

CMA publishes final Order in Veterinary Services Market Investigation



Press Release

22 September 2026

Today, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published its final Order setting out the remedies arising from its Market Investigation into veterinary services for household pets. The publication marks the conclusion of a three-year investigation that has generated significant engagement from both consumers and the veterinary profession.

Throughout the investigation, the Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS) has shared insights and data with the CMA and contributed analysis on consumer protection, complaint handling, and routes to redress.

The Order introduces measures designed to improve transparency and consumer awareness across the veterinary sector. While much of the public discussion has focused on areas such as prescription charges, ownership transparency, and estimates, the Order also includes important provisions on complaint handling and dispute resolution.

Under the new requirements, veterinary practices will be expected to:

- Have a written complaints procedure and provide information about it to clients.
- Engage in complaint mediation where concerns cannot be resolved locally.
- Signpost pet owners to an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider for mediation.
- Record complaint data and share relevant information with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

These provisions are due to come into force in March 2027.

Many veterinary practices already have established complaints procedures and routinely engage in mediation. The new requirements are intended to create a more consistent approach across the profession and ensure that all pet owners have access to clear complaint pathways and independent support where local resolution is not possible.



Comment from VCMS

Jennie Jones, Head of VCMS, said:

"The CMA's remedies recognise the importance of effective complaint resolution and independent mediation. Most veterinary practices are committed to listening to their clients and resolving concerns constructively. These changes will help ensure that pet owners have access to clear information, fair processes and independent support when concerns cannot be resolved locally."

"Experience from complaint mediation shows that concerns are often complex and emotionally charged, particularly when they involve expectations, communication, treatment outcomes and perceptions of value. Early dialogue, clear communication and access to independent mediation can help maintain trust and support positive outcomes for everyone involved."

The VCMS welcomes the increased emphasis on complaint resolution and consumer awareness. Having reviewed the final remedies, it is clear that their primary aim is to help pet owners make informed decisions and understand the options available to them throughout their veterinary care journey, rather than directly influence treatment costs.

Many of the measures apply to first-opinion practices providing veterinary care for household pets and may not apply in the same way to referral practices or to veterinary services provided for animals outside the household pet category. This reflects the CMA's focus on everyday consumer experiences within the veterinary market.

Over the coming months, the VCMS will develop guidance, blogs, resources, and webinars to help veterinary businesses and pet owners understand the new requirements and the opportunities they present to improve communication, complaint resolution, and client relationships. The service will also support practices that are less familiar with mediation and help them understand how ADR can complement their existing complaints procedures.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

Please visit our website for our most recent [VCMS Annual Report](#), which details our activity and shares veterinary complaint data and insight.

Editor Notes:

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.

The service was established in 2017 following a pilot in 2016. The VCMS receives on average 3,800 enquiries a year. Pet owners can access the VCMS directly, or veterinary practices can direct them to the service. Click here for more information on [Contacting the VCMS](#) and [FAQs for pet owners](#)