



## **RCVS-accredited? What does that mean?**

### **What is the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' Practice Standards Scheme?**

The Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) is a voluntary accreditation scheme for veterinary practices. It was set up by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in 2005 to promote and maintain high standards in veterinary care. The Scheme does this by setting standards and inspecting the practices that choose to take part.

All RCVS-accredited practices have to meet Core standards, including hygiene, health and safety, clinical governance and the facilities provided. On top of this 'Core' accreditation, General Practices can gain species- or discipline-specific accreditations, for example, small animals, farm animals, equine patients or emergency service clinics - or any combination of these. Veterinary Hospitals can seek accreditation as small animal or equine hospitals.

To maintain the accreditation, practices are inspected by RCVS Assessors every four years and there are random spot checks.

### **What does it mean for clients and their animals?**

It can be hard for owners to know what happens behind the scenes at the vets. The Scheme makes more information about practices available to help animal owners choose a practice. In particular, the Scheme can reassure people about the night-time cover, hygiene and facilities available at an individual practice.

### **Does accreditation mean that veterinary services are more expensive?**

Some clients may assume accreditation will push up costs. However, compared with overall practice spending the costs of the Scheme are not large. In 2019, practices joining the Scheme will pay £463 to join. Afterwards there is an annual fee of £456 for main premises and £125 for branches. Achieving high standards may incur some costs, although savings may also come from improvements in efficiency.

Charges for veterinary services are still up to individual practices (unless charges are so high as to constitute disgraceful professional conduct by a veterinary surgeon).

### **What about practices that aren't accredited?**

Standards are very high in most practices in the UK and it doesn't necessarily follow that practices not in the Scheme are worse than PSS-accredited practices. In accredited practices, though, an RCVS assessor has been behind the scenes and is satisfied that the practice meets standards agreed by all

the key veterinary organisations, so clients have peace of mind. Half of UK practice premises are accredited.

**Were there schemes before this?**

The PSS replaces two schemes, run by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, and by the British Veterinary Hospitals Association in conjunction with the RCVS.

**Where can you check a practice's accreditation and find out more?**

You can check if a practice is accredited through RCVSONline at [www.findavet.org.uk](http://www.findavet.org.uk). You can find out more about the Practice Standards Scheme by visiting [www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/practicestandards), emailing [pss@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:pss@rcvs.org.uk) or calling the RCVS on 020 7202 0767.