

Veterinary Pathology Specialty Advisory Committee newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2025

Veterinary Pathology SAC Chair's message



The Veterinary Pathology Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC) has had a busy year organising webinars, drafting and reviewing guidelines, and writing articles for the College Bulletin. We are now in the midst of the autumn examinations. In autumn 2026, we will pilot the use of whole slide images for the Part 2 veterinary pathology examination. As many veterinary pathologists routinely use whole slide images in their daily practice, this is a most welcome initiative.

I am delighted to welcome our new SAC members:

Alwyn Jones (Livestock and Surveillance

Representative), Dr David Sheehan (Anatomic

Veterinary Pathology Trainee Representative) and Dr Jasmine Chan (Veterinary Pathology Clinical Trainee Representative). Their expertise and new perspectives will strengthen our work. While we celebrate these new additions, we also bid farewell to Dr Kate English and Dr Marvin Firth, whose substantial contributions to the Veterinary Pathology SAC have been invaluable. We thank them both for their commitment to advancing our specialty.



I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the presenters who have contributed to our vet path webinars over the past year. These sessions have been extremely successful, attracting attendees from across the world and significantly increasing visibility and enquiries about the College and fellowship examinations. We are excited to continue this webinar series, with new sessions planned to resume in early spring 2026.

We are also developing in-person training days designed for both trainees and practicing pathologists, which we believe will provide valuable hands-on learning opportunities and networking for our community.

Veterinary pathology continues to grow and evolve, and we need your expertise, ideas and active involvement to meet these expanding challenges. The SAC welcomes your input and encourages your active participation in College activities. Whether you have suggestions for outreach initiatives, webinar topics, training opportunities, or would like to join the Veterinary Pathology SAC directly, please do not hesitate to contact us. A list of SAC vacancies appears at the end of this newsletter.

Your engagement is essential, and I strongly encourage you to become involved in whatever capacity works for you. Every contribution matters and only with your active participation can we continue to improve and strengthen veterinary pathology.

Dr Pamela Kelly, Chair of the Veterinary Pathology SAC

New Veterinary Clinical Pathology Representative, Dr Jasmine Chan



I am delighted to serve as the Veterinary Clinical Pathology Trainee Representative on the Trainees' Advisory Committee. This role has given me a fantastic opportunity to collaborate with inspiring committee members from a wide range of specialist fields and to learn from their experiences.

Here in the UK, trainees have access to multiple training pathways and programmes designed to prepare them for different board examinations.

Whatever route a trainee chooses, the resources provided by RCPATH are invaluable in guiding and supporting them along the way.



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 and retention of animal tissues and records.](#)

[G185 Best practice recommendations: For veterinary surgeons seeking pathology expertise.](#)

Veterinary pathology Bulletin articles

Point-of-care testing in veterinary medicine

“POCT is revolutionising how vets make clinical decisions.”

In this [article](#), Dr Pamela Kelly and Professor Roberto La Ragione explore how point-of-care testing is transforming veterinary practice by delivering rapid, on-site diagnostics that improve treatment, animal welfare and disease surveillance. With examples across small animal, farm animal, and equine practice, they highlight current applications, emerging technologies and the fragmented regulatory landscape in Europe.

Veterinary pathology webinars

The role of pathology in farm animal disease surveillance



Shane McGettrick and Dr Máire McElroy hosted an intriguing 1-hour webinar on the role of veterinary pathologists in animal-related threats to both animal and public health, within a national surveillance system. Watch this insightful talk [here](#).



Epipathology: pathology and epidemiology in conservation medicine

Dr Pamela Kelly and Dr Natalie Tocco presented an hour-long webinar exploring how post-mortem examinations reveal critical insights about exotic species. This fascinating intersection of forensic investigation and conservation medicine helps transform findings from the deceased into life-saving knowledge for living animals. Watch this vital, but often over-looked discussion [here](#).



Establishing mode of action and human relevance of animal carcinogenic outcomes

If you missed it live, you can still watch this insightful 1-hour webinar [here](#).

Professor John R Foster and Dr Jan Klapwijk unpack how IPCS guidelines are used to define the mode of action of chemically induced neoplasia and assess its relevance to human exposure. Using real-world chemical case studies, they show how this approach is transforming risk assessment and shaping the safety evaluation of both drugs and agrochemicals. Packed with expert insights and practical examples, this session is a must-watch for anyone interested in toxicological pathology.

Day in the life of livestock disease surveillance



Alwyn Jones, veterinary pathologist and Veterinary Pathology SAC representative, works at SRUC Veterinary Services in St Boswells, delivering livestock disease surveillance for the Scottish government.

This year, Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3), spread by midges, remains a major concern after outbreaks in Europe and England, and is expected to recur in the UK. Farmers are urged to use 1 of 3 imported vaccines available under special licence. Schmallenberg virus is also circulating, with cases of deformed calves and lambs reported in Scotland.

A dry spring has restricted grass growth and raised concerns for livestock fertility. Tick-related diseases remain common, with outbreaks of tick-borne fever and new cases of



Louping ill in the Scottish Borders for the first time in 20 years. Anecdotally, tick numbers appear to be rising, possibly linked to climate and land use changes.

The Scottish pig industry has also launched a campaign to eradicate porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome, which has been well-received across the sector.

Alwyn Jones, Veterinary Pathologist

Day in the life of a farm animal pathologist



As I sit down to write this for the College newsletter before the day explodes, I overhear the Donegal accent of the first farmer arriving at post mortem reception. He's brought a sheep, wrapped in canvas, after a 3-hour journey from North Donegal. He struggles to recall vaccination dates, mentions there are "others not right," and wonders how long results will take. His case feels familiar, yet I can't help hoping it turns out to be something unusual – louping ill, or another nervous disease that might yield good histology or PCR material. And so, the day begins. It's Easter week, peak lambing and calving season in the west of Ireland. Animals are

dying, and everyone wants answers.

I work at Sligo Regional Veterinary Laboratory, 1 of 6 run by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. My title is Senior Research Officer and Veterinary Pathologist, but most days I'm a laboratory manager who still does pathology. With a team of 18 – vets, scientists, office staff and attendants – our core purpose is farm animal disease surveillance and investigation on behalf of the Irish government. We are the frontline for exotic, emerging, endemic and zoonotic diseases, and for safeguarding food production. Around 4,000 post mortems come through our doors each year, and spring is so busy we spend the rest of the year catching up.

We operate mainly through passive surveillance, relying on farmers and vets to bring us cases. The better our service, the more submissions arrive and the more our resources are stretched. My constant fear is missing the important case among the routine. We triage as best we can – some post mortems are brief, focused only on cause of death, while



others deserve slowing down to capture every detail. Internationally, there's no magic solution: surveillance is always about sifting through the usual to spot the unusual.

Technology helps. PCR testing now allows us to screen bovine and ovine fetuses quickly for a range of pathogens, sparing us endless slides. Yet results still need context – finding or not finding an agent is meaningless without pathology to prove it fits the lesions. Curiosity remains at the heart of the job, pulling at threads until the story makes sense. That's where pathology training and FRCPath discipline carry me. They give me confidence to interpret findings safely, even when certainty isn't possible.

Collaboration is essential too. Cameras and remote meetings help us review cases together, but they don't replace working side by side, reading a colleague's raised eyebrow as you float a theory. Pride lies in holding every case to a standard, even on frantic days. Reports may never be neat and confirmatory tests aren't always possible, but my words are the only record of my contribution. As an FRCPath pathologist, they matter.

We are fortunate to have discretion to pursue interesting cases, but with that comes guilt, many slides, so many opportunities and never enough time for research, publications or training others. Still, the Donegal farmer travelled 3 hours to let us examine his sheep. He wants answers. That, at least, I can give him. Maybe that's enough for today.

Shane McGettrick, Senior Research Officer and Veterinary Pathologist

Pathology Portal

The College, in collaboration with Health Education England (HEE), has developed the Pathology Portal to support both trainees and practising pathologists through technology and interactive features. It is currently being accessed more than 20,000 times a month by over 6,000 users.

The Pathology Portal hosts a diverse range of learning materials, including virtual microscopy whole slide imaging, allowing pathology tissue samples to be annotated and viewed online. These materials are mapped to the College's 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 its



resources within veterinary pathology and the team would be happy to talk to anyone who may have teaching resources or lectures or is 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, veterinary clinical pathology and veterinary microbiology are encouraged to register as an RCPATH trainee. The annual registration fee is £54. Trainees wishing to register should complete the registration form here: www.rcpath.org/trainees/training/register-as-a-veterinary-pathology-trainee.html.

What are the benefits of registering as an RCPATH trainee?

The benefits of registration with the College include:

- full access to the relevant curriculum
- information about the College's Trainees' Advisory Committee – the committee that represents trainees in the College
- access to MyRCPATH, including access to the members' handbook, draft consultations, Council and other College committee minutes, and previous issues of the Bulletin. The members' handbook includes details of individual members but, as a registered trainee, your details will not be listed in the members' handbook
- access to the quarterly Bulletin and all College mailings (including the monthly President's e-newsletter) for the duration of training
- notification of College scientific meetings at reduced rates
- discounts on pathology titles (behind member login)
- as a registered trainee of the RCPATH, you are able to buy a TOTUM Pro card, which offers discounts across a range of over 200 retailers
- access to a range of CPD events.

Any queries concerning the registration process should be directed to Adobea Akuffo, Training Coordinator, via training@rcpath.org.



RCPATH Veterinary Pathology School for trainees/residents

To support trainees and residents in their training and strengthen the College's veterinary pathology community, the RCPATH Veterinary Pathology SAC is planning a Veterinary Pathology School in spring 2026.

This will take the form of a series of 1-hour webinars, offering revision updates across key curriculum areas, alongside guidance on preparing for the RCPATH Part 1 and Part 2 examinations. Sessions will cover anatomic, clinical and microbiology topics, delivered by expert speakers.

The Pathology Spring School will be open to veterinary pathology (anatomic and clinical) and microbiology trainees/residents at all stages of training. While the emphasis will be on the FRCPATH programme, those preparing for ACVP, ECVCP, ECVM and ECVP exams may also find it useful.

More information to follow in due course.

Exams update 2025



This year has been a busy one for our trainees, with 6 veterinary pathology Part 1 candidates sitting in autumn 2025 and 2 veterinary clinical pathology candidates earlier in the Spring.

While results cannot be shared owing 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.

Readers will be aware that some candidates faced technical issues in the Part 1 examinations between 23 and 25 September 2025. For more information, please refer to the College's statement [here](#).



My Green Lab

2024 BSVP Autumn Meeting – Exotic and zoo animal pathology

The BSVP Autumn Meeting 2024 was held on 5–6 October at the Roslin Institute, Edinburgh, with 58 delegates (including 17 trainees/residents) attending. The programme covered a wide range of topics in exotic and zoo animal pathology, opening with Dr Daniela Denk on diagnostic principles and comparative approaches, followed by sessions on infectious diseases, comparative neoplasia and cetacean pathology.

Sunday featured talks from Dr Denk on parasitic and environmental diseases, Dr Mark Stidworthy on fungal and microsporidial infections, Dr Alexandra Penrose on exotic cytology, and further insights into avian pathology. The event closed with an interactive quiz led by Drs Spiro and Denk, giving trainees valuable experience of board-style exam questions and reinforcing the importance of integrating disease pathogenesis, species context and morphology.



Speakers group photo: Dr Linda Morrison, Dr Erika Abbondati, Dr Alexandra Penrose, Dr Simon Spiro, Dr Mark Stidworthy, Dr Daniela Denk.

5 trainees received bursaries for their scientific posters.

- **Alberto Rodriguez Barbon** (Chester Zoo/University of Liverpool) – Post-mortem lesions in 20 captive Malaysian fire snails (*Platymma tweediei*), with pneumonia as the consistent finding.



- **Bert De Jonge** (RVC) – Okapi case series with a Fanconi-like syndrome linked to chronic tubulo-interstitial nephritis.
- **Catherine Ennett** (University of Nottingham) – Renal neoplasm in a male hognose snake (*Heterodon nasicus*), highlighting diagnostic challenges in species with limited IHC application.
- **Nicola Sankey** (RVC) – 2 cases of pyometra in large exotic cats (jungle cat and Amur leopard).
- **Yannick Van de Weyer** (University of Liverpool) – Osteomyelitis and myositis from *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* in village weavers and an oriental magpie robin, without intestinal lesions.

Thanks to scientific organisers Drs Linda Morrison and Erika Abbondati for making the event possible!

BSVP Green Labs Competition

The BSVP Green Labs Competition 2024–2025 recognised laboratories for their sustainability initiatives, awarding £500 to the winning team and £250 to the runner-up. The winning project, 'Chemical recycling at the University College Dublin School of Veterinary Medicine: A preliminary cost–benefit analysis', was led by Alison Lee with Susan Peters, Ruth O'Connell, Daniel O'Sullivan, Mary Sekiya and Damien Bradley.

Their work analysed the economic and carbon costs of formalin and solvent use, explored recycling options and encouraged discussions on reducing formalin reliance. Judges praised the project's thorough and creative approach in building a strong business case for sustainability. The runner-up prize went to Elizabeth Alloway of the Veterinary Pathology Group for her project 'Lighting replacement – Fluorescents to LED'.

By adopting mindful practices and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, even small steps can lead to significant positive change. For more about the wider My Green Lab initiative, visit www.mygreenlab.org.

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 by Friday 9 January 2026.



Current roles

- Veterinary Clinical Pathology Specialty Advisor.
- Veterinary (Microbiology) Pathology Trainee.
- 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@aat.org.uk. Please title your email 'Vet Path News'.

