RCVS submission of monitoring proposal for the compliance of veterinary businesses with the CMA substantive order

1. The CMA will require the RCVS to monitor businesses for compliance with remedies falling into five categories:

    - Practice information
    - Provision of price estimates and exercising clinical judgement
    - Medicines
    - Cremation options and prices
    - Complaints procedures

2. The remedies that the RCVS will monitor are set out in the final Veterinary Services Market Investigation Order 2026 (the Order). A brief summary is set out in the table below which is also set out in the Order, and refers to the parts of the Order where the remedies are set out in full.

Part and Article	Name of Article or Part	Compliance Date for Large Veterinary Businesses	Compliance Date for Small Veterinary Businesses
Part 2, Article 5	Ownership Information	22 March 2027	22 March 2027
Part 2, Article 6	Practice Information	22 December 2026	22 March 2027
Part 2, Article 7	Price List	22 December 2026	22 March 2027
Part 2, Article 8	Parasiticide Price List	22 December 2026	22 March 2027
Part 2, Article 9	Pet Care Plans	22 December 2026	22 March 2027
Part 2, Article 10	Submission of information to the RCVS for publication on the Find a Vet Platform	3 months from the date on which the RCVS has fully complied with paragraph 4.1 of the Substantive RCVS Undertakings, or 22 September 2027, whichever is later.	3 months from the date on which the RCVS has fully complied with paragraph 4.1 of the Substantive RCVS Undertakings, or 22 September 2027, whichever is later.
Part 3, Article 11	Written estimates for higher cost treatments	22 June 2027	22 September 2027
Part 3, Article 12	Itemised bills	22 June 2027	22 September 2027
Part 3, Article 13	Ensuring that Veterinary Professionals can act in accordance with the relevant provisions of the RCVS Codes and Guidance	22 December 2026	22 March 2027
Part 4, Article 14	Pet Owner awareness of written prescriptions	22 June 2027	22 September 2027
Part 4, Article 15	Provision of Written Prescriptions	22 June 2027	22 September 2027
Part 4, Article 16	Standard Flyer for ongoing medication	22 June 2027	22 September 2027

Part 4, Article 17	Own Brand Medication	22 June 2027	22 September 2027
Part 4, Article 18	Prescription Fees	22 March 2027	22 September 2027
Part 6, Article 20	Cremation options and prices for Pet Owners	22 December 2026	22 March 2027
Part 7, Article 21	In-house complaint processes	22 March 2027	22 March 2027
Part 7, Article 22	Complaint logs	22 March 2027	22 March 2027
Part 7, Article 23	Mediation	22 March 2027	22 March 2027

The proposed general approach

3. The CMA has set out that the monitoring work will be a combination of monitoring attestations provided by practices/businesses and spot-checking of practices/businesses. Monitoring by the RCVS will be undertaken in accordance with the undertakings offered by the RCVS and accepted by the CMA.

4. The RCVS has had meetings with the CMA to discuss how monitoring might be carried out. Enforcement in the event of non-compliance will not be carried out by the RCVS, but by the CMA. The CMA has noted in the FDR that the RCVS will be required to refer all **potential** cases of non-compliance to the CMA, indicating that it is not expecting RCVS to apply any judgment about what constitutes a breach.

5. Broadly, the FDR sets out the level of monitoring that has been described by the CMA in discussions with the RCVS. The CMA, in its own monitoring, relies heavily on attestations submitted by the businesses who are required to comply with remedies. This is supplemented with following up with businesses if the CMA has information that the business is non-compliant. The CMA has indicated that it focuses its monitoring and enforcement activity on following up on all reports of, or information about, non-compliance in its own monitoring of remedies in other Orders, but typically less frequently monitors or checks those other businesses where there is no evidence of non-compliance outside of established attestation processes.

6. It is proposed below that there is a monitoring team established within RCVS, within the same directorate as the Registration team, whose sole or primary role will be to monitor the requirements of the CMA Order by spot-checking. The existing registration team will receive and monitor attestations and fees. Both teams will use the same systems and infrastructure as the Registration and Customer Services teams. In order to receive information about compliance, the monitoring team will need to receive and act on information from other teams at the RCVS/funded by the RCVS, for example, Professional Conduct and the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), and outside the RCVS, i.e. the Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS).

7. The nature of RCVS monitoring of veterinary businesses'/practices' compliance with the remedies will be fundamentally different (e.g. reactive) from the approach taken to assessments and checks undertaken as part of the PSS, which are both routine and reactive and cover a much broader range of standards across not just veterinary services for household pets, with qualitatively different outcomes. However, the RCVS will identify any potential synergies due to experience

and business contacts gained from operation of the PSS in an effort to ensure the cost of monitoring activity is kept to the minimum necessary.

8. Detailed guidance and standard operating procedures for multiple teams across the RCVS and beyond will be required to enable the team to carry out the monitoring to sufficient quality. Access to legal and technical support will also be required particularly in cases where judgement may have to be exercised to assess whether a practice is compliant.

Acting on information of non-compliance

9. Information about practices and businesses that are alleged to be non-compliant may be received directly, for example, it would be known directly by the RCVS if practices/businesses had or had not submitted an attestation and failure to submit would be non-compliant with the Order. The RCVS would also directly monitor the provision of information for Find a Vet. Information regarding non-compliant businesses and practices is also likely to be received through complaints or the provision of information from third parties, customers or other veterinary businesses.

10. The CMA has described in meetings that it focusses its own monitoring and enforcement activity on businesses where there is some information that they are not compliant. The CMA has also described its method of enforcement in relation to other sets of remedies. Generally, for recently introduced remedies, the CMA supports businesses to comply and keep lines of communication open with businesses, rather than moving immediately to enforcement, although this may be necessary for egregious breaches or repeat non-compliance and the appropriate action is determined on a case-by-case basis. The CMA has a range of enforcement tools, including issuing written directions and for remedies introduced after 1 January 2026, the power to impose financial penalties.

Proposed approach

11. The monitoring will be undertaken by both the Registration team, in respect of monitoring attestations and receiving fees, and a monitoring team alongside the Registration and Customer services team. Guidance, including on assessing risk, and Standard Operating Procedures will be required to assist the teams to undertake monitoring work, and some systems upgrades will be required to enable as much automation as possible. Guidance about the RCVS processes is likely to be required by veterinary businesses. A flow chart of the proposed process is at Annex A.

12. Extra headcount will also be required to undertake this work, including monitoring officers and a supervisor or manager. Consideration will need to be given in due course about the CMA's requirements in reporting compliance to it and the internal governance structure at RCVS to ensure that the RCVS is keeping to the provisions of any undertakings into which it enters.

13. Businesses will be required to provide their details to the RCVS via a webform so that the RCVS can put those details on Find a Vet. The webform will need to be developed internally.

14. It is proposed that the attestations will be received by the Registration team via the customer relationship management (CRM) system and will be monitored to check that they have attested

correctly, and to ascertain how many businesses have attested that they are non-compliant. If possible, there will be an assessment of missing attestations.

15. The Registration team will also collect fees from practices and businesses, and it would be cost effective for fees and attestations to be submitted simultaneously. If a fee is not paid then this will be non-compliance reportable to the CMA, and the debt can be pursued in court by the RCVS

16. Where the Registration team assesses that a business or practice is non-compliant, it will notify the monitoring team. The monitoring team will conduct spot-checks on those practices and businesses in accordance with the undertakings. The monitoring team may also receive information alleging non-compliance from a number of other sources as set out below:

    - Registration team regarding non-compliance with the provision of information requirements for FaV and attestations
    - VCMS from complaints about veterinary practices
    - Professional Conduct and Customer Services regarding complaints about veterinary professionals or practices (likely to also be referred to VCMS)
    - PSS team regarding non-compliance observed during the routine assessments of practices

17. Under this model, there will only be reactive monitoring in response to information received and not routine monitoring of practices.

18. Where the RCVS has information that a practice is non-compliant, then the monitoring team will follow the process set out in the flow chart at Annex A. This will involve contacting the practice and asking it to either evidence that it is compliant, by uploading photographs or relevant documents, or to provide a deadline by which it will be expected to show that it is compliant. Support will be offered where required to set out what is expected in order to demonstrate compliance.

19. The RCVS will report any non-compliance to the CMA. The CMA has set out its initial expectations of monitoring frequency and content, although the CMA and RCVS will work together to develop an agreed reporting process once the monitoring regime is established and levels/areas of non-compliance are better understood. It is likely that regular compliance reporting will also be required on certain remedies around pricing and overall levels of compliance across small and large veterinary businesses, including qualitative information and actions taken by the RCVS to resolve breaches of the remedies. The CMA has requested that, at least initially there are weekly meetings with its monitoring team.