24/7 emergency care: a new emphasis

OUR responsibilities in providing 24/7 emergency first aid and pain relief for any suffering animal have never been disputed by the profession but fulfilling this obligation continues to raise grey areas requiring further discussion.

One area frequently cited by RCVS members is knowing when it is reasonable to say “no” to a client who is demanding an out-of-hours visit which appears to be purely for their convenience, as opposed to the welfare of their pet.

By saying “no” to these cases, vets are concerned they could face disciplinary action by the RCVS and vets are concerned they could face convenience, as opposed to the welfare which appears to be purely for their own convenience.

RCVS to review its emergency care first aid and pain relief led the obligations in providing emergency for out-of-hours care and the vet’s disciplinary action by the RCVS and vets are concerned they could face convenience, as opposed to the welfare which appears to be purely for their own convenience.

RCVS registrar Gordon Hockey and former council member Clare Tapsfield-Wright who chaired the standards committee.

Recognising the conflict which often exists between a client’s expectations for out-of-hours care and the vet’s obligations in providing emergency first aid and pain relief led the RCVS to review its emergency care.

This information can be provided in the format of leaflets, posters and notices as well as clear statements on the practice’s website/social media.

Practices which are contacted by non-registered clients are also within their rights to charge a greater fee for a call-out compared to the fee usually charged for a registered client.

With multi-site practices on the rise and outsourcing of emergency work, the transfer of patients also has to be taken into consideration.

The RCVS advises that the transfer should only be based on clinical need, not convenience or commercial reasons. Transfers should always have a detailed history and clinical notes with them and transfers should always be kept to a minimum.

The RCVS was also keen to stress that vets who are senior managers could be accountable even if they are not on the clinical frontline. Their role in deciding staffing levels and implementing protocols plays an important part in providing appropriate emergency care and will be taken into account if the provision of care has been deemed inadequate.

These were just some of the main points discussed within the webinar but more were raised and answers to questions asked by the participating audience also proved interesting and informative.

I have to commend the RCVS for taking steps to review and make positive changes to its guidance notes for emergency 24/7 care and this webinar provides a clear explanation of why these changes have been made and how they should be put into practice.

Being a topic which is likely to affect every one of us in practice, I would highly recommend taking an hour of your time to log in and watch this webinar available on both the RCVS and The Webinar Vet’s websites. You can also find more information at www.rcvs.org.uk/247care.