

## A Code of Conduct for managing potential conflicts of interest

### Declaring a conflict of interest

*Veterinary Evidence* makes every effort to obtain declarations of interest from authors at the submission stage; reviewers at the invitation stage; Associate Editors at the assignment stage; and all Editorial Board members upon invitation to joining the board.

*Veterinary Evidence* strives to uphold the principles of best practice in scholarly publishing. We therefore aim to be transparent when it comes to any conflicts of interest that may arise during the publication process or post publication.

To make the best decision on how to proceed with a submission or peer-review process, *Veterinary Evidence* asks authors, reviewers and Editors to declare any competing interests, so that *Veterinary Evidence* can make informed decisions regarding submissions and reviews.

### What is a conflict of interest?

The [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors](#) (ICMJE) states that:

*The potential for conflicts of interest can exist whether or not an individual believes that the relationship affects his or her scientific judgment. Financial relationships (such as employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony) are the most easily identifiable conflicts of interest and the most likely to undermine the credibility of the journal, the authors, and of science itself. However, conflicts can occur for other reasons, such as personal relationships, academic competition, and intellectual passion.*

Editors should therefore ask themselves if there is anything that may bias their judgement when performing the task required of them and to state this within their declaration of interest.

All disclosures of potential conflicts of interest are reviewed by the Editor in order to determine whether there is any potential for bias.

### The veterinary profession

In a small profession the potential for conflicts of interest is exacerbated. In order to utilise relevant knowledge and experience in decision making it is often necessary to involve those who have personal or professional interests. In making decisions in situations involving particular individuals (such as the award of research grants) it may be the case that those involved in the decisions know the individuals involved, directly or indirectly. In order to discharge its responsibilities RCVS Knowledge must take a pragmatic approach and take particular care in assessing the risks involved and in mitigating them, wherever possible. This Code is intended to assist in this by ensuring that all concerned are fully aware of any conflicts of interest and that those interests are managed appropriately and proportionately. This Code relates to the conduct of Members of the RCVS Knowledge Board in the way that the Code of Professional Conduct relates to the conduct of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

**Who needs to submit a declaration of interest?**

All members of the editorial board.

**What interests need to be declared?**

Any professional, business or personal interests which may impinge on the activities of *Veterinary Evidence* or RCVS Knowledge.

*If in doubt, disclose.*

**NB Conflicts of interest are not just matters which you think may be a bar to objectivity, but should also include those which others, such as outsiders, may think give rise to bias. The ultimate test of when an interest needs to be declared is if it might be seen by an objective observer as something that might have influenced the decision arising from any discussion in which you participated.**

The list may include current or previous employment or practice (covering at least the last 7 years); professional qualifications; memberships, fellowships and offices held in professional bodies; links with local, national and community organisations; consultancies and directorships; shareholdings, membership of the freemasons or a political party; directorships; appointments, e.g. as advisors to pet insurers; gifts and hospitality (which exceed the value of £150 in any year from a single source).

In appropriate cases it may be necessary to disclose religious beliefs or vegetarian preferences in so far as they may have a bearing on a particular discussion. These may be disclosed to the Chair at the relevant meeting.

Relevant interests relating to immediate family or people with whom you have a close association should be disclosed, in so far as they are known to you. Personal relationships would usually only be relevant in the context of a specific discussion and for that reason are not included in the attached form.

Personal or sensitive information, e.g. relating to connections with animal research institutions, need not be disclosed on the published form but should be made known internally, in writing.

**Who to consult in the event of uncertainty?**

First point of contact will be the Managing Editor, who will consult the Editor-in-chief.

**Storage and Publication of declarations**

The declaration of interest forms are stored electronically.

Declarations of interest for Board Members are published on the *Veterinary Evidence* website, and will be stored on the RCVS Knowledge intranet.

**Keeping declarations up to date**

Declarations of interest should be continuously kept up to date by reporting any changes when they arise, and normally within 28 days of any change in circumstances.

The electronic form, stored on the intranet, will dateline any changes to the document. It will therefore be possible to see when declarations have been added or deleted.

## Board and Staff Members' declaration of interests form

The information entered in the form will be published on the *Veterinary Evidence* website. Personal or sensitive information should be disclosed privately to the Chair or Executive Director.

### Name

Christopher (Kit) Sturgess

### Directorships

Company/organisation	Role
Vet Freedom Limited	Director
Wildheart Trust and Trust Trading	Director

### Shareholdings (of relevance e.g. in pharmaceuticals companies, farming, food, etc)

Company/organisation	Role
All in managed funds	

### Consultancies

Company/organisation	Role
Various single projects, not retained by any organisation as a consultant	

### Appointment to other bodies

Company/Organisation	Role
Chair BSAVA Education Committee Chair Wildheart Trust Chair of Plowright Award committee	Chair
Committee member Southern BSAVA RCVS Estates Strategy Project Board RCVS Certification Subcommittee Editorial board - Companion Animal Editorial Board - Veterinary Nursing Journal Trustee Cats Protection - on their Audit committee	Committee member or Trustee

### Membership and/or Fellowships of other veterinary or allied organisations

Company/organisation	Role
Small animal medicine society	Member, ex chair
Veterinary Cardiovascular Society	Member
Fellowship of RCVS	Member

### Funding received directly or indirectly<sup>i</sup> from RCVS Knowledge (other than expenses or wages.

See the note below)

None

**Employment** (practice, industry, university, etc. - past and present)

Vet Freedom Ltd – veterinary locum services

Last 10 years – Director of Anderson Sturgess Veterinary Specialists and Head of Medicine

**Qualifications** (other than veterinary qualifications listed in the Register)

None

**Interests relating to immediate family or close friends**

Wife (Avery) is MRCVS and director Vet Freedom Ltd.

**Other relevant information** (includes links with local or national bodies, political organisations, gifts and hospitality (exceeding £150 in any year from a single source) or other interests: anything which may be perceived to constitute a conflict of interest and which if not disclosed but subsequently identified could cause embarrassment for the individual and RCVS Knowledge.)

None

I hereby declare that in returning this form I accept and will abide by the RCVS Knowledge Code of Conduct for managing potential conflicts of interest.

**Authorisation**

By returning this information electronically to [info@rcvsknowledge.org](mailto:info@rcvsknowledge.org) or directly on the intranet, I confirm that the information contained is an accurate reflection of interests, and agree that the above information can be held on file at RCVS Knowledge, published on the intranet and the website, and used in response to specific and relevant requests for information.



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<sup>i</sup> An example of an indirect grant would include, for example, a grant to a member of a faculty of which you are a member, and for whom you have some managerial or administrative responsibility.