

## What the RCVS can and cannot do

### What the RCVS can do:

1. Investigate complaints within our jurisdiction (the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966).
2. Give formal advice to a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse.
3. Hold a public hearing against a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse whose alleged actions or behaviour may amount to serious professional misconduct (see the document '*Serious Professional Misconduct*' at <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints/>).
4. Hold a public hearing against a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse who has been convicted of a criminal offence that may mean he or she is unfit to practise.
5. Suspend or remove a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse from practice.

(Further information about recent Disciplinary Committee Hearings is available at [www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/disciplinary))

### What the RCVS cannot do:

6. Fine a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse for any wrong-doing.
7. Award any form of compensation or refund or fee reduction.
8. Adjudicate on negligence as an alternative to the civil courts (see the document '*Negligence*' at <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/complaints/>).
9. Adjudicate on the level of fees charged, except when the fees are so extreme that they might constitute serious professional misconduct (see Chapter 9 '*Practice information and fees*' of the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct).

### Points to remember

10. Veterinary surgeons have clinical freedom to treat animals; therefore, veterinary surgeons may have different approaches to the same problem.

Registered veterinary nurses have clinical freedom to make professional decisions; therefore registered veterinary nurses may have different approaches to the same problem.

11. Diagnosis is not an exact science. Misdiagnosis or missed-diagnosis is not necessarily professional misconduct.

12. In veterinary medicine (just as in human medicine) the outcome of treatment or medication or nursing care may not be what the owner or veterinary surgeon would wish.
13. Try to resolve problems directly with your veterinary surgeon, registered veterinary nurse or practice in the first instance.