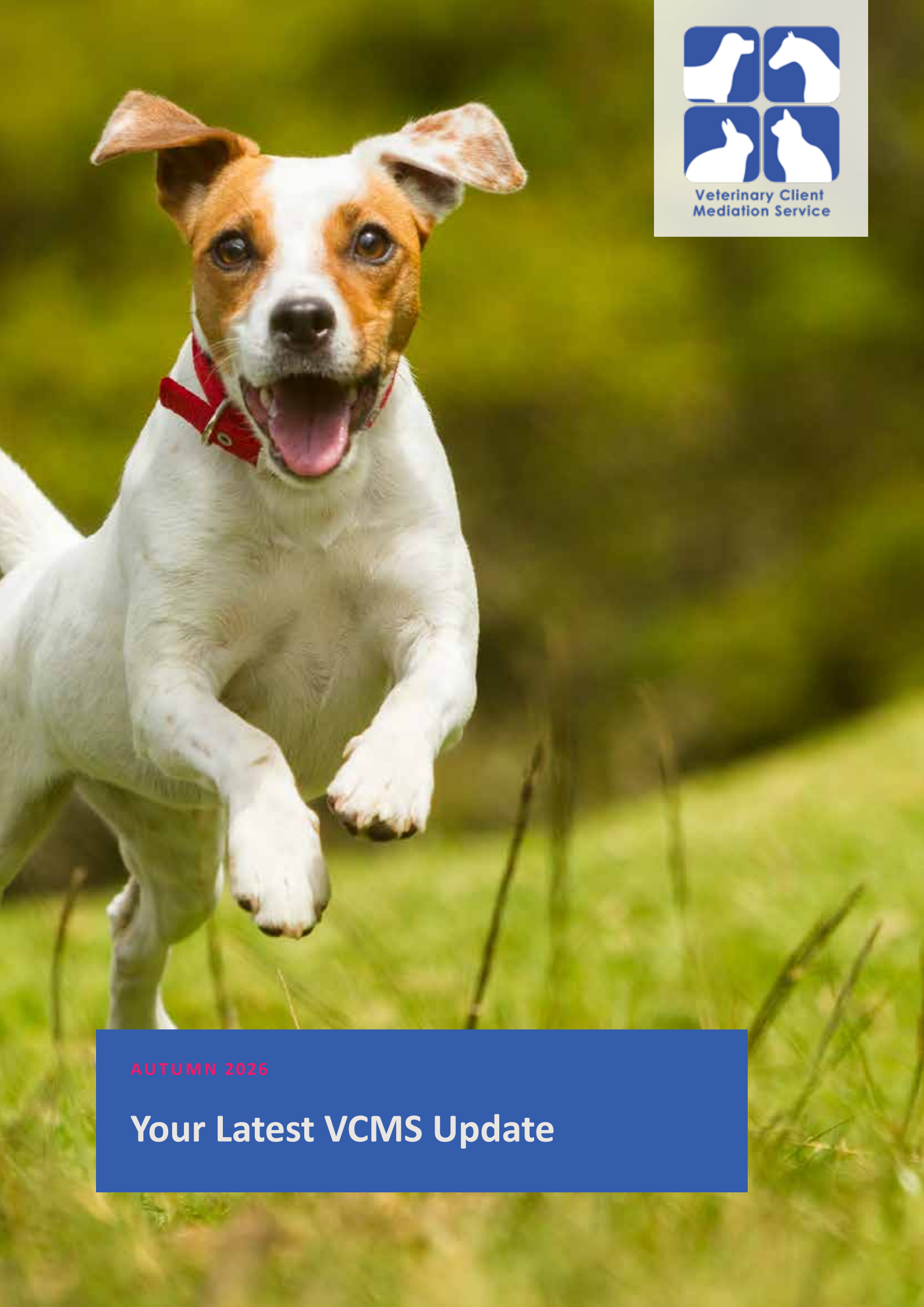


Veterinary Client Mediation Service

AUTUMN 2026

Your Latest VCMS Update

Latest Insights

CMA REMEDIES: WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOUR PRACTICE

Good news for the veterinary profession: while the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) remedies will introduce new expectations around transparency and consumer information, the latest VCMS data suggests that many practices are already focusing on the areas that matter most to clients: communication, trust and shared decision-making.

THE BIG PICTURE

The latest VCMS annual report shows that veterinary practices continue to engage positively with early resolution and mediation, helping preserve relationships with clients and reducing the likelihood of complaints escalating further.

During 2025, VCMS received 3,638 enquiries, a modest increase of 2.5% on the previous year. Importantly, 57% of complaints were resolved locally within the practice or through advice from the VCMS team, demonstrating the value of strong practice-level complaint handling.

WHAT ARE CLIENTS REALLY COMPLAINING ABOUT?

The report delivers an important message for practices.

Many complaints are not primarily about clinical outcomes. Instead, they are about how decisions are communicated and understood.

Key trends include:

» Communication remains at the heart of many complaints.

» Concerns about consent discussions and shared decision-making continue to rise.

» Complaints relating to disagreements with treatment plans increased significantly, suggesting that pet owners want greater involvement in decisions affecting their animals.

» Diagnostic pathways and unexpected outcomes remain common areas of concern.

» Complaints focused solely on fees have fallen relative to previous years.

CMA Hub

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS OUR CMA HUB

A dedicated online resource designed to help practices understand and implement the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements with confidence.



COMING IN 2027 - CMA MARKET INVESTIGATION ORDER COMES INTO EFFECT

The CMA remedies are expected to place greater emphasis on:

- Transparent pricing
- Clear information about services
- Better-informed consent
- Helping clients make informed decisions
- Improved consumer confidence

The encouraging news is that the VCMS data suggests the profession has already been making changes in recent years and months which impact some of the areas highlighted by the CMA. The strongest themes emerging from complaints align closely with the areas the CMA is seeking to strengthen: communication, consent and client understanding.

In terms of complaint handling, the CMA Order sets out:

- Article 21 - To have an effective complaints process with set timelines for handling 'Actionable Complaints'
- Article 23 It will become mandatory to participate in mediation in good faith
- Article 22 - Record complaints in a standardised way for learning and oversight

The VCMS are delivering a series of webinars and providing useful resources to explain the Order and requirements on veterinary businesses in a CMA hub – please visit for up-to-date information and support.

The VCMS and Nockolds will also be facilitating the CMA Decision Tree, which is intended to help pet owners understand the veterinary complaint process and the options available if the complaint cannot be resolved within the veterinary business.

THREE PRACTICAL ACTIONS: REVIEW YOUR CONSENT CONVERSATIONS

Clients increasingly want to understand:

- Available options
- Likely outcomes
- Potential risks
- Estimated costs

Taking a few extra minutes during key conversations can help informed and more confidence decision making by pet owners, and prevent misunderstandings later.

FOCUS ON SHARED DECISION-MAKING

The sharp rise in complaints about disagreements with treatment plans suggests that clients want to feel involved, even when clinical recommendations are clear.

MAKE COMMUNICATION EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

From reception teams to clinicians, every interaction contributes to trust and confidence. Consistent messaging and clear explanations remain one of the best complaint prevention tools available.

VCMS Tip of the Month

THE BEST COMPLAINT IS THE ONE THAT NEVER HAPPENS

The latest findings reinforce a simple lesson: clients are more likely to accept difficult outcomes when they understand the journey, feel involved in decisions and believe they have been listened to.

As the CMA reforms continue to develop, practices that invest in communication, transparency and trust-building will be well placed to thrive.

Join Our Upcoming Webinar

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS WITH VCMS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MEDIATION

Wednesday 2 December | 12:30pm - 1:30pm | Online | Free

When a complaint cannot be resolved directly, mediation can provide a constructive way forward. This practical session will explore the role of the Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS) and how it can help practices and clients reach positive outcomes.

Scan the QR code to find out more and book your place!