

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Dr Buckley

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Ref: GC.SN FOIA

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22 September 2023

Dear Dr Buckley

Re: Request for information

Thank you for your email of 26 August, in which you request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Before I deal with your request, it may assist if I set out the RCVS's obligations as a public authority. Under the FOIA, members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities. The FOIA covers any recorded information held by that public authority. The FOIA does not oblige a public authority to supply copy documents (although where it falls within the scope of the FOIA it should supply information contained within those documents) nor does it oblige a public authority to provide information that is not recorded in some form.

Now turning to your email of 26 August, your request for information is as follows:

I would like a copy of written/email communication that has occurred during the timeframe - 01.01.2021 - 26.08.2023) between representatives (employers/employees) the following organisations:

- CVS
- Vets4Pets
- APHA
- DEFRA
- UKHSA / Public Health England

And

RCVS council members (term of office overlapped with the following time period 2022 - 2023) and / or legal and / or professional conduct and / or disciplinary teams that mention one of the following terms:

- "Brucella"***
- "Brucellosis"***
- "Brucella canis"***
- "Canine Brucellosis"***
- "Canine brucella"***

In relation to your request for information on Brucella/Brucellosis/Brucella canis/Canine Brucellosis/Canine Brucella, we note that you are requesting communications with a number of different elements of the College's activities.

1. Council members – there have not been any formal minuted discussions at Council or any of its associated Committees in relation to these topics. Any correspondence between individual Council members and employees or representatives of the named organisations is not disclosable as it does not take place in pursuance of the statutory function of the College and therefore does not fall within the ambit of the FOI.
2. Legal/professional conduct/disciplinary teams – as we have notified you previously, concerns and advice files are categorised according to the chapters in the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons and nurses, and thus Brucella and associated conditions are not searchable terms. Moreover, when individual registrants contact the College, no searchable record is kept of their employment at that time. For this reason, we do not hold the information you request, and any search would require a manual check of each concern and/or advice request registered between 1 January 2021 and 26 August 2023, and we consider that the time it would take to complete this task would exceed the appropriate cost limit. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which is £450. This represents the estimated cost of a staff member spending 18 hours in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving, and extracting it.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may:

- a. Write to Eleanor Ferguson, Registrar of the RCVS, at the RCVS offices (or email: e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk)
- b. If you are not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may write to the Information Commissioner, who is appointed to consider such complaints at the address shown below:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF

Further information on how to complain is available on the Information Commissioner's Office website:
<https://ico.org.uk/>

Yours sincerely,

Gemma Crossley

Solicitor

Head of Professional Conduct