Why have I been invited to an investigation meeting?

Nicky Ackerley BA(Hons)

Nicky Ackerley HR Support is owned by Nicky Ackerley who has a BA (Hons) Business Studies Degree, is a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and who has been a practising HR manager for over 20 years. HR Support Consultancy has provided the BVNA's Industrial Relations Service since it began in 2002.

The BVNA Helpline is often contacted by veterinary nurses who are worried that they have been invited to attend an investigation meeting. They invariably ask should they attend. The answer is "Yes".

An investigation meeting is just that – an investigation. It does not mean that the person invited to attend the meeting is guilty, it means that an allegation has been made or an incident has occurred; and the facts need to be established before any decision is made as to whether any further action would be necessary.

In some cases, this will require the holding of an investigatory meeting with the employee before proceeding to any disciplinary hearing. In others, the investigatory stage will be the collation of evidence by the practice for use at any disciplinary hearing.

Investigation meetings are normally held if the practice feels that an act of misconduct has occurred.

If there is an investigatory meeting, this should not by itself result in any disciplinary action. Although there is no statutory right for an employee to be accompanied at a formal investigatory meeting, such a right may be allowed under the practice's own procedure.

You may be called into the office by the practice manager/head nurse, or you may receive a letter in writing inviting you to attend a meeting. The meeting should be held by the person carrying out the investigation and they will probably have someone with them taking notes; or alternatively you may be asked to write a statement regarding the incident.

Examples of why you may be called to a meeting include:

- Two nurses have been seen arguing and raising their voices in an aggressive manner in reception and a customer has written a letter of complaint to the practice.

Firstly, the practice needs to establish who the two nurses were. To be able to do this they would have to speak to all the staff on duty that day and ask them all if they had witnessed the incident and to clarify who the two nurses were.

If any of the members of staff had witnessed the incident, they may be asked to submit a written statement or attend an investigation meeting. This would then be used as evidence at the disciplinary hearing.

- It had been noticed that the wrong medication had been supplied to a vet by a nurse assisting in an operation. This had been reported to the head nurse.

The practice would have to carry out an investigation with both the vet and the nurse to establish if there was a case of negligence. Both parties would need to be asked about their version of events.

Either notes would be taken at the meeting, or they would be requested to provide a written statement. These statements would then be used as evidence, if it is decided that disciplinary action is to be taken against one or both of the parties.

If, following the investigation meeting, it is decided that disciplinary action is to be taken, the veterinary nurse should receive a formal letter from the practice. This should explain the reason for the disciplinary action, advise the right to representation, and provide copies of any evidence that will be used at the disciplinary hearing, so that they are able to prepare in advance.

The process above should also be used for carrying out an investigation following a formal grievance. vnj

Members of the BVNA can contact the Industrial Relations Services (IRS) Helpline for free advice and support.

Call 01822 870270 or e-mail Nicky@hrsupportconsultancy.co.uk

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RCVS SETTING VETERINARY STANDARDS

Don't forget to vote!

The VN Council elections are now open for voting – don't miss your chance to decide who is on the governing body for your profession!

There are four candidates standing for two places: Sue Badger, Andrea Jeffery (current VN Council and RCVS Council member), Amy Robinson and Helen Tottey.

All listed and registered veterinary nurses are eligible to vote, and should by now have received their voting papers. If you have not received yours, please contact Annette Amato on a.amato@rcvs.org.uk.

Your vote can be cast online, by post or by text message – full details are in your voting pack – and voting must be completed by 5pm on Friday 26 April (NB. The deadline published in the March issue of *VNJ* was incorrect, for which please accept our apologies).

The successful candidates will take up their places at RCVS Day on Friday 5 July and each serve for a four-year term.

Golden chance to celebrate success

Do you know a veterinary nurse, veterinary surgeon or lay person who has made an outstanding contribution to the veterinary nursing profession?

Now is your chance to recognise them, as we are seeking nominations for the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council Golden Jubilee award.

We all know veterinary nurses who do fantastic jobs in their practices every day, but do you know someone who has gone that extra mile to think about the bigger picture and make a difference to the profession as a whole? Or it could be a veterinary surgeon or lay person who has made an exceptional contribution to veterinary nursing.

The Golden Jubilee award was instigated by VN Council in its 50th anniversary year (2011) and the first two recipients were Jean Turner and Sue Badger.

Nominations can be made by any veterinary nurse or veterinary surgeon, and need to be supported with detailed evidence for VN Council to consider at its May meeting. Nomination forms are available from the RCVS website, and need to be received by 1 May 2013.

Vectar volunteers

Vectar

An online veterinary nurse clinical coach training pack has been developed as part of the Europe-funded Vectar project, being led by the RCVS, and we need volunteers to trial it (www.vectar.org).

The pack has been developed to tackle the problem of getting busy clinical staff – who are involved in veterinary nurse training – to take time out of work to attend traditional training (this is especially important elsewhere in Europe, because of the huge distances involved).

The training pack is currently being field trialled and we are seeking clinical coaches working in UK RCVS Training Practices to pilot it and give us some feedback – it would count as free continuing professional development!

If you are interested, please contact Julie Dugmore on j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk The final version of the pack will be available in the autumn.

NEWS REVIEW by Jean Turner

Firm's flea control tablets now available for cats

Comfortis flavoured chewable flea control tablets (spinosad) are now licensed for cats and Elanco Companion Animal Health has further extended its range with the addition of two new sizes for toy dogs and smaller cats.

The firm claims that the monthly oral adulticide starts to kill fleas in cats and dogs in 30 minutes and rapidly achieves 100% efficacy, thereby providing protection that lasts a full month.

The product can be used alongside other treatments, such as wormers, and there is no pesticide residue on a pet following application, such that the efficacy is not affected by a cat's natural and common grooming behaviour.

For further information, contact your Elanco Companion Animal Health key account manager or call 01256 353131.

VN wins iPad at national veterinary show

Veterinary nurse, Elizabeth Sharples, from Vets Now vet practice in Bath Road, Bristol, has been named a winner at the London Vet Show held recently at Olympia, Kensington.

Royal Canin presented Elizabeth with an iPad 3 after her entry was selected at random at the pet food manufacturer's '*Catom* Competition' to coincide with the launch of its new interactive cat consult tool.

Elizabeth (left) answered all three questions about the Catom software correctly.

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NEWS REVIEW by Jean Turner

Are you on the VN Register or List?

A significant number of VN's names have been removed from the RCVS List (incorporating the Register) owing to non-payment of fees. If you have not received your new card and feel you should have done by now, please check with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons – and also your bank, to see whether the fees have been paid.

Remember you will not be able legally to perform many duties if you are not on the appropriate List or Register. Employers are being asked to check their veterinary nurse employees' registration status too. vnj

Information on strangles

The Redwings Horse Sanctuary has issued an information pack on strangles after a fifth of its new arrivals in 2012 tested positive for the disease.

'Strangles: Speak Out!' is an information pack for horse owners, yard managers and show organisers, which includes guidance on the world's most commonly diagnosed equine infectious disease.

To order a free copy of the strangles information pack, call 01508 481008. vnj

Canine parvovirus warnings via Twitter

A Twitter-based warning system has been set up to alert vets and dog owners to cases of canine parvovirus (CPV). In three months, cases have been reported in 61 postcode areas.

Since its launch in November, the alert system @parvoalert has attracted over 1,000 followers. It works by posting updates about the geographic location of CPV, by re-tweeting the first half of a postcode where vets and dog owners have reported cases.

So far, reports have been most frequent from cities in the North West, including Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. However, cases have been reported elsewhere, as far afield as Hereford, Romford, Sevenoaks and Weston-super-Mare.

All practices in an affected postcode are immediately sent a precautionary 'Parvo-Alert Pack' courtesy of Virbac, which includes waiting room posters, leaflets, stickers and template text for newsletters, to help warn clients.

Once the alert system becomes more established, a comprehensive web-based CPV resource is to be built that will feature background information on the prevention and treatment of disease, comment from veterinary experts and downloadable practice support materials. vnj

Are you prepared for Rabbit Month

Throughout the month of May, Supreme Petfoods is once again encouraging vet practices to hop to it and 'Think Rabbit'!

Following the success of last year's campaign, the firm has extended the campaign from two weeks to a whole month with the aim of helping even more UK vet practices engage with their existing rabbit-owning clients, as well as attracting new ones.

'Think Rabbit' was developed following increased requests from practices for information and support to help them develop their small pets business. According to Supreme, over 500 UK vet practices benefited from taking part in the campaign last year and many used it as an opportunity to raise awareness about their rabbit healthcare services, such as vaccination programmes and dental checks.

To sign up, visit http://bit.ly/J2YOkI or find out more at #thinkrabbit vnj

New legislation regulates dog breeders in NI

All too often veterinary surgeons are faced with a client holding a new puppy with health, welfare or behaviour problems – by which time it's too late.

New legislation to regulate all commercial dog breeders was agreed in the Northern Ireland Assembly on Monday 18 February. vnj

BVA Congress 2013

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) Congress 2013 will take place at the London Vet Show at Olympia, London, on 21-22 November bringing together political debate and a comprehensive programme of high quality CPD.

As well as the traditional contentious issues discussions, farm and equine streams for mixed practitioners will be delivered by the BVA to run alongside the popular companion animal stream provided by the Royal Veterinary College.

Further information is available at www.bva.co.uk/events/BVA_Congress.aspx vnj

Animal Care Trust enhances level of care

A new ophthalmology service has been established at the Royal Veterinary College, London, with support from the RVC Animal Care Trust (ACT), which has funded several pieces of new equipment, including a goniosopy lens.

The ACT has also funded the 'Brainsight' neuro-navigation system for the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals, which enables cats and dogs to have cancerous tumours removed from the brain – previously inoperable owing to their deep location.

Finally, the RVC's Equine Referral Hospital was recently able to invest in equine dentistry equipment for its patients thanks to an ACT grant. vnj

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Day 44

The client returned for the author to see the wound fully healed. Thickened scar tissue was present. Unfortunately the photograph was lost so the owner returned on Day 111 so the author could have a final photograph of the area **(Figure 9)** and Daisy **(Figure 10)**! Only a very small patch of darkly pigmented scar tissue was present.

Figure 8: Day 27. Wound improving

Figure 9: Day 111. Fully healed

Figure 10: 'Daisy'

Discussion

As with the previous wound management cases, both owner and patient compliance were very good. The owners had been warned of the potential risks of pressure sores occurring when long-term dressings are used.

Bandaging is a complex affair and when dressing a limb the main objective is to avoid any iatrogenic injury. This can be done by ensuring it is not too tight but at the same time not too loose so that it will slip. It is difficult to achieve the right balance, and the only way to gain a 'feel' for how much tension is required comes from practice. Adequate cotton padding is needed, especially over vulnerable areas and between toes.

From an owner's point of view, they must be advised on the proper aftercare of bandages to try and avoid any complications, because even over-exercising can cause slippage. If a bandage slips, it will cause friction and undue pressure in certain areas.

Direct or shear pressure may also contribute to complications by causing ischaemic injury – through the interruption and reduction of blood flow to the area – which will, in turn, prevent healing. So any problems with a bandage should be considered of great importance and should not be ignored.

The author would have expected the overall healing time to have been less in this case, but it was increased by patient interference.

Since this case the author has trialled a recently launched product, 'Protective Sleeve Taz' (J.A.K Marketing) which is a fabric sleeve that covers a front leg to protect wounds and/or bandages (see www.medicalpetshirts.com). The author believes this would have been an ideal alternative to the collar and boot in this case, but the product was unavailable at the time.

NEWS REVIEW by Jean Turner

BVNA attends Cruft's

The BVNA attended Cruft's for the first time this year where the main objective was to promote the work of the Veterinary Nurse and National VN Awareness Month in May 2013, as well as to give veterinary nursing career and pet care advice.

The BVNA was also invited to participate in the launch of 'The Hounds for Heroes' charity campaign 'Fit in Kit', and council member, Lucy Hayne (back row centre), was photographed with other professionals.

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NEWS REVIEW by Jean Turner

ESCCAP parasite CPD day a success

The recent 'Everyday Parasites' CPD day, presented by the UK and Ireland contingent of the European Scientific Counsel for Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP UK & Ireland), was deemed a huge success, with 55 attendees receiving top quality companion animal parasite CPD.

The impressive amount of interaction and questions from the equal numbers of attending vets, vet nurses and SQPs was a great indicator of how beneficial the day was to everyone who took part. All lectures were filmed and are available to view online at www.esccapuk-cpd.co.uk.

Tackling the concerns at the forefront of companion animal parasitology, the 'Everyday Parasites' day offered bang up to date information and advice that is relevant to vets, vet nurses and SQPs right now.

Fleas, ticks and worms were covered, including *Toxocara* and *Angiostrongylus vasorum* (lungworm) – the latter receiving ever-increasing media interest owing to high profile awareness campaigns. The presentation on *Toxocara* focused on its zoonotic capabilities, with a review of the evidence of its potential impact on humans. The wide range of reported health and well-being implications highlighted the importance of education about – and control of – this parasite that often passes 'under the radar'.

It wasn't just factual information about the parasites that was given either – advice about initiating compliance, integrated parasite control and the resources on offer from ESCCAP UK was also shared, giving the attendees a full armoury of tools to play their part in the fight against companion animal parasites in the UK.

One vet attendee was keen to share her thoughts of the day. "To have been given impartial information from trusted experts on a topic that affects me and every small animal vet, every day, is so important," she said.

"I feel much better equipped now to give clear advice to my clients and colleagues regarding parasite control."

Maggie Fisher; ESCCAP director, consultant parasitologist and one of the speakers at the CPD day was encouraged by the range of people who attended the event, saying: "To see vets, vet nurses and SQPs learning together at an event like this is great because it is ensures a consistent message from all professionals that is going to ensure that pet owners everywhere get the right messages about parasite risks and control."

The talks from the 'Everyday Parasites' CPD day will be the latest addition to a growing library of all the previous ESCCAP UK CPD lectures, available to view at www.esccapuk-cpd.co.uk.

Information about upcoming CPD events can also be found here and all ESCCAP CPD events are AMTRA-accredited where possible. There are also companion animal parasite reference resources on offer from ESCCAP UK including online, downloadable and printed materials such as Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) tools and advice, posters, leaflets and study aids at www.esccapuk.org.uk.

Battle to protect hares hots up

A new plan to manage hare populations in England has been condemned by animal welfare groups after it ignored calls for a 'closed season'.

A draft code of practice for brown hare management has been drawn up for Defra by the British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC), but a coalition of animal welfare groups claims that it ignores vital concerns.

Care for the Wild, the Humane Society International, Blue Hare, and the Hare Preservation Trust are concerned that the current tally of around 350,000 hares hunted each year out of a national population of 750,000 is simply unsustainable.

"Letting the shooting lobby manage wildlife protection sounds like a bad joke but that is what is happening," said Philip Mansbridge, CEO of Care for the Wild.

"The argument for a closed season to protect pregnant mothers and their young in February is scientifically sound, common sense and would put England in line with Scotland. At the moment, hares are suffering from a postcode lottery which is threatening the future of the entire population," he said.

Research from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust states that shooting hares during February can remove up to 60% of breeding hares.

The hare coalition is seeking a meeting with wildlife minister Richard Benyon, requesting that Defra takes control of the process. Initially the object would be to give Natural England the responsibility of drawing up a draft voluntary code for a closed season, but with the ultimate aim of getting a closed season written in law.

The process would involve working closely not only with shooting, farming and landowning organisations, but also with all key animal welfare and wildlife protection groups in the UK.

A century ago there were around four million hares, but the population has been reduced by about 80%, mainly because of farming practices that have reduced their habitat, and the annual kill. Previous government plans to double the hare population by 2010 failed.

"Hares are one of the forgotten victims of English wildlife. I think people would be shocked to know that on average around 1,000 are killed every day. That's a deplorable statistic, so asking for a closed season to protect mothers and their babies is frankly not much to ask," said Mr Mansbridge.

For more information, call Care for the Wild campaigns & communications manager, Chris Pitt, on 07891 743889.

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NEWS REVIEW by Jean Turner

'Bertha' reaches FSB finals

Onswitch has announced that 'Bertha', its double-decker, state-of-the-art training venue, has been placed as an area finalist in the Business Innovation category of the 2013 Federation of Small Businesses awards.

Bertha travels the country, visiting cities as far afield as Dublin, Belfast, Norwich, Aberdeen, Cardiff and Exeter up to three times every year. According to the firm, Bertha provides the only mobile veterinary customer care training venue in the UK, delivering convenient and cost-effective local specialist training for veterinary practices throughout Britain.

In order to reach the national final, Bertha has already been crowned area winner for the East Midlands. National category winners will be announced at a gala awards dinner on 18th April at Glaziers Hall in London, amidst stiff competition from companies large and small, each operating in very different market sectors.

For more information on Bertha, or the range of training, research and consultancy services that Onswitch offers, contact info@onswitch.co.uk or call 01476 565343.

2013 BURSARIES

BVNA works alongside numerous of companies and institutions to award a number of bursaries each year with the aim of assisting students or qualified Veterinary Nurses who are BVNA Members*.

Please find details below of the bursaries currently available. To download application forms please visit our website at www.bvna.org.uk. Closing dates for all bursaries is 31st May 2013.

Name: BVNA Educational Bursary
Number: Variable
Amount: Up to £500
Objectives: General furthering of veterinary nurse training/education

Name: Royal Canin Bursary
Number: One
Amount: £500
Objectives: To assist with funding of a nutrition-based course/qualification

Name: Kennel Club Trust Veterinary Nursing Bursary
Number: Variable
Amount: £3,000 total
Objectives: General furthering of veterinary nurse training/education

Name: Kennel Club Trust Veterinary Nursing Degree Bursary
Number: One
Amount: £4,000 over 3/4 years (paid in instalments)
Objectives: To contribute to the cost of completing a VN Degree qualification

*You must have been a BVNA Member for at least six months in order to apply for any of the bursaries

BVNA VETERINARY NURSE CERTIFICATE IN DENTISTRY

This is the most comprehensive dentistry course for Veterinary Nurses currently available. It covers, in detail, all aspects of general dentistry in small animal practice. The course runs over a calendar year with a mix of contact teaching and directed learning. Designed specifically for the qualified and listed Veterinary Nurse but also open to Veterinary Surgeons.

CONTACT TEACHING IN 3 TWO-DAY MODULES

- Modules take place on a Friday and Saturday at Rodbaston College, Staffordshire
- Module 1 May 10-11, Module 2 September 13-14, Module 3 January 17-18
- Mix of lectures, workshops, practicals, demonstrations and discussion

SELF LEARNING & EXAMINATION

- Set coursework and reading list
- Case studies (4), case diaries and written & practical task exams

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST WITH THE BVNA BEFORE THE END OF APRIL IN ORDER TO BENEFIT FROM SIGNIFICANTLY DISCOUNTED COURSE FEES

For an information pack contact BVNA:
82 Greenway Business Centre, Harlow, Essex CM19 5QE
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E-mail: lisa@bvna.co.uk

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