

VCMS Annual Report 2025 Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VCMS reports rising demand as new complaint trends emerge across the veterinary sector

The Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS) has reported a rise in demand for its independent complaint-resolution service, while highlighting significant changes in the types of concerns being raised by pet owners across the UK veterinary sector.

The VCMS received 3,638 enquiries during 2025, representing a 2.5% increase on the previous year. Almost all enquiries (98%) fell within the service's remit, with more than half resolved at an early stage through advice and support that enabled concerns to be addressed directly by practices. VCMS also conducted 1,080 mediations during the year, achieving an 80% resolution rate. A total of 1,386 veterinary practices were invited to participate in mediation, with 77% voluntarily engaging in VCMS mediation and resolution process.

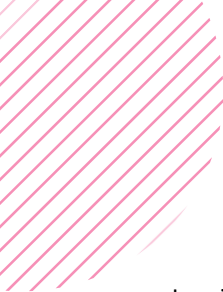
Communication and Decision-Making Remain Central Themes

The report identifies communication as a recurring feature in many veterinary complaints, with increasing numbers of pet owners raising concerns about consent discussions, shared decision-making and understanding treatment options. One of the most significant changes during the year was a substantial increase in complaints involving disagreement or dissatisfaction with treatment plans, rising by 480% year-on-year. Complaints relating to consent, service and communication also increased by 6%. The findings suggest that many complaints stem not only from clinical outcomes, but from how veterinary teams and pet owners communicate, discuss, and understand decisions. Diagnostic pathways and unexpected outcomes also remain among the most common reasons for contacting the service.

Why Mediation Matters

Veterinary complaints are often highly emotive because they involve much-loved animals, unplanned and distress purchases and, in some cases, upsetting outcomes. VCMS's experience is that many pet owners escalate their complaints as they want their concerns to be heard, a clear explanation of what happened, reassurance that lessons have been learned where appropriate, and confidence that their experience has been understood.

Independent mediation provides a structured environment where both parties can explain their perspective, improve understanding, and work toward a mutually acceptable resolution. This can help preserve relationships between veterinary practices and clients while reducing the need for more formal and adversarial complaint processes.



Jennie Jones, Head of VCMS, said:

“Veterinary complaints can be particularly challenging because they often arise during emotionally difficult circumstances for pet owners. Our experience is that many people are not looking for a simple judgement about fault. They want answers, understanding, acknowledgement of their concerns and an opportunity to have a meaningful conversation about their experience. Mediation helps create that dialogue, allowing both the pet owner and the veterinary practice to better understand each other's perspective and work towards a constructive resolution.”

High Levels of Satisfaction

VCMS also reported strong satisfaction levels among both veterinary practices and pet owners. The annual report shows that 89% of pet owners and 97% of veterinary practices who used the service would recommend it, while 90% of pet owners and 96% of veterinary practices felt their perspectives had been explored and understood.

Engagement

2025 saw an ongoing increase in veterinary practices voluntarily engaging in mediation with the VCMS. In the last quarter of 2025, over 85% of practices engaged. This is a positive indicator that voluntary engagement will continue to build ahead of first opinion veterinary businesses being required to engage in good faith from March 2027 when the CMA remedies following the market investigation come into force. This gives pet owners reassurance that their veterinary practice will engage if a complaint cannot be resolved at a local level.

Supporting Learning Across the Profession

VCMS says the insights it gathers can help the profession better understand the factors driving complaints and support efforts to improve communication, prevent complaints, and build client confidence.

Further Information

For further information, contact Jennie Jones, Head of VCMS jenniejones@vetmediation.co.uk or sueclark@nockolds.co.uk for press enquiries.

The VCMS is delivered by Nockolds Solicitors, who specialise in complaint resolution in regulated sectors. The VCMS, through Nockolds is an Approved ADR Body under the ADR Regulations (overseen by the CTSI). The RCVS contracts with Nockolds so the service is funded by the regulator, but delivered on an independent and arm's length basis.