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Disciplinary Committee strikes off Wiltshire vet

7 May 2013

The Disciplinary Committee of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) last week [3 May] struck off the Register a veterinary surgeon for charges relating to tuberculin (TB) testing on cattle that he undertook and certified at four farms during June and July of 2010.

At the end of the ten-day hearing, the Disciplinary Committee found Sorin Dinu Chelemen guilty of 32 charges relating to his work as an Official Veterinarian (OV) for Animal Health (see note), while employed as a locum at Endell Veterinary Group, Salisbury.

Mr Chelemen, who represented himself at the hearing, disputed all of the charges. He also said he had had poor knowledge and comprehension of written and spoken English at the time, which had since improved.

Mr Chelemen gave the Committee detailed accounts of what he said occurred in relation to the TB testing at all four farms. However, in almost all the points where the facts were denied, the Committee found a stark divergence between his evidence and that given by witnesses for the College.

The Committee was generally unimpressed by Mr Chelemen's account of events, finding many of his allegations and explanations for his actions to be incredible or unreliable.

For example, he claimed that, during his Animal Health training, he had not been given a copy of the 'Manual of Procedures' containing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for TB testing.

Although the Committee accepted Mr Chelemen's English had been poor at the time, leading to communication problems, he had satisfactorily demonstrated that he knew how to perform TB tests in accordance with these SOPs when he started work at the practice.

Overall, the Committee found Mr Chelemen's attitude was that he had not done anything wrong and nothing was his fault, and that he had little understanding of the professional responsibilities incumbent on an OV.

By contrast, the Committee considered all the witnesses called by the College to have given clear, credible and consistent evidence. Complaints had been made about three farms that were separate and unconnected, and



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where the tests had been conducted on different dates.

These complaints, if not identical, were very similar. The evidence was overwhelming that Mr Chelemen had not followed the SOPs when carrying out testing at three of the farms.

The Committee noted that the measurements recorded by Mr Chelemen did not show the differences which would be normally expected.

Mr Chelemen had not measured the animals in accordance with the SOPs when he knew he ought to have, and he had been dishonest in certifying the tests.

When considering sanctions, the Committee found an aggravating factor was that Mr Chelemen's actions undermined procedures to prevent the spread of disease.

In particular, he failed to notify the owners of animals on three farms that he had found reactors or inconclusive reactors, resulting in those animals not being isolated. Nor did he submit paperwork to Animal Health about these animals, which was a fundamental breach of his duties as an OV.

In mitigation, the Committee accepted that Mr Chelemen had no previous RCVS disciplinary findings against him; and, that the OV training he received was limited, having regard to English not being his first language and relative inexperience as a TB tester.

It also took into account that this disciplinary case had been in progress for three years, his poor health and his financial and family circumstances.

"The Committee is of the view that this is a most serious case, in which the integrity of TB testing was undermined, and animal health was put at risk, which may have resulted in the spread of disease," said Mrs Judith Webb, chairing and speaking on behalf of the Committee.

"Furthermore, this case involves findings of dishonesty, which has been held to come at the top end of the spectrum of gravity of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

She directed that Mr Chelemen be struck off the Register.

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