The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure

Veterinary Pathology Specialty Advisory Committee newsletter

Autumn 2026

Veterinary Pathology SAC Chair's message



Over the past year, the Veterinary Pathology Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC), with the help of Prof Sarah Baillie, has been focused on updating and revising the Part 1 examinations across several veterinary pathology subdisciplines. These changes will bring the examinations more in line with current methods of assessment, improve transparency for candidates, and align them more closely with other RCPath specialties.

From spring into early summer, we hosted seven excellent webinars covering topics ranging from forensic pathology to medical devices to the role of the toxicological pathologist. As always, the level of expertise on display was hugely impressive, and on behalf of the SAC I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the presenters who made these sessions so brilliant. The series has been a great success, attracting attendees from across the globe and significantly raising the profile of, and enquiries about, the RCPath and fellowship examinations. We're delighted to continue this webinar series, with new sessions already planned for next year.

As always, the committee welcomes your input and encourages your active participation in College activities. Whether you have suggestions for outreach initiatives, webinar topics, or

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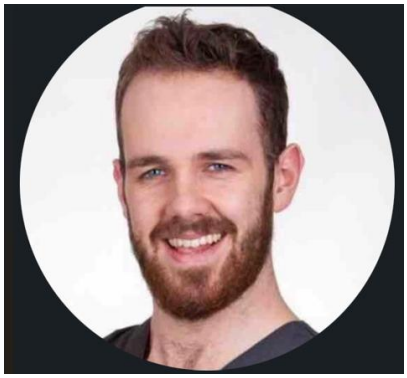
training opportunities, please don't hesitate to get in touch directly. Your engagement helps ensure we continue to meet the growing needs of the veterinary pathology community.

Dr Pamela Kelly, Chair of the Veterinary Pathology SAC

New Anatomic Veterinary Pathology Trainee Representative, Dr David Sheehan



My name is David Sheehan, and I am currently a third-year anatomic pathology resident at University College Dublin. I began my residency in 2024, after spending several years working in clinical practice in Canada and New Zealand. Since starting residency, I have sat and passed the RCPath Part 1 examination in 2025, and I am hoping to sit Part 2 next year.

Life as a veterinary anatomic pathology resident is varied and busy. My typical schedule rotates between post-mortem duty, biopsy duty and research weeks. During post-mortem weeks, we examine a broad range of cases, including internal submissions from the UCD Veterinary Hospital and external referrals from practices across Ireland. The caseload can be extremely varied, ranging from complex internal medicine cases to wildlife and zoo animals, which provides excellent exposure.

On biopsy weeks, I view digital histology slides with supervisors from a large veterinary diagnostic laboratory. This aspect of training has been particularly valuable for developing diagnostic confidence, pattern recognition and concise report writing.

Research weeks provide time to catch up on post-mortem histology, trim cases from the previous week, meet with my doctoral thesis committee and work on my research project. My doctoral research focuses on chronic inflammatory enteropathy in dogs. In particular, I am investigating associations between signalment, clinicopathological variables and histological features in dogs with chronic inflammatory enteropathy. The project involves substantial data cleaning, interpretation and statistical analysis.

Alongside residency, I am the Veterinary Pathology Anatomic Trainee representative on the Specialty Advisory Committee. The SAC meets twice yearly and advises on specialty-

specific matters. My role is to attend these meetings and ensure that the concerns, views and interests of veterinary anatomic pathology trainees are represented. This has been a valuable opportunity to better understand how training, examinations and professional standards are discussed and developed at college level.

I also sit on the Trainees' Advisory Committee, which is run by trainees, for trainees. The TAC represents all branches of pathology and includes a broad range of experience across medical and non-medical trainees. Its main function is to facilitate communication between the College and its trainees.

Overall, residency has been challenging but extremely rewarding. The combination of diagnostic service work, research and teaching provides a broad and stimulating training experience. Participation in both the SAC and TAC has also shown me that trainees have an important role in shaping their own training. For anyone considering getting involved, I would strongly encourage it.

Guidelines and best practice recommendations

G192 Guidelines on veterinary necropsy practice - Post-mortem examination of animals having received chemotherapeutic or radioactive agents

G184 Best Practice recommendations: Storage retention animal tissues records

G185 Best Practice recommendations: For Veterinary surgeons seeking pathology expertise

Veterinary pathology webinar

Toxicological Pathology: Roles, Training and Opportunities



Delivered jointly with the British Society of Toxicological Pathology (BSTP), this engaging webinar shines a spotlight on toxicological pathology – an exciting but often underexplored career pathway at the intersection of pathology, pharmacology and regulatory science. Featuring expert insights from Richard Haworth and Dr Jan Klapwijk, and chaired by Dr Pamela Kelly, the session explores what toxicologists and toxicological pathologists do, career opportunities across industry, contract research organisations and academia, and the different training routes available, including FRCPath and European specialist pathways. Whether you're a trainee considering your career options, an established pathologist looking for a new direction, or a veterinarian or scientist curious about entering the field, this session offers a practical introduction to the opportunities available in toxicological pathology. **The webinar recording is now available to watch below – catch up at a time that suits you.**



A day in the life of a Veterinary Microbiologist

I graduated in 1995 and went on to study for an MSc in Veterinary Microbiology at the Royal Veterinary College (University of London), which led to a position at the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA). I was fortunate that this position included a PhD scholarship in collaboration with the University of London (Royal Holloway), which focused on Avian Pathogenic *E. coli* (APEC). With this knowledge, I began creating vaccines for poultry. The VLA (now the APHA) provided me with a fantastic platform to develop my scientific career as a veterinary microbiologist. Moreover, the vaccine studies that I undertook after my PhD taught me how to work with

industry, and it highlighted the huge contribution that vaccination can make to animal and human health and welfare.

After completing my PhD studies, I worked as a postdoctoral researcher at Royal Holloway, University of London, working in collaboration with the Veterinary Laboratories Agency as a senior veterinary scientist, and then as a work group leader (Pathogenesis and Control). This allowed me to further develop my interest in veterinary microbiology and pathology. In 2009 I started to work at the University of Surrey as a part-time Senior Lecturer to develop a number of veterinary focused programmes. In 2010 I was appointed Professor of Veterinary Microbiology and Pathology. In 2015 I moved to the University of Surrey full time to concentrate on the development of the new School of Veterinary Medicine and my research group. I obtained Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists in 2010.

A ‘typical’ working day at the University of Surrey

Every day is different!! Day to day, I’m mostly managing academics, research scientists and a number of research projects. I also manage several postdocs and PhD students in my research group. I meet with my postdocs and students on a regular basis and review their work and plan future studies and ultimately publications. I also undertake teaching (Veterinary Medicine students and Biosciences students) and supervise undergraduate student research projects, and trainees working towards the FRCPath in Veterinary Microbiology. I also spend a significant amount of time meeting collaborators, writing grant proposals and papers, and mentoring colleagues.

For the last two years I have held the role of Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences (FHMS). This role has involved overseeing five schools (Biosciences, Psychology, Health Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, and Medicine) and setting the strategy for the Faculty, whilst working with the University’s Executive Board. I recently started a new role as the Academic Lead for Strategic Partnerships across the entire University!

Alongside my University role, I Chair the Veterinary Laboratory Antimicrobial Diagnostics (VLAD), and the Food Industry Initiative on Antimicrobials (FIIA). I am also a member of the APHA Science Advisory Board, a member of the Jenner Institute Scientific Advisory Board, a governor for the Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust, and a member of the RCPath Veterinary Pathology Committee (veterinary microbiology representative), and a

Trustee for Humanimal Trust and the Houghton Trust. I am also a huge advocate for One Health and One Medicine and am a member of the European One Health Association - European One Health Association (EOHA).

My current research focus

My research currently focuses on five main areas: Diagnostics, vaccines, antimicrobial resistance, microbiomes, and bacterial pathogens of livestock, poultry and companion animals. I also have a particular interest in zoonotic infections.

My research group is working on a number of rapid point-of-care diagnostic tests that will help diagnose infections more quickly, and aid pragmatic antimicrobial prescribing to help reduce antimicrobial resistance (AMR). I am also involved in the development of novel interventions to control bacterial pathogens including prebiotics, probiotics and postbiotics. My research group is using AI to predict AMR, design vaccines and improve diagnostic tests. In addition, we are using reality simulators to help improve infection control.

I am also fortunate to be part of the European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare (EUP AH&W) - EUPAHW - Home. My research group is involved in a number of EUP AH&W funded research projects focused on bacterial pathogens, microbiomes, AMR, vaccines and diagnostics. In addition, I am the deputy lead for the Communication, Exploitation, Education and Dissemination work package.

I recently organised the European College of Veterinary Microbiology Conference at the University of Surrey. The conference attracted over 175 veterinary microbiologists from across the globe to discuss current and future developments in diagnostic and research focused veterinary microbiology. The conference also included a workshop on innovative molecular diagnostics.

Professor Roberto La Ragione – Veterinary Microbiologist, Professor of Veterinary Microbiology and Pathology, and Academic Lead for Strategic Partnerships, University of Surrey

Day in the life of a livestock disease surveillance representative



The hot weather has certainly been challenging this summer, and the prolonged dry conditions are creating some significant challenges for livestock farmers. Lack of rainfall means lack of grass growth. animals are at increased risk of heat stress, and some farms are facing challenges maintaining adequate water supplies. Heat stress can reduce feed intake and growth rates, affect ovulation and conception rates, compromise male fertility and reduce milk production, and in severe cases, can be fatal. Providing shade and ensuring animals have access to an adequate supply of clean, fresh water are basic but essential measures for livestock to cool themselves during these times.

There has been a surge in Bluetongue virus infections within the GB sheep population this summer with a number of clinical cases confirmed and further cases currently under investigation. Bluetongue is a notifiable disease spread between animals by biting midges. Sheep are particularly susceptible to clinical disease and signs include fever, facial swelling and oral ulceration. These clinical signs are due to virus-induced injury to endothelial lining of small blood vessels. A vaccine is available and is the main method of preventing the disease.

Another emerging concern is *Haemonchus contortus*, commonly known as the barber's pole worm. This blood-sucking nematode is an important parasite of sheep and can cause significant disease including anaemia, weakness, weight loss and, in severe cases, death. Historically, Haemonchus has been more commonly associated with warmer regions, including south-eastern parts of Great Britain. However, we are now seeing the parasite in a wider geographical area, including a number of cases here in Scotland this year. The changing distribution of Haemonchus is thought to be linked, at least in part, to changing climatic conditions. Education, good flock monitoring and early detection are key to minimising the impact of this parasite and protecting both animal health and welfare.

Alwyn Llewellyn Jones, Livestock and Surveillance Representative

Day in the life of a farm animal pathologist

Ash Wednesday has rolled around for the seventh time since I arrived here at the Regional Veterinary Laboratory. It’s the anniversary of starting my job here. I moved from the excitement of headquarters and a job I loved so I could bring my small kids to secondary school. They are in university now on their own journeys, and I’m still here.



I remember my very first day; I did a double-take as I noticed the grey smudges of ash on some of the staff's foreheads. Having just relocated from city headquarters, I hadn’t even realised what day it was, let alone that my first day here was also the first day of Lent. The penance had started, I thought. I had been promoted two years prior, and apparently, I was now deemed capable of being not only a pathologist but also a manager. I studied hard to learn about pathology; I don't remember ever studying management. But on this seventh Ash Wednesday, the ringing phone found a manager experienced by necessity as is so often the fate of the specialist in a regional location.

The call was about a dead white-tailed sea eagle. It triggered our usual protocol: explaining the specific photos needed from the scene and the rigid chain-of-evidence requirements.

The eagle dominates the PM table with a wingspan of 2.1 metres. It is a perfect creation, built to soar in the sky, but like all perfect biological creations, it has succumbed to death and plummeted down to the rest of us, eventually landing on a pathology table relying on somebody like me to tell its story.

These are a rare species, once extinct on this small island but repopulated by a highly successful reintroduction scheme. The cause of death is politically and legally critical because persecution occurs and is punished. A satellite tag tracked this bird's movements until they abruptly stopped, and a skin-mounted thermometer registered its body temperature until it reached ambient. Then, it was located, and now the responsibility of telling the why is mine.

I often ask myself why the responsibility is mine. There are plenty of people much better suited to do these things, with better facilities, better equipment, and more funding. Yet here I am, armed with a scalpel, some universal containers, and those letters after my name that mean my opinion carries weight. Little did I know when I sat my fellowship exams that this is where I'd end up. Little did I or anyone else know when I accepted the post in Sligo that I'd be looking at fallen eagles. It happened because it could happen; we built the expertise and now do wildlife forensic work for the country. So here we are, the two of us, each having evolved to suit the imperfect environments we found ourselves until today we meet in a post-mortem room designed for cattle in the 1960s.

The talons are clenched. I note that. I'm not completely sure what it means for this bird, but the experts consider it a sign of muscle contraction, perhaps a seizure before death. The rest of the external examination is unremarkable. There is no evidence of trauma; certain political fears of wind turbines remain unfounded, at least this work wont add to that sensationalist noise. An X-ray confirms it wasn't shot. It is remarkably fresh and well-identified, a credit to my colleagues in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) who watch over and protect these great birds in all the hidden places they get to.

I part the great feathers and open the carcass. Sometimes I amaze myself at the routine ability to do this. I was trained on ruminants and pigs by fantastic mentors, and lately I have had to learn about birds by finding other fantastic mentors, often wishing I'd paid more interest to avian medicine in university. The eagle dissection follows a method adapted from a poultry necropsy technique taught to me by a pathologist in another country who was generous with their time; now, it is second nature to me, and I'm trying to teach others the same technique, hoping to repay the debt by paying it forward.

Internally, the organs are pristine. There is no gross haemorrhage, no gross inflammation. The crop and gizzard are full. I place them to one side to weigh and sift through at the very end. There is a reason for that order, but for now, it is just the procedure.

I take my samples: virology, parasites, bacteriology, DNA. And, of course, I fill my favourite pot, the formalin jar that gets me out of jail so many times. I fill it with small, thin pieces of every organ, cut carefully so the fixative can penetrate and I don't distort the sacred structure. I know I may look at this histopathology and not understand everything; not many people have the privilege of looking at white-tailed sea eagles at a cellular level, but for some reason, I do. Even if I don't understand the full picture immediately, I will follow

my training: describe the lesions (or lack thereof), reach a morphological diagnosis, and interpret it in context. If I am stuck, I'll ask a colleague with more experience, or perhaps one with less who is currently training and has read the books more recently. That is the pathology discipline. That is the FRCPath standard.

Finally, I get to the crop and gizzard. They are full; the eagle has recently consumed part of a duck. And there, among the ingested contents, is a small, grey granule.

I note the granule and feel my senses heighten. I retrieve a fresh pair of forceps and step over to the trolley to grab a universal container. I label it for toxicant analysis. By the time I return to the tray containing the crop contents, I notice a fly has landed on the edge of the tissue and immediately died.

Why have we a fly in the PM room while doing forensic analysis? I suppose the 1960s architects couldn't have expected this, but the pathologist training in me wonders why the fly died.

There was a reason I left the gastrointestinal contents to the very end of the sampling, and the dead fly proves exactly why the procedure and training are so important. Maybe we will have an answer, but not yet. The procedures worked, and I'm confident I didn't contaminate the rest of the bird, the room, or the environment. The scene remains secure and the samples will disclose the story.

I finish the sampling, label the containers, and seal the forensic evidence bags. I will hold final judgment until the tests are complete and the findings are confirmed. Then I'll write the pathology report and we'll take it from there.

For now, it is time to wash down and go have a cup of coffee with the staff. Forensic PMs are always done first thing in the morning, as my head is fresh and the queues of farm animals at the door are less pressuring. The day has really only just started, and there will soon be farmers waiting at reception for faecal egg counts, or looking for a decision on whether they need to vaccinate their calves for pneumonia. They won't know the eagle ever existed.

There will be no treats with the coffee today on the first day of Lent in my seventh year. But this morning wasn't a penance either.

Shane McGettrick, **Senior Research Officer and Veterinary pathologist**

Pathology Portal

The Royal College of Pathologists, in collaboration with Health Education England (HEE), have developed the Pathology Portal to support both trainees and practising pathologists through technology and interactive features. It is currently being accessed more than half a million times by over 7,500 users.

The Pathology Portal hosts a diverse range of learning materials, including virtual microscopy whole slide imaging (WSI), allowing pathology tissue samples to be annotated and viewed online. These materials are mapped to the Royal College of Pathologists' curricula, ensuring relevance and quality.

Notably, the platform is not limited to digital morphological learning. It also encompasses clinical and macroscopic learning across various disciplines, including a dedicated category for veterinary pathology. Currently, the Pathology Portal is looking to build it’s resources within Veterinary Pathology and the team would be happy to talk to anyone who may have teaching resources or lectures or are interested in using the Pathology Portal as a teaching tool.

For more information and access to the Pathology Portal, visit: www.rcpath.org/profession/pathology-portal.html.

Online trainee registration system

UK trainees in veterinary anatomic pathology, veterinary clinical pathology and veterinary microbiology are encouraged to register as RCPath trainees.

The annual registration fee is **£55**. To register, please complete the online registration form available at:

https://www.rcpath.org/trainees/training/register-as-a-veterinary-pathology-trainee.html

Benefits of Registering as an RCPath Trainee

Registering with the Royal College of Pathologists provides a range of valuable benefits throughout your training, including:

- Full access to the relevant specialty curriculum.
- Information about the College's Trainees' Advisory Committee, which represents trainees within the College.
- Access to MyRCPath, including:
    - the Members' Handbook
    - draft consultations
    - Council and committee minutes
    - previous editions of the *Bulletin*.

Please note that while the Members' Handbook contains details of College members, registered trainees are not listed within it.

- Access to the quarterly *Bulletin* and all College communications, including the monthly President's e-newsletter, for the duration of training.
- Advance notification of College scientific meetings and access to reduced registration rates.
- Discounts on selected pathology titles (accessible via the member portal).
- Eligibility to purchase a TOTUM PRO card, offering discounts at more than 200 retailers.

- Access to a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) events.

If you have any questions about the registration process, please contact Adobea Akuffo, Training Coordinator, at **training@rcpath.org**.

RCPath Veterinary Pathology School for trainees/residents

Following a successful Veterinary Pathology Spring School in 2026, we are delighted to make the session recordings available to watch on demand.

Organised by the RCPath Veterinary Pathology SAC, the Spring School brought together trainees, residents and expert speakers from across the veterinary pathology community for a series of engaging 1-hour webinars. The programme offered valuable revision updates across key curriculum areas, alongside practical guidance on preparing for the RCPath Part 1 and Part 2 examinations.

Sessions covered a range of anatomic pathology, clinical pathology and microbiology topics, providing a valuable opportunity to support learning, share expertise and strengthen connections across the RCPath veterinary pathology community.

While the programme was developed with the FRCPath pathway in mind, the sessions may also be useful for those preparing for ACVP, ECVCP, ECVM and ECVP examinations, as well as veterinary pathology and microbiology trainees and residents at all stages of training.

Missed a session, or want to revisit one? You can now catch up with the Veterinary Pathology Spring School by watching the recordings below:

Veterinary Pathology Spring webinar series - 1

Veterinary Pathology Spring webinar series - 2

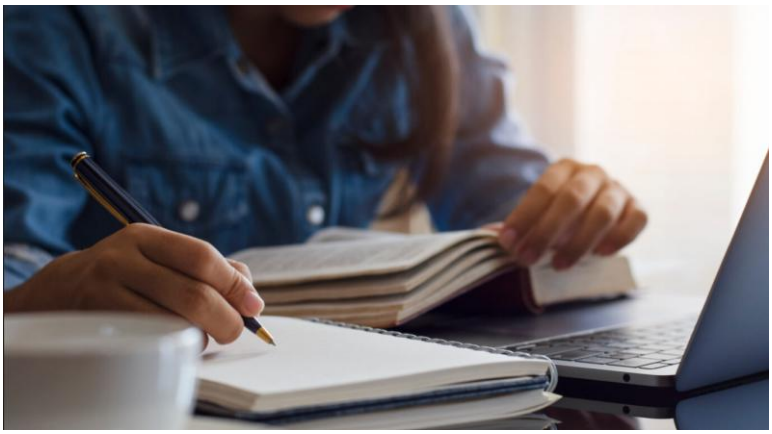
Veterinary Pathology Spring webinar series – 3

Veterinary Pathology Spring webinar series - 4

Veterinary Pathology Spring webinar series - 5

Veterinary Pathology Spring webinar series - 6

Exams update 2026:



This year has been a busy one for our trainees, with three Veterinary Pathology Part 1 candidates and one Part 2 candidate sitting in Autumn 2026, and one Veterinary Clinical Pathology Part 1 candidate and two Part 2 candidates in Spring. While results can't be shared due to the small candidate numbers, we want to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of all those who have taken exams this year. For further details regarding veterinary pathology examinations, please contact exams@rcpath.org.

The British Society of Veterinary Pathology (BSVP) Spring Meeting 2026

The BSVP welcomed delegates to its Spring Meeting, held at the University of Cambridge and online. The meeting, *Ocular Pathology: A Histopathological, Cytological and Clinical Approach*, brought together veterinary pathologists, ophthalmologists, trainees and students to explore the diagnosis and pathology of ocular disease.

The programme featured expert presentations from Dr. Emma Scurrell (for the pathology) and Dr. Heidi Featherstone (for the clinical aspect), who provided complementary perspectives on ocular disease. Topics ranged from examination and sampling techniques to histopathological interpretation, orbital pathology and feline ocular disease, with an interactive case discussion providing delegates with the opportunity to apply their learning to real-life examples.

The meeting received excellent feedback from attendees, who valued the practical focus of the programme and the opportunity to engage with colleagues from across the veterinary pathology community.



Successful recipients of our trainee bursaries were Aoife Hannon, Risa Kunii, Audra-Lynne Schlach, Kitty Ennett and Shyam Kanjee who presented their poster over breaks and lunch time.



BSVP thanks the speakers, the organisers and all the delegates for being so engaging and making the meeting such a success and looks forward to welcoming members to future events. The next BSVP meeting will be held in Bristol on the 17th and 18th of October 2026.

Veterinary Pathology SAC member vacancies

We have a number of vacancies on the Veterinary Pathology SAC. If you are interested in any of the following roles, please follow this link to apply.

Current roles

- Veterinary (Microbiology) Pathology Trainee.
- Veterinary (Clinical) Pathology Trainee.
- CPD, Clinical Lead for Academic Activities Advisor.
- Veterinary Clinical Pathology Specialty Advisor.
- Curriculum Development Representative.

Feedback or suggestions

If you have any feedback on this newsletter, or suggestions for items or College activities you wish to learn more about, please contact Louise Mair, Governance and Committee Services Officer, at louise.mair@rcpath.org. Please title your email ‘Vet Path News’.