



Best practice recommendations

For veterinary surgeons seeking pathology expertise

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Foreword

Best practice recommendations (BPRs) are published by the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH) to assist pathologists in providing a high standard of care for patients. These recommendations are systematically developed statements intended to support the decision-making process for practitioners and patients regarding the appropriate actions that might be taken in specific clinical circumstances. They are based on the best available evidence at the time the document was prepared. We note that it may be necessary or even desirable to depart from the advice provided in BPRs in the interests of certain patients and special circumstances. However, the clinical risk of departing from the BPR should be carefully assessed and documented.

A formal revision cycle for all BPRs takes place every three years. The College will ask the original authors to consider whether or not the recommendations need to be revised. 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 two weeks, allowing members to view and comment on them. 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 consultation with the membership from 18 December 2019 to 15 January 2020. All comments received from the membership have been addressed by the authors to the satisfaction of the Clinical Director of Publishing and Engagement.

This BPR was developed without any external funding of 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. Introduction

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 a normal range 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 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 opinions or interpretations to veterinary surgeons in the UK.

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

2. 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.

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, plus FRCPath, DipACVP, DipECVCP or DipECVP.

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.

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