

ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

INQUIRY RE:

**JANINE SUSAN PARODY, MRCVS**

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**COMPLETE DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

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1. Dr Parody appeared before the Disciplinary Committee (“the Committee”) to answer the following Charge:

THAT, being registered in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons and whilst in practice at the Castle Veterinary Group, CVS (UK) Ltd, Suffolk (“the practice”), you:

1. In relation to a cat named Shadow who had been presented to you for euthanasia on 20 December 2021:

- (a) On 20 December 2021, failed to euthanase Shadow;
- (b) Between 20 December 2021 and 30 December 2021, failed to inform SM, who had presented Shadow at the practice for euthanasia, that Shadow had not been euthanased;
- (c) Between 20 December 2021 and 30 December 2021, went ahead with a treatment plan for Shadow, including sedation and castration, without informing or obtaining consent from SM to that treatment plan;
- (d) On or about 22 December 2021, were involved in and/or directed the surgical removal of a microchip from Shadow;
  - (i) when such removal was not clinically justified; and/or
  - (ii) in so doing you intended to mislead another or other/s in relation to Shadow’s identity;
- (e) Between approximately 23 December 2021 and 31 December 2021, took Shadow home with you without informing or obtaining consent from SM to do so;

(f) Between 20 December and 30 December 2021, failed to make any or any adequate clinical records with regards to Shadow;

2. Your conduct in relation to 1(b) to (f) above was dishonest;

AND that in relation to the matters set out above, whether individually or in any combination, you are guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

## **Preliminary matters**

### Application for part of the hearing to be in private

2. At the outset of the hearing Miss Sanderson, who appeared on behalf of Dr Parody, made an application that any references to Dr Parody's health be dealt with in private. Mr Weston, who appeared on behalf of the College, did not raise any objection to the application.
3. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor that whilst these proceedings are ordinarily conducted in public, so that the public are aware of the functions being carried out by the Regulator, there was provision within the Rules to allow the hearing to go into private session where to do so was in the interests of justice. The interests of justice can include protecting the private life of a respondent and matters relating to health are often dealt with in private for that reason. The Committee was satisfied that it was appropriate, therefore, that any health matters relating to Dr Parody be dealt with in private. Accordingly, where such matters were raised the Committee would go into private session.

### Admissions

4. On behalf of Dr Parody, Miss Sanderson indicated that 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d)(i), 1(e) and 1(f) were all admitted. Furthermore, in relation to allegation 2, it was admitted that Dr Parody's conduct in relation to 1(b), 1(c), 1(d)(i) and 1(e) was dishonest.
5. Miss Sanderson said that 1(d)(ii) was denied by Dr Parody, who also denied that her conduct in relation to 1(d)(ii) and 1(f) was dishonest.

## **Background**

6. At the time of the matters set out in the allegations, Dr Parody was employed as a Registered Veterinary Surgeon at the Castle Veterinary Group, CVS (UK) Ltd, Suffolk, at its practice in Framlingham, Suffolk (“the Practice”).
7. Around 12 December 2021, SM was asked by an acquaintance to take over the care of Shadow, a young male cat, about eight months old, from a third party (the previous owner), who was no longer able to look after him appropriately. Ms SM said she was happy to do this as she regularly rescued cats. She used the Castle Veterinary Group for the care of her animals. At the time of taking ownership of Shadow, Shadow already had a microchip, which was inserted and registered with Pettrac on 29 July 2021, with the last four digits 8551.
8. Ms SM said that Shadow was a very sick cat. He was very thin and had facial wounds, which he had been scratching. He also had bloody discharge from his ears. Ms SM took Shadow to the Fromus branch of CVS on 13 December 2021 and he was examined by Dr Imogen Elliott. That examination and the tests that flowed from it led to a diagnosis that Shadow had MRSA, which was both difficult to treat and contagious to both humans and animals.
9. When Ms SM was informed of that diagnosis on 18 December 2021, it was decided that the condition of Shadow, the difficulties of treatment, the potential for onward transmissions to her other pets and children, and the need for isolation, justified the euthanasia of Shadow, and Ms SM agreed to this course. An appointment was booked for 20 December 2021 for that procedure to be carried out at the Fromus branch. Following the encounter on 13 December 2021, a record appears in the clinical notes showing that a veterinary nurse was able to read Shadow’s microchip, to contact the registered owner (the previous owner) and to confirm Ms SM’s account of the transfer of ownership.
10. On 20 December 2021, Esther Collier, a Receptionist at the Fromus branch, booked Shadow in for euthanasia and informed Ms SM of the need to change the venue from Fromus to the Practice. She made an appointment in the appointment notes for the cat’s euthanasia, which recorded that the cat would just be dropped off, and Ms Collier explained that to the Practice’s Receptionist, Sophie Green, in a telephone call. Ms SM attended the Practice shortly before 11am that day but, because of Covid restrictions, was not able to enter the Practice premises and instead stayed in the car in the car park and Shadow was collected by the Receptionist, Ms Green. Ms SM heard no more until 30 December 2021 and thought Shadow had been euthanased, however this had not, in fact, taken place.
11. Although there was no witness statement from Ms Green, it was apparent that she took Shadow into the Practice and left him in a consultation room, ready to be put to sleep. Dr Parody was to

carry out the procedure, assisted by Victoria Gould, RVN. Ms Gould at the time was sitting on the floor in the Practice with a very poorly and dying dog. She was told there was a stray cat coming in to be euthanased, she could not recall who had said this but thought it was probably Ms Green. She said, *"I just know there was a general feeling that Shadow was a stray and not owned. Sophie was a trusted team member and I did not question it."* Ms Gould then had to accompany Dr Parody into the consultation room to assist with putting Shadow to sleep. Ms Gould said there was no paperwork, but Dr Parody did not question this, referring to it not being a *"normal"* day (she had already been involved in at least two euthanasias that morning) she assumed that *"whoever admitted the cat had done the forms."* Ms Gould said that the cat was moving around and seemed bright and she wondered out loud if cats could be treated for MRSA, as humans can be. Dr Parody did not go ahead with the euthanasia and instead said she would speak to a dermatologist. Later that day, Dr Parody told Ms Gould that she had decided to treat the cat.

12. Ms Gould questioned whether the owner had consented to the treatment, to which Dr Parody said the owner did not want the cat, thought it would be dead and would be *"none the wiser."*
13. Melanie Giacomini, another Receptionist, confirmed that Shadow was brought in for euthanasia, but that Dr Parody had said she had contacted a dermatologist and ordered medication to treat the cat.
14. On 21 December 2021, Ms Giacomini said she understood that Shadow was being treated by Dr Parody assisted by veterinary nurse Bronwyn Nicholls and Ms Green. Mrs Nicholls, described that on 21 December 2021 Shadow was given some medication and that she had identified that the cat was a male and entire (ie had not been castrated).
15. On 22 December 2021, Mrs Nicholls said that during her shift, Dr Parody told her that she was going to sedate Shadow and give him a full body clip, so he could be treated more effectively for MRSA. During the clipping, and whilst Shadow was anaesthetised, his skin was disinfected and cleansed and Dr Parody also elected to castrate him. In addition, Shadow's microchip was clear to see subcutaneously and Dr Parody pinched the skin under the microchip and directed Mrs Nicholls to make an incision, the microchip was then removed and the wound glued. A new microchip was inserted but not, at that stage, registered to anyone.
16. Ms Giacomini said that Dr Parody took Shadow home with her and she heard Dr Parody making arrangements to clear a bedroom for him to be kept isolated.

17. On 23 December 2021, Ms Giacomini said Dr Parody asked her if she could help look after Shadow over Christmas as she would be away. Ms Giacomini said she was not able to do so.
18. On 30 December 2021, Ms Collier, the Receptionist who had booked Shadow in to be euthanised on 20 December 2021, noted that there was no record or clinical history after 18 December 2021, for Shadow. She contacted the Practice to investigate and received an email at 09:10 from Dr Parody. In that email Dr Parody explained the cat had not been put to sleep, because she could not face another such procedure, and stated that the cat was *“at home with me and doing really well. Ms SM is aware and is very grateful.”* Dr Parody was later to accept that this last part was a lie, because at this point no one had told Ms SM that Shadow was still alive.
19. Ms Collier replied at 09:23 asking if the cat had been signed over to Dr Parody. Rosie Barker, the Clinical Director, was told by Ms Collier that the cat had not been euthanised as expected and so Ms Barker emailed Dr Parody, at 09:34, asking for the notes to be updated and asking what had happened with the cat and whether he was signed over to the Practice. At 09:45 Dr Parody replied saying that notes had not been made and said *“I think there were some crossed wires as the owner thought he had to be PTS and was very surprised when I said it was potentially treatable? I’ve started treatment and the owner is now deciding if she wants him back to continue treatment or wants him signed over. I have said she needs to decide by the weekend.”*
20. Ms Giacomini, in the late morning of 30 December 2021, was asked by Dr Parody to call the owner of Shadow and explain what had happened. Ms SM was both shocked and elated to hear that Shadow was still alive. Ms Giacomini discussed the costs and difficulties of having Shadow back with the ongoing treatment he needed and she discussed transferring ownership to the Practice. Ms SM said that she got the impression from Ms Giacomini that Dr Parody wanted to keep Shadow and she felt she was being persuaded not to take Shadow back. However, Ms SM said that as soon as she knew Shadow was alive, she wanted him back.
21. Dr Parody said that if the cat were to be returned to Ms SM, then she would have to pay for the treatment of about £480. There was then an email exchange between Ms SM and Ms Giacomini in which Ms SM expressed her surprise at not being told sooner as *“I was grieving for his little soul.”* To which Ms Giacomini replied with the (false account) that the Practice had delayed contacting her until the treatment had been successful.
22. On 31 December 2021, Dr Elliott received an email from Dr Parody informing her that Ms SM wished to have Shadow returned to her. Ms SM returned to the Practice and collected Shadow the same day. A new microchip for Shadow, with the number ending 0802, had been inserted by Dr Parody and was registered on the Practice’s computer system.

23. There are no notes for Shadow in the animal's clinical records between 20 December 2021, the day he was booked in to be put to sleep, and 31 December 2021, the day he was returned to Ms SM, though there are entries within the estimate produced on 30 December 2021.
24. On 7 February 2022, Ms SM disputed her obligation to pay for Shadow's treatment before she had taken the cat back and which she had known nothing about at the time, in particular the castration.
25. On 9 February 2022, Dr Parody wrote to staff at the Practice by email, in which she set out her view that Shadow was not wanted by Ms SM and had been treated by her as a stray.
26. Following these events, an investigation was carried out by CVS under Sally Mitchell RVN.
27. On 11 February 2022, Dr Parody was suspended from the Practice. On 17 February 2022, Dr Parody was interviewed by Ms Mitchell. In that interview Dr Parody said she thought the cat was "*presented unowned as she didn't want him*" rather than a stray. She said she saw the record of MRSA in the 'clinical side' of the records. She accepted she had not recorded in the computer records drugs used or procedures carried out.
28. On 22 February 2022 Dr Parody resigned from the Practice.
29. After further treatment, on 24 February 2022 Ms SM made the decision to euthanase Shadow, as he was deteriorating and she decided to "*end his suffering.*" She said that she felt both Shadow and she had suffered unnecessarily as a result of Dr Parody's decision not to put him to sleep on 20 December 2021, as planned.
30. In the course of the investigation on 23 June 2022, Ms Collier was provided with screenshots passing between Ms Green and Dr Parody and the following exchange:

Ms Green: *They knew about the microchip already ... which made me feel instantly sick x*  
Dr Parody: *Knew what? x*

Ms Green: *Well I think they wanted to get it out of me. But she questioned me why there was a microchip on the bill when the cat already had a microchip ...*

Dr Parody: *But only three people knows and it was actually BN that cut it out and removed it - I was holding it in place. So can't see BN dropping herself in it? I think they just wanted to know why it had been chipped twice potentially? Not that one had been removed? x they're just wondering why it had been done twice x*

Ms Green: *Okay thank god for that. X*

Dr Parody: *Or whether we'd billed a microchip but then not done it maybe? What did you say about the microchip? x*

Ms Green: *I didn't say anything, I just said I didn't know about it. X*

Dr Parody: *There's no way BN would say anything ... she knows she'd be struck off immediately! She cut it out! x*

31. In June 2022, after Ms Mitchell had concluded her investigation, she discovered that the microchip had been removed from Shadow and a new one inserted. She explained that the correct procedure for change of ownership in respect of microchips is to update the existing record.
32. In an email dated 29 April 2022, Dr Parody self-reported to the College and contended that she had treated Shadow on 20 December 2021 as an unowned cat, and that the owner, when she discovered the cat was treated, was happy and the source of any issues was a dispute over billing. She accepted she should have obtained consent for treatment, kept records and had caused some distress to the client. She denied wanting to keep the cat.
33. In an email to the College, dated 5 March 2023, Dr Parody explained that on 22 December 2021, she had clipped and treated Shadow and that in doing so without consent she had acted dishonestly. She added that during that procedure she had seen that Shadow had a microchip. She said that, "*Melanie, the Receptionist, had already contacted the local rescue charity (Suffolk Animal Rescue) to re-home it. A suggestion was made upon finding the chip that we remove it as we thought that the cat was registered to the drug-addict from whom it had been removed and this would make it hard to reregister when the cat was re-homed. I now understand from the medical history provided by the College that the chip had already been transferred to Ms SM. We were not aware of this at the time. We then inserted a new microchip.*" She denied wanting to home Shadow herself. She accepted the removal of the microchip was wrong and not clinically justified.
34. In her witness statement for these proceedings, dated 9 September 2024, Dr Parody spoke of the particular stresses that were affecting her home and work life at that time. She spoke of the significant increase in workload brought about by the Covid pandemic and the temporary closure of two of the three practices in their group. This resulted in the Practice covering for all three and Dr Parody covering for six vets. She said the Practice was close to collapse, she was always fully booked and often double booked. The phones were constantly ringing and animals were often being dropped off. She described it as chaotic and said she was just trying to keep her head above water.

35. Dr Parody said that 20 December 2021 was the first day with the other practices closed and she was the only veterinary surgeon on duty. There was only one veterinary nurse, Ms Gould, when there should have been two. There were two Receptionists, Ms Green and Ms Giacomini. Dr Parody said she was made aware of a cat booked in for euthanasia because it had MRSA. She understood it had been rescued from a drug addict, but the lady bringing him in no longer wanted him after finding out that he had MRSA. Dr Parody said, *“I understood that the cat had arrived and had been isolated in a consulting room to prevent spread of infection. I understood (probably from Sophie) that the lady who dropped him off did not want to speak to me and did not want her cat carrier back. I was not told her name or the cat’s name.”*
36. Dr Parody said it was two hours before she could deal with the cat and by that time she and Ms Gould had already put three to four cats or dogs to sleep that morning, which was an unusual amount, but the result of covering for three surgeries. Dr Parody stated, *“I gowned up and I first saw the cat when I walked into a consulting room with Victoria Gould. We were ready to euthanise him. The drug Pentoject had already been drawn up. Upon entering the room, I was greeted by a sweet young cat which appeared healthy apart from his skin condition. I had already done back to back euthanasias that morning as mentioned and upon seeing a happy young cat, I just could not face another euthanasia. I think it is important to say here that even though at that point I had been a vet for over 10 years, euthanasias are never easy and you always “take them home” with you.”*
37. Dr Parody said that Ms Gould asked whether MRSA was treatable in animals and they had a short discussion about it. Dr Parody then decided she wanted to investigate the matter further, before proceeding with the euthanasia. She spoke to a dermatologist and learned that it was possible to treat MRSA. She thus took the decision to *“rescue the cat again and save his life”*, treating him as ‘unowned’ based on the information she had been given verbally. She accepted she had not checked to see if there were any records for the cat and she should have done so, but the surgery was so busy she did not have time to do so. Dr Parody described how she put together a treatment plan for the cat and bathed the cat with a topical anti-bacterial scrub and gave him antibiotics. She said there was discussion between the four staff members about what to do with the cat, with the plan being to re-home him as they were treating him as unowned.
38. Dr Parody said she remembered hearing Ms Giacomini leaving a message for Jayne Roberts at Suffolk Animal Rescue, something that Ms Giacomini adamantly denied during her evidence. Ms Roberts also gave evidence and whilst she could not be specific about the timings, she said she did remember a call from Ms Giacomini during Covid about taking a cat with MRSA. Ms Roberts said it stuck in her mind because she does like to refuse requests,



however she was not set up to look after cats with MRSA and in any event was not taking cats at that time as she was self- isolating during Covid.

39. Dr Parody went on to state that Shadow, although he was referred to as 'Scabby' as she was unaware of his name at that time, was kept in the Practice overnight on 20 December 2021 and the person who brought Shadow in was not contacted, was not advised that Shadow had not been put to sleep and her consent was not sought for the on-going treatment. Dr Parody accepted that in treating the cat without consent and failing to euthanase Shadow her actions were dishonest. She went on to say:

*"I understand that my decision not to euthanise Shadow and instead to treat him without the consent of Ms SM was wrong. It was a decision I made on a very, very busy and stressful day and when I thought the cat had no owner but I fully appreciate that was no excuse. Once I had made that one decision, I did not revisit my decision but simply continued to treat the cat as best I could at an extremely stressful time. I accept that as a result of my decision and actions that the lady who had brought the cat in and who I now know was Ms SM, was misled into thinking that it had been put to sleep and this is something I very much regret."*

40. With regard to the treatment given, Dr Parody said that on 22 December 2022, on the advice of the dermatologist, she gave Shadow a full body clip to remove any contaminants in the hair and to aid the application of topical treatment. This was done under sedation. When clipping Shadow, she said a microchip was clearly detected just below the skin at the back of the neck. She went on to say, *"A suggestion was made upon finding the chip that we remove it as we thought that the cat was registered to the drug-addict from whom it had been removed and this would make it hard to re-register when the cat was rehomed. I honestly cannot now remember which one of us suggested that the microchip be removed. Bronwyn Nicholls removed the chip and I inserted a new one. However, I accept that as the veterinary surgeon in charge, I must and do take responsibility for the chip's removal."* She added that none of them scanned the microchip before removing it.

41. Dr Parody said she also castrated the cat as *"male cats are usually neutered before being rehomed and doing it at this time meant that he would not have to have another general anaesthetic at a later date to have this procedure done. I was doing my best to make it as easy as possible to rehome the cat."* Dr Parody said the new chip was not registered to anyone as this would be done when the cat was re-homed.

42. Dr Parody denied ever having any intention to keep the cat, saying, *“My actions with regard to this cat all snowballed from my decision to treat the cat on 20 December and not put him to sleep. I know I should not have done this but because the cat was young and the condition curable, I felt that I was acting with the welfare of the cat at the centre of my decisions. My actions were not in any way for my personal gain. I did not want to adopt the cat and never had any intention of doing so.”*
43. Over the Christmas period Dr Parody said that she kept Shadow at home, but on 30 December 2021 she heard from Ms Collier about the costs issues when she returned to work. She realised they should contact the person who left the cat straight away and she then learned of Ms SM and the cat being Shadow. Dr Parody tasked Ms Giacomini with making the call to Ms SM as she was *“always very keen to speak to the clients.”* Dr Parody said she was happy to return Shadow on 31 December 2021 to Ms SM and the new microchip was registered to Ms SM.
44. Dr Parody accepted that when she emailed Ms Collier that morning and said Ms SM was *“aware and grateful”* that was incorrect, because at that time Ms SM did not know that Shadow was still alive. By way of explanation, Dr Parody said, *“I knew by that point that what we had done was wrong and I was trying to buy myself some time to put things right. I understand that I should not have lied to Esther in this way and I deeply regret my actions.”*
45. Dr Parody added, *“I fully understand that I should not have removed or directed the removal of the existing microchip and that was a serious error of judgement on my part. It was not clinically justified, and it was wrong to remove it. However, I was not trying to mislead anyone as to Shadow’s identity. I genuinely thought the cat was unowned and I was simply trying to make rehoming him, hopefully through a charity, easier. Whilst I was wrong to remove the chip and I now understand it was contrary to the Code of Conduct and I greatly regret my action, I never had any intention to mislead anyone and I do not believe my actions were dishonest.”* Dr Parody also said, *“I had not behaved as I should as a veterinary surgeon even though I felt I had been acting to protect the welfare of the cat. I knew I had let myself and the profession down badly.”*
46. With regard to the text messages exchanged with Ms Green (referred to above), Dr Parody said, *“I did keep in touch with both Bronwyn Nicholls and Sophie Green after I left Castle. We had been a close knit team and had always messaged each other out of hours when I was working there. I was aware that the investigation was ongoing and I was informed by Sophie through a text message that those conducting the investigation knew about the microchip. This had never been raised before in the investigation. As soon as it was, I felt*

*sick. It was a split second decision and one that I will always regret. It has caused me so much worry and many sleepless nights.”*

47. Dr Parody said she appreciated that she had made serious errors of judgment over the treatment of Shadow, but said there were extenuating circumstances due to the pressure she was working under at the time. She added that she knew this was no excuse. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] All of this combined so that she made decisions which she can now see were clearly wrong.

48. Dr Parody went on to say, *“My actions in December 2021 have had a profound impact on my life over the last three years. I cannot believe that I allowed myself to make decisions which have resulted in disciplinary proceedings before my Regulator. I love my profession and believe that I am a good veterinary surgeon. With the exception of the brief period around December 2021, I have always been a valued employee in every practice that I have worked. I believe I form good relationships with the clients who appreciate my efforts, and I always do my very best for the animals placed in my care.”*

49. In concluding, Dr Parody assured the Committee and the College that she would never again depart from the guidance provided in the Guide to Professional Conduct and the Supporting Guidance, regardless of the circumstances and the pressure she is under.

50. Dr Parody’s assessment of her professional skills and qualities as a veterinary surgeon were supported by a plethora of glowing character references from colleagues and clients. As to the pressures they were under at the Practice in December 2021, Ms Gould said it was *“only a matter of time until something ‘snapped’ at Castle.”* She said that on that particular day it was difficult because *“you have a certain level of tolerance for death and you reach a level after two or three [euthanasias] when it is a relief when something has not died.”* She also described Dr Parody as *“an exceptional vet.”*

51. When speaking of Dr Parody during her oral evidence, Mrs Nicholls said *“She is very fair, she treated my own animals very well and I am very grateful. She is an extremely good vet and took the trouble to find out about the skin case for the cat and not many vets would have done that they would just have put it down. I was very, very happy to work with her.”*

52. In her oral evidence, Dr Parody remained adamant that the change of the microchip was done with a view to easing the process of re-homing the cat and not with any intention to mislead others as to the identity of Shadow. She denied acting dishonestly in this respect. She also denied acting dishonestly by not making adequate records for Shadow.

### **Determination on the Facts**

53. The Committee considered with care all the evidence relied on by the parties, together with the submissions made by Mr Weston and Miss Sanderson. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor and bore in mind that it was for the College to prove the disputed facts and to do so to the highest civil standard of proof, that is to say the Committee must be sure of the matters alleged in order to find them proved. In reaching its decisions on the disputed facts the Committee took into account all the oral evidence together with the documents relied on by both parties. It also took into account Dr Parody's good character, together with the character evidence she relied on, both oral and written. However, in taking Dr Parody's good character and references into account, the Committee also bore in mind the admissions that Dr Parody had made to many of the matters alleged and in particular to having acted dishonestly in many respects with regard to her actions relating to Shadow.

54. The Committee heard live evidence from the following witnesses:

SM- owner of Shadow

Melanie Giacomini - Receptionist

Victoria Gould - Veterinary Nurse

Bronwyn Nicholls - Veterinary Nurse (retired)

Janine Parody - the Respondent Veterinary Surgeon

Jayne Roberts - Suffolk Animal Rescue

55. The statements of the following witnesses were not challenged and so were read into the record as agreed evidence:

Imogen Elliot - Veterinary Surgeon

Thomas Barnes - Veterinary Nurse

Esther Collier - Receptionist

Rosie Barker - Veterinary Surgeon

Sally Mitchell - Veterinary Nurse and Investigator

## **The Committee's determination on the Particulars**

### **Particular 1(a) On 20 December 2021, failed to euthanase Shadow;**

56. The Committee found this Particular proved on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

### **Particular 1(b) Between 20 December 2021 and 30 December 2021, failed to inform SM, who had presented Shadow at the practice for euthanasia, that Shadow had not been euthanased;**

57. The Committee found this Particular proved on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

### **Particular 1(c) Between 20 December 2021 and 30 December 2021, went ahead with a treatment plan for Shadow, including sedation and castration, without informing or obtaining consent from SM to that treatment plan;**

58. The Committee found this Particular proved on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

### **Particular 1(d)(i) On or about 22 December 2021, were involved in and/or directed the surgical removal of a microchip from Shadow when such removal was not clinically justified;**

59. The Committee found this Particular proved on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

### **Particular 1(d)(ii) On or about 22 December 2021, were involved in and/or directed the surgical removal of a microchip from Shadow - in so doing you intended to mislead another or other/s in relation to Shadow's identity;**

60. To find this allegation proved the Committee would have to be sure that, at the time of removing, or directing the removal of, the microchip, Dr Parody intended to mislead another or others in relation to Shadow's identity. The Committee recognised and accepted that a microchip's purpose is to identify an animal and that, therefore, the removal of a microchip may make it more difficult (and in some cases impossible) to identify the animal concerned. Thus, it could be argued

that the removal of a microchip could be misleading. However, the College had to prove that it was Dr Parody's intention to mislead.

61. The Committee carefully considered the context at the time of Shadow's attendance at the Practice. There was no dispute that this occurred during the Covid pandemic and that, on 20 December 2021, two of the three practices were not operating due to staff shortages caused by Covid. Consequently, the Practice was exceptionally busy taking on cases from the other two practices and with a limited number of staff. Dr Parody said she was doing the job of six vets. There were the added complications caused by the restrictions around Covid that prevented pet owners from entering the Practice and being with their pets. The Committee heard how, on 20 December 2021, Dr Parody had already had to put a number of animals to sleep when she was presented with Shadow to be euthanased. Ms Gould described sitting on the floor with a dying dog when she was required to then go and assist with euthanasing Shadow and how traumatic that was. Whilst not condoning the decisions made by Dr Parody, the Committee accepted this was no normal day.
62. The Committee considered it plausible, particularly in those extenuating circumstances, that Dr Parody relied on what she was told by trusted members of her team. The missing evidence in this case was the direct testimony of Sophie Green, the Receptionist who brought Shadow into the Practice on 20 December 2021. It was clear, however, that Ms Gould and Dr Parody relied on what they were told by Ms Green about the circumstances of the cat concerned. Whether the former owner was in fact a drug addict (and there was no independent evidence of this) or not and whether the cat was found under a bush or not, did not really matter, what mattered was the state of knowledge of Dr Parody at the time. That information can only realistically have been passed on by Ms Green and that was what all those in the Practice relied on. The Committee was not persuaded by Mr Weston's assertion that Dr Parody must have looked at the full clinical record for Shadow. Had she done so she would have immediately known that the cat had a name and an owner and no doubt this case would never have arisen. Instead, Dr Parody, working in an exceptionally hectic and stressful environment, relied on what she was told by Ms Green and understood that this was a cat that had been owned by a drug addict, effectively abandoned and then rescued by a well-wisher who, on learning the cat had MRSA, no longer wanted to keep it and decided to have it put to sleep. The Committee accepted that, however erroneous, this was her state of mind when she made the decision not to put Shadow to sleep that day.
63. When the time came to administer the drug Pentoject, Ms Gould mused out loud whether it was possible to treat MRSA in a cat. That led Dr Parody to put off the euthanasia and instead make enquiries with a dermatologist about the possibility of treating a cat with MRSA. That then set in train the chain of events that followed, with the advice coming back that it was possible. Dr

Parody then made a decision that was not in fact hers to make, which she accepts, and decided to “*rescue the cat again*”.

64. Dr Parody accepted that, on 22 December 2021, whilst Scabby (as he was known to her at the time) was sedated for treatment for the MRSA, she directed Mrs Nicholls to assist with the removal of the microchip from Shadow. She denied, however, that this was done in order to mislead others in relation to Shadow’s identity. She reiterated that the decision to remove the microchip had been a spur of the moment decision, with a view to easing the process of re-homing the cat, without the complication of a microchip registered to the previous owner, who may have been difficult to contact. She denied it had been done to hide the history of the cat, which she said she would have passed on to any subsequent owner as a matter of routine.
65. Dr Parody reminded the Committee that this had been no ordinary period; the Practice, and she, were under immense pressure and they were not operating under “*even vaguely normal conditions*”. She said that now, away from those conditions, she could not begin to understand why she made the decision to remove the microchip. She said it was a ‘*crazy*’ thing to do and that, looking back, she did not know why she had thought that was acceptable. She fully accepted how wrong it was to have removed the chip and she has struggled since to understand the decisions she made in relation to Shadow, saying “*that is not how I am as a vet.*”
66. She accepted also that she had not mentioned the changing of the microchip in her correspondence with the Practice and her subsequent interview with Ms Mitchell. In cross-examination she accepted that she had wanted to conceal the fact of the change because she knew, after the event, how wrong it was. She remained adamant, however, that at the time her motive was simply to ease the process of re-homing Shadow and there was no intent to mislead others as to Shadow’s identity. Her actions after the event may have been dishonest, but the Committee had to consider only her intent at the time of the microchip removal, as alleged by the College.
67. Mrs Nicholls gave evidence about the microchip removal. She said that at the time they were under the impression that Shadow was a stray and she had in fact named the cat ‘*Scabby*’ because of all its scabs. The information about the cat being found under a hedge and being a stray came from Sophie. Mrs Nicholls said she was asked by Dr Parody to make the incision and remove the chip, which was very much a “*spur of the moment*” thing. She said Dr Parody was using her fingers to bring the chip to the surface as it was “*very close to the surface*” and therefore Dr Parody could not do that and make the incision.

68. Mrs Nicholls said she was under the impression that the cat was going to be re-homed with either Dr Parody or Sophie, describing Shadow as a *“Very sweet little cat.”*
69. When describing the state of the Practice at that time, Mrs Nicholls said, *“We were absolutely run off our feet and taking in cases from the other two practices because of Covid. We were the only Practice fit and there was only a small team of us, working all hours, 8am until 7pm, working straight through, so it was very traumatic and stressful at the time.”* She added, *“We were coping, but that was about it. It was very, very busy.”*
70. The Committee was in no doubt that, however mistakenly, Dr Parody had been acting in, what she considered at the time to be, the best interests for the welfare of a viable young cat, whom she felt deserved another chance at life, given the advice of the dermatologist that the MRSA could be treated. However, no doubt driven by the extraordinarily stressful circumstances, she made a series of very poor decisions, without having first done the most basic of checks that could have avoided the whole sorry chain of events. A simple scan of the microchip and a consequent check of the clinical records, would have shown that the cat had a name and an owner. Had Dr Parody done that and still felt that the cat should have been given another chance, having spoken to the dermatologist, she could and should have then relayed that to the new owner, Ms SM, and sought her views. Instead, Dr Parody made incorrect assumptions about the lack of ownership of Shadow, based on conversations from other members of staff, rather than clinical records and took it upon herself to make a series of decisions she was not entitled to make, without first consulting the owner.
71. The Committee was not persuaded so that it was sure that Dr Parody’s motive for removing the microchip was to mislead others as to the identity of Shadow. Rather, it was a momentary decision, based on an arguably flawed premise, but an explanation the Committee was prepared to accept, given its overall view of Dr Parody’s character and professionalism. Shadow was sedated for his hair to be clipped and topical medication applied, not for his microchip to be removed, or indeed to be castrated. Both those things happened because Dr Parody believed they would make it easier to re-home, what she believed to be, an unwanted and unowned cat, and had not been planned in advance. The Committee was persuaded that this was Dr Parody’s true motivation.
72. The Committee did not believe that Dr Parody had some grand design to conceal Shadow’s identity and keep him for herself. She already had two cats, two dogs and two children at home and no desire to add a third cat, particularly one with MRSA that would require extensive care. Nevertheless she took it upon herself to do just that over the Christmas period, no doubt at some considerable inconvenience to herself and her family (they removed her daughter’s mattress



from her bedroom so that they could isolate Shadow in that room), because they were unable to find anyone else to look after Shadow. The Committee considered that this was the mark of a caring and compassionate veterinary surgeon, not someone with secret designs to add another cat to her household, or to mislead others as to the identity of the cat.

73. The Committee considered Dr Parody's account of not wanting to keep the cat herself was reinforced by the call she heard Ms Giacomini make to Jayne Roberts at the Suffolk Animal Rescue, leaving a message asking if they would take a cat with MRSA. Although Ms Giacomini was adamant that she had not made this call, Ms Roberts was equally adamant that she had received such a call and she particularly remembered it because it had come out of the blue and she had not heard from Ms Giacomini for a while. Also she had to say no because of Covid restrictions and the difficulties of looking after a cat with MRSA that would require regular visits to the vet, something she could not do when self-isolating. With two conflicting accounts the Committee could not be sure that this call was not made and indeed thought it was more likely that it was.

74. In all the circumstances, the Committee found Particular 1(d)(ii) not proved.

**Particular 1 (e) Between approximately 23 December 2021 and 31 December 2021, took Shadow home with you without informing or obtaining consent from SM to do so;**

75. The Committee found this Particular proved on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

**Particular 1(f) Between 20 December and 30 December 2021, failed to make any or any adequate clinical records with regards to Shadow;**

76. The Committee found this Particular proved on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

**Particular 2 Your conduct in relation to 1(b) to (f) above was dishonest.**

77. The Committee found this Particular proved in relation to 1(b), 1(c), 1(d)(i) and 1(e) on the basis of Dr Parody's admission, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College.

**Particular 2 in relation to 1(d)(ii)**

78. In light of its finding that the College had not proved 1(d)(ii), it follows that this allegation must be found not proved, since it is predicated on a positive finding in relation to 1(d)(ii).

**Particular 2 in relation to 1(f)**

79. Dr Parody accepted that she failed to make adequate records in relation to Shadow. With regard to the lack of records for Shadow, Dr Parody was asked by the Committee why she had not followed the 'stray policy'. In answer she said, *"We were not operating under any vaguely normal conditions. The normal stray policy is if no one comes forward in two weeks then we treat the animal as unowned, only doing emergency treatment. In reality with a lot of strays we start to do things in the initial two weeks, which is what happened in this case. A lot of the treatment was as the dermatologist had advised."*

80. She went on to say that at that time they had three other stray cats in the Practice and that they had a culture of trying to help as much as they could. Dr Parody said they would not have created a clinical record for any of them, just Hospital Sheets if they required medication. She was asked why Shadow had appeared as a stray in her own account (the one that covered her own pets) and she said that because the treatment required medication that they did not have in stock, it had to be ordered in and booked somewhere, so *"I booked it on my account with a view to paying."* She said she had done similar before with a dog. This was not because she wanted to keep Shadow. On the contrary she *"absolutely did not want to keep Shadow"* as she already had *"two cats, two dogs, two kids and was a single Mum"*, so it was *"always about re-homing the cat."*

81. Dr Parody added that she had never created a clinical record on the computer for a stray or unowned animal and that any necessary records for such animals would be kept on paper only. She said that was in keeping with the common practice at the time and what she also did now, at the different practice where she currently works. She admitted, however, that this was a failure on her part as the CVS policy is that she should have created a record on the computer system, which she had not done. She denied this failure was dishonest as there had been a 'Hospital Sheet' for Shadow with a full treatment plan for the cat.

82. The Committee took into account Mrs Nicholls' evidence that when she attended the Practice on 21 December 2021 there was a treatment plan for this cat. This clearly indicates that something was written down, no doubt on what was referred to as the Hospital Sheet, by Dr Parody, for Mrs Nicholls to follow. Furthermore, on 22 December 2021, Mrs Nicholls said she completed a 'Sedation Sheet', recording the procedure carried out that day. Ms Mitchell, when questioning Dr Parody in June 2022 as part of the internal investigation, made reference to there being *"32/marbocyl 5mg [the medication used to treat the MRSA] in the history on a stray record on*

*your file*". The College had not produced any of these records for the Committee to consider, but all demonstrated that whilst there may not have been a computerised clinical record between 20 and 30 December 2021, there were clearly other records. Had it been Dr Parody's intention to deceive others by hiding what she had been doing then it would be unlikely she would have made, or been party to, those records. Furthermore, had she wanted for some reason to disguise or hide the action she had taken in relation to Shadow that would have required the collusion of all the other staff members at the Practice between 20 and 30 December 2021. There was no evidence to support any such collusion.

83. Whilst there may be an argument to show that post these events, Dr Parody acted dishonestly in trying to cover her tracks and desperately rectify matters by, for example, lying about Ms SM's knowledge and acquiescence of the steps taken to treat Shadow, that is not what she was charged with.

84. In all the circumstances, the Committee was not persuaded on the evidence, so that it was sure, that Dr Parody had acted dishonestly in not making adequate records relating to Shadow. Accordingly, the Committee found this charge in respect of 1(f) not proved.

### **Disgraceful Conduct in a Professional Respect**

85. The Committee considered with care the submissions made by the parties, together with all the evidence in the case pertinent to the facts it had found proved. It was cognisant of the fact that the question of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect was very much a matter for its own judgment and that there was no burden or standard of proof that applied. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor and took into account the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons, together with its Supporting Guidance.

86. The Committee found there to be the following aggravating factors related to the proved facts:

- a. actual injury to an animal;
- b. breach of client trust.

87. The Committee found there to be the following mitigating factors, related to the proved facts:

- a. the prevailing circumstances, whereby during the Covid pandemic two of the three practices were unable to operate at the relevant time and thus the Practice ended up having to cover all three; they were all under immense pressure and they had already had to put to sleep a number of animals that morning;

- b. the circumstances of the incident: Dr Parody's intent was of doing the best for this animal so the welfare of the cat was at the forefront of her mind and clouded the rest of her decision making;
- c. single and isolated incident;
- d. decision taken without the opportunity for full reflection.

88. The Committee found Dr Parody had breached the following parts of the Code and Guidance:

- 1.3 *Veterinary surgeons must provide veterinary care that is appropriate and adequate.*
- 1.1 *Veterinary surgeons must be open and honest with clients.*
- 2.4 *Veterinary surgeons must communicate effectively with clients, including in written and spoken English, and ensure informed consent is obtained before treatments or procedures are carried out.*
- 2.5 *Veterinary surgeons must keep clear, accurate and detailed clinical and client records.*

*[Guidance on the removal of microchips]*

- 20.25 *Because of the importance attached to the accurate identification of animals and the potential for fraud, a microchip must only be removed where this can be clinically justified. This justification should be documented and where required another microchip or alternative method of identification used.*
- 20.26 *Removal of a microchip in any other circumstances would be an unnecessary mutilation. While the insertion of a second microchip may be problematic, this in itself does not justify removal of a microchip and an audit trail must be maintained.*

89. However well-intentioned, Dr Parody made some serious errors of judgment with regard to her approach to Shadow and embarked upon a course of dishonest conduct, which started with her failure to inform Ms SM about her decision not to euthanase Shadow, was followed by her treatment of Shadow, including his castration and microchip removal, all without the consent of the owner, and ended with her taking Shadow home over Christmas, again without Ms SM's consent. In addition, she failed to make adequate clinical records with regards to Shadow.

90. The Committee was satisfied that this overall conduct fell far below the standard expected of a veterinary surgeon and amounted to disgraceful conduct.

91. Accordingly, the Committee found the allegation that Dr Parody was guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect was proved.

**The Committee's Determination on Sanction**

92. In reaching its decision on sanction, the Committee took into account all the relevant evidence and documents provided, together with the submissions made by both parties and all matters of personal mitigation. The Committee also referred to the RCVS Disciplinary Committee Sanctions Guidance ("the Guidance"). The Committee had in mind that the purpose of sanctions was not to punish Dr Parody, but to protect animal welfare, maintain public confidence in the profession and maintain proper standards of conduct and performance. The Committee was also cognisant of the need to ensure that any sanction is proportionate. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor.

93. [REDACTED]

94. [REDACTED]

95. [REDACTED]

96. Dr Parody gave further oral evidence at the sanction stage. She said that there had been quite a toxic atmosphere at the Practice in December 2021 and everyone was under a lot of pressure and stressed. [REDACTED]

Dr Parody told the Committee how different things were now. She had moved to Hereford to be close to her parents and has much more support. The practice she now works in are all very supportive [REDACTED]

97. Dr Parody said she is passionate about being a vet, absolutely adores her job and that being a vet was all she ever wanted to be from a very young age. She said she never feels more proud than when asked what she does for a living and she is able to say she is a vet. She said it is more than a job, it is a *“massive part of me and who I am.”*

98. The Committee heard from four character witnesses called on behalf of Dr Parody and was also provided with a significant number of written testimonials. The first live witness was Ms SR, a long-term owner of dogs with many years of dealing with vets and a client of Dr Parody’s at Medivet Leominster Veterinary Practice (Dr Parody’s current place of work - formally Marches). She said that Dr Parody *“does a wonderful job. She is kind, compassionate and caring to my dog. She is very knowledgeable, explains things well and takes her time. I am very impressed with her as a vet.”* Ms SR described Dr Parody as a *“compassionate and dedicated vet, together with being a highly skilled and caring professional.”* Ms SR was particularly impressed by Dr Parody’s dedication to finding ways to help her dog’s chronic skin condition and said how Dr Parody was *“endlessly supportive”* in helping her, resulting in significant improvements to her dog’s condition. Ms SR said she could not recommend Dr Parody highly enough.

99. The second live character witness was her current employer, Mr John Horlock MRCVS, who has worked closely with Dr Parody since September 2023. He was aware of the charges she faced and her admissions to many of them, including dishonesty. He expressed his unequivocal support for Dr Parody, describing her as *“an exceptional professional who consistently*

*demonstrates the highest standards of honesty, integrity and dedication in all that she undertakes.*” Mr Horlock said of Dr Parody that she had shown herself to be someone who values transparency and ethical conduct above all else. He said her honesty is evident in every interaction, whether she is communicating with clients, colleagues or management. He went on to describe her integrity as *“unshakeable”* and that she always does what is right, even when faced with difficult situations or unpopular decisions.

100. Mr Horlock also said, *“Professionally, Janine is nothing short of exemplary. She approaches her work with a level of diligence and commitment that is truly inspiring. Janine is incredibly hard-working, often going above and beyond what is required to ensure that her clients and their pets are treated to the highest standard. Her ability to remain focused and productive under immense pressure is remarkable and she consistently delivers outstanding results, even in the most challenging circumstances.”*

101. Mr Horlock also spoke of Dr Parody’s natural leadership qualities and her ability to foster a collaborative environment, where everyone feels supported and valued. He added, *“Her commitment to her work and her family is truly commendable, reflecting her strength, resilience and dedication.”* Mr Horlock said he had been involved in employing fellow Veterinary Surgeons for over 30 years and that clinically Dr Parody was *“right up there with the best”*, so much so that he suggested she might like to become Lead Vet when he retires.

102. Dr Adrian Allan MRCVS, who also currently works alongside Dr Parody, gave live evidence and spoke of her in similarly positive terms and added that she always follows practice protocols and wrote excellent clinical notes. He described her as a *“role model of a very committed professional who makes a significant contribution both to our Practice and the Profession ...”* He added that Dr Parody was like a *“blast of fresh air”*, describing her as an *“enthusiastic, committed and excellent clinician.”* He said she was very collaborative and very much a team player, who *“lightens the mood.”* He said she was very good at following up and taking responsibility for her cases and that his experience of her was *“overwhelmingly positive.”* Dr Allan said that Dr Parody is a very warm person who gets on well with clients, who seek her out. He described her as *“thoroughly reliable.”*

103. Nicola Fraser, Head Veterinary Nurse at Medivet Leominster Veterinary Practice, gave oral evidence to the Committee. She described Dr Parody as *“generous with her time and compassion with her patients and their owners”* and said she is her vet of choice when taking her own pets to be seen. Ms Fraser gave an example whereby Dr Parody demonstrated her integrity with the owners of a newly acquired puppy. They had already attended another practice where a heart murmur had been diagnosed. They then attended their practice and the puppy

was seen by Dr Parody, who also diagnosed a heart murmur. The owners were insistent that the heart murmur should be omitted from the clinical history so that they could obtain pet insurance first, with a clean history. Dr Parody informed them that this would be fraudulent and not something she would do. Ms Fraser described how the owners were furious at this and became verbally abusive to Dr Parody. Ms Fraser said, *“Janine showed great resilience and integrity on this day advocating that this was neither the best thing for the animal and was both morally and professionally immoral.”*

104. Ms Fraser also said that Dr Parody is a firm favourite with clients and she inspires the rest of the team to strive to increase clinical standards within their practice. She added, *“Janine is always the first person I would go to, she would always do the right thing for the client, she is very personable and an absolute star.”*

105. Dr Stuart Collier MRCVS also works with Dr Parody and described her as an exemplary veterinary surgeon, very popular with staff and clients alike. He said her clinical cases are always dealt with thoroughly *“as Janine is never one to cut corners.”* He said that her case histories are always easy to read and comprehensive and that if difficult cases are encountered, she never hesitates to ask for help, either in the practice or from a referral specialist. He added, *“Janine’s diligence and care for animals is seen in the fact that she will give the same level of care to patients that are in need, whether they are clients pets, strays or wildlife presented at the surgery.”* He concluded saying, *“I, like the rest of my colleagues at our practice, have come to recognise Janine to be a genuine and upstanding person of great honesty and integrity, a person that can be relied on and a person that is a consummate professional.”*

106. There were many more testimonials in a similarly complimentary vein and it is not necessary to reproduce them all in this determination, since it will be clear from this selection how highly thought of Dr Parody is, both professionally and personally. It was also worth noting that all the referees knew about the charges faced by Dr Parody when writing their testimonials and notwithstanding that knowledge still held her in the highest regard.

107. The live character witnesses and the written testimonials invariably spoke of Dr Parody’s integrity and professionalism, emphasising that they were not compromised even when under extreme pressure. The Committee had rarely seen such an impressive set of character references and testimonials and, whilst aware that the reputation of the profession is more important than the fortunes of any individual member, such positive observations and comments are very much to Dr Parody’s credit: it is clear that she is considered to be a most valued asset to the profession. Perhaps, more importantly, they emphasise just how out of character her behaviour in this case was and very much supported Dr Parody’s earlier evidence when she said



*“this is not how I am.”* In the character evidence, Dr Parody is universally considered to be someone who genuinely cares for those around her, be they animals, owners or staff alike and goes above and beyond in her desire to deliver on that premise.

108. The Committee first considered any aggravating and mitigating factors in this case. The Committee found the same aggravating factors as when considering disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, namely:

- a. actual injury to an animal (albeit under sedation, it was a very small skin incision, which was appropriately sealed);
- b. breach of client trust.

109. The Committee considered the following mitigating factors:

- a. no previous disciplinary history;
- b. a long and unblemished career as a veterinary surgeon both before and after this incident;
- c. the prevailing circumstances, whereby during the Covid pandemic two of the three practices were unable to operate at the relevant time and thus the Practice ended up having to cover all three; they were all under immense pressure and they had already had to put to sleep a number of animals that morning;
- d. the circumstances of the incident: Dr Parody’s intent was of doing the best for this animal so the welfare of the cat was at the forefront of her mind and clouded the rest of her decision making;
- e. single and isolated incident;
- f. decision taken without the opportunity for full reflection;
- g. open and frank admissions to the matters alleged by the College;
- h. significant insight into her conduct and the impact her actions had had on Ms SM, Shadow, her colleagues and the wider profession;
- i. remediation, ensuring there will not be a repeat of the circumstances in which the conduct occurred;
- j. [REDACTED]
- k. significant lapse of time since the events in question;
- l. genuine expressions of remorse and apology;
- m. many very positive testimonials.

110. The Committee recognises that there is a scale of seriousness of dishonesty and therefore gave careful consideration as to where Dr Parody’s dishonest conduct fell to be judged. The

Committee was concerned with her conduct between 20 December and 31 December 2021, as found proved. What led to what she has admitted as dishonest behaviour, was her acting to protect the welfare of the cat. The Committee was confident that she most certainly did not set out to act dishonestly. She made an initial error of judgement and everything that followed flowed from that. What she went on to do was something of a panicky attempt to cover up what she had done initially, so that she could decide on how to rectify it but, the Committee was satisfied, all done with the best of intentions and in the best interests of the cat and its owner. She had not acted out of any personal or financial gain or malicious intent. She had created a mess and she was trying to sort that mess out. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] For all these reasons, the Committee concluded that Dr Parody's dishonest conduct fell at the very lowest end of the spectrum.

111. With that view in mind, together with the aggravating and mitigating factors, the Committee considered what sanction to impose, beginning with the least serious and stopping at the sanction that the Committee considered properly reflected the misconduct in this case.
112. In light of the accepted dishonest element of the conduct the Committee did not consider this was an appropriate case in which to take no further action. Furthermore, the Committee took into account Ms SM's evidence that she felt she and Shadow had suffered unnecessarily as a result of Dr Parody's decision not to put Shadow to sleep on 20 December 2021, as planned, and that actual injury was caused to Shadow as a result of the removal of the microchip. In such circumstances the public interest would not be served by the Committee taking no further action.
113. The Committee did not consider postponement to be an appropriate disposal in this case.
114. The Committee next considered whether to reprimand or warn Dr Parody about her behaviour.
115. The Committee was aware that Dr Parody's conduct fell far short of the standard expected of a Veterinary Surgeon and that dishonesty, in particular, is always to be viewed as serious, ordinarily attracting a sanction towards the top end of severity. However, it is most important that the conduct is seen and dealt with in context and, as described above, these were without question exceptional circumstances. There is no doubting that what she did was very wrong and she knows that. However, the conduct occurred due to Dr Parody's compassion for the circumstances of the cat presented for euthanasia and her obvious dedication to its welfare: there was no other reason for her to have embarked on that course of conduct. Dr Parody has demonstrated significant insight into her behaviour and expressed genuine remorse. She has

shown by her admissions that she understands that her conduct was dishonest and she has assured the Committee that there would be no repetition. Indeed, she has worked for a number of years since this incident without any repetition and it is clear that her colleagues and clients alike all consider her to be the consummate professional and a role model for the profession. The Committee was persuaded that this behaviour was very much out of character and was satisfied that it was highly unlikely that Dr Parody would behave in such a way again, even if under similar pressure.

116. The Committee was made aware by the Legal Assessor, that the Courts have for a while been making it clear that there is a spectrum of dishonesty and that it is not a foregone conclusion that dishonesty will lead to suspension, let alone erasure, and careful regard must be had to the context and circumstances of the offending behaviour. The dishonest behaviour in this case arose not out of any malicious intent on the part of Dr Parody, nor for any personal or financial gain but, paradoxically, out of her genuinely held (albeit misguided) belief (in that frantic moment), that it was in the best interests for the welfare of that viable, young cat who at the time, she believed, was effectively ownerless, to be rescued for a second time.

117. The Committee did give consideration to suspending Dr Parody's registration with the College. This would have sent out a very clear message that this sort of behaviour is not to be tolerated. However, in light of the extensive mitigation, her honesty and insight throughout these proceedings, [REDACTED] and the unlikelihood of behaviour of this type ever being repeated, the Committee considered the public would not be best served by suspending an otherwise exemplary Veterinary Surgeon and that such a sanction would be disproportionate. The Committee is satisfied that Dr Parody does not represent any risk to animals and, when considering the reputation of the profession, the Committee took into account the extensive character references from professional colleagues and clients alike, who clearly thought it would be wrong to prevent Dr Parody from practising.

118. In all the, somewhat exceptional, circumstances of this case, the Committee was satisfied that a reprimand would provide adequate protection to animals, as it was satisfied Dr Parody was most unlikely to ever make such a flawed set of decisions again. The Committee was satisfied that Dr Parody does not represent a risk to animals going forward, indeed from the character evidence it is clear that she always puts the welfare of animals first. She has also shown, since this episode, that she can work under pressure and not resort to making bad decisions and thus the Committee considered the wider public interest would be served in this case by a reprimand. Notwithstanding the serious nature of Dr Parody's conduct with regard to Shadow and Ms SM, the Committee was satisfied that a fully informed member of the public would not be shocked if Dr Parody were allowed to continue to practise.

119. The Committee did not consider it necessary to also warn Dr Parody, since it was confident she did not represent a risk to animals and that she would not find herself in this predicament again.

120. The decision of this Committee is, therefore, that Dr Parody be reprimanded. Dr Parody should, however, be under no illusion of how serious it is to have a finding of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect made against her and she should not take lightly the decision of this Committee to reprimand her.

121. That concludes this case.

**Disciplinary Committee**  
**24 September 2024**