

## RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses

### Introduction

- a. Licence to practise qualifications leading to entry onto the Veterinary Nurse Register must articulate with the RCVS Day One Skills for veterinary nurses and be specified, recorded and assessed in a format that is readily auditable and accessible to learners.
- b. The Day One Skills list is a regulatory benchmark of essential clinical skills, developed and reviewed by the RCVS, based on the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nursing. The skills list is embedded in an electronic nursing progress log (the NPL) which has been designed to support a process of clinical mentorship and learning in addition to recording competence achievement. Awarding institutions may use the NPL or develop their own recording systems.
- c. There are Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing in relation to the care of either horses (or other equidae) or small animals, which should include dogs, cats and exotic species, or a combination of the three.
- d. The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct sets out veterinary nurses' professional responsibilities. Where applicable the RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing has been referenced to the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* and the relevant supporting guidance which should be referred to, by student veterinary nurses, when completing the skills.

## RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing Small Animal

### Section 1 Legislation affecting practice

#### Relevant day one competences

3. Demonstrate knowledge of the organisation and legislation related to a veterinary business
4. Promote, monitor and maintain health and safety in the veterinary setting; demonstrate knowledge of systems of quality assurance; apply principles of risk management to their practice
21. Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including observing the appropriate health and safety recommendations

	Skill	Guidance
1.	Comply with Health and Safety requirements and local risk factors	Comply with legislative requirements

2. Follow Standard Operating Procedures and manufacturer guidelines when using equipment and materials
3. Take appropriate action and report injury to self or others
4. Carry out a risk assessment for one area of the practice and instigate appropriate action
5. Comply with the requirements for reporting notifiable diseases and reportable diseases and injuries under RIDDOR Professional discussion in relation to notifiable diseases and reporting is an acceptable assessment method for this skill

## **Section 2 Communication**

### **Relevant day one competences**

5. Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned
6. Prepare accurate clinical and client records, and laboratory reports when necessary, in a form satisfactory to colleagues and understandable by the public
7. Work effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in the delivery of services
8. Understand the economic and emotional context in which the veterinary nurse operates
9. Be able to review and evaluate literature and presentations critically
10. Understand and apply principles of clinical governance, and practise evidence-based veterinary nursing
11. Demonstrate ability to cope with incomplete information, deal with contingencies, and adapt to change
19. Communicate clearly and collaborate with referral and diagnostic services, ensuring they receive an appropriate history from the veterinary surgeon.
31. Understand the appropriate need for euthanasia; sensitively support the owner and others with due regard for health and safety of those present; advise on disposal of the carcass
32. Advise clients on programmes of preventative medicine appropriate to species

Skill	Guidance
1. Communicate effectively using a variety of different methods <b>see supporting guidance:</b> <b>5 communication between professional colleagues</b>	Communicate with clients, work colleagues, other veterinary professionals and the public. Communication models should be followed where applicable
2. Create accurate and legible written communications according to practice policy	Records to include: patient records and reports, laboratory reports, admission and consent forms, client home care plans and instructions
3. Access and store client and practice records according to practice policy and data protection laws <b>see supporting guidance:</b> <b>14 client confidentiality</b>	
4. Admit patients <b>see supporting guidance:</b> <b>1 referrals and second opinions</b> <b>9 practice information, fees and insurance</b> <b>11 communication and consent</b>	Obtain written and verbal informed consent; Respond appropriately to economic status of clients to include insurance and charity referrals
5. Conduct effective nursing consultations <b>See supporting guidance:</b> <b>18 delegation to veterinary nurses</b>	History taking and appropriate examination; Identifying patients for referral to a veterinary surgeon; Application of treatments; Programmes of preventative medicine; Implant a microchip
6. Provide discharge information and guidance to owners	Advise clients on safe and correct routes of administration and potential side effects; Demonstrate to clients safe techniques for administering medication; Advise clients on the storage and disposal of medication; Wound care advice; Bandage advice
7. Complete appropriate paperwork for referral and diagnostic services <b>See supporting guidance:</b> <b>13 clinical and client records</b>	To include laboratory samples, clinical histories and hereditary tests

This links to Laboratory Skill 8

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| 8.  | Practise evidence-based nursing  | Appraise literature; Discuss findings with practice team   |
| 9.  | Collaborate with inter-professional colleagues to improve professional practice and relationships<br><b>see supporting guidance:</b><br><b>5 communication between professional colleagues</b><br><b>17 veterinary teams and leaders</b> | Consult the veterinary team in the event of unexpected medical or surgical complications, serious complaint, accident or anaesthetic death; Consider mitigating circumstances;<br>Ensure effective protocols are in place;<br>Communicate changes to the practice team |
| 10. | Communicate effectively expressing appropriate empathy and sympathy<br><b>See supporting guidance:</b><br><b>8 Euthanasia of animals</b>   | Prepare the owner for loss; Support the owner through the euthanasia process;<br>Provide follow-up support for a bereaved owner; Maintain and adapt professional approach to the circumstances   |

### Section 3 Handling and restraint

#### Relevant day one competences

14. Handle and restrain animal patients safely and humanely, and instruct others in helping the veterinary surgeon perform these techniques.

	Skill	Guidance
1.	Evaluate behavioural and environmental factors when approaching and handling animals	Recognition of and minimising fear and distress
2.	Transport animals using approved manual handling and lifting procedures	
3.	Select and wear appropriate personal protective equipment	
4.	Demonstrate techniques for approaching and catching animals	
5.	Lead and move animals using the most appropriate equipment for the species	

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| 6. | Use appropriate restraint methods suitable for the patient and situation with due consideration for animal welfare | Maintain patients emotional homeostasis and wellbeing; Recognise signs of distress and act accordingly to minimise this; Restrain for clinical examination, sample collection, administration of medicines and introduction of an appropriate airway management device |
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#### **Section 4 Nursing care**

##### **Relevant day one competences**

- 15. Deliver nursing care in accordance with best practice and due regard to animal welfare
- 16. Develop appropriate care plans and administer care in the interests of the patients and with regard to the resources available
- 17. Administer emergency first aid and assist with the provision of emergency treatment to animals.
- 24. Be aware of suspected adverse reactions and alert the veterinary surgeon
- 30. Assess pain and alert the veterinary surgeon

Skill	Guidance	
1.	Use an appropriate model of care to deliver the nursing process and create care plans for a range of disorders and diseases	Interpret nursing care plans and carry out appropriate nursing interventions
2.	Carry out a nursing assessment ascertaining information about the patient's normal routine	Food and fluid intake; Urination and defecation; Behaviour (response to pain, strangers, commands etc); Mobility; Sleep and rest; Maintain your own hygiene levels
3.	Perform a clinical examination and record findings	To include temperature, pulse, respiration, weight and capillary refill times/mucous membranes
4.	Provide husbandry to animals within a veterinary setting; accommodation, nutrition and excretions	Consider age, species, condition, demeanour and enrichment. Undertake a nutritional assessment according to WSAVA guidelines. Calculate food

requirements based on disease and life stage/lifestyle, Manage assisted feeding to include hand feeding, oral hydration and managing and maintaining assisted feeding tubes

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| 5.  | Groom and bathe patients according to their needs   |   |
| 6.  | Assess, monitor, manage and report the status of wounds   |   |
| 7.  | Apply dressings appropriate to type of wound  |   |
| 8.  | Apply bandages appropriate to species and condition   |   |
| 9.  | Administer medicines prescribed by the veterinary surgeon in accordance with instructions from the manufacturer | To include oral, topical, subcutaneous, intramuscular and intravenous   |
| 10. | Monitor for adverse medication reactions and alert veterinary surgeon   |   |
| 11. | Provide fluid therapy to in-patients  | Select appropriate fluids according to veterinary surgeon instructions; Select and prepare administration equipment; Place intravenous catheters into appropriate veins; Intravenous catheter management; Calculate amount and rate of fluid to administer; Observe and monitor patients receiving fluids |
| 12. | Assess pain and alert the veterinary surgeon  | Score and evaluate pain using a validated system; intensity of pain and associated anxiety and behaviour  |
| 13. | Perform basic physical therapy techniques to aid mobilisation   | To include passive movement and active exercise   |
| 14. | Administer first aid for a range of situations within the limits of law and the expertise of the student        |   |
| 15. | Assist with a range of emergency care techniques  |   |

## Section 5 Laboratory techniques

### Relevant day one competences

18. Collect, preserve and transport samples, prepare appropriate diagnostic tests, understand the limitations of the test results and identify the significance of spurious results

	Skill	Guidance
1.	Discuss with the veterinary surgeon and prepare for an appropriate sampling strategy	Strategy to include: personal protective equipment (PPE), clipping and preparing sample site, preparation of patient and equipment; calibration of equipment. Strategies prepared for: blood, urine, faeces, skin/hair and tissue biopsies
2.	Take appropriate samples	Samples to include: blood, urine, faeces, skin, hair pluck, bacterial swabs.
3.	Carry out haematological analysis	To include: biochemistry, haematology, packed cell volume, total solids and smear
4.	Carry out urinalysis	To include: specific gravity, sediment analysis
5.	Carry out faecal analysis.	May include; gross visual analysis; microscopic analysis; quantitative examination; Baermann technique or commercial test kits
6.	Carry out skin and hair analysis	To include: hair pluck, tape strips and coat brushings
7.	Use a microscope	To include: low magnification, high magnification and oil immersion. Record Vernier Scale readings
8.	Prepare samples for external analysis  (this skill links to communication skill 7)	To include: accurate completion of documentation, correct packaging and labelling, correct preservation and storage.
9.	Record laboratory test results and communicate accurately to the appropriate clinician	

**Section 6 Diagnostic imaging**  
**Relevant day one competences**

20. Prepare and conduct diagnostic imaging and other techniques carrying out the procedure in accordance with good health and safety and current regulations.

	Skill	Guidance
1.	Prepare and use radiography equipment to produce a diagnostic image	
2.	Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and radiation monitoring equipment in accordance with practice local rules	
3.	Position a patient to obtain a diagnostic image of the area of interest	A variety of species and positions would be expected
4.	Process images according to practice procedure	
5.	Record exposures and results of images according to practice procedure	Appraise the quality of the image
6.	Prepare and support animals during endoscopy investigation	
7.	Prepare and support animals during ultrasound investigation	

**Section 7 Dispensing**  
**Relevant day one competences**

22. Access the appropriate sources of data on licensed medicines.

23. Dispense medicines correctly and responsibly in accordance with veterinary surgeon direction, legislation and latest guidance.

	Skill	Guidance
1.	Ensure safe handling and management of pharmaceuticals in accordance with legislation	Store, handle and dispose of medicines in line with legislative guidelines and specific requirements found in the

		Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) and with reference to their drug category. To include; Controlled drugs and cytotoxic/ cytostatic/certain hormonal medicines which require special handling and disposal
2.	Interpret prescriptions and prepare medicines for dispensing.	Calculate drug dosages and confirm with colleague; Package and label in accordance with legal requirements
3.	Maintain appropriate records	Controlled drugs (CDs) Medicines records

**Section 8 Infection control**  
**Relevant day one competences**

21. Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including observing the appropriate health and safety recommendations

25. Apply principles of bio-security correctly, including sterilisation of equipment and disinfection of clothing.

	Skill	Guidance
1.	Recognise clinical signs of common notifiable and zoonotic diseases and undertake strategies to prevent spread and infection	See also section 1:part 5
2.	Formulate and implement an appropriate infection control strategy according to practice protocol	Constitute appropriate cleaning and disinfectant solutions; Prepare, clean and maintain patient accommodation that maximises the welfare of hospitalised patients to include isolation accommodation; Prepare, clean and maintain examination rooms, preparation area and operating theatre to include periodic deep clean and after infected cases
3.	Dispose of hazardous and non-hazardous waste safely and correctly according to current legislation	

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| 4. | Ensure appropriate hygiene skills are followed before and after handling animals and equipment | Comply with the World Health Organisation hand washing method;                                 |
| 5. | Carry out effective barrier nursing  | Use and dispose of PPE taking into account accommodation, PPE, equipment and patient condition |

**Section 9 Theatre practice**  
**Relevant day one competences**

26. Prepare the environment, equipment and patient for aseptic surgery
27. Assist the veterinary surgeon as a scrubbed nurse to perform surgical procedures on patients

Skill	Guidance
1. Check and clean surgical instruments	Identify common surgical instruments; Identify and report damage to equipment and instruments
2. Prepare package and monitor the sterilisation of instruments and materials	
3. Prepare the theatre for use based on equipment and procedure	
4. Position patients appropriately on the operating table in accordance with the planned procedure taking into account patient condition	
5. Prepare the surgical site appropriately for the procedure in accordance with veterinary surgeon's preference	
6. Assist as circulating nurse	Open and pass sterile materials direct to scrubbed personnel; Prepare ancillary and powered equipment
7. Prepare hands and arms using appropriate method	
8. Prepare for surgical assistance wearing appropriate attire	Don gown and gloves (closed gloving method) in an aseptic manner to assist with surgery

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| 9.  | Put on surgical gloves (open gloving method) in an aseptic manner to assist with sterile procedures | Maintain sterility |
| 10. | Maintain sterility of self and others during procedures   |                    |
| 11. | Assist with draping patient maintaining sterility   |                    |
| 12. | Monitor and record materials during surgery   |                    |
| 13. | Handle and pass instruments and equipment aseptically during surgery                                |                    |

### Section 10 Anaesthesia

#### Relevant day one competences

28. Assist the veterinary surgeon by preparing patients, equipment and materials for anaesthetic procedures
29. Assist in administering and maintaining anaesthesia to patients

Skill	Guidance
1. Assess the patient's anaesthetic risks	To include ASA guidelines, behaviour and temperament
2. Prepare for anaesthesia	Check and prepare the anaesthetic machine in accordance with practice protocol; Select and prepare breathing system/circuit and pollution control system in accordance with practice protocol; Select and prepare monitoring equipment according to the patient's condition; Prepare materials and equipment required for induction of anaesthesia to include pharmaceutical agents (according to veterinary surgeon direction) and appropriate airway management device
3. Prepare patients for anaesthesia	Administer prescribed premedicants and assess the patient's response; Introduce airway management device (check position and secure airway management

- device)
4. Maintain and monitor the patient during the anaesthetic process  
**See supporting guidance:  
18 delegation to veterinary nurses**  
Measure temperature, heart rate, central and peripheral pulse, respiratory rate; Evaluate depth of anaesthesia; Monitor equipment (systems/circuits and tube, gases and volatile agents, patient monitors); Interpret and report observations to the directing veterinary surgeon (Inconsistencies, patient monitors); Calculate and administer inhalation anaesthesia under veterinary direction (Change the depth or level of inhalation anaesthesia under veterinary direction)
  5. Complete anaesthetic monitoring records
  6. Supervise recovery from anaesthesia  
Disconnect patients from anaesthetic equipment and materials; Position patients for recovery; Remove airway management device at appropriate stage of recovery; Maintain accurate recovery records; Communicate post operative and/or anaesthetic recovery progress to the supervising veterinary surgeon