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which equated to a sizeable 200 mile trip on each bicycle. He also helped flagging cyclists with motivational tips, gleaned from years of hard training.

Mark was joined on the stand by Peter Gorbing, chief executive of Dogs for the

very worthy cause."

Dogs for the Disabled trains assistance dogs for children and adults with physical disabilities and for families with an autistic child. PetSavers, meanwhile, aims to improve pets' health by



relieving the distress and pain caused by diseases for which there is no effective treatment.

Visit [www.dogsforthedisabled.org](http://www.dogsforthedisabled.org) or [www.petsavers.org.uk](http://www.petsavers.org.uk) to find out more information.

VT 15.7.13 43(28):4

# RISING OOH EXPECTATIONS PRESSURE VETS – WARNING

RISING public expectations and falling revenues are making it increasingly difficult to provide effective out-of-hours (OOH) care.

This is the view of veterinary business consultant and qualified vet Jeremy Johnson, who also believes making owners register animals with a practice could offer OOH providers more protection from potentially damaging complaints.

Mr Johnson has spoken out following the case of Munhuwepasi Chikosi, who was struck off by the RCVS disciplinary committee (DC) for delaying attending a call to euthanise a dog that had been run over.

## Controversy

The decision has raised concerns within the profession and, according to Mr Johnson, highlighted just how vulnerable OOH providers can be. "Twenty years ago, obligations in the guide to professional conduct were not fair – any client could drag you away from what you were doing to deal with a problem they had caused, whether they were paying or non-paying; registered with you or non-registered," he said.

"At the time, 70 per cent of

report by  
**James Westgate**

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turnover and more profit came from medicines. As medicines accounted for very little of the overhead they were relatively profitable and subsidised the 'unfair' stuff. Furthermore, if patients were left unattended at the surgery while the on call vet did a 'domiliary visit', clients rarely questioned this as they had less information on standards of patient care.

"Medicine profits have paid for rising standards – premises, equipment, continuing professional development (CPD) to provide better quality emergency care, having trained staff on call, looking after in-patients or just providing the reassurance of having a veterinarian on the premises. At the same time, the RCVS has responded to a perceived public pressure for higher standards – perhaps due to media pressure raising clients' expectations of what could be done for their pets, or maybe just a reaction to the numbers of complaints the college receives."

Increasing internet sales have

hit medicine profit margins in many practices, while an increasingly savvy public is more likely to be aware of professional obligations placed on practising veterinary surgeons, according to Mr Johnson.

He added: "In 2013, clients buy medicines online and can look up veterinarians' professional obligations at [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk) on their smartphones. There used to be weasel words in further guidance to the guide attempting to give vets a let out from being 'whipping boys' in certain circumstances, but you pretty much had to be a lawyer to understand what was written and certainly the public would look at the guide or the code and still think 'if I insist, they have to come out'.

"If, instead, clients had to register for cover – just as they do to see their doctor or dentist – the point when they registered or re-registered would be an opportunity to assess their needs, and the number of genuinely registered clients would form a better basis on which to plan requirements for OOH cover or arrange this with an OOH provider and communicate precisely the type of service on offer.

"The problem with OOH cover today is that in the competitive market of 2013 you still have essentially the same obligations as 20 years ago."

Aside from wider concerns raised by the Chikosi case, the DC's suggestion he was wrong to advise the owner to bring the injured dog into the practice using a blanket has caused widespread confusion.

## Need for clarity

BSAVA president Michael Day, said: "It is not appropriate for BSAVA to comment on this case's specifics; however, members are concerned about the statement that advice from the veterinarian in this case that the dog 'should be moved on a blanket was wrong, as she may have had an injured back'. As such, BSAVA has written to the RCVS asking for clarity on this decision aspect.

"While we understand there may be specific case factors that make this statement appropriate, the statement, as issued, appears to apply to all dogs that may have an injured back. The advice to move injured dogs using a blanket is commonly given by veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses and the

recommendation for transport of large dogs in the BSAVA *Textbook of Veterinary Nursing* (fifth edition) is 'large, immobile or severely injured dogs are best carried by two or more people in a blanket or on a stretcher'."

It is RCVS policy not to comment on specific cases, but the college has released a statement: "Cases around 24-hour emergency cover do tend to spark debate," stated Gordon Hockey, RCVS head of legal services and registrar. "The DC decision is consistent with long-standing RCVS advice on 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief, and confirms the importance of individual professional judgement that takes account of animal needs in the specific case.

"The advice in the code of professional conduct and supporting guidance remains in place and all DC decisions are considered by the advisory committee, which may result in further advice or clarification being produced by the RCVS.

"Meanwhile, nothing takes the place of reading the DC's full decision, and I would urge veterinarians with an interest in this area to take the time to do this," added Mr Hockey.

## University of Surrey welcomes new vet expertise



Gail Anderson.

THE University of Surrey has a new head of veterinary education.

Gail Anderson is an experienced specialist surgeon, educator, administrator and researcher, and has worked in senior clinical and leadership roles in universities and private practice in Canada and Australia.

She served as inaugural dean for the new School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences at the University of Adelaide, and, most recently, was senior associate dean for veterinary education and

department head for professional skills, ethics and welfare at Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine in St Kitts, West Indies.

The first Australian woman to be awarded diplomate status at the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, Prof Anderson has stated the main goal at the University of Surrey will be to "ensure graduating veterinarians are engaged to their fullest extent with all the possibilities the profession has to offer."

Lisa Roberts is dean of the faculty

of health and medical sciences at the University of Surrey. She said: "I very much look forward to working closely with Prof Anderson in her new role. She has made an outstanding contribution to veterinary education and I am confident she will help us achieve our vision for training the veterinary leaders of the future in the new school."

Prof Anderson's appointment comes a month after Christopher Proudman was appointed head of the School of Veterinary Medicine at the university.