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The full details of the published version of the article are as follows:

TITLE: Acceptance rates for manuscripts submitted to veterinary peer-reviewed journals in 2012

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JOURNAL TITLE: EQUINE VETERINARY JOURNAL

PUBLISHER: Wiley

PUBLICATION DATE: March/April 2015

DOI: [10.1111/evj.12376](https://doi.org/10.1111/evj.12376)

1 **Acceptance rates for manuscripts submitted to veterinary peer-reviewed journals in**
2 **2012**

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9 Acknowledgements: We are grateful to Sally Burton of the Library and Information Services
10 Division of The Royal Veterinary College for her advice and for funding to support this
11 study, and to all journal Editors who contributed data to this study.

12 Conflicts of interest: none

13 Source of funding: noted under acknowledgements

14 Key words: acceptance rates, journal, manuscript rejection, publishing, research

15 Running head: Acceptance rates for veterinary journals

16 Total word count: 2989

17 **Abstract**

18 Reasons for performing study. Relatively few journals publish their annual acceptance rate,
19 although this figure is of scientific and academic interest.

20 Objectives. To determine the acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted to veterinary peer-
21 reviewed journals during 2012 and to determine the proportions of submitted manuscripts
22 that were accepted without revision, accepted after revision or rejected.

23 Study design. Self-reporting questionnaire distributed to editorial contacts and returned by
24 Email with data submission by insertion into a template.

25 Methods. Editors of 118 peer-reviewed journals listed in the Web of Science in the subject
26 category *veterinary sciences* were invited by Email to submit data pertinent to manuscripts
27 submitted to their journal in 2012.

28 Results. Data were received from 30 (26%) journals. Average (\pm SD) acceptance rate was
29 47% (\pm 15%). On average 3% (\pm 5%) submitted manuscripts were accepted without revision,
30 44% (\pm 15%) manuscripts were accepted after revision, 4% (\pm 4%) manuscripts were
31 withdrawn by authors, 46% (\pm 17%) manuscripts were rejected and 3% (\pm 5%) manuscripts
32 were still pending at the end of the study period.

33 Conclusions. With so few manuscripts accepted without revision, prospective authors must
34 expect to expend time and effort revising and resubmitting their manuscripts for publication.

35 Although authors are frequently able to correct manuscript flaws identified by reviewers, the
36 knowledge that less than half submitted manuscripts are accepted might help stimulate
37 prospective authors to try to submit better quality manuscripts.

38 **Introduction**

39 Publication in a peer-reviewed journal requires a submitted manuscript to pass scrutiny by
40 one or more reviewers chosen by the journal Editor on the basis of their experience and asked
41 to judge its quality [1,2]. On the basis of peer-review, manuscripts may be accepted for
42 publication, returned for revision and resubmission, or rejected. Many manuscripts requiring
43 revision and resubmission are ultimately accepted for publication [3] and many rejected
44 manuscripts are accepted subsequently by other journals [4,5,6].

45 The proportion of submitted manuscripts that are subsequently accepted for publication by a
46 journal (the acceptance rate) will depend on various factors, including the quality of
47 manuscripts submitted, the rate at which new manuscripts are received by the journal, the
48 number of papers already accepted into the publication process and the page capacity of the
49 journal. The average acceptance rate for 17 radiology journals surveyed in 2006 was 52% [7].

50 Journals may include acceptance rate in their web site (e.g.
51 <http://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/site/about/>) or publish this information as part of an annual
52 review [8], but most do not publish acceptance rates, possibly because prospective authors
53 could be discouraged by a low acceptance rate. On the other hand, it seems clear that many
54 prospective authors need more guidance about manuscript submission [9,10,11] and knowing
55 how many manuscripts are rejected might help stimulate efforts to submit better quality
56 manuscripts. Among a group of veterinary journal Editors consulted informally by the
57 authors when planning the present study, there was a general view that prospective authors
58 and editorial boards would find a review of acceptance rates to be interesting.

59 The aim of the present study was to determine the acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted
60 to veterinary peer-reviewed journals during 2012. A secondary aim was to determine the
61 proportions of submitted manuscripts that were accepted without revision, accepted after
62 revision or rejected.

63

64 **Methods**

65 Editorial contact details were sought for all peer-reviewed journals listed in the Web of
66 Science^a in the subject category *veterinary sciences*. Peer-reviewed journals were identified
67 on the basis of their editorial policy statement. A message (see Appendix 1) explaining the
68 background to the present study and inviting Editors to submit data pertinent to manuscripts
69 submitted to their journal between 1st January and 31st December 2012 was sent to each of the
70 Email addresses found for editorial contacts of peer-reviewed journals. The message was sent
71 in December 2013 and a reply was requested within 12 weeks of receipt of the invitation to
72 submit data. A reminder was sent 4 weeks before the deadline. Editors were requested to
73 submit data by insertion of numbers of manuscripts into a template (Figure 1). Major revision
74 was defined as that requiring a second review by scrutineers. Reasons for rejection were not
75 requested. Editors were advised that data from their journal would be included anonymously
76 if that was their wish. Editors were also asked to give a reason if their journal elected not to
77 provide data.

78 For each peer-reviewed veterinary journal listed in the Web of Science, total citations in
79 2012, total number of articles published in 2012, and the impact factor were recorded. It
80 should be noted that the journal impact factor is based on data for the preceding two years
81 (i.e. impact factor for 2012 = citations to 2010-11 articles divided by number of 2010-11
82 articles). The acceptance rate was calculated as the number of manuscripts accepted
83 (including those accepted after revision/resubmission) divided by the total number of
84 manuscripts submitted. For journals providing acceptance data, the total number of articles
85 published in 2012 was subdivided into original articles and reviews, based on document types
86 listed in the Web of Science.

87 Data were analysed using SPSS Statistics version 19^b. Based on visual assessment of
88 histograms and Normal plots, distributions for the number of citations, total number of
89 articles published, and journal impact factor were characterized by positive skew, hence
90 subsequent testing of differences between responding and non-responding journals was done
91 using the Mann-Whitney test. Correlations between acceptance rate and number of citations
92 per year, total number of articles published per year, journal impact factor, number of
93 manuscripts submitted per year, and the proportion of published articles that were reviews
94 were tested using Spearman's rho. Results with $p < 0.05$ were considered significant.

95

96 **Results**

97 Of 143 journals listed in the Web of Science subject category *veterinary sciences*, the
98 websites of 126 included an editorial policy statement indicating peer-review of submitted
99 manuscripts. Emails were sent to 122 peer-reviewed journals for which an Email address for
100 editorial contact was found. Automated error messages indicating the Email was
101 undeliverable were received in four instances, hence Email contact appeared to be functional
102 in 118 instances.

103 Data were received by the deadline from 30/118 (26%) peer-reviewed journals contacted.
104 Characteristics of these journals, based on their Web of Science entries for 2012, are
105 summarised in Table 1. Of the five (4%) journals that gave a reason for not providing data,
106 data were not readily available in three and the Editor was unwilling to participate in two. No
107 reply was received from the remaining 83 (70%) journals. The number of citations per year,
108 total number of articles published and impact factor for responding and non-responding
109 journals are summarized in Table 2. Responding journals had more citations and more

110 articles published than non-responding journals. There was no significant difference in
111 impact factor.

112 For manuscripts submitted to 30 responding veterinary journals in 2012, the average (\pm SD)
113 acceptance rate was 47% (\pm 15%). Acceptance rate was weakly negatively correlated with
114 number of citations ($\rho = -0.44$, $p=0.014$), total number of articles published ($\rho = -0.38$,
115 $p=0.04$) and journal impact factor ($\rho = -0.38$, $p=0.04$). Acceptance rate was more strongly
116 inversely correlated with the number of manuscript submitted per annum ($\rho = -0.60$,
117 $p=0.002$). Acceptance rate was not correlated with the proportion of published articles that
118 were reviews ($\rho = 0.31$, $p=0.13$).

119 Of the 30 responding journals, six reported only their overall acceptance rate and 24 provided
120 a completed data template. On average, 3% submitted manuscripts were accepted without
121 revision, 44% manuscripts were accepted after revision, 4% manuscripts were withdrawn by
122 authors, 46% manuscripts were rejected outright and 3% manuscripts were still pending at the
123 end of the study period (Table 3). Minor revisions were requested for 20% manuscripts and
124 major revisions were requested for 36% manuscripts. On average, all manuscripts requiring
125 minor revisions and 67% manuscripts requiring major revisions were eventually accepted
126 (Figure 2).

127

128 **Discussion**

129 For 30 peer-reviewed veterinary journals reporting their acceptance rate for 2012, the average
130 was 47%. On average only 3% manuscripts were accepted without revision and 44%
131 manuscripts were accepted after revision. Although there were variations between journals
132 (e.g. acceptance rate varied between 25% and 89%), these summary figures make clear the
133 demanding nature of peer-reviewed publication. With so few manuscripts accepted without

134 revision, prospective authors must expect to expend time and effort revising and resubmitting
135 their manuscripts for publication. On average all manuscripts requiring minor revisions and
136 67% of those requiring major revisions were eventually accepted, hence authors are
137 frequently able to correct manuscript flaws identified by reviewers. One of the benefits of the
138 peer-review process is that it frequently helps authors to improve the scientific quality and
139 readability of their manuscript [12], although the quality of reviewers is known to be variable
140 [13,14,15].

141 For this study, data were collected using a self-reporting questionnaire method based on a
142 detailed template delivered and returned by Email. This questionnaire method enables large
143 numbers of potential respondents to be contacted efficiently and produces quantitative data
144 amenable to analysis without the need for substantial coding or cleaning; however, it
145 typically produces relatively low rates of return. The response rate of 26% is compatible with
146 this expectation. The 30 responding journals may be considered a representative sample
147 based on their total citations, total number of articles published and journal impact factor,
148 which all overlapped substantially with the ranges for non-responding journals; however,
149 with respect to their primary focus, the 30 responding journals represent a heterogeneous
150 group, containing examples of journals with clinical, research, species- and speciality-
151 specific content, and with differing proportions of original research papers, case reports,
152 reviews, editorials and letters. Just as the subject matter and content of these journals is
153 heterogeneous, so will be their readership (which includes prospective authors).
154 Consequently, it is probably not appropriate to emphasise the differences in results between
155 journals.

156 All journals in this study had a stated policy that implied that all submitted manuscripts
157 underwent peer-review. Journals that employ a mixed editorial policy in which only a
158 proportion of submitted manuscripts undergo peer-review may calculate acceptance rates

159 differently, for example based only on the peer-reviewed manuscripts. Differences in
160 editorial practice (e.g. inconsistent definitions of a resubmission and the inclusion/exclusion
161 of invited papers, correspondence or book reviews in the calculations) and the potential
162 unreliability of self-reported data, further complicate comparisons of published acceptance
163 rates [16].

164 Acceptance rate was weakly negatively correlated with number of citations, total number of
165 articles published and journal impact factor. A peer-reviewed journal with a relatively large
166 number of annual citations and published articles is more likely to be considered authoritative
167 in its subject and a popular target for prospective authors, hence a tendency for a lower
168 acceptance rate probably reflects heightened selection by an Editor receiving a surplus of
169 manuscripts. Similarly, the finding that acceptance rate was inversely correlated with the
170 number of manuscript submitted per annum makes sense if a journal publishes roughly the
171 same number of articles each year because an increased number of submitted manuscripts
172 must be balanced by a lower acceptance rate if the Editor wishes to avoid prolonged time to
173 publication. None of these correlations is strong, probably because the variables relate to
174 different years (journal impact factor to 2010-11; total citations and total number of articles
175 published to 2012; acceptance rate to 2012-14) and because acceptance rate will also depend
176 on the quality of submitted manuscripts. A weak positive correlation between journal impact
177 factor and rejection rate (approximately equal to 1 minus acceptance rate) has been reported
178 previously and used as evidence that journal impact factor is not a measure of publication
179 quality [7].

180 Journal subject area and editorial practices also affect acceptance rates [17]. For example,
181 acceptance rates are lower for business and computer science journals than for medical
182 journals, for North American journals compared to journals from other regions of the world,

183 and for journals that employed three or more reviewers per submission than for journals that
184 used one or two [17].

185 In the present study, acceptance rate was not correlated with the proportion of published
186 articles that were reviews. The proportion of published articles that were reviews was
187 included as a variable because of the possibility that it could affect acceptance rate, but this
188 appears not to be the case. Compared to original research papers, review articles might be
189 more likely to be accepted because their factual content is based primarily on data already
190 published and because inclusion of reviews is associated with higher journal impact factor
191 [7]; conversely, review articles might be more likely to be rejected because they contain no
192 new data.

193 This survey of journal acceptance rates is not intended to be used by prospective authors as a
194 means of maximizing the likelihood of manuscript acceptance by picking a journal with a
195 high acceptance rate. Prospective authors have been advised not to submit their manuscripts
196 to journals chosen on the basis of their acceptance rate [7] or impact factor [17,18]. The
197 authors' primary interest – dissemination of their research results – is usually best served by
198 publishing in journals whose readership most closely matches their own profile [7], hence
199 that consideration should take priority when selecting a journal. Attempting to publish a
200 paper in a journal peripheral to an author's field of study is not recommended because
201 manuscripts with content not well-suited to the target journal are likely to be rejected outright
202 [3]. In the present study, the proportion of manuscripts rejected will include manuscripts
203 outside the scope of the journal, which will be rejected regardless of quality (and possibly
204 without peer-review).

205 If the results of this survey prove to be useful to authors, it is likely to be because they make
206 clear the magnitude of the selection pressure on manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed
207 journals, and the need to understand the criteria of quality used by reviewers and editors and

208 to ensure that their manuscript satisfies these criteria before submission. A manuscript
209 prepared well for submission will be free of the flaws recognised as major reasons for
210 manuscript rejection, including lack of new or useful information, methodological errors,
211 deficiencies in data and poor writing [3,10,19-23]. It is hoped that knowledge of journal
212 acceptance rates will help stimulate prospective authors to try to submit better quality
213 manuscripts.

214 Table 1. Veterinary peer-reviewed journals that provided acceptance rate data for 2012

215

Journal	Citations	Articles published	Proportion of review articles	Impact factor
Theriogenology	13198	428	5%	2.082
Veterinary Microbiology	12083	441	2%	3.127
Veterinary Record	10356	265	<1%	1.803
Applied Animal Behaviour Science	5989	160	6%	1.497
Equine Veterinary Journal	5734	156	4%	2.286
Avian Diseases	4783	162	2%	1.734
Preventative Veterinary Medicine	4589	172	5%	2.389
Veterinary Pathology	4190	119	na	1.929
Reproduction in Domestic Animals	2880	348	3%	1.392
Journal of Small Animal Practice	2874	115	6%	1.177
Canadian Veterinary Journal	2373	135	4%	0.767
Veterinary Radiology and Ultrasound	2194	101	na	1.414
Journal of Veterinary Pharmacology and Therapeutics	2150	104	3%	1.349
Scientific and Technical Review (Organisation Mondiale de la Santé Animale)	1755	46	9%	0.69
Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery	1310	130	20%	1.08
Journal of Animal Physiology and Animal Nutrition	1202	128	2%	1.254
Veterinary Ophthalmology	1051	93	2%	0.959
Comparative Medicine	971	68	1%	1.12
Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia	950	72	na	1.34
Pesquisa Veterinária Brasileira	817	248	1%	0.538
Equine Veterinary Education	648	89	16%	0.697
Acta Veterinaria Hungarica	604	46	2%	1.173
Revue de Médecine Vétérinaire (Toulouse)	586	81	na	0.251
Journal of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science	557	80	10%	1.145
Brazilian Journal of Veterinary Parasitology	498	85	8%	0.722
Journal of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Kafkas	371	225	2%	0.458
Wiener Tierärztliche Monatsschrift	233	44	2%	0.392
Vlaams Diergeneeskundig Tijdschrift	147	37	38%	0.361
Philippine Journal of Veterinary Medicine	30	15	na	0.059
Journal of the Hellenic Veterinary Medical Society	26	25	48%	0.273

216

217 na, data not available

218 Table 2. Comparison of responding and non-responding journals

219

220		Responding	Non-responding	p
221	n	30	92	
222	Total citations	1256 (26-13,198)	756 (28-12,644)	0.049
223	Number of articles published	110 (15-441)	64 (0-602)	0.024
224	Impact factor	1.16 (0.06-3.13)	0.92 (0.07-3.43)	0.31

225

226 Values are median (range)

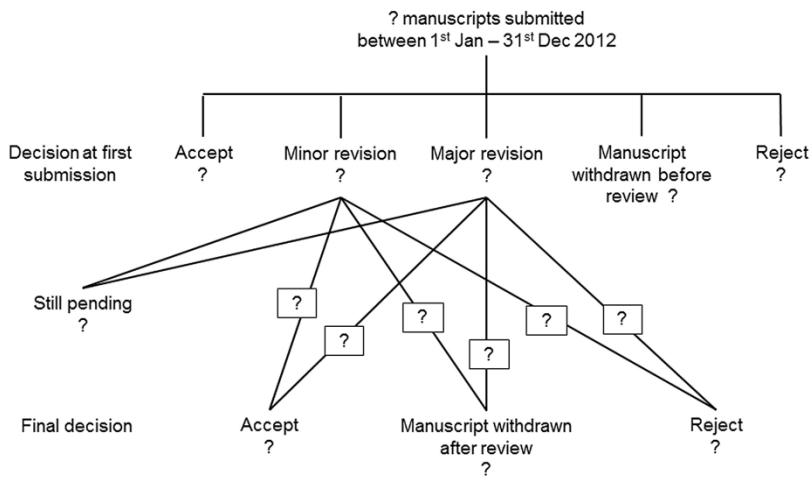
227 Table 3. Acceptance rates and fates of manuscripts submitted to veterinary peer-reviewed journals in
 228 2012

229

Journal name	Total manuscripts submitted	Acceptance rate	Accepted without revision	Accepted after revision	Withdrawn	Rejected	Pending
Veterinary Record	801	33%	43 (5%)	220 (27%)	0	538 (67%)	0
Journal of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Kafkas	631	41%	0	260 (41%)	4 (1%)	366 (58%)	1 (0%)
Reproduction in Domestic Animals	516	27%	0	139 (27%)	5 (1%)	346 (67%)	26 (5%)
Journal of Animal Physiology and Animal Nutrition	496	25%	1 (0%)	121 (24%)	12 (2%)	346 (70%)	16 (3%)
Equine Veterinary Journal	418	43%	23 (6%)	158(38%)	20 (5%)	211 (50%)	6 (1%)
Journal of Small Animal Practice	383	29%	11 (3%)	101(26%)	10 (3%)	259 (68%)	2 (1%)
Canadian Veterinary Journal	258	45%	3 (1%)	112(43%)	3 (1%)	140 (54%)	0
Revue de Médecine Vétérinaire (Toulouse)	247	38%	2 (1%)	93(38%)	19 (8%)	126 (51%)	7 (3%)
Journal of Veterinary Pharmacology and Therapeutics	230	37%	0	85(37%)	0	145 (63%)	0
Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery	221	52%	9 (4%)	106(48%)	5 (2%)	101 (46%)	0
Veterinary Radiology and Ultrasound	219	45%	0	99(45%)	4 (2%)	116 (53%)	0
Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia	218	40%	4 (2%)	84(39%)	2 (1%)	127 (58%)	1 (0%)
Veterinary Ophthalmology	206	57%	39(19%)	79(38%)	0	88 (43%)	0
Avian Diseases	196	56%	2 (1%)	108(55%)	20 (10%)	65 (33%)	1 (1%)
Journal of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science	175	43%	0	75(43%)	5 (3%)	62 (35%)	33 (19%)
Comparative Medicine	169	38%	1 (1%)	63(37%)	3 (2%)	75 (44%)	27 (16%)
Equine Veterinary Education	147	63%	27(18%)	66(45%)	0	47 (32%)	7 (5%)
Acta Veterinaria Hungarica	145	37%	6 (4%)	48(33%)	4 (3%)	87 (60%)	0
Brazilian Journal of Veterinary Parasitology	128	67%	0	86(67%)	7 (5%)	35 (27%)	0
Philippine Journal of Veterinary Medicine	53	43%	1 (2%)	22(42%)	5 (9%)	20 (38%)	5 (9%)
Vlaams Diergeneeskundig Tijdschrift	49	59%	0	29(59%)	5 (10%)	13 (27%)	2 (4%)
Wiener Tierärztliche Monatsschrift	45	89%	1 (2%)	39(87%)	2 (4%)	3 (7%)	0
Scientific and Technical Review (Organisation Mondiale de la Santé Animale)	40	38%	0	15(38%)	7 (18%)	15 (38%)	3 (8%)
Journal of the Hellenic Veterinary Medical Society	20	70%	0	14 (70%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	0
Range	20-801	25-89%	0-43	14-260	0-20	3-538	0-33
Average (\pm SD)	251 (\pm 198)	47% (\pm 15%)	3% (\pm 5%)	44% (\pm 15%)	4% (\pm 4%)	46% (\pm 17%)	3% (\pm 5%)

230

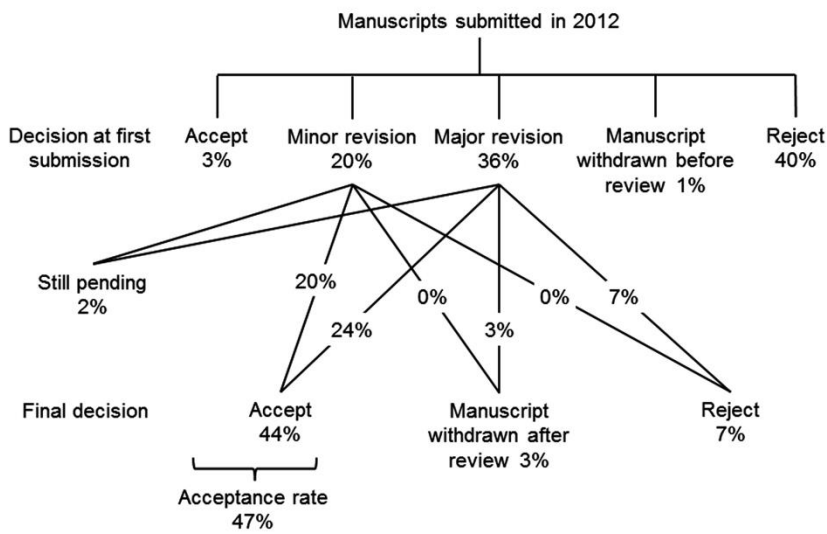
231 **Legends**



232

233 Figure 1. Template used for data entry by veterinary journal Editors.

234



235

236 Figure 2. Fate of manuscripts submitted to 24 veterinary journals.

237 **Manufacturers' details**

238 ^a Thomson Reuters New York, NY 10036, USA

239 ^b IBM Corporation, Chicago, IL60606, USA

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