



Best practice recommendations

For veterinary surgeons seeking pathology expertise

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- The authors have been updated to: Professor Roberto La Ragione and members of the Veterinary Pathology SAC.

Introduction

- Page 5, lines 4–6: ‘These opinions may range from comparison of a numerical result with a normal range to a full interpretation of a case’ has been updated to read...’ to ‘These opinions may range from comparison of a numerical result with normal limits to a full interpretation of a case’.
- Page 5, line 8: Changed from ‘veterinary surgeon’ to ‘primary care veterinary surgeon’.
- Page 5, lines 19–21: ‘It is not a requirement for persons outside the UK to be registered with the RCVS in order to provide opinions or interpretations to veterinary surgeons in the UK.’ has been updated to ‘It is not a requirement for persons outside the UK to be registered with the RCVS in order to provide general opinions or interpretations directly to registered veterinary surgeons in the UK.’
- Page 5, lines 21–22: However, to report for a diagnostic laboratory in the UK, persons must be registered with the RCVS, even if they are not based in the UK.
- Page 6, lines 13–19: ‘is registered in their country of residence, plus is an FRCPath, DipACVP, DipECVCP or DipECVP. N.B. If the veterinary surgeon offering the opinion is not an MRCVS, it is the responsibility of the registered veterinary surgeons (MRCVS), under whose care the animal is to ensure that they are satisfied that the opinion comes from a suitably qualified person, and that they understand that the diagnosis is theirs (i.e. the MRCVS).’

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Foreword

Best practice recommendations (BPRs) published by the Royal College of Pathologists should assist pathologists in providing a high standard of care for patients. BPRs are systematically developed statements intended to assist the decisions and approach of practitioners and patients about appropriate actions for specific clinical circumstances. They are based on the best available evidence at the time the document was prepared. It may be necessary or even desirable to depart from the advice in the interests of specific patients and special circumstances. The clinical risk of departing from the BPR should be assessed and documented.

A formal revision cycle for all BPRs takes place every 5 years. The College will ask the authors of the BPR to consider whether or not the recommendations need to be revised. A review may be required sooner if new developments arise or changes in practice necessitate an update. A full consultation process will be undertaken if major revisions are required. If minor revisions or changes are required, a short note of the proposed changes will be placed on the College website for 2 weeks for members' attention. If members do not object to the changes, a short notice of change will be incorporated into the document and the full revised version will replace the previous version on the College website.

This BPR has been reviewed by the Publishing team. It was placed on the College website for an abridged consultation with the membership from 11 January to 25 January 2024. All comments received from the membership were addressed by the authors to the satisfaction of the Clinical Director of Publishing and Engagement.

This BPR was developed without external funding to the writing group. The College requires the authors of BPRs to provide a list of potential conflicts of interest. These are monitored by the College's Publishing team and are available on request. The authors of this document have declared that there are no conflicts of interest.

1 Abbreviations

DipACVP – Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists

DipECVCP – Diplomate of the European College of Veterinary Clinical Pathology

DipECVP – Diplomate of the European College of Veterinary Pathologists

FRCPATH – Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists

FRCVS – Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

MRCVS – Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

RCVS – Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Opinions are regularly sought by (UK-practising MRCVS) veterinary surgeons from veterinary pathologists within and outside the UK. These opinions may range from comparison of a numerical result with normal limits to a full interpretation of a case, which, in some circumstances, may amount to a diagnosis. The RCVS guidance makes clear that responsibility for the overall diagnosis and treatment of an animal, taking into account the full clinical context, ultimately rests with the primary care veterinary surgeon who provides these services to the client in the UK.

A UK-based veterinary surgeon providing a diagnosis to a client in the UK (including when that is based on opinion and information obtained from overseas) must be a practising veterinary surgeon under the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966), and therefore must be registered with the RCVS as a full UK practising member.

If a UK-based diagnostic laboratory receives diagnostic analysis or interpretation from overseas by veterinarians or pathologists who are not registered with the RCVS, any diagnostic interpretation provided by the laboratory to a practising veterinary surgeon in the UK is the responsibility of, and must be signed off by, a veterinary-qualified (MRCVS) pathologist, in accordance with clause 12.11 of the Code of Professional Conduct.

It is not a requirement for persons outside the UK to be registered with the RCVS in order to provide general opinions or interpretations directly to registered veterinary surgeons in

the UK. However, to report for a diagnostic laboratory in the UK, persons must be registered with the RCVS, even if they are not based in the UK.

The following recommendations provide further clarification for practising veterinary surgeons in the UK who utilise pathology referrals.

3 Recommendations

In addition to the guidance provided by the RCVS, the RCPATH's Veterinary Pathology Specialist Advisory Committee (SAC) recommends the following for UK-based veterinary surgeons seeking pathology services, to ensure that they provide the expected level of professional service.

3.1 Pathology services

When seeking pathology services, UK-based veterinary surgeons should ensure that this is provided by:

- a veterinary surgeon registered with the RCVS as UK-practising (MRCVS/FRCVS) and normally holding an appropriate postgraduate pathology qualification (e.g. FRCPath, DipACVP, DipECVCP or DipECVP).
- or, exceptionally, a non-MRCVS pathologist based overseas, who holds a veterinary degree from a suitably accredited RCVS-recognised veterinary school, is registered in their country of residence, plus is an FRCPath, DipACVP, DipECVCP or DipECVP.
N.B. If the veterinary surgeon offering the opinion is not an MRCVS, it is the responsibility of the registered veterinary surgeons (MRCVS), under whose care the animal is to ensure that they are satisfied that the opinion comes from a suitably qualified person, and that they understand that the diagnosis is theirs (i.e. the MRCVS').

3.2 Additional specialist opinion

When seeking additional specialist opinion from a non-MRCVS pathologist/scientist, UK-based veterinary pathologists should ensure that the non-MRCVS individual reports back to a veterinary pathologist who is registered with the RCVS as UK-practising (MRCVS/FRCVS) and who is appropriately qualified (FRCPath, DipACVP, DipECVCP or DipECVP). The UK-practising pathologist should audit the results prior to release to the veterinary surgeon responsible for diagnosis and treatment.