

Summary	
Meeting	Standards Committee
Date	16 April 2024
Title	Standards Committee Minutes
Summary	<p>Minutes of Standards Committee meeting held in-person and remotely on Tuesday, 16 April 2024, at 10am</p> <p>The Committee's attention is drawn to paragraphs 1-17 of the classified appendix.</p>
Attachments	Classified appendix
Author	<p>Vicki Price</p> <p>Senior Standards and Advice Officer</p> <p>v.price@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Minutes	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2 and 3

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

Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held in-person and remotely on Tuesday 16 April 2024

Members: Linda Belton (Chair)
Claire McLaughlan
Louise Allum
Danny Chambers
Olivia Cook
Will Wilkinson
Derek Bray
Alice McLeish
Tim Walker
Melissa Donald
Matthew Rendle
Sue Paterson

In attendance:

RCVS	Lizzie Lockett	CEO
	Eleanor Ferguson	Registrar
	Gemma Kingswell	Head of Legal Services (Standards)
	Beth Jinks	Standards and Advisory Lead
	Victoria Price	Senior Standards and Advice Officer
	Ky Richardson	Senior Standards and Advice Officer/Solicitor

BZVS/Wildlife/rescue centre vets

Caroline Allen	Chief Veterinary Officer, RSPCA
Liz Mullineaux	Junior Vice President, BVA
Justine Shotton	Head Vet, Wildlife & Exotics, RSPCA

AI 1 Apologies for absence, declarations of interest, minutes from the meeting of 14 February 2024.

1. No apologies were received.
2. Three declarations of interest were received in relation to AI 2(a). OC declared a conflict that her current employer and the RSPCA have a difference of opinion over an issue which is yet to be resolved; AM declared that she previously worked as a wildlife vet; and MR declared that he worked with wildlife, and had been in discussions with Liz Mullineaux, who is part of the group that had approached the RCVS about this matter. MR had also emailed the VMD to ask for clarity

on some of the issues that were due to be discussed at the meeting. The Committee was also reminded about an already declared conflict by SP for AI 2(c) regarding specialists.

3. The minutes from the meeting of 14 February 2024 were agreed.

Matters for decision

AI 2 (a) Prescribing for and euthanasia of wildlife - confidential

4. The minutes of this agenda item discussion can be found in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1-9.

AI 2 (b) Consumer choice and professional autonomy

5. The background to the paper was explained and the Committee was asked to decide on the following:
 - a) In relation to the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA's) recent findings on consumer choice, the existing supporting guidance could be pulled together more to help vets comply with their obligations, and whether any additional guidance is required.
 - b) In respect of professional autonomy, decide if additional guidance is required or whether any additional investigations should be carried out.
6. The Committee discussed the following matters in relation to consumer choice:
 - a) It would be useful to provide more information on 'contextualised care' and exercising professional judgement, to support vets to exercise their autonomy in deciding appropriate care, particularly in settings where there may be encouraged to follow pet health plans/company policies which prescribe the same testing and treatment route for each patient.
 - b) It was agreed the College should not wait for the CMA report to be published before amending its guidance, as vets are looking for more support to meet their obligations, which is not necessarily driven by the CMA, and the CMA report may be some time away.
 - c) It was suggested that the RCVS Public Advisory Group could be approached about developing a patient charter or poster style document, to highlight to clients the likely discussion around fees, and prompts for the client to use when asking their vet questions. However, it was noted that this approach has previously been tried via a [practice poster](#) created by this Committee, the uptake of which was not widespread by practices.
7. It was agreed Chapter 10 of the supporting guidance should be revised so that existing guidance on consumer obligations are listed and referenced in one place. Although no new guidance is needed, the existing guidance on this topic should be brought together with additional cross-referencing and links to improve its visibility. For example, Chapter 10 could hyperlink to the role of the senior veterinary surgeon in Chapter 17.

8. It was agreed Chapter 2 should be amended to add guidance on contextualised care.

Action: Standards and Advisory Lead

9. In relation to professional autonomy, the Committee agreed the guidance in Chapter 17 on the role of the senior veterinary surgeon should clarify that it includes responsibility for consumer issues within the practice, and there should be a cross-reference/hyperlink from paragraph 17.15(b) to Chapter 2 regarding contextualised care and to the new Chapter 10 (see above). It was also agreed the PSS team should be contacted in relation to requiring practices to confirm with PSS assessors who the appointed senior vet is.

Action: Head of Legal Services (Standards) & Standards and Advisory Lead

AI 2 (c) Specialists – confidential

10. The minutes of this agenda item discussion can be found in the classified appendix at paragraphs 10-14.

AI 2 (d) Letters of non-objection

11. Due to time constraints the Committee agreed that this item would be held over to the next meeting on 12 June 2024.

Action: Standards and Advisory Lead

AI 2 (e) Compulsory microchipping of cats – new guidance

12. The Committee was provided with an overview of the new legislation providing for compulsory microchipping of cats in England and proposed updates to Chapter 29 and Chapter 8 of the supporting guidance, as follows:

- a) The new legislation mirrors the legislation requiring compulsory microchipping of dogs;
- b) The same legal routes of administration will apply to cats as for dogs;
- c) The same eligibility criteria will apply in relation to who can legally implant a microchip, i.e. if not a vet or RVN, the person must have received practical training before or completed an approved training course after the relevant date;
- d) Similar to the guidance on scanning healthy dogs without welfare concerns for a microchip prior to proceeding with a client's request for euthanasia, it is proposed to include guidance that healthy cats should be scanned for a microchip prior to euthanasia, to check whether there is another owner who has responsibility for or is willing to take responsibility for the cat.

13. The Committee discussed the following issues:

- a) It was agreed it is important to scan healthy cats presented as strays for euthanasia for a microchip, as they do wander and can be away from home for days, and may belong to someone else/be mistakenly thought to be stray, and/or can be presented maliciously as a nuisance.

- b) It was noted that the BVA Policy Committee was strongly opposed to vets being legally required to scan dogs for microchips, so as to avoid vets taking on responsibility for scanning in emergencies, dealing with out-of-date database details, or becoming involved in ownership disputes. The Standards and Advisory Lead clarified that, as is the case with the current guidance regarding dogs, the new guidance would only apply to healthy cats with no other welfare concerns and therefore would not apply in an emergency or where euthanasia was otherwise appropriate for health and/or welfare reasons.
 - c) It was raised that it may not always be straightforward to decide whether a cat is healthy and requires scanning or can be regarded as unhealthy and not requiring scanning.
 - d) The committee discussed whether new guidance might have repercussions for vets and/or be perceived as an additional time burden, i.e., having to scan for a microchip in every case. It was agreed that the change should be communicated to the profession clearly so that the detail was properly understood.
 - e) It was raised that some owners are not happy to have their cats microchipped, but it was agreed that it is not for vets to enforce the legislation, and the guidance includes details of who is responsible for enforcement.
 - f) It was raised that a set of FAQs could be prepared if we start to receive many questions about this issue.
14. The Committee agreed the preferred guidance wording is 'should' scan rather than 'must' scan in order to leave some room for exceptions; and that wording should be added to the guidance to the effect that if a vet scans but does not find a microchip this should be recorded in the notes.

Action: Standards and Advisory Lead

Matters for discussion

AI 3 (a) Blood sampling for TB gamma testing– confidential

15. The minutes of this agenda item discussion can be found in the classified appendix at paragraphs 15-16.

Matters for report

AI 4 (a) Disciplinary Committee Report

16. Due to time constraints, comments on the report were sought by email following the meeting. The report was noted by the Committee and no comments received.

AI 4 (b) Riding Establishments Subcommittee Report

17. Due to time constraints, comments on the report were sought by email following the meeting. The report was noted by the Committee and no comments received.

Confidential matters for report

AI 5 (a) Routine Veterinary Practice Subcommittee Report

18. Due to time constraints, comments on the report were sought by email following the meeting. The report was noted by the Committee and no comments received, although SP did note a conflict as a member of the RVP subcommittee.

AI 5 (b) Ethics Review Panel Report

19. Due to time constraints, comments on the report were sought by email following the meeting. The report was noted by the Committee and no comments received.

AI 5 (c) Certification Subcommittee Report

20. Due to time constraints, comments on the report were sought by email following the meeting. The report was noted by the Committee and no comments received.

AI 6 Risk and equality

21. The minutes of this agenda item discussion can be found in the classified appendix at paragraph 17.

AI 7 Any other business and date of next meeting on 12 June 2024 (remote)

22. No other business was raised. The date of the next meeting on 12 June 2024, to be held remotely, was noted.

Table of actions - unclassified

Paragraph	Task	Responsibility
7	Make suggested revisions to guidance Chapter 10 and Chapter 2 and bring back to next meeting for review	Standards and Advisory Lead
8	Make suggested revisions to guidance Chapter 17 and contact PSS team about requiring practices to confirm who senior vet is with PSS assessors	Head of Legal Services (Standards)
10	Bring the paper on Letters of non-objection forward to the Committee meeting on 12 June 2024	Standards and Advisory Lead
13	Make the suggested revisions to Chapter 29 and Chapter 8 of the supporting guidance and publish on the website	Standards and Advisory Lead