

Minutes of the 3rd Annual General Meeting of the British Society of Veterinary Pathology held on Saturday 14th November 2009 at The School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, The University of Nottingham

Apologies were received from Kevin Isaacs, Tony Blunden, Cheryl Scudamore, Edmund Flach, John Cooper and Brain Summers. 34 members were in attendance.

1. The minutes of the 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Society held on Saturday 8th November 2008 at The School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, The University of Nottingham, which had been circulated by email in November 2009 were approved without amendment.

2. Honorary Secretary's report

Membership demographics

The Hon Sec reported that the current membership was 105, but with 12 members yet to renew. The interested list (non-members) contained 18 people. There have been 4 formal resignations (2 moved abroad, 1 maternity, 1 retirement), and 1 member lost to follow up. Among the membership, most were anatomic pathologists, from a good mix of sectors. In terms of educational status approximately 40% were trainees (RCPath, E/ACVP, PhD).

Charity Commission application

The Hon Sec reported that an application for charitable status had been initially submitted in 2007 to the Charities Commission. A series of follow up queries were received in October 2007, after the 1st AGM, and at the 2nd (2008) AGM the Constitution was modified with a view to resubmission. However, the Charities Commission criteria for registration of a charity had changed in 2008. Specific issues which the CC had queried included: the distinction between professional body and organisation with public charitable aims (BSVO felt to fall into the former), whether the Society genuinely promoted the interests of veterinary pathology versus veterinary pathologists (for example, individual career development as a primary purpose?). There was also concern about any possible advocacy or "political activity", the proposal for a private members areas, and the listing of job adverts and careers advice on our website. Since then Council had been discussing the issues, and now questioned the benefit to BSVP of charitable status in view of our small membership and limited financial benefits set against the financial and constitutional constraints (financial benefits possibly limited (Gift Aid but small numbers and admin cost, profits negligible, limitation to political and career development goals, restriction on private web areas, job adverts etc). It had therefore been decided that a further application would not be pursued at this time. However, the exact financial status of the Society with respect to tax therefore remained unclear.

Communication

The Hon Sec discussed the need for improved communications. A regular email newsletter remained an aspiration, but time for preparation and contributions would be needed. The Society had been represented on the SAC on Vet Path at RCPath – by Kevin Isaacs once in person, and Mark Stidworthy once by teleconference. Additional modes of communication that might be useful in the future included a members'-only Listserv and a database of diagnostic testing available in different laboratories. It was hoped that some progress might be made on some of these during the coming year.

3. Honorary Treasurer's report

The Honorary Treasurer presented brief summary accounts of the Society at the end of the financial years 2008 and 2009.

Summary of funds:

Total funds 2008: £16345, total funds 2009: £15428. There was therefore a year on year deficit of £917.

She reported that the difference in income was partly due to 2 debtors owing £575, and a further £250 paid after the accounts were sent to the accountant. There was one outstanding debt of £325 for module 4. She noted that governance costs had increased:

Year	2008	2009
Secretarial expenses	1,538	3,929
PO Box/ postage	120	207
Telephone and Fax	83	255

In the light of this increased strain on the Society's finances, changes were proposed. These were to alter the membership fees, holding them at £25 for trainees (certified by a sponsor), but increasing them to £50 for non-trainees. There would also be alterations in the fees for Modules. Registration for a trainee member would now be £250, trainee non-member £325, non-trainee member £325 and non-trainee non-member £400. Fees for the current one day AGM/Scientific meeting would also alter: trainee member £125, trainee non-member £175, non-trainee member £175, non-trainee non-trainee £250.

There was some discussion of the above alterations, with some concern being expressed about the increases, as well as questions about whether external sponsorship was available. It was pointed out that without the professional secretariat, it was unlikely that the current Council members would be able to continue the activities of the Society, and that sponsorship had been sought on a number of occasions in the past, without success, and was likely to be even more difficult in the current financial climate. The changes were then approved without opposition by the meeting.

4. Education Coordinator's report

The Education Coordinator outlined the current pattern of activity, namely nine modules over four years in a didactic lecture format, of which 3 had been general pathology followed by 6 systemic pathology. Each module was 2 days long and contained no practical element. Weekdays had been gaining favour over weekends, and the condensed format limited time away from work. The following modules had been completed before the 2008 AGM: Module 1 General pathology at R(D)SVS, Module 2 General pathology at Glasgow Vet School, Module 3 General pathology at RVC and Module 4 Neuropathology at Moredun. During the 2008/2009 year, 2 further modules had taken place: Module 5 Respiratory organised by Simon Priestnall at RVC, and Module 6 Dermatology and Endocrine organised by Lucy Woolford at AHT. According to current scheduling the following Modules were still to take place: Module 7: Alimentary (not liver), Module 8: Liver (and pancreas), Module 9: Haematopoietic, skeletal and/or muscular (?).

Module 5 review: Respiratory

This Module was organised by Simon Priestnall and held at the RVC. There were 25 attendees (including 4 trainees), representing the following sectors: 6 academic, 4 pharmaceutical industry, 5 government surveillance, 5 research institute, 3 commercial diagnostics and 2 zoo animal

pathology. Financially, the Module took receipts of £6500, had expenses of £5204.44, and therefore made a surplus of £1295.56. There had been generally good feedback on organisation and content, but more time had been requested for discussion after talks.

Module 6 review: Dermatology and Endocrine

This Module was organised by Lucy Woolford and took place at AHT. There were only 16 attendees (including 3 trainees), representing the following sectors (7 academic, 4 government surveillance, 4 commercial diagnostic, 1 pharmaceutical industry). Financially, receipts had been £3843.00, and expenses: £3813.67, with a nominal surplus of £29.33 (however this related to one speaker not claiming expenses). Although there had been generally good feedback on content and organisation, late registrations (only nine colleagues registered within days of the event) had generated a significant risk of having to cancel the event, and it was noted that the availability of a BSVP credit card would have assisted booking (particularly for overseas speakers).

In closing the Education Coordinator noted that there may be a need for additional support or reduced registration fees to encourage trainees to attend, and also that there was a need for additional volunteers to act as organisers for future modules. Thanks were given to Dr Simon Priestnall, module 5 organiser, Dr Lucy Woolford, module 6 organiser, speakers on the modules and Sue Newband, BSVP administration, in ensuring that these meetings had gone ahead.

5. Honorary President's report

In a brief resume of the Society's past and future activities, the President suggested that the core activity of the Society, to provide relevant CPD into the future was secure. He identified possibilities for collaboration with other organisations in achieving these aims. He encouraged members present to make their views known from the floor, and to contribute to the ongoing debate on the development of the Society. He commended and thanked those volunteers involved in the activities of the Society over the preceding year, particularly Professor Brian Summers who was stepping down as Education Coordinator.

6. Elections/Appointments to the Society's Offices

The Council position of Education Coordinator had become vacant after the resignation of Brian Summers. A single candidate had been nominated by Council and had accepted the position. Alexandra Schock of VLA Lasswade was therefore approved by the meeting without a vote. The positions of Honorary Treasurer (Jane Miller), Honorary President (Rod Else) and Honorary Secretary (Mark Stidworthy) were not due for replacement (the BSVP Constitution stipulates 2 year terms of office subject to renewal). Mark Stidworthy indicated that he would be standing down at the end of a four-year term at the AGM in 2010.

7. Application for Specialist Division status of BVA

Discussion of this issue was introduced by the Honorary Secretary. He noted that veterinary pathology was a low profile speciality, with low levels of awareness amongst students and clinical vets as to what veterinary pathologists do, where we do it, and under what conditions. In particular, there were chronic problems with pathologist shortages and in obtaining reliable long-term financial support for training. He questioned which larger veterinary professional body would promote pathology's interests in the wider profession? In relation to this, he suggested that the Society explored the possibility of seeking Specialist Division status of the British Veterinary Association. The benefits of BVA divisional status (as currently constituted) might include a seat on BVA Council (a voting member must be a BVA Member or BVA Associate), inclusion on the

BVA website, occasional space in BVA News for events/articles and free placements in Vet Record, use of BVA boardroom and catering facilities at Mansfield Street for committee meetings at Divisional/Affiliate rates, a route to BVA divisions for the dissemination of information and ideas, the ability to state on BSVP stationery our divisional status, and general profile elevation! On the other hand, to qualify, officers must be BVA members (or can affiliate for set fee – currently £500) a potential cost to BSVP. Other criteria included that organisations must have a membership of usually 100 or more (BSVP was currently in this region), membership must not be politically motivated and the approval of BVA Board would be needed. He noted that not all BSVP members are BVA members and some may have philosophical objections to association with the BVA.

Following this outline of the position, the Hon Sec proposed that BSVP make a formal application to BVA for affiliation as a Specialist Division. This would require amendment to Article 11 of the BSVP Constitution, to stipulate that the Office Bearers of the Society shall be BVA Members or BVA Associates. He proposed that following any comments at this (2009) AGM, an email consultation be undertaken with a formal vote to ratify any decision at the next AGM. He also noted however that whilst initial soundings with BVA had been potentially favourable, the Council structure of BVA was currently undergoing a major overhaul, and this may limit the options for and benefits of affiliation with BVA. When the subject was thrown open for discussion, the proposal received a generally favourable reaction, with the main concerns relating to the potential cost to the Society of maintaining the Specialist Division requirements if BSVP Officers were not members of BVA and needed their subscriptions to be paid.

8. Modules/Autumn meeting/AGM 2010

The Hon Sec introduced this subject since the post of Education Coordinator had just changed hands. Upcoming Modules included Module 7 alimentary and Module 8 liver (and pancreas), as well as Module 9 (in which one or more of cardiovascular, haematopoietic and musculoskeletal systems were due to be included). However, as the first round of Modules came towards its conclusion, it was necessary to start considering how a future programme of Modules should run. Should this be a straightforward repeat, or should it be different, and was there any room for collaboration on common ground with other organisations such as the BSTP? In addition, should venues for Modules and AGM be fixed or rotating? Were there any venues that were ideal or to be avoided? What should happen to the AGM/Scientific meeting in the future? Should it be incorporated into a Module, as there were problems with meeting crowding/conflicting meetings and financial pressures limiting meeting attendance? Was the current format the best e.g. 1 or 2 days, week-end or mid-week? Should there be “trainee” sessions and should the remainder of the Module content be at a more advanced level to reflect the reality that mostly non-trainees were attending Modules?

Relatively little time was available for discussion of these topics, but concerns expressed included the inaccessibility of venues, the generally perceived high cost of the Modules, and conflicting views on the desirability of week-end versus mid-week Modules.

A request was made for volunteers to help organise future Modules and Scientific Meetings.

9. Any other business - AVTRW collaboration, announcements

Collaboration with AVTRW

Adrian Philbey, Secretary of AVTRW, provided a brief overview of recent developments in AVTRW, including a new Officer team and the move of the annual conference from Scarborough

to York. Veterinary pathology remained a key component of the meeting, and he invited the support of the BSVP as a joint organiser of the AVTRW Pathology Day 2010.

Invitation to join ExoticVetPath listserv

An email newsgroup had recently been formed for pathologists particularly interested or involved in zoo and exotic animal pathology. Any interested parties were invited to join, via the moderator Edmund Flach (Edmund.Flach@zsl.org)

Mouse pathology day

A joint BSTP/RCPATH meeting on mouse pathology was taking place at the Royal College of Pathologists in April 2010, and the BSVP was pleased to publicise and support this.

The meeting closed with thanks from the President for all those contributing during the previous year, and attendees at the meeting itself.

Minutes prepared by Mark Stidworthy