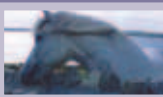




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quantity and quality**  
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getting the best deal?**  
– page 28

# VETERINARY Practice

**MAY 2008** Volume 40 Number 3



**Hands-on  
veterinary  
education**  
an interview  
with the RVC's  
Quintin  
McKellar  
– page 22

## Wholesaler aims to follow corporate

CENTAUR Services is seeking approval from its existing shareholders to proceed with an IPO (initial public offering) on the AIM market, the London Stock Exchange subsidiary for smaller growing companies.

If agreement is reached, proceeds should be distributed to shareholders who sell shares in the flotation within three to six months.

Managing director Paul Gerring and his fellow directors believe the move is the best one to enable further development of the veterinary wholesaler.

Centaur will be the second veterinary company to take this route, following the corporate firm, CVS, now known as CVS Group plc, which floated last October. Its shares are currently trading at around £2.40 and in March it purchased the Animed Veterinary Group for £1.6 million, taking the number of veterinary surgeries in the group to 146.



**Paul Gerring.**

## ARE NURSES GETTING A FAIR DEAL?

**VETERINARY surgeons will often say that their nurses make a valuable contribution to the success of the practice, but are they prepared to put their money where their mouth is and offer these staff a decent wage?**

That question must have crossed the minds of many of those who attended the session held by the Royal College during the BSAVA congress to highlight the initial results of its 2008 survey of veterinary nurses.

A questionnaire was completed by 3,871 listed, registered and student VNs and gives an insight into their training, working conditions and attitudes towards the future development of their profession.

The overall message of the survey will come as no surprise to the nurses themselves or their employers in showing that qualified VNs are still extremely poorly paid.

About 40% earn an annual salary of between £15,000 and £20,000 with under 20% earning above the national median for women in the UK workforce of £21,700.

About 10% have earnings below the national minimum wage of £10,664 for a 37.5 hour week.

However, the preliminary analysis lumps together part- and full-time staff and so it is unclear if these lowest paid staff are only working a few hours per week or whether their employers are flouting the law.



**Andrea Jeffery.**

Certainly, 13% of respondents have some form of second income, which Mrs Andrea Jeffery, who chairs the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council,

interpreted as an indication that many were struggling to survive on their main salary. There are other indicators in the survey that the terms and conditions for VNs are not the most generous: 14% have to pay for their own CPD, 15% receive no overtime payments and 23% receive nothing for time spent on call.

Nevertheless, a large majority of respondents are happy in their work: 75% say they plan to stay in their current job for the foreseeable future; and, if they had their time again, 55% would choose to train as a VN, a similar level of satisfaction to that in a comparable survey of veterinarians.

The study also threw up a number of positive findings: generally VNs are being given opportunities in practice to develop areas of special expertise and most are able to devote more than the basic minimum time each year to CPD.

More importantly, a substantial majority appear to find their work satisfying, although better pay and being shown more respect by their employers would make their enjoyment even greater.

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References: 1 Gandemange E, 2002 Field Evaluation of the efficacy of marbifloxacin in the treatment of acute mastitis due to Gram-negative bacteria in the dairy cow. Cattle Practice Vol 10 Part 1 57-62. 2 Andrews T., Oct 2002 Costs and treatment of *E. coli* mastitis Veterinary Times. \*Source: Farmers Weekly April 2008

## £1 million in grants

THE RCVS Trust has awarded over £1,000,000 to nearly 60 research and animal welfare projects in the UK and overseas to mark its golden jubilee year.

In addition to a £250,000 investment in six new UK residencies and nearly £120,000 across nine new Blue Sky Research projects, the Trust has released an additional £500,000 to fund two golden jubilee awards: one at the Royal (Dick) looking at canine ageing and regeneration and another at the Liverpool veterinary school in veterinary pathogen genomics.

The Trust is also funding a number of overseas projects through its network of charity partners, including SPANA, Wildlife Vets International and the Worldwide Veterinary Service.

Welfare initiatives the Trust is supporting include an evaluation of young graduate well-being, the development of support schemes for recent graduates and the Lancaster Final Year Seminar.

## Poisons information

THE BVA Animal Welfare Foundation, in conjunction with the Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS), has published an update of the *Pets and Poisons – Keeping Your Animals Safe* leaflet, first produced in 2004.

It provides a reference guide for owners on preventing poisoning along with what to do if you think an animal has been poisoned.

Practices can obtain batches of 50 leaflets for the waiting room free (although a donation to AWF is

encouraged) directly from the BVA agent, Ten Alps, telephone 02078 782307, or download copies from [www.bvaawf.org.uk/resources/leaflets/pets\\_poisons\\_leaflet\\_2008\\_FINAL1.pdf](http://www.bvaawf.org.uk/resources/leaflets/pets_poisons_leaflet_2008_FINAL1.pdf).

## It shouldn't happen!

THE National Office of Animal Health is looking for "it shouldn't happen to a pet" anecdotes to highlight the lack of awareness of pet health issues amongst owners.

With a prize of £500 towards a staff Christmas party for the winning anecdote, NOAH will use the stories in a campaign to raise awareness of common pet care misconceptions and to highlight the importance of animal health and welfare considerations.

"Funny" pet-related anecdotes can be submitted on entry forms on [www.noah.co.uk](http://www.noah.co.uk). Closing date is Friday 30th May.

## Roslin joins Dick

THE Roslin Institute is joining forces with the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh. The veterinary school is contributing 18 group leaders and their research teams.

Further recruitment over the next few years is expected to see The Roslin Institute double its staff numbers to about 500. As part of its expansion, the institute will move to a £58.5 million building next to the new veterinary school development at Easter Bush, Midlothian, which is planned for completion in 2010.

The Roslin Institute is to benefit from £40 million of research funding

from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council over the next five years.

Professor David Hume, director of the institute, said the pooling of resources and expertise would further cement the position of Scotland as the world's leading centre of animal sciences research.

## 'One world' seminar

*ONE World, One Disease* is the title of a seminar to be held at the Royal Society of Medicine in London on 24th June.

Jointly organised by the RSM and the RCVS, it will examine some of the effects of climate change on patterns of animal health and the impact of this on humans.

The meeting, says the College, will provide an understanding of the complexity of the global changes faced, and work towards the integrated approach needed to manage the serious problems that threaten animal and human health.

Speakers will include Professor Sheila Crispin, RCVS senior vice-president, who has been instrumental in organising the conference; Caroline Lucas, MEP; Professor Bob Watson, DEFRA's chief scientific adviser; Professor Quintin McKellar of the RVC; and Lt Col Tim Brookes from the Health Protection Agency.

Tickets are available via the RSM website, [www.rsm.ac.uk/academ/e10-oneworld.php](http://www.rsm.ac.uk/academ/e10-oneworld.php).

## Worming campaign

NOVARTIS Animal Health is launching an initiative designed to raise pet owner awareness about the

importance of worming. The Worm Patrol is a campaign which can be easily implemented in practice, the firm says, and is supported by a comprehensive range of marketing materials.

The company is also introducing this month a four-tablet pack of Milbemax in both the Dog and Cat Tasty tablets for use alongside the campaign "to provide a complete and convenient service for clients".

Practices can choose when they wish to run their Worm Patrol campaign and interested practices should contact a Novartis territory manager or call the practice support line on 0800 854100 to find out how.

Marketing materials include a waiting room display kit, client information leaflets, badges, stickers and a PR toolkit. A focal point in the waiting room will be a Worm Patrol 5ft post.

## Microchip month

JUNE is National Microchip Month. Virbac reports that it is giving full support to the month with special offers on BackHome microchips throughout May and June for practices offering Microchip events.

These chips can be read by all scanners conforming to the ISO standard, being a pan-European brand present in eight European countries. The chips are pre-loaded in disposable implanters.

They come with registration documents for postal or internet registration on the AniBase database, collar tags to show the animal is chipped and receipt confirmation reply-cards to enable back-tracking of chips to practice.

# VETERINARY Practice

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**Website:** [www.veterinary-practice.com](http://www.veterinary-practice.com)

- **Funding for senior lectureship** – Vets Now is funding the creation of a senior lectureship in emergency and critical care (ECC) at the Glasgow veterinary school. The post is being taken up in June by Dr Ava Firth, a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care, who is currently clinical training specialist with Vets Now.
- **Change of caps** – Vétoquinol is introducing new flip-off plastic caps on its injectable range. First product with the new cap is Marbocyl 10%; others will change during the year. The new caps mean it is no longer necessary to have the aluminium caps which were used to protect the rubber bung and were not always easy to remove, the firm states.
- **SAC head of veterinary services** – SAC has appointed Brian Hosie as the new head of veterinary services. He will replace Dr Barti Synge who will be retiring in the summer. A graduate of the Royal (Dick), Mr Hosie has been with SAC for almost 25 years.
- **New directors appointed** – Tina Hunt has been appointed veterinary business unit director and Nigel Robinson OTC business unit director at Fort Dodge Animal Health. Mrs Hunt spent 10 years working primarily in equine practice before moving into industry where she has held a variety of technical, sales and management roles, most recently as area business manager at Pfizer. Mr Robinson has moved from the role of finance director which he has held since November 2004.
- **International technical manager** – Jane McNae has taken up the newly-created role of international technical manager for Protexin Veterinary, part of Probiotics International. Since graduating from Queensland in 1997, Jane has worked in small animal practices in both Hong Kong and the UK, as well as in industry as a technical manager. Another personnel change for Protexin Veterinary is the recent promotion of Dan Marley to UK national sales manager.



# How do you 'value' an economic recession?

**THE papers are full of gloom, the TV news is dire and, on occasion, the temptation to pull the duvet over one's head and stay in bed for a month can be overwhelming.**

Of course, human nature propels us along at an amazing speed because bad news is nearly always about someone else and, however altruistic our approach, murder and mayhem don't really touch us as individuals.

So, despite whatever may be going on in the world, we continue to go about our business as if nothing has happened. In reality, of course, nothing has usually happened to affect us directly but it's the indirect effect of distant happenings that can take us by surprise.

Until Christmas last year, how many of us had ever heard of sub-prime mortgages? Even the concept that lending money to impecunious American citizens was actually an established financial sector came as a shock to many of us.

Here, in the UK, people arrange mortgages – whatever they have to do, they do it – and we all cross our fingers that we'll carry on working enough to meet the costs involved. Perhaps there's a category of lending here that specialises in similar higher-risk mortgages but most of us had never been even vaguely aware of it until Northern Rock hit the headlines.

## A reason to do nothing

Now, in roughly the same way that all financial institutions justify their intransigence by citing the Financial Services Authority as a legitimate reason to do nothing, loudly, the collapse of Northern Rock will continue to appear like one of the ugly sisters when you least expect it.

The Government may have saved the investors but a new code of financial caution has beset the country, rolling in like a sea mist that simply won't go away.

Does it matter? Will it affect us?

Yes, almost certainly. As Mervyn King, the Bank of England's governor, put it, "Lenders intend to tighten conditions further this year. This tightening is unlikely to be short-lived."

What King was really saying was that this will directly, and adversely, affect the standard of living for those residing in the UK. This will simply fuel the current trend of insecurity surrounding house prices and will

accelerate an already rising rate of inflation. For most of us, fingers crossed as if we fear the return of the bogeyman, we're simply holding our breath and hoping that unemployment rates do not increase to further damage the housing market.

In the meantime several things are happening. People are not buying houses, nor are they – mostly – buying new cars, or boats or caravans. Early bookings for summer holidays are down, except at the elite end of the market where cash is still king and sellers are doing expensive deals to shore up the slide lower down.

There are still people wandering into Tiffany, people buying Cristal champagne (a jeroabam of 1999 will set you back £1,475) and sales of Bentley are significantly improved. But this, as in so many other ways, reflects a widening gap in UK society and in people's ability to pay for the things they want or need.

Unless one is disabled, it's hard to say that any of us actually needs a dog but most of us find solace or even joy in the companionship of a pet dog or cat. What is apparent, though, is that the costs of owning a pet are increasing along with everything else. The Feline Advisory Bureau has just

launched an excellent initiative – WellCat for life – and, at the launch meeting, showed statistics that confirmed the urban myth that around 50% of the nation's cats may never see the vet in their lifetime.

Perhaps more worrying was the concern that, while approximately 10% of cat owners are so utterly committed that they will do everything that their vet asks, promptly and without question, a further 40% or so are well-intentioned but largely non-compliant because, as the FAB put it, "Life gets in the way."

That must be a familiar thought for all of us. How often do we plan to do something but then shelve that plan at the last minute because "life gets in the way"? Doesn't that apply to us just as much as it does to the clients who visit veterinary practices every day, in every town?

## Inexorable fall

If so, how can we be surprised when the data, reflecting our business dynamics, show a steady and inexorable fall-off in the number of active clients per FTE. One doesn't need to be Mervyn King to put two and two together

to predict a further tightening in the numbers of people electing to come into veterinary surgeries when there is no apparent health reason to warrant the trip.

This will most likely be more accentuated in cats as cat owners are all too well aware of the inherent joys in trapping and transporting an unwilling cat to the vet. On occasion, one can turn a blind eye to life getting in the way, particularly if it avoids further financial drain, and we should expect this trend to increase unless we manage it directly.

The future doesn't have to be gloomy but it does require the owners of practices to think creatively to encourage greater traffic through the door, at a time when money will be increasingly scarce for clients and more expensive for businesses.

The industry surrounding practice



## THE MERCURY COLUMN

in which a guest columnist takes the temperature of the profession – and the world around

The future doesn't have to be gloomy but it does require the owners of practices to think creatively to encourage greater traffic through the door, at a time when money will be increasingly scarce...

has come up with some excellent and timely initiatives – National Pet Month, National Flea Week, WellCat for life, to name but three. Let's put 2008 down as the year when practices joined forces wholeheartedly with industry to bring about change.

We urgently need to change the way in which so many pet owners view their veterinary practices. We need to change the way in which people seek information about their pets and we need to change the passivity with which much of the profession approaches the future.

If money is tight and people elect to come to the practice less frequently, veterinary preventive care will become simply a commodity that pet owners can buy wherever it suits them and decreased frequency of visiting will become a habit.

Some creative thought and a collective burst of energy across the board might just make the difference between holding on to the profession's ability to steer its own future course or finding that the options available to the profession have been further eroded through an increased degree of financial depression.

## No equine visitors allowed at hospital...

A HOSPITAL in Hawaii has restated its rules on pets after a man took a horse up in a lift in a bid to cheer up a sick relative with his favourite steed.

Man and beast were stopped by security guards only after reaching the third floor, after apparently passing through the lobby unchallenged.

The patient was allowed to see them but it turned out to be the wrong horse.

A hospital spokeswoman said there was a visitation policy for dogs and cats, but not for horses.

Security managed to remove the visitor and the horse with just a few scuff marks, she added.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH...

**"My comments do not accurately reflect my views."** – Gerry Sutcliffe, Labour Member of Parliament for the Bradford South constituency and the Home Office Minister in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

# Quantity and quality at year's big event

**THE BSAVA president, Frances Barr, narrowly achieved every president's ambition to reign over a record congress. It was announced at the AGM that the number of delegate days had beaten the previous year's total by one!**

However, quantity is not the only criterion by which a congress should be judged – quality is far more important. The prevailing view seemed to be that she had managed to crown her year on both scores.

My first encounter after arrival on Thursday at midday was to cross her proud parent's path:

Jennifer and Alastair Porter were for once basking in *her* reflected glory and Alastair was like the cat that had got the cream.

My first encounter with science was the stimulating and masterly presentation by Baroness Greenfield on *Consciousness*. Her delivery, centre stage, without notes, away from the lectern, was reminiscent of David Cameron's delivery at last year's Tory party conference. Even more fascinating was her unfaltering use of the English language, combining humour and throw-away lines that reminded one of Victoria Wood.

An early encounter with Roger Green established that he was (at last) retired from doing locums – as he found his preferred treatments were gradually disappearing from the dispensary shelves. Not that he has given up work completely. He still provides his experience as an expert

witness. In these days of litigation-minded clientele, his is a name worth noting!

I heard that *The World of James Herriott Museum* in Thirsk is under threat as the local authority says it cannot afford to continue its annual grant. The museum might have to close but there are moves afoot to save it. We shall hear more of this, no doubt, as it deserves to be saved, as much as the London Poisons Unit which is also threatened with closure.

The grapevine informs me that a possible remedy is an annual practice

subscription set on the basis of the number of vets in the practice and a consultation fee for each referral.

The Commercial Exhibition provided the usual alternative of continuing education on products, old and new, from characters similarly old and new. One old hand was David James, founder of DRM Dental, who supplied me with my first reliable dental scaler some 28 years ago. Indeed, he told me he had only recently been to South Croydon to service it, and it was still going strong, like David!

## Sporting prowess

He was once the World No. 3 Latin American Dancer as well as a member of the Peggy Spencer Latin American Formation Team when they were World Champions. He actually batted in a Kent match with Dennis Compton when he was 15; at the same

age, he played in the Arsenal B Team – until he broke his arm and had to leave. I suggested it was a good job he did not break his leg or they might have put him down.

Schering-Plough Animal Health, a congress sponsor, enlarged since last year's acquisition of Intervet, launched its new product, Zylkene, at congress. I was informed it takes the stress out of life in the same way that mother's milk has a calming effect on the newborn in the first few days of life. It contains a bioactive decapeptide,

derived from casein, but is not broken down by pepsin.

I commented that Zylkene would therefore be undigested until it was in the small intestine when it encountered trypsin. The young lady expressed surprise that I would know that; in much the same way that I was encouraged to learn that my memory was better than I thought!

David Hallas, Schering-Plough's general manager, was flying in from the USA overnight Friday and was due to land at Heathrow early morning on Saturday. It should have been in good time for his arrival to participate with 100 invited vets at the product launch and the lunch afterwards.

Unfortunately, he was flying BA into Terminal 5. He did, in fact, arrive in Birmingham late afternoon, miraculously with his luggage. We hope he had some Zylkene with him.

Attracted to the Bayer HealthCare stand by new claims for Advocate, it appears that this has much potential already but more for the future as global warming increases the incidence of lungworm, as well as heartworm. According to Bayer, 38% of vets in one survey have had suspected or confirmed cases of lungworm in the UK. Not always easy to diagnose, it is obviously something to bear in mind.

2Sys Ltd offers a practice management computer system based solely on an internet connection and browser. You do not need a server or practice software and it is claimed to save on capital investment. You do not need to back-up and clients can log onto their own account, monitor patient progress, check statements, order repeat prescriptions, pay bills and so on.

There is more to it than just that but you can learn more from the website, [www.vetit.co.uk](http://www.vetit.co.uk), an unfortunate name perhaps! However, some ISPs and phone connections to broadband are



**Bruce Jones receives his certificate of honorary membership from Dr Frances Barr, president, during the BSAVA's AGM.**

not always that reliable so there may be pluses and minuses.

My packed lunch on Saturday included a bottle of Johnson's Orange and Raspberry Juice that was remarkably palatable, although one vet at our table remarked that the last time he saw a similar liquid was in a bitch with pyometra!

## Information service

Sunday saw the AGM which has tended to be somewhat mundane in recent years and not as lively as in the early days when I started attending BSAVA congress.

This year, however, we were treated to the award of honorary membership to Bruce V. Jones, a founder member of the BSAVA who initiated a scientific information service on behalf of the association with all the abstracts of possible interest to members. From this grew the first BSAVA publication, which gave rise to the *JSAP* under his editorship.

One must not forget he is the Jones of *Jones' Animal Nursing*! It culminated in his hard work producing the commemorative booklet for the association's fiftieth anniversary in 2007. This recognition was not before time and greeted with acclamation.

The AGM came to an end after Frances Barr handed over to her boss at the Bristol vet school, Ed Hall.

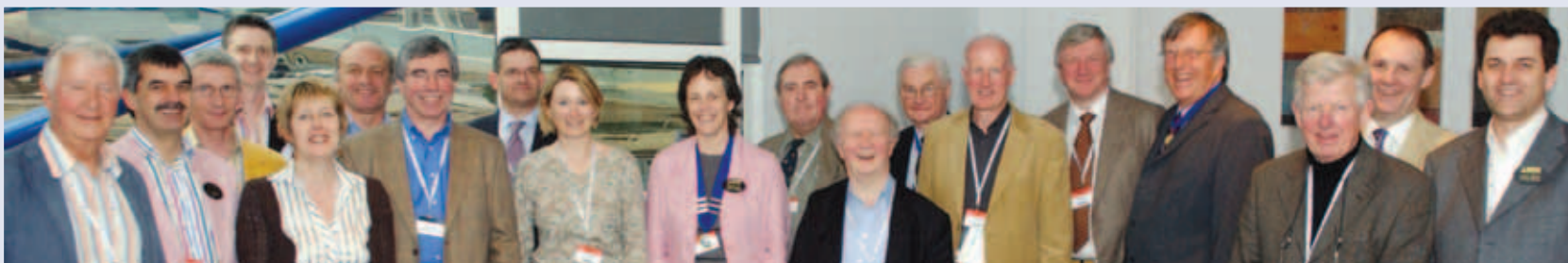


**The new BSAVA president, Professor Ed Hall, with the new senior-vice president, Dr Frances Barr.**



**The Petsavers' stand in the congress exhibition.**





Past presidents of the BSAVA met with current officers during the congress: John Bower, Mike Jessop, Dr Richard Harvey, Dr Richard Dixon, Lynne Hill, Ray Butcher, Julian Wells, Dr Ed Hall, Dr Carmel Mooney, Dr Frances Barr, Roger Green, Des Thompson, Dr Andrew Edney, Harvey Locke, Professor Neil Gorman, John Foster, Geoff Parkin, Mark Johnston and Grant Petrie.



The Royal Canin Pet Health Counsellor of the Year awards dinner was held during the congress. The overall winner was selected from a short list of six of the Pet Health Counsellor of the Month winners. Sarah Heath (fourth from left), who was one of the judges, presented the award for Pet Health Counsellor of the Year, with £1,500 travel vouchers, to Jan Stevenson (sixth from left) from Severn Veterinary Centre, Worcestershire. The judges were impressed with "her innovative approach to clinics in practice and that she was able to demonstrate the impact these can have on a practice's profile and profitability". Between them is Gudi Stuttard of Royal Canin. The others on the shortlist were (from left): Rachel Burbridge, Wessex Vets, Somerset; Dawn Childs, Bishop Stortford Vet Hospital; Michelle Herbert, Abbey Vet Group, Berkshire; Lydia Downes, Burghley Vet Centre, Lincs.; and Clare O'Dwyer, Priory Clinic, Norfolk. They are shown with Andrew Doyle, sales director at Royal Canin.



BVA president Nick Blayney in an unusual pose at the congress. VP will send some bubbly to the sender of the most entertaining caption!

## Manual for pet owners

The Merck Veterinary Manual is well known in the veterinary profession. Now a companion volume has been published for pet owners: The Merck/Merial Manual for Pet Health. Dr Scott Line, associate editor of both publications, attended the BSAVA congress to launch the weighty volume – it has over 1,350 pages – in the UK. With more than 200 contributors from around the world – including Andrew Bathe, Caroline Hahn, Svend Kold, Maureen Milne, Peter Holmes, Morag Kerr and Stuart Taylor from the UK – it focuses on preventive care and animal health advice for dogs, cats, horses, birds, fish, reptiles and other exotic pets. Published in America last November with a print run of 250,000, more than 120,000 have already been sold and there are plans for translations into several languages. It is published on a not-for-profit basis through an educational



partnership between Merck and Merial and will be sold through bookshops.

## Delegate from Kenya

Among the many delegates from overseas this year was Ambreen (known as Nonee) Magre. After qualifying in Kenya nearly 20 years ago, she spent 12 years at the Stone Lion Veterinary Centre in Wimbledon, later moving to practices in New Malden and then Croydon before returning to Wimbledon; she completed the CertVOphthal in 1997. Returning to Kenya she has worked for the KSPCA for the past five years, mainly doing neutering and vaccination work, carrying out up to 30 operations a day with little help and minimal equipment – and no anaesthetic machine, and dealing with all in-patients for free. Nonee, who lives with her parents, also works with children in some of the poorest areas of Nairobi. Although she enjoys what she is doing she is toying with the idea of returning to the UK and setting up her own practice.



If your practice has that WOW! factor, then you should enter the 2008 WOW! Awards being run by **Veterinary Practice** in association with **Paradigm Design**. We want to pay tribute to excellence in the design of front-of-house appearance and facilities in veterinary practices, both large and small. The judges will look for imaginative and innovative approaches and ideas, which promote higher standards of care for both clients and patients and help make visits to practices a pleasurable and memorable experience.

Please use the entry form – available to download from the website [www.veterinary-practice.com](http://www.veterinary-practice.com) (which also has full details) or by post from *Veterinary Practice* (30 Diamond Ridge, Camberley, Surrey GU15 4LD; telephone 01276 686654, fax 01276 63307) – to tell us, in up to 200 words, why your practice deserves to win one of the 2008 awards and also send up to a maximum of 10 photographs covering the main areas.

There are two categories:

1. practices with no more than 10 full-time (or FTE) staff
2. practices with more than 10 full-time (or FTE) staff

### Entries close on Thursday 10th July 2008

Judging will take place during the summer; the results will be announced in the October issue of *Veterinary Practice*.

**The prizes:** each of the two winning practices will receive £500; a gourmet meal will be arranged for up to four staff from each of the winners where the presentation will be made; a certificate to display in the practice; the winners will be featured in *Veterinary Practice*.



# Scene in the NIA



The stands in the commercial exhibition at the congress get ever fancier, more imaginative and more varied. Shown here is a selection of the free-standing ones (clockwise from above) – Animalcare; Dechra (now including the products previously marketed by VetXX); BSAVA Publications, featuring the new manuals published in the last 12 months; Kruuse, Pfizer and Boehringer Ingelheim.



John Yorke of YDT Medical with the new VetSpecs VSM7 digital multi-parameter vital signs monitor launched at the congress.



Howard Wilder, managing director of Genitrix, on his company's stand.

## Eleventh year gets under way

**GENITRIX** first appeared on the veterinary scene at the BSAVA congress in 1998.

That year, the firm's founder, Howard Wilder, invested in four posters and 500 leaflets and placed his entire stock of products on a picnic table in the smallest shell stand he could get in the exhibition hall in the ICC – this was in the days before the exhibition outgrew the convention centre and moved to the National Indoor Arena.

All the stock was sold and all the leaflets handed out and Howard, having removed the posters and table, went off to buy more – and so the business got under way, and has never looked back.

For the past three years it has been the fastest growing veterinary medicines company in the UK and has steadily been expanding its product range. At that first congress, Howard had Arthrotabs, a mobility supplement for dogs, and Lacto B, one of the first

probiotics on the UK market. There has been a regular stream of new products since then, including Xenex Ultra, the first insecticide developed for small furbies, HY-50 Vet, a sodium hyaluronate injection for horses, and Xeno-450, an ivermectin derivative.

At this year's congress the firm launched Dentagen, a dental plaque protection system for dogs and cats, and RIP Fleas Extra, a new formulation of its environmental flea treatment (*further details of both products are on the "products" page*).

The firm's marketing director, Rob Watkins, says that since its launch in 2005, RIP Fleas has broken all records, becoming the fastest growing product in the market.

The company, now beginning its 11th year, is based in a two-storey building close to Billingshurst Station in West Sussex, and is determined, says Mr Wilder, to remain a fast-growing independent supplier of specialist products to veterinary practices.

## BSAVA presents its annual awards

The BSAVA Awards were presented on the first morning of the congress. The photos show (below) Chris Laurence (right) receiving the J. A. Wight Memorial Award (awarded by the Blue Cross) from Jim Wight (Alf Wight's son); and (right) the then president, Dr Frances Barr, hands over the Woodrow Award (watched over by a photo of "Woody" Woodrow, the BSAVA's first president) to Séverine Tasker.





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# Trying to understand 'consciousness'

**SOMETHING disappears every time a veterinary surgeon administers an anaesthetic to his or her patient – and if we knew what exactly it was, we would have the answer to the most intriguing of all puzzles, neuroscientist Susan Greenfield told the BSAVA congress.**

Baroness Greenfield has spent her entire career trying to answer the question, "What is consciousness?", and admits that she is no nearer to formulating a definitive answer than when she began.

But studies in neurology departments around the world are providing a better model for explaining how the subjective experience of consciousness is generated in the brain and how this produces the different levels of consciousness observed in different species and at different times within the same individual.

Brain imaging techniques such as PET (Positron Emission Tomography) have been used to compare the activity of the human brain when awake and unconscious. These have shown only differences in the amount but not the location of activity, so there is no single "centre" in the brain responsible for the experience of consciousness, she said.

In any case, the temporal resolution of any conventional imaging methods would be too slow to identify the short-lived phenomena that constitute conscious thoughts. However, electrophysiological studies have identified a plausible candidate in the waves of electrical activity that circulate around particular regions of the brain with a frequency of 40Hz. But as this same phenomenon could

occur in a section of brain in a dish, it is not the whole story, she said.

In reality, consciousness is likely to result from an interplay between several different factors. This includes the networks of neuronal connections established between brain cells in response to an individual's experience – of which there is a far greater complexity within human brain than in, say, a goldfish, she pointed out.

## Sensory stimuli

Others include the effects of sensory stimuli which cause waves of electrical activity like the waves caused by a stone falling into water. But there are also biochemical factors, neuropeptides which control the level of arousal in the brain and so control the strength of those electrical ripples. But they also communicate with the rest of the body so that the brain is not functioning in isolation.

In opening her lecture at the congress, Baroness Greenfield recalled much earlier in her career holding in her hand a formalin-fixed human brain and wondering how that unprepossessing lump of grey tissue could encapsulate the personality, thoughts, dreams and emotions of its former owner. At the end, she acknowledged that her presentation would not have provided the answer.

"I am still asking the same question an embarrassing number of decades later. Although I may not have got to the real answer of how water is turned into wine, I hope I have convinced you that neuroscience can bring something to the party and permit some interesting experiments on issues that otherwise we would have to leave to the philosophers."

# 'Pet health plans' launched

Stephen Gates, managing director, with Gudrun Ravetz (left), veterinary consultant, and Juliet Long, new product development manager for The Practice Business, a trading name of Denplan and part of the AXA group, at the launch of the firm's payments scheme for veterinary practices during the BSAVA congress. It involves monthly payments by clients for preventive healthcare for dogs and cats. "The plans complement standard pet insurance and cover important routine treatment," explained Juliet Long. Interest-free loans can be arranged for non-routine work. The Winchester-based firm runs similar schemes in the dental field. For details telephone 0800 169 9958 or e-mail enquiries@pethealthplans.co.uk.



Charles Bagnall (left) of the Orwell Veterinary Group in Ipswich celebrates with many of his staff after his practice was named Practice of the Year at the Petplan Awards. Fifth from left is John Hill, the SPVS president, who presented the award; at right is comedian Michael McIntyre, the compère for this ninth presentation of the awards.

## Awards for people and practice of the year

BRIAN Faulkner, from the Melton Veterinary Surgery in Woodbridge, Suffolk, was named Vet of the Year 2008 at the Petplan Veterinary Awards, presented on the Thursday night of the BSAVA congress.

He impressed the judges with his commitment, enthusiasm and compassion for both the animals he deals with and their owners and they described him as an "outstanding ambassador" for the profession.



Brian Faulkner receives the Vet of the Year Award from the BVA president, Nick Blayney.



Louisa Baker (left) receives the Vet Nurse of the Year Award from Claire Fraser, president of the BVNA.

Orwell Veterinary Group in Ipswich was named Veterinary Practice of the Year; Rita Dingwall of Springfield Surgery in Cranbrook, Kent, was named Practice Manager of the Year; Louisa Baker, from the Priors Leaze Veterinary Centre in Chichester, was named Veterinary Nurse of the Year; and Margaret Gait, from Cinque Ports Veterinary Associates in Lydd, Suffolk, took the Receptionist of the Year title. Matt Brash, who starred in the ITV series *Zoo Vet* and *Zoo Vet at Large*, received a Special Recognition Award.

The Petsavers Veterinary Achievement Award went to Austen Reid and the Petplan Charitable Trust Scientific Award to David Argyle for his work in oncology.

## PRIZEWINNERS AT THE CONGRESS

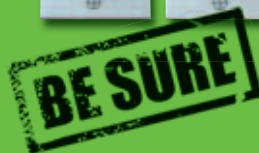
- Twelve delegates won Nintendo Wiis in prize draws on the Hill's stand: James Hamilton of the Pet Vaccination Clinic in Nuneaton; A. Kinch of the Springfield Vet Group in Sheffield; Anira Gandhi of the PDSA in Coventry; Miss C. E. Hephew of Castle Vets in Reading; Miss A. M. Ruff of Hornchurch; Miss H. Stranwood of Riverside Veterinary Centre in Stratford upon Avon; Caroline Galdas of Yorkshire Vets in Bradford; Clare Treacher of Passey Place Vets in London; Mr N. T. Rudram of Priory Close Vet Surgery in Taunton; Miss K. Bennett of Aylesbury; Tina Swoder of Coombefield Veterinary Hospital in Axminster; and Kirsty Preston of R. S. Dowding in Gainsborough.
- Louise Turley, of the Vale Veterinary Group in Tiverton, beat 606 other entrants to win Ceva Animal Health's quiz, run to mark the launch of Prilactone and Skoosh, at the BSAVA congress. She won a new iPod Touch.



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[www.stopwormsdead.co.uk](http://www.stopwormsdead.co.uk)



## Bluetongue vaccine licensed

INTERVET's bluetongue vaccine, Bovilis BTV8, has been granted a licence by the VMD. The licence, the first for a bluetongue vaccine in the UK, sets out dose rates and treatment regimes.

The recommended dose rates for animals over one month of age are: sheep – 1 x 1ml, injected subcutaneously; cattle – 2 x 1ml, approximately three weeks apart, injected subcutaneously. In successive years, re-vaccination should be given two weeks prior to the risk period.

Treated animals should have protective immunity three weeks after the initial course but may have a slight swelling at the site of injection.

The vaccine is available in 20ml and 50ml bottles.

The licence recommends the use of multi-injection vaccination systems and the firm will be supplying a discounted 1ml vaccination gun.

## Dental plaque protection system

GENITRIX has launched Dentagen, a dental plaque protection system for dogs and cats. The company says it offers a new solution to existing dental treatments, for which client compliance can be poor, with clinical trials demonstrating its ability to significantly inhibit the formation of plaque.

The active principle is a plant extract called RF2 and the product operates as an "anti-biofilm" treatment by modifying the membrane of oral bacteria to prevent them from producing plaque even at low concentrations.

The product differs from existing dental products, says Genitrix, in offering an integrated treatment regime involving both the practice and the pet owner.

Dentagen wax is presented for practice use in a syringe for easy application to the gingival layer and the buccal area of teeth. The initial protective coating of wax is applied to dogs or cats at the end of dental procedures in practice and while the animal is still sedated. The coating lasts for two to three days.

Dog owners can then maintain the protective coating by giving their pet Dentagen plaque prevention chews every other day. These chews,

impregnated with RF2 and of a specially designed shape and consistency, are supplied in two sizes with the larger size designed for dogs over 8kg and a smaller size for dogs less than 8kg.

Katy Horton of White Hart Lane Vets, who has trialled the product, commented: "The Dentagen wax was certainly very easy to apply and, from the small sample of dogs we've so far tried it on, the palatability of the chews was good."

"While tooth-brushing remains the gold standard for dental care, we recognise that it can be difficult for owners and believe that this new approach could be a valuable alternative."

Five syringes of Dentagen wax for application in practice cost £12.50. Packs of nine small chews cost £5.10 and a pack of the larger chews £6.50.

## Flea treatment reformulated

RIP Fleas, the environmental flea treatment from Genitrix, has been given a new formulation, says the firm, to ensure it acts more quickly in the killing of adult fleas and that it continues to kill fleas as they emerge from pupae for up to 12 months.

Now known as RIP Fleas Extra, the product is also licensed for the control of house dust mites in the environment for up to 12 months.

The reformulation is said to make the product the only environmental flea treatment to contain three active ingredients while complying fully with new EU Biocides regulations. It is the only such treatment to be fragranced and is also the only product to be presented in a volume which will cover 120 square metres – the size of an average house.

It contains: tetramethrin – a second generation synthetic pyrethroid and a contact insecticide with a rapid knockdown action of insect pests; permethrin – a potent insecticide with a powerful contact action on insects but with a low toxicity to most mammals; and methoprene – a compound that mimics the insect juvenile hormone and arrests development of fleas and house dust mites in the environment.

When used synergistically, tetramethrin and permethrin provide a rapid knockdown and kill of fleas as they hatch from pupae. The firm reports that studies have shown that this combination works four times more quickly than permethrin alone.

## Two new products for dogs

VIRBAC has introduced Suprelorin, a contraceptive implant for male dogs which, the firm states, provides a pioneering method for effective,

temporary de-sexing for a six-month period. "Testosterone is safely suppressed to deliver the same results as castration, yet eliminates the need for surgery," it says.

"The implants can be used in combination with annual vaccinations and as part of a general health programme for the patient, while owners can assess the benefits of de-sexing prior to making a decision about surgery."

Also new from Virbac is Ypozane for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia in dogs. This is a long-acting anti-androgen targeting the prostate, while maintaining reproductive function. Tablets are available in four different strengths for dogs of all sizes.

The firm says the product provides rapid clinical benefits, visible within a week of treatment, that last for six months in correctly treated dogs. "The convenience of the short, seven-day treatment period and oral route promote owner compliance and therefore treatment success," Virbac reports.

## Hyperthyroidism in cats treatment

INTERVET UK has launched Vidalta (carbimazole), which it describes as the first hyperthyroidism drug to be fully effective with once daily administration.

It is the first 24-hour sustained release formulation for the treatment of hyperthyroidism in cats which is reported to deliver a rapid, long-term, practical and reliable method to treat and stabilise the condition.

Trials have shown that clinical signs of hyperthyroidism may be eliminated within 10 days of commencing treatment.

There are two tablet strengths in two pack sizes: Vidalta 10mg and Vidalta 15mg in 30 tablet packs for early

## Hand-held x-ray machine

Clark Dental has introduced the Nomad hand-held x-ray machine from Aribex. The operator is protected by a patented internal radiation shield as well as an external backscatter shield. One operator would have to expose over 10,000 E-speed films per year in order to approach the lowest measurable dose on a monitoring badge, the firm states. Two rechargeable batteries provide 150 exposures each, and it is compatible with both digital sensors and traditional x-ray film. Details are available from Clark Dental, telephone 01270 613750, e-mail maria@clarkdental.co.uk.



stabilisation and in 100 tablet packs for long-term maintenance.

## Four licensed generics

DECHRA is expanding its Veterinary Essentials portfolio of veterinary licensed generics with the introduction of four new products.

These are Flexicam, a NSAID for the control of pain and inflammation in dogs with acute and chronic musculo-skeletal disorders (which joins the range following the acquisition of VetXX); Prednidale 25, the first veterinary licensed 25mg strength prednisolone; and a new combination of sedation and reversal agents – Sedator (medetomidine hydrochloride) and Atipam, an alpha-2-adrenoceptor antagonist.

Dechra has also introduced a margin and profit calculator which is said to provide an instant analysis of how much can be saved when stocking veterinary licensed generic products over an equivalent.

## Equine anthelmintic launched

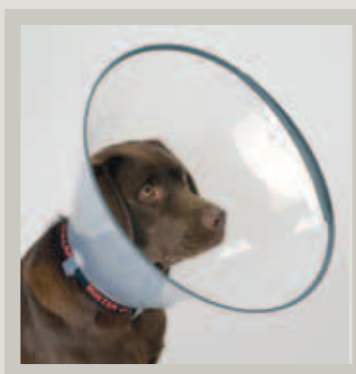
CHANELLE Animal Health has launched Animec Paste for Horses.

Animec (ivermectin) 18.7mg/g oral paste is presented in a calibrated dosing syringe which includes a locking-ring for accurate dosing. It is indicated for the treatment of roundworms, bloodworms, pinworms, neck threadworms and bots and is said to be ideal for rotational worming.

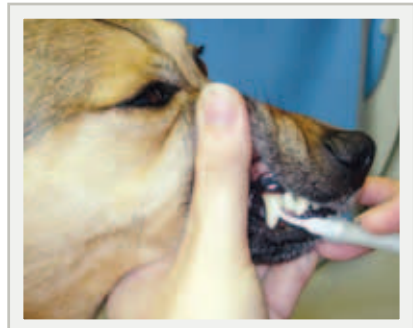
## Gastro-intestinal diet

PROTEXIN Veterinary has launched

## Latest collar



Kruise UK has expanded the Buster range of Elizabethan collars with the introduction of a Buster Comfort Collar. This new design is described as softer and more flexible and has a soft rubber outer edge for better comfort for the animal. The collars are available in seven sizes ranging from 7.5 to 30cm.





Pro-Balance, which it describes as a therapeutic GI diet.

It is the first such diet to contain an added probiotic, *Enterococcus faecium*, and also contains Protexin Preplex, a multi-sourced prebiotic.

Low in fibre, it has low to moderate fat levels with Omega 3 fatty acids to help reduce gastro-intestinal inflammation. There are two pack sizes of 1kg and 3kg.

## New model of CIDR device

A NEW model of the controlled internal drug release (CIDR) device for oestrus synchronisation in cows and maiden heifers has been introduced by Pfizer Animal Health.

The CIDR-1380 supersedes the CIDR-1900 and has been re-designed for reduced invasiveness and minimal contact with the reproductive tract's internal surfaces consistent with achieving the target rate of progesterone absorption.

According to Pfizer's senior livestock veterinary surgeon, Carolyn Hogan, improved functionality has allowed the total progesterone content to be reduced to 1,380mg per device without reducing the efficacy, in line with responsible design

parameters to avoid over-supply of medicinal active ingredients.

## Liver function supplement

EQUISTRO has introduced Legaphyton for the support of liver function. It incorporates Siliphos, a complex of concentrated milk thistle fruit extract and phospholipids, and is a source of readily available carbohydrates.

The product is available in 900g packs, which is sufficient for 30 days for a standard 500kg horse.

## 'Best home flea treatment'

INDOREX household flea spray has been voted the Best Home Flea Treatment by readers of *Your Dog* magazine, the biggest circulation dog journal in the UK.

Virbac reports that it is the only product to kill adult fleas and dust mites and prevent the development of their eggs and larvae for two months, providing 12-month's protection from a single application. This, plus its ease of use with no residual smell, has made it the leading environmental flea control product available through

vets, says the firm, with over one million cans sold.

## Antimicrobial re-named

COLISCOUR is the new name for Colivet solution, a soluble antimicrobial for pigs from Ceva. It is

the UK's only colistin-based antimicrobial.

Phil McGuire, Ceva's business unit manager, said the change of name was the easiest way to avoid confusion between this product and a totally different non-prescription product of a similar name.

## New locum recruitment guides

RIG Vet Recruitment has added two new titles to its range of personnel recruitment guides with the introduction of "Rig's Practice VN Guide" and "Rig's Locum VN Guide".

Using a similar format to the other guides covering employing locum veterinary surgeons, the new leaflets offer basic information and advice laid out in an A5 format accompanied by light-hearted cartoons.

"At the end of last year, we conducted a survey among some vet nurses and frankly were surprised at how little information on practice admin and procedures some VNs were given on their first day," said Justin Carpenter, the firm's managing director.

"For example, 88% were not given a formal induction, 78% were not advised on fire and health and safety regulations, and when expected to undertake reception work, 97% were not informed on phone protocols or appointment systems."

For copies, contact the firm on 01392 332858.



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# Veterinary surgeons and quality food

A RECENT conference entitled *South West Excellence leading the way in food, farming and tourism* had speakers demonstrating a firm intention to develop farm produce as a major initiative.

These were not the usual farmer representatives bemoaning the lack of profitability but specialists extolling the excellence of available farm produce. Underpinning the discussions was a recognition that healthy animals are delivered for consumption and that quality food comes from green, welfare-friendly production.

At the South West Dairy Event, a direct linkage was shown between the efforts of veterinary surgeons on behalf of their clients and the produce that is sold as a direct result of health planning.

The Delaware Veterinary Group in Somerset had buffalo sausages, various cheeses and other tasty things on its stand, the produce from clients' farms. It seems important that veterinary advice and action is clearly seen as a part of the food production chain.

Much work needs to be done to achieve this and one of the benefits may be that quality restaurants will welcome veterinary surgeons as informed customers. A highlight has already been given to the chef of the year that the smell of disinfectant on a customer is a sign of intense interest in quality food!

## Rises expected

Tom Vosa of Clydesdale Bank commented on the high cereal prices worldwide and the current 20-year low in world stocks. Demand is outstripping supply and terms of trade have moved in favour of agriculture. Higher food prices will be needed to support increases in production. The price of meat is expected to rise, with a rise in farmers' incomes despite raised input costs for fertilisers and fuel.

In the UK this will mean consumer price inflation with less disposable income. An increase in tourism is likely to come from the Middle East and Asia and the South West currently has a low level of foreign tourists.

An alliance with other gastronomic regions is proposed by Marc Millon, a food, wine and travel writer, with the integration of farming, leisure, food

and drink. The South West is seen as having "the best larder in Europe" and bears comparison with the development of Chianti, the area around Florence and Siena.

Tuscan Agriturismo has developed from a poor base and now attracts high-spending tourists from within Italy and beyond.

People are looking to rediscover the countryside with its slower pace and to enjoy local produce.

An incitement to consumers has been vital to the Tuscan experience and products are linked to place with emphasis on a protected designation of origin. He emphasises that this is not "budget

tourism". Producers from Tuscany, complete with translator, were introduced, to hear what was being discussed and attending in order to develop the Tuscan-South West links.

## Marketing pride

Michael Caines, two-star Michelin chef and businessman, described the pride taken within his hotels and restaurants in marketing the difference in the food and hospitality on offer.

A local hotel has more than doubled its turnover by offering local produce and as the hotel business grows so do the businesses of the supplying producers. International recognition of the hotel also gives recognition to the suppliers. Utilising the local larder enables a food culture to be developed which customers appreciate.

An example of producing air-dried pork and beef was highlighted by Jean Cole. She and her husband have developed an air drying process that produces salami that is equivalent to traditional salami from southern Europe. The greatest compliment she received was from a customer who simply believed that the product had to be imported. Prime Cornish beef and pork is dried and matured.

Both she and Mark Sharman, Sharpham wines and unpasteurised cheese, have resisted approaches from supermarkets to retail their products. As small producers, sufficient demand is currently generated by specialist outlets. However, the wine needed to be taken up by recognised outlets in London before local restaurants accepted the brand.

Approximately half of the production is sold on the farm and

guided lunch tours are a growth area where people walk the farm and stagger off, loaded with cheeses from the Jersey herd and wine from the vines. Bacchus is the grape variety to look out for if wine is your thing.

One of the highlighted advantages was that customers are met on a face to face basis which is not enjoyed by many farmers. Knowing that people are enjoying your produce is important.

The conference had many sponsors and linked in with a festival of food organised by Taste of the West, and John Sheaves, chief executive, offered further insights. Food is listed among the top three reasons for tourists to visit an area.

Food tourism has great potential. By 2015 it is planned that the South West of England will be the major food region with the best food available in the UK. The model encompasses food quality, provenance, integrity and sustainability. Links with the land and the local culture together with green issues and carbon footprint are important.

## Adding value

Technical expertise is required to introduce change and to add value. Currently there are 214 million trips of visitors to Devon and Cornwall alone with a spend of £4.6 billion. The South West has 18% of the national land area with 50,000 registered holdings and 20,000 farmers.

The agricultural output is three times that of Wales and there are 150 different cheeses produced within the region. Regional branding is important. Emphasis is to be placed on producer support, quality assurance and communication to change perceptions.

Sir Harry Studholme, Perridge



Species branding and (below) the best bangers in the west.



estate with arable, sheep and woodland, chaired the conference and encouraged the food-related businesses present to embrace the development of local food. A twinning network between the South West and Tuscany is being arranged and anyone interested should register with [info@southwestengland-tuscany.org.uk](mailto:info@southwestengland-tuscany.org.uk).

Outside the veterinary practice client box, there appears to be room for recognition of the technical expertise applied to achieve healthy stock. Which veterinary practice will be the first to offer health planning tours for non agriculturalists?

## RCVS QUESTION TIME IN ILMINSTER

THE final RCVS regional question time of the current presidential year is to be held at the Shrubbery Hotel in Ilminster, Somerset, on Thursday 22nd May. The evening starts at 6.30pm with food and drink, followed by question time at 7.15 with the meeting finishing at around 10pm.

Bob Moore will chair the meeting and the panel will be made up of the officer team and Veterinary Nurses Council chairman Andrea Jeffery.

To book a place, contact Fiona Clark at the RCVS on 02072 020773 or [f.clark@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:f.clark@rcvs.org.uk) before 9th May.



## Preventive health initiatives

LINKS Vet Group in Haddington, Scotland, has introduced a series of preventive health initiatives for pets.

As well as introducing programmes for animals to treat the early signs of allergic skin disease, spot genetic risks of blindness and treat arthritis, specialist programmes are being drawn up for both overweight and elderly animals.

The group's Glen Watson explains: "These initiatives aim to both educate pet owners in spotting conditions early and give their pets the opportunity to undergo treatments to prevent complications in the future."

The initiatives proved incredibly popular when piloted in late 2007, he says, and this year sees the introduction of diet management, arthritis treatment and allergic skin care plans.

Discounted healthcare plans for cats and dogs have been introduced and a Horse Health Plan, for horse owners who would like to have annual clinical health checks performed on their animals, is also in the pipeline.

The practice has used its database to identify patients who are deemed genetically at risk of certain conditions, or who have exhibited symptoms which might act as a marker for the emergence of disease at a later stage.

Where appropriate, owners have been contacted and invited to attend the surgery for appropriate screening examinations. A recent client education evening on canine arthritis was attended by 150.

The Links Vet Group has been operating in Haddington, East Lothian, since the mid 19th century and currently has clinics in the centre of Haddington, Dunbar, Musselburgh and North Berwick. The Haddington Clinic is moving to new purpose-built premises later this year which will provide double the immediate working capacity.



Glen Watson.

## Donations sought for Benin project

AFTER raising over £30,000 to build a wall that will stop snakes from invading a school in Benin, Jacqui Molyneux, who runs the Prince Bishop Veterinary Hospital in Leadgate near Consett, County Durham, along with Rotary Club colleagues, has raised money to build a library.

Once equipped, this will introduce the children to computers as well as TV and video for the first time in their lives.

As well as securing sponsorship to fund 17 youngsters through school at £90 a year, she has had vital medical equipment from her practice, including an ultrasound machine, converted from animal to human use and transported to the region.

Jacqui aims to raise the £13,000 needed to fully equip the library by the end of this summer, and is seeking donations from individuals and businesses. Cheques payable to The West Africa Trust should be sent to: The West Africa Trust, c/o Newton Press, St Cuthbert's Way, Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham DH5 6DX.

## Involving the nation's pet owners

MARC Abraham, who frequently appears on the *Paul O'Grady Show* on Channel 4, is setting up a new website, [www.thepet.net](http://www.thepet.net), which, he says, is aimed at involving the nation's pet owners to revolutionise

the pet industry.

"The website aims to be the most trusted and up-to-date source of pet information available," he states.

He adds: "After working in the pet industry as a vet for 13 years, I believe

it's time for a much-needed shake-up. Increasing corporate attitudes, widespread complacency and lack of the personal touch are turning pets into luxury items when they were once just a normal part of everyone's family."

The

# MRSA seminars 2008

## An in-depth look at the threat of MRSA to veterinary practice.

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**Prof. David Lloyd**

BVetMed, PhD, DipECVD, ILTM, FRCVS

**Dr. Tim Nuttall**

BSc, BVSc, PhD, CertVD, CBiol, MRCVS

**Ms. Amanda Boag**

MA, VetMB, DipACVIM, DipACVECC, MRCVS

FRIDAY 9TH MAY 2008

THURROCK - EAST LONDON

Prof. David Lloyd BVetMed, PhD, DipECVD, ILTM, FRCVS

Prof. Mark Enright BSc, PhD

Dr. Susan Dawson BVMS PhD MRCVS

TUESDAY 13TH MAY 2008

NEWCASTLE

Dr. Tim Nuttall BSc, BVSc, PhD, CertVD, CBiol, MRCVS

Dr. Giles Edwards MB, BChir, MA, PhD, MRCPath

Dr. Nicola Williams BSc, PhD

WEDNESDAY 14TH MAY 2008

CHEADLE - SOUTH MANCHESTER

Dr. Tim Nuttall BSc, BVSc, PhD, CertVD, CBiol, MRCVS

Dr. Giles Edwards MB, BChir, MA, PhD, MRCPath

Dr. Susan Dawson BVMS PhD MRCVS

TUESDAY 20TH MAY 2008

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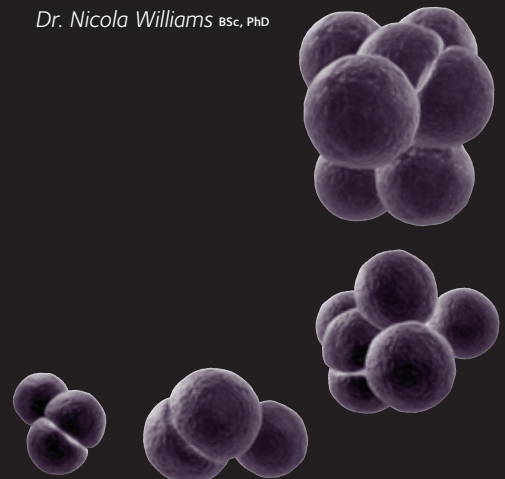
  
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# The battle for the profession's future

**A COVERT philosophical "battle" is taking place in the United States over the future structure of small animal (pet) veterinary practice.**

Most of the participants are unaware that a battle is going on because they are either part of the proud and paradigm-insulated group that is responsible for getting the profession to where it is today, or they have the silo perspective that marks a profession dominated by small, separate, and isolated work centers.

Nevertheless, I believe that we are at an important inflection point regarding the future structure of pet practice: will the dominant practice model be "general practice" embracing wellness care, preventive medicine, and sickness (reactive) care and supported by clinical specialty referral practices for rare and challenging cases, or, will the profession continue to adopt the human

medicine practice model of providing expensive and inconvenient reactive care by a multitude of clinical specialists, with general practice relegated to providing routine health and sickness evaluations and triage services?

Proponents of the latter model are mainly clinical specialists who seem to equate quality medicine with sophisticated technologies and believe that two to four years of additional clinical training and experience (i.e. internships and residencies) and board certification are necessary in order to practise quality medicine.

This, of course, is the model followed by human medicine in the US. However, there is now widespread agreement that this reactive human medicine practice model, although capable of delivering daily miracles, is too expensive and inconvenient – and failing to provide the care wanted by

broad segments of society.

In veterinary medicine, approximately one third of new graduates of US veterinary schools now apply for such clinical specialty track training programmes, believing that this is essential for success in veterinary practice.

As a result, specialty practices are being established in virtually every urban environment. General practices are being urged to refer cases to such practices, and many school clinical faculties now advocate such referrals as representing the new standard of care.

Senior veterinary students who rotate through clinical specialty clinics repeatedly hear that, "If you see a case like this, you should refer it to someone like me – a specialist!"

I suspect that the same battle is quietly changing the face of veterinary medicine in the UK and Europe, too. In this and future articles, I will illustrate through specific vignettes how the "battle" is being waged and the

implications for practice.

It is important that we understand the current state at the macro level so that we, as general practitioners, have a chance to participate thoughtfully rather than be caught unaware after the battle is over! I hope that these comments generate some vigorous discussion!

## Reactive practice

In the United States, human medical practice is essentially entirely reactive: practitioners have almost completely lost

any role in wellness care and preventive medicine. Such services can now be obtained through pharmacies, large stores and, increasingly, via the internet.

Self-care is the dominant wellness model in the US

and is extending its reach into reactive care through web-based systems and the ready availability of prescription drugs, vaccines, etc., through internet sites.

Similarly, food animal practice in the US has largely gone the same route as practitioners have persisted in playing reactive roles (being part of the problem) while farmers wanted



**HUGH LEWIS begins a series in which he comments on developments on the other side of the Atlantic**

**Self-care is the dominant wellness model in the US and is extending its reach into reactive care through web-based systems...**



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(1) Dryden M. et al., Efficacy of a topically applied formulation of metaflumizone on cats against the adult cat flea, flea egg production and hatch, and adult flea emergence. Vet. Parasitol.(2007), doi:10.1016/j.vetpar.2007.08.043.

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preventive help in maintaining maximum health and productivity for their herds (i.e. preventing the problems from arising).

It is less obvious in the pet market, but there is a growing gap between what pet owners want for their pets (health, happiness, a strong and satisfying bond, and long life), and what veterinarians want and are trained to provide: sophisticated, reactive services (diagnosis, treatment).

It is easy to forget that the veterinary profession is a service profession and what clients want matters. They, through the marketplace, have a history of getting what they want.

### An ethical dilemma?

A number of infectious diseases are currently sweeping across the US, driven by people movement, lack of geographical barriers, and perhaps by climate change and the migration of vectors. Examples include heartworm, West Nile virus, Lyme disease,

anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, babesiosis, etc. In the future, it could include SARS, avian flu, monkey pox, leishmania, etc.

It seems that if an infectious disease is endemic anywhere, it can now become endemic everywhere! This presents us with an interesting ethical dilemma which depends upon whether one takes a micro (individual pet) view or a macro (pet population) view and how one answers the question, "When is it appropriate to initiate preventive treatments for infectious disease?"

Should one try to prevent a disease from becoming endemic in an area (e.g. Oregon) by initiating a vaccination programme (e.g. for West Nile virus), or should one wait for it to become endemic before it is justified in trying to prevent it?

The predominant opinion in the US, focused as we are on reactive medicine and the individual pet (member of the family), is that exposing it to unnecessary risk is viewed as unethical.

On the other hand, not working to prevent a serious disease from becoming endemic when the means (vaccine) are on hand surely must also be unethical, but only if one views the larger picture of population health which only secondarily affects the individual pet.

I have been aware of this ever since our practice was accused of being

unethical because we recommended heartworm preventive treatment in our north-western region hospitals. Dogma had it that the disease did not occur in these states because the ambient temperature did not support the full development cycle of the parasite.

Fortunately, we had hospitals in most states and had been able to track the disease's spread westward and northward into these states. This is a privilege that practitioners in single, stand-alone practices do not have. It allows us to see the big picture as well as understand the dynamics of disease spread.

It also raises our awareness of how important it is to our patients and clients for us to prevent disease rather than wait for it to arise and then treat it. It also raises the clear responsibility we have to share our knowledge with our colleagues in the veterinary profession.

### Risk assessments

So, how does this tie in to the "battle" mentioned above? We have become aware that resistance to disease prevention measures predominantly comes from our clinical specialty colleagues who are oriented to reactive medicine by virtue of their clinical disciplines (problem first, solution second) and individual pet focus.

Because of their clinical expertise and reputations, they understandably dominate groups and panels making medical recommendations. In view of their orientation, they naturally advocate performing risk assessments for each pet prior to initiating preventive care (vaccination, heartworm prevention, etc.).

In cases where the disease in question is rare because it is not yet endemic, it is viewed as all risk and no benefit – and hence any preventive treatment would be untenable. As a result, advocating measures to prevent a disease from becoming endemic is viewed as quite unethical and constituting "malpractice" to some.

This view reflects their reactive, patient-centric perspective. General practices are more attuned to the need for preventive care of their patient population, but can be intimidated by these "practice standards-setting" groups.

Travel by both people and animals and the translocation of cultural practices are also starting to affect the animal disease spectrum in the USA and UK. We must guard against letting the move towards a focus on the needs of the individual pet get in the way of making sensible decisions to prevent the rise of new endemic diseases.

Hugh B. Lewis, BVMS, DipACVP, MRCVS, is president of DataSavant LLC and senior vice-president/practice development of Banfield, the American (and now international) chain of pet hospitals, with headquarters in Portland, Oregon.

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# Draft Marine Bill promises much

APRIL saw the publication of the British Government's draft Marine Bill, a long-awaited move to give added protection to British marine life and to designate a new network of marine nature reserves.

One of the functions of the Bill will be to create a new agency known as the Marine Management Organisation, which will enforce the relevant environmental legislation and regulate developments such as offshore wind farms.

The RSPB has given a cautious welcome to the Bill's publication in the hope that robust environmental protection laws will follow. However, it has some concerns that the Bill will simply involve "a rehash of the current, ineffective legislation".

Why do we need to give our coastline and territorial waters more protection than they currently receive? Well, consider that at present only 0.001% of UK seas have high levels of protection from damaging activities. And that Sally Bailey of the conservation group WWF UK reckons: "There is a considerable body of work suggesting that a network of marine protected areas

should cover from 20-30% of waters, with some work even suggesting as much as 40%."

So there is obviously huge scope for the Bill with currently just three highly-protected marine reserves in UK waters: Lundy Island off the north Devon coast; Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland; and Skomer in Pembrokeshire.

And whilst all seabirds in the UK are protected when they are on land, there is no protection

extended (other than in the three reserves mentioned), to those areas of sea next to where they breed and in which they need to fish.

## Conservation zones

Bearing this in mind the RSPB has just published a report, *Safeguarding our Seabirds*, in which it identifies 70 near-shore sites that are of national importance for breeding seabirds and worthy of protection as Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

If the new Bill, once enacted, enables a network of MCZs to be established then it could have far-reaching consequences for the long-term future of not just seabirds but of all forms of marine life.

**ANDREW COE**  
believes the legislation  
could have far-reaching  
consequences



Common seals may be one of the beneficiaries of the new Bill.

Another function of the Bill is to declare a "right to roam" around the whole of the English coastline with the exception of some railway lines and MOD sites. The National Trust has welcomed this as a means of improving access by all to what is a "highly prized Public asset". Private individuals who own parts of the coastline, and the likes of golf course committees, are likely to be less enthusiastic, with talk of big drops in the retail value of some properties should the idea go ahead.

My own feeling on the matter is that it could be a wonderful opportunity to see parts of our country that have previously been off

limits but I worry that us humans are just too irresponsible to be trusted with the privilege. Think litter, erosion, malicious damage to fences and styles, noise pollution, gates left open, and you might be able to imagine my concerns.

The saving grace I suppose is that many of the newly opened up areas will be relatively remote and thus sufficiently far away from the car parks and ice cream vans such that only the most dedicated of ramblers will want to access them.

One hopes that the more intrepid will be all too aware of the need to conserve what they see and not despoil it.

## CPD

### The future of CPD?

THE BVA launched a pilot of VETS.TV at the BSAVA congress.

This is an internet television site run jointly by the BVA and Ten Alps Publishing which will be available via a microsite of [www.bva.co.uk](http://www.bva.co.uk).

The pilot includes custom-made videos on MRSA, litigation and stress management, a series of interviews with key veterinary figures and a number of specially acquired programmes.

The BVA president, Nick Blayney, says he believes that VETS.TV represents the future of CPD. "It will become a significant and popular

medium for the profession since it offers varied and interesting programming covering CPD sessions, information on broad general interest and practice-related subjects. It will be up-to-date, forward thinking and an information packed service designed specifically for the veterinary professional."

### Nursing day at ESFM

THE European Society of Feline Medicine (ESFM) congress is to be held in Edinburgh in September.

It will include, for the first time, a feline nursing programme. This will be on Saturday 27th September at the Sheraton Hotel. Sponsored by Hill's Pet Nutrition and Ceva, the theme for the day will be *Making yours a cat friendly practice*.

On Saturday evening, there will be a "Golden Party" to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ESFM's founder, the FAB, at The Hub, home of Edinburgh's International Festival, sponsored by Schering-Plough.

To register, see [www.fabcats.org](http://www.fabcats.org) or call 0870 742 2278.

### BVNA in Scotland

THE British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) is organising a day of CPD training for its members in Scotland on Saturday 14th June at the Quality Inn in Edinburgh.

Attendance will qualify nurses for six CPD hours.

Sarah Heath, Paul Crawford and Chris Bradley will speak on topics such as "behaviour issues", "critical care", "analgesia" and "diabetes management".

Further details are available from the BVNA office or on [www.bvna.co.uk](http://www.bvna.co.uk).

### APBC courses

THE Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors is to run a series of one-day seminars for veterinary surgeons and nurses. All the events will be held at the Henley Golf and Country Club in Warwickshire.

Subjects, speakers and dates are: *Canine aggression – handling the biting dog* with Robin Walker on 23rd May;

*Focusing on felines* with Sarah Heath on 13th June; *Dealing with the firework challenge* with Sarah Heath on 12th September; *Practical solutions for puppy problems* with Gwen Bailey and Claire Arrowsmith on 3rd October.

Details can be found at [www.apbc.org.uk](http://www.apbc.org.uk).

### FAB day in May

FELINE respiratory disease is the theme of the Feline Advisory Bureau Study Day to be held on Friday 9th May at the Royal (Dick) Hospital for Small Animals at Easter Bush.

Information on the new highly pathogenic feline calicivirus strains will be presented by Dr Danielle Gunn-Moore, professor in Feline Medicine at the Dick Vet. She will also discuss the treatment of chronic bronchopulmonary disease.

Other speakers will be Dr Kerry Simpson, Anita Schwartz and Vicky Halls.

Cost of attending is £40. For details see the website [www.fabcats.org/conferences/edinburgh/08](http://www.fabcats.org/conferences/edinburgh/08) or e-mail [conferences@fabcats.org](mailto:conferences@fabcats.org).







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# Suicide and the veterinary profession

**VETS, doctors and dentists have a suicide rate around four times higher than that of the population in general. So why do so many of us choose to kill ourselves?**

There is a point where the pain becomes too much, where the black hole of depression turns into an unclimbable barricade. It feels as if everything hurts, there is no relief.

It's time for "Stop the world, I want to get off" but in reality the world will continue to turn with or without me. It is not responding to my needs and is oblivious to my existence. So, in eliminating myself it will stop my bad feelings and stop them forever. I need suffer no more.

But then, at what price? In ceasing to be Marion McCullagh I will be 60kg of clinical waste. I'll ruin my kids by leaving them a bad example and a burden of grief. My friends will be sad. I won't see the horse again and who will look after the dog?

For me, so far, reality has kicked in. I'll phone someone, walk the dog, go for a ride. Throw some excitement at me and I'm happy to rush back into the arena and continue the struggle. The depression gets pushed away again as soon as I am sufficiently involved.

Fun, doing something with good friends, physical or mental stimulus can provide a way out of the bad feelings. Perhaps it is because I am so used to dealing with other people's

problems in the clinical area, so used to timetables, appointments, highly-structured days at work, that I simply cannot switch off and do without them when I have some free time. Like Winston Churchill's black dog, my

depression stays faithfully at heel and moves in whenever it sees an opportunity.

The veterinary profession is well regarded by society. It takes a sparkling school career to gain entry to veterinary undergraduate training. Vets are seen as compassionate, intelligent and effective. Sometimes I think that vets choose their part of medicine because they

prefer animals to people.

The pleasure of having a "hands-on" occupation that deals with problems in the flesh rather than always via e-mail may be undermined by an inherent shyness.

Nick Blayney, the current BVA president, said, "I think vets lead a very lonely life professionally. They don't get stimulation or new ideas from outside unless they seek them." The daily routine in practice can be isolating, frustrating or boring and support from management and colleagues may not be enough to balance the stress.

One of the things under-emphasised in training is the very high exposure to clients' grief. Vets are trained to prevent animal suffering and to preserve the function of the

animal. Doctors also relieve suffering but are obliged to preserve life to the bitter end.

To a farmer, death can be the end point of production. If it comes too early and is a financial loss, he may express anger, disappointment and a degree of grief but he survives by acceptance and optimism and by moving on to the next task.

Pet owners have a negative view of death and many of them are very bad at accepting that life has a finite time span. We live in an era where sex in all its variety is acceptable but death is taboo.

## Compassion is central

Small animal practitioners are expected to kill an animal in the most comfortable way possible. Providing compassion for animals is central to our ethic and we are well trained for it but we find ourselves obliged to extend our skill and compassion to deeply grieving owners on a very regular basis.

We are not trained as counsellors and extending so much sympathy so often can erode the detachment and resilience that is necessary to enjoy life as a practising veterinary surgeon. Counsellors have a strong support system. The grief that they pick up from their clients is dissipated by supervision where they can discuss their case load and gain perspective.

Too much euthanasia wears out a vet, and the more caring the individual the more susceptible he or she will be to the emotional distress which feeds into depression with the potential for suicide.

Performing euthanasia can be regarded as part of anaesthesia, but it

is a loss to the veterinary surgeon as well as to the owner. Very often there is an emotional bond between the vet and the animal. I might have vaccinated the dog for 15 years, or seen the horse through the triumphs and disasters of competition.

Euthanasia can leave the practitioner with a personal burden of negative emotions as well as those brought on by mopping up the client's feelings, which are often complex; the sadness can be embellished with anger, guilt or doubt.

So is this what prompted the equine practitioner to shoot himself in his kitchen and the small animal specialist to set himself up an intravenous drip of Phenobarbital? Is it because we keep animals only as long as they are functional? When they cannot produce a calf or jump big fences or keep us company without soiling the furniture we dispose of them.

"I don't want him to suffer" is a good wish but do veterinary surgeons apply it to themselves? Does euthanasia get distorted into untimely suicide and what can the profession do to stop this happening?

It seems that there is a niche for setting up an easily accessible support system of debriefing within practices, especially small animal practices where euthanasia is so frequent and sentiment flows so freely. Veterinary surgeons take on every bit as much emotional pressure as human counsellors and do not have the benefit of formal emotional support.

Prevention is better than cure so perhaps it is time for us to take as good care of ourselves as we do of our patients.



**MARION McCULLAGH believes it's time for veterinary surgeons to take as good care of themselves as of their patients**

## Sources of help...

### ■ VET HELPLINE telephone 07659 811118

A 24-hour rapid response answerphone service for discussion of problems with someone who has experience of the veterinary profession

### ■ VETERINARY SURGEONS' HEALTH SUPPORT PROGRAMME telephone 07946 634220

Confidential treatment and advice on mental health and addictive issues such as alcohol, drugs and eating disorders

### ■ VETLIFE website [www.vetlife.org.uk](http://www.vetlife.org.uk)

A website run by the Veterinary Benevolent Fund to provide information on the support available to anyone in the veterinary profession

### ■ THE SAMARITANS telephone 08457 90 90 90

Emotional support helpline for anyone in a crisis





# What are the possible causes?

**FEW of us can have been in practice for very long before hearing from a child that his or her aspiration is to become a veterinary surgeon, or the lament from an adult, with justifications and excuses, why a similar ambition was thwarted.**

Why, then, does a profession, the envy of so many, have such a high incidence of suicide among those who have achieved their objective? Could it be that there is an emotional and philosophical chasm between the expectations of life in the profession and the reality?

Our founding fathers, fired with enthusiasm by the Enlightenment, had unashamedly anthropocentric objectives. Domestic animals were considered commodities by society to be used and abused as it thought fit.

This position would have been influenced or granted credence by the biblical statement that humans were given dominion over animals. Social practice has adversely modified the divine directive. Humanity dominates its domestic animals and treats them as slaves. It is largely ignorant of their needs and wants, imposes very few controls and has little compassion.

So long as the nascent profession functioned constrained only by the limiting philosophy of pragmatism, its practitioners were unlikely to be anguished by moral concerns relating to the well-being of the animals to which they ministered.

## A crime and a sin

Recruited largely from those with an agricultural or equine background, for them the status of animals was a given. No doubt there were suicides within the profession but any enthusiasm for such an activity would have been restrained by the fact that it was both a crime and a sin.

It would be difficult to over-estimate the subtle shift in attitude to animals in society between the first

and second centuries of our profession's existence.

It has been claimed that alcohol and drug abuse is responsible for the high suicide rate in the medical and related professions because of the ready availability of both. This surely

begs the question.

Presumably there must be factors associated with professional activities that incline those, supposedly with above average intelligence, towards self-abuse.

There will, no doubt, be those who have problems common to all sections of society: mental illness, financial problems,

difficult family conditions and unrequited love. The interesting question is whether the veterinary profession has a little more of the problems afflicting the other professions or does it have unique and more momentous difficulties? I incline to the latter.

## Anthropocentric perspective

We operate on two diverse and conflicting levels. Those associated with agricultural and laboratory animals have a strictly anthropocentric perspective.

For them, animals remain a commodity, tools of human society that justifies the abuse and torment to which we subject them. They, presumably, justify their indifference to the cruelty involved because they consider our species to have overwhelming prerogative.

Conversely, members ministering to pet animals are required to adopt a totally different attitude. Pet owners, with varying degrees of concern, expect us to consider their animals' lives sacrosanct. Many demand standards of medical treatment equal to that enjoyed by human beings.

This conflicts with unworthy acts and manipulations that are the very antithesis of concern for animal welfare. Thus, pets are selectively bred, even genetically mangled, to produce conformations that ensure

life-long discomfort and disability.

Many are socially isolated and sexually mutilated to ensure that the unfortunate creatures comply with the ludicrous demands of owners who have the need for an animated teddy.

Any veterinary surgeon with the intellectual ability to penetrate the crust of complacency that conceals our profession's approach to animal welfare will be forced to contemplate the inadequacies of the *status quo*.

How, then, do new graduates accommodate to these obvious anomalies? Those of us who spent our early years in mixed practice accepted that all animals were equal but some were more equal than others. We simply switched philosophy from farm to the small animal consulting table.

Any farm animal not pulling its economic weight was "sent in" while the ageing, decrepit Pekingese in terminal decline was subjected to expensive, life-prolonging medication. We accepted our subservient role to the fatuous demands of society. Who knows what damage was done to us?

Today, when fewer graduates are selected from traditional backgrounds, I suspect that some find the incongruities inherent in our professional philosophy difficult to accept. Of course, many do accommodate.

Those with agricultural interests – a declining group – have no difficulties. Those in the equine branch seem oblivious to the welfare of the horse. While its practical value for transportation and war have diminished, it remains an adjunct to human playtime, to be discarded

when age or injury impose functional inadequacy.

In small animals work, some, indifferent to the fundamentals of animal welfare, seek solace in the technologies of their calling. Thus, we see specialisation burgeoning.

Technocrats, unable to see the welfare wood for the trees that enhance their kudos, plunge headlong into scientific medicine, its associated electronic contraptions and surgical techniques of questionable value.

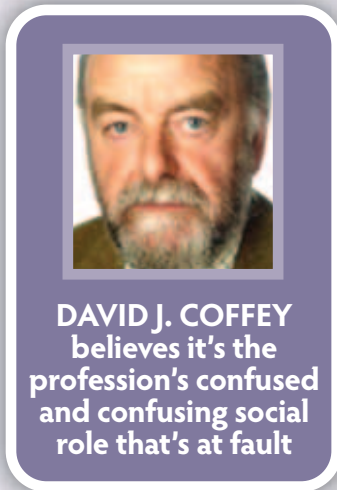
## Several options

The real victims, those who have genuine empathy with animals, who do not see them as living gadgets subservient to human aspirations, have several options.

Some leave the profession; those with incisive minds, as students. Some adjust their horizons and degrade their moral concerns to comply with the profession's limited expectations. A few, unable to cope, commit suicide.

If we are to reduce the number of disenchanting members who seek solace in drugs, alcohol or death, the inconsistencies, incongruities and contradictions inherent in our profession's philosophy should be forcibly explained to prospective students.

The problem is that the profession's politicians appear oblivious to our confusing and confused social role. Rather than analysing its problems in depth, they blunder on proclaiming functions and welfare responsibilities, of which they have little knowledge, to the frustration of many in society who anguish over the treatment of animals and to the detriment of our students and young graduates.



**DAVID J. COFFEY**  
believes it's the  
profession's confused  
and confusing social  
role that's at fault

## First place where both dogs and people can donate blood

BEECHWOOD Veterinary Hospital in Doncaster has become the first place in the country where both dogs and people can give blood, after teaming up with the National Blood Service (NBS) and Pet Blood Bank UK (PBBuk). Mark Straw, veterinary surgeon and associate director, said: "I'm a regular blood donor and know how important it is to give. I thought it would be great if I could do it at work, luckily enough so did the other staff and the owners of our patients. I am proud that Beechwood is now a people and pets lifesaver."



**Beechwood donors, veterinary nurse Emma Heaton who gave blood at the last session, and her dog Dillon who will donate at the PBBuk session in May, with organiser Mark Straw.**

*Those of us who spent our early years in mixed practice accepted that all animals were equal but some were more equal than others. We simply switched philosophy from farm to the small animal consulting table.*



# Getting to grips with parasites

## ENDOPARASITES

### Environmental burden of *Toxoplasma gondii* cysts in cat faeces

**Haydee Dabritz and others, University of California, Davis**  
*Toxoplasma gondii* is a ubiquitous protozoan parasite that infects 30-40% of the world's human population. One of the main routes of human infection is contact with contaminated cat faeces. The authors assess the analytical sensitivity of methods for detecting *Toxoplasma* oocysts and the environmental load resulting from shedding by owned and feral cats.

Faecal samples were taken from 326 cats in the Morro Bay region of California. On the basis of the estimated tonnage of cat faeces deposited outdoors in this area, they estimate the annual burden in the environment to be between 94 and 4,671 oocysts per m<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the low prevalence and short duration of oocyst shedding by cats in this and other surveys, they state that the sheer numbers of oocysts shed by cats during initial infection could lead to substantial environmental contamination.

*Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* **231** (11): 1,676-1,684.

### Problems in diagnosing tapeworm infections in horses

**John Abbott, Oakham Veterinary Hospital, Rutland**

The prevalence of the tapeworm *Anoplocephala perfoliata* in different equine populations has been reported to vary between 20 and 80%. Much of this variation can be attributed to the difficulties in diagnosing tapeworm infections in this species. Abattoir studies tend to demonstrate a much higher prevalence than standard methods for detecting tapeworm eggs in equine faeces. The author examines both the benefits and limitations of an ELISA-based method and describes its application as a monitoring tool.

*Equine Veterinary Journal* **40** (1): 5-6.

### Interpretation of serum antibody response to *Anoplocephala perfoliata*

**L. N. Kjaer and others, University of Copenhagen, Denmark**

*Anoplocephala perfoliata* is the most common equine tapeworm and high levels of infection have been associated with cases of intestinal intussusception, perforation and peritonitis. The authors compared the response to an *A. perfoliata* specific ELISA test with the findings of faecal egg counts and post mortem examination of 84 horses. Antibody levels correlated significantly with the intensity of infection despite substantial individual variation. They suggest a cut-off point for this test to indicate horses needing anthelmintic treatment.

*Equine Veterinary Journal* **39** (6): 529-533.

### Fatal hookworm infection in a North American dog

**Chris Wojnarowicz, Prairie Diagnostic Services, Saskatoon, Canada**



The southern hookworm (*Ancylostoma caninum*) is a relatively rare cause of gut nematode infection in western Canada. A case was confirmed in a 53-day-old blue lacy puppy which presented with a two-day history of vomiting and lethargy. The puppy had arrived in Alberta from Texas a few days before the beginning of clinical signs. Clinical and laboratory investigations indicated a gastrointestinal parasite infection. Despite aggressive therapy the puppy died and *A. caninum* was confirmed on post mortem examination.

*Canadian Veterinary Journal* **48** (11): 1,185-1,186.

### Evidence of direct transmission of *Babesia gibsoni* in dogs

**R. Jefferies and others, Murdoch University, Western Australia**

*Babesia gibsoni* is protozoan parasite infecting the erythrocytes of domestic and wild dogs, causing fever, haemolytic anaemia, thrombocytopaenia, splenomegaly and sometimes death. It can be transmitted by several species of tick but there have been some cases of apparent dog to dog transmission. Often these involved dogs of fighting breeds and it has been suggested that blood transfer during fights may be the transmission route. The authors found 14 dogs positive for this parasite, all of which were American pit bull terriers.

### Prevalence of *Campylobacter* and four intestinal parasites in Hearing Dogs

**C. M. Guest and others, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Princes**

**Risborough, Bucks.**

There is little current information on the prevalence of gastrointestinal parasites in the UK dog population. Many canine parasites are potential zoonotic pathogens and their control is particularly important in Hearing Dogs which are often owned by people who may be vulnerable to infection because of age or a compromised immune system. The

authors examined faeces from dogs associated with the charity. Levels of *Campylobacter* infection were as high as 31% but the prevalence of other endoparasites was much lower.

*Journal of Small Animal Practice* **48** (11): 632-637.

### *Trichostrongylus* and *Haemonchus* infections in low bodyweight lambs

**S. J. McClure and D. L. Emery, CSIRO, Armidale, New South Wales**

During trials of a new anthelmintic vaccine in lambs a correlation was detected between bodyweight and variation in worm counts. The authors report further observations on the effect of bodyweight on protection and immunity during challenge of lambs in the control groups for these trials. They found that merino lambs weighing less than 23kg at the time of first exposure to *Trichostrongylus colubriformis* and *Haemonchus contortus* had an impaired ability to develop protective mucosal immunity and to resist parasite challenge.

*Australian Veterinary Journal* **85** (11): 437-445.

## ECTOPARASITES

### Clinical effects and outcome of feline permethrin spot-on poisonings reported to the Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS), London

**Nicholas Sutton and others, Veterinary Poisons Information Service**

Permethrin is a pyrethroid insecticide used in topical (spot-on) flea treatments for dogs. These products are contraindicated in cats because of a high risk of toxicosis but there have been many reports of owners ignoring or not noticing warnings on the product packaging.

The authors describe the findings in 286 cases of inappropriate use in cats reported by veterinary practitioners to the Veterinary Poisons Information Service in London. In 96.9% of these cases, the cats showed clinical signs, with increased muscle activity (twitching, tremor, fasciculations or convulsions) occurring in 88% of cases.

The duration of this muscle activity was long, with convulsions lasting for an average of 39 hours and tremors for 32 hours. Recovery typically occurred within two to three days but in some cases it took up to seven days. In 10.5% of cases the affected cat died.

*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* **9** (4): 335-339.

### Efficacy of an imidacloprid/permethrin product against rabbit ectoparasites

**Olaf Hansen and others, Bayer Healthcare, Leverkusen, Germany**

Advantix (Bayer) is a spot-on formulation containing imidacloprid and permethrin licensed for the treatment and prevention of flea infestations in dogs. The authors evaluate its use in the treatment of flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*) and mite (*Cheyletiella parasitovorax* and *Lisotrophus gibbus*) infestations in rabbits. Rabbits received 40mg imidacloprid and 200mg permethrin and were evaluated at intervals over the next six weeks. From two weeks after treatment no fleas or mites were detected. No adverse reactions were recorded.

*International Journal Applied Research in Veterinary Medicine* **4** (4): 320-325.

### Prevalence of *Rickettsia felis* DNA in the blood of cats and their fleas

**Jennifer Hawley and others, Colorado State University**

*Rickettsia felis* is one of a group of arthropod borne rickettsial parasites responsible for the spotted fever conditions in humans, characterised by fever, headache, myalgia and macular rash. In many parts of the world it has been associated with the cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*). The authors used

## National flea week this month

NATIONAL Flea Week runs from 19th-25th May, providing practices with a platform from which to advise pet owners about ways of dealing with these parasites. Details are on the website [www.nationalfleaweek.com](http://www.nationalfleaweek.com).





PCR analyses to detect *R. felis* DNA in cats and their fleas in three US states, using the bacterial citrate synthase gene and the outer membrane protein B gene. Overall, 67% of the 92 flea samples but none from the host cats were positive.  
*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* 9 (3): 258-262.

#### Review of tick toxicity in Australian cats linked to *Ixodes* species

Daniel Schull and others, University of Queensland

Tick toxicity in cats is a common condition along the eastern coast of Australia and is usually linked with exposure to *Ixodes holocyclus*. Typical clinical signs include a flaccid ascending neuromuscular paralysis, anxiety, dysphonia, hind limb weakness, papillary dilation and respiratory signs. Mainstays of treatment are tick removal, antitoxin serum and intensive supportive care. With prompt and appropriate management, the prognosis is good but the authors warn that most of the literature on tick toxicity is highly anecdotal in nature.

*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* 9 (6): 487-493.

#### Advances in the control of ticks in small animal practice

Anke Hendricks and Natalie Perrins, Royal Veterinary College

Although ticks can be a cause of significant disease in small animals, in the UK tick control has often been considered an added bonus of using flea control products. However, due to an increasing mobility of pets since the relaxation of quarantine controls and a growing awareness of the dangers of tick-borne disease, there is a realisation of the need for better tick control. There are now specific products licensed for use in cats and dogs and the authors explain the principles behind the implementation of a control programme.

*In Practice* 29 (5): 284-287.

#### Selamectin in the treatment of psoroptic and sarcoptic mange in rabbits

Arif Kurtdele and others, Ankara University, Turkey

*Sarcoptes scabiei* and *Psoroptes cuniculi* are common ectoparasites of rabbits, with the former causing alopecia and dermatitis and the latter responsible for severe dermatitis and otitis. The authors assessed the efficacy of selamectin against these parasites. Groups of New Zealand and Angora rabbits were given a minimum dose of 6mg/kg bodyweight and examined regularly over the next eight weeks. Treated rabbits were found to have significantly fewer mites on skin

scraping or otoscopy than those given vehicle alone.

*Veterinary Dermatology* 18 (1): 18-22.

#### Diagnosis of *Malassezia* otitis externa in the dog

J. S. Griffin and others, Cornell University, New York

Otitis externa is the most common disorder of the canine external ear canal, causing inflammation of ear canal, with or without infection. The yeast *Malassezia pachydermatis* is involved in an estimated 57% of all infections. The authors examined the effect of heat-fixing otic exudate on subsequent

cytological analysis. Exudate collected on cotton swabs was rolled on to glass slides and heat fixed before staining. It was found that there was no difference in the yeast numbers counted on treated and non-treated slides.

*Journal of Veterinary Medicine* (A) 54 (8): 424-427.

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# Facing up to the challenges

**ROWING would seem to be an ideal pastime for anyone preparing for a working life as a historian, less so as a research scientist and academic administrator. But the one sport in which participants spend their whole time looking backwards did help to launch the career of Quintin McKellar, principal of the Royal Veterinary College.**

After growing up on the family sheep farm in Renfrewshire, Professor McKellar might have been expected to take up a position in large animal practice on graduating from the Glasgow veterinary school in 1981.

Instead, he applied and was accepted for a PhD researching the biology of the bovine gut nematode *Ostertagia ostertagi*.

"I'd like to be able to give a different reason, but my main motivation for staying on was to continue as a member of the university rowing club, which I was deeply involved with at the time," he explains.

Although his rationale for entering academia may have been idiosyncratic, Quintin found he was well suited to the role of a veterinary researcher. So on completing his PhD in 1984 he was offered a job in the department of pharmacology, working on parasite responses to anthelmintics. And it wasn't long before he was required to test his skills as an administrator when, following the tragic death of Jim Bogan in 1988, he took over as head of department.

Professor McKellar remained at Glasgow until 1996 when he assumed much greater administrative responsibilities as director of the Moredun Institute. At that time, Moredun was coping with both the scientific and financial challenges presented by its move to its new laboratories on the Pentlands Science Park outside Edinburgh. So he was familiar with the pressures of

justifying massive expenditure on new facilities when he moved to the RVC in August 2004.

At the Hawkshead campus, the RVC had recently built a new large animal clinical centre and was planning a project to double the size of the Queen Mother Hospital, the first phase of which was completed in March this year. There were further projects in the pipeline for the creation of two new research facilities: a controlled environment building for

carrying out welfare research and a centre for research on locomotion and motion where researchers examine changes in anatomy and physiology in a broad range of domestic and wild animal species.

This emphasis on developing the Hawkshead site prompted a long debate on the future

of the college's original home in Camden Town. But, he says, the college authorities have now decided to retain the old buildings as the base for its pre-clinical veterinary students and for undergraduates on its veterinary science course.

"There are many reasons why we have chosen to stay there but the main one is the benefits for students of being in central London – the social and cultural aspects that they would miss out on if they had to spend all their time at the one campus."

While recognising the need to support its research and clinical services work, the college has to remember its principal responsibility is to its students. So another major investment went into the LIVE building at Hawkshead which officially opened in February 2007.

That provides the facilities for undergraduates to carry out the sort of independent problem-based learning needed by today's undergraduates and which it is hoped will equip them with the ability to continue expanding their clinical skills throughout their careers.

The new centre also helps those responsible for directing this teaching. "If you are trying to assess students who will be going out into a practice environment, then asking them to write essays is probably not the best way of going about it," he notes.

Like the other UK veterinary schools, the RVC is reviewing the content of its undergraduate course to cope with the explosion in knowledge in the biological sciences. This process has been given added impetus by the opening of the new school in Nottingham, which had the luxury of designing its curriculum from scratch.

"Having another competitor on the scene has made us all sharpen our focus but it is reassuring to find that many of the teaching methodologies being used at the new school are essentially those that we have pioneered."

Professor McKellar believes the emergence of a new school may also accelerate moves towards a more diverse approach at the different schools. "Within the constraints of the RCVS guidelines, I think the schools will head down the route towards some level of specialisation in their courses. Students will be tracked more robustly than in the past towards an interest in a particular species or clinical discipline. But hopefully we will still produce graduates with the potential to go into any branch of the profession."

Wherever they decide to make their careers, one inescapable fact about the next generation of veterinary graduates is their gender. Nearly 90% of the current intake at the RVC is female but Prof. McKellar says that this imbalance reflects the numbers of students applying to the course and rejects any return to an entry system heavily biased in favour of male candidates.

## A positive trend

He insists that the feminisation of the veterinary profession is largely a positive trend. Any resulting problems, such as the need to provide career breaks for childcare, are ones that should be addressed by the veterinary profession as a whole, and not just the school admissions tutors.

An aspect of the undergraduate intake that he believes the schools should address is their social mix – one that is increasingly white, middle class. The RVC is now in the second year of a one-year foundation programme allowing students from disadvantaged backgrounds to compete for a place on the course on an equal footing.

This programme is supported by generous bursaries and every one of the 30 students on the first course has been accepted at the RVC or another UK school and they are performing extremely well, he says.

But the schools should not be



dropping their academic standards in an effort to attract the more practically-minded students that many practitioners claim would be better suited than the current high-flyers to life in practice.

"My old gran used to say that if someone wasn't any good at maths, it was all right because they would be good at woodwork. Sadly, that isn't true because life isn't fair. The people with the best academic skills are, more often than not, the same ones who have the best practical and social skills, so trying to disentangle them is just daft."

He does, however, have more sympathy for that other perennial complaint made by older practitioners about new graduates: their lack of commercial acumen. He believes business skills should be learned before graduates begin life in practice.

"Yes, it is our responsibility and we have let them down." So the RVC is considering the possibility of business studies electives for undergraduates and is also looking at offering postgraduate courses to both its own students and those from other schools.

In deciding the future direction of veterinary education in the UK, the schools will have to work within the framework of the existing legislation as there is little prospect of a replacement for the 1966 Veterinary Surgeons Act.

Prof. McKellar insists that there is plenty of scope within the existing rules to make positive changes to the British system. "My goal is to help in providing veterinary education that is second to none. If you ask most people which country provides the best system they would say the US. I want ours to be the best on offer: that isn't pie-in-the-sky, I really think it can be achieved."

Planning how to get there is another matter. But to meet the challenge, Prof. McKellar is making an early start, as he does every day. His daily routine involves getting up at 6am and spending half-an-hour on the rowing machine set up in his garage. "On cold winter mornings I open the doors and stare out into the darkness while I row. I find that really relaxing."



**JOHN BONNER  
meets the principal  
of the RVC**





KRUUSE advert

# Furniture store transformed into pioneer hospital's referral centre

IN the north-west of England, one of the longest established veterinary hospitals in the country is continuing to lead the field, setting up a new multi-disciplinary referral centre.

The name of the Rutland House Veterinary Hospital in St Helens, Merseyside, is well-known in the profession; for many decades it has been in the forefront of practice and has produced some of the profession's best-known names. The current partners are orthopods Ian Barclay and Duncan Midgley and dermatologist Sue Paterson.

The partners realised that they had reached the limit of expansion in their existing location but were keen to develop the business and expand their referral caseload.

The answer was found in a redundant furniture store four miles away which they have developed into a multi-disciplinary referral centre, leaving the original site as a first opinion veterinary hospital.

## Tremendous freedom

The new building was acquired as a shell with little internal structure, allowing tremendous freedom for the layout that the partners could design. I asked who their architect was, but practice manager Janie Clare replied

that she and the three partners had designed it themselves.

They had met architects initially but had found them unsatisfactory, failing to grasp the issues of working with animals in a healthcare setting. The end result, opened last October, is a very attractive building and a comfortable and functional working environment.

The waiting room is large and bright, and its L-shape allows separation of cats and dogs,

resulting in fewer stressed or excited patients. The eight consulting rooms are each large enough to accommodate family groups that often arrive with referral patients, and one is windowless for the ophthalmologists.

Another room opens into the entrance lobby rather than directly off the waiting room and will become a condolence room. Two consulting rooms are used primarily by the dermatologists who, in addition to their busy skin caseload, have a particular interest in ear cases.

These back onto a treatment room fitted with two work-tables



**CHRISTINE SHIELD** takes a close look at a north-west practice's latest development



The new premises and (below) head of surgery Prue Neath with orthopaedic surgeon Duncan Midgley.



(one of which is a tub-table for flushing ears), a bank of cages for day-patients and a laboratory. This area also houses a CO<sub>2</sub> laser, a BAER machine for hearing tests and a video otoscopy set-up, which gives excellent visualisation of the depths of the ear canal and makes diagnosis and thorough cleaning far easier.

## Large meeting room

Also on the ground floor is a two-bedroom flat and a 60-seat meeting room. This is used for internal CPD, for regular meetings for referring practices and for breeder groups, and is made available without charge to any local group which wishes to make use of it.

The floor plan allows the dog waiting area to be used as additional meeting space, for example to run parallel vet and nurse sessions, or as a catering area for meetings held in the main room. The separate cat waiting area ensures that the practice can still operate around such use.

The kennels

## RUTLAND HOUSE VETERINARY HOSPITAL – HISTORY

- Established in 1961 by John Tandy and Ian Hughes
- Became one of Britain's earliest veterinary hospitals in the late 1960s
- John Tandy was instrumental in the establishment of the British Veterinary Hospitals Association in 1972 and was elected as the founder president
- New partners Christine Morton (now McGrath) and Ian Barclay bought into the practice in 1988; two years later John and Ian retired
- Christine Morton left the practice to pursue other interests in 1999
- Duncan Midgley joined the partnership in 1998
- Sue Paterson joined the partnership in 2003



The design of the cat ward allows for remarkably relaxed in-patients.



The spacious prep room and (right) the reception area – behind the desk are (from left) feline consultant Ellie Mardell and receptionists Janet Hamlett and Linda Whitehead.





furnished with walk-in kennels for large or long-stay patients, and one for cats. Ellie Mardell, head of the feline medicine service, specified the cat kennels very carefully, including a resting shelf in each, and although none of the in-patients was using the shelf when I visited, they did all seem extraordinarily relaxed, lying on their sides and backs rather than warily upright.

### Strict hygiene

Prue Neath, newly appointed head of surgery, has instituted strict hygiene controls. People are only allowed into the surgical suite in scrubs and clogs, or with outdoor clothes covered with a Tyvek suit together with hat and shoe-covers.

The prep room is particularly spacious, with five tub tables along one wall and the five operating theatres along the other wall, interspersed with scrub sinks. There is also a busy minor procedures room with ultrasound facilities, although the well-equipped endoscopy suite, which is primarily used by the internal medicine specialist Rebecca Littler for gastro-enterology cases, is downstairs to avoid any aerosol contamination of theatres.

The third floor is occupied by spacious offices for the veterinary

*Right: dermatologist Sue Paterson and VN Lydia Payne use video otoscopy to flush a dog's ear, Below: orthopedist Ian Barclay is the longest-standing of the three partners in the Rutland House practice.*



consultants so they have a quiet area for report writing and phoning clients and referring veterinary surgeons.

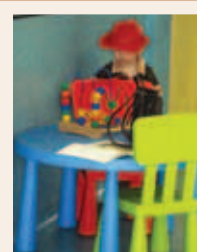
### New services

Currently the practice offers referrals in canine and feline medicine,

dermatology, ophthalmology, soft tissue surgery and orthopaedic surgery.

Plans for the future include the addition of a cardiology service by the end of the year, and after that an oncology service to complement the existing disciplines.

A CT scanner is scheduled for installation in June as an addition to the



*A play facility in the waiting room helps keep younger visitors out of trouble.*

## RUTLAND HOUSE VETERINARY HOSPITAL IN 2008

- First opinion veterinary hospital in St Helens – eight full-time equivalent veterinary surgeons
- Six other branches around the area, occupying three full-time equivalent veterinary surgeons

## RUTLAND HOUSE REFERRALS

- New multi-disciplinary referral centre four miles away from the original hospital
- Three partners, seven full-time equivalent veterinary surgeons
- Twenty VNs
- Six support staff, plus additional administrative support from the hospital
- Six disciplines currently with two more planned, each headed by a diplomate
- Programme of internships and residencies

mobile MRI scanner which visits twice monthly.

It is good to see that such a well-known and long-established practice is not resting on its laurels but continuing to set the trends within the profession.

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1. MacAllister CG, et al. *Equine Veterinary Journal* 1999; Supplement 29: 77-80. 2. Andrews FM, et al. *Equine Veterinary Journal* 1999; Supplement 29: 81-86. 3. McClure SR, et al. *JAVMA* 2005; Vol 226: 1681-1685.



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# Raising awareness of gastric ulcers

**THE objective of Gastric Ulcer Awareness Month (GUAM), first held in May last year, is to increase awareness and understanding of what is possibly one of the most under-diagnosed problems in the equine field.**

The month is sponsored by Merial and supported by the BEVA.

The symptoms of gastric ulcers can be vague and vary from one horse to another and whilst it's generally known that around 90% of racehorses in training have ulcers, it's perhaps less well known that about 60% of performance horses and 40% of leisure horses are also affected.

Following GUAM 2007, a number of horses were identified, diagnosed and successfully treated for gastric ulcers as a direct result of the publicity campaign, thus improving the welfare and quality of life for the animals (and owners) concerned. Due to the vague nature of the symptoms, many horses were previously suspected of other ailments, general poor performance or behavioural problems.

It would be easy to get complacent because, despite the building publicity surrounding the condition, there is still a very long way to go in creating awareness and understanding among all those involved in the equine industry. Gastric ulceration is still one of the UK's most under-rated equine conditions.

During GUAM 2008, a high-profile campaign will target horse owners, riders and trainers of all classes of equines. This includes a series of events, feature articles, advertising and supporting literature.

Events include a "Horse Health Masterclass" for horse owners, taking place in Oxfordshire, a seminar for racehorse trainers at Newmarket Tattersalls, and two CPD forums for vets.

The first is a one-day CPD seminar "From the obvious to the obscure: medical conditions that put diagnostic skills to the test".

The speakers are: Richard Hepburn of Willesley Equine Clinic speaking on gastric ulcers (very common); John Walmsley of The Liphook Equine Hospital speaking on back problems (quite common); Andy Durham speaking on liver disease (quite common); and Dr Richard Newton of the Animal Health Trust on West Nile/African Horse Sickness (rare).

This full-day event is being held at

The National Water Sports Centre, Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham, on 7th May. For details contact Bev Archer at Merial on 01279 775862 or e-mail [beverley.archer@merial.com](mailto:beverley.archer@merial.com).

There is also a BEVA CPD training event sponsored by Merial and EV Veterinary Products to be held at

Willesley Equine on 15th and 16th May.

The course is suitable for all levels of veterinarians in general and specialist equine practice. Each delegate will attend for one of the practical days and all will attend the lecture evening on 15th May.

The main aim of

this course is to teach effective gastroscopy via direct hands-on small group instruction. It is suitable for RCVS Module C-E 1 Gastrointestinal disease and intensive care.

The speakers are Richard Hepburn and Dr Tim Brazil of Equine Medicine On The Move; the tutors will be Emma Mitchell, temporary lecturer in equine medicine at the RVC, and Rachel Conwell of Minster Equine Veterinary Clinic.

For details of this event contact BEVA on 01638 723 555 or visit [www.beva.org.uk](http://www.beva.org.uk).

## Differences

On the preview day, following a tour of the hospital, Andy Durham, an RCVS specialist in equine internal medicine, gave a presentation on gastric ulceration.

Mr Durham explained that there are fundamental differences in human and equine ulcers. The equine condition is, in most cases, brought on by exposure to acid in the squamous mucosa in the upper half of the stomach; whereas the human stomach is completely lined with a stratified glandular mucosa, it is only the bottom part of the horse's stomach that is so protected.

The normal pH at the margo plicatus is 4.1, rising to 5.5 in the squamous fundus. A high proportion of gastric ulcers can be found in the area of the margo plicatus.

In addition to this, humans only secrete acid into the stomach when they eat, whereas horses are designed to be constant trickle feeders, releasing acid into the stomach constantly regardless of whether or not they are eating.

In natural conditions, the horse will have a constant flow of food filling the lower, protected part of the stomach. However, with modern stabling and exercise, the vulnerable top part of the horse's stomach can become exposed to acid.

A regular and constant intake of forage will help absorb the acid, whereas a high cereal intake within a low forage diet will make the stomach content very fluid. During exercise, pressure from the abdomen compresses the stomach, which in turn pushes the fluid level to the squamous mucosa.

Finally, Mr Durham discussed the signs of gastric ulcers. They will generally cause low-grade pain, which means that signs are often vague. In addition, tolerance of ulcers will also vary from one horse to another. The signs are: poor performance, picky appetite, mild weight loss, starey coat, colic, discomfort on girth tightening and, in foals, salivation and teeth grinding.

Dr Emma Batson of Merial went on to talk about risk factors, diagnosis, treatment and management for prevention.

Dr Batson demonstrated through clinical trials that during 24 hours feed deprivation, the acidity in the horse's stomach falls to pH 2.0 or less for 76% of the time. She also noted that it's



Andy Durham.

worth remembering that the acid secreted into the stomach is 200 times stronger than vinegar.

Trials have shown that in a horse that has been starved for a few hours, exercise will have a more detrimental effect on ulcers than a horse that has been on *ad lib* forage.

The less full the stomach (or more "fluid" if fed cereals), the exercise will mean that more acid will come into contact with the vulnerable top part of the stomach.

In contrast, in a horse that has had constant access to forage, the stomach

contents will form a mat-like barrier, protecting the upper part of the stomach. Other risk factors for gastric ulcers include stable confinement, transportation and anaesthesia.

GastroGard (omeprazole) is the

only licensed treatment for gastric ulcers in the UK, Dr Batson said. Following treatment, however, it is important that, where possible, management changes are put in place, otherwise the ulcers may well return. These include access to *ad lib* hay or forage, turnout and, where possible, only small quantities of cereals. Exercise or training on an empty stomach should be avoided.

For those horses where the risk factors remain high – due to the training regime for example – Dr Batson explained that trials have shown that an on-going preventive dose of omeprazole at 1mg/kg will help prevent ulcers from returning.

Concluding with a series of case studies demonstrating where ulcers have been identified, diagnosed and treated, Dr Batson said that, in some cases, the horses have made quite dramatic responses.

The vague signs associated with gastric ulcers, however, mean that in some horses the causes can be multifactorial and so further

**VETERINARY Practice**  
reports on a preview event at The Liphook Equine Hospital in Hampshire for 'gastric ulcer awareness month'

...with modern stabling and exercise, the vulnerable top part of the horse's stomach can become exposed to acid.



The live gastroscopy demonstration in progress.



# National database to help control incidence of disease in horses

**HORSE owners and their veterinary advisers have been given a powerful tool for controlling the incidence of disease in the UK equine population.**

At the National Equine Forum in London on 27th March, Graham Suggett, director of equine development at the British Equestrian Federation, announced the completion of the second phase of the National Equine Database.

This provides a single source of information on the whole of the country's horse population and is "a truly world-beating resource", he said.

Set up with DEFRA funding to monitor the equine passport system, for two years the database has been gathering data supplied by breed societies and other passport issuing

organisations (PIOs) on more than 1.15 million horses.

After overcoming problems in software development, the BEF is now able to offer free on-line access to pedigree information on all horses entered in the database with more detailed data available later on a charged-for basis. Mr Suggett said the database will provide objective evidence to link breeding and performance and will allow comparisons between horses competing in different sporting disciplines.

It is hoped this will stimulate both the domestic and export markets for UK horses and it will also provide valuable information for use in disease surveillance and control.

## Disease threats

Updates on two of the most serious disease threats to the UK's equine population were given by veterinarians attending the meeting.

Dr Pat Harris of the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition delivered a paper on behalf of the RVC's Professor Josh Slater on the current state of strangles research.

In view of the serious economic and animal welfare implications of this highly contagious endemic disease, it remained a high priority for funding agencies, she explained.

This research has been further stimulated by the completion in 2006 of the full map of the *Streptococcus equi* genome. By comparing this with the DNA of the closely related but less dangerous organism, *Strep. zooepidemicus*, researchers have been able to identify genetic markers of virulence, a key step towards the design of an efficient vaccine.

The new knowledge has also helped towards the development of two new diagnostic tests which have been made available by the Animal Health Trust. These technologies are useful in identifying animals with mild or absent clinical signs which play such an important

investigation may be necessary to diagnose these.

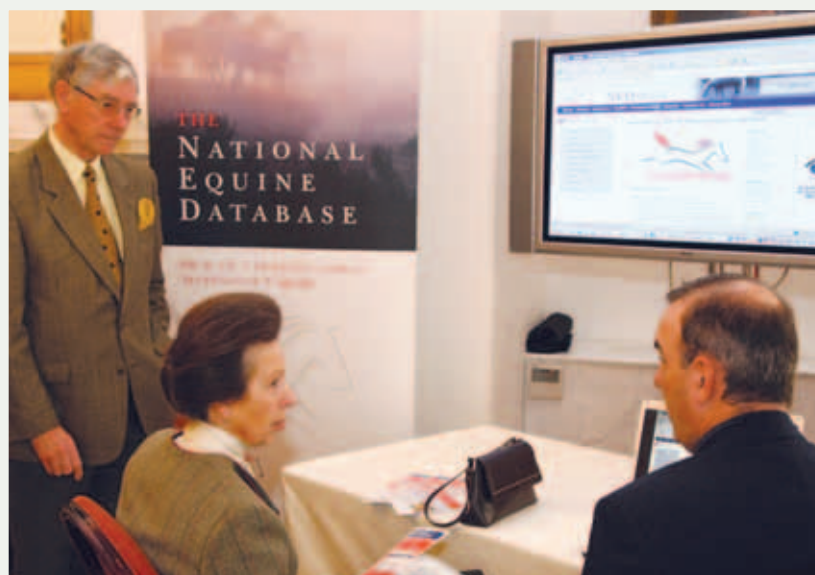
## Gastrosocopy

The day concluded with a live gastrosocopy demonstration performed on a thoroughbred competition horse, approximately 16hh, whose signs were significant resistance on girth tightening. Gastrosocopy using a 3m video endoscope is currently the only definitive way to diagnose (or eliminate) ulcers.

The horse is sedated and the procedure takes about 15 minutes, after which full recovery is determined by the level of sedation, but usually just a couple of hours. In this case no ulcers were found, thus eliminating them from the cause.

Earlier in the day Mr Durham had also performed a follow-up gastrosocopy on a racehorse. Two weeks earlier the horse, then in training, had been diagnosed with grade four ulcers (the highest level) and had since been on a treatment dose of omeprazole.

The gastrosocopy showed a normal healthy stomach and Mr Durham's recommendation was to complete the 28-day course of treatment. The horse was in fact then being turned away for a period and his management would be reviewed on his return to work.



Nick Wallbridge, of the British Equestrian Federation, who developed the software for the new database demonstrates its features to the Princess Royal; on the left is Graham Suggett.

role in disease transmission, she said.

The second infectious condition has not been recorded so far in the UK. But changes in the distribution of the insect vector of African horse sickness make it possible that the disease could arrive to cause devastation within the UK horse industry, warned Paul Jepson, chief executive of the Horse Trust.

Brigadier Jepson's organisation is part of a DEFRA working party investigating measures for controlling this disease. The group has learned valuable lessons from the efforts to deal with bluetongue, another exotic viral condition spread by the same *Culicoides* midges – notably that mass slaughter is of limited value in controlling the spread of the virus laden insects.

The best defence against the threat of similar problems with AHS is vigilance – "the worst scenario would be an outbreak of AHS in a 'backstreet' pony that would probably go unrecognised, allowing the disease to gain a foothold."

**Infectious conditions**  
New data on non-

infectious conditions arising from routine husbandry practices were also described at the meeting. Soraya Morscher of the department of life science at the University of Limerick presented the results of a study which

won her a competition for the best student thesis in the equine science field: the Eqvalan Duo Equine Thesis of the Year.

She analysed the data on 1,297 foalings over 13 years at a large public stud in County Kildare in an effort to identify factors linked to problems in the perinatal period. She found that about 17% of mares experienced

difficulties in delivery, a considerably higher figure than in previous reports.

Meanwhile, the incidence of "red bag presentations" (in which the placenta is expelled prematurely with potentially fatal consequences for the foal) was more than 6.3%, again far higher than the 1% stated in earlier reports.

This condition was more often associated with older mares and an increase in the number of previous deliveries.

Ms Morscher said new information resulting from such work was valuable in monitoring any variation in the incidence of foaling complications that may result from changes in management practices. This was particularly important because of the rapid nature of the birth process in this species – an average of 17 minutes – and the high economic value of thoroughbreds.

"It is imperative to establish early on whether delivery of the foal and events surrounding birth are within normal ranges: any aberration can pose significant risk to the mare and the foal," she said.

John McEwen, chairman of the veterinary committee of the FEI, presented a paper on the health and welfare challenges for horses at the 2008 Olympics.

**The worst scenario would be an outbreak of AHS in a 'backstreet' pony that would probably go unrecognised, allowing the disease to gain a foothold**



Paul Jepson.



Soraya Morscher.

# Banking: getting the best business deal

**WITH the economy looking shaky, every business should be looking to control its costs. But while many businesses are looking at supplies, energy or staff, few are looking at their bank account to save expenses.**

They should be. Alliance & Leicester believes businesses are missing out on half a billion pounds a year by failing to look for the best business deposit account. And the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) believes that its 125,000 members are paying £65 million more than they need to in banking fees on their current accounts.

As Steve Jennings, business banking director at A&L, points out, "Businesses must review their finances regularly" – and that includes asking if they're getting what they need out of their bank, and what they're paying for it.

It's certainly possible to get a better deal. Over recent years, the number of banks providing services to business has increased. The Big Four still dominate the high street, but choice has been increased by the entry of Alliance & Leicester, the Co-Operative Bank and Abbey to the business banking sector.

## Less progress

The overwhelming majority of businesses, however, still bank with the major high street banks. And there's been less progress here: despite the Office of Fair Trading telling banks to offer either free business banking or interest on business current accounts, the banks have been dragging their feet. So if you're with one of the big banks, it may be time to investigate your options.

Some banks are now offering free periods to businesses which switch to the bank, from six to 18 months. Abbey offers "free forever". Read the small print though – because cash payments, which can be significant for some businesses, are often only free up to a monthly limit.

There may also be a limited number of cheques you can pay in

per month before charges start cutting in.

There is no short cut to sitting down with a spreadsheet and working out the numbers. The right bank account for one business isn't necessarily the best for the business next door. Different amounts of cash and cheque payments can make a big difference. For instance, the Royal Bank of Scotland's Free Automated Transactions Tariff, with no charges

for direct debits or standing orders, would be useful for many businesses with a regular stream of subscription or maintenance income. But its high cash handling charges would make it unsuitable for a retailer.

Many of the major banks have more than one business tariff. It's worth checking that

you are on the right one – again, this means sitting down with a spreadsheet, not just looking at the brochure. Like all things in business, saving money on the business bank account requires a little hard work.

Any business which generally maintains its account in credit should also consider the effect of interest on its current account. While many accounts still don't offer any interest on credit balances, others do – and there's a wide variance in the rates offered. Under £500 will only get a quarter of a per cent interest at many banks, whereas HSBC and Lloyds will pay over 3%.

It's possible that a cash-rich business with relatively few, large value transactions would get a better deal from an interest bearing current account with bank charges than from a free account which doesn't pay interest.

There are some good deals available to FSB members (detailed in Table 1). The FSB has an arrangement with the Co-Operative Bank, offering a free account with significant savings over most of the other banks. Other good options are Abbey and Alliance & Leicester, which have set out to attract new business customers and offer excellent terms.

## Save hassle

By the way, don't forget that if you get a good offer from another bank, it may well be worth going to your



existing bank and asking whether it can match or beat it. If it can, you'll save yourself the hassle of switching while saving on bank charges too.

If you're considering switching to a bank which doesn't offer a charge-free period, ask if it can sweeten the deal: many bank managers have a limited amount of discretion to use such offers in order to win new business for their branch.

Many of the business banks advertise the quality of their advice and relationships with customers. The question has to be whether you want the bank manager as your adviser – and whether you will get real value out of that relationship.

## 'Greatest supporter'

Some businesses claim the bank manager is one of their greatest supporters, and can help find them the right finance to grow the business. If that's the case, you're with the right bank. If not, it's worth considering a switch.

The Big Four banks, of course, offer branch-based business bank accounts. Many business customers

prefer to have a branch banking relationship. But if you are happy to work over the internet, there are some good deals available.

Cash handling needn't be a problem, since many banks use the Post Office network for paying in and offer access to LINK ATMs for taking cash out.

Most banks handle basic transactions correctly and efficiently (if your bank makes mistakes on basic transactions it's time to switch, however good the deal you're currently getting!). However, switching an account may involve changing a number of direct debits and other automated arrangements.

It's easy for these to go wrong, so during the period immediately around a change of bank, be extra vigilant in looking at your statements and ensuring suppliers, customers and employees know they should tell you immediately if there are any problems.

While choosing the right current account is of first importance, choosing the right deposit accounts or debt finance can also be crucial in

TABLE 1

	Free period	Free cash	Free cheques	Cash credit fee	Cheque credit fee	Interest on credit
Abbey Free Day to Day Banking Forever	Permanent	£3,000 a month by ATM	100 paid in a month, and up to 100 cash and cheque debits a month, free	50p/£100	50p	0.75-2.72%
Natwest Standard	None	None	None	57p/£100		3.25%
FSB/Coop Bank	Permanent	Up to £4,000 a month	Free	40p/£100 above £4,000	None	Yes – up to 4.49%
A&L Free Business Current account	Permanent	£4,000 free per month	Free and unlimited	35p/£100 for NFRN members		
Barclays Business Tariff	None	None	None	55p	28p	3.25%

Source: Moneyfacts/BBA business account finder, sole trader accounts.



**ANDREA KIRKBY**  
reviews what's on offer and the need to keep tabs on what you are paying

Andrea Kirkby is a freelance business journalist with many years experience of the City.



## Simplifying the rota process

AT Veterinary Systems has launched a new product designed to simplify the process of creating and managing staff rotas. Rota Manager is described as the first product of its kind to take on the complex but essential task of veterinary staff management.

Its objectives are to improve staff efficiency; slash the time it takes to produce rotas; make life easier for those charged with producing rotas; reduce the mountains of paper generated by manual rotas; and ensure a rota is immediately available on every computer screen in a practice.

The most recent Management Analysis Indices (MAI) figures produced by AT show wide variations in the total fees earned per vet even in practices charging similar amounts.

The firm says that closer investigation reveals a multitude of causes for this but a significant factor is how staff rotas are managed, indicating that those practices with lower turnover figures may benefit from implementing improved time and rota management systems.

A survey carried out by the MAI team in March also shows that the

typical management time taken for creating staff rotas for vets, nurses and receptionists can vary immensely. In larger practices (with 30 plus staff) it is not unusual for over 600 management hours per year to be spent on creating and managing staff rotas. This figure does not take into account time spent on making follow-up changes to it.

The survey also indicates that as a practice gets larger, the number of man-hours it takes to create the staff rotas increases almost exponentially, owing to the multiple complexities involved with accommodating additional staff preferences and so on.

The stats are further supported by feedback from the survey; many vets, practice managers and head nurses described staff rota writing as a "chore", "headache", "a nightmare of a job", and "a thankless task".

## E-mail marketing service

MC Communications of Durham has joined forces with Constant Contact, a provider of e-mail marketing and online surveys, to help veterinary practices promote their services.

The PR and copywriting consultancy, which specialises in

veterinary PR and marketing and whose clients include SPVS, can now provide what it calls "easy-to-use e-mail marketing and online survey products" and "a full service e-marketing service".

Practices can choose either to manage their accounts themselves and design, write and distribute their newsletters in-house, or else opt for a service which will include account management, design, copywriting and distribution.

Principal consultant Marie Carter said that e-mail marketing would be the best solution for practices looking to promote their services by communicating directly with existing and lapsed clients.

For details e-mail enquiries@mccommunications.org.uk or call Marie on 0191 373 7830.

## Data transfer system launched

A DATA-transfer system, created by a SPVS-led consortium, was unveiled during the BSAVA congress.

The consortium leader, Nick Lloyd, who is IT officer of SPVS, introduced Vet-XML which, he said, allows information to be transmitted between practices and labs using a

common format.

The consortium comprises manufacturers and suppliers of practice management systems, laboratory firms and wholesalers. It allows different systems to communicate electronically with each other using the same language. The consortium believes it will also help improve the management of clinical records.

For details see [www.vetxml.org](http://www.vetxml.org).

## Charity trek in China

DOGS for the Disabled's third charity trek, The Great Wall of China Challenge, takes place from 25th April to 4th May next year.

To take part in the challenge, you need to pay a registration fee of £250 and pledge to raise minimum funds of £2,900 for the charity. For further information and an application form telephone the event organiser, Action for Charity, on 0845 408 2698 or e-mail [events@actionforcharity.co.uk](mailto:events@actionforcharity.co.uk); details are also on the website, [www.actionforcharity.co.uk](http://www.actionforcharity.co.uk).

reducing the cost of finance to your business.

Many businesses don't have deposit accounts, but if there's more cash in the current account than is needed for business operations, it's worthwhile getting a deposit account – the rate of interest will be higher than on any current account.

Steve Jennings says many small businesses still believe you need to have a current account before a bank will let you open a deposit account. In fact, stand-alone deposit accounts are widely available – and can often offer better rates of interest.

## Top accounts

Many come from providers which don't offer current accounts – Kaupthing Singer & Friedlander's Premier Base Rate 90 has the highest rate of interest at 5.5%, according to Moneyfacts, with Bath Building Society and Northern Rock also showing up in the top accounts. For loans, too, businesses can approach banks other than their current account provider.

The credit crunch may make it more difficult to do so, so go armed with evidence that your business has stable revenues and profitability.

The credit crunch also means that banks may take a view that certain types of business should pay higher interest rates on their finance – so it will be doubly worth while checking

the market to see if you can get a better rate.

Businesses which have usually relied on an overdraft should be aware that rates are often better on fixed debt. Besides, if the economy does worsen, a bank can insist that an overdraft is repayable on demand – potentially putting a firm out of business.

Fix the debt with a term loan, and this risk is removed – though the loan will have to be either paid off, or renewed, at the end of the loan period. Leasing deals can also work out well for businesses that have a large asset base.

Finally, once you've selected your bank (or banks), don't forget to keep tabs on what you're paying. Check your statements: banks can, and do, make mistakes when calculating charges. If there appears to be a discrepancy between what you think you ought to have paid, and the amount on the statement, query it – immediately.

Even though you can claim back wrongly applied bank charges for six years, it's much easier to do so immediately.

Banks are not the villains they are often painted. They're businesses trying to make a profit. But that profit could be your margin – so ensure that you are getting a fair deal from your bank. And if you're not, switch!

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# Some like it hot!

MARILYN Monroe will, forever, be an icon of the establishment. Vivacious, vulnerable and so very venal, her appeal transcended the obvious and appealed to generations across all creeds, classes and conventions.

Yet, when you look at her, it's intriguing that, while none of her features was in itself that beautiful, when seen together, as a person, she was radiantly attractive.

Visual appeal is not just intriguing, it's something that, as a mere male, I imagine I will never properly understand. Thankfully, we're all different from one another which should give me a fighting chance but it does perplex me that when I ask women whom they find attractive, the list ranges from Liam Neeson, Jack Nicholson, Leonardo Di Caprio to Robert de Niro. I mean, how can the female of the species find these guys all so attractive when they're all so different.

Each one, individually, yes, of course I can see the attraction but there's no discernible pattern here, no common thread. I do accept that this will, forever, be one of the gender mysteries that I may never fathom but it did set me wondering where else the least straightforward answer proves to be the right one.

Recently I've been driving a Nissan Qashqai and, here too, the sum of the parts far exceeds the individual components.

## Thoroughly likeable

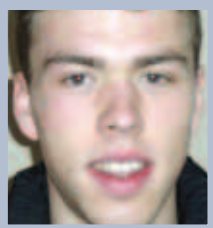
Overall, this is a thoroughly likeable car – a fact well recognised by the public who seem to have bought rather a lot of them. Like Ms Monroe, the Qashqai has no individual, exquisite features but the final result is extremely capable and user friendly.

The Qashqai is Nissan's version of a true cross-over vehicle in a rapidly growing market sector and is equally at home in an urban environment as well as a rural one. The press marketing that accompanied the car was keen to point it out as being "100%

urbanproof". What this means is a mystery to me. All I know is that the two-wheel-drive version I tested would struggle to herd sheep in the Himalayas, but would excel at driving up slightly muddy driveways whilst dropping the kids to school.

So in today's terms it could be considered an adequate off-roader, which would frankly be more than most people require. Powered by a choice of two petrol and two diesel engines, some of the engines can sound a little coarse, particularly the 1.5dCi as tested (the smaller of the diesels), but all produce acceptable performance and the 2.0dCi might be a better option if you intend to work the car hard whilst expecting reasonable fuel economy.

Over the week I saw a regular return of over 45mpg, which is outstanding for a car of its size and capability. However, any lack of exhilarating performance



**ROBBIE TIFFIN**  
tried out the Nissan Qashqai Acenta and wanted to keep it



doesn't really matter. It goes well enough to suit its personality which is both accommodating and, somehow, rather charming.

## No one complained!

It's spacious and so easy to live with that I really didn't want to give it back at the end of the test period. It swallowed trips to B&Q without murmur, digesting great sheets of hardboard and aluminium ladders with ease.

It carried five of us on a day trip in comfort and, rather unusually, no one complained about anything at all.

Legroom front and rear is excellent, the seats are comfortable and supportive, they fold easily, and access to the rear is simple and straightforward. The six-speed gearbox is light and precise and a joy to use.

All in all, the Qashqai was an excellent companion and workhorse all rolled into one. True, the test car, in Acenta trim, came in a dreadful, metallic copper colour with orange and black check upholstery to match but, in a more sober suit of clothes and with leather trim, the Qashqai would be as much at home on the forecourt of the

## AT A GLANCE

### Nissan Qashqai 1.5dCi Acenta

**Price:** £17,889 (as tested); £16,399 list price OTR

**Power:** 106PS

**0-62 mph:** 12.2 seconds

**Top speed:** 108mph

**Fuel economy:** combined 52.3mpg

**Insurance group:** 14

**OVERALL:** +++++/5

Dorchester as it would be in the muddy lanes of Borchester.

Safe, comfortable and capable, this is an excellent family car either in 2wd or 4wd form. Above all, the huge, panoramic glass roof not only looks terrific from outside but allows the interior to be light, airy and somehow rather cheerful.

To be honest, I would have one tomorrow but I'm not sure I'd ever get over the feeling that, one evening, I might find it crooning "Happy Birthday Mr President" from under fluttering eyelashes, and that one day I would wake up to find the CIA taking an unhealthy interest.

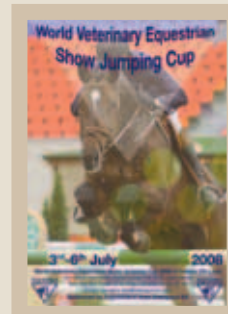


## Calling veterinary show-jumpers

THE French Association of Veterinary Riders (AFVC) is inviting all veterinary riders to compete in the First World Veterinary Equestrian Show Jumping Cup, to be held in Lure (France) from 3rd to 6th July this year. The event is open to all qualified veterinarians and veterinary students, who may participate with or without their own horse.

The event will include four show-jumping competitions (one per day), while the social programme consists of a gala evening (Friday), a dinner-dance (Saturday, sponsored by Merial) and a Sunday lunch. The major sponsor of the event is Equistro/Vétoquinol.

The veterinary show-jumping event will coincide with France's 6th Grand National show-jumping competition, also held in Lure.



## New award for equine vets

PETPLAN Equine is to sponsor a new award at this year's Animal Health Trust Awards: the Petplan Equine Vet of the Year. This, says the company, is in recognition of the huge contribution made by local vets to the equine community. Owners and riders will be able to nominate their local equine vet for the award if they feel he or she is deserving of the recognition that this accolade would bring. A short list will be drawn up from the nominations received and an independent panel will judge the winner, who will receive the award at the AHT's Equestrian Awards in London on 6th November.



# Investment ideas for your 2008-09 ISA

**THE ISA concept was introduced by the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown, in his first budget and was first made available to the public in 1999. ISAs are an effective wrapper for investments that protect funds deposited in them from both income and capital gains taxes, although unlike pensions they do not benefit from tax relief on contributions.**

ISAs also have the added benefit of being easily accessible and funds can be removed as and when the investor wishes, although there are limits on contributions within each tax year.

Currently ISAs (or individual savings accounts) are held by more than 16 million individual investors, with policies worth more than £180 billion.

In the current 2008-09 tax year, people will be allowed to save up to £3,600 into a cash ISA and up to £7,200 in a stocks and shares ISA, within an overall annual savings limit of £7,200. This is an increase on last year's contribution limits which were limited to £3,000 into a cash ISA and up to £7,000 in a stocks and shares ISA, within an overall annual savings limit of £7,000.

In addition, ISA savers will be able to invest in two separate ISAs each tax year: a cash ISA and a stocks and shares ISA. For example, investors can choose to save £1,000 in a cash ISA with one provider and £6,200 in a stocks and shares ISA with a different provider.

Also, the distinction between mini and maxi ISAs will no longer exist. Mini cash ISAs, TOISAs and the cash component of a maxi ISA will automatically become cash ISAs. Mini stocks and shares ISAs and the stocks and shares component of a maxi ISA will automatically become stocks and shares ISAs.

It should also be noted that from 6th April this year, all Personal Equity Plans (PEPs) will automatically become stocks and shares ISAs. Investors will be able to invest in this re-labelled PEP as long as they haven't subscribed to another stocks and shares ISA during the current tax year.

Last December the Government

also announced that any cash saved so far in ISAs could eventually be rolled forward into a new stocks and shares ISA, without infringing that year's contribution limit. This means ISA

savers will be able to transfer money saved in their cash ISA to their stocks and shares ISA.

So now we have dealt with the basic details, here are our top tips for ISA investment in the forthcoming tax year.

## BlackRock Merrill Lynch Gold & General

During periods of economic uncertainty,

like the one we are currently facing, investments into gold can be a highly attractive option. This is because gold is a stateless investment that has a universal appeal. The climate for gold is as good as it's been in recent history.

The jewellery industry is the major market for this commodity and the enhanced wealth in the middle classes of India and China has dramatically escalated the demand for gold. This has meant that since 1999 the gold price has more than tripled, reaching an all-time peak of \$913 an ounce on 15th January.

Even at current prices it looks excellent value and we think growing demand could continue to bolster the price. Although it must be remembered that this is not certain, and that prices may well go down as well as up.

We at Allchurch Bailey believe the (BlackRock) Merrill Lynch Gold & General Fund is an excellent way to invest in this sector and a great way for investors to benefit over the

long term from the increased demand for gold.

■ *Performance:* 1 year, 41.57%; 3 years, 160.83%; 5 years, 253.66%.

## Jupiter European Special Situations

As investors remain concerned about the credit markets and the impact of a slowdown in the US, the manager of Jupiter's European Special Situations portfolio has balanced his fund with a greater bias towards larger companies.

He believes many have been sold indiscriminately so he is using this opportunity to buy his favourites at bargain levels. We believe this strategy

will prove beneficial for the investor over the longer term.

■ *Performance:* 1 year, 1.01%; 3 years, 64.91%; 5 years, 191.98%.

## Invesco Perpetual Monthly Income Plus

If you are looking for a high income with the potential for capital growth, and are able to invest for the long term, we believe you should definitely look at this fund.

First, it currently offers a yield of 7.5% gross (variable and not guaranteed). Within an ISA the income is completely tax-free, and you can either withdraw it monthly or roll it up with the fund enhancing growth.

Secondly, all the signals indicate that this could be one of the best times to invest in fixed interest for almost 10 years. The last time bonds were this attractive was the turn of the millennium.

Today yields are at a similar level to February 2000, but valuations are even lower. This means investors who act now have the opportunity to benefit from these income levels. In addition if valuations rise there is also

the potential for capital growth. Please remember though that all funds can fall in value as well as rise.

Finally, the fund has the capacity to invest throughout the market, and it is managed by one of the best fixed interest teams in the UK.

In summary, we believe this is an opportunity that we might not see again for many years. This is why we recommend the Invesco Perpetual Monthly Income Plus fund as an ideal home part of your 2008-09 ISA allowance.

■ *Performance:* 1 year, -5.81%; 3 years, 13.83%; 5 years, 65.24%.

Finally, if you want to secure your ISA allowances but don't want to make an investment decision today, you can hold cash within an ISA at 6.15% tax free until you decide upon the next best course of action.

Nico Kontou Goymer can be contacted at Allchurch Bailey Investment Consultants Ltd, Almswood House, 93 High Street, Evesham, WR11 4DU; telephone 01386 442597, e-mail invest@allchurchbailey.co.uk, website

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**The distinction between mini and maxi ISAs will no longer exist ... all Personal Equity Plans (PEPs) will automatically become stocks and shares ISAs.**

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