Transferring all balances dd's etc

103. As already noted earlier there are risks which would require careful consideration. It may not be the place of the College to advise Members on their banking.

Proposed process to adopting the commitments

104. Below is a table which lists the eleven commitments and summarises where we are with each guiding principle.

Commitment	Ready to be met?	Next steps should Council approve	Teams responsible	Deadline
Embed sustainability in governance, structure and culture	No	Draft a formal E&S Plan based on meeting the UKHACC Commitments for APC approval	PIPA	Q2 2026
Net zero for RCVS	No	Develop a plan to gain IIE Silver	PIPA, Green Team	
		Paper on offsetting options	PIPA	Next APC meeting
Sustainability plan for the veterinary professions	No	Paper Summarising existing initiatives (e.g. Vet Sustain) and identifying where RCVS can add value	PIPA	Next APC meeting
Climate declaration	Yes	Plan declaration timing and format with APC and Coms	PIPA, APC, Coms	Next APC meeting
Campaign on mitigating and adapting to the planetary crisis	Yes	None	N/A	N/A
Educate Members	No	Further internal consultation required	RCVS Fellowship, RCVS Knowledge, APC, PIPA	Q2 2026
Acknowledge the link between climate change and inequalities	No	Further internal consultation required	RCVS Fellowship, RCVS Knowledge, APC, PIPA	Q2 2026
Travel policy for members of staff	No	Work with iIE to draft a new travel plan	Green Team, PIPA	TBC
Switch to a green bank and encourage members to switch	No	Create a working party to oversee the project	Finance, Coms	TBC
Disinvestment	Yes	Register with Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative	Finance, PIPA	Next APC Meeting
Prioritise plant based and	Yes	Liaise with Facilities	PIPA	Next APC Meeting

sustainably sourced food				
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Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	20 November 2025
Title	Draft Risk Appetite Statement
Summary	Following feedback from Council's risk session in June 2025, an initial draft Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) was developed for the College. The draft was subsequently reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee in September 2025, which advised on the wording and practical application. The Committee's recommendations were then shared with the College Senior Team, whose input informed the final draft now presented to Council for consideration and formal approval.
Decisions required	Council is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Consider the contents of the draft RAS. b) If satisfied, approve the RAS as presented.
Attachments	Annex A - Draft RCVS Risk Appetite Statement Policy
Authors	Huda Haid Governance Officer h.haid@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft.'
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation, or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others. 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation. 3. To protect commercially sensitive information. 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS.
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation.

Draft RCVS Risk Appetite Statement

Background

1. At its meeting on 5 June 2025, Council took part in the annual risk session led by the former Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). Members were asked to assess the College's appetite for risk across the following seven categories using a Risk Appetite Matrix:
 - Strategic
 - Financial
 - Operations
 - People
 - Partners and Stakeholders
 - Innovation
 - Reputation
2. For each category, Council selected one of four levels of risk appetite: Risk Hungry, Risk Open, Risk Nervous, or Risk Averse.
3. The results of this exercise informed the development of a first draft Risk Appetite Statement (RAS), which was later reviewed by the ARC. The Senior Team and Governance Team then refined the document, incorporating some of ARC's feedback and aligning it with strategic priorities.
4. The final draft version, set out at **Annex A**, is now presented to Council for formal approval.
5. Approval of the RAS will provide a clear foundation for defining the College's approach to risk, supporting consistent governance and informed decision-making. As the College's risk management framework continues to mature, this will also enable the future development of measurable risk tolerance levels to strengthen monitoring and escalation processes in a proportionate and practical manner, ensuring the framework evolves without unnecessary complexity.

Key points

5. The draft RAS has been formalised as a policy to strengthen governance and accountability in defining and managing the College's risk appetite.
6. To ensure alignment with the wider risk framework, the RAS will become a core component of the RCVS Risk Management Policy, which will be updated in due course to include a detailed Risk Appetite section. The RAS Policy will be retained as an annex for reference and continuity.
7. The Senior Team preferred the term 'Risk Cautious' instead of 'Risk Nervous' as used in the original matrix. This terminology has been updated throughout.

8. The RCVS mission statement has been integrated within the RAS to ensure consistency with the current Strategic Plan.
9. The RAS will be reviewed every 18 months to align with strategic planning cycles to maintain ongoing relevance.
10. Following approval, the RAS will be communicated to all staff and embedded in decision-making and training processes to support consistent risk awareness across the organisation.

Decisions required

11. Council is asked to:
 - a) Consider the contents of the draft RAS.
 - b) If satisfied, approve the RAS as presented.

Annex A – Draft RCVS Risk Appetite Statement Policy

1. Purpose

This Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) outlines the RCVS's approach to risk-taking in pursuit of its strategic objectives. It sets out the categories and levels of risk the College is willing to accept or avoid.

The RAS forms a core component of the RCVS Risk Management Policy, providing a consistent framework through which risk appetite is embedded into existing organisational risk management and decision-making processes.

2. Scope

The RAS applies to all RCVS departments, functions, and activities. It provides a framework for consistent risk management and informed decision-making. It complements the Corporate Risk Register by articulating the College's appetite for different categories of risk.

3. Governance

The RAS is approved by the RCVS Council, as recommended by the College Senior Team. Oversight is provided by the Audit and Risk Committee and the College Governance Team, with implementation supported by designated Risk Owners across the organisation.

4. Risk Appetite Overview

The RCVS seeks to maintain a balanced and informed approach to risk, encouraging innovation and continuous improvement while safeguarding its assets, reputation, and its regulatory responsibilities.

4.1. Risk Categories and Appetite

In June 2025, Council undertook a formal assessment of the organisational risk appetite using a Risk Appetite Matrix. The outcomes of this exercise informed the appetite levels as set out below.

Risk Category	Risk Appetite Level
Strategic	Risk Open
Financial	Risk Open
Operations	Risk Open
People	Risk Cautious

Partners or Stakeholders	Risk Open
Innovation	Risk Hungry
Reputation	Risk Cautious

4.2. Risk Appetite Statement

Our mission is to protect the public interest by ensuring animal health and welfare, and public health, are advanced through thriving, world-class veterinary professions.

To achieve this, the College embraces risk where it supports innovation (Risk Hungry), maintains openness to risk in strategic, operational and partnership activities (Risk Open), and exercises greater caution to risk in areas relating to people, finances and reputation (Risk Cautious), applying stronger controls where impacts on staff, resources or standing may arise.

These appetite categories reflect the College's general attitude toward risk and do not represent quantified tolerance thresholds.

4.3. Risk Appetite Definitions

Risk Appetite Level	Definition
Risk Hungry	Seeks innovative options with potential for higher rewards despite greater inherent risk.
Risk Open	Considers a range of options and selects those likely to offer successful outcomes within acceptable levels of risk.
Risk Cautious	Prefers safe and measured options with lower residual risk and limited reward potential.
Risk Averse	Prioritises avoiding risk and uncertainty.

5. Monitoring and Review

Risk appetite will be monitored through regular reviews of departmental and the corporate risk registers to ensure alignment between the College's stated appetite and its actual risk exposure.

Adjustments may be made in response to changes in the internal or external environment. The Governance Team, in consultation with the Senior Team and the Audit and Risk Committee, will lead a full review of the RAS every 18 months to ensure its continued relevance and alignment with strategic priorities.

6. Communication and Use

The RAS will be communicated to all staff and embedded into training, decision-making frameworks, and strategic planning. It will inform the design and approval of new projects and initiatives.

Periodic assurance will be sought through the Audit and Risk Committee to assess how effectively the RAS is being applied across the organisation.

Version Control

Version	1.0
Approved By	RCVS Council
Approval Date	20 November 2025
Review Cycle	Every 18 months
Next Review Due	March 2027
Policy Owner	Governance Team

Summary

Meeting	Council
Date	20 November 2025
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since RCVS Council's last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the RCVS.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Chris Murdoch Senior Case Manager c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

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Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council November 2025

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since the last report, and covers the period 22 May to 7 November 2025.
2. Since the last Report to Council there have been 11 Stage Two Preliminary Investigation Committee (S2PIC) meetings (4 June, 18 June, 2 July, 16 July, 6 August, 20 August, 3 September, 17 September, 8 October, 22 October and 5 November).

New cases considered by the S2PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the S2PIC at the 11 meetings referred to above is 41. Of the 41 new cases considered:
 - 14 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee.
 - 25 were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports.
 - 2 cases were referred to the Disciplinary Committee.
4. No cases have been referred to the RCVS Performance, or Health, Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The S2PIC is currently investigating 36 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports (for example).

Health Protocol

6. There are no veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol

7. There is one veterinary surgeon currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department – Enquiries and concerns

8. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
9. In the period 22 May to 7 November:
 - the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 1601; and,
 - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 380.

10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 22 May and 7 November 2025. At the last Council meeting the categories in use were discussed. It was noted that “veterinary care” is the most commonly used, and a question was raised as to whether this could be broken down into more specific sub-categories (all the categories relating to chapters of the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Conduct). This change has been implemented.

Concerns registered between 22 May and 7 November 2025

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	2
- Certification	5
- Client confidentiality	3
- Clinical and client records	6
- Clinical governance	0
- Communication and consent	21
- Communication between professional colleagues	6
- Conviction	5
- CPD compliance	0
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	4
- Euthanasia of animals	18
- Euthanasia of animals – ‘Tuk’s law’	0
- Fair trading requirements	0
- Giving evidence for court	1
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	3
- Illegal practice (<i>potential</i>)	2
- Microchipping	2
- Miscellaneous	7
- Named veterinary surgeons	1
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	5
- Performance case (<i>potential</i>)	1
- Recognised veterinary practice	0
- Referrals and second opinions	0
- Registration investigation	0
- Restoration application	1
- Social media and networking forums	5
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	2
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	2
- Veterinary care	150
- Veterinary care – surgical errors/complications	25

- Veterinary care – unnecessary treatment/diagnostic work	9
- Veterinary care – unfit discharge/post-op complications	13
- Veterinary care – missed or misdiagnosis	34
- Veterinary medicines	20
- Veterinary medicines – application of factors without physical examination	0
- Veterinary medicines – prescribing CDs/antimicrobials without physical examination	0
- Veterinary medicines – ‘under care’ query, other	0
- Veterinary teams and leaders	0
- Whistle-blowing	13
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	3
- Unassigned	11
Total	380

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 22 May 2025 to 7 November 2025, the Committee has referred four cases involving four veterinary surgeons to the Disciplinary Committee (DC).

Referral to Charter Case Committee

12. In the period 22 May 2025 to 7 November 2025, no cases have been referred to the Charter Case Committee (CCC).

Veterinary Investigators

13. The Chief Investigator and Veterinary Investigators have undertaken seven visits since the last report. The first was an announced visit to a veterinary surgeon as the request of PIC to assess compliance with minimum practice standards equivalent to the Core Standards of the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme, clinical records and veterinary medicines. The second was an announced visit to a veterinary surgeon at the request of PIC to view CCTV footage. The third was an unannounced visit with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) to a veterinary practice regarding a concern raised by a local authority regarding veterinary certificates and medicines. The fourth was an unannounced visit with the VMD to a wildlife sanctuary to investigate a lay person possibly administering Euthatal. The fifth was an announced visit to a veterinary surgeon at the request of PIC to assess issues relating to the practice meeting Core Standards, the clinical records of clients and the use and storage of Veterinary medicines. The sixth was an announced visit to a veterinary surgeon to view his work diary and the seventh visit was a follow up visit to a veterinary surgeon to check on progress regarding issues highlighted at the first visit on 7 March 2025.

Concerns procedure

14. As Council is aware, the process for the consideration of concerns at Stage One changed at the beginning of October 2022. The median number of weeks in which cases concluded at Stage One can be seen below.

Month in which case concluded	Median number of weeks taken
February 2023	13
March 2023	13.3
April 2023	14.9
May 2023	14.3
June 2023	14.4
July 2023	15
August 2023	15.9
September 2023	13.4
October 2023	12.6
November 2023	18.3
December 2023	11.5
January 2024	16
February 2024	15
March 2024	17.6
April 2024	15
May 2024	12.9
June 2024	19.9
July 2024	11.9
August 2024	15.2
September 2024	13.9
October 2024	12
November 2024	14.4
December 2024	15.9
January 2025	17.4
February 2025	13.4
March 2025	14.3
April 2025	10.1
May 2025	14.7
June 2025	15
July 2025	18.9
August 2025	17.1
September 2025	18
October 2025	14

15. PIC/DC Liaison Committee considered detailed information on the time taken by cases at Stage One at its meeting in November and discussed a new KPI timeframe in light of the data provided and the steps involved in the process. The Liaison Committee concluded that six months was an appropriate timeframe. It also concluded that it would still be helpful to provide median times taken, as this is a good indicator of the most likely duration of matters for those involved in the process.
16. In line with the above KPI, cases that commenced in September and October 2023 have been assessed retrospectively to determine what percentage of them met the six-month KPI. These can be seen below, and we continue to report on this percentage in the future.

17.

Month case started	Cases that met KPI
October 2023	94%
November 2023	87%
December 2023	84%
January 2024	86%
February 2024	93%
March 2024	87%
April 2024	90%
May 2024	85%
June 2024	75%
July 2024	97%
August 2024	91%
September 2024	91%
October 2024	91%
November 2024	94%
December 2024	86%
January 2025	94%
February 2025	79%
March 2025	90%
April 2025	85%

18. The Stage Two KPI is currently for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within seven months. A case is deemed to be complex where the PIC requests that witness statements and/or expert evidence be obtained. At its meeting in May 2024, PIC/DC Liaison Committee, having undertaken a full review of the Stage Two KPI, concluded that it was not appropriate to have a KPI for complex cases, in view of the specific complexities of each case. Cases are reported in detail to that Committee, which is able to discuss and monitor performance accordingly.
19. In the period 22 May 2025 to 7 November 2025, the PIC reached a decision (to close, refer to the Charter Case Committee, or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI in 15 out of 16 simple cases.
20. 12 complex cases were decided. In accordance with the above, these cases (and the work of the department in general) are reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

Illegal practice

21. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 21 May 2025), 16 new reports of suspected illegal practice have been received. Of these, nine have been closed after issuing advice/cease and desist letters or referring matters to other relevant agencies; and seven are subject to ongoing enquiries. There is a total of 10 ongoing enquiries.

Summary

Meeting	Council
Date	20 November 2025
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
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Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council

Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Council, there have been five meetings of the Stage 2 VN PIC, which took place on 27 May, 8 July, 19 August, 23 September and 4 November. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 16 December 2025.

RVN Concerns received / registered

2. In the period 21 May 2025 and 7 November 2025, there were 36 new Concerns relating to RVNs. Of these 36 new Concerns:
 - 4 cases closed at Stage 1 VNPIC.
 - 30 cases are currently under investigation by a Case Manager, Veterinary Nurse, Veterinary surgeon, and a lay member (Stage 1 VNPIC).
 - 1 case has been adjourned for consideration by the Stage 2 VNPIC.
 - 1 case has been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. Eight new cases have been considered by the Stage 2 VNPIC between 21 May 2025 and 7 November 2025. Of these eight new cases, two cases closed (one with formal advice issued to the Respondent), two cases were adjourned to obtain further information, two cases were referred to external solicitors for formal statements to be taken, and two cases were referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Ongoing Investigations

4. Six concerns are currently under investigation by the Stage 2 VN PIC, and these will be returned to the Committee for a decision in due course.

Health Concerns

5. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Concerns

6. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

7. Since the last report, three cases (involving three Respondents) have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Referral to Charter Case Committee

8. Since the last report, no cases have been referred to the Charter Case Committee.

Disciplinary Hearings

9. Since the last report, three disciplinary hearings have taken place in relation to veterinary nurses. The first hearing took place between 19 and 21 May 2025 and related to the Respondent's conviction of three counts of causing serious injury by dangerous driving. The Disciplinary Committee did not consider that the Respondent's conduct was liable to have a seriously detrimental effect on the reputation of the profession and concluded that the public, in full knowledge of the circumstances of this particular case, would not expect a finding that the conviction renders the Respondent unfit to practise as a veterinary nurse.
10. The second hearing took place between 10 and 12 September 2025. The charges related to leaving hospitalised animals unattended and falsifying clinical records to suggest that the relevant clinical checks had been made when the Respondent had, in fact, fallen asleep. The Committee found serious professional misconduct and decided to impose a period of suspension of six months.
11. The third hearing took place between 20 and 24 October 2025. The charges related to incidents in which the Respondent acted against veterinary instruction and/or acted without the direction of and/or authorisation of a registered veterinary surgeon. The Committee found serious professional misconduct and directed the Registrar to remove the Respondent from the Register of Veterinary Nurses.