

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AMTRA COUNCIL

Thursday 19 May 2011

Eastwood Room, The Farmers Club, London

(Note that these minutes are subject to amendment and approval at the next meeting of the Council.)

PRESENT

Mr Bob Stevenson	Chairman
Mr Peter Rudman	Vice Chairman
Dr Vicki Adams	Pet Care Trust (alternate for Meriel France)
Mr John Blackwell	BVA
Mr Martyn Channon	elected representative of farm animal SQPs
Mr Chris Conway	elected representative of companion animal SQPs
Ms Lisa Lines	elected representative of VN SQPs
Dr Douglas McEwan	assessor representative
Mr Ian Scott	AHDA
Mr Chris Taylor	as chairman of the Education Committee
Mr David Taylor	elected representative of farm animal SQPs
Mr Simon Wetherald	elected representative of equine SQPs
Ms Claire Williams	BETA

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Stephen Dawson	Secretary General
Mr Carwyn Ellis	Observer, Harper Adams University College
Mr Paul Green	Observer, Veterinary Medicines Directorate

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr Andrew Cairns	RPS
Mr Adam Quinney	NFU
Mr Phil Sketchley	NOAH

1. Welcome to new members

Chris Conway was welcomed to his first meeting as the new companion animal SQP representative. Vicki Adams was welcomed as an alternate for Meriel France.

Martyn Channon and Dave Taylor were congratulated on winning the postal ballot for the farm animal SQP representatives.

Stephen Dawson advised Council that Bert Burns had written to him resigning from Council. Members asked Mr Dawson to write and thank him for his contributions to AMTRA over the years.

ACTION: SRD

3. To approve the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 February 2011

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda

(a) Item 3(a) - direct debits

Stephen Dawson reported that after further discussions he considered that the use of Direct Debits for payment of SQP annual renewals was unlikely to be practical at the present time, but he was progressing an online payment system.

(b) VPC

Ian Scott advised Council that he had been invited to present to the VPC on the "modern SQP". This was considered an encouraging sign of the recognition of the importance of SQP input.

(c) SCOPS

AMTRA and AHDA had agreed to provide core funding for SCOPS for 12 months, subject to input from NOAH and NFU; the situation with the other two organisations was not known.

5. Poultry/Avian SQPs

Following discussions at the last Council meeting, Harper Adams had produced an outline Module Descriptor. Council agreed that the name "avian" was better than "poultry" as it was appropriate to include some material on pigeons and other birds.

There was discussion on the role of existing R-SQPs. It was agreed that they should continue to be regarded as competent to continue to prescribe and supply avian medicines as there is no identified knowledge gap, simply that AMTRA and Harper Adams are facilitating avian specialisation. While some avian SQPs might be more knowledgeable than generalist R-SQPs, that was normal with any specialist and wasn't a problem provided the generalist meets the appropriate standards.

6. Reinstatements to the SQP register

There was discussion about a more standardised approach to dealing with those who are academically qualified but have dropped off the SQP Register and wish to be reinstated.

Council considered that there should be a lighter, 10%, financial penalty for payment up to 3 months late, and that after 6 months off the register SQPs would need to demonstrate that they were up to date either by having gained their CPD points target or passed the "CPD exam". Stephen Dawson would produce precise proposals for the September Council meeting.

ACTION: SRD

7. Multiple assessments

Stephen Dawson advised Council that Harper Adams allows students three attempts as of right at passing the AMTRA modules, and at the discretion of the subject board allows a fourth attempt – but in practice to date that discretion is always used to allow a fourth attempt. He asked whether Council was content with that situation, or should AMTRA seek to offer HA some guidance they could use in deciding whether to permit a fourth attempt?

Council agreed that AMTRA's rules on who is academically qualified need not follow HAUC's rules, but that Council were content for the situation to remain unchanged.

Stephen Dawson further advised Council that while most people who fail their viva go on to pass on the second attempt (which is now always with a different assessor), no written record could be found of any limit on the number of viva attempts. Council agreed that this should be limited to four, as with the written modules.

8. OTC Awards

The OTC Awards would this year be at the House of Lords for a lunchtime reception on 25 October. Further efforts should be made to use this as an opportunity to promote the SQP role.

9. VMD update and EU Regulatory review

The new Veterinary Medicines Regulations – and thus the associated Guidance and new Code of Practice for SQPs – have been delayed further and were now expected on 1 October 2011.

Paul Green advised Council that the Government approach to regulation generally is to seek less regulation and make it more difficult to get new regulations approved. The Regulatory Policy Committee has come back to VMD with a number of queries about the proposed new Veterinary Medicines Regulations which had delayed things further, but he was now confident of the Regulations coming into force on 1 October.

Council noted VMD's informal consultation on options to revise the fees structure for VMD's inspection-related activities, including inspections of SQP premises.

At EU level there had been no significant developments recently. VMD would be involved in a meeting with the Commission in June.

Internet selling was an area of the draft Veterinary Medicines Regulations that was under further review. VMD may focus on enforcement activity and education rather than additional regulatory controls. Council members agreed that robust and publicised enforcement activity was essential.

10. CPD

(a) Progress update

Council noted the update on SQPs' progress towards their CPD targets. Although a lot of CPD had been undertaken, there were still many SQPs well short of their targets. Council agreed that AMTRA had provided enough CPD itself and made appropriate efforts to communicate the need for CPD and the options available.

(b) Exam alternative

Council agreed that attempts at the "CPD exam" for those not gaining sufficient CPD points should be limited to four (though in practice there may not be enough time to have that many attempts and then wait for the results).

Council agreed that AMTRA should make it clear that it had no plans to offer a similar option in 2013.

Exceptional cases of individuals who failed to get enough CPD points should be considered by the Secretary General, Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

(c) Second CPD period

Council reviewed proposals from Stephen Dawson for modifications to the CPD system for the period from July 2011 to June 2013.

Council agreed:

1. **Scope:** any training or learning that is of benefit to an SQP in the performance of their duties should be accreditable. Content meeting the existing accreditation criteria should be awarded 8 points per hour; other content should be awarded 4 points per hour (removing the current concept of "bonus" points). Where practical, an event may be divided between these two categories.
2. **Distance learning:** allow distance learning supported by multiple-choice question ("quizzes") assessment to take account of the time taken to study the associated reading or audiovisual material on the basis of 4 points per hour (rather than simply 1 point per 10 questions, as now). Remove restriction on maximum number of allowable points from quizzes – but retain current 15-point minimum from seminars.
3. **FE or HE courses:** allow passing of relevant FE or HE courses to contribute on the basis of 1 CPD point per academic credit, subject to a maximum of 50% of an SQP's CPD points target. Relevancy to be decided on a case-by-case basis.
4. **Points targets:** adjust the points targets as follows. These take account of the wider range of the farm animal module than the equine and companion modules and the greater number of points available under (1) and (2).

R-SQP: 80 points
G and K-SQPs: 60 points

L and E-SQPs: 50 points
J and C-SQPs 30 points

- 5. Vet Nurses (and in future pharmacy professionals):** allow 50% of target to be met by certified attendance at non-AMTRA-accredited events which are CPD for their other profession and which the individual asserts as relevant to their SQP role.

Council asked that where appropriate communications to SQPs should seek to reflect the linkage between CPD points and hours.

11. Any Other Business

Ian Scott reported that he and Stephen Dawson had been speaking with Moredun. All SQPs of AHDA members would gain free access to Moredun data, with other SQPs able to access membership at a reduced rate.

12. Dates of future meetings

Already agreed 28 September 2011 at 11am.