NEWS & REPORTS

IN OTHER COVID-19 NEWS

• Vet practices are putting aside human-compatable ventilators, oxygen supplies and personal protective equipment such as surgical masks, as well as anaesthetic machines and monitors, for use in saving human lives. The scheme has been promoted by the RCVS, the BVA and several other veterinary associations and businesses.
  
  Practices can register their interest in the scheme at: https://bit.ly/3ajDNGa
  
  Vet Record has asked Defra and the Department of Health whether the government will be requisitioning such equipment from practices and, if so, when, but had received no response at the time of going to press.
  
• The government has postponed the introduction of its IR35 tax reforms until next April because of the coronavirus pandemic.
  
  They would have meant that locums could no longer be hired through personal service companies or private limited companies, and could only work off payroll if they did so via an umbrella company or agency.
  
  But last week Steve Barclay, chief secretary to the Treasury, told MPs in the House of Commons that the changes would be deferred “in response to the ongoing spread of Covid-19 to help businesses and individuals”.
  
• Two retired veterinary scientists have highlighted a method they think has a possibility of producing a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 virus – the causative virus of Covid-19.
  
  In a letter in this week’s issue, Aung Myint, a former government vet in Myanmar, and Trevor Jones, a former veterinary investigation officer in the UK, describe a method they developed over a number of years in the 1990s and early 2000s.
  
  They describe how genetically transformed Pasteurella multocida, which had taken up viral genes into their genomes, was able to express classical swine fever viral antigens.
  
  They think this method could be adapted for Covid-19. Read more on p 388.
  
• The RCVS’ veterinary nurses (VN) council has agreed to a temporary suspension of requirements for student VNs and training programmes.
  
  It is now not compulsory for students to complete clinical placements within the next eight weeks. For final-year students, the VN council says any shortfall relative to the requirements should not be a barrier to completion of their programme. Students in other years are expected to have time to make up any shortfall in placements.