

Veterinary Council of Ireland Newsletter

Autumn 2016 Issue 14



New Website Goes Live

The development of the Council's new website is now complete and contains many new and powerful features designed to make your interaction with the Council administration a little easier. Notably it now includes a Registrants Extranet, an improved Registrant-only section, which contains all information relevant to your registration record. All you need to access the Registrant Extranet are your logon details (Username (numeric only) and Password).

The Continuing Veterinary Education (CVE) features have been enhanced to provide a calendar of upcoming CVE events, view all your past and current CVE activity and make CVE credit claims online. If for instance you are claiming CVE credits for a conference you'll need a scanned copy of the conference agenda and certificate of attendance - you can also gain additional credits for sharing learning experiences with your in practice colleagues of a veterinary course or seminar you attended.

The new site development process involved the transfer of all registrant data, premises data and the setting up of new systems designed to streamline interaction with the Council administration when using the website. All of the core data that was there before is still there, but, has been enhanced and we plan to add new features over time. In addition to CVE you can also update your PAS declaration, make a new Certificate of Suitability (COS) application and apply to renew a COS.

Please visit the website and let us know what you think. We hope it will provide a more accessible user experience and provide you, the registrant, with an improved resource in respect of your registration. We welcome any feedback. Please send it to info@vci.ie

New Vet Graduate Handbook now available on the Veterinary Council of Ireland website

New Vet Graduate Handbook available on www.vci.ie

The 'New Vet Graduate Handbook with SAFEVET' launched earlier this year is now available in the Registrant Extranet of the Veterinary Council of Ireland website. This handbook is given to each new graduate when they register with the Veterinary Council of Ireland and aims to equip new veterinary graduates to cope with the stresses of professional and personal life and to improve health and wellbeing. More experienced veterinary professionals will also find useful information to support themselves in their personal and professional lives.



The Handbook was written and researched by Dr Margaret O'Rourke, Director of Behavioural Science in the School of Medicine, University College Cork. The tools and tips in this book are a distillation of what the world's leading psychologists, doctors and business leaders are saying will improve health and wellbeing, and performance at home and at work.

Put your practice on the map!

We anticipate that the new interactive map will be a popular feature of the new website where colleagues and members of the public can find a veterinary practice, clinic or hospital based on that practice's GPS coordinates. This will help new clients and business suppliers to locate you more easily.

The ability to locate your practice will also be useful to prospective employees when advertising for staff. We need your help to do this. Make sure your practice is represented by submitting your practice GPS coordinates via the "submit location" option on www.vci.ie as soon as possible.



Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS)

Ensure compliance with the Council's mandatory Premises Accreditation Scheme.

The Council would like to bring to the attention of Registered Persons that it is an offence, under section 106 of the Act, to practise veterinary medicine other than at a premises to which a Certificate of Suitability applies. Under section 123 of the Act, a person who commits an offence under section 106 of the Act is liable on summary conviction to a Class A fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or both.

Be prepared and plan in advance if you intend to do any of the following:-

- a) open a new veterinary premises;
- b) expand your veterinary service and open another premises;
- c) move to a new premises / change your premises address;
- d) change your premises classification.

Where it is intended to establish or move veterinary premises or change a PAS classification a registered person must make application to the Council for a Certificate of Suitability before he or she or any other registered persons commence the practice of veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing at or from the premises.

COS Application Process

There are some critical steps to follow to ensure compliance with the Council's mandatory PAS. These steps must be taken in order to receive a valid Certificate of Suitability (COS). **You should note that it can take approximately three months to complete the following process:**

All applications for the grant of a Certificate of Suitability (COS) follow the procedure as outlined below:-

1. The Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS) declaration form and the Application for Certificate of Suitability and self-assessment questionnaire are

completed by the Registered Person who is applying to be the COS holder and returned to the Council offices together with fee. (Section 110 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005 (the Act)).

2. A non-refundable application fee of €395 is payable at this stage.
3. A visit to assess the premises is arranged as soon as practicable and a report on that assessment is submitted to the Council.
4. The application for a COS is considered by Council based on the application and the report from the premises assessment. A decision is made per section 112 (1) of the Act (i.e. to grant, to grant with conditions or to refuse) and the applicant is informed of this decision.

Acts of veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing must NOT be performed at or from a premises to which an application relates, until a decision has been made by the Council in respect of a Certificate of Suitability and a certificate is issued.

Registered persons are also required to complete a PAS declaration form whenever their circumstances change. You are reminded that every registered person must ensure that his/her PAS declaration is up to date. The PAS declaration confirms whether or not he/she is working in a (1) non-exempt premises or (2) exempt premises or (3) retired and non-practising or (4) non-practising. Those working in non-exempt or exempt premises are required to provide additional information. In addition, you are required to declare on your Annual Registration Form (ARF) that your PAS declaration is correct.



COMMON COMPLAINTS TO THE COUNCIL

FITNESS TO PRACTISE 2015

The Veterinary Council of Ireland implements the Fitness to Practise process when considering complaints against registered persons. This process is defined in Part 7 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005 (as amended).

Any person can make an application into the fitness to practise veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing of a registered person. All such applications follow a strictly defined process which may ultimately result in the matter proceeding to a hearing before a Fitness to Practise Committee.

In 2015, the Council received a total of 31 applications for inquiry. This represents a 32% increase in the

number received in 2014. Eight of these cases have been referred to the Fitness to Practise Committee for hearing. The Preliminary Investigation Committee met on 26 occasions in 2015 to deal with 26 cases, the five remaining cases are on-going.

The subject of the 26 cases concerned dogs (11), cats (6), horses (3), cattle (4) and other (2).

More specifically, the allegations made by complainants related to inadequate veterinary care and treatment (9); poor practice procedures (6); certification (4); treatment of animals by non-veterinary practitioners (2); supply of animal remedies/prescriptions (2); 24 hour emergency cover (1); fees and related matters (1); and advertising (1).

Ethical Ethel



Your ethical dilemmas are welcome for Ethel's consideration. These may be submitted in confidence to

info@vci.ie or the Council offices at
53 Lansdowne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Dear Ethel

I have been invited by a colleague to attend a seminar on veterinary homeopathy. In my 10 years since qualifying I have never worked in a practice that used homeopathic remedies, and now in my own practice I do not see any reason to contemplate doing so. However, this colleague is very keen that I come along, insisting that they have used homeopathy to good effect, and their clients love it. Furthermore, I am aware that this seminar has been allocated 5 CVE credits by the Veterinary Council of Ireland. Am I missing something here? Perhaps homeopathy does form part of the scientific study of veterinary medicine these days? Should I go along and get the points, or should I stick to my principles and stay away?

Conor, Co. Cork

Dear Conor

Homeopathy falls under the category of "Complementary" or "Alternative" medical therapies. The practice of homeopathy stems from the theories of Samuel Hahnemann, a German Physician (1755-1843) who practiced medicine in Saxony. Unhappy with the fact that medical practices used at that time, like bloodletting, were often ineffective, he developed a system of treatment with herbal substances on the principle that "like cures like". His thinking was influenced by the use of the bark of the Cinchona tree to treat malaria. Being skeptical of its efficacy, he dosed himself and observed that he suffered from shivering and fever – symptoms similar to those of malaria. Hence, the idea that if large doses of a substance caused a disease, it could also cure the condition in smaller doses. We know now, of course, that the effect of the bark was due to its content of quinine, which kills the malaria parasite, Plasmodium. Hahnemann also held for a time that coffee was the cause of many diseases.

Hahnemann's principles were articulated formally in 1810 when he published "The Organon of the Healing Art". He also wrote about the use of homeopathy in animals.

Opposition to homeopathy from established medical science arises on the fact that beyond the placebo effect, there is an absence of evidence on efficacy from systematic reviews of clinical trials. This lack of efficacy is not surprising when we consider that the extreme dilutions often used in homeopathic remedies are such that not even one molecule of the original substance may remain in the preparation. Nevertheless, advocates of



homeopathy have invoked concepts from quantum physics, including quantum entanglement, to provide a rationale for its mechanism of action, outside the laws of chemistry and physics as we currently understand them.

In veterinary medicine, the placebo effect can apply to the reactions of animal owners, who perceive a benefit following administration of objectively ineffective remedies.

In considering the ethical implications of whether to attend this homeopathic seminar, a number of issues need to be borne in mind. The first is that attending such an event, and listening to the evidence presented, could never be considered unethical. To suggest otherwise would be to adopt a mindset supportive of book-burning and censorship. However, a veterinary practitioner holds their privileged position in society and law by virtue of having undertaken a five-year programme of higher education that has been accredited to meet the standards of the Veterinary Council of Ireland, which are similar to those specified in other developed countries. Veterinary schools meeting such standards do not include homeopathy within their curricula, but do provide graduates with a comprehensive background in the scientific basis of medicine. Such an education provides graduates with the capability to evaluate the evidence provided for the efficacy of proposed or existing remedies for animal disease. It is

reasonable to suggest, therefore, that a veterinary practitioner attending such an event should evaluate the information provided according to the evidence provided, and in light of their background knowledge of the scientific basis of medicine.

Extending this approach to communicating with clients about the effectiveness of homeopathic remedies will enable the practitioner to provide unbiased information. In essence, failing to provide clients with accurate information about the available evidence in relation to homeopathic remedies, in an honest manner, would be unethical. In a message to pharmacists about the requirement to provide customers with accurate information on homeopathic products, Edzard Ernst, Professor Emeritus of Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter, and a former homeopathic practitioner, said: "My plea is simply for honesty. Let people buy what they want, but tell them the truth about what they are buying".

So, my advice, Conor, would be to attend this seminar, if you wish, by all means, but do so in order to participate as a peer in a discussion on the scientific basis of veterinary practice, and with a view to presenting an informed view to clients. Let me know how you get on. Now, I'm off for a coffee!

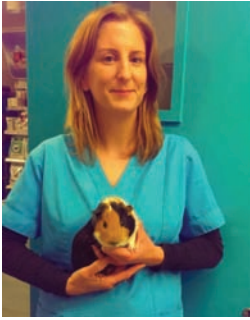
With best wishes

Ethel

Teamwork in Practice

Recent surveys of the professions have identified the vital importance of teamwork between all the members of a veterinary practice in order to deliver a quality service to animals and clients.

In this short piece, Karl D'Arcy MVB and Fiona Linnane RVN, from the Glenina Veterinary Clinic in Renmore, Co. Galway, talk about how a strong nurse/practitioner relationship helps the practice relationship with clients and animals.



Fiona Linnane

"When I did my course there were few options to study veterinary nursing in Ireland so I qualified through the RCVS. I started my student nurse training in Blacklion Pet Hospital in Greystones (formerly Wilson and Kelly) and sat my first year exams in London University. On completion of my two-year placement in Blacklion Pet Hospital I then went on to complete a three-month intense course at Bicton College of Agriculture before my final exams. My written exams were held in London University and my practical (OSCE) exams were in Bristol University.

There are many aspects to a veterinary nurse's role. In addition to my regular work I have special interests in wound management, anaesthesia, emergency care and nutrition.

Having a successful working environment and a good veterinary nurse/ vet practitioner relationship entails learning from each other. Therefore, as with any working relationship, good communication, mutual respect, trust and the willingness to foster an environment to acquire new skills is what I believe to be the keys to a successful relationship.

Our teamwork involves many different tasks, from the simplest of procedures, for example, safely restraining an animal so a sample may be taken, up to more complex tasks such as assisting in medical and surgical cases where a patient may require constant monitoring by the veterinary nurse and constant checks by the vet. Good communication is vital between us to ensure a safe outcome for the patient, and to communicate patient updates to the client.

We frequently have opportunities to learn from each other. As our job in veterinary practice is so varied and both vets and veterinary nurses have different skill sets, every day I learn something new. Every role in the practice team is of vital importance to the success of the practice and to the quality of the veterinary care provided to patients.

Part of every veterinary professional's life is Continuing Professional Development, either by keeping up to date with new literature or attending courses. Each member of

staff who attends a CPD event shares information on their return and benefits the whole practice.

When clients experience professional communication regarding their animal it builds the clients' trust and confidence in the practice. Having a strong relationship within the practice reassures the client that the common goal of each member of the veterinary team is to treat their animal to the highest standard thus providing optimal patient care."

"I trained in UCD and qualified in 2000. I worked for a year in Co Sligo before starting in my current practice. This is a very mixed practice and I enjoy the variety of work that brings. Although I have no particular specialisation, I am probably doing more and more small animal work now.



Karl D'Arcy

I think mutual trust between nurse and vet is the key to a successful relationship. It would be very difficult to work with someone if you were constantly second guessing their work. You would end up doing both jobs. Clear and consistent communication is also vital.

We work together mostly when carrying out procedures on in-patients or during surgery. A lot of tasks require at least two pairs of hands, especially any procedure involving a conscious animal, such as catheterisation, or blood testing, or skin scrapes. Probably the most specialised co-operation in a task is during anaesthesia and surgery.

Our roles diverge a bit more when dealing with monitoring and treating ongoing cases. For example, nursing staff will have a more immediate role in caring for and observing an animal on fluid therapy, with my role being more to oversee and make decisions on therapy. However, experienced nurses will often anticipate the vet's decisions and be ready to implement them promptly. In our clinic, nurses take a very pro-active role in the long-term care of some conditions. One particular example of that would be in the care of an obese patient on a weight loss programme.

I think the biggest lesson vets can learn from veterinary nurses is to look at the entirety of our animal patients' health and demeanour. Because nurses often observe and interact with in-patients more than vets they can have a more nuanced view of how they are improving or not. More specifically, I think there is a constant exchange of new ideas between all staff whether picked up from a colleague or at a CPD event attended by one of the team.

A strong nurse/practitioner relationship gives clients the comfort and security of knowing that a team is caring for their animal, not just a single overworked individual. If a client feels that the whole practice has an interest in them and their animal, I think they can trust our judgement and ability so much more."

TAIL DOCKING AND DEW CLAW REMOVAL

The Veterinary Nursing Committee of the Veterinary Council of Ireland wishes to advise all registrants that it considers Tail Docking and Dew Claw Removal of dogs to be acts of veterinary medicine and as such, are procedures that should only be carried out by veterinary practitioners.

The Council has requested the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to consider amending S.I. No. 128 of 2014 Prohibition on Tail Docking and Dew Claw Removal (Dogs) Regulation 2014 as it is in direct conflict with the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended. In a response, the Department stated that it is proposing to consult with the Veterinary Nursing education providers for their views on the matter.

EXPERT WITNESSES

The Veterinary Council of Ireland implements the Fitness to Practise process, as defined in Part 7 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended, when considering complaints. The initial Preliminary Investigation can ultimately result in a matter being referred to the Fitness to Practise Committee for hearing.

The Council is seeking applications from veterinary practitioners who are willing to act as independent experts to consider fitness to practise matters as part of an inquiry. Experts are required to review and assess material relating to a complaint, provide a report and give evidence before an inquiry. Please contact the Council offices if you are interested.

Your responsibilities toward animal welfare

Registered veterinary practitioners and registered veterinary nurses have clear responsibilities in relation to animal welfare. If you are concerned about any animal welfare issue you should contact the official Animal Welfare Helpline bearing in mind your obligations regarding client confidentiality as set out in the Code of Professional Conduct.

The Animal Health and Welfare Division of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine operates an Animal Welfare Helpline where suspected animal welfare concerns can be reported via phone or email. The helpline is manned from 09.00 to 17.45 Monday to Friday.

All complaints received are registered on the Department database and referred to the relevant Regional Office for investigation. All referred calls are investigated by the Department's Veterinary Inspectors with follow up visits where required. The Department emphasises that all calls are strictly 100% confidential.

The contact details for the Helpline are:
Lo Call: 0761 064408 and 01 6072379
Email: animalwelfare@agriculture.gov.ie

Veterinarians are everywhere!

In this issue, we feature another advertisement from the powerful press and poster campaign commissioned by the Federation of Veterinarians in Europe (FVE).

The campaign is designed to draw attention to the importance and diversity of the work of the veterinary profession. This advertisement highlights the role of the profession in Zoonosis Prevention and uses the campaign headline 'Veterinarians are Everywhere', with the tagline, 'Because Veterinarians Are Vital'.



The advertisement includes the following text:

'It is estimated that around two thirds of pathogens that affect humans originate from animal populations. Good examples are bird flu, rabies, toxoplasmosis, and mad cow disease. Healthy animals are a source of safe and wholesome food. The prevention of disease in people often starts with the prevention and control of animal disease. Veterinarians, together with other health professionals, care for the health of animals and people.'

The advertisements can also be used as posters and if any practitioners are interested in getting copies for their practice, please contact the Veterinary Council of Ireland at info@vci.ie or phone +353 (0) 1 668 4402.

Contact Details

The Veterinary Council of Ireland
53 Lansdowne Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

Tel: 01 668 4402

Fax: 01 660 4373

Email: info@vci.ie

Website: www.vci.ie

