

# Veterinary Council of Ireland Newsletter

Spring 2017 Issue 16



## Council maintains standards with sanctions in 2016

The Council considered six reports from the Fitness to Practise Committee in 2016 following hearings concerning seven veterinary practitioners. Sanctions were imposed by the Council under Section 81 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended on five veterinary practitioners.

The Council can impose sanctions, in advancing order of seriousness, of 'advice', 'warning', and 'censure' before exercising the more penal sanctions of attachment of conditions to continued registration, suspension or removal from the Register.

One practitioner, Mr John Hughes MVB MRCVS, was found guilty of professional misconduct. It was alleged that Mr Hughes had imported and engaged in the sale of animal remedies for which, there was no authorisation in place and had obtained prescription only medicines for the purposes of supply in the absence of a prescription and for animals not under his care. Mr Hughes had removed his name from the Register of Veterinary Practitioners prior to commencement of the Inquiry. The Council imposed a sanction of censure, which was the highest penalty that could be imposed given that he was no longer on the Register.

While none of the remaining four veterinary practitioners were found guilty of professional misconduct, three had sanctions of 'advice' imposed, and one had a sanction of 'warning' imposed.

The offences were:

- I. euthanasing a dog rather than administer regular inoculations as the client had requested.
- II. failing to make adequate attempts to physically examine a dog which had been struck by the veterinary practitioner's vehicle while on a farm call.
- III. leaving prescription books at a pharmacy so that prescription only medicines could be dispensed by the pharmacy in circumstances where no valid prescription had been completed or signed prior to dispensing.
- IV. engaging the services of a veterinary practitioner, from another jurisdiction, who was not registered with the Council.



Further information on the individual cases is available in the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Annual Report 2016. This can be viewed at [www.vci.ie/reports](http://www.vci.ie/reports)

## Council Elections 2017

The term of office of six elected members, five veterinary practitioners and one veterinary nurse, ends on 31 December 2017 and candidates for the vacancies created will be elected according to the following timetable.

### ELECTIONS TIMETABLE

Posting of nomination papers	- Friday, 18 August 2017
Nomination day	- Friday, 8 September 2017
Voting papers posted	- Tuesday, 19 September 2017
Closing date for votes	- Wednesday, 11 October 2017
Counting of votes and declaration of result	- Thursday, 12 October 2017
Final date for appeals	- Friday, 20 October 2017
Referral of appeals	- Monday, 23 October 2017
Council meet to ratify result	- Friday, 3 November 2017
Letter to the Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine	- Monday, 6 November 2017

## Consultation on the Premises Accreditation Scheme

The Council has reviewed the PAS Standards to ensure that they fulfil the required function for patients, the public and the veterinary professions, as well as from a regulatory perspective. The Council is inviting you to provide your feedback on the amendments it is proposing to make to the PAS Standards by email to [consultation@vci.ie](mailto:consultation@vci.ie) **by Friday, 23 June 2017.**

The Council will analyse the responses it receives and will use this feedback in drafting revised PAS Standards which will come into effect on 1 January 2018.

The Consultation document is available on [www.vci.ie/consultations](http://www.vci.ie/consultations)

**Delegation to veterinary nurses and lay staff in the veterinary practice**



**The Legal Position**

The Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended defines the practice of veterinary medicine and provides, subject to a number of exceptions, that only veterinary practitioners may practise veterinary medicine. One of the exceptions is veterinary nurses who can, in specified circumstances, carry out veterinary procedures on animals.

**What can a veterinary nurse at a veterinary practice do?**

The Act lists the procedures which a veterinary nurse can carry out on an animal, while assisting and in the presence of a veterinary practitioner. These are -

- (i) holding and handling tissue during performance of surgical procedures,
- (ii) induction, maintenance and termination of general anaesthesia, including performance of endotracheal intubation,
- (iii) assisting at the performance of surgical procedures that are not minor,
- (iv) assisting at the performance on an animal of a caesarean section operation or other surgery to assist her to give birth to her young.

The Act also lists the procedures which a veterinary nurse can carry out on an animal, under the direction of a veterinary practitioner. These are -

- (i) administration of medication enterically, intraosseously or intravenously,
- (ii) catheterisation, surgical treatment of abscesses and ulcers, application of external casts and cutaneous suturing,
- (iii) the taking of images by x-ray,
- (iv) the carrying out of minor medical procedures or minor surgery.

'Minor' relates to a procedure or surgery that does not involve entry beneath the skin, mucosa or into the cornea.

The Act does not provide a list of minor medical procedures or minor surgery because

it would be impossible to say with any certainty that a given procedure or surgery would, in every event, be safe to delegate. The delegation of veterinary procedures is determined by the significance or risk of the procedure, as well as the level of training of the veterinary nurse.

**What can lay staff at a veterinary practice do?**

There is no specific legal dispensation in the Act which would allow a veterinary practitioner delegate veterinary procedures to a lay person at a veterinary practice. This means that no lay member of staff, no matter what their job title in practice may be, can legally undertake delegated minor medical procedures or minor surgery, regardless of how skilled or experienced they are considered to be.

Lay staff may only perform tasks that are not generally considered to be veterinary procedures. The delegation of any task to a lay person at a veterinary practice should be justified and is a matter for the professional judgement of the directing veterinary practitioner in each individual case.

**Job titles for veterinary nurses and lay staff**

Under the Act, the title "veterinary nurse" is a protected title. The Act makes it an offence for any person other than a veterinary nurse, registered in the Register of Veterinary Nurses, to use the title or description that would give the impression that he or she is registered or any abbreviation or derivative of them, either alone or in connection with any other title or description. The Act also makes it an offence for any person other than a veterinary nurse to represent that they are registered on the Register of Veterinary Nurses.

Job titles for practice staff should be clear and should not potentially confuse either clients or veterinary practitioners wishing to delegate treatments.

**Veterinarians are everywhere!**

This issue features another advertisement from the Federation of Veterinarians in Europe campaign, which is intended to draw attention to the importance and diversity of the work of the veterinary profession. This latest advertisement highlights the role of the profession in environmental protection and includes the following text:

*Veterinarians help farmers and other animal keepers to act in the most environmentally friendly way possible. For example, veterinarians advise farmers in the responsible use of chemicals and animal medicines, and the treatment of waste so it does not cause damage to the environment.*



Copies of the advertisements are available for download from the publications section of the FVE website [www.fve.org](http://www.fve.org)

# Teamwork in the Veterinary Practice Working Environment

Delivering a quality service to both animals and clients is very dependent on teamwork between all the members of a veterinary practice. In this article, Dr Aoife Mc Cann MVB and Mr Mark Mc Corry RVN, from the Blacklion Pet Hospital in Greystones, Co. Wicklow, give their views on how a strong veterinary nurse / veterinary practitioner working relationship helps the practice deliver the best possible service to clients and animals.

## Dr Aoife McCann MVB, Cert(GP)SAS



Dr Aoife McCann, MVB, Cert(GP) SAS

### Collaboration

I believe that good communication and mutual respect are vital to a successful veterinary nurse/veterinary practitioner relationship.

A good example of this collaboration and teamwork is often seen in surgery, where the veterinary nurse will generally pre-med the patient, assist with induction and prep the patient, and will monitor the anaesthesia and post-op recovery.

Dental work too can often involve teamwork, with the veterinary nurse performing scaling, polishing and simple extractions.

During radiology, the veterinary nurse will often position the animal and take the X-rays, after being briefed about what images are needed. This frees up my time to speak to the client, write up the accompanying history and research the case.

During consultations, the veterinary nurse will often get the background history to the case and ask the owner questions that may be pertinent to the examination. I would often call on a veterinary nurse during a consultation to help restrain an animal for examination, injections, nail clipping and so on. After an annual health check and discussion about parasite prevention, I will sometimes direct the client to the veterinary nurse on reception who will organise the relevant endo and ecto parasite treatment. Veterinary

nurses on ward or hospitalisation duty are vital in keeping vets informed of any changes in patient status.

On the occasional house call a veterinary nurse will usually accompany the vet to assist with restraint, and generally be a support to both vet and client (especially when the house call involves euthanasia).

### Learning from each other

While the basic perspective on providing good animal care for our patients is the same for both vets and veterinary nurses, over the years I've picked up numerous tricks of the trade from working with various veterinary nurses, such as dealing with difficult dogs, bandage techniques, and advancing IV catheters in dehydrated or collapsed patients. I've found sometimes that veterinary nurses pick up on aspects of a case, either through communication with a client or by observing the patient during hospitalisation, that may have been missed during initial consultation.

A strong relationship between a veterinary nurse and a veterinary practitioner optimises the care we can give to animals. If the communication and cooperation between vet and veterinary nurse is good it ensures each animal's needs are fully met and leads to improved outcomes. Also, I think it provides reassurance to the client to know that both vet and veterinary nurse have a common goal, which is to provide the best possible care for their pet.

## Mr Mark Mc Corry RVN

### Collaboration

The skills and professional abilities of the modern veterinary nurse are very much complementary to the veterinary practitioner. We admit surgical patients, perform a clinical exam of each patient and, under the direction of the veterinary practitioner, prepare and administer all anaesthetic medications. We

often insert intravenous catheters prior to anaesthetic induction and intubation, take blood samples and set up and calculate IV fluid therapy. We position patients, take radiographs, and process and assess image quality.

Aoife and I would communicate continuously, offering each other input or thoughts on current cases, expected consultations, client concerns and scheduling over the day. When used to their full capabilities veterinary nurses can reduce the work burden placed on the veterinary practitioner and thus increase efficacy and patient care while creating a very rewarding and fulfilling working experience.

### Mutual learning

I first worked with Aoife in the Pet Emergency Hospital in UCD and her experience, calm demeanour and expertise was extremely reassuring to me. I learned to trust my training and knowledge and most importantly to remain calm and not panic. Communication was essential and I found that confidence in my skills and abilities increased as a result. I always learn something new and of interest from working alongside her.

I believe a good working relationship between vet and veterinary nurse provides clients and patients the best possible care and service. Although the role of patient care differs between veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses, the overall goal is the same and that is to provide the best possible care.



Mark Mc Corry RVN

## WHISTLEBLOWING IN THE WORKPLACE

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 is intended to provide a robust statutory framework within which workers can raise concerns regarding potential wrongdoing that has come to their attention in the workplace in the knowledge that they can avail of significant employment and other protections if they are penalised by their employers or suffer any detriment for doing so. For further information on making a disclosure to the Council under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 please see: <http://www.vci.ie/Services-for-the-Public/Protected-Disclosures>

## Certificate of Suitability Reminder

Registered persons are reminded that it is an offence under the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended, to practise veterinary medicine at or from a premises where there is no Certificate of Suitability. It is your responsibility to check that your registration details are correct.

This can be easily verified by going to the Council's website at: <http://www.vci.ie/Home> and checking that you are registered to the correct premises.

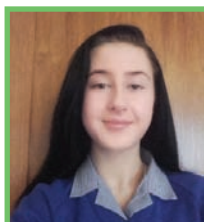
Registrants are also reminded that they are required to complete a new Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS) declaration when their work details change. If you are working at or from a number of different premises, for example as a locum, you are required to list each of those premises on your PAS declaration.

PAS Declaration forms are available at this website link: [www.vci.ie/Registrant-Extranet/PAS-Declaration-Form](http://www.vci.ie/Registrant-Extranet/PAS-Declaration-Form)

## BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition

Katie Francis (pictured), a 5th year student in Mount Sackville Secondary School in Chapelizod, won the Veterinary Council competition at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition last January with her video on the theme 'One Health'. She won a week-long placement on the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine Summer School 2017.

The Council's President Ray Finn said: "Katie's video entry demonstrated a clear understanding of the ways in which the veterinary professions interact with the environment, animals and humans. Congratulations to her, her teachers and her school. We would like to wish Katie good luck at the Summer School and in her future studies".



*Competition Winner  
Katie Francis*

## CVE reminder

Registrants are reminded that their CVE requirements for the current credit year (1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017) must be completed before the 31 July 2017 deadline. In order to renew their Licence to Practise on 1 January 2018, veterinary practitioners must demonstrate achievement of a minimum of 20 credits for each credit year. Veterinary nurses must demonstrate an achievement of a minimum of 12 credits for each credit year.

The Council's CVE Administrator is Georgina Farren, and she is available to assist you with any CVE queries you may have. Please contact her on (01) 668 44 02 or [cve@vci.ie](mailto:cve@vci.ie).

### Free CVE eLectures

Registrants can sign up for two FREE eLectures which centre on Animal Welfare and Veterinary Ethics. This is an opportunity to gain up to six CVE credits FREE of CHARGE by 31 July 2017 and update skills in these important areas of veterinary practice. Please note that CVE credits from these eLectures can only be claimed once.

These modules have been developed by the Council and each eLecture attracts three CVE credits when successfully completed. The eLectures are available within the UCD CVE learning community by following the instructions below: -

- Go to [www.ucd.ie/vetmed/cve](http://www.ucd.ie/vetmed/cve)
- Find the two Veterinary Council sponsored offerings in the list - Veterinary Ethics -and- Concepts of Animal Welfare.
- Click "Add to Basket" beside each offering.
- Login with existing UCD Connect credentials or create a new account.
- The order will be processed and access granted to the material.
- This is typically an overnight process.

Please contact [cve@ucd.ie](mailto:cve@ucd.ie) or [cve@vci.ie](mailto:cve@vci.ie) if you have any queries.

# Using Social Media & Online Networking Forums

Social media has become a mainstream part of our lives and is in widespread use to promote businesses and services, including veterinary practices. Popular social media accounts include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn and there are many more.



Using Facebook, Twitter, or a website to promote your practice may seem very straightforward, but it's easy sometimes to stray into commenting inappropriately, especially if more than one person in your practice has access to the media accounts.

While every platform is different in the way it is used, there are a few tips which may help keep us all on the straight and narrow.

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ post information that you are happy for everyone to see.</li> <li>✓ always be positive when posting about your work and your profession.</li> <li>✓ maintain client confidentiality.</li> <li>✓ share informative or educational videos and pictures – but always seek permission to use content that is not your own.</li> <li>✓ remove any content which could be considered as unprofessional.</li> <li>✓ implement a social media policy and set clear house rules for people engaging on your accounts (e.g. your Clinic Facebook page).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ share personal information - don't enter your own or anyone else's personal details on a public social media account. This especially includes photos of people or animals.</li> <li>✗ post anything that could be considered defamatory or embarrassing, or damaging to an individual, an organisation or the profession's reputation.</li> <li>✗ let social media become your sounding board for bad experiences.</li> <li>✗ post anything illegal or content that condones or encourages other people to act unlawfully, and don't use material without consent.</li> <li>✗ let your social media accounts become dormant - better to take them down than leave them idle.</li> <li>✗ bring the veterinary profession into disrepute.</li> </ul>

Remember, once something is posted on social media sites - it's very hard to take it back, and even if you take it down subsequently, it may have been copied and circulated elsewhere!

Remember the reputation of the veterinary professions in all your posts and comments - and never say or write anything that would bring the profession into disrepute.

## Council Awareness Campaigns

These two advertisements featured in a recent advertising campaign run by the Council. In both cases the objective was to raise awareness of bull and horse breeders' obligations with regard to their animals. The advertisements featured in the Irish Farmers' Journal, the Irish Field and the Farming Independent during February, March and April.

**Buying a bull or ram for breeding?**  
Protect Your Investment

Only a veterinary practitioner can provide a certificate of breeding soundness that has legal standing.

Discuss any queries with your veterinary practitioner




**Veterinary Council of Ireland**  
Regulating the Veterinary Profession Protecting the Public

**Who's scanning your mare?**

Pregnancy scanning of mares can only be carried out **legally** by a veterinary practitioner. Veterinary practitioners are the only people with the expertise to ensure the health and welfare of your mare.

**Don't put your mare at risk.  
Don't break the law.**



Regulating the Veterinary Profession Protecting the Public

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