

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.

Editorial Board 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 Managing Editor.

Name

Louise Buckley

Directorships

Company / organisation	Role
None	

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

Company / organisation	Role
None that I am aware of unless anonymously invested via my Teacher/USS/workplace pensions. I am not a direct shareholder of anything.	

Consultancies

Company / organisation	Role

Appointment to other bodies

Company / organisation	Role
Frontiers of Veterinary Science (journal)	Review Editor for Animal Behaviour & Welfare
Veterinary Nursing Journal (journal, BVNA)	Former editorial board member
Animal Science Cases (CABI)	Editorial Board
BSAVA	Former PDP Committee and Scientific Committee member

Membership and / or Fellowships of other veterinary or allied organisations

Company / organisation	Role
RCVS	Registered Veterinary Nurse
BVNA	Honorary veterinary nursing member
ISAE	Ordinary member
UFAW	Ordinary member
APBC	Former Academic member
AWSELVA	Ordinary member
Causeway Education	Mentor

Funding received directly or indirectly¹ from RCVS Knowledge (other than expenses or wages. See the note below).

None

I was part of the original research group that received funding to develop the EBVM Learn resources. The PI / leading institution for this was University of Bristol. Prior to this I have received funding for myself and / or work colleagues to attend RCVS Knowledge EBVM focused study days/conferences.

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

Current:
 University of Edinburgh

Previous:
 IVC Evidensia – Mintlaw veterinary practice
 Vets Now
 Bristol Veterinary School, University of Bristol
 Anglian Ruskin University
 Harper Adams University
 College of Animal Welfare
 Self-employed veterinary nurse (locum)
 Universities of Middlesex and Glynwyr (past, external assessor)
 Vets Now (past)
 University of Glasgow (past)
 Cats Protection (past)

Vets4Pets/Companion Care (past)
Lincoln Veterinary Hospital (past)
Self-employed veterinary nurse locum (past)
No other veterinary practices that I can recall since qualifying as a vet nurse in 2002.

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

PhD – Animal welfare assessment
PGCert – Teaching & Learning in Higher Education
PG Cert – Applied Animal Behaviour & Welfare
Currently studying – Masters Applied Statistics in Healthcare
BA(Hons) Philosophy
BSc(Hons) Animal Behaviour Science
Edinburgh Teaching Award, leading to Senior Fellowship status of Advance HE

Interests relating to immediate family or close friends

None

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).

I run a social media page (4.6k members) and co-run a support group (circa 650 members) for owners of overseas dogs imported into the UK and test positive/might test positive for Brucella canis. This page also provides advice and support to rescue organisations and veterinary professionals, and has an increasingly international focus. As part of this awareness raising, I campaign for access to accurate evidence-based information, and undertake Freedom of Information requests of multiple public bodies and organisations, and undertake other legal/lawful peaceful means to address misinformation.

Member of the Scottish National Party

I review research papers for multiple peer reviewed journals both in veterinary, animal welfare, and human healthcare journals. Have reviewed conference abstracts for multiple professional bodies including both human and veterinary education, animal welfare & behaviour, and veterinary/veterinary nursing. Details upon request.

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 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 *Veterinary Evidence* website, and used in response to specific and relevant requests for information.

Louise Buckley

¹ 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.