

What's the best way to deal with osteosarcoma?

– page 13

Can clients be fully informed about vaccinations?

– page 17

Have you entered yet for the practice design awards?

– page 28

Ever had a problem with writing a reference?

– page 57

VETERINARY Practice

MAY 2011 Volume 43 Number 3

Bayer HealthCare Animal Health

CKD?

Renalzin
Renal Protection from Bayer

www.renalzin.co.uk



Changes to disciplinary process on way

FASTER and fairer methods will be introduced to protect animals and their owners from errant behaviour by both veterinary surgeons and VNs, the audience was told at a satellite meeting during last month's BSAVA congress.

Representatives from the Royal College and its VN council explained proposed changes to the RCVS disciplinary process, progress on the new code of conduct, and outlined the structure of the newly introduced system for investigating misconduct by registered veterinary nurses.

Yet even now that ministers have given the go-ahead to the RCVS's plans for a legislative reform order (LRO), members are advised against holding their breath for the new system to come into force.

Even with a so-called "fast track" process it might take

around 15 months to enact the legislation needed to introduce a new structure for the preliminary investigation and disciplinary committees, said the Royal College president, Peter Jinman.

Reform of the disciplinary procedures for veterinary surgeons is the most urgent priority in making up for the deficiencies of the outdated Veterinary Surgeons Act, he said, and any other issues will be addressed during the coming months by an RCVS legislation working party.



Peter Jinman.

The LRO will address the fundamental issue of creating an independent tribunal that will no longer consist of the College Council members responsible for making the rules. But it will also assist the search for people who will be able to spare the time needed to serve on these committees.

Mr Jinman pointed

out that the disciplinary committee sat for 47 days in 2010 compared with 17 days in 2005. Finding dates suitable for all members of the committee was creating a bottleneck.

"Speeding up the process will be of benefit to everybody, the complainant and the veterinary surgeons or nurses involved," Mr Jinman said.

Three-month consultation

DEFRA would be announcing the necessary three-month consultation period on the proposed order in May, he continued, and it would be laid before Parliament at some time in the autumn.

In the meantime, the Royal College would be lobbying MPs and Peers on the importance of the new system in order to ensure that it was introduced as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the disciplinary process for registered veterinary nurses was already in place, having taken effect at the beginning of April. Liz Branscombe, who chairs the VN Council, explained that the system was modelled very closely on that for veterinary surgeons and would address issues of serious professional misconduct, criminal convictions or fraudulent registration.

The powers to suspend or remove someone's registration had not existed under the old system of listed nurses

before the VN register was opened. But now most listed nurses qualifying before 2003 have come on board, with 84% of eligible VNs now registered.

But if the new system follows the same pattern as for the veterinary surgeon disciplinary process, then very few complaints are likely to lead to a formal disciplinary hearing.

"VNs should know that they are not likely to be disciplined simply for

continued on page 3

Bold plans for BSAVA

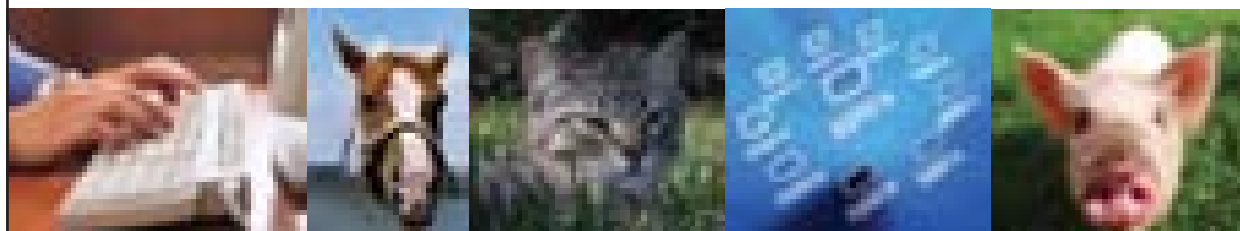


The new president of the BSAVA, Andrew Ash, announced some bold new plans for the association at its AGM in Birmingham on 3rd April. Details, along with reports of the BSAVA congress, start on page 8.

IN THIS ISSUE	Mercury	4	Viewpoint	32	Livestock pages	44
	Cross-words	6	Dermatology	34	Equine pages	48
	Events	8	Recent graduates	37	Education	52
	Conservation	24	Laboratory feature	38	Travel	53
	Latest products	30	Out and about	43	Business & finance	57

A professional computer system that will increase efficiency, is easy to use and will start paying for itself straight away - **Ventana is the ideal system for you.**

 **Midshire & Ventana**
VETERINARY SYSTEMS



See why other practices have changed to Ventana, for a no obligation quotation or a demonstration at your practice please call us on

01606 737476
www.midshire.com



CORTAVANCE™

THE HARD-

HITTING

SPRAY

WITH A

KNOCKOUT

PERFORMANCE

ON PRURITIC

DERMATOSES!



- **Efficacious** – HCA is equal in potency to dexamethasone¹. Product shown to have equal efficacy to ciclosporin in treating atopic dermatitis².
- **High safety profile** – No detectable harmful general effects¹, no systemic effects or immune suppression¹, no skin thinning at 1-5x dose for 14 days¹.
- **Cost-effective** - Up to 500 sprays per bottle - around two pence per spray at current list price (March 2011).

CORTAVANCE™

Label dose: 2 pumps of the spray per 100cm² area, once a day for 7 days.

Virbac
ANIMAL HEALTH

1. Registration Dossier (EMA, European Public Assessment Report: http://www.ema.europa.eu/ema/index.jsp?curl=pages/medicines/veterinary/medicines/000110/vet_med_000109.jsp&murl=menus/medicines/medicines.jsp&mid=WC0b01ac058001fa1c)

2. Equal efficacy of 0.0584% hydrocortisone aceponate spray and ciclosporin in treating canine atopic dermatitis. Nuttall et al. (2010). Proceedings of the 24th annual congress of the European Society of Veterinary Dermatology. September 23-25 2010, Florence, Italy.

Cortavance™ contains hydrocortisone aceponate. **[POM-V] Indications for use:** For the symptomatic treatment of inflammatory and pruritic dermatoses in dogs.

Virbac Limited, Woolpit Business Park, Windmill Avenue, Woolpit, Bury St. Edmunds, IP30 9UP Telephone 01359 243243, Email: enquiries@virbac.co.uk



WORLD LEADERS
IN VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

DISCIPLINE – *from front page* making a genuine mistake. There is a lot of concern, worry, even panic in the profession about these changes but if we want to be taken seriously we have to have a process in place for disciplining those who do transgress. We are sure that very few will require this system.”

The rules are intended to cover the “happy incompetent” as well as those who knowingly break the rules. But it is only those who make repeated errors or attempt to cover up their mistakes who are likely to get into trouble. “If in doubt, call us for advice,” Ms Branscombe urged.

Wherever possible, the Royal College will avoid having to bring its members or those of the VN council before its disciplinary committees. It recognises that there are many situations where it is not the appropriate option for the person concerned and it is also sensible to avoid the huge costs, currently about £10,000 a day, resulting from a formal hearing, pointed out Gordon Hockey, who heads the Royal College’s professional conduct department.

This is the reason why the RCVS introduced a new health

protocol last November for dealing with members with drink or drug problems that will often manifest themselves as professional conduct issues. The protocol is intended to provide a more compassionate approach to dealing with personal problems and is modelled closely on those systems already in place for other professions.

Help and guidance

Instead of shining a public light on the member’s problems at a disciplinary hearing, the person will be offered help and guidance. Mr Hockey said the RCVS hoped that this would deal more effectively with addiction as colleagues may now be more likely to come forward to report their concerns.

Mr Hockey also updated members on progress towards the introduction of a new Code of Conduct to replace the existing guide. This would attempt to

make members’ obligations much clearer to understand and would deal with issues missing or not covered adequately in the existing document.

A draft of the code could be downloaded from the RCVS website and he urged all members to read it and come forward with any comments.



Liz Branscombe.

We're changing our mailing system...

VETERINARY Practice is moving to a new software package for mailing out copies to readers each month so it is possible that a number of you will receive it at a different address from that previously used – and a number will receive a copy for the first time as the list of recipients is being expanded.

If you wish to receive *Veterinary Practice* at a different address from where you receive the next issue, please return the address sheet which came with the issue with your preferred address completed in the space provided. Please note that it is very important that the original address sheet is used so that we can link the alternative address with the one actually used. However, if you have lost that sheet, please send the information by e-mail to kerry@jcagroup.com.

To comply with the regulations concerning the advertising of POM-V medicines, only veterinary surgeons and practices, academia and the veterinary industry are entitled to receive *Veterinary Practice*.

'Earth Day' recommendations

THE Worldwatch Institute’s Nourishing the Planet team is recommending 15 ways that agriculture can address environmental challenges while also alleviating hunger, reducing malnutrition, and lifting people out of poverty.

These were announced on “Earth Day”, 22nd April, when individuals and organisations around the world were urged to address the challenges facing the world.

Details of Nourishing the Planet, a two-year evaluation of innovations in agriculture, are on www.NourishingthePlanet.org.

Danielle Nierenberg, the project co-director, said: “Agriculture encompasses such a large chunk of the planet that creating healthy economies, mitigating climate change, and improving livelihoods will require a long-standing commitment to the world’s farmers.”

Past attempts to combat hunger have tended to focus narrowly on a few types of crops, rely heavily on chemical fertilisers, and ignore women farmers, said Worldwatch president, Christopher Flavin.

“There’s been relatively little focus on low-cost ways to boost soil fertility and make better use of scarce water, and on solutions that exist beyond the farm and all along the food chain,” he said.

The 15 recommendations cover various aspects of such things as: reducing food waste; using farmers’ knowledge in research and development; improving soil fertility; safeguarding local food biodiversity; coping with climate change and building resilience; charting a new path to eliminating hunger; moving ecoagriculture into the mainstream; and improving food production from livestock.

VETERINARY Practice

Veterinary Practice is an independent monthly publication for members of the veterinary profession in the UK. It is mailed free to all veterinary surgeons in practice and is available on subscription (£36 a year) to others interested.

Editorial and design:

Editor: David Ritchie, BA, HonAssocRCVS
(editor@veterinary-practice.com)

Editorial consultant:
John Tandy, BVSc, MRCVS

Design: Simon Wyatt

Advertising and subscriptions:

JCA Media Group Ltd
Lion Lane, Needham Market, Suffolk, IP6 8NT

Contact:
Emma Devine
(emma@jcagroup.com) or
Bronwen Halliday
(bronwen@jcagroup.com)
01449 720881

Published monthly by

VP Publishing Ltd
30 Diamond Ridge, Camberley, Surrey GU15 4LD

Contact:
01276 686654 (tel)
01276 63307 (fax)
editor@veterinary-practice.com



Follow us on Twitter at [vpeditor](https://twitter.com/vpeditor)

Visit our website at www.veterinary-practice.com



© VP Publishing Ltd (2011): no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form (except for review purposes) without the express permission of the editor.

Printed by Buxton Press, Buxton, Derbyshire



22 years experience in Practice Management Systems and 802 installations. You deserve the best for your business.

Willows Referrals (100 users), Companion Care (80 sites), Pet Doctors (30 Sites), Yorkshire Vets (9 Sites), St Georges (5 Sites), Inglis (3 sites), Braemar (2 Sites), Rivendell (3 sites), Coombefield (20 Users), Crown House (9 Users), Powderham (2 Sites, 10 Users), Riverside (4 Users), Beechwood (4 Sites), The Blue Cross (4 Hospitals), Armac (3 sites, 20 users), Kynoch & Partners (6 Sites), Cinque Ports (6 Sites), Cherrydown (3 Sites), Lynton House (3 Sites), Bourne Vets (11 users), Pets Barn (3 sites), North Downs (37 Users), All Creatures (4 Users), Downes (3 sites), Fairfield (6 Users), The Vetcare Centres (3 Sites), Shepherds (4 Sites), Redleaves (9 User), Forest Lodge (2 Sites), Battleflats (3 Sites), Easipetcare (3 Sites), Wellpets (9 Sites), Grove Vets (2 Sites), Hampden Vets (6 Sites), Towerwood (2 Sites), New Priory (2 Sites), Rees Vets (11 user), Ikin & Oxenham (2 Sites), Jubilee Vets (21 user), Spring Lodge (5 Sites), Harwell (2 User), Rhodes (2 sites), Kings Road (5 Users), Selworthy (6 User), AJ Bartram (2 Sites),

Your Vets (2 Sites), Banstead Vets (3 user), Warrendale Vets (7 User), Queens Park (5 User), Daventry (5 User), R Henney Vets (4 users), Eastgate Vets (5 Users), Thames Valley Equine (3 User), Forest Vet Clinic (2 Sites).....

Jupiter
SYSTEMS

0845 2000 725
www.jupitersystems.net

How much motivation do we need to do things differently?

I WAS intrigued to see an advertisement in the veterinary press highlighting the word “motivation” and asking if the readers still feel as inspired as when they graduated.

While offering up my congratulations to the corporate practice concerned for an excellent advertising campaign, I started to think more about that very word – motivation.

None of us is unfamiliar with the term but I suspect that it means different things to different people. For some, it may be associated with a drive to succeed – perhaps in business, perhaps within a company – while for others it may involve some soul-searching and a need for greater fulfilment in either a physical or more spiritual sense. In all cases, it will involve harnessing an inner energy to secure an incentive or an inducement of some kind.

Perhaps that's where we may be going off the rails a bit in small animal practice. I could be wrong about this but not the bit about going off the rails. Reading the veterinary press or while attending BSAVA's recent congress it wasn't possible to avoid some written or spoken dissertation on how the indicative parameters of small animal practice success were pointing downhill in a quite alarming way.

Times are difficult

We all realise that, economically, times are difficult but one could be forgiven for thinking that this doesn't apply to veterinary practice. So many practitioners were non-committal but I did talk to a number of the best-known names and, without exception, they all admitted that it's not all plain sailing.

So, unless we assume that the best-known names have the riskiest businesses, we might reasonably assume that if it's tricky out there for them, it is

tricky out there for most of us.

To be fair, outside agencies and countless veterinary observers have been telling us this for ages. We heard from Onswitch, way back in 2005, that 20% of our favoured clients were using more than one practice and the Fort Dodge Indices have been showing an inexorable decline in footfall, shown through the actual numbers of active clients/FTE, ever since 2002, but perhaps we thought, just as I do if I'm

THE MERCURY COLUMN
in which a guest columnist takes
the temperature of the profession -
and the world around

speeding, that these figures are meant for someone else rather than me.

It's a natural thing to think that the rules are made for someone else and we never think it's going to be ourselves who will be caught, but tell that to the accident victims and they will say, to a man or woman, that they never thought it would be them either.

So where's the motivation in that? In reality, unless we change the way we do business with the pet-owning client, some of us will not be in business at all. Perhaps survival is the ultimate inducement to change behaviour and it is clear to anyone analysing the dynamics of veterinary practice that a significant change in behaviour is needed – soon.

The number of active patients/FTE has continued to fall from 1,586 in December 2008 to 1,453 some two years later. To make these figures more telling, that figure was 1,825 in 2001.

There is no more puissant factor in business success than having an increasing pool of active patients and here we have the diametric opposite, yet

we seem to be paralysed by inertia like rabbits in the headlights.

If we can stir ourselves sufficiently to decide on a course of action that will, in itself, prove to be a much-needed catalyst for changing behaviour. Some have already done so and are reaping the benefits of having made the change but clearly others will leave it far too late unless they are somehow motivated to change.

It might be useful to take a look at our clients' motivation. What motivates our clients to take action on their pets' behalf? For some, it is their sense of responsibility for the health and well-being of their pet while, for others, it may be more influenced by financial considerations.

Shrinking income

We will all be aware that for the vast majority of families, disposable income has already shrunk and will continue to do so if interest rates rise and mortgage payments and rents increase as a result.

Ten years ago, £40 worth of diesel would take you to Bratislava; now it will barely get you down to the shops and back and this, accompanied by increases in the costs of many staples of modern life, will severely reduce the disposable cash

available for non-urgent pet health activities in the vast majority of families.

One thing strikes me as being amazing. We all know that the dog population numbers have been declining while the numbers of cats have been growing. In 2001, when there were more dogs than cats, the split of veterinary transactions dogs v. cats was 56:36.

Ten years later, when we have far more cats, more people living alone and a societal environment which favours cat ownership over dog ownership, the split has become 66:30. Let's ask ourselves why:

- Is it because we have more dogs? No.
- Does society favour dog ownership more now, a decade later? No.
- Do cat owners value their cats more now? Probably.
- Are there more cats now? Yes, lots.
- Are cat owners more willing in 2011 to spend more on their cats than before? Yes.
- Are cat owners spending more money



in the practice nowadays? Clearly not.

So, if we have a rapid decline in the number of patients attending and if cats are not properly represented in practice turnover, according to their population size and the capacity of their owners to pay, there is obviously a clear disconnect here.

If you talk to the ISFM (International Society of Feline Medicine), they will tell you the unpalatable truth that so many cat owners feel let down by the same veterinary practices that were ever so willing to see the cat, charge a consult fee, prescribe a course of medication and then wash their hands of the cat owner and the patient as soon as they'd paid the bill, leaving the cat owner still with a sick cat, a hefty bill and a kitchen drawer full of feline medications that they simply cannot get into the cat.

Will they come back to try again? Not likely; would you?

These consumers are faced with a choice of returning to the practice embarrassed and indignant or going to Pets at Home, so is it any surprise that the performance of the “pet £” in the pet retail sector is several times better than it is in the veterinary sector. Is it really a surprise that active patient numbers are continuing to fall in our veterinary world?

The big surprise must surely be that this profession, which continues to harness the very best academic brains amongst the nation's school leavers, is so unwilling to adopt change and to find a different path.

It's not that we can't, so it can only be that we won't consider doing it differently – an observation for which the directors and shareholders of the pet retailing giants are incalculably grateful.

One can only wonder how much motivation it will take to change our professional behaviour – and when is being a late adopter simply too late?

The big surprise must surely be that this profession ... is so unwilling to adopt change and to find a different path.

Higher production, lower emissions

RESEARCH carried out by academics from Aberystwyth University in conjunction with the Compton Group, based in Swansea, is reported to have resulted in a discovery which could lead both to an improvement in milk and meat production and to a significant reduction in methane emissions from cattle and sheep.

The research team, led by Professor Jamie Newbold of Aberystwyth University, found that by adding sandalwood (or a sandalwood analogue) to animal feed, the growth of pathogenic bacteria such as *E. coli* and *Listeria* in the rumen is reduced. As a consequence, energy which would otherwise be lost through the production of methane is diverted to increased milk and meat production. At the same time there was a significant reduction in the emission of methane.

Trials in a rumen simulating fermenter (Rusitec) showed that javanol, a sandalwood analogue, reduced methane production by up to 25%. A reduction of 20% in methane emissions was achieved in field trials with sheep when 2ml of javanol per day was added to their diet.



Your path to the right diagnosis

Cardiopet® proBNP



The new Cardiopet® proBNP Test from IDEXX Reference Laboratories delivers quantitative results with interpretative criteria that can help you determine the severity of the cardiac disease – ultimately improving patient care through earlier detection and treatment. The test is minimally invasive, requiring only a simple blood sample.

Cardiopet® proBNP – for murmur dogs with mild to more severe clinical signs and to screen all cats.

www.idexx.co.uk/probnp • Tel: 01937 544000

One or two flaws in the new system...

THIS month has been a month of form filling. From where I am writing this, I can see my obligatory national census form. It is in that part of the kitchen where things you can't throw away but don't really want to tackle get stacked up.

It's in there with car tax reminders, the cooker instruction manual and a file of stuff we can't

throw out but haven't tackled yet concerning moving house. The

census form is by far the most noticeable when viewed from the side.

Most of you reading this will have been grappling with another obligatory form-filling exercise: the new RCVS registration. This has caused some disquiet amongst vets as being an unnecessary exercise and an intrusive one.

I have noticed a few flaws in the system. One is that there is no direct confirmation that your efforts by post or on-line have been successful. As the penalty for not doing this could be removal from the register, the RCVS should confirm that you have been successful in your registration.

As a comparison: I have just taxed the car on-line and before I turned off the computer I checked the e-mail and there was a confirmation of my payment and successful taxation of the car.

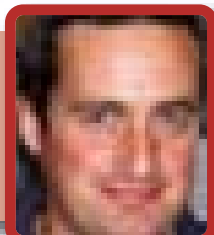
A more minor flaw is that if you pay by direct

debit, it appears that you still have to "pay" to confirm your details, but just enter a £0 amount. The other *Catch 22* aspect is that part of the reason for all this is to confirm your current address and yet the forms were posted out to the addresses on the existing database.

It's a tricky one for the RCVS and over the years will

GARETH CROSS

has been struggling with some tedious form-filling - not least for the RCVS - but eventually finds some relief in his veterinary work



come right, but I hope they go easy on the first poor vet they haul up for not completing the forms.

Picture the scene at Belgravia house. The vet, Yossarian, is on the phone to the RCVS.

RCVS staff: "So Mr Yossarian, why have you not completed your obligatory re-registration form to confirm your address?"

Yossarian: "Well, you see, I never got it, it went to my old address."

RCVS staff: "But if you had completed the re-registration forms we would have your correct address."

Yossarian: "But you posted the forms for me to do that to the wrong address."

RCVS staff: "But if you had filled in the forms as required we wouldn't be in this situation."

Yossarian: "I never received the forms to fill in. The *RCVS News* and the form to fill in all went to my old

address..." and so on.

All ending in an hilarious law-suit and much farce.

More seriously, though, is the fact that many of you out there will have put your signature to the first falsified document in your veterinary career. And sent it straight back to the RCVS to boot. That bit where you confirm you have done all the CPD you should have.

How many people returning from career breaks, locums, mums and dads, very part-timers, old boys, the fed-up and about to retire, have not done enough CPD but signed the form to say they had? There will be a significant minority who have just confirmed they have done all those hours of CPD when they haven't.

I do not think it is a bad thing to make people confirm that they have done the required CPD but the RCVS should have warned everyone three years ago. (I definitely have done enough CPD by the way, in case anyone from the RCVS reads this – which I know they do – as I did a two-year taught course and have the hole in my company bank account to prove it).

The issue of CPD provision and costs of it for part-timers and people taking time away from vetting needs to be considered. Not all CPD hours have to be filled by attending courses, but some of them do.

a mortgage application.

Our favourite moment was when we had to fill in the address of our current lender. We happen to be staying with the same building society. They had not provided enough boxes for their own address to be filled in on their own form!

On the subject of confirmation (as mentioned above with respect to the RCVS), the building society texted us at 10pm congratulating us on a successful application. The next day they texted us to tell us that our forms had just been received.

Our IFA investigated and told us they had received the forms but they couldn't confirm the application had been successful. So much for confirmation for when you send off a form. It's not just the RCVS which gets it wrong.

Website fine but bland...

If anyone hasn't yet seen the Royal College's new website, prepare to be ... bowled under? Underwhelmed? It looks fine, but quite bland and the little V-shaped shieldy thing is, well, a little V-shaped shieldy thing. I don't expect they will be



'the little V-shaped shieldy thing is, well, a little V-shaped shieldy thing'

paying for a replacement practice standards' plaque for all our practices either.

"Look for the logo" Ted used to say to the public on the old RCVS website. But which one? I think some of my kid's toys have a V-shaped shieldy sticker thing on them. I'll stick that to the nice formal-looking plaque we forked out for last year.

It all sounds a bit down in the dumps in vet world, but one of the joys of our job is, despite the form-filling and the many other usual gripes and moans of our job, it still has the capacity to delight and amaze us.

This week I was summoned to work a bit early for a possible caesar on a cat. After some manipulation and the judicious use of oxytocin, we had, between the efforts of myself and the queen, delivered five healthy little siamese kittens.

They mewed and flopped round the basket. Blind and functioning on instinct alone they managed to find mum and latched onto the milk bar.

They were in complete and blissful ignorance of forms, mortgages, the RCVS's latest dictum, etc. And for a few minutes then, so was I.

RCVS seeks comments on new code

THE RCVS is seeking feedback on its new draft *Code of Professional Conduct*.

The draft, which is intended to replace the existing *RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons*, has been produced by a working party set up by the College's advisory committee to review the guides for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

The draft is described as a short, principles-based document using the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe's code of conduct as its starting point. It will be supported by additional advice on specific areas of veterinary practice or issues such as clinical governance.

The draft includes a compulsory CPD requirement, the RCVS health protocol and more on clinical competence, and gives prominence to relevant issues on medicines.

It also contains an updated declaration to be made by veterinary surgeons, which gives increased emphasis to animal welfare.

"Over the decade or so since it was last reviewed, not only has the *Guide* become unwieldy in places, but the way that regulators in general publish professional conduct rules has changed," says Clare Tapsfield-Wright, a College Council member who chairs the working party. "Our draft new code aims to clarify matters and bring us into line with best practice elsewhere."

The new code, together with the consultation paper, can be downloaded at www.rcvs.org.uk/codeconsultation.

Comments should be sent to Christopher Murdoch, secretary to the working party, at c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk, by 24th June 2011.

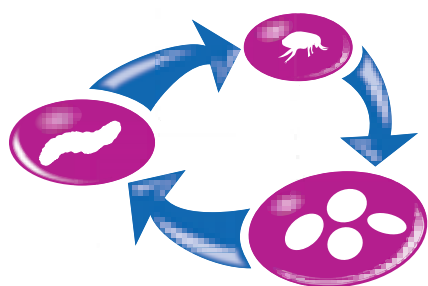
People may well lie...

The RCVS must be made aware, though, that if they put people in a position where they have only two options – to falsify an official document (one of the cardinal sins for an MRCVS) or be automatically removed from the register – then people may well lie. And once people have had to do it for one thing...

I am not in this position and nor are any vets I know personally, but there will be some who have had to do it on this occasion to stay in work. Most will have never falsified anything before. If they are forced to falsify a document to stay in practice, well it's the thin end of the wedge. However, in defence of the RCVS, I have to say that they have very nicely worded that section to allow a fair bit of wriggle room.

The RCVS is not the worst for forms though. We have just spent an entire weekend collating documents for

Clearing the way to a
flea-free environment.



Only Stronghold treats fleas
and eggs on the pet and existing eggs and
larvae in the environment.



For further information please contact Pfizer Animal Health, Walton Oaks, Tadworth,
Surrey KT20 7NS **POM-V** Pfizer Animal Health, 9 Riverwalk, National Digital Park,
Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24 **POM** Stronghold contains selamectin.
Use medicines responsibly www.noah.co.uk/responsible

stronghold[®]
For protection of pet and home

AH280/10

BSAVA to be more aggressive in expanding roles in CPD, events and publishing

GOODBYE *Blue Peter*, hello *Dragons' Den*. Members of the BSAVA can expect to see a marked change in the way that their organisation presents itself.

The BSAVA is turning from a gentle, well-intentioned and rather slow moving body – run by and for its members – into a hard-nosed and ferocious commercial operation. The transformation was announced at the association's annual general meeting in Birmingham by the outgoing president, Grant Petrie.

The programme for change will be driven by amendments to the association's constitution agreed at the meeting which will allow the BSAVA to be run on more business-like lines.

"Our committee processes and the Articles of Association have hampered our progress. Historically, we have been far too slow to implement ideas," he said.

Over the coming months, Mr Petrie said he would be working with his successor, Andrew Ash, and the two officers next in line for the presidency, Mark Johnston and Professor Michael Day, on "a more focused and longer term business strategy".

A new approach is needed because

of the changing veterinary environment in which the association will be interacting as much with companies and other large organisations as it does with individual members. It will also help the association to defend itself against intruders taking over its home turf – the CPD meetings and publications on which its reputation rests.

Mr Petrie noted that commercial organisations had become very active in providing CPD courses for small animal practitioners and it would only be a matter of time before the

VETERINARY PRACTICE

hears the BSAVA's retiring and incoming presidents outline their plans for the coming year at the AGM and their aim to make the association more commercial

association's publishing functions came under similar pressure. While he was extremely proud of the high quality of conferences, journals and books produced by the BSAVA, "I fear that unless we respond to the changing veterinary climate, the association may have far less relevance in future."

Running the association's CPD activities is now a full-time job held by one of its recent past presidents, Dr Frances Barr, who was appointed head of the education business unit last July. She will take primary responsibility for the launch next January of the modular postgraduate certificate for veterinary surgeons – requiring around 600 hours of study and leading to a masters level certificate.

Ambitious project

"This discipline-based programme is one of the association's most ambitious and exciting projects to date," Mr Petrie said. "All our educational tools will feed in to the postgraduate programme and it is providing the focus to re-establish BSAVA as the place to obtain continuing professional development as well as supporting the profession with lifelong learning."

Meanwhile, with the BSAVA having opened its doors to veterinary nurses



The new officer team of the BSAVA at the congress, with the new president, Andrew Ash, wearing the chain of office and (from left): Professor Michael Day, junior vice-president; Tricia Colville, treasurer; Mark Johnston, vice-president; Grant Petrie, senior vice-president; and Katie Dunn, secretary.

earlier this year, it is also developing training programmes leading to a qualification for this new category of members. That project is being handled by the association's education committee under its new chairperson, Dr Sue Paterson.

Despite Mr Petrie's concerns over the prospect of a more competitive environment in the future and the difficult economic conditions of the present, he was able to report another successful year for the association. Membership grew in 2010 by more than 11% to just under 6,000 and record numbers of these had attended the congress.

Final figures for registrants were not available at the time of the AGM but the total would certainly be up on last year and the commercial exhibition had also continued to thrive with a 10% increase in the number of stands.

Second congress...

The success of the spring congress produced a strong argument for holding a second major meeting to allow those people to attend who have to "hold the fort" back at the practice during the main event.

Mr Petrie pointed out that the BSAVA was organising the scientific sessions for the September congress in London of its parent body, the BVA. "I hope both associations have the imagination to build on this initiative for 2012 and beyond," he said.

In the meantime, preparations are already well under way for the 2012 BSAVA congress in which the UK organisation will be host to the European and World small animal veterinary associations, FECAVA and WSAVA. Plans are also under way for the British and Irish associations to co-host the 2013 FECAVA meeting in Dublin.

The BSAVA also has plans for overseas expansion of its publishing operations. Its manuals sell around the world and have been translated into a number of foreign languages. Having included simultaneous translations of some of the scientific programme at the 2011 congress into Spanish and

Polish, the association is keen to help meet the growing global demand for high quality veterinary CPD materials and will be looking over the next few years to expand sales of its publications in both conventional and electronic formats.

Honorary membership

Another international publishing phenomenon was awarded honorary membership of the BSAVA at the AGM. Dr Bruce Fogle came to the UK after training as a veterinary surgeon in his native Canada in 1970 and was given his first job in UK practice by the BSAVA's first president, Woody Woodrow, at his York Street clinic in central London.

He went on to organise the first scientific meeting on the human-animal bond and become the world's best-selling practising vet for his series of books on animal behaviour and pet care.

In 1982 he helped found the charity Hearing Dogs for the Deaf and was awarded the MBE in 1995 for his services to the disabled. However, as pointed out by Mr Petrie, who is one of his current practice colleagues, Dr Fogle is best known for 20 years as the husband of [the actress] Julia Foster and now as the father of [television personality] Ben."



Grant Petrie (right) congratulates editor-in-chief Ian Ramsey on the publication of the 7th edition of the BSAVA Small Animal Formulary. The 448-page book is available to BSAVA members at £40 and to non-members at £60.

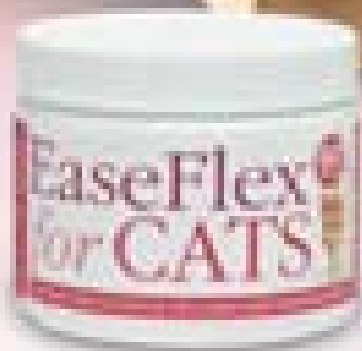


Bruce Fogle.

The cat's out of the bag!

EaseFlex Chews NOW AVAILABLE for cats!

- ▲ Palatable chews that cats appreciate.
- ▲ Soft chew is easy to feed, no mixing required.
- ▲ Contains high levels of glucosamine, chondroitin, MSM and antioxidants.
- ▲ Shaped and textured to suit cats.
- ▲ Available in packs of 60 chews.



For further information contact:

Alstoe Ltd., The Industrial Park,
Sheriff Hutton, York YO60 6RZ. UK
Tel: 01347 878606 Fax: 01347 878333
E-mail: info@alstoe.co.uk www.alstoe.co.uk
©Registered Trade Mark ©Alstoe Ltd. 2011

Alstoe
ANIMAL HEALTH

Science is improved understanding

EaseFlex[®] for CATS

THE TASTY WAY TO SOOTHE STIFF JOINTS AND MAINTAIN MOBILITY

Record numbers at BSAVA's 54th congress

MORE than 8,000 people gathered for the BSAVA congress in Birmingham last month, 16% more than last year.

Delegates totalled 5,816 (5,028 in 2010), including 634 from overseas, with more than 50 countries represented: Denmark (74), Norway (53) and the USA (44) sent the most. In all, 3,887 veterinary surgeons, 1,820 nurses and 109 students registered for the event which the president, Grant Petrie, described in his opening address as "one of the highlights of the global veterinary calendar".

He said it had been a tremendous honour to preside over such a truly world-class congress, particularly to serve as president on the 250th anniversary of the veterinary profession.

He went on to make a presentation to the dean of the Lyon veterinary school, Dr Stéphane Martinot, to mark the anniversary of the founding of the world's first veterinary school there in 1761 by Claude Bourgelat.



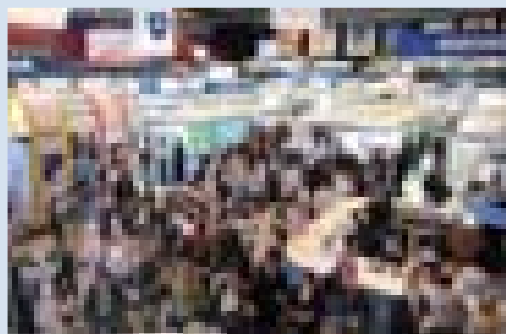
A packed hall 1 in the ICC for the BSAVA lecture presented by the adventurer Monty Halls. Below: a packed aisle in the commercial exhibition in the NIA.

Mr Petrie said the congress had surpassed all his expectations and it was a year he would never forget.

"I am immensely proud to see more delegates and more exhibitors than ever before, together with a fantastic social programme and networking opportunities which created a really special buzz around the event.

"It is a really exciting time for veterinary science and congress continues to be right at the heart of the profession. I believe it has been the best year yet and the figures certainly support this."

■ According to the Birmingham Convention Bureau, the BSAVA congress generates an estimated £14.8 million for the regional economy – including accommodation, meals, events, entertainment, travel, and other activities and costs.



Above left: Grant Petrie presenting Dr Stéphane Martinot of the Lyon veterinary school with a specially commissioned piece of glassware by Will Shakspeare of Taunton in Somerset to mark the 250th anniversary of the founding of the school. Above right: a big crowd gathering during a coffee break at one of the refreshment points in the commercial exhibition. Below: BSAVA presidents – past, present and future – at the congress (from left): Simon Orr, Mike Herrtage, Colin Price, Peter Beynon, Tony Hilbery, Des Thompson, Neil Gorman, Grant Petrie (president for 2010-11 and now senior vice-president), John Hird, Lynne Hill, Ray Butcher, Lynn Turner, Mark Johnston (who should become president next year), Ted Chandler, Richard Dixon, Roger Green, Andrew Ash (the new president), John Dalton, John Sheridan (the earliest – 1974-75), John Foster, David Wadsworth and Andrew Edney.



FLEE

HOUSEHOLD FLEA SPRAY

Eliminates Fleas, flea eggs, larvae, pupae and mites in an instant!

**SAFE FOR
HUMANS**

**PESTICIDE
FREE**

SAFE ✓



**ENVIRONMENTALLY
FRIENDLY**

**SAFE FOR
PETS**

SAFE ✓



Further information is available from;
Bimeda, Bryn Cefni Industrial Park, Llangefni, Anglesey, Wales, LL777XA
Free phone: 0800526769
Email: sales@bimeda.com or visit; www.bimeda.com

**Providing Animal Health
solutions for over 50 Years**

BSAVA awards handed out

PROFESSOR Gail Smith of the University of Pennsylvania received the Blaine Award for outstanding contributions to the advancement of small animal medicine or surgery, during the awards ceremony at the congress. He is shown at right receiving the award from Royal Canin's Andrew Doyle (left).

The photo below shows Dr Clare Rusbridge receiving the J. A. Wight Memorial Award (sponsored by the Blue Cross) from Jim Wight (the late Alf Wight's son) for outstanding contributions to small animal welfare.

Among other awards presented were: Amoroso Award to Professor Sandy Trees; Simon Award to Philip Lhermette; Melton Award to Amanda Boag; Woodrow Award to Dr Alex German; Bourgelat Award to Professor Sydney Moïse; Dunkin Award to Graham Hayes; and the Petsavers Award to Samantha Taylor.

Clinical research abstract awards from the 2010 congress went to Dr James Yeates, Sarah Thomson and Lorenzo Novello.



Stand award winners

THIS year's best stand awards at the congress went to Dunlops (*pictured below*) for the "best space only stand, The Company of Animals for the "best large shell scheme stand" and OrthoPets Europe for the "best small shell scheme stand" – shown at left are Rod and Alison Hunt of the firm which is based at Berkeley, Glos. Judging was carried out by Dr Frances Barr, the BSAVA's academic director; Gordon Logan, chairman of the NOAH sub-committee which represents exhibitors; and Dr Laurel Kaddatz, president of North American Veterinary Conference.

And who should win the Dunlops Challenge but Jill Nute, from Cornwall! A former president of the RCVS, Jill completed the challenge successfully and hers was the first entry pulled out in the draw which took place on the Sunday afternoon.



Veterinary 'Oscars' presented

THE winners of Petplan's 2011 Vet of the Year Awards – commonly known as the Veterinary Oscars – were announced at a dinner in the Birmingham Town Hall on the Thursday evening of the congress.

Two other awards were (as usual) also presented. The Petplan Charitable Trust Award went to Dr Brian Catchpole (*pictured below*) and the Petsavers Veterinary Achievement Award to Dr David Sobel from the USA who is shown in the lower photo with Mark Pertwee (left) who presented the award on behalf of Petsavers.

For the 12th Petplan awards, more than 2,800 nominations (a record) were received.

The Vet Practice of the Year award went to Emersons Green Veterinary Surgery of Bristol whose work to educate their customers stood out for the judges; four members of staff from the practice are shown above with (left) one of the judges, the RCVS president Peter Jinman.

The Vet of the Year award went to Alison Laurie of Crown Vets of Inverness, who was praised by the judges for her clinical excellence, exceptional ability and compassion towards customers and their pets. She is shown with Harvey Locke (left), the BVA president who was one of the judges, and the comedian Alun Cochrane, who compered the evening and entertained the 250 guests.

The Vet Nurse of the Year award went to Maria Corcoran of the Orwell Veterinary Group in Ipswich, praised by the judges for her ability to naturally lead by example as well as her ability to always make pet care and comfort her top priority.

The Vet Support Staff of the Year award was presented to Patty Fraser of the Loch Leven Equine Practice in Kinross, who was considered by the judges to be the "hub" of the practice, "constantly making a strong contribution to the team in many ways".



Seeking the best way to deal with osteosarcoma

CHOOSING the right treatment for a dog with an osteosarcoma is a highly controversial topic, with vocal critics of all the three main options – euthanasia, amputation and prosthetic limbs.

Yet there was little evidence of any heat in the debate on this issue at the BSAVA Congress, with both the main speakers agreeing on the fundamental point that the choice should depend solely on the interests of the animal.

Neither Jane Dobson, reader in veterinary oncology at the University of Cambridge, and Noel Fitzpatrick, head of the eponymous Surrey-based orthopaedic referral practice, showed any appetite to turn their discussion into a squabble.

Each recognised that euthanasia was the likely outcome in a majority of cases, although amputation was a reasonable option that could maintain a good quality of life and limb-sparing techniques should only be attempted if the benefits outweighed the costs incurred during surgery and the recovery period.

Pioneering work

Mr Fitzpatrick has built a national reputation with his pioneering work in developing novel endoprostheses and the even more remarkable ITAPs (intraosseus transcutaneous amputation prostheses). But he pointed out that 80% of the cases referred to his practice for limb-sparing surgery were euthanased or had an amputation.

“Ego, money or wanting to advance the science are not good enough reasons for doing these procedures, the question must always

be: is it in the interests of that particular patient?” he stated.

If the equivalent condition in humans is any guide, then canine osteosarcoma must be an unpleasant and painful condition.

Good technique

Amputation is a good technique for eliminating the source of that discomfort but perhaps 90% of dogs are likely to have microscopic metastases at the time of diagnosis and so the relief is often temporary: “It is not a question of whether euthanasia is an option but when,” Dr Dobson said.

Living with three legs is often easier for the dog concerned than for its owners who may find the sight of their animal following surgery to be extremely distressing. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that older or heavier dogs find it harder to adjust to the new situation.

But there are some dogs that do find it difficult and limb-sparing surgery can offer a similar extension to the animal's life expectancy as amputation and adjuvant chemotherapy, Mr Fitzpatrick pointed out.

As well as helping canine patients, Mr Fitzpatrick's work is also contributing to developments in human surgery through his collaborations with staff at Stanmore orthopaedic hospital and University College, London.

Inserting a human prosthesis currently costs up to a hundred times more than its canine equivalent. Improvements in the technology and surgical methods developed in dogs

should improve the outcomes and reduce the costs of procedures in both species, he said.

During questions, Mr Fitzpatrick was asked if there was any evidence for the existence of the same sort of phantom limb pain in dogs that occurs in human amputees. He believed that it certainly did exist, noting that one of the patients shown in an earlier video with an ITAP was seen to lick the prosthesis as though it was the source of sensation.

The physiological mechanisms of phantom pain are not well understood, he said, adding that he has been involved in a project involving soldiers returning from Afghanistan and Iraq with blast injuries. This work may help clarify the role in phantom pain for microscopic particles of grit which may not be visible in radiological

images.

Dr Dobson argued that there was no convincing evidence for the existence of this phenomenon in veterinary patients. It was impossible to prove because there is no way of asking the animals concerned what exactly they are feeling. But the anaesthetists working at Cambridge were fully aware of the possibility and tried to minimise the risks of chronic pain through the use of nerve blocks during surgery to remove a damaged leg.



Sharing a platform at the BSAVA congress: Noel Fitzpatrick and Dr Jane Dobson.

1980's theme party to mark company's 25th birthday at the BSAVA congress

Beth Skillings of Cats Protection went in for some serious celebrations at Virbac's 1980's themed Thursday night party at the BSAVA congress, winning the top prize for the best outfit of the night. Dressed as an early take on Madonna (with a hint of Cyndi



Lauper), Beth won a bottle of bubbly for her efforts. The "sell out" party was held in the Hyatt Regency as part of the company's 25th anniversary festivities and drew some interesting interpretations on the theme, including Virbac's Callum Blair who took the staff prize for his "take" on George Michael. Beth (centre) is shown receiving her prize from Callum Blair and Virbac product manager Victoria Hudson who organised the event.



MADE YOU LOOK



A **NEW MonoForage® diet** range to support wellbeing for three of the most commonly presented problems in rabbits.

WITH UP TO 34% FIBRE



SUPPORTING WELLBEING THROUGH TARGETED NUTRITION

supremeprofessional.com / 0845 058 9697

Follow us on twitter @Supremevet



MERIAL

We've made millions of pets more comfortable.

Since 1995, FRONTLINE® products have been the first choice to kill fleas and ticks on pets. We were the first to introduce a spray, the first with a spot-on application, and the first to provide Integrated Flea Control in one dose. To be comfortable with what you prescribe, talk to us first.

FRONTLINE *Combo*®
Trust the experts.

Practice staff must take responsibility

REPEATED failure to comply with practice policies on the control of infectious disease should be a disciplinary offence which could lead to the sack, according to Dr Tim Nuttall, senior lecturer in veterinary dermatology at the Liverpool veterinary school.

He warned delegates that it is imperative for all practice staff to take responsibility

for preventing the spread of potentially fatal pathogens such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

MRSA is not a normal component of the bacterial flora of companion animals and the majority of dogs that are carrying the bug will have become contaminated when visiting a veterinary practice. As with human hospital workers, veterinary staff are much more likely to be carrying the

organism than ordinary members of the public, he said.

So it is vital that all staff take seriously their obligations to prevent infection through rigorous adherence to hygiene policies.

"If not," said Dr Nuttall, "there is a major risk to the

and other infection control measures, he said.

These should be on display throughout the premises so that even someone on his or her first day at work knows how to clean and disinfect a potential source of infection without having to go and ask a colleague. But it is even more important that all staff appreciate the need to maintain the same high standards.

"There is one thing worse than having no guidelines, and that is to have ones that nobody follows. If you are sued in the courts, having no policies might be seen as negligence but to have them and fail to implement them could be viewed as wilful negligence."

Protocols strictly enforced

At the Liverpool small animal hospital and other major referral centres, these protocols are strictly enforced.

"Persistent and wilful disregard for these rules will rapidly become a disciplinary and possibly a dismissal issue. One person can undermine all the good work that everybody else is doing.

"It is also important that there is constant reinforcement and encouragement rather than having a big blitz on hygiene and then letting complacency set in so that things are ignored."

The places in the practice that are most likely to be contaminated with MRSA are those where there is frequent hand contact – doors, taps, computer keyboards, etc. So it is vital that regular and thorough hand cleaning forms the cornerstone of a practice infection control policy. Dr Nuttall pointed out that soap and hot water is just as effective as a well-known disinfectant in destroying more than 99% of all known germs.

Alcohol-based gels are useful in controlling bacteria on hands which may already appear clean and the gel dispensers are a constant reminder to staff who may otherwise forget to scrub their hands after handling a

patient. But they are no substitute for thorough hand washing, he said.

Pressure on practitioners to restrict their use of antibiotics is an inevitable consequence of the spread of resistant bacteria; Dr Nuttall urged colleagues to consider choosing older products where appropriate and only opting for more recently introduced products when there is a strong suspicion that resistant strains may be present.

"You should not think in terms of strong and weak antibiotics: there is only appropriate and inappropriate," he said. Avoiding unnecessary use of prophylactic antimicrobials and using topical products whenever practical will also help to maintain the clinical effectiveness of these drugs.

In NHS hospitals, the introduction of stricter hygiene protocols has been very effective, resulting in a 50% reduction in cases of MRSA bacteraemia over a two-year period up to October 2010. Much of the credit for this must go to the old-fashioned matrons appointed to ensure that rigorous standards are maintained.

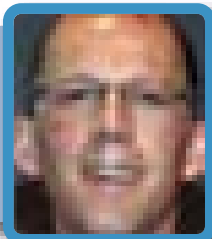
Dr Nuttall believed it was a good idea for one person to take overall responsibility for hygiene standards in a veterinary practice, suggesting "the head nurse, as she is normally the scariest member of staff".

It is vital that hygiene policies are not only followed but are seen to be followed, Dr Nuttall stated.

Much of the reason for changes in the attitudes of veterinary practices towards MRSA have been brought about through the activities of Jill Moss, whose dog Bella died as a result of an infection contracted at a veterinary surgery.

Supporters of her campaign are encouraged to check up on the hygiene routines at their own veterinary practices. So having things like posters on display setting out practice policy and plenty of alcohol gel dispensers will not only remind the staff of their duties, they will also help to inspire confidence in members of the public, he said.

Dr TIM NUTTALL told a session on infection control at the BSAVA congress of the importance of having clear guidelines for preventing the spread of infection in practices



reputation of the practice, including the possibility of being sued. In the nightmare situation, an animal acquires an MRSA infection at a practice, takes it home and the infection is passed on to a vulnerable member of their family and that person dies. This will happen sooner or later to some veterinary practice: make sure that it isn't yours."

All practices should have written protocols detailing cleaning routines

Weak evidence base for some reasons for neutering bitches

THE evidence base for a number of welfare aspects of neutering bitches is very weak, according to research being carried out by a group at the Royal Veterinary College.

Presenting an interim report on the work to the joint Cats Protection and Dogs Trust reception at the BSAVA congress, Wendy Beauvais, who has been working on the project with Jacqueline Cordwell and David Brodbelt, demonstrated that very few articles from peer-reviewed journals provided reliable information on the value of a number of procedures which are commonly carried out.

Among the objectives of the work, the results of which will be published in full in the near future, are to evaluate the strength of evidence for an association between neutering, age of neutering, and either mammary masses or urinary incontinence, and to identify other disorders associated with neutering, based on current literature.

With mammary masses, the group identified 11,149 records but only 13 articles satisfied the eligibility criteria and all of them were adjudged to have a high or moderate risk of bias or "confounding".

Miss Beauvais said there was some weak evidence that neutering before the age of two-and-a-half might be associated with a reduced risk of malignant mammary tumours and that neutering before the first oestrous might

be more strongly protective.

With urinary incontinence, 1,794 records were identified of which seven satisfied the eligibility criteria and all of these were considered to have a high or moderate degree of bias. The speaker said there was some evidence that neutering is associated with an increased risk of urinary incontinence and that the earlier the bitch is neutered, the greater the risk.

She added that currently available evidence for a causal relationship between neutering and either mammary masses or urinary incontinence is weak.

The group has identified 39 other conditions that have been studied in relation to neutering and plans to review the published evidence.

Changes

This meeting at the congress is usually called to announce the winners of a number of veterinary student scholarships but the charities reported a drop in interest and instead have been offering opportunities for students to see practice with them.

So far this year Cats Protection has offered placements to 20 students and Dogs Trust 24.

Those who gain placements will be asked to produce a report on their work and these will be judged early next year with a £500 prize being presented to the winner and £250 to the runner-up at the 2012 congress.

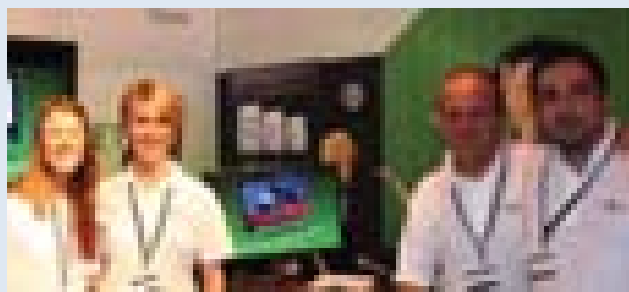
A presidential breeding ground...

THE article about Andrew Ash in the April issue referred to Ted Chandler and John Sheridan as former presidents of the BSAVA from the Grove Lodge practice based in Worthing, and stated that Mr Ash would be the third veterinary surgeon from the practice to be elected president.

Mr Sheridan points out that Geoff Startup was also a president of the BSAVA, so Andrew is in fact the fourth president from that practice – and the fifth from Worthing as Peter Beynon also practised in Worthing when he was president.

THE VETERINARY PRACTICE TEAM

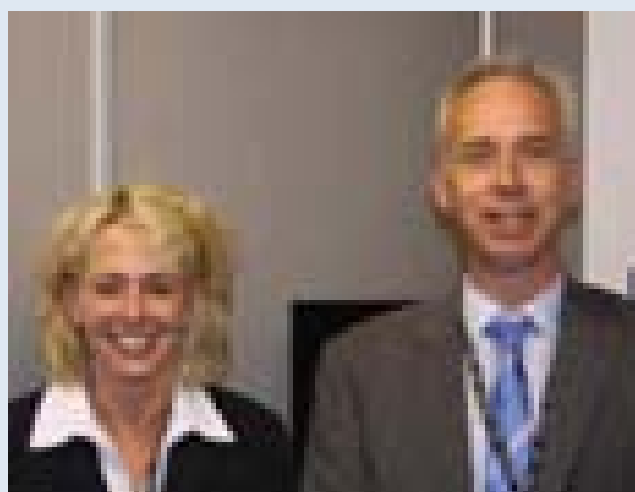
Reports on the BSAVA congress in this issue have been written by, among others, John Bonner and Susan McKay. Photos have been supplied from various sources including the BSAVA's official photographer.



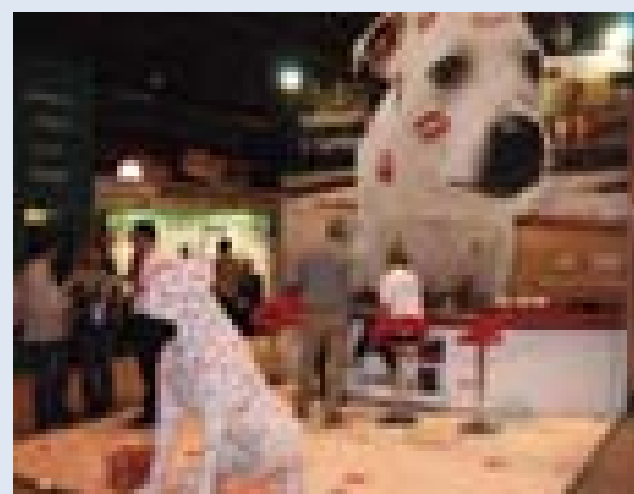
Around the BSAVA congress commercial exhibition

Among the sights in the commercial exhibition were (anti-clockwise from top left):

- a new Companion Therapy laser on the Kruuse stand;
- Coltronics featured a range of products from a regenerative oxygen supply machine to light-weight light emitting diodes;
- newest company at the event was undoubtedly Invicta Animal Health, based near Horsham – the directors Anna Lake and Rob Watkins (formerly with Genitrix) introduced the CareFusion Chloraprep skin antiseptic system along with the ChroMyco fungal culture system;
- another newcomer was Innovacyn and the firm's sales and marketing manager for Europe was on the stand with an American range of wound and skin care products;
- Catalin Dragoi from Trio Diagnostics Ireland on the stand of Quality Clinical Reagents, with a giraffe which was one several prizes in a draw organised by the firm;
- Virbac's David Ellerton (UK managing director) and Sandrine Brunel (head of corporate communications) cut a cake on the stand to celebrate 25 years since the French company's arrival in the UK – the cake cutting was followed by a 1980's themed party at the Hyatt Regency near the ICC;



- Animalcare had a colourful stand to display its expanding product range;
- Boehringer Ingelheim had a "pin a kiss on the dog" feature which attracted a great deal of interest;
- Intervet/Schering-Plough featured Posatex for treating otitis externa;
- the Vet Channel display was designed as a waiting room where staff – from left: Brea Oliver, Kate Shepherd, MD Simon Healy and Mark Fleming – introduced the Vetpod vet-media player for practice waiting rooms.



Vaccinations: can clients be fully informed?

CAN enough information be given during a 10-minute consultation on the relative merits of annual or triennial vaccinations for clients to be able to give properly informed consent to the procedure recommended by their vet?

And if annual boosters are to be replaced by an annual health check, will clients turn up for an appointment where they are only given advice? Or would attendance then become so irregular that it would lead to a catastrophic re-emergence of long absent infections because of a decline in herd immunity?

These were among the key issues raised at a BSAVA congress session on vaccination advice at which practitioners were given sometimes conflicting guidance by experts from academia, industry and the regulatory authorities.

Professor Michael Day from the Bristol veterinary school is part of a World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) working group which has drawn up advice for practitioners on vaccination policy.

He reminded colleagues of the remarkable successes achieved in controlling once deadly diseases through vaccination and the extremely low level of reported adverse events following treatment. Nevertheless, there is a measurable risk and the profession needs to find ways to make such procedures even safer, he said.

Main cause of uncertainty

He noted that one of the main causes of uncertainty for practitioners is that the advice given on the data sheets for canine and feline vaccines – and therefore the legal documents controlling their use – does not always reflect the latest scientific data on which the guidelines produced by the WSAVA and other organisations are based.

Prof. Day stressed that the onus would always rest with the practitioner to decide what was best for the individual patient, based on knowledge of its history and lifestyle.

Donal Murphy from the National Office of Animal Health and Anna-Marie Brady of the Veterinary

Medicines Directorate both agreed on the importance of the practitioner's judgement but each noted the wisdom of following the advice given on the data sheet (or summary of product characteristics).

Yet some practitioners may choose to follow their own judgement on the frequency of treatment without reference to guidelines or SPCs. A recent survey of UK practices found that just over half recommended treatment at three-yearly intervals with those components of the vaccine regimen now available in that format.

So nearly as many practices continue to give these products on an annual basis, Prof. Day pointed out.

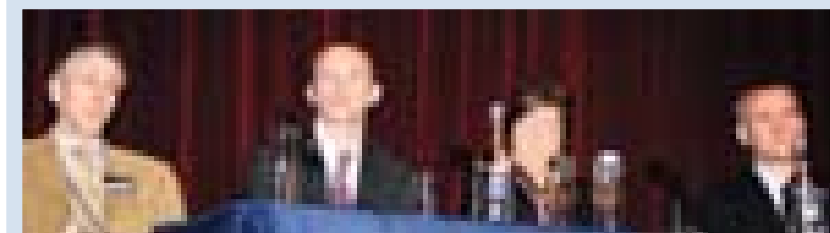
Glasgow practitioner Ross Allen believed it was impractical to try to explain the complexities of the arguments on vaccination in a busy practice setting. It was also "exceptionally difficult" to persuade clients to pay for information when there was no accompanying treatment.

Prof. Day agreed that a switch to the concept of annual health checks marked a fundamental shift in the vet:client relationship. He also advised that the issues behind vaccination should be discussed at the first consultation with the owners of a new puppy or kitten when a longer time slot could be arranged.

Mr Murphy acknowledged the time pressures under which practitioners work and suggested that vets provide written information for interested clients through information sheets or practice newsletters or advise them on finding web-based information sources.

One audience member, however, observed that it was only a small minority of clients who expressed concern about the potential side-effects of vaccination; most trusted their veterinary surgeons to make the right decision on behalf of their pet.

Mr Murphy believed that the main focus of veterinary practitioners should be in encouraging greater use of small animal vaccines. He noted figures from a recent PDSA survey which indicated



The vaccination panel (from left): Professor Michael Day, Ross Allen, Anne-Marie Brady and Donal Murphy.

that around 18% of the country's dogs and 28% of its cats have never been vaccinated at all.

This leads to the continued circulation of entirely preventable diseases – figures extrapolated from the number of cases seen by the 55 practices involved in the industry-sponsored Cicada network suggest that there are 62,000 cases of kennel cough and 6,000 cases of both parvovirus and feline leukaemia in the UK each year, he said.

Conflicting advice

Practitioners from the audience wanted to know at what stage it was necessary to insist on a full course of vaccinations in an animal in which regular treatment has lapsed.

Prof. Day said there was conflicting advice on this issue from different authorities but the WSAVA guidelines suggested that a single vaccination would stimulate the existing immunological memory.

He also urged colleagues to try to

avoid unnecessary treatments for those animals entering kennels or catteries by educating staff to accept that annual vaccination is unnecessary if products with a longer duration of immunity have been used.

One practitioner was concerned that if vaccine products only need to be used every three or four years, the pet's owners would forget to arrange an appointment at the required time and it might be difficult for the practice to trace them and send reminders.

Prof. Day reminded the audience that it was only for the so-called core components, like parvo and feline leukaemia, that the data sheets recommend triennial treatments. For other diseases such as kennel cough and leptospirosis, the duration of immunity is much shorter and annual treatment will still be necessary.

COLTRONICS SYSTEMS LTD

VETERINARY PRODUCTS & SERVICES

■ VETERINARY VACCINES, VACCINATION & TREATMENT

■ VETERINARY LABORATORY SERVICES & DIAGNOSTICS

■ VETERINARY MEDICAL EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

■ VETERINARY & SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY SERVICES

■ VETERINARY & SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY SERVICES

■ VETERINARY & SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY SERVICES

Coltronic Systems Ltd, 17 Napier Road, Edinburgh EH10 6DT, Scotland, UK
Tel: 0131 271 1111 www.coltronic.co.uk Fax: 0131 271 1111

Vetmedin it better

www.vetmedin.co.uk



vet²edin[®]
DUAL ACTING INODILATION

Rewrites the ending

Sharing knowledge in 'an exciting field'

BRINGING together leading academics, practitioners and veterinary specialists in the fields of chronic pain, acute pain and oncology, the 7th European Pain Management Symposium was held at the Astir Palace, Athens, from 16th to 18th March.

The event had a truly international flavour, attended by some 120 veterinarians from Italy, Greece, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Russia, Japan and South Africa.

Hosted by Merial, the symposium highlighted "an ongoing commitment to advancing veterinary knowledge by sharing the latest research and findings directly with practitioners", in the words of Dr Jean-Christophe Thibault, Merial's director of technical services for biologicals and NSAIDs.

He said that the presentations reflected a "growing recognition that animals, like humans, need to be given a pain reliever specific to each painful situation. The correct and continuous assessment of pain is the only way to ensure treatment is adjusted to the clinical conditions of the patient".

OA management in young dogs

"Pain management is always the first priority of osteoarthritis (OA) management," Dr Denis Marcellin-Little of North Carolina State University told the symposium.

OA in young dogs is usually attributable to joint subluxation, joint instability or synovitis due to osteochondritis dissecans, he said. "Between OA flares, pain relief may be enhanced by therapeutic exercises that strengthen, improve posture, and increase proprioception."

A dog's growth rate has a profound impact on the manifestation of developmental orthopaedic diseases, especially at the rapid stage and, aided by the support of vets and nurses, he said owners should:

- be taught to recognise the signs of

OA flares in dogs, young and old;

- know what activities are to be promoted and what activities should be avoided;

- be taught to assess proper gait during exercise; and

- be taught how to optimise their dogs' weight.

DONAL NUGENT

reports on the 7th European Pain Management Symposium where there was emphasis on accurate assessment of pain as key to successful therapeutic outcomes



Geriatric dogs

The long-term effect of NSAIDs in geriatric dogs has not been well researched to date. Addressing this deficit, a study involving owners and veterinarians was undertaken by Kenneth Joubert, of the Faculty of Veterinary Science in Pretoria, to evaluate the effects of 90 days administration of firocoxib in 45 geriatric dogs (dogs older than seven years) with OA.

The study found that veterinarian evaluations of lameness, palpation and range of motion were statistically significantly improved over the 90 days, as were owner evaluations of pain, activity and "stiffness after playing".

Presenting the findings to the symposium, Dr Joubert said that side effects were in the expected range and noted in 13 dogs, with a total of 27 adverse events recorded, the most common being diarrhoea, vomition, dark stools and anorexia.

The study covered a total of 2,970 treatment days, which means an adverse event rate of 0.009%. Side effects should be interpreted in the light of the patients' age and physiological condition, Dr Joubert added.

Pain scales

"Historically, simple uni-dimensional scales such as the simple descriptive scale (SDS), numerical rating scale (NRS) and the visual analogue scale (VAS) have been used to score pain in animals, but a collective problem with these scales is that they only measure the intensity of pain, not its affective properties – how it makes the

animal feel," Jackie Reid, professor of veterinary anaesthesia at the Glasgow veterinary school, told the symposium in her presentation *Measuring acute and chronic pain in dogs*.

Prof. Reid played a key role in the development of the Glasgow Composite Measure Pain Scale (CMPS), which uses psychometric methodology to measure dogs suffering acute pain.

A short form (CMPS-SF) has been developed for routine clinical use and comprises six behavioural categories: vocalisation, attention to wound, mobility, response to touch, demeanour and posture/activity.

The CMPS-SF has been tested for validity and reliability in a study by veterinary surgeons in three veterinary schools and can be downloaded at www.gla.ac.uk/vet/painandwelfare.

Multimodal approach

In his presentation, *Multimodal approach to surgical pain in veterinary medicine*, Derek Flaherty, head of veterinary anaesthesia at the Glasgow veterinary school, told the symposium that, in general, veterinarians "need to start thinking of animals as individuals in how they respond to analgesia".

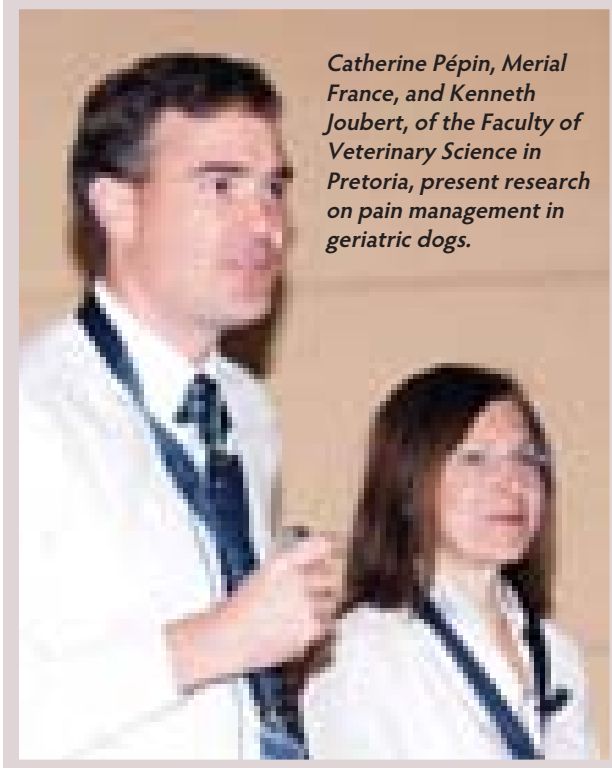
Rather than use one drug for pain management, the multimodal approach is to employ several, with each acting in different parts of the pain path. Pre-emptive analgesia can be employed to eliminate the issue of hypersensitivity

linked to surgery.

If sufficient analgesia has been administered, peripheral and central sensitisation will be dulled, he explained. Post-surgery, when the animal recovers consciousness, analgesia can be more easily achieved with reduced drug doses.

Opioids are a mainstay of surgery pain management, while NSAIDs are very effective analgesics, although only a few have a licence to be

Catherine Pépin, Merial France, and Kenneth Joubert, of the Faculty of Veterinary Science in Pretoria, present research on pain management in geriatric dogs.



used peri-operatively, Dr Flaherty said. Explaining that paracetamol is undervalued in the veterinary field, he said it has been shown to dramatically reduce the dependence on opioids in humans.

Although dangerous when used in cats, it is useful for dogs and, where NSAIDs are contraindicated, can be used in the peri-operative period.

Control of dental pain

Dental surgery can be considered to have the combined features of osteoarticular and soft-tissue surgery, said Dr Jean-Christophe Thibault of Merial France, in his presentation on clinical efficacy of firocoxib in the control of dental pain.

A negative control, double-blinded, study involved 40 dogs administered firocoxib (Previcox) orally prior to dental surgery and continuing daily over three days.

In addition, each dog was given morphine at 0.25mg/kg subcutaneously at pre-medication prior to surgery and at extubation immediately after surgery.

Dr Thibault said that the results indicated a highly significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.0001$). Dogs treated with firocoxib had lower pain scores and expressed significantly fewer signs of pain than the control dogs.

The study also found that there were no adverse reactions to treatment, in particular blood and clotting parameters remained unaffected.

Ophthalmologic surgery

Dr Thomas Dulaurent, a veterinary practitioner in France, highlighted recent developments in the field of ophthalmology in his presentation on Cox-2 inhibitors in ophthalmologic pain and surgery.



Jackie Reid, Professor of Veterinary Anaesthesia at the Glasgow veterinary school, addresses the symposium.

Donal Nugent is a freelance writer/editor based in Dublin who specialises in business and science journalism. A former editor of the Irish Veterinary Journal he is also a published poet and, in 2008, was awarded the START prize for emerging Irish poets.

He explained that studies have pointed to "unexpected additional beneficial effects on the eye of Cox-2 selective NSAIDs, such as prevention of posterior lens capsule opacification, prevention of choroidal and retinal neovascularisation, and inhibition of inflammation in experimental autoimmune anterior uveitis".

He said: "Careful, suitable pre-op protocol for planned intra-ocular surgeries such as cataract, lens luxation or vitreo-retinal surgeries should include topical NSAIDs.

"This treatment diminishes ocular pain and lowers the risk of aqueous barrier disruption during the surgical procedure."

Analgesia in oncology

"It is estimated that over 70% of human patients and over 50% of dogs with cancer have chronic pain. Since pain negatively affects quality of life (QoL), its management should be a priority for clinicians," said Josef Pastor, professor of clinical medicine in the veterinary faculty of the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

In a paper entitled *Analgesia of the dog with cancer*, he said that a three-step analgesic ladder for treating cancer pain has been proposed by the WHO. This recommends the use of non-opiate drugs, generally NSAIDs, for

mild pain; with weaker opiates added for persistent or moderate pain; and stronger opiates for severe pain. "Adjuvant analgesic drugs can be incorporated at any step," he explained.

Prof. Pastor noted that, as with humans, there are enormous individual variations among animals, which should be reflected in individualised pain management strategies.

"In the field of oncology, we are learning that QoL is important. We have to open our minds and see it is not just about treating the tumour – pain management is also important."

Coxibs in oncology

Veterinary oncology specialist Dr François Serres of France addressed the role of coxibs in veterinary oncology as part of a well-planned multimodal approach to treatment, such as metronomic therapy.

The choice of a multimodal treatment is directly related to the biological behaviour of the tumour

and its sensitivity to the proposed treatment, he explained, adding that one possible choice for multimodal treatment is the combination of chemotherapy with a Cox-2 inhibitor, as there is growing evidence that the activity of these anti-neoplastic agents could be complementary.

"An over-expression of Cox-2 has been demonstrated in numerous epithelial tumours, including mammary, nasal and prostatic epithelial tumours, squamous cell carcinoma or urinary bladder transitional cell carcinoma, but also in malignant melanoma," he said.

Pain management award

The Merial Pain Management Award recognises the achievements of veterinary practitioners who contribute to the developing body of knowledge around pain management through high-quality case studies.

The third Merial Pain Management Award was awarded to Dr Volker Harra, a veterinary practitioner in Vienna. Dr Harra's case study,

Speakers and delegates from all across Europe and further afield assembled for the pain management symposium.

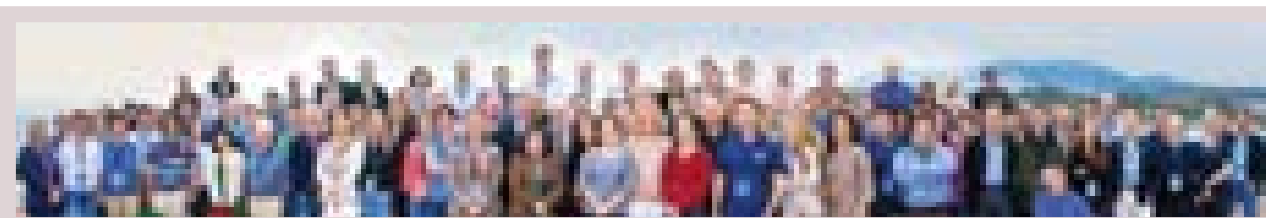
Management of an osteosarcoma in a cat with firocoxib, was praised by judges for its originality in highlighting "the potential use of a highly-selective Cox-2 inhibitor despite being off-licence, in the management of non-refractory pain in this cat".

Conclusion

Noting that veterinarians frequently cite lack of knowledge as an impediment to progress in pain management, Dr Thibault said it was vital to create opportunities to actively advance dialogue in this area.

"The symposium has allowed us to share the growing body of knowledge with a practising veterinarian audience. Many presentations offered excellent examples of the significant advances in unexplored fields.

"The future is still evolving in animal pain management – this an exciting field to be involved in."



OrthoPets Europe
Supporting Your Patient's Quality of Life!

OrthoPets Custom Orthotics and Prosthetics can significantly improve your patient's wellbeing, promote healing and/or reduce the risk of further injury. Regardless of the external support challenge your patient is facing, **OrthoPets** can meet individual needs with our revolutionary support solutions.

www.orthopets.co.uk

OrthoPets Europe Ltd

Telephone: +44 (0)1453 811930
Fax: +44 (0)1453 811285
email: info@orthopets.co.uk

As seen at BSAVA Congress!
Winners of the BSAVA Best Small Stand Award



- When surgery is delayed or not an option
- Provide joint stability in ligament or tendon injury cases
- Part of a comprehensive pain management plan
- Support post surgical recovery
- Maintain functional limb position after neurological injury
- Restore quality of life through mobility management
- Replace partially amputated or congenitally missing limb(s)

Find us on
facebook

Interesting things to see on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean

I'VE written two articles recently about my visit to the North American Veterinary Conference (NAVC), held in January every year in Florida. This final article focuses on one of the key parts of any veterinary conference: the commercial exhibition.

The NAVC has an interesting modification of the standard conference model: there are two large commercial exhibitions, one at each of the main resorts that hosts the lectures.

Both exhibitions follow the usual international pattern, with row after row of standard-sized stalls, hosted by enthusiastic sales people, interspersed with occasional super-sized set ups for the larger commercial companies.

There are the usual competitions and special offers, with each stall doing whatever it can to grab the attention of passing customers.

Many of the products on offer at the NAVC were identical to those available at UK veterinary conferences; the international veterinary market has been globalised in many areas. My focus, however, was on seeking out areas that are different to Europe, and there were plenty of those.

The high-end technical stuff at the NAVC is the biggest, brightest and best, and the offerings on the digital radiography front were a good example.

A step further

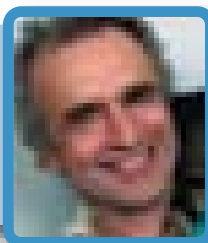
What about going a step further than a DR digital x-ray system, and paying an extra \$100K to create a facility that can do CAT scans too, using a machine small enough to fit into a consult room? If money was no object, the NAVC would be the ideal shopping mall to kit out your dream veterinary practice.

Elsewhere in the commercial exhibition, I was struck by some obvious trans-Atlantic cultural differences. The presence of

compounding pharmacies is a good example. In North America, if a vet wants to prescribe a medicine of any kind that isn't available commercially, he or she just needs to contact the local compounding pharmacist with the desired recipe, and the product will be made up in a palatable oral formulation or an easy-to-apply cream, or whatever. It's a shame that this flexibility has been lost from the UK veterinary profession's pharmaceutical armoury.

PETE WEDDERBURN

presents his final report from the North American Veterinary Conference held in Orlando in January, concentrating on the commercial exhibitions



Pet-only airline

Pet transport is not a big issue in the UK, with relatively short distances to travel, but when pets need to move from one city to another in the USA, air travel is sometimes the only way. One of the new services being promoted at NAVC was the pet-only airline, www.petairways.com.

This has enjoyed remarkable growth since it was launched two years ago, with last year's turnover reaching \$1.3 million. "Seats in the main cabin" are booked for pets online, in just the same way as Ryanair or Easyjet tickets are purchased for humans. With the increasing popularity of pet passports, could this be coming to Europe soon?

Commercial exhibitions are also used to launch new practice marketing tools, of which perhaps the most exciting at the NAVC was a concept called "Vetstreet". For a monthly fee, Vetstreet links up with your own practice management software system, uploading all your clients' and pets' details to their site.

Your clients can then log into a carefully screened version of their own pet's record, seeing when boosters or check-ups are due, and looking at their history of examination dates and prescribed medicines. They can communicate with you via Vetstreet, sending you messages such as asking for an appointment.

They can also re-order their prescription medicines, and this is the clever bit: they can ask for the order to be laid up at your clinic for them to collect,

or they can order directly online via an internet pet pharmacy. And you, the vet, are able to set the price that they pay for the medicines.

You work with the internet pet pharmacy: you take a cut and they take a cut. This new system is allowing vets in North America to compete directly with the internet pet pharmacies. Vetstreet also offers other services such as e-mail, text and postcard reminders to be sent automatically to clients.

There's always a scattering of new and quirky offerings in commercial exhibitions, and the NAVC had plenty of these.

What about a dog exercising machine that resembles a giant hamster wheel?

You can now take your pet for a gallop without even needing to step out of the door, with indoor gyms that allow owners and dogs to run beside each other on treadmills.

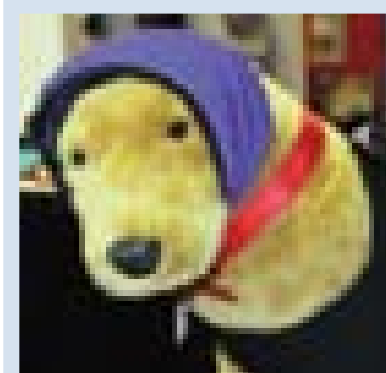
All that's needed now is blue-sky wallpaper on the ceiling, some rural sound effects and it'll be almost as good as a stroll in the countryside.

Or what about a second-hand skull? At one stand, you could buy the skull of your choice, from regular dog and cat skulls to hamsters, rats, large felines (lions?) and even humans (I trusted that the latter were synthetic).

Minority interests

The size of the North American market allows even minority interests to be catered for. If your dog is a water sports enthusiast, you can buy a neoprene snood, designed for dogs that are prone to otitis, preventing water from getting in their ears.

One other "wacky" new concept to mention from the exhibition: "Clipnosis". Basically, plastic bulldog-type clips are clipped onto the scruff of cats' necks to make them feel calmer. It seems similar to the twitch concept in horses. It looks a little inhumane, but when you clip the things onto your own forearm, it doesn't hurt at all – the clips are tensioned so that they aren't too

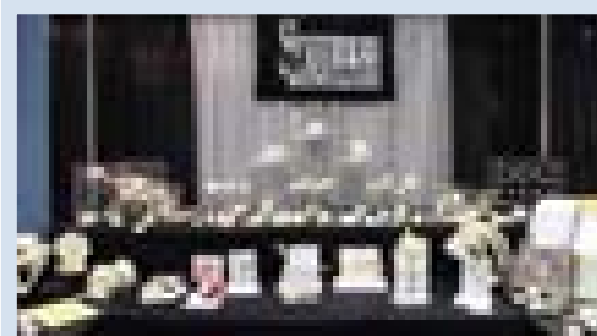


A neoprene snood to protect dogs' ears when swimming; below: a CT scanner on show.

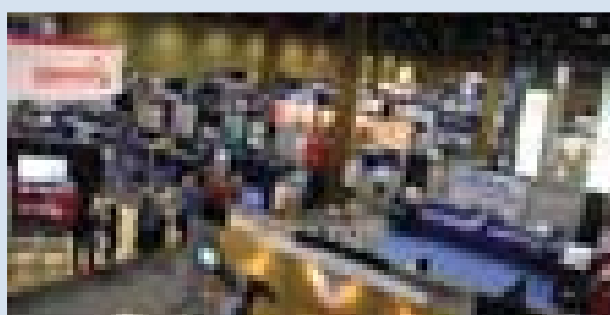
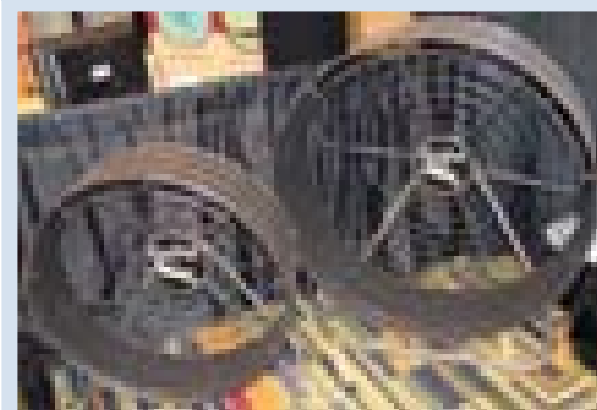


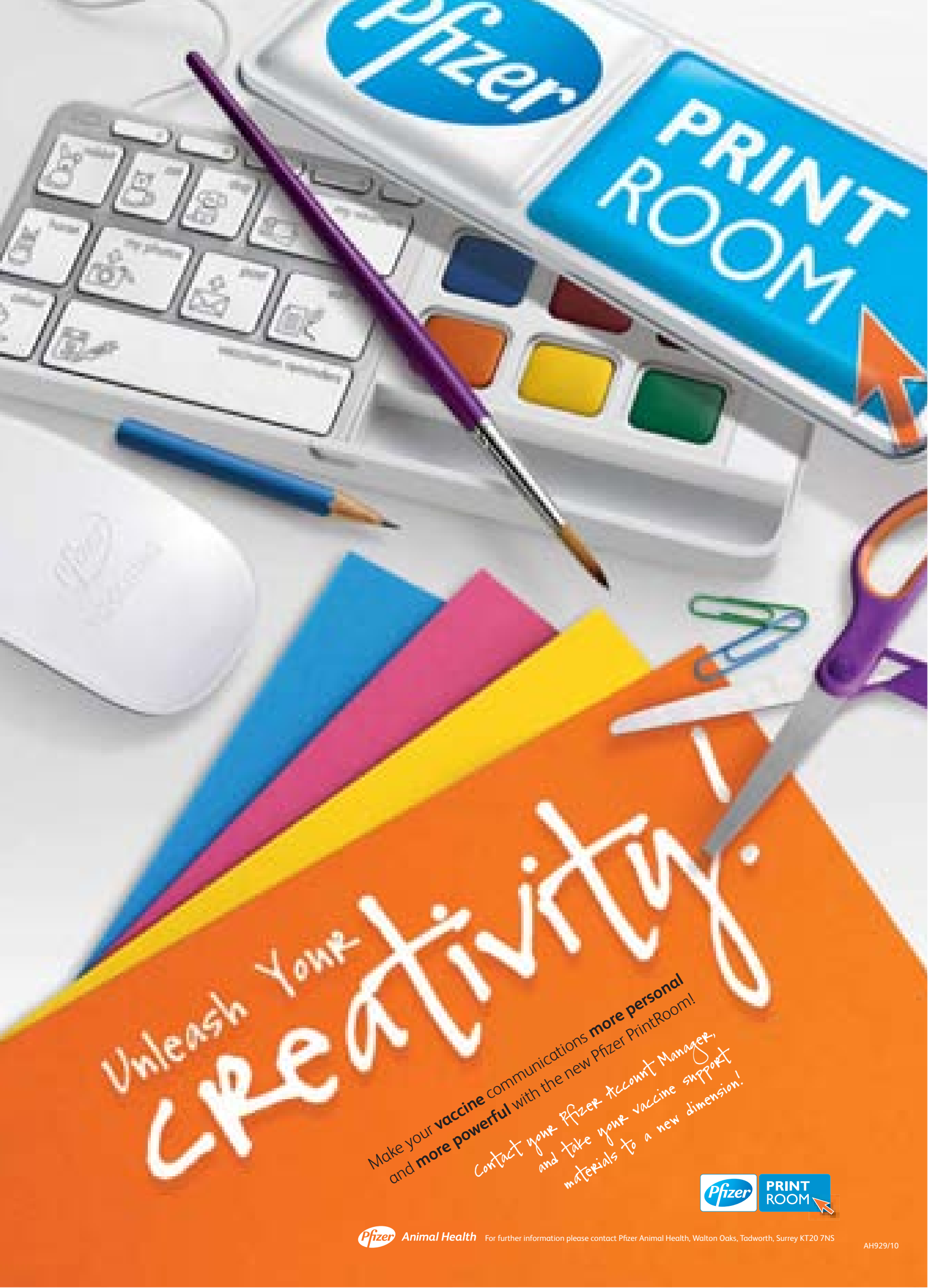
tight.

I bought a bagful for a fiver and tried them on my own cat when I got home. After seeing him hunched up glaring at me, as much as I tried to tell myself that he was "calm", I couldn't quite believe it. I decided that I wouldn't repeat the exercise on clients' cats. Some ideas seem to lose some of their charm as they cross that wide Atlantic Ocean.



Two of the more unusual exhibits: a wide selection of skulls and (below) exercise machines for dogs.





Unleash Your Creativity!

Make your **vaccine** communications **more personal**
and **more powerful** with the new Pfizer PrintRoom!
*Contact your Pfizer Account Manager,
and take your vaccine support
materials to a new dimension!*



Animal Health

For further information please contact Pfizer Animal Health, Walton Oaks, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 7NS



PRINT
ROOM

The perfect month to look for snakes

ADDERS are the most widespread reptile in Britain and are also the only poisonous one to inhabit these shores.

Widespread does not equate to common though, and recent surveys have shown a significant decline in adder numbers. Data published by the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust show that out of approximately 250 square kilometres surveyed nationwide, adders were found to exist in only about 20.

The decline in adder numbers is probably a result of habitat loss and human disturbance. Historically, adders have been deliberately killed because of the perceived danger they present to people but in reality only a handful of people have died from adder bites in the last 10 years.

They are shy, non-aggressive and are only likely to bite if trodden on or deliberately antagonised.

Typically, adders thrive in open habitat such as heathland, moorland, dunes, cliffs and open woodland. Unlike grass snakes they rarely stray into gardens and most of us will go through our entire lives without ever seeing an adder in the wild.

That said, May is the perfect time

to get out and about to look for adders. With the warming weather they will have left their hibernation dens and can now be found basking in the sun on a warm day. This is also the mating season so you may even be lucky enough to see them courting.

All adders (apart from a few melanistic individuals) have a clearly recognised dark zig-zag stripe the entire length of their body. In males this stripe is on a background of grey or white but in females it ranges from brown through to copper, making the sexes easily recognisable. After mating, the female incubates the eggs

VETERINARY PRACTICE's conservation correspondent bemoans the declining numbers of adders

internally so that live young are "born" sometime in August or September.

Adders have a relatively thick-set body and can grow to a maximum length of about two feet. They prey largely on small rodents such as mice and voles and also on lizards.

Snake hunting

I have seen some half a dozen adders in my life, in Wales, England and Scotland, all bar one entirely by chance. The only time we have ever



purposefully gone looking for them, we were lucky enough to come across a female crossing the footpath right in front of us after a non-productive hunt of some three hours.

We had "bribed" the kids to come on a long walk with the carrot of snake hunting and this had touched an adventurous nerve in their minds. I can't honestly say that I had expected to find one but, as we made our way back to the car after a fruitless but highly enjoyable hunt, this small female obliged by choosing her moment to cross the path just as we approached. As they say, you couldn't make it up.

Sadly, when it comes to our other native reptiles and amphibians, it is not just adders that appear to be declining. Common frogs and common toads have also declined in numbers in various parts of the country and it is

only the palmate newt that appears to be extending its range.

Fortunately, there is a great deal of interest in reversing the trend and reptiles are actively considered when assessing the impact of large developments on their habitat.

As an example, since 1998 over 24,000 reptiles (adders, grass snakes, common lizards and slow worms) have been captured at an old refinery site in Essex that is being developed into a container port. These were relocated to nature reserves run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and are said to be thriving there.

Relocation, though, is controversial and is certainly not the long-term answer. That lies in conserving and improving habitat and preventing populations from becoming isolated from one another so that their genetic diversity can be maintained.

EVENTS

Discussion of issues facing everyone in practice at Christian conference

THEY say that a picture paints a thousand words, and for me, this one says it all!

Over 110 vets, students, nurses and families joined together at the Hayes Conference centre in Derbyshire for the Biennial Veterinary Christian Fellowship Conference and had a fabulous weekend of Bible study, worship, fellowship and fun.

It was a time to renew old friendships as well as making lots of new ones and to discuss issues facing all of us in practice life as well as through the years at college.

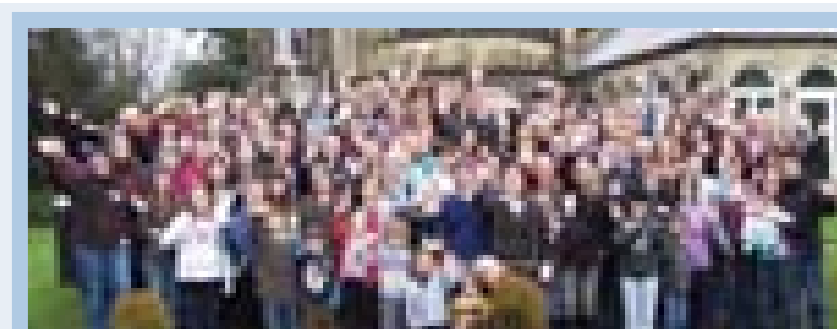
Stuart Reid, an Edinburgh graduate who later went into full-time church ministry, was our guest speaker for the weekend, and looked at "Knowing the greatness of your call" from the book of Ephesians.

Splitting into small groups then allowed time to discuss the issues that

ALI BUDGELL
secretary of the Veterinary Christian Fellowship, reports on the latest weekend conference

Stuart had raised in much more detail and to see how they are relevant to our everyday lives. The groups this year were based on geographical location which meant folk were able to get to know those people who live close by, and as VCF regional groups are now starting up, it allowed folk to find out where their nearest group would be.

The afternoon included seminars from topics as varied as beginning life as a new graduate, to ethics, life overseas as a missionary, money in



practice, ethics and creation v. science.

We were also joined this year by two couples who have been working overseas as missionaries in various capacities and it was fascinating to hear of the work that they have been involved with.

Additional skills

For Michael Duncalfe who qualified from Bristol in 1978, and his wife Nicki, this has meant learning additional skills as he now flies and trains pilots for Mission Aviation Fellowship in Papua New Guinea, but also treats various animals on the way.

It was hugely encouraging to see so many students from the various vet schools, ranging from biovet students to final years, and to hear of

their progress and hopefully to help and support them on their journey.

With some very impressive music gifts in the veterinary profession, we were blessed with a great crowd of musicians, taking it in turns to lead the worship, but all playing amazingly well together, most having not met one another before.

The legendary ceilidh was called brilliantly once again by Mark Ross and had everyone up and dancing from the very youngest to the not so young, but meant a few stiff joints in the morning.

If you would like to know more about the VCF or to become involved, or to find out about the regional groups which are being set up, then please e-mail secretary@vcf.org.uk.

Update their details for FREE in June

National Microchipping Month – sponsored by Petlog



By Celia Walsom, Petlog Manager

Microchipping is an effective tool in reuniting lost pets with their owners, but what happens when owners forget to keep their details up to date? This year, National Microchipping Month focuses on the need to check and update contact details.



The microchip last a lifetime, its great to know the Petlog aftercare service lasts a lifetime too and all for just £10 – Our practice recommends Petlog Premium to all clients. R Williams, Leeds

National Microchipping Month – sponsored by Petlog

This June is the eighth year National Microchipping Month has been sponsored by Petlog. This year with your help, Petlog wants to not only promote the benefits of microchipping but the need for pet owners to keep contact details up to date. Every year Petlog is joined by veterinary practices around the country which support and promote National Microchipping Month, hosting events, promoting offers and communicating with pet owners in their local area, often seeing an increase in footfall and boosting relationships with clients.

At Petlog, we are asking for your support to help us help you, your clients and, most importantly, microchipped pets everywhere.

Petlog are offering their customers the chance to update their details online for FREE during June*

Microchipped pets with incorrect contact details can waste time for all involved, causing distress to the pet and result in them being kennelled unnecessarily, re-homed or even worse.

As the UK's largest microchip registration and reunification database, Petlog is passionate about the service it provides and therefore, for this year's campaign Petlog is offering an opportunity for all owners of microchipped pets registered with the Petlog database the opportunity to update their details for free online during June 2011*.

A true lifetime service

In addition, Petlog will also be offering owners the chance to upgrade to the Petlog Premium Lifetime Service for the special price of £7.50 for the month of June (normally £10); allowing pet owners to decide which Petlog service, Basic or Premium, best suits their needs. Petlog Premium offers a true lifetime service, allowing owners to update their details as often as they need in the future, add holiday details and temporary contact details as well as providing a lost pet alert service, all for a genuine one off lifetime payment. This cost represents a small percentage of the overall cost of owning a pet for life.

Mrs Lloyd is a Petlog Premium customer, who

upgraded to take advantage of the benefits on offer - she updated her contact information as she was going away on holiday and wanted to make sure she could be reached where she was if her pet, Poppy went missing. She said: "It's important to know that my pet is taken care of even in another country – Petlog will do this for me. We are safe wherever we go."

A service that supports you in what you do

With animal welfare at the heart of our business, we know how important pets are to their owners and therefore, see it as our responsibility to offer a genuine, robust and cost effective service that is available to all pet owners. A service that supports you in what you do, giving you the confidence that you have chosen the best possible service for your client and their pets. By sponsoring NMM and offering the ability for all owners registered with Petlog to check and update their details online for FREE* in June, Petlog is leading the way in delivering an overall outstanding service and setting a standard for other databases to follow.

How can you get involved?

- Promote the campaign in your practice - download useful tools free from the Petlog website, which include practice guides, logos, editable posters and more – www.nationalmicrochippingmonth.org.uk
- Communicate the Petlog National Microchipping Month Promotion to your clients, stress the importance of them keeping their details up to date, especially mobile phone numbers and emails.
- Use your practice newsletter and e-newsletter to encourage your clients to check their details are up to date stressing the importance of mobile phone and email address. Remember to include the link: www.petlog.org.uk/updatefree

When choosing your microchip and aftercare service, what is important to you and what is important to your client? At Petlog, we tick all the boxes, so

- ☒ Are all additional costs to your clients transparent?
- ☒ Is the service delivered robust and backed by clear results?
- ☒ Is it monitored by MAG/BSAVA and compliant to ISO9001 Quality Standards?
- ☒ Does it link with all databases and work at a European level?
- ☒ Is there a true 24/7 service for both Lost and Found pets? (Pets don't always go missing between 9am-5pm!)

At Petlog, we answer 'yes' to all the above, so you can be assured your clients are happy and their pets are safe – that's The Petlog Promise

Competition Time!

You could be 'Petlog's Featured Practice'. This is a great opportunity for you and your practice to gain free publicity and you can celebrate with *£100 Leisure Vouchers! (plus 10 runners up prizes of £25 Leisure Vouchers).

To enter – all you need to do is post pictures of "a day in the life" of your practice to [Facebook.com/Petloglostfound](https://www.facebook.com/Petloglostfound)

*terms and conditions apply

For more information visit www.petlog.org.uk/vets or call 01296 390 602

Useful addition to practice library

EQUINE THERIOGENOLOGY
Blackwell's Five-Minute Veterinary Consult Clinical Companion series
Edited by Carla L. Carleton

1,208pp.; £79.99; Wiley-Blackwell

THIS is an extremely comprehensive book on equine reproduction, with over a thousand pages. However, as it is laid out in the famous five-minute consult format it is not daunting.

There are 158 chapters, which is ideal for the busy reader. The whole format is excellent with photographs and drawings which really help the reader. The depth of coverage is very extensive, covering all the normal topics and including excellent chapters on foal conditions.

It is aimed at veterinary clinicians. Its layout and index make it ideal for not only equine practitioners but also practitioners in mixed practice. Veterinary students will appreciate this book particularly those in their final year undergoing their equine rotations. It will make ideal reading for them in the long night hours nursing sick foals.

I think this book will be of value to stud owners and horse breeders generally as the text is straight forward and not overly complicated.

Books may appear expensive. However, this is a very large volume and therefore I do not think it is over priced at £79.99. I think it should be included in every library of an equine practice. In fact, much of the contents will be familiar to equine practitioners. However, it will be a godsend to mixed practitioners for quick, accurate reference.

I tried a small experiment with referencing a single rare condition, hypocalcaemia. It took me only four minutes to read a full review of the condition. I tried to get the same information on the internet but gave up with only half the story after 12 minutes. My case rests.

Buy this book and it will be useful for several years. I am sure a new edition will be available when you need to replace it.

– Graham Duncanson

Quick consult on emergency care

SMALL ANIMAL EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL CARE

Blackwell's Five-Minute Veterinary Consult Clinical Companion

Edited by Elisa M. Mazzaferro

871pp.; £59.99; Wiley-Blackwell

OF all the occasions when a concise "Five-Minute Clinical Companion" is needed, none is more urgent and critical

than the moment at which an emergency case comes through the door. This new volume aims to provide the necessary information in a readily accessible and easy-to-use format.

Emergency conditions and critical care situations from *Blackwell's Five Minute Veterinary Consult: Canine and Feline* have been updated and expanded by an impressive selection of vets, many of whom are board certified in the USA, to provide the very latest information in a way that can be referred to quickly.

The book covers 114 subjects, from acetaminophen poisoning to zinc toxicity, listed alphabetically. There is also a very useful list of contents by systems, which arranges the subjects according to body system, thus grouping the various problems which may be encountered by each specific system, in one place.

Information in each chapter is arranged logically and simply, in "bullet" format, beginning with a definition, and then expanding into aetiology, signalment, clinical features, differential diagnoses, diagnostics, therapeutics and finally adding relevant comments, client education and prognoses.

The book is aimed at all of us in general practice for those times that an emergency case comes in and a quick guide is needed initially.

Since chapters are written by different authors, there is some variability in the levels of information given. Although some chapters go into great detail, for example the GDV surgery is very thorough, newer graduates may feel more reassured with some additional literature that has more detail in certain areas: for example, the step-by-step stabilisation of a diabetic.

Another example of this is that the methodology for pericardiocentesis is described in detail in the pericardial effusions chapter; however, techniques for thoracocentesis and chest drain placement are omitted from both the chapters on pleural effusion and pyothorax, and yet this is dealt with very admirably in the section on pneumothorax, although this is then not referred to in the aforementioned chapters.

Generally, the cardiology chapters tend to be excellent. Sadly, there are several minor typographical errors in the book.

With American authors, the book inevitably has a strong US bias, both as far as the availability of certain drugs and also the subjects covered – bites from coral snakes, pit vipers and black widow spiders are not frequently encountered in the UK!

This book succeeds in its aim to provide readily accessible, up-to-date

information covering most emergency conditions, in a format that is quick and easy to consult, once the reader has familiarised him or herself with the general layout. When more depth is needed by the practitioner, however, both in terms of information and how-to techniques, further literature may be necessary.

– Sarah Beardall

Worth reading several times...

SMALL ANIMAL EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL CARE:

Case studies in client communication, morbidity and mortality

By Lisa Powell, Elizabeth Rozanski and John Rush

218pp.; £34.99; Wiley-Blackwell

THIS book is a collection of real case studies seen in emergency practices where mistakes have occurred for various reasons. It is based on the morbidity and mortality conferences which doctors attend.

The book is broadly divided into four parts, covering medical and treatment errors, medical judgement errors, lessons in client communication and communication issues between colleagues and hospital staff. Each of these topics is then divided into chapters based on an individual case.

Each case is described clinically and in the context of the setting and personnel involved where necessary. At the end of each case the errors within it are then highlighted with suggestions on how the situation could have been handled differently or avoided.

This book is an easy and interesting read and is very accessible. If you enjoy reading the VDS case studies, then you will also appreciate this. It is a book that I believe is useful for both experienced and newly-graduated vets and also nurses, as not only are clinical aspects broached, there is also a large focus on communication.

I feel it would be

relevant to any practising clinician as the problems encountered in these cases are not solely emergency based.

On a slight negative, this book is based on American cases so some drugs and cases are not applicable to the UK and some of the more intensively worked-up cases would only be treated like this in referral hospitals, but lessons can still be learnt from these.

This is a book you could probably read cover to cover several times and still gain something from although, that said, a few of the points are a bit repetitive and/or common sense.

Given its small size, at £34.99 it is not a cheap book but if it is passed around the practice for all to read and it avoids you having to respond to even one complaint letter, it is probably worth the money.

– Sharon Cole

148 years ago

Having completed one year's training at the Royal Veterinary College, George Williamson left and sailed from Liverpool on September 22nd on the Tea Clipper *The Belled Will* where he was one of only two passengers carried for the three-and-a-half month long voyage.

Monday 5 October

Tumbled out at 6 o'clock, while washing my nose began to bleed. Had a walk on the poop with Captain Graham. Saw a West Indies schooner. Gave Spot ½ an opium pill and 3 oz of Castor oil also gave Bull a dose of Castor oil. Reading on the poop. We are now in the latitude where the trades should begin. The breeze has been very light have been moving about 7 knots steering SW. The men have been holey-stoning the decks. The thermometer stood about 75 in the shade. I have been making a copy of my journal. The captain having just been chaffing Mr Hodgson and I about crossing the line, he was about to go on deck through after cabin on opening the door it was flooded with water. I had been to the closet and neglected to turn off the water and it had run over. I helped the steward mop it up. Had a chat with the Captain in the after cabin in the evening he lying on the sofa in his pyjamas. Turned in about 10 o'clock.

Tuesday 6 October

Rose at 6.15. Brushed my clothes and had a little exercise on the poop. Saw a schooner supposed to be bound for the West Indies. Steering SW ¼ S. Breeze continues light this morning's log showed 6½ knots. Spot appeared much better for his medicine. The men have been holey-stoning the deck. It has been very fine and very warm. Turned in about 9.30.

Wednesday 7 October

Got out at 6.15. Took a purgative pill about 7 and another at 12. Walking on the poop and working a few sums. The log at 12 o'clock showed 6 1/2 knots. We are now in latitude 22 Westward and longitude 25 West. When it was 12 o'clock with us it was 1.20 by Greenwich time. The men finished holey-stoning the decks and washed off the sand. Saw several flying fish today. Steering SW ½ S. The breeze finished after dark. Beautifully fine day. The only meal I partook was dinner, being in a dilapidated condition. The stowaway fell down the half deck and dislocated his wrist, the Captain put it in splints. Turned in at 10 o'clock.

George Williamson was not in good health. After a long and rough sea passage, the sailing ship arrived at Hong Kong on 5th January 5th 1864. It is not known if George Williamson practised as a veterinary surgeon there.

• Extract from *A Victorian Veterinary Student's Diary* by D. R. Lane, published by the Granville Penn Press, Netherpton Lodge, Querington, Cirencester GL7 5DD. Hardback, 241 pages, 13 illustrations. Price £25.60 (includes pandp).

KRUUSE

Is Rehabilitation for You?



Lately, an increasing interest in products involving rehabilitation and training of dogs has been prevalent. Consequently, KRUUSE has now developed a complete range of rehabilitation products that will assist you in getting your patients back into shape following a period of convalescence.

The KRUUSE Rehab line:

- KRUUSE Rehab Dog Blankets
- KRUUSE Rehab Protectors
- KRUUSE Rehab Canine Conditioning Equipment
- Simply Bands
- Goniometer

The line is under constant development and improvement.



For further information please contact:

ReHab

KRUUSE

Designed by ReDog of Sweden™

12 Sherburn Network Centre, Lancaster Close
Sherburn in Elmet North Yorkshire LS25 6NS
Tel. + 44 (0) 1977681523 · www.kruise.com



Please ask for leaflet.

Hull practice purchased

KINGSTON Veterinary Group in Hull has acquired the Peel Veterinary Practice in the city, giving it six premises in East Yorkshire. All nine members of the nursing and reception staff at Peel have been retained.

They have been joined at the practice by Kingston director Richard Jones.

Peel's former owner Giles Horner is transferring to the Kingston Group's Beverley Road surgery as a locum.

Five-site practice sold

CVS (UK) Ltd announced last month that it had acquired the Attimore Veterinary Group, a five-site practice in Hertfordshire.

The practice has a veterinary hospital in Welwyn Garden City, and branches in Hatfield, Potters Bar, Wheathampstead (St Albans) and Woolmer Green (Knebworth).

Earlier in the year, CVS acquired RH Campbell Veterinary Surgery, a single site practice in Swansea.

The group now operates 220 surgeries, six diagnostic labs and a pet crematorium.

Thieves target Banbury practice

HAWTHORN Lodge Veterinary Practice in Banbury, Oxon., was recently raided by a man with a knife in the waistband of his jeans who ordered staff to hand over money from the till while an accomplice waited at the entrance to the building.

The robbers, who are being hunted by Thames Valley Police, are described as white and aged between 17 and 20 years old. They were both wearing hooded tops.

■ The practice announced recently that it is to move in the summer into larger premises in Banbury, taking over and refurbishing a former doctor's surgery which has better access and more parking.

Area managers for practice group

MEDIVET reports that it has bolstered its hub-and-spoke approach to managing its practices by upgrading the role of its area managers.

The organisation groups most of its practices by area, each with between six and 13 practices under a single, regional continuous care and emergency centre.

The new area managers are mainly experienced veterinary nurses who, says Medivet, now provide a two-way flow of best practice and feedback across individual branch practices, area centres and the corporate leadership.

The new role also includes oversight of the training and recruitment of nurses and assistants.

Medivet has more than 70 practices in London, Hertfordshire, Essex, Oxfordshire, Essex, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire.

Regional centre for RVC

THE RVC has opened a new regional veterinary centre in collaboration with an agricultural college, Kingston Maurward College in Dorset, to provide an opportunity for students to gain hands-on farm animal experience in the field.

Over the next year, 55 students in their final year will visit the centre in groups of 3-4 to develop farm animal clinical decision-making skills and population medicine. Students keen on gaining more experience can elect to do up to six extra weeks of farm animal training.

The partnership was marked by a lunch event at the 17th century Kingston Maurward House, with 40 local farmers and vets invited to celebrate the launch.

This is the second regional veterinary centre opened by the RVC, with the first based in South Wales.

The 2011 BVHA Practice Design Awards

THE British Veterinary Hospitals Association (BVHA) Design Awards for 2011, run in association with *Veterinary Practice*, are intended to recognise – and reward – outstanding design.

If, within the last two years, you have opened new premises for a first opinion and/or referral practice, refurbished your existing premises or come up with an innovative design solution for an area of the practice, these design awards are for you.

Any practice that has completed a project on or after **1st April 2009** is eligible to enter. All that's required is that you send the following:

1. Your practice name, address, telephone number and e-mail address, plus the name and position of the person submitting the entry.
2. The numbers of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other support staff in the practice.
3. What area of veterinary practice you are involved in, whether referral or first opinion,

- Are you proud of what you have achieved?
 - Have you developed truly outstanding premises?
 - Is there a particular feature or room with a remarkable design innovation that has made a significant difference to you, your staff, your clients and/or your patients?
- Then these awards are for you!



companion animal, equine, farm animal or mixed practice.

4. A report, of not more than 500 words, about the project, emphasising its outstanding design and innovative features – listing clever solutions to problems, explaining why things were done in a particular way, plus an assessment of whether what you have done is living up to expectations.
5. Up to 12 photographs showing the finished project – including pre-improvement shots if available.
6. A floor plan of the premises.
7. An indication of the cost of the

THREE CATEGORIES

1. New first opinion premises
2. New referral practice premises (where at least 75% of patients seen are referrals)
3. Practice refurbishment or innovation in design of a specific area/feature

project.

These Design Awards are open to any veterinary practice within the United Kingdom.

The closing date for receipt of entries is **Tuesday 30th June 2011**.

PRIZES

Prizes in each category will include vouchers for new equipment.

In addition, all three category winners will receive a certificate to display in their practices and free registration for two people to the BVHA Congress 2011 in October where the results will be announced.

Terms and conditions of entry

Entries can be submitted by post (to: BVHA Practice Design Awards, 30 Diamond Ridge, Camberley, Surrey GU15 4LD) or by e-mail (to editor@veterinary-practice.com), or by a combination of the two (e.g. send entry information by e-mail; photos – prints or jpegs on disc or memory stick – and plan by post).

Photos sent by e-mail should be in the form of jpegs with a maximum size per photo of 500kb. Photos and plans sent by post will be returned *on request* once judging is complete.

Judging will be carried out during the summer by a panel representing the BVHA and *Veterinary Practice*. The judges will compile a shortlist from the entries and visit the practices concerned. The results will be announced during the BVHA Annual Congress in October and featured in the November and December issues of *Veterinary Practice*. The judges' decisions will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

main sponsor:
TECHNIK
TECHNOLOGY

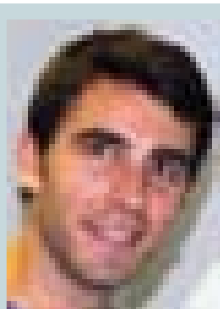
Malignant melanoma trial at practice

VRCC, the Essex based veterinary referral centre, reports that it is now part of an elite membership of ACVR diplomates, the VRTOG (Veterinary Radiation Therapy Oncology Group), specially created to promote veterinary radiation oncology worldwide.

The VRTOG has authorised guidelines such as a Radiation Morbidity Scoring Scheme, Quality Assurance Programme Recommendations, along with various research projects.

One of the latest VRTOG studies is to evaluate the effect of combination coarse-fraction radiotherapy and the Merial melanoma vaccine on the outcome of dogs with incompletely resected or unresectable oral malignant melanoma.

"This trial is unique in the UK," says the practice, "as VRCC is the only VRTOG member."



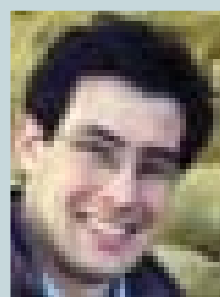
Jerome Benoit.

"Veterinary surgeons who may have possible candidates for this trial should contact Jerome Benoit at the VRCC oncology department (telephone 01268 564664) to discuss options."

Website for recent graduates

VETGRAD is a new on-line facility for graduates up to five years qualified.

The aim says Thomas Rees, founder of the website, "is to bring together all the best resources for new vets in one place including jobs, free CPD, weekly articles and competitions".



Thomas Rees.

Mr Rees, who graduated from Cambridge in 2009, added, "We want to provide our members with a secure forum where they can share tips, exchange experience and generally support one another without members of the public and more senior vets (such as the boss!) prying."

The website is linked with Vetpol. Recent graduates can register for free at www.vetgrad.co.uk

liP accreditation body appointed

LANTRA, the Sector Skills Council supporting land-based industries, has

been appointed to accredit the Investors in People (liP) programme to veterinary businesses in England.

liP is said to offer "a practical, flexible and easy to use framework for improving business productivity, performance and competitiveness in organisations of all types and sizes through good practice in people

management".

Peter Martin, LANTRA's chief executive, says it helps businesses become more competitive, dynamic and professional.

"Employers need to constantly review and update the skills of their staff and ensure that their skills are fully utilised. Only by doing this can they

maximise the return possible from their staff, who are their greatest asset," he said.

LANTRA is one of five newly approved liP centres.

For more information or to register an interest, see www.lantra.co.uk/investors-in-people or e-mail investorsinpeople@lantra.co.uk.



Andrew Dobson - equine vet at The Barn Equine & Large Animal Veterinary Practice



Working with us means we can work for you

At Petplan we have over 30 years' experience working with the veterinary profession. We provide a range of support services including a dedicated vet staff website, monthly newsletters to keep you in the loop and a team of Business Developers who can help with anything from a client query to training for practice staff.

The range of equine material we provide is suitable for all practices to use and provides a quick and easy way to promote horse insurance to your clients.

To find out more visit

petplanvet.co.uk
Or call **0800 316 8800**



Petplan Equine is a trading name of Allianz Insurance plc which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Registered office: 57 Ladymead, Guildford, Surrey GU1 1DB. Registered in England No. 84638.

Water-soluble NSAID launched

VÉTOQUINOL UK Ltd has launched Sodium Salicyl 80%, a water soluble, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).

This contains 800mg of sodium salicylate and is indicated in calves (of at least two weeks of age) for supportive treatment of pyrexia in acute respiratory disease; and in pigs for the treatment of inflammation, in combination with concurrent antibiotic therapy.

“Unlike acetylsalicylic acid (conventional aspirin) which is poorly soluble in water, sodium salicylate is highly water soluble (1g/ml water), even in the hard water commonly encountered in the UK, which makes it ideal for group therapy in any herd,” the firm states.

The product can be administered orally through the milk replacer or drinking water.

Injection for pigs and cattle

JANSSEN Animal Health has introduced Truleva (ceftiofur) RTU 50mg/ml suspension for injection for pigs and cattle.

The product is said to be particularly beneficial in the treatment of metritis, respiratory disease or foot rot in dairy cattle due to its activity against the bacteria commonly involved in such diseases, efficacy of transport to the site of infection and penetration into infected tissues.

It is presented in a 100ml vial.



Opiate now available for horses

ALSTOE reports that Vetergesic (buprenorphine), an injectable opiate for small animal use, is now registered for use in horses.

The product is said to potentiate sedative drugs for standing sedation or routine premedication and provides profound centrally-acting analgesic effects for up to nine hours.

Field studies carried out in the UK have shown that when combined with a sedative, the product can provide up to 60 minutes of operating time, with smooth and quick recoveries.

Vetergesic Multidose is available for dogs, cats and horses in a 10ml vial.

Alstoe provides an hour-long explanatory seminar for practices. An eight-page brochure and pocket-sized dose chart are also available.

Palatable version of NSAID

NORBROOK Laboratories has introduced a new palatable version of Carprieve (carprofen) Flavoured Tablets.

The tablets, which are pork liver flavoured, are indicated for chronic inflammation, such as degenerative joint disease in dogs, as well as post-operative pain management.

Tests have shown, says Norbrook, that 75% of dogs will take them voluntarily.

New version of supplement

CEVA Animal Health has introduced Hepatosyl Plus, a new version of its Hepatosyl liver support supplement for horses.

It contains the same antioxidant ingredients as the original version but with the addition of silybin, described as the most active isomer of *Silybum marianum* (milk thistle).

Treatments for digital dermatitis

KRUUSE has introduced two products, Bovivet Complete Hoof Bandage and Kruuse Hoof Gel 38% (salicylic acid), for use in treating digital dermatitis in cattle.

The bandage is made from a water-repelling material; inside is a treatment pad. The outer stocking design allows for checking on progress of the treatment and for re-application if necessary. It is available in two sizes: large which fits most cattle breeds, and



small for calves and small breeds.

The hoof gel is for use in conjunction with the bandage.

An instructional video on the use of the products is available at www.youtube.com/user/KRUUSEcom

Spot-on for cats and dogs

VIRBAC has introduced Allerderm Spot-On, a topical spot-on product designed to rebuild the epidermal barrier in dogs and cats with skin problems.



The product contains essential fatty acids, ceramides and cholesterol and is applied along the back of the dog or cat initially at weekly intervals, eventually reducing to monthly applications.

It is available in packs of six pipettes in 2ml (suitable for cats and dogs less than 10kg) and 4ml (suitable for dogs over 10kg).

Hand cream and a shirt for dogs

PETLIFE International of Bury St Edmunds launched SkinSure hand cream onto the veterinary market at the BSAVA congress.

The product's inventor was on the stand to explain the product's uses in addressing occupational skin problems and in minimising risk in animal handling.

The product is described as a highly-effective anti-microbial skin protection that intensively moisturises as it protects; it forms an antibacterial, waterproof and breathable layer on the skin, is suitable for both wet and dry work, is free from lanolin, alcohol and fragrances and is non-greasy and hypoallergenic.

It is said to provide protection for at least three hours.

The company also launched Thundershirt, described as a drug-free, effective solution to dog anxiety and over-excitement.

The product works, says the firm, “by applying a constant gentle pressure to the dog's torso, which has a calming effect similar to swaddling for a baby”.

Imported from the US, it has, says the firm, been used by thousands of vets and dog trainers.

Educational TV ad on cat worming

THE first educational television advertisement on the importance of worming cats, and the option to use a spot-on treatment, is to be broadcast this month.

It has been produced by Bayer Animal Health, manufacturer of Profender Spot-on solution, with the aim of driving pet owners to their vet to ask about spot-on worming for their cats.

Online CPD on Cushing's syndrome

DECHRA Veterinary Products has launched an online CPD programme to help in the diagnosis, management and treatment of dogs suffering from hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's syndrome).

The module has been designed, says the firm, to provide a comprehensive overview of the condition, which vets can study in their own time.

Accounting for six hours' CPD, the module complements a CPD roadshow on the disease recently completed by Dechra around the UK, with more than 350 vets attending the sessions; further meetings are scheduled for later this year.

For details contact a territory manager or see www.dechra.co.uk/academy.

Canine behaviour seminars

CANINE behaviour specialist Dr Jez Rose, is holding a series of VetPro CPD seminars in May, focusing on canine behaviour and body language. The evening seminars will offer behavioural resources for use in each attendee's practice and a CPD certificate.

Sessions cost £35 and will be held on 9th May at Wolf Conservation Trust, Beenham, Berks.; 10th May at New Jordans, Beaconsfield, Bucks.; 24th May at The Corn Exchange, Witney, Oxon; and 25th May at Loudwater Farm, Rickmansworth, Herts.

For further information and to book online, see www.jezrose.co.uk/vetpro-seminars.html.

Clarification on flea treatments

On page 13 of the April issue there was a short news item entitled “American Flea Treatment”. This stated that Comfortis is “America's best-selling flea treatment”. This statement was incorrect. Frontline Plus is America's best-selling flea treatment.

Elanco, which was launching Comfortis in the UK, used the statement “number one recommended prescription flea medication in the US”. Meriel points out that UK-based veterinarians will not be aware that most well-known brands of flea treatment in the US, such as Frontline Plus, are not prescription-only products as they are in the UK.

ARE YOU TAKING A HEAVY-HANDED APPROACH TO HYPERTHYROIDISM?

New research and opinions from leading experts suggest that a heavy-handed approach to feline hyperthyroidism could be putting patients at risk. Felimazole offers the smallest starting dose and

dose adjustments of any licensed treatment for feline hyperthyroidism. With nine possible dose combinations, it has all the flexibility you need to keep your patients euthyroid.

View the NEW research and opinions now at: www.dechra.co.uk/hyperthyroidism

Felimazole® Because no two cats are the same.

Felimazole contains thiamazole. UK: POM-V IE: POM

For further information contact: Dechra Veterinary Products Limited, Sansaw Business Park, Hadnall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY4 4AS.
Tel: +44 (0)1939 211200 Fax: +44 (0)1939 211201 www.dechra.com Use medicines responsibly: www.noah.co.uk/responsible


Dechra
Veterinary Products

Did you enjoy – or begrudge – the big day?

BY the time you read this it will be all over. Not civilisation as we know it, but the Royal Wedding. And I hope the grumpy old men (because it appears to be all men) that were quoted in “another place” (different veterinary publication) complaining about yet another bank holiday giveaway to their staff, are now feeling much more at ease with themselves.

But I wonder, do they not have family and friends of their own with whom they would like to spend another day of this relatively short life of ours? Because I for one certainly do!

Now I know that journalistic tone can put a certain slant on an article to make it controversial (I've even done the same myself) but the direct quotes reported: “It sucks...”; “Bank holidays are a pain in the arse...”; “Bank holidays are an anachronism...; are fairly unequivocal and would certainly not have been out of place on that TV programme of the same name. Why, I wonder, is there such an archaic approach by these people to time off for their staff?

Yes, I admit, bank holidays can be a nuisance. They disrupt the normal flow of business and almost certainly reduce practice income. But they can also put a smile on the faces of the staff whose turn it is to have that extra day off, and if you need to pay the others extra cash to keep them sweet, well it's not the end of the world is it?

A bit more cash...

Veterinary practice staff are not noted for their high salaries, be they vets, veterinary nurses or support staff. So why begrudge them the occasional opportunity to put a bit more cash in their pay packet?

And surely, as a practice principal, if you can do it with a smile on your face rather than with a begrudging mutter about it being “all right for some”, the practice will reap the long-term benefits of an appreciative, harmonious workforce, more than willing to go that extra mile when the need arises. Begrudging treatment begets begrudging service and there lies the route to much

misery.

Reading about these attitudes brought home to me just how archaic some sections of the profession still are in so many ways. Those persons quoted spoke of how bank holidays were only brought about to safeguard at least some days off during the year for an ill-used workforce and that in the modern world, with statutory holiday entitlement, there was no longer a need for them.

Reading between the lines, it appeared that those complaining might even relish a return to the “good old days” described so eloquently by Jane Austen when there were “gentlemen” (by birth) and the rest of us who really

PERISCOPE

continues the series of reflections on issues of current concern

ought to know our place and wouldn't know what to do with an extra day off if it hit us in the face.

Such an attitude appears to me a relic from another age when vets could be expected to work for their board and lodging and not a lot else. The same era when the likes of Health and Safety and maternity leave had not been heard of and the rights of employees were not on the agenda.

Legitimate debate

Well the world has moved on a long way since then, particularly in Europe. Yes, there is a legitimate debate to be had about some things like the Working Time Directive. And many will argue that a bank holiday to celebrate the wedding of a couple most of us have never met and never will, is a step too far. But come on, it's not open anarchy is it?

Of course hard work is good for us, nay essential in these current times to get us all out of the deep financial hole

we have dug for ourselves and the generations that follow. But in my experience, most staff in veterinary practice already work pretty hard and certainly couldn't be described as shirkers.

All work and no play does make Jack a dull boy, and time off is essential in order for all of us to

build and nurture our relationships and well-being outside work. We certainly shouldn't be made to feel guilty about looking forward to time off.

And the importance of bank holidays, particularly for something like the royal wedding, is that they give the whole country the opportunity for a shared emotional experience. Something that we can enjoy as a nation and that will, in many ways that can't easily be quantified, create a cohesion that cuts across age, gender, social, religious, racial and political groups.

A bit of pain

In a time of austerity when everyone (bar the bankers of course, how could they possibly get by without their bonuses?), is having to share a little bit of the pain, the unexpected opportunity for a party to catch up with friends and family is one that should be grasped with both hands.

We will certainly be putting out the bunting at home and cleaning off the barbecue (regardless of the weather) to welcome people with food and a few beers and glasses of wine and we might even watch the ceremony on the telly to get into the spirit of it all.

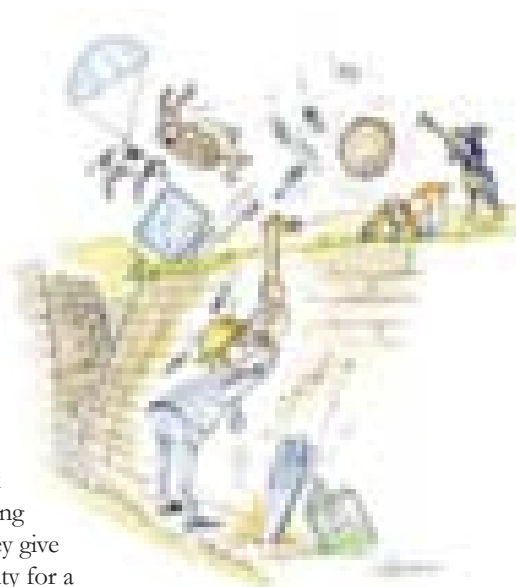
I am quite certain that by now there

will

be a few grumpy old men out there with super-heated steam erupting from their ears and the words “bah humbug” poised on their lips. Don't worry, the occasion has long since passed and I'm sure that for most of you the pain was not as great as you had feared and that few if any veterinary practices crumbled to dust as the result of this unexpected day off.

But take heart, there will soon be time for you to repent. There is another bank holiday at the end of May. Why not surprise your staff by wishing those who are off a very enjoyable long weekend (with a genuine smile on your face) and treat all those who are in working on the day to lunch from the local takeaway?

You might be surprised at the effect that such an approach has and you might even come to love those “pain in the arse” bank holidays yourself.



VRC and VPC seek new members

THE Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC) and the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) are seeking new members and, in the case of the VPC, a new chairman.

The VRC, which is seeking three new members, advises the chief executives of the VMD and the Food Standards Agency on planning residues surveillance programmes and on the significance of the results for consumer health.

The VPC, which is advertising for a chairman and eight members, is an independent body that advises ministers on all issues relating to the control of veterinary medicines. Its members provide scientific advice to the Government on the safety, quality and efficacy of veterinary medicines.

Both committees meet up to six times a year. The appointments to the VRC are from October 2011 until December 2014; the appointments to the VPC are from January 2012 until December 2015. The closing date for applications to both is 12 noon on 16th May.

For further information about the positions, contact the VMD at vrcappts@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk.

AHVLA formed from AH and VLA

ANIMAL Health and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) merged on 1st April to create the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA).

In a statement, DEFRA says that bringing together their services, expertise and scientific capability will create a stronger organisation capable of providing a range of vital services to the livestock farming industry and related sectors.

“Importantly, the merger will increase the resilience of the combined agency's operations in a difficult financial climate. Joining the two organisations creates new and wider opportunities to identify more cost effective, flexible and robust ways of working.”

NEW

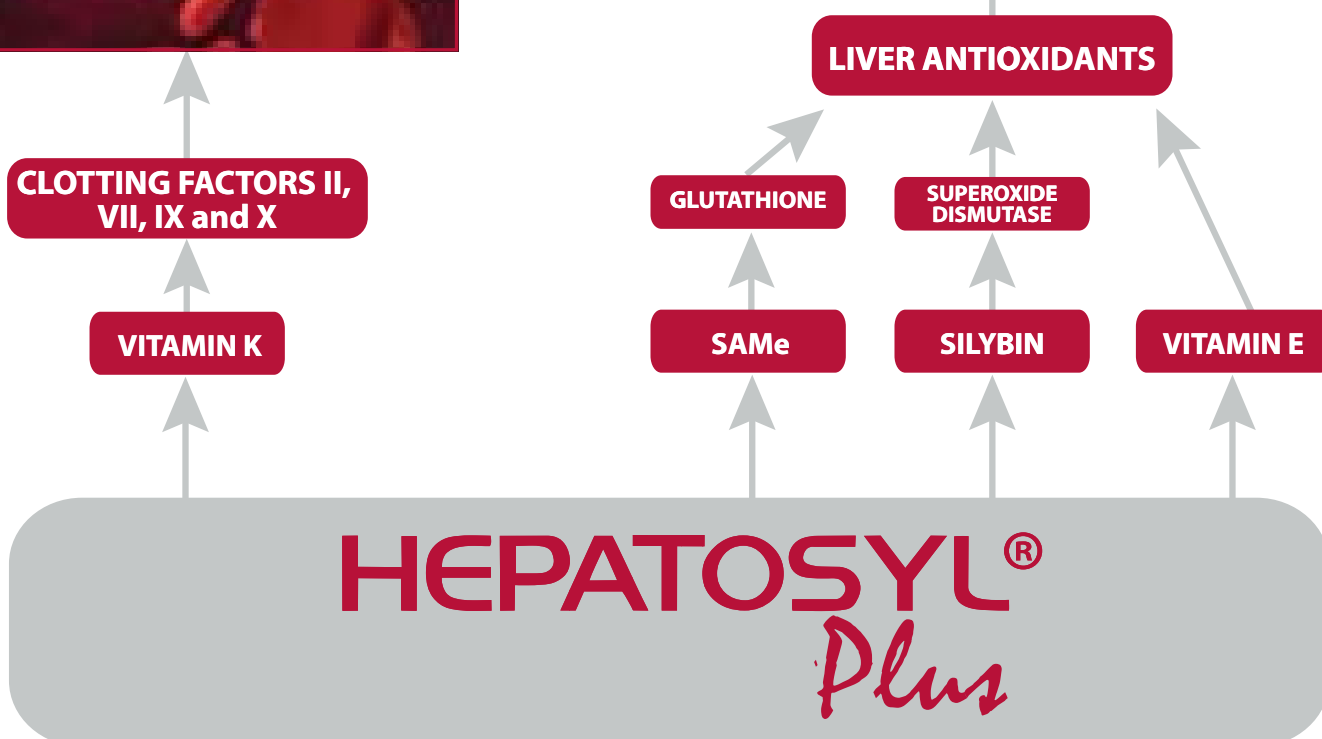
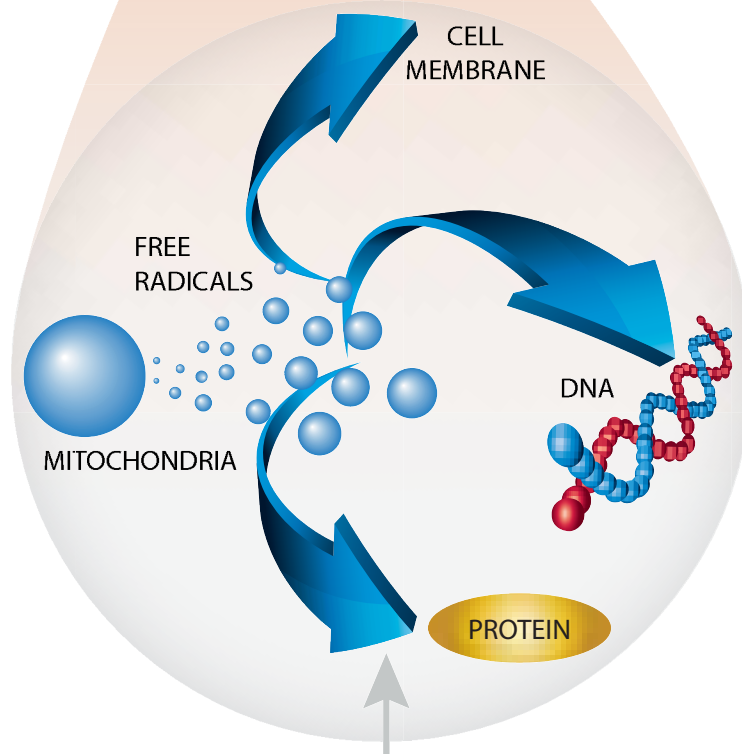
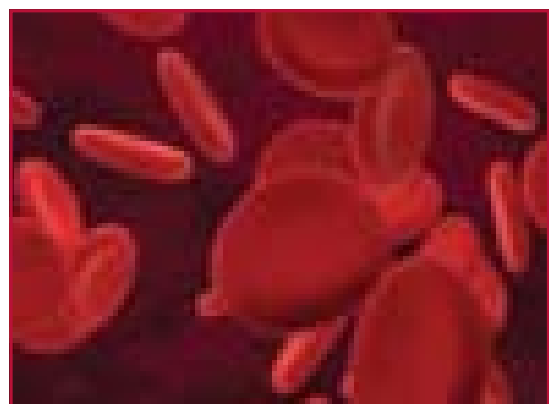
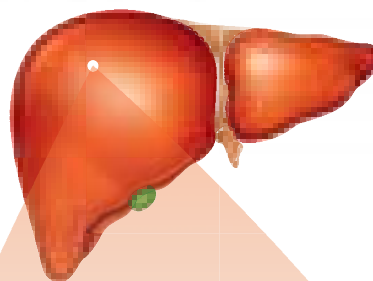
HEPATOSYL[®] Plus

Liver Support Supplement

NOW
CONTAINS
SILYBIN

The UK's leading liver support supplement¹ now contains Silybin!

- Triple antioxidant approach - SAmE, Vitamin E and Silybin
- The only liver support supplement to contain Vitamin K



1. iMap data MAT February 2011

Managing allergic skin cases

“STEROID phobia” is one of the biggest problems that veterinary practitioners will have to overcome if they are to achieve better management of allergic skin conditions in their canine patients.

Misplaced fears over the side-effects of corticosteroid treatment mean that many pet owners are reluctant to use one of the cheapest and most effective treatments available for use against this condition, according to speakers at a recent round-table discussion on controlling skin diseases.

The meeting, organised by Virbac Animal Health, brought together veterinary and medical dermatologists together with veterinary general practitioners with an interest in allergic skin disease.

They heard that the conditions afflicting dermatology patients in the human and animals worlds are increasingly common and clinically very similar. So veterinary practitioners can learn from the experiences of their medical colleagues and, in particular, should note the latter's success in using topical steroid preparations in controlling eczema.

Dr Joanna Gach, a consultant dermatologist at the University Hospital, Coventry, said that around 20% of children have some degree of atopic skin disease – of which one third will grow out of the disease, one third will have occasional flare-ups and one third will need continuous treatment. Atopic disease is also seen with increasing frequency in adult patients, she said.

First choice

Topical steroids are the

first choice treatment in human atopic dermatitis because they are highly effective in producing symptomatic relief and can be directed specifically at the areas where they are needed. However, she recognised that good communication with the child's family is crucial to the successful management of the condition.

The treatment regime is likely to be complicated and parents may be

VETERINARY PRACTICE reports on a round-table meeting where the management and treatment of atopic dermatitis was the main topic

concerned about the reputation of steroid products and the warnings on product literature. Patient information on steroid products may highlight the need to avoid broken skin and use the product sparingly; she pointed out that skin damage was an almost inevitable consequence of the underlying itch and aggressive treatment was essential in order to control flare-ups in the disease.

But human dermatologists can choose between a range of steroid products containing active agents with significant differences in potency. Therefore, the treatment can not only be directed towards the stage and severity of the skin condition but also its anatomical location, as studies have shown differences of more than 40-fold in the absorption rates of different types of human skin.

Dr Gach acknowledged that there were significant risks, such as cutaneous atrophy, resulting from long-term treatment with traditional corticosteroids. But the safety profile of more

recently products is much less of a concern.

Virbac's Cortavance (hydrocortisone aceponate) was the first of this new generation of topical corticosteroids licensed for use in dogs and the meeting was organised to consider the reasons for the sluggish take-up by veterinary practitioners of a product that has now been available for four years.

Studies in canine atopy have produced convincing evidence on the efficacy of topical steroid treatments. Dr Tim Nuttall, senior lecturer in dermatology at the Liverpool veterinary school, described a trial demonstrating at least a 50% reduction in lesion score with regular daily treatment of the affected skin for 14 weeks.

Avoid 'roller coaster'

Aggressive therapy is vital to controlling atopy and can be followed up with appropriate maintenance treatment: it is essential to avoid “the roller coaster of flare-ups as frequent inflammation will worsen the disease and the prognosis”, he said.

Dr Nuttall said owners should be warned that treatment is unlikely to result in a cure and so atopic dermatitis should be regarded as a life-long condition that needs to be carefully controlled. Various options are available as part of the management strategy – including shampoos, emollients, essential fatty acid-based diets and allergen-specific immunotherapy – but corticosteroids will remain the most effective individual component of this multimodal therapy.

He recommended that first

opinion practitioners should check the recommendations of an international panel which summarises the currently available evidence

(*Veterinary Dermatology*

21 (3): 233-

248 – this paper can be downloaded free from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>, search for “canine atopic dermatitis”).

Administration difficulties

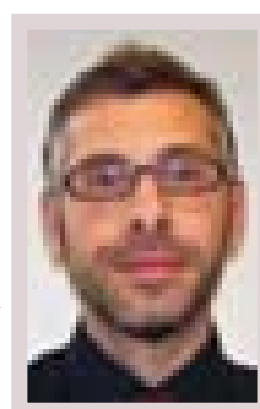
The perceived difficulties in administering a potentially messy treatment in canine patients may be one of the reasons for the reluctance of owners to use topical products.

It was noted, however, that clients can be trained in the proper application of topical products and that many of the affected areas will have lost fur covering as a result of the condition or have a normally light hair coat.

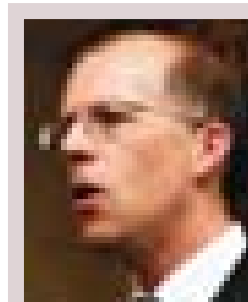
Dr Filippo De Bellis, a European diplomate in

veterinary dermatology at the Animal Health Trust, Newmarket, recognised that the hirsute nature of a typical veterinary patient does present challenges for practitioners.

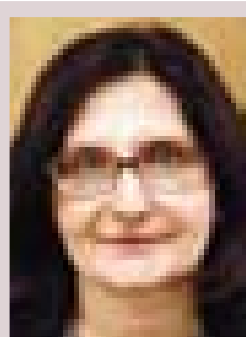
Early treatment is important in the successful treatment of atopic dermatitis in both species and it is more difficult for pet owners to spot the early stages of skin problems in their pets than in their offspring.



Dr Filippo De Bellis.



Dr Tim Nuttall.



Dr Joanna Gach.



How sure are you about the condition of your vaccines and pharmaceuticals?

You need to consult a Shoreline refrigeration specialist.

Variations in temperature can lessen the effectiveness of vaccines and pharmaceuticals and in some cases can actually render them useless.

That's why you need specialist refrigeration from Shoreline. Our wide range of fridges designed for medical and veterinarian use and compliant with RCVS, RPSGB, NHS and WHO standards, provides a complete solution for the safe storage of pharmaceuticals. Contact us today.

Shoreline®
VETERINARY REFRIGERATION

Tel: 01903 733877
www.vetfridge.co.uk

Advantix[®] Specialist in the field.

The only spot-on licensed both to kill *and* repel ticks,
providing protection for dogs who love the great outdoors.



REPELS AND KILLS TICKS



TICKS



FLEAS



FLEA
LARVAE



MOSQUITOES**
SAND FLIES**
STABLE FLIES**



Advantix contains 10% imidacloprid and 50% permethrin. Please refer to appropriate data sheet, further information is available on request. Use Medicines Responsibly (www.noah.co.uk/responsible). © Registered Trade Mark of Bayer AG. Bayer plc, Animal Health Division, Bayer House, Strawberry Hill, Newbury RG14 1JA. Tel: 01635 563000. *Product must be licensed for use in the country where it is applied. **Repellent effect only. ADVX/21/03.10/ZO

POM-V

Questions on CPD and home visits

IF a group of veterinary surgeons spend an evening discussing their CPD obligations, does that time contribute to the 35 hours they are required to commit to those activities each year?

That was one of the more unexpected issues raised at the Question Time session with the RCVS officer team and VN Council members in London on 24th March.

The event was part of a series of

stops around the country allowing practitioners and nurses to challenge their professional leaders on Royal

VETERINARY PRACTICE

reports on the latest Question Time evening hosted by the Royal College

College policy issues and raise broader concerns affecting the veterinary team.

Surrey practitioner Chris Serjeant wanted to know why the average CPD requirement was 35 hours. He believed

this was excessive and that younger veterinary surgeons could not afford the costs of attending the necessary number of meetings.

The Royal College treasurer, Bradley Viner, pointed out that attendance at formal scientific meetings is not the only way to perform CPD. Any activity that makes practitioners think about the way they carry out their work can legitimately be considered as CPD. So that includes reading journals, carrying out clinical audit to assess the practice performance and even going to professional meetings like this Q&A event, he said.

The RCVS president, Peter Jinman, argued that colleagues should never view their CPD activities as an unwelcome chore but as an essential part of being a member of a professional group.

As yet there is no mandatory requirement to carry out further training but that is likely to change to bring veterinary surgeons into line with normal practice in most other professions, including VNs.

He noted that an examination of CPD records was one of the first acts taken by the RCVS preliminary investigation committee during any assessment made against a practitioner relating to competence issues.

The Royal College disciplinary process was another subject attracting a lot of questions at the meeting. Oli Robinson, a newly-qualified practitioner from London, was concerned about a recent case in which a veterinary surgeon's Royal College registration was suspended for 10 months as a result of his failure to make an out-of-hours domiciliary visit.



Dr Jerry Davies, senior vice-president of the Royal College, in discussion at the Question Time.

Mr Robinson envisaged a situation in which such visits went against the practice policy because the practice owner was a non-veterinarian and not bound by the professional code of conduct. So did the vet have to make a choice between losing a job by ignoring the boss's wishes, or potentially losing his or her career if he or she did not attend and the client complained?

Process problems

Junior vice-president Dr Jerry Davies acknowledged that there were problems with the disciplinary process in that the legal framework in which it operated did not consider the possibility of veterinary surgeons being employed by non vets. But the vet's professional obligations had to remain paramount and he doubted whether any RCVS member should countenance staying in any job in which they were being asked to break their profession's code of conduct.

In any circumstances where a young veterinarian had concerns about his or her ethical duties, it was essential to make contemporaneous notes about the situation and the rationale for any decision reached, said Mr Jinman.

He also urged colleagues to contact the Royal College, which should be viewed as a valuable source of help and advice rather than as an organisation that will seek to punish them should they make a mistake.

Recent Graduates, open up your career in ECC

Join the Cutting Edge...

Our unique and groundbreaking Cutting Edge programme is aimed at passionate and energetic Veterinary Surgeons who not only want to develop an exciting career in Emergency and Critical Care, but who would like the additional support and training of our intensive 10 week induction (delivered by ECC diplomate Amanda Boag) to ensure they have the skills and confidence required for a career as a sole charge ECC vet.

.... take your career to places you never thought possible

To apply visit www.vets-now.com/cuttingedge or for an informal chat please call us on 01383 841181.

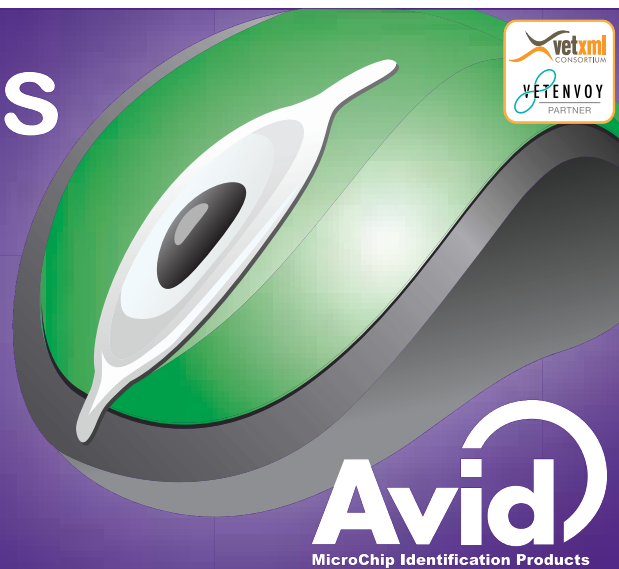
For more information visit www.facebook.com/vetsnowcuttingedge



Register AVID chips with just a click!

...and following the success of our FREE UPDATES CAMPAIGN last year, the UK PETtrac Database will again be giving FREE updates for your clients with AVID MicroChips during National Microchipping Month 2011!

Call 0800 652 7 977 for further information



Are we in an altruistic profession?

WHAT is altruism? Altruism can be defined as an individual's selfless concern for the welfare of others, regardless of the cost to that individual.

First coined by Comte in 1851, it is an important moral in many of the major religions and features most prominently in Buddhism. The teachings of the Dalai Lama provide well-known philosophical statements like: "Many illnesses can be cured by the one medicine of love and compassion. These qualities are the ultimate source of human happiness, and the need for them lies at the very core of our being."

Altruism can also be termed to individuals.

Names such as Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Princess Diana and Nelson Mandela spring immediately to mind. It must be distinguished from loyalty and duty, with true altruism motivated without reward.

Of course, Nelson Mandela did get reward but does this make his actions less noble as for a long period of time he must have lost faith that a reward would eventually manifest? In the same way, Princess Diana had duty but it was her pursuit of going beyond that duty which made her behaviour befitting of the term altruism.

Basic anatomy?

So is altruism a choice or inbuilt wiring? Research at the National Institute of Health used MRI scanning to demonstrate the activation of the subgenual cortex and septal region of the brain when making charitable donations. It is these structures which are known as related to bonding and attachment.

The suggestion, therefore, is that altruism is not superior moral decision-making but instead basic anatomy and neurological wiring.

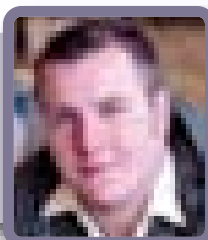
In contrast, researchers at Duke University argued that "altruistic behaviour may originate from how

people view the world rather than how they act in it".

Wouldn't it be an interesting concept to sample the veterinary profession and see whether we are more likely to show altruism than the general population, whether there are differences between gender groups, differences between small and large animal practitioners and differences between age groups?

But altruism is not a concept exclusively reserved for religious teachings and individuals. Animals can also show true

RICHARD SANDERSON wonders, among other things, to what extent veterinary surgeons work selflessly for the welfare of animals - and their owners



altruism, demonstrated nicely by *Dictyostelium mucoroides* which live as individual amoebae until suffering from starvation. Once a critical point is noted, they aggregate and form a fruiting body. It is then that certain cells will sacrifice themselves to ensure the survival of others.

Another example would be that of matrophagy – something I think we are all glad is not a component of humanity!

The religion Jainism promotes the view of Ahimsa – "to live and let live, thereby not harming sentient beings". Adherents value all life and consider all beings as equal.

It is this respect for sentient beings and the quest to preserve the life rights

and welfare of all animals that is not too dissimilar to our RCVS oath.

Financial implications

So is altruism a prominent feature of the modern veterinary practitioner? As a profession we differ from medicine as we are not wrapped up in the financial cotton wool of the NHS.

Recent government policy is, of course, thinning this cotton wool but every practice manager and principal I speak to about the veterinary profession indicates times are indeed challenging. And as such we must always consider the financial implications and viability of our decisions.

What this doesn't, or shouldn't, alter, however, is our drive to provide the highest standards of veterinary care we can provide working with our multifactorial constraints.

I have spoken before that quality of life and work-life balance are important concepts in happiness. I was recently interviewing prospective vet students and one potential student indicated he felt it was unhealthy to have hobbies and interests outside of work.

This is not something I agree with and think it is essential to have interests outside of our work. Does that mean that those who agree are less altruistic than those who do devote their whole life to their work? Is it possible to have both?

Prior plans affected

I don't think many of us would spend the evening watching our complicated bitch spay overnight to make sure it

doesn't bleed and don't think anyone would reasonably expect us to. If nothing else, it would affect the quality of our work the next day.

In the same way I don't think anyone would expect us to provide a sub-standard level of care to meet prior arrangements. Last week, for example, I missed prior dinner plans in order to check a deteriorating cat with FIA on my night off.

Was that an example of altruism or just a part of the job? Outside eyes may consider that above and beyond but for many of us I think we accept at times that our commitments to our patients override all other engagements.

It's the same as the pyometra, GDV or colic that presents at 6.59pm when we close at 7pm – we all know that the vast majority of us would stay to provide the emergency treatment required regardless of the implications to ourselves.

Anthropologically, Marcel Mauss described the evolution of altruism from the notion of sacrifice. If this is correct, the sacrifices many of us make on an almost daily basis would support the notion that altruism is a real part of our profession.

Of course, what makes the veterinary profession different is that actions that many would call truly altruistic are actions we subconsciously take each day. These decisions do ultimately benefit us financially (provided our prices value our time) and in terms of learning and experience, but this isn't to be perceived as the main driving force, at least for many of us.

Richard O. Sanderson, BVSc, MRCVS, graduated from the Liverpool veterinary school in 2009, where he received the Alumni award for academic excellence and was recently elected as chairman for the University of Liverpool Veterinary Alumni Association. After 16 months in mixed practice, Richard recently moved into companion animal practice. He can be contacted at rosanderson_vet@hotmail.co.uk.

VETARK
 PROFESSIONAL

Special products for special pets

Have you heard?

Now its safe to get in the water,
the vetark fish range is back
with NEW products

Seeing ex-battery birds?
- look at our New range
for poultry

Contact us

www.vetark.co.uk
 e: info@vetark.co.uk
 t: 44(0)1962-844316

Papers on developments in laboratory diagnostics

Prospects for developing saliva-based diagnostic tests in veterinary medicine

John Prickett and Jeffrey Zimmerman, Iowa State University

A possible use for saliva in diagnosing disease was demonstrated as long ago as 1909. In that year Pollaci and Ceraulo showed that oral fluid from patients with Malta fever caused agglutination of *Micrococcus* (now *Brucella*) *melitensis*, thereby demonstrating the presence of saliva-born antibodies. However, interest in saliva-based diagnostics only began to develop after 1986 with the detection of human immunodeficiency virus antibodies in oral fluid from AIDS patients.

The authors review the current status and future prospects for developing this form of non-invasive diagnostic test for use in veterinary practice. They note that pathogen-specific IgA, IgM and IgG antibodies have been found in oral fluid from various domestic species. Moreover, a range of infectious agents are shed in saliva, notably foot-and-mouth disease virus. They argue that the concept could be developed into rapid point-of-care assays that could "revolutionise" disease management.

Animal Health Research Reviews 11 (2): 207-216.

Assessment of a relaxin-based test for detecting pregnancy in cats

Brian DiGangi and others, University of Florida

Relaxin is a pregnancy-specific hormone that has been used as the basis of a commercial point-of-care test for diagnosing pregnancy in dogs. The authors investigate the potential value of this assay in identifying pregnant cats. It was used on blood samples from cats from a breeding colony and on strays undergoing ovariohysterectomy. Pregnancy was detectable at 20 days gestation and with 100% accuracy after day 29. The test is potentially useful in managing breeding animals and before carrying out procedures that may be contraindicated in pregnant queens.

Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 237 (11): 1,267-1,274.

Genetic analysis of papillomaviruses from epithelial lesions of cats

Eman Anis and others, University of Tennessee

Papillomaviruses infect a wide range of mammalian and avian species causing benign cutaneous and mucosal

proliferations (warts) and sometimes malignancies. The authors analysed the L1 gene from squamous cell carcinoma biopsies from eight cats. In two cases the nucleotide sequence was 99% homologous with that of one common human papillomavirus and another was a novel virus strain that was 84% homologous with a different human isolate. The results provide evidence for the possible transmission of papilloma viruses between humans and cats.

American Journal of Veterinary Research 71 (12): 1,457-1,461.

An approach to the diagnosis of polyuria in the canine patient

Hans Kooistra, Utrecht University

Polyuria occurs in dogs when their daily urine output exceeds 50ml per kg bodyweight each day. Identifying the underlying cause of polyuria can be particularly challenging in this species because of the long list of diseases in which it may be part of the clinical picture. The author summarises current knowledge of homeostasis and the mechanisms of urine concentration. He also outlines a step-by-step approach to a diagnostic work-up. Particular attention is paid to the specific features of central and renal diabetes insipidus and primary polydipsia.

European Journal of Companion Animal Practice 20 (2): 199-203.

Comparison of auscultatory and echocardiographic findings in healthy cats

Tobias Wagner and others, Royal Veterinary College, London

Previous studies have identified a high prevalence of heart murmurs in cats on auscultation. Echocardiographic examinations have also shown that significant numbers of otherwise healthy cats have evidence of left ventricular hypertrophy. The authors attempt to assess the relationship between these two conditions in 199 cats in rehoming centres, of which 34% (67) were found to have a murmur. Sixty one cats with a murmur were tested by echocardiography, and between 18 and 62% had LVH, depending on the echo criteria used.

Journal of Veterinary Cardiology 12 (3): 171-182.

Hypercoagulability in dogs with primary immune-mediated haemolytic anaemia

Renee Fenty and others, Tufts University, Massachusetts

Immune-mediated haemolytic anaemia is the most common haemolytic disorder in dogs. There is strong suspicion for a role of hypercoagulability in the clinical signs of primary IMHA but this has never been confirmed ante mortem in dogs with the condition. The authors used thrombo-elastography to look for

evidence of hypercoagulability in 11 dogs with primary IMHA. Their findings showed that affected dogs had a significantly lower clot formation time at diagnosis and before treatment with drugs which may affect coagulation.

Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 238 (4): 463-467.

PCR and ELISA analysis in detecting persistent bovine viral diarrhoea virus infection

Lifang Yan and others, Mississippi State University

Cattle that are persistently infected with bovine viral diarrhoea virus will continuously shed virus and provide a reservoir of infection for their herd-mates. The authors investigated the combined use of a real-time PCR technique and an antigen capture ELISA for use in the early identification and removal of persistently infected animals. Used together, the tests appear to offer significant cost savings over the analysis of individual samples by immunohistochemistry and other methods.

Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation 23 (1): 16-25.

Immunoglobulin G responses to *Malassezia pachydermatis* in atopic and normal dogs

Ha Kim and others, Konkuk University, South Korea

Elevated *Malassezia*-specific serum IgG and IgE have been identified in atopic dogs and these animals may also have a greater IgG response to a clinically significant 25 kDa antigen produced by the yeast. The authors compared the IgG responses to *M. pachydermatis* in atopic and non-atopic dogs. Yeast proteins with a molecular weight of 98 kDa were recognised at a significantly higher frequency in the sera of atopic dogs. Most of the atopic dogs with *Malassezia* dermatitis had a greater IgG response than did normal dogs.

Canadian Veterinary Journal 51 (8): 869-872.

Evaluation of a flow-mediated vasodilation measurement technique in healthy dogs

Ian Jones and others, Royal Veterinary College, London

Flow-mediated vasodilation is a technique developed to investigate endothelial function in humans, facilitating evaluation of the role of endothelial dysfunction in heart disease. It involves high-resolution ultrasonographic images of a brachial artery before and after a period of reactive hyperaemia caused by occlusion of the artery with a blood pressure cuff. The authors applied the method in 43 dogs of different breeds. Their findings suggest that the technique can certainly be used in dogs but there were significant variations in readings between and within

individuals.

American Journal of Veterinary Research 71 (10): 1,154-1,161.

Validation of a urine test for hyperuricosuria in Bulldogs and Black Russian terriers

Nili Karmi and others, University of California, Davis

Uricosuria is an inherited condition in Dalmatians involving excessive excretion of uric acid in the urine which may result in the formation of urate uroliths. Urolithiasis is also a problem in the Bulldog and Black Russian breeds and the authors investigate whether this is the result of a similar genetic mutation. Urine tests and genetic analysis suggest that the same mutation is indeed responsible for hyperuricosuria in the three different breeds. The same management strategies used to control the condition in Dalmatians will therefore be applicable in Bulldogs and Black Russian terriers.

American Journal of Veterinary Research 71 (8): 909-914.

Diuretic renal scintigraphy in dogs with nephro-ureterolithiasis

Silke Hecht and others, University of Tennessee

Urolithiasis is among the commonest urinary tract disorders in dogs and calculi blocking the renal pelvis or ureter can cause irreversible damage to the kidneys. Diuretic renal scintigraphy is a technique developed for the diagnosis of the same condition in humans and is tested by the authors in 83 dogs with nephro-ureterolithiasis with and without renal and ureteral dilation. Their findings suggest that it may be a useful adjunct modality to rule out or confirm ureteral obstruction but other tests will be necessary to achieve a definitive diagnosis.

Canadian Veterinary Journal 51 (12): 1,360-1,366.

Computed tomography in the diagnosis of brain infarction in dogs

Amanda Paul and others, Murdoch University, Western Australia

Cerebrovascular accidents or strokes were once considered uncommon in dogs but with the development of more effective imaging technologies they are recognised more frequently. The authors used computed tomography to investigate eight dogs presenting with acute onset neurological signs.

The technique precisely located the anatomic site of the lesion and determined whether it was ischaemic or haemorrhagic in origin. CT appears particularly sensitive in imaging haemorrhagic lesions but magnetic resonance imaging may perform better with ischaemic infarctions.

Australian Veterinary Journal 88 (10): 374-380.

Update on testing in canine Cushing's

ANY of the delegates hoping for an easy 8.30 start on Saturday morning at the congress, were in for a rude awakening if they attended Catharine Scott-Moncrieff's lecture on Cushing's.

Eschewing the usual 10-minute preamble reiterating what most clinicians already know, the speaker launched straight into an "Update on testing in canine Cushing's". This was a lecture that did what it said on the tin (and then some).

Testing times

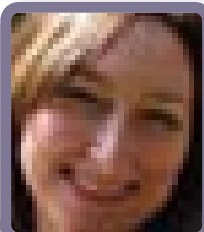
Using the terms Cushing's and hyperadrenocorticism interchangeably, the speaker noted that most cases that are seen will be pituitary dependant (85%), while the remainder will be adrenal dependant. The choice of test should be geared very much to the circumstances of the individual patient.

An ACTH stimulation test is a

good first-line choice. Most patients with Cushing's will have an exaggerated response but dogs with iatrogenic Cushing's will have a below normal response. This is only a good test to use in animals that are systemically well

SUSAN MCKAY

reports on the session at the BSAVA congress on testing in canine Cushing's followed by an update on whether, when and how to treat



and does not differentiate between pituitary dependant hyperadrenocorticism (PDH) and adrenal tumours (AT).

The low dose dexamethasone suppression test does not detect iatrogenic disease but does differentiate between PDH and AT, although is more affected by stress or concurrent illness. Urinary cortisol:creatinine ratios are highly sensitive but of variable specificity.

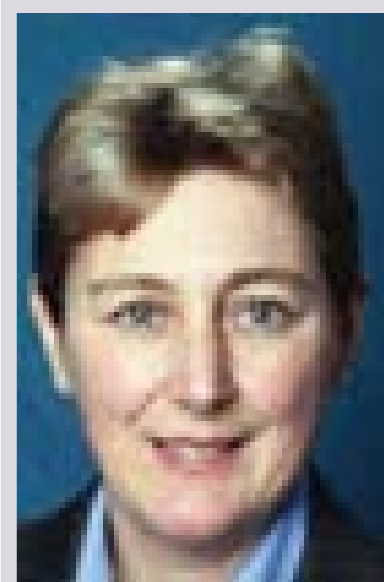
Other tests that help in differentiating between PDH and AT are the high-low dose dexamethasone suppression tests – as dogs with

adrenal tumours will not show suppressed cortisol production at any dose – and endogenous ACTH levels. If greater than 50%, suppression and then breakthrough occurs at 4-8 hours using low dose dexamethasone, then a high dose test is unnecessary as the low dose test confirms PDH but conversely, lack of suppression does not confirm AT.

High endogenous ACTH levels are diagnostic for PDH but low levels may occur in PDH and AT, due to intermittent secretion. Diagnostic imaging may also aid diagnosis if there is a discrepancy between the size of the adrenals: generally a unilateral enlargement with a greater than 5mm differential between glands suggests an adrenal tumour is present.

New manifestations

Sex hormone profiles are much in vogue in the US at present. The concentration of one or more sex hormones will usually be raised in dogs with Cushing's but some dogs may be "atypical", showing clinical signs, normal ACTH stimulation tests and low dose dexamethasone suppression tests but abnormal sex



Dr Catherine Scott-Moncrieff.

hormone panels.

The speaker did not recommend including a sex hormone panel for routine testing but suggested that increases of around double normal levels and with at least two to three hormones raised, were likely to be significant. There are several explanations for increases in sex hormones and it is possible that these atypical cases could just be early



PROVIDE A RELIABLE AND ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS WITH RANDOX VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC SOLUTIONS!

Randox is an international diagnostics company, with almost 30 years experience in veterinary diagnostics. Our extensive product portfolio includes diagnostic reagents and chemistry analysers specifically designed to accurately diagnose and effectively monitor the general health and well being of a diverse range of animals from pets to livestock.



- RX monza** A compact, semi-automated chemistry analyser with an extensive test menu, ideal for in-house veterinary testing.
- RX daytona** A fully automated chemistry analyser capable of 450 tests/hour including ISEs. Its extensive test menu eliminates the need to send samples away improving workflow and productivity.
- RX imola** A fully automated chemistry analyser capable of 640 tests/hour including ISEs. Efficient and dependable the RX imola boosts productivity and reduces costs.

Our range of veterinary diagnostic reagents covers over 100 tests and includes the following commonly run veterinary assays:

Bile acids • Copper • D-3 Hydroxybutyrate • Fructosamine • Non-Esterified Fatty Acids • Glutathione Peroxidase

RANDOX

Randox Laboratories Limited, 55 Diamond Road, Crumlin, County Antrim, BT29 4QY, United Kingdom

T +44 (0) 28 9442 2413 **F** +44 (0) 28 9445 2912 **E** marketing@randox.com **I** www.randox.com





Cambridge Specialist Laboratory Services

*Experts in endocrinology
and immunoassay*

- Flexible radioimmunoassay (RIA) techniques
- Excellent precision and accuracy
- Robust analysis with minimal sample interference
- Multispecies validations
- Unparalleled technical expertise



PO Box 967, Stapleford, Cambridge, CB22 5XY

T. 01223 493400

F. 01223 493404

info@cslabs.co.uk

www.cslabs.co.uk

Only a Professional Pharmacy fridge
is purpose designed to
store vaccines safely and securely



Would your customers want you to trust
the health of their animals to anything else?

LABCOLD



www.labcold.com

0870 300 1001

manifestations of disease, which then progress to become classical Cushing's.

All in all, the session offered a very logical, expert analysis of the best tests to use in individual cases, delivered at a pace that kept delegates on their toes.

Treatment for life

The second lecture on whether, when and how to treat was equally as thought-provoking. There is an assumption that after a diagnosis is made, treating Cushing's is inevitable. But serious questions have to be asked: will treatment prolong life or improve the quality of life and does the owner perceive that there are problems?

If there are no risks associated with not treating, the "wait and see" option becomes a viable choice. Patients with functional adrenal tumours could suffer metastasis or invasion and early treatment is indicated but in those with pituitary-dependant Cushing's it is probably wise to wait for the appearance of clinical signs and to recognise that there is no evidence that treatment prolongs life; it is merely palliative compared to the surgical option, which can be curative.

Survival rates for dogs post-hypophysectomy of 84% are quoted one year post-surgery by Utrecht, which compares well with medical treatment but it is not an option that is easy to access.

Choice words

In the US, both trilostane and mitotane are available as first-line treatments. In the UK the cascade limits us to trilostane but Catharine Scott-Moncrieff feels that there is a good rationale for using mitotane as the treatment of choice in some cases.

Those patients with adrenal tumours will usually do better on mitotane as it causes selective necrosis

Sex hormone profiles are much in vogue in the US at present. The concentration of one or more sex hormones will usually be raised in dogs with Cushing's but some dogs may be "atypical"...

of the adrenal cortex and can shrink tumours, compared to trilostane, which can result in tumours enlarging. In dogs where trilostane has to be given every eight hours in the induction period to stabilise, mitotane may also be a better option.

Dogs that relapse after being given mitotane or those with

concurrent disease would usually be better off with trilostane. There is no significant difference in median survival rates (which are around 11.5 months for adrenal tumours and 1.7 years for pituitary-dependent) between the two treatments, though some dogs live for years with the disease.

Kintzer's 1991 study suggests that 58% relapse on mitotane and 6% will become Addison's, which in many ways is easier to manage than Cushing's. There was copious information on loading doses and monitoring as well as side effects, all of which you can hear again on the BSAVA website, as the session was recorded.

Lasting memories

There was time for a run-through of upcoming treatments as the lecture came to a close. Ketoconazole leads to a clinical improvement in around 90% of patients and a median survival time of 25 months, while retinoic acid results in longer survival times.

Cabergoline gives a good response in less than half of all patients but good survival and a reduction in pituitary size has been reported.

A last thought in response to a question from the floor is that although we assume that quality of life is better in medicated dogs, we still don't know whether survival rates of dogs left completely untreated is any better than those that are treated with medication.

An interesting one to ponder upon back at the practice...

Laboratory makes donations to charities

Avacta Animal Health made donations to both the Feline Advisory Bureau and the RSPCA during the BSAVA congress. The laboratory, which specialises in allergy testing and allergy solutions for cats, dogs and horses, donated £1 for every pet owner feedback questionnaire returned following an allergy test; FAB was the recipient of the cat owner questionnaire donations and the RSPCA the dog owner questionnaire donations. The photo shows Claire Bessant (right), chief executive of the FAB, accepting a rather large cheque from Janice Hogg, MD of Avacta.



'Rewarding' tests on rabbits

"CLINICAL pathology in rabbits can be very rewarding and impact positively on both case outcome as well as client bonding," said Molly Varga of Cheshire Pet in Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, in a paper at the BSAVA congress on *Clinical pathology and test results*.

She said that clinical pathological samples could comprise blood samples, urine samples, cytological preparations, faecal samples, culture swabs, aspirates of effusions, bone marrow and CSF, and she strongly recommended the use of a laboratory experienced in dealing with rabbit samples.

Biochemical parameters commonly evaluated in rabbits included total protein, albumin, globulin, ALT, AST, CK, ALKP, calcium, phosphorus, urea, creatinine, glucose and potassium.

Total protein could be used in combination with PCV and urine specific gravity to evaluate hydration status.

Where globulin levels were elevated and PCV and urine SG normal, protein electrophoresis might be indicated to clarify the type of disease process involved; hypoalbuminaemia

might be noted in cases of malnutrition.

Rabbits are unique in the way they utilise calcium, Mrs Varga said. Instead of controlling the amount absorbed from the gut, as with most domestic animals, all calcium is transported into the bloodstream, relying on the excess being excreted by the kidney, with

VETERINARY PRACTICE

picks up some pointers on diagnostic tests from papers presented at the BSAVA congress

blood levels directly related to the content of calcium in the diet. With severely deficient diets, hypocalcaemia might result.

The speaker said that serological tests were available for several infectious diseases, including pasteurellosis, treponematosi, myxomatosis, viral haemorrhagic disease and encephalitozoonosis, but she added that interpretation had to be performed with caution and the limitations of such testing recognised.

Taking care with rodents

"BLOOD sampling small mammals can be challenging," according to William Lewis of The Wylie Veterinary

Centre in Upminster, Essex.

In a paper at the BSAVA congress on rodents, covering guinea pigs, chinchillas, rats, hamsters, gerbils and degus, he said that as a general rule it is safe to take 0.8-1% of the body weight in blood volume, using tail veins, cephalic, jugular, lateral saphenous or cranial vena cava.

Beginning with the statement, "You will miss more by not looking than by not knowing," he said that a diagnosis might be obvious on clinical examination or might require additional testing – but many times a definite diagnosis might not be attainable and it was reasonable to make "a best guess diagnosis" and treat as such.

Noting that many rats and hamsters would urinate or defaecate on the consulting room table, providing samples for testing, he said that other samples which could be obtained were skin scrapings, blood, impression smears or fine-needle aspirates.

Referring to the DAMNIT system used in small animal medicine, he said he used the THINFINE system: trauma, husbandry, infection, nutrition, female reproductive disease, infectious disease, neoplasia and endocrine disease.

Mr Lewis also stressed the

importance of accurate weighing using scales measuring to 1 gram.

Renal effects of endocrine disease

Hypoadrenocorticism mimics many other disease presentations and is easy to misdiagnose as acute renal failure in young dogs as azotaemia with isosthenuria is a common finding, said Dr Marie Kerl from the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Missouri.

Noting that hyponatraemia and hyperkalaemia were also often present in the same chemistry profiles in laboratories where electrolytes were measured, she said that not all in-house chemistry analysers used in private practice routinely measured electrolytes.

Although azotaemia and isosthenuria occurred concurrently, the azotaemia might still be pre-renal.

"In hypoadrenocorticism the medullary concentration gradient is lost because of chronic sodium wasting, so it is impossible for an affected animal to demonstrate adequate urine concentration."

Dr Kerl added that the long-term progress of hypoadrenocorticism was generally guarded to poor once renal failure had been established.



FDC 7000i

FDC 4000i

Automated Clinical Chemistry Analyser



FDC 4000i



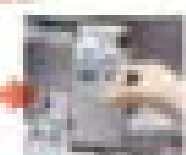
FDC 7000i

NWFL in-clinic excellence

Simple 3 step procedure:



Add the sample



Add the reagents and mix



Push the START key

To hear more about the fantastic deals on in-clinic instrumentation contact Nick Watson on 07880 745423

Trust in Excellence

Position Laboratory, Lancashire House, 22 Manor Lane, Little Broughton,
 Preston, Lancashire, PR1 7LJ
 Tel: 01773 899115 Email: nick@nwfl.co.uk www.nwfl.co.uk



Position Laboratory is a Trading Division of
 Clontech Ltd (Registered in England number 4013124)

Online catalogue for reagents and diagnostic kits launched by VLA

VLA Scientific has launched a new interactive online catalogue for biological reagents and diagnostic kits. This, it says, will assist customers in conveniently accessing information on the extensive ranges of products in this area.

Customers can search and view reagent ranges by subject, disease and type. There is a facility to compile a basket of the products required and send this to the sales desk for processing.

Full details of each product are available along with other technical documents. There are also links to the relevant proficiency testing scheme that VLA Scientific offers.

VLA Scientific products, which include antisera, antigens diagnostic kits, are available for: bacterial diseases,

avian viral diseases, mammalian viral diseases, monoclonal antibodies, salmonella antisera and bacterial isolates.

For details see http://vla.defra.gov.uk/vlascientific/vlas_pr_reagents_cat.htm.

■ Vetqas, the proficiency testing (PT) service of VLA Scientific, is expanding its programme to include a PT scheme for veterinary cellular pathology staining technique and another scheme for veterinary immunohistochemistry technique.

The schemes are well established in the UK having been founded in 1993 by scientists at the veterinary schools of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Paula Johnson, head of the quality assurance unit at the VLA, said: "We are pleased to add this new area to our extensive range of veterinary proficiency testing schemes. It has long been recognised that consistently well-produced histological sections are essential to veterinary pathologists as an aid to making accurate diagnosis of disease.

The cellular pathology PT schemes will continue to benefit from the expertise of the founding scientists, who will act as assessors and provide support to Vetqas."

This development took place last month.

WAVLD cancels June symposium; next in 2013 in Berlin

THE XVI International Symposium of the World Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians is to be held in Berlin from 5th to 8th June, 2013.

The XVth meeting planned for Bogota, Colombia, next month has been cancelled because, says the association, of the global recession.

The WAVLD is an organisation of veterinarians who are dedicated to the promotion of quality veterinary laboratory diagnostic medicine throughout the world.

Its stated mission is to improve animal and human

health by facilitating the availability of quality laboratory testing provided through veterinary diagnostic laboratories around the world. This mission is accomplished by:

- disseminating the latest information relating to the diagnosis of animal diseases through outstanding educational symposia;
- facilitating the organisation of associations of veterinary laboratory diagnosticians in all countries of the world;
- providing consulting assistance to countries wishing to build and operate state-of-the-art veterinary diagnostic laboratories;

■ supporting other activities to improve the health and welfare of man and animals throughout the world.

For details see the association's website, wavld.org.



Prize winners at BSAVA congress

NATIONWIDE Laboratories had three daily prizes of Fuji Z70 digital cameras at the BSAVA congress plus a grand prize of an Amazon Kindle pre-loaded with *Small animal medical differential diagnosis* authored by Marcus Thompson.

The daily winners were: Thursday – Rachel Storer of Hollybush Vets; Friday – Abigail Konar of Abbey

Vet Centre; and Saturday – David Strong of the PDSA. The grand prize winner was Saski Sutton of Downland Veterinary Group.

Mark Davies, the firm's commercial manager, said he was delighted by the hundreds of vets, nurses and practice managers who visited the stand.

The photo shows Saski Sutton (right) receiving the grand prize from Nationwide's client services co-ordinator Kate Fazakerley.



in the knowledge that it's a Swann-Morton



All medical devices are CE marked in accordance with the Medical Device Directive (93/42/EEC)

FM 73368

When they rely on you, you can depend on us time after time for the accuracy and precision you need.

The preferred choice of Vets everywhere, Swann-Morton surgical blades and scalpels deliver consistent quality, precision and performance to meet the highest demands of contemporary Veterinary practices.

Where only Swann-Morton will do.

Owlerton Green, Sheffield S6 2BJ
Telephone: 0114 2344231, Sales: 0114 2344223,
Fax: 0114 2314966

uksales@swann-morton.com, exportsales@swann-morton.com

www.swann-morton.com

Swann-Morton

'Swann-Morton' and the 'Ring Pattern Logo' are the registered trade marks of Swann-Morton Limited and related companies.

L.J. Smith & Son

Microscope Repairs, Sales and Service

Our business has been established for over 50 years, for the servicing and repair of any make or model of microscope.

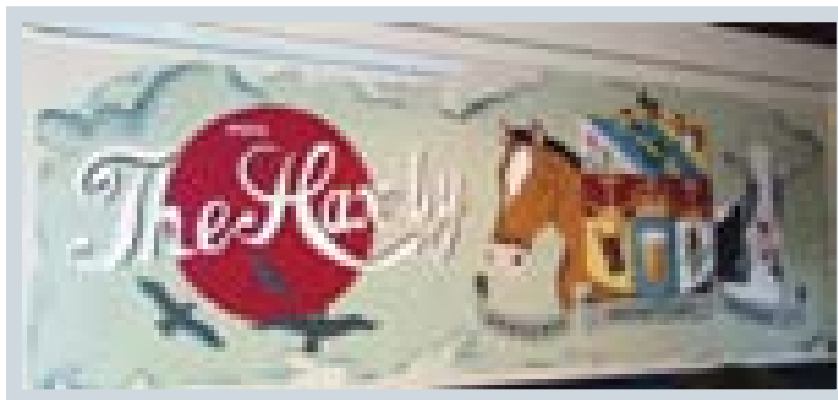
Contact us for a free quote on

01767 260095

or email

service@ljsmithson.co.uk





Fitting tribute to RVC graduate who went on to become president of both the BVA and RCVS

FOUR years and four days after Don Haxby's memorial service in London, one result of his legacy came to fruition, writes *Michael Nelson*.

This was the opening ceremony in March for The Haxby Bar in the old students' common room at the RVC in Camden Town.

Hosted by the student body, it was attended by Don's ex-wife Barbara, with her son Adrian and daughters Libby and Jo.

This was the most fitting memorial to the man as it epitomises one of his attributes: the fostering of veterinary students as the lifeblood of the future of the profession that Don loved and served with enthusiasm.

The significance of his gift will not have escaped those aware of one of Don's other attributes: the enjoyment of alcohol.

Don graduated from the RVC in 1953 and over the following 40 years combined mixed general practice with poultry consultancy and veterinary politics. He went on to become president of the BVA in 1977-78, the

RCVS in 1983-84 and the UK Inter-Professional Group from 1989 to 1993.

The RVC development director, Jonathan

Forrest, provided some of the background to the development of the bar, and his colleague, Vicki Laing (alumni and donor development manager) filled in the rest.

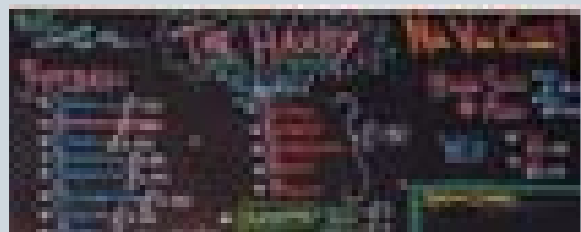
Mention should be made of another important member of the team, Clare Parker, the bar manager, who has been involved in achieving the final result, including the idea behind the mural on the wall opposite the bar. One somehow has the feeling that Don would have approved of her.

There were few former students present but the RVC is sending each of them a short video which recorded the ceremony.

The number of Don's friends is gradually dwindling as the years go by and it is encouraging to know that his *alma mater* is ensuring his name will live on for generations to come in at least one of the nation's veterinary schools.



Don Haxby.



The notice behind the bar which bans "vet chat".

A further expansion...



During the recent BSAVA congress, Vets Now announced its plans to expand its referral services with the acquisition of Great Western Referrals in Swindon. The hospital will become Vets Now Referrals' second permanent site, after Glasgow. Vets Now says it plans to grow the Swindon referral service by improving the premises and extending the current referral team. As part of the acquisition it will be incorporating the specialist care currently offered for exotic pets by Great Western Exotic Vets; this service will continue to be run as Great Western Exotics and will retain the expertise of Neil Forbes, an RCVS and European Recognised Specialist in Avian Medicine. The photo, taken on the Vets Now stand at the congress, shows (from left): Richard Dixon, founder of Vets Now who was BSAVA president in 2009-10; Professor Stuart Carmichael, national hospitals director of Vets Now; Neil Forbes; and Amanda Boag, clinical director of Vets Now. During the congress awards ceremony, Amanda received the Melton Award for meritorious contributions to small animal practice.

■ Vets Now has also announced a new partnership with the Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS). Vets Now, in co-operation with its host practices and the VPIS, is launching a "Tox Box" service giving vets 24-hour direct access to the treatments that they are most likely to need, and least likely to stock, in a poisoning emergency. Through Tox Box, any vet calling the VPIS advice line will be able to access the drugs required in a poisoning emergency at selected Vets Now clinics and host practices across the UK. Vets do not need to be Vets Now member practices to use the service; they can phone VPIS at any time on 02071 880200 for advice and access to drugs.

Promotion for affairs manager

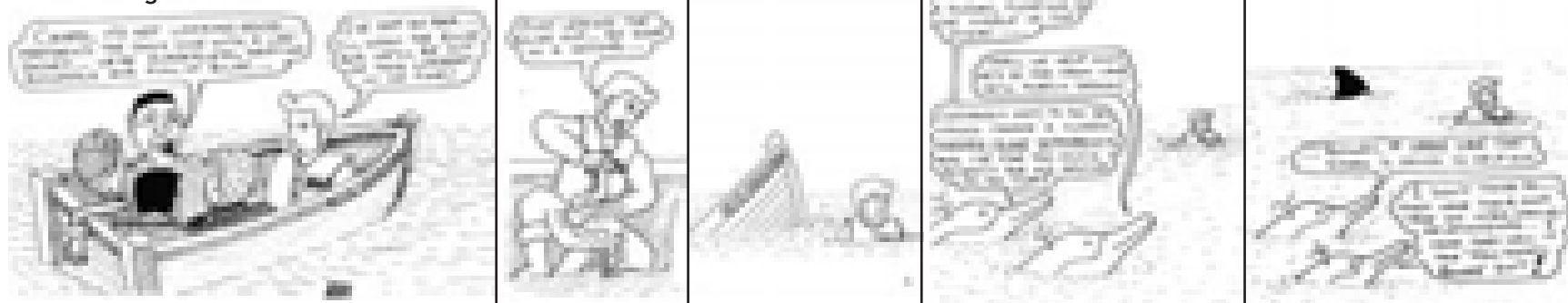
ADRIAN Pratt, formerly veterinary affairs manager for Hill's Pet Nutrition, has been promoted to head of veterinary channel for the UK and Ireland. He will now have responsibility for growing veterinary business and will head up the firm's customer development and sales team as well as retaining the overall responsibility for the veterinary affairs team.

He joins a senior management team where vets are strongly

represented including the UK and Ireland managing director, Dr Blake Hawley, as well as six vets working in various positions throughout the Hill's UK and Ireland organisation.



The Whiting view...



A hunger for improvements revealed at cattle lameness conference

IN opening the 2011 Cattle Lameness Conference at University of Nottingham, Nick Bell highlighted that there has been a great deal of activity and innovation, that farmers are “hungry” for services and solutions and that there is growing commercial innovation.

A copy of the proceedings is available from emma.palfreyman@nottingham.ac.uk and the content will act as an important information source for practices, but there were many asides as the speakers developed their themes and the more than 130 delegates were seen to be noting many points in the margins.

Professor David Logue of the Glasgow veterinary school reviewed the impact of nutrition on lameness and indicated that although intuitively good nutrition equals good feet, the influence of diet on lameness is complex. Current thinking is that the environmental challenge to the foot is more significant than a direct effect of the diet.

Most important areas

“We consider the interactions between the development of the claw in the young animal, the subsequent biomechanics of the claw, management and presentation of the diet (whether housed or at grass), and the effect of all these on the surface the cow walks upon are the most important areas to consider in relation to lameness in the dairy cow.

“While good lifetime nutrition is essential as a lameness preventive, its relationship with other environmental, managerial and genetic risks and their interaction is the major determinant of claw horn lameness, he said. His presentation was supported by 87 well-chosen slides.

The margin points included:

- referring to mobility scoring, it is important to recognise when you need to lift the cow’s foot and examine it;
- high yielding cows have a greater

reduction in digital cushion thickness than low yielders;

- horn quality and fat pad performance are critical to an understanding of lameness;
- after calving, avoid moving young cows from soft to hard surfaces (two months is good, four days is not enough time);
- consider first calving mobs (group first calvers before introducing them into the main herd);
- genetic selection can only work with reliable records;
- reduce all environmental challenges.

Utilising video, Neil Chesterton from New Zealand demonstrated the

VETERINARY PRACTICE
reports on another successful and wide-ranging conference on cattle lameness issues and developments held at the University of Nottingham

link between impatience and lameness. Seventy per cent of lameness in dairy cows is a result of white line injury and sole injury, he said, and an understanding of how these injuries occur on a dairy unit is fundamental to lameness improvements.

He explained that foot wear does not necessarily lead to lameness. The weight of the cow is on the wall of the hoof and when the wall wears the cow walks on the sole. If the sole is thick enough, then there is no lameness. There is a need to be able to measure sole thickness in live cows. Anyone with ideas for an effective measurement method is invited to contact chesterton@inspire.net.nz.

Lameness is caused by physical damage and pushing cows along walkways prevents the cow from placing each hoof to avoid stones. The walking order for a herd is not the same as the collecting yard order to enter the parlour, so the herd needs space to re-order itself without cows being pushed about.

The tearing action of sideways movement on concrete was



Conference speakers (from left): Owen Atkinson, Neil Chesterton, David Logue, Nicola Blackie, Nick Bell (chairman), Jon Huxley and Brian Pocknee of The Dairy Group.

demonstrated. Back-up gates that continuously push the cows forward can lead to foot slip and the weak point of the hoof is the white line.

One of the many take-home messages from Neil was that thin soles plus poor cow flow plus impatient herdsman leads to sole injury and white line separation. Cows with thick soles that are enduring the same factors show little lameness.

For the first three months after calving the herdsman needs to be gentle with movement of the cows, he said. Where tracks are also used for farm vehicles, the break-up of surfaces increases and the area where a stone track joins onto concrete needs careful management to avoid penetrating injuries.

Where a track links with a collecting yard, the track needs to become wider to allow the cows to readjust their herd position. There have been many successes in reducing herd lameness, even with inadequate facilities, by identifying where wear and tear is occurring. Herds with a low incidence of lameness have been “ruined” by changing to an impatient herdsman.

Markers

Utilising available technology, Nicola Blackie of Writtle College fixed ping pong balls and other markers to the limbs and spine of cows and investigated walking behaviour. The outcome is a detailed understanding of the behaviour of lame cows.

As the work continued, it became apparent that it was more difficult to score mobility from a video than it was from live observation. The video was, however, very valuable in measuring gait and stride length.

Lame cows were shown to have a shorter stride length, moved more slowly, had negative tracking distance and showed numerical differences in spine posture when walking. Cows with sole ulcers showed lengthening in the thoracic and shortening in the lumbar regions of the spine, showed significant shortening of the spine when walking and had a lower head position than cows with no hoof lesions.

Stride length was recorded at up to 31cm shorter with sole ulcers. The gait analysis methods, using a camera and Simi Motion Analysis Software, were adapted from those used in sport and equine science. It is clear that lame cows adapt their walking to reduce the risk of pain.

Activity monitors (Ice Robotics) were attached to the right rear fetlock. Lame cows spent longer lying down (two hours per day) and the more severe the lameness the longer the lying time.

Work is ongoing to

further identify the times of day when lying time occurs and duration of lying bouts. Observations indicate that lame cows drop in the social order and feed at quieter times, often in the middle of the night.

Nottingham research

A review was presented by Dr Jon Huxley of recent lameness research at the University of Nottingham. Studies on mobility, milk yield and mastitis indicate that severely lame cows showed a drop in milk yield four months, six months and eight months after the lameness was observed.

A reduction in yield was greatest when the lameness occurred close to calving. Prompt detection and treatment of lameness, particularly in freshly calved cows, is important. One of the difficulties with lameness control is that more high-yielding cows are lame and have low cell counts. These cows are retained in the herd because of their production.

Observations of cows at a mixed ration feeding face indicated that lame cows had fewer feeding bouts than other cows (16 lame: 26 control). The length of each feeding bout was similar. The amount of dry matter intake per cow is being investigated.

Further studies on hock lesions have indicated that if both hocks are affected, the mobility score is not necessarily altered, but if there is one

...thin soles plus poor cow flow plus impatient herdsman leads to sole injury and white line separation.

hock lesion, mobility is reduced. Sawdust on mats and mattresses increases the number of cows with hair loss and hock lesions.

In discussion, Dr Huxley indicated that hair loss may not be an initial stage of ulceration and there could be two distinct conditions of hair loss and ulcers.

Further indications are that it is the lesions on the hock that are making the animal lame rather than lameness causing hock lesions. It appears likely that this topic will be investigated and discussed at future meetings.

Foot lesion recording

During 2010, over 5,000 cow records were gathered within the DairyCo foot lesion recording system with the co-operation of foot trimmers. Over half of the cows had at least one lesion. Sole bruising was the most common recorded lesion followed by digital dermatitis, white line disease and sole ulceration.

The question was raised as to why there were four times as many digital dermatitis cases in hind limbs than fore



limbs. DairyCo has funded a literature review and 608 papers of primary research, not reviews, on the prevention and treatment of lameness have been gathered

into a database which is to be made freely available. Contact Jon.Huxley@nottingham.ac.uk for access.

In September 2011, the DairyCo Healthy Feet Programme is due to be launched and it directly involves veterinary surgeons as mobility mentors. Owen Atkinson from Lambert, Leonard & May has been operating the programme with his clients and presented his observations and ambitions for the initiative. Information has been gathered from various programmes that are taking place around the world that tackle lameness in dairy herds.

A step-wise approach has been developed to diagnose problems, devise an action plan and develop skills. Successful participation is targeted by farmers, veterinary surgeons, foot trimmers and advisers to give farmers the confidence and knowledge to make

the necessary changes to reduce lameness and improve their business.

Emphasis is placed on a farm team approach with the mobility mentor arranging a whole herd mobility score as a starting reference. These mentors are expected to offer technical knowledge but also to be able to investigate and identify lesions.

A Hoof Care Field Guide and a Lesion Picture Card are to be provided and a "lameness map" of the herd developed. Agreed points of action to respond to the problems identified are to be brought together as a "mobility contract" and progress will be monitored formally on a quarterly basis.

Funding for the programme is under discussion but initially the indications are that the farmers appreciate the deliberate approach and have been willing to pay for the veterinary time involved. There are no written reports and this indicates the need for the mentor to develop actions across the team.

Mr Atkinson indicated that he has

learned to "talk less and listen more" and the key will be for the farmer to develop his own solutions. Mentors will

be supported and able to learn from each other. Three training courses for mentors are now available (contact healthyfeet@dairyco.ahdb.org.uk). A pilot workshop with eight vets has guided development of the training.

The scale of the problem with lameness in dairy herds is not being underestimated, or the difficulties in

implementing successful prevention and treatment solutions. Mr Atkinson identifies that the potential rewards are too large to ignore and include less lameness; happier, healthy cows; more profitable milk production; and better job satisfaction.

■ The winning poster was a combined study by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, the University of Glasgow and Queens University Belfast and it clearly stated the conclusions of their study. Are parlour washings containing bleach (hypochlorite) as a footbath, effective in controlling digital dermatitis? No.

...the potential rewards are too large to ignore and include less lameness; happier, healthy cows; more profitable milk production; and better job satisfaction.

Programme aims to eradicate sheep scab in west Wales

TWO sheep farming brothers, Dafydd and John Jones near Machynlleth in west Wales, are pioneering a farmer-led five-year programme to eradicate sheep scab.

Among all the 30-plus adjoining sheep farmers in the initiative's catchment area, the goal is not only to get rid of sheep scab but also to minimise the risk of its re-introduction through co-ordinated preventive treatment and effective biosecurity.

The initiative began at a meeting attended by 19 of the target farmers to discuss the key issues. Dafydd Jones said: "First, we have to admit that we have sheep scab in the area. Then the process is to educate ourselves about the problem, work together to eradicate sheep scab, and establish long-term defences to prevent it returning."

He said that his flock had a scab outbreak in September 2009, right at the peak of finished lamb sales, which caused major disruption on several counts.

"The farm is organic and we have a contract to supply Waitrose that forbids the use of OP dips in any situation, but allows treatment with moxidectin under closely defined parameters. Even so, the meat withhold requirement meant treated lambs had to be sold as non-organic. In addition to delayed sale, there was a painful price penalty."

So the motives underpinning this initiative, according to Mr Jones, are not related at all to the new Scottish sheep

scab legislation introduced last December, but have everything to do with identifying a business problem and doing something about it.

Part of the problem, he says, is the window of opportunity for scab mites between the traditional use of OP dips by some farmers in the autumn and the use of injectable scab treatments by others pre-lambing. In January, scanning in particular is seen as a potential vector for flock-to-flock transmission of scab mites.

With this in mind, the plan involves preventive scab treatments across the initiative's entire catchment area within the months of January and September, using either an OP dip or the injectable moxidectin-based Cydectin 2% LA for its licensed 60-day persistency.

For farmers using the injectable treatment, January can replace pre-lambing use, and administering at the same time as scanning means empty ewes can be segregated before treatment and sold without having a meat withhold period to observe.

Hugh Williams, from Williams Veterinary Surgeons in Tywyn, is integrally involved in the initiative. He says that as long as all farmers in the area comply with the programme, with 100% of sheep treated or dipped correctly, the scab mite can be eradicated. Then maintaining scab-free status would require effective biosecurity including the use of the SCOPS quarantine protocol for incoming sheep.

NEW



Truleva® RTU

What value peace of mind...?



The high quality antibacterial with zero milk withdrawal for ALL dairy cows.

Truleva® RTU

JANSSEN ANIMAL HEALTH

a division of Janssen-Cilag Ltd

Truleva® RTU is suitable for use in all milking cows where vets require an antibacterial and where the disease and spectrum fit with the product claims. Truleva® RTU 50 mg/ml Suspension for injection for pigs and cattle contains 50 mg/ml Cefiofur. Legal category POM-V. Use medicines responsibly. www.noah.co.uk/responsible

Further information is available from Janssen Animal Health, 50-100 Holmers Farm Way, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP12 4EG, UK. Tel: 01494 567555 Fax: 01494 567556 Email: ahhealth@its.jnj.com www.janssenanimalhealth.co.uk

Are the beneficial effects of macrolide antibiotics underestimated in large animal practice?

THERE has been much debate over the last few years regarding the use and potential overuse of antibiotics in large animal practice which has more recently reached a climax with the suggestion that direct antibiotic promotion to farmers should be banned.

Strict NOAH (National Office of Animal Health) advertising codes are now in place to encourage a more educational platform and help preserve this direct and important communication route to the end user;

however, there is no doubt that this topic will remain a continual focus for discussion.

The risks of transferrable antibiotic resistance to humans appears to be very small with limited supportive scientific evidence, but either way, there is no doubt that strict professional management within the food animal arena is crucial to preserve this status and more targeted use of specific antibiotic groups may be an advantage.

History

Macrolides have been used as an alternative to penicillin since the early 1950s. It all began with the development of erythromycin from which newer semi-synthetic molecules have subsequently been created to enhance their spectrum of activity and duration of action whilst reducing side effects.

Mode of action

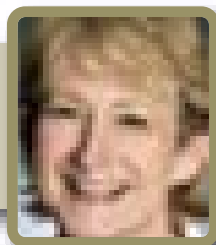
As a class, the macrolides demonstrate wide tissue distribution and reach high intracellular concentrations. Their antibacterial spectrum of activity is mainly Gram-positive with some Gram-negative effect that includes *Mycoplasma spp.*, which have been important in their continued development for pneumonia in

ruminants and pigs.

Macrolides tend to accumulate within leucocytes and macrophages, a feature that allows them to be rapidly transported to the site of infection, particularly in the lungs. Despite being lipophilic, they do not appear to cross into the cerebro-spinal fluid.

Their mode of action is via protein synthesis inhibition, where they reversibly bind to the subunit 50s of the bacterial ribosome which is mainly bacteriostatic but can also be bactericidal in

LOUISE RADFORD
considers a number of the
benefits of macrolide antibiotic
use in large animal practice



high concentrations.

Tylosin (Tylan 200, Elanco) was launched in the 1960s with a similar spectrum of activity to erythromycin whilst having a broader effect on *Mycoplasma spp.*

In the UK, it is still the most commonly used dairy antibiotic through its high specificity for Gram-positive bacteria and mycoplasmas in conditions such as pneumonia, footrot, metritis and mastitis linked to *Strep. uberis* or *Staph. aureus*. Tylosin in pigs (Tylan 200, Elanco; Tyluvet 20, Vétoquinol) is indicated to treat swine dysentery, erysipelas and enzootic pneumonia.

Tilmicosin (Micotil, Elanco) was launched in the early 1990s as a semi-synthetic derivative of tylosin and was the first macrolide to be developed for long-acting use against bovine respiratory disease (BRD) with one subcutaneous injection of 10mg/kg exceeding the MIC for *M. haemolytica* for 72 hours.

It has also been highly successful in sheep. It has been found that high intracellular tissue distribution may concentrate the drug up to 20-fold compared to serum¹.

Since 2006, and partially as a consequence of its strict veterinary only use that encourages closer clinical inspection, the high intracellular penetration of tilmicosin 300mg/ml has been used with much success to specifically target persistent *Staphylococcus aureus* infections². It is also indicated for the treatment of interdigital necrobacillosis in cattle and has been

used with success for whole flock treatment of footrot in sheep (SVS, 2010).

Tulathromycin (Draxxin, Pfizer), launched in 2004, uniquely has a slightly different lactone ring structure which places it into a different group of triamilides.

The product is licensed for the treatment and prevention of BRD, swine respiratory disease and the treatment of IBK. Like tilmicosin, it is characterised by extensive tissue distribution and slow elimination ($t_{1/2}$ 90 hours) which provides prolonged drug concentrations in the lungs.

Gamithromycin (Zactran, Merial), the most recent macrolide addition, is an azalide, again having a slightly different structure that encourages rapid absorption and long action ($t_{1/2}$ 90 hours). The product is licensed for use for the prevention and treatment of BRD in cattle.

With all these products, due respect must be paid to the recommended dose volume used per injection site and cross-resistance between different group members has been recorded.

Anti-inflammatory benefits

In addition to their antimicrobial effects, macrolide antibiotics are known to modulate immune cell functions. During the early 1980s, it was discovered that chronic treatment with erythromycin resulted in dramatically improved five-year survival rates in patients with chronic inflammatory pulmonary disease.

Low sputum concentrations in

patients receiving low-dose, long-term therapies, led researchers to focus on the anti-inflammatory effects. The mechanisms responsible for this phenomenon are still not totally understood but are thought to include the modulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines and the alteration of neutrophil function.

Research findings have demonstrated that both tilmicosin³ and tulathromycin⁴ induce neutrophil apoptosis, which in turn provides anti-inflammatory benefits, particularly in the lung.

Despite these advantages, the macrolides as a group are considered to be under-utilised in veterinary medicine.¹ The excellent intracellular activity combined with long action make them an ideal choice in large animal practice. Now, with a broader veterinary macrolide portfolio for selection, times may be changing.

1. Antimicrobial therapy in veterinary medicine – 4th edition (2007): Steve Giguere, *et al.*
2. Proceedings of British Mastitis Conference: Biggs, 1996; Allcock and May, 2009.
3. Buret, A. G. (2010) Immuno-modulation and anti-inflammatory benefits of antibiotics: example of tilmicosin. *Can J Vet Res* **74** (1): 1-10.
4. Fischer, C. D. *et al* (2011) Anti-inflammatory benefits of antibiotic-induced neutrophil apoptosis: tulathromycin induces caspase-3-dependent neutrophil programmed cell death. *Antimicrob Agents Chemother* **55** (1): 338-348.

Seminar on swine reproduction attracts more than 300 European specialists to Madrid

THE first European symposium solely dedicated to swine reproduction was held on 11th and 12th April in Madrid. Organised by Ceva Santé Animale, the symposium reviewed new reproduction management strategies to be implemented in order to improve health and production. Over 300 specialists from all parts of Europe attended.

The scientific programme featured a number of sow reproduction researchers, practitioners and consultants, including England's Dr Ian Dennis, who discussed physiology and the factors influencing management of the reproduction cycle. Finally, a panel discussion was held answering audience questions.

Dr Marc Prikazsky, Ceva's CEO, said that using science to improve the efficiency and quality of animal production was vital for feeding the 9 billion people on the planet by 2050.

Louise Radford, BVetMed, CertVR, MRCVS, DipM, MCIM, qualified at London in 1988 and spent several years in practice before joining the animal health industry in 1996, where she worked both internationally and in the UK. Since 2008 she has managed her own consultancy company, Vetbrief.

Facing up to issue of suicide by farmers

THERE is concern about agricultural suicide. There has been concern about suicide by farmers for many years and the Centre for Agricultural Strategy highlighted the detail in a report, *Agriculture & Human Health*, in 1983, produced for the launch of the Institute of Agricultural Medicine.

Understanding is still ongoing and recent research is questioning whether the support and advisory services are directing their efforts in the right way.

Internationally, blame has been placed on "suicide seeds" for the 200,000 farmer suicides in India. The cost of the biotechnology, to utilise cotton seeds with in-built resistance, has vastly increased the purchase price of the seed and the resulting farmer debt is believed to engender hopelessness.

Closer to home, an increase in farmer suicide in Ireland was reported in 2010, the findings of a Teagasc (the agriculture and food development authority in Ireland) initiative to investigate rural problems. The cost of farm improvements is believed to have led to a loss of income. Speed of change, financial pressure and social shift are all considered to be factors.

Figures collated by the Office of National Statistics show an improving situation for general suicide. For years there have been approximately three times as many male suicides as female. The data are presented as so many per 100,000 of the population and in 2009 males in England aged 15 and over had a figure of 16.1, which is better than the 20.2 recorded in 1991. The corresponding figures for females were 4.8 in 2009 and 6.5 in 1991.

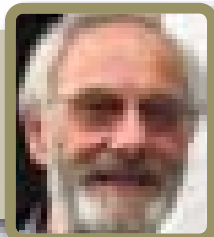
A similar fall is seen in the 15-44 age group with an encouraging

outcome for the over 75 years group, having a male fall of 25.9 to 13.9 and 9.1 to 4.8 for females. In 2009 the population of England was just under 52 million people, Wales 3 million, Scotland 5 million and Northern Ireland 1.8 million. We can expect over 5,500 suicides in the UK this year.

There are more than 400 administrative areas recorded with the number of suicides and the rate. During the period 1998 to 2004, South Gloucestershire recorded 58 suicides in men aged 15 and over, which gives 8.5 per 100,000 people and places the area at the better end of the spectrum.

North East Derbyshire had 29 suicides and is

RICHARD GARD
discusses a tragic and continuing problem and looks at the causes and the types of help available



number 401 in the list, whereas the Shetland Isles had 30 and shows the highest statistic with 47.5 suicides per 100,000 people. It would appear that many factors are likely to contribute to these figures, not least the timely response of emergency support.

People involved with farmers identified many aspects that are part of the stress of the life and the work. In 1991 two distinct initiatives were given some publicity, one in Yorkshire and one in Kent, both established by ladies with first-hand experience.

References were made to the "pain and depression of declining agricultural prosperity" and that "most farmers can cope with the day-to-day management stresses of land and animals but too often are unable to cope with their own emotions".

Insightful observation

One of the more insightful observations was that "farmers are reticent about saying that they want help", and "friends and family are often longing to help but unless the sufferer admits to being in trouble there is nothing anyone can do."

There were area initiatives based on health. The belief was, and still is, that a fit and healthy farmer is likely to rationalise the family and business difficulties that arise.

If there are underlying health problems, whether diagnosed or not, farming stresses may have fatal consequences. A number of GP surgeries operated an outreach approach, starting with the husbands of young wives attending the surgery for children's vaccinations. Whole family check-ups were encouraged.

As many of the working farmers are in this age group, there was expected to be a good outcome. The take-up, however, was not universally great and as the number of local families engaged in farming has fallen, it is more difficult to offer resources to farmers as a special case. It would be encouraging to hear of successful outcomes and initiatives currently in operation.

A particularly innovative project started up in Cumbria with rural nurses having a mobile surgery and attending markets and making farm calls. Here the farmer was able to fit in an MOT without making an appointment or having to attend a cluttered surgery.

The attitude of the nurses played a large part in the success of this initiative and many blood pressures and aches and pains were identified and referred to the doctor or not as appropriate. There was considerable interest in this approach and although it was difficult to directly attribute any benefits to prevention of suicide, the farmers appeared to adopt the "health cart". Then along came foot-and-mouth disease.

The closure of the countryside killed off any activities that were considered at all fringe and it appears that the project was never able to get going again. If there are such schemes that have gone unreported, it would be good to know. However, the slaughter of the cattle and sheep and the disruption of day-to-day farming released initiatives to support farming families in financial difficulties, and all involved recognised that stress and depression were very real problems in the countryside that needed to be tackled.

It was said that the management of the disease and the social acceptance allowed many farmers to retire with dignity. It is not known whether farmers who gave up farming then had a suicide-free existence. Was it the farming or the farmer that was the risk factor?

Because of the way that the statistics are recorded and collated, it is difficult to accurately know just how many farmers do actually commit suicide. It is said that a farmer suicide is not a cry for help. A shotgun or binder twine have been mentioned with farmer suicide and often the deed is carried out in an isolated location or when the family are away.

Some deaths that are recorded as accidental could be successful suicides, as benefit of the doubt is believed to be given by coroners. And this brings us to the latest research,

which has investigated anecdotal information from the UK and Canada.

Current projects have been contacted and their literature and publications reviewed. Discussions with the individuals involved, who are working with agricultural communities, have ranged across many aspects including the changing role of the wife within the family farm.

What has come to the fore is that the telephone support line approach has to be critically questioned. Younger farmers in particular are simply not coming forward until problems are at such a state that business and family may not be recoverable. The view is that the risk of farmer suicide is on the increase.

Guiding model

One of the guiding models for initiatives in the UK has been The Samaritans: its Rural Outreach programme helped to establish specific farmer support lines.

There are, of course, veterinary initiatives as well, combining telephone contact with experienced business awareness. The people who offer a listening ear deserve our special praise and it is recognised that they too are often in need of support for a return to emotional stability after difficult contacts.

Looking at the broad agricultural issues over the past 30 or so years, it would appear that stress and depression in farming goes in waves. At one point the wave troughs and then peaks. It would appear that the wave is going up in 2011 and anyone involved in large animal practice will be aware of many frustrations and difficulties being experienced by clients.

There has not been a formal role for veterinary surgeons with farmers in emotional difficulties but there are of course specific diseases of beasts that can cause depression in man. It may be helpful to identify local doctors who can do more than provide a short surgery consultation.

Offering a card with the number of a telephone helpline may not be enough. The individuals within the Farm Crisis Network offer support visits come what may but grants and donations are falling and more time has to be spent chasing funding to back up the volunteers.

The project "Family Farming: Culture, Suicide and Rural Support in the UK and Canada", is managed by Dr Linda Price at Queen's University, Belfast. A research paper is available (L.price@qub.ac.uk).

Richard Gard developed an interest in understanding more about the issue of farmer suicide over 30 years ago. At one time the farmer organisations were reluctant to recognise the stresses within farming. As a member, and then director, of the Institute of Agricultural Medicine, he attended many meetings and discussions where individuals combined their knowledge, which raised awareness and led to widespread recognition. Specific aspects have been identified that contribute to rural stress and the report, by the Farm Crisis Network in 2009, on the impact of TB on farming families has again alerted many to the problem.

Papers on gastro-intestinal conditions in horses

Investigation into lower survival rates of geriatric horses with colic

Louise Southwood and others, University of Pennsylvania

Gastrointestinal tract problems are probably the most common cause of referral to an equine hospital for geriatric horses, aged 16 years and over. Many surgeons believe that the survival rate of this group is lower than for mature horses aged four to 15 years.

In two papers, the authors compare the laboratory and clinical findings on admission for 300 colic patients in each group along with the treatment, diagnosis and short-term survival. Biochemical and cardiorespiratory findings were similar in both groups but geriatric horses were more likely to show evidence of pain and lack of normal intestinal borborygmi, and had a higher peritoneal fluid total protein concentration.

The overall survival rate was indeed lower in geriatric horses (59 %) than in mature adult horses (76%). The older horses were more likely to be euthanased after attempts to medically manage their condition. Those undergoing surgery for large bowel obstruction were also less likely to survive.

Equine Veterinary Journal 42 (7): 621-627 and 628-635.

Plasma D-Dimer as a prognostic indicator in equine colic cases

Carla Cesarini and others, Autonomous University of Barcelona

Coagulation disorders are a common finding in horses with gastrointestinal diseases. Levels of the fibrin degradation product plasma D-Dimer have been found to be a sensitive marker of coagulopathies and so the authors investigated whether it might provide a prognostic indicator for gastrointestinal disease. In 493 horses evaluated for abdominal pain, those with more serious diagnoses of enteritis and peritonitis had more severe coagulopathies and higher plasma D-Dimer concentrations on admission. Non-survivors also had significantly higher levels of the biomarker on arrival.

Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine 24 (6): 1,490-1,497.

Clostridium perfringens in faeces and ileal contents from horses with grass sickness

Bryony Waggett and others, University of Edinburgh

There is increasing evidence of an association between equine grass sickness and intestinal overgrowth with

Clostridium botulinum. The authors investigate a possible link with a related anaerobe, *C. perfringens*, by sampling material from the guts of grass sickness cases and healthy horses. Selective culture and ELISA analyses of faeces and ileal contents showed significantly higher levels of *C. perfringens* in the grass sickness cases. Using a commercial ELISA for this bacterium may therefore aid in differentiating between grass sickness and other causes of colic.

Equine Veterinary Journal 42 (6): 494-499.

Resection and anastomosis of the descending colon in 43 horses

Timo Prange and others, Michigan State University

Conditions requiring resection and anastomosis of the descending colon are relatively unusual forms of colic and there is little published data on the surgical outcome. The authors examined records from seven equine referral hospitals and gathered data on 43 cases. Of these, 36 horses (84%) were successfully discharged and 28 of 30 followed up over a period of at least six months were still alive. The most frequent cause of small colon incarceration was strangulating lipoma. Common complications included post-operative fever and diarrhoea.

Veterinary Surgery 39 (6): 748-753.

Cyclo-oxygenase-2 expression in tissues from horses with gastric ulcers

Niamh Morrissey and others, University College Dublin

Cyclo-oxygenase-2 selective analgesic drugs are in common use in equine medicine but there is little data on the distribution of the target enzyme in diseased and healthy tissues in this species. The authors examined gastric biopsy specimens from horses with experimentally-induced gastric ulcers for evidence of COX-2 mRNA expression. They found that the enzyme was expressed in the ulcer margins during healing, indicating a possible role for this enzyme in ulcer repair. This potential role for COX-2 should be considered when prescribing COX-2 inhibitors for horses with gastric ulcers.

American Journal of Veterinary Research 71 (11): 1,312-1,320.

Effect of lipopolysaccharide on the expression of genes associated with inflammation

Marco Lopes and others, University of Georgia

Systemic inflammatory response syndrome may occur as a result of the transmural movement of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) from the intestinal lumen in horses with severe gut disease. The authors investigated the effect of *ex vivo* exposure to LPS on the expression of inflammatory genes in leukocytes from horses with

gastrointestinal disease. Incubation with LPS caused increased expression of interleukin-10 in both healthy and diseased horses but the changes were less marked in those with non-fatal GI disease, indicating a possible prognostic role.

American Journal of Veterinary Research 71 (10): 1,162-1,169.

Intestinal neuronal dysplasia-like condition in a foal with bacterial colitis

Dipak Giri and others, Texas A&M University

A five-day-old quarterhorse colt was presented with a history of lethargy, agonal breathing and diarrhoea. Treatment was unsuccessful and the foal was euthanased. Necropsy findings included numerous small pale tan to red nodules in the submucosa of the right ventral colon. These were composed of expanded submucosal mesenchyme containing numerous neurons individually or in ganglia. The histological changes were unusual but were consistent with those seen in a condition of the submucosal plexus in human patients known as intestinal neuronal dysplasia.

Veterinary Pathology 47 (4): 654-657.

Association between hypercoagulability and decreased survival in horses with GI disease

Bettina Dunkel and others, Royal Veterinary College, London

Hypercoagulability can be detected in the early stages of ischaemic or inflammatory gastrointestinal disease. The authors assessed hypercoagulability in 30 diseased and healthy horses using the method of thrombo-elastography (TEG) to identify possible associations with outcome. Their findings showed that horses with ischaemic or inflammatory GI disease had shorter reaction times in TEG tests but the changes were subtle and did not resemble those seen in both animals and humans with other forms of hypercoagulability.

Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine 24 (6): 1,467-1,474.

Methods for optimising results of ultrasound scans of the equine small intestine

Tracy Norman and others, Texas A&M University

The convoluted shape of the small intestine and the presence of ingesta and gas within the gastrointestinal tract mean that interpreting ultrasound images of this organ is challenging. The authors examined the effects of fasting and giving infusions of a mineral oil-based contrast agent on the quality of the images obtained in 10 healthy horses. A 24-hour fast significantly improved the ability to obtain high quality images. Meanwhile, the use of a contrast agent

produced qualitative improvements in image quality but these were not statistically significant.

Veterinary Radiology and Ultrasound 51 (6): 642-646.

Malformation of the ventral colon in a thoroughbred filly with colic

Gareth Trope and others, Ballarat

Veterinary Practice, Victoria

Congenital abnormalities of the intestinal tract may remain asymptomatic or be associated with colic in the neonate or older horse. The authors describe a case in a four-month-old thoroughbred filly which presented with abdominal pain. An exploratory laparotomy revealed an unusual T-shaped malformation of the ventral colon. After resection and anastomosis there were no further episodes of abdominal pain during a 12-month follow-up period. However, acute dehiscence of linear alba did occur as a complication of the original surgery.

Australian Veterinary Journal 88 (8): 322-325.

Epitheliotropic intestinal T-cell lymphoma as a cause of diarrhoea in a horse

Macarena Sanz and others, Washington State University

A 25-year-old Appaloosa gelding was presented with a two-month history of weight loss and diarrhoea of one week's duration. Laboratory and clinical findings were inconclusive and due to a combination of the horse's age and its deteriorating condition, the owner requested euthanasia. On post mortem examination, neoplastic lymphocytes were found to be infiltrating the mucosa of the large and small intestine. Immunohistochemistry was positive for CD-3, a T-cell marker consistent with a diagnosis of epitheliotropic T-cell lymphoma.

Canadian Veterinary Journal 51 (5): 522-524.

Complete caecal bypass without ileal transection in seven cases of caecal impaction

Diego Quinteros and others, Tufts University, Massachusetts

Impaction is the most common surgical condition affecting the caecum in horses, accounting for up to 55% of such cases. The condition is usually treated by complete caecal bypass with ileal transection but a variant technique has been introduced without ileal transection. The authors describe the results in seven horses treated using the new method. Although the clinical outcomes were similar, avoiding ileal transection has the potential to reduce surgical time and there is a reduced risk of intra-operative abdominal contamination.

Australian Veterinary Journal 88 (11): 434-438.

May 2011 is
Gastric Ulcer
Awareness
Month

Equine gastric ulcers. The hidden health threat.

It's estimated that up to **63%**^{1,2} of performance horses suffer from gastric ulcers, but many don't show any clinical signs.

The only way to be sure is to perform a gastroscopy. Travelling³, competing and training^{4,5} all increase the risk of gastric ulcers, even for horses in peak athletic condition.

As part of a new health initiative **InnerVision**, Merial are raising awareness of this potentially damaging condition.

For more information about the **InnerVision** campaign and gastroscopy clinics in your area, contact your local Merial Territory Manager.

www.equinegastriculcers.co.uk



References: 1. Mitchell RD. Prevalence of gastric ulcers in hunter/jumper and dressage horses evaluated for poor performance. *Proceedings of the Association of Equine Sports Medicine Annual Meeting 2001*. 2. Nieto JE, Snyder JR, Beldomenico P, Aleman M, Kerr JW, Spier SJ. Prevalence of gastric ulcers in endurance horses – a preliminary report. *Vet J* 2004 Jan; 167(1): 33-37. 3. McClure SR *et al*. Gastric ulcer development in horses in a simulated show or training environment. *JAVMA* 2005; Vol 227 (5): 775-777. 4. Manohar M, Goetz TE, Saupe B, Hutchens E, Coney E. Thyroid, renal and splanchnic circulation in horses at rest and during short-term exercise. *Am J Vet Res* 1995; 56: 1356-1361. 5. Lorenzo-Figueras M *et al*. Effects of exercise on gastric volume and pH in the proximal portion of the stomach of horses. *AVJR* 2002; 63(11): 1481-1487.



Merial Animal Health Ltd. CM19 5TG, UK. *GastroGard*TM is a registered trademark of the AstraZeneca Group of Companies. © Merial 2011. All rights reserved. *GastroGard*TM contains omeprazole. Legal category UK: [POM-V] IE: [POM]. Read packaging before use. For further information call the Merial Customer Support Centre on 0870 6000123.


GastroGardTM
(omeprazole) 37% Oral paste for horses

Gastric ulcers and weanlings: evaluation of three diets

IN a paper in the March 2011 issue of the *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science* (pp124-128) entitled "Effect of feed processing method on average daily gain and gastric ulcer development in weanling horses", Rebecca S. Flores, Chris R. Byron and Kevin H. Kline, report on a study in which they determined that a forage-rich diet caused the least amount of gastrointestinal (GI) problems.

Dr Kline, professor of animal science at the University of Illinois, and colleagues evaluated the effects of three different diets (an all-alfalfa hay diet, a diet of hay cubes and grain, and one consisting of a pelleted complete feed) on the gastro-intestinal health of 16 standardbred weanlings (six colts and 10 fillies). The weanlings were divided into two groups of eight (three colts and five fillies each).

Each group was fed a different diet during three 28-day periods. Both groups were fed the all-alfalfa hay diet

for the first 28-day period. Then the researchers fed one group the hay cubes and grain diet and gave the other complete feed for 28 days. The groups switched diets for the final 28 days.

At the end of each 28-day period, each weanling underwent an endoscopic examination to determine

VETERINARY PRACTICE
reports on some of the latest research findings on gastric ulcers in horses

the number and severity of gastric ulcers present in the stomach. The veterinarian performing the endoscopic exams was blinded to the weanlings' most recent diets, except for the first round of exams in which all the horses were on the same diet.

After period 1 on the all-hay diet, the horses were found to have low ulcer numbers and severity scores, supporting the importance of a high-forage diet in young growing horses, the team reported.

After the next 28-day cycle when the horses began consuming their new diets, the team noted that regardless of whether the weanlings ate the hay cubes and grain diet or the complete feed diet, the number and severity of the ulcers in the weanlings' stomachs had increased by 30%. There was no statistically significant difference between the ulcer scores among horses on these two diets.

Three times higher

On the final endoscopic exams (after the third 28-day cycle), the horses' gastric ulcer scores were nearly three times higher than their base scores. The team said these results suggest that the weanlings did not adjust well to the high-concentrate diets." This suggests that the gastric ulceration seen in the young horses in this study was a progressive, active pathology extending

throughout the 56 days of both high grain diet treatments," the report notes.

The team hypothesised that "the finely ground pelleted feed required less chewing and might therefore have resulted in reduced saliva production". Because saliva has a buffering effect on the stomach, the researchers believe this imbalance likely contributed to ulcer formation in the stomach.

Professor Kline suggests that if young horses are pushed to grow and gain weight for whatever reasons, then the feeding of additional processed concentrates should be divided into several small feedings throughout the day and accompanied by plenty of good-quality forages.

Starting with high-quality forage provides weanlings with most of their nutrient requirements, according to the researchers, reducing their need for additional concentrates.

Study of prevalence of gastric ulcers in endurance horses

IN a paper entitled "Prevalence of gastric ulcer syndrome in high-level endurance horses", published in the March edition of the *Equine Veterinary Journal* [43 (2): 141-144], Y. Tamzali, C. Marguet, N. Priymenko and F. Lyazrhi, report that two-thirds of horses examined after a 50 or 80km endurance ride had gastric ulcers, but no data on horses competing at higher levels (i.e. 90-160km) were available. In addition, more than 90% of racehorses had EGUS.

"Unlike these other types of athletic horses, the prevalence of gastric ulcers in endurance horses is less well-studied," said Dr Youssef Tamzali, of the Ecole Veterinaire de Toulouse in France.

Dr Tamzali and his team performed two separate gastroscopies in 30 high-level endurance horses: one during the off-season period and the second during the competition season within 2-3 days of competing in a 90-160km ride.

Statistically significant

Key findings were that 48% of the horses had gastric ulcers during the off-season period, and 93% of the horses had gastric ulcers during the competition season. This difference was statistically significant, and age, breed, and gender did not influence the results.

"This high prevalence of gastric ulcers in elite endurance horses is similar to the rates of ulcers in other athletic horses and could be an important cause of poor performance," Dr Tamzali said.

Two other significant findings Tamzali were:

1. Horses kept on pasture showed significantly higher "ulcer scores" than the horses housed in a mixed environment (the group of horses kept on pasture had a high starch diet due to added concentrates); and
2. A positive correlation existed between "gastric score" severity and ride distance: the longer the ride, the more severe the score.

"These results strengthen those obtained by another research group and underline the fact that amount of starch fed per day or per meal is a very important factor in development of ulcers," said Dr Tamzali.

■ Previous studies have shown that gastric ulcers occur in up to 37% of leisure horses, 63% of performance horses and 93% of racehorses, with foals at particular risk – around 50% of foals develop stomach ulcers, particularly in the first few months of life.

This, and further information, is on the website www.equinegastriculcers.co.uk.

can't
cope?

Visit www.veterinarypractice.com
for more information
on this and other
equine health issues.



Horse welfare survey findings published

WORLD Horse Welfare has published the results of the Great British Horse Survey 2010.

The survey was carried out to provide a picture of the equine community in the UK, including their thoughts on topics such as horse welfare in sports, costs of horse keeping and equine disease.

More than 14,000 people responded to the survey, with more than three-quarters describing themselves as horse owners.

The findings revealed, says the charity, that Britain's equine community are clearly feeling the

pinch as the growing costs of keeping their horses continue to bite. More than 80% of those who responded said costs were their first or second most pressing concern, while almost half cited access to safe riding as a priority.

In contrast, only one in four ranked the risk of infectious disease highly, despite the emergence last year of the first cases of Equine Infectious Anaemia in the UK for three decades. Opinion is divided over how many owners have their horses vaccinated as frequently as recommended by vets, with 41% of those who had an opinion thinking less than half of owners did this while another 41% think it is more than half.

The overall perception of horse welfare in sports is quite positive, but some are considered to be better than others. When asked "How well do you think the treatment of horses is regulated in the following sports?", eventing came out on top as 84% of respondents said that the treatment of horses was either "quite well", "well-regulated" or "very well-regulated". This was followed by dressage at 80%, showjumping at 77% and endurance at 74%.

Around one in four, however, thought the regulation of treatment of horses in flat racing and jump racing was "quite poor", "poor" or "very poor", and almost one in five think the same for polo and hunting.

A majority (69%) think the 80% increase of horse riders in the last 10 years is a good thing and 49% think there has also been a corresponding improvement in horse knowledge in the past 10 years. The main sources for knowledge (respondents were able to choose more than one source) were given as magazines (76%), vets and farriers (73%), websites (64%) and friends (63%).

For the question "What would improve horse welfare the most?", the results showed that over 56% of respondents felt that education was the key. A third of people believed that proper enforcement of legislation was needed and almost a fifth thought a reduction in overbreeding would help improve horse welfare the most.

Nearly 90% of respondents thought owners of obese horses should be educated and only 12% said they should be prosecuted.

Finally, 92% of respondents believe Great Britain is still a nation of horse lovers.

10th anniversary of MRI company: from prototype to 50th installation

HALLMARQ MRI Veterinary Imaging reports that it has completed 10 years in business with more than 22,000 scans around the world.

Tim Mair of Bell Equine Veterinary Clinic in Kent, who worked with Hallmarq to develop its prototype scanner and had the first system installed in 2002, said it had "changed the way we diagnose lameness".

"The technology has helped to increase the speed and accuracy of diagnosis and has also ensured horses and ponies are in as safe an environment as they can be for such a procedure."

Hallmarq's Jos Belgrave commented: "We are delighted to reach this milestone, and we will carry on striving to ensure rapid diagnosis of lameness."

The 50th system was recently installed at Northwest Equine Performance Clinic in Oregon USA.

MRSA carriers

ACCORDING to a paper published recently in the *Australian Veterinary Journal*, equine vets are more likely to be carriers of MRSA than vets who deal mainly with small animals.

Industry and government vets were found to have the lowest prevalence (0.9%) in a survey of 771 vets attending conferences.

Solely equine vets had a prevalence of 21.4%, those with horses as a major area of work 11.8%, with small animals vets at 4.9%.

Three methods of giving equine pain relief

The choice is a no-brainer

DANILON®
Equidos

Palatable NSAID for horses, with
suxibuzone, the next generation
phenylbutazone pro-drug



**HOLD, STRUGGLE,
SQUIRT**

**DISGUISE, FEED,
WAIT**

**TEAR, POUR,
RELAX**



DANILON® Equidos 1.5 g Granules for Top Dressing contains 1.5 g suxibuzone.
Legal category [POM-V] Further information is available from: Janssen Animal Health,
50-100 Holmers Farm Way, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 4EG, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1494 567555 Email: ahealth@its.jnj.com www.janssenanimalhealth.com

Use medicines responsibly www.noah.co.uk/responsible

JANSSEN
ANIMAL HEALTH

a division of
Janssen-Cilag Ltd

Graduated? Now you need to relearn how to learn!

SELF-directed Learning (SDL) is a set of key learning skills that need to be brought fully into play upon graduation and developed and refined throughout the professional career in the pursuit of life-long learning.

SDL provides the opportunity for an individual to both take responsibility for and have control over his or her learning.

What is SDL?

Learning can be viewed on a continuum with “other”-directed learning (ODL) towards one end and SDL towards the other. ODL is the learning we are familiar with as children and which extends to a greater or lesser extent into university and even beyond. SDL is the predominant learning after graduation.

The key is the matter of choice and responsibility and whether it lies with an outside “expert” who dictates what is to be learnt, how and whether it has been learnt or with the individuals themselves.

Why is SDL so important?

Though it may not appear so, SDL is the ONLY form of learning that counts after graduation. Everything

that we do regarding education is OUR responsibility. It is our choice and we suffer or enjoy the consequences.

The RCVS currently stipulates quantities of CPD but, rightly, leaves type, form and nature to the individual, which allows the flexibility required for the multitude of career paths, contexts and levels of experience/expertise that exist within the profession.

So what's the problem?

Well, there are several (**Panel 1**). Essentially, the veterinary undergraduate

after graduation.

This is then compounded in that we are, predominately, expecting them to develop those skills through the Professional Development Phase (PDP) with little or no support.

So what's the solution?

Well, again there are several (**Panel 1**). Enhancing development of SDL readiness and skills within the university environment is, perhaps, the most obvious. It would have significant advantages both to the students and the universities but it would be challenging to implement in view of the systemic resistance to change which currently exists.

It will be interesting to see if this changes when the newer approaches being used at

Nottingham University have an influence in the next few years as their students are released into the working population.

Strengthening EMS is clearly important and my understanding is that the RCVS is working towards this, though there remain some doubts with the suggestion of making EMS voluntary being raised again at recent RCVS Council meetings.

Implications

This would have significant implications if this opportunity was missed and it is to be hoped that what has been called the “jewel in the crown” of veterinary education (RCVS, 2009) will be polished and re-set rather than discarded.

Considerable work is being done with regard to the PDP and this is probably where a focused effort could have greatest benefit to the younger members of our profession, closely followed by EMS.

The transition into practice can be difficult and can be the origin from which serious issues affecting physical and mental well-being arise as the years go by.

Currently, many new graduates either do not appreciate the potential benefits of PDP with regard to developing their professional practice or see it as a tick-box exercise from which they gain little. This needs to change.

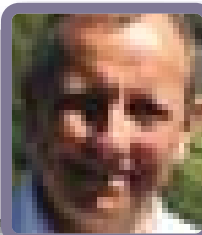
Real benefits

The RCVS requirement for the development and training of clinical coaches for the new Veterinary Nursing Scheme could, if linked to the support of EMS students and PDP graduates, bring real benefits not only to the students and graduates but also to the practices themselves.

It is important that whilst we need to improve the support available that this also needs to be improved in such a way that encourages/ensures individuals to take responsibility for their own future development if they are to become fully contributing members of the profession.

CHRIS WHIPP

continues his series on life-long learning with a look at ‘self-directed learning’ and urges individuals to take responsibility for their own development



Chris Whipp, BVetMed, MSc(VetGP), MRCVS, qualified from the RVC in 1979. After 20 years in practice, he completed a one-year modular course in clinical coaching, mentoring and supervision at Guy's hospital in London. In 2001 he joined the first SPVS Masters set doing a masters degree researching learning styles and the development of clinical expertise whilst contributing to the initial groundworks for a new RCVS modular certificate. In 2004 he completed a postgraduate course in professional and executive coaching before going on to work for five years as an executive coach within the business sector and conducting doctoral research into self-directed learning (SDL) within the veterinary profession. He currently splits his time between first opinion clinical practice, providing work-based learning programmes through Middlesex University, professional coaching and the “BEVME – A Dialogue” initiative.

PANEL 1 Challenges

- Decline in SDL readiness through the course
- Increased preference for concrete learning through the course
- Difficulty maximising benefits from EMS
- Difficulty navigating the transition into practice
- Preference for and dependence on undergraduate style CPD learning

Solutions

- Strengthen EMS
- Improve and formalise PDP support
- Development of clinical coaches
- Encourage the development of more self-directed forms of CPD than have existed in the past

“Best Evidence Veterinary Medical Education (BEVME) - A Dialogue”

“BEVME – a dialogue” is a two-year UK practitioner-led initiative to bring together stakeholders from all aspects and stages in veterinary education to encourage and foster “best evidence” practice and provide constructive solutions to existing challenges.

It doesn't matter whether you are a student looking towards graduating, a new graduate making the transition, an experienced practitioner looking for the next challenge, an academic looking to integrate your teaching, a manager looking to ensure a ROI, a corporate looking for a group approach or a CPD provider looking to strengthen the evidence of your practice, there will be as much there as you wish to take from it.

There are no costs, no obligation and you can unsubscribe at any time. You will receive regular e-mail newsletters on all matters veterinary educational and membership of a secure online “dialogue” group.

To register an interest/join the group, go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/BEVME. If you have any queries, e-mail christopherwhipp@aol.com.

A country developing to match world standards

WORKING in a foreign country, if only for a short time, opens your eyes to its culture like nothing else. For me, a trip to the Mekong Delta to visit Pangasius farms and onward processing operations has left me with a lot of thinking through about my pre-conceived ideas of Asia.

Flying into Ho Chi Minh City after a long haul of 17 hours flying time opened my senses to the noise and crush of people. For the whole of the week the noise of Hondas (a generic term for all motorcycles) was never far away.

There are up to around 10 million people living in the city and it shows.

The traffic is chaotic but I was assured there are very few accidents because people drive so slowly. It is apparent that you can drive in any direction you like provided you keep moving and are relatively slow.

In contrast, the traffic in the countryside, although less busy, is more likely to cause loss of life simply because people drive too fast on poorly made roads.

There are around 4 million Hondas in Ho Chi Minh City and they appear to be on the road all at the same time. They are the workhorse of the country and can be used to transport anything from dozens of eggs to families (I counted up to four people on a bike).

Watching them from a rooftop terrace seems like a flowing river on the streets below with eddies and shallows where a small group will cut across traffic (traffic lights ignored) or riding on pavements when the traffic light turns red. A metro for the city has been promised by 2015 – let's hope so.

Journey times down country to the Mekong are incredibly long by road – it took us five hours to drive from HCMC to Can Tho, the largest city in the Delta. By contrast, it seemed a lot

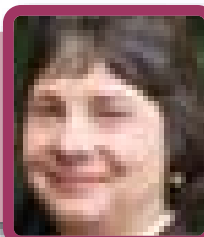
easier when we travelled from place to place by boat.

The Mekong river floods every year as river water flows down from China bringing rich alluvial silt (and no doubt other entities). The flooding is fairly predictable and gradual enough to allow families in the flooding zones to move their property piece by piece to higher ground. Others build their homes on stilts and can remain *in situ*.

The silting of the river has a wonderful irony. On the river there are a number of dredging boats which pick up the sediment and take it by boat to Singapore and other places where it is sold back to the Chinese.

Vietnamese

Dr LYDIA BROWN reports on her recent visit to Vietnam and describes some of the more remarkable sights and sounds - and the fishing industry



food is wonderful and much of it is based upon fish. Dessert always seemed to be healthy fruit (dragon fruit, lychee, mango, rambutan, small sweet bananas, jack fruit and durian). The main fish species grown in the country is Pangasius, a freshwater catfish we find in UK supermarkets as Vietnamese River Cobbler.

Global exports

Vietnam exports 600,000 tonnes of Pangasius (mainly as fillets) to 132 markets globally and more than a third is exported to Europe and the USA. Ironically, the USA has its own large channel catfish industry so the competition must be fierce there for the less than 10% of Vietnam's exported produce which it takes.

About 450,000 tonnes of shrimp (Black Tiger and White leg) are also cultured with just under half of it being exported. Put into context, Vietnamese Pangasius production is equivalent to the total Atlantic salmon production in Norway, UK, Ireland and Chile. Most Pangasius is produced in freshwater ponds and fish grow

from fingerlings to 1kg harvest weight in around seven months.

One pond (1 ha) can produce 400 tonnes of fish. These numbers indicate both the enormous challenges in keeping fish healthy and trying to encourage good welfare but also the huge potential for fish production to provide cheap protein to feed local people.

The fish are seined from the pond and put into specially constructed wells of boats to go to the processing plants – 20 tonnes at a time. At the plant they are netted from the boats into containers which are taken to the entry point of the plant on the riverside and they are killed by slitting the gills.

Manual systems

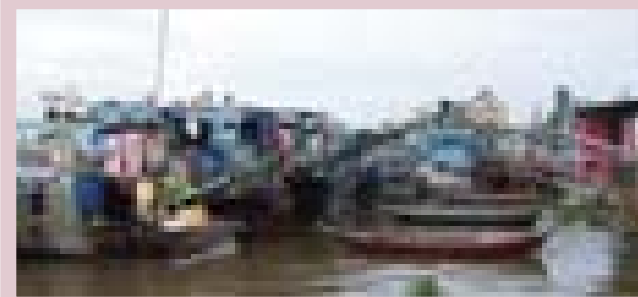
All these operations are alongside the river systems. The processing plants are huge and all operations are manual on a conveyor belt system. One plant I visited employed 2,500 local people. My greatest surprise was to see the huge number of quality standards these processing plants have achieved. Almost every national market has its own standards and these processing plants must comply with them all to be competitive in the world.

Processing is fast – very fast. I saw one worker fillet a fish and only take 10 seconds per side.

There are other less intensive forms of aquaculture. Tilapia are grown in cages under floating houses; fish and shrimp are trapped in nets by small family units as the floods come down the Mekong River, fattened up and then harvested as the floods recede.

The most creative and also very popular method is to trap floating vegetables – or as I misheard the first time, “blooding be- gettables” (mainly water hyacinth) – inside staked enclosures, leaving them for a month to encourage small fry to shelter in the vegetations.

Nets are gradually placed around the enclosure and eventually it is possible to remove the vegetation and seine out the fish



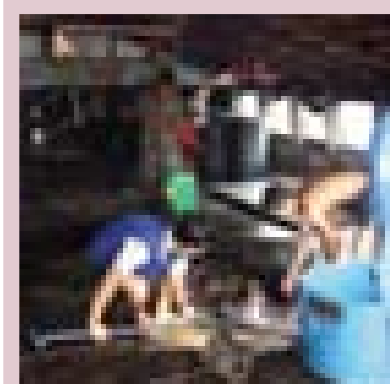
Many families live in floating houses.

which have meanwhile grown to a reasonable size, all for very little effort.

People in the countryside are very poor by our standards (although in comparison with the rest of Vietnam, the Mekong Delta is relatively wealthy) but the government is trying very hard to help people help themselves. In the past there has been an issue of boat families on the river who did not send their children to school; the government issued new regulations about this which meant that they are now educated.

My over-riding impression is of a country which is developing an infrastructure to match world standards at a level of quality in processing which would be the envy of anywhere else in the world.

The people are kind and gentle and business is conducted in a formal, professional manner. If you cannot deliver the product with the right quality and the right price, you will not get the contract. There is a lot of integration in business both in families and throughout the supply chain – a model we could do well to emulate.



Two aspects of fish farming.



The workhorses of the country.

Lydia Brown, BVSc, PhD, BA, MBA, FRCVS, who qualified from Liverpool in 1978, is a fish vet working for Pharmaq Ltd, a company providing fish health-care solutions throughout the world. Dr Brown, who was president of the RCVS in 1998-99 and is currently president of the Veterinary Benevolent Fund, a position she has held since 2005, was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours.

Misadventures with elves

FOR reasons that remained hidden to me – and which, I felt, were most unjust – I still had not located sufficient (or even, if I was brutally honest with myself, possibly any) of the supposedly mythical creatures necessary for my DipCrypt case log.

I take my continuing education obligations most seriously, and this had not been for lack of strenuous effort, with considerable international travel. At least, however, I was accumulating a growing body of knowledge about the environments in which such creatures were reputed to live, which I was sure had to count for something. At least it would help me pass the theory exam.

Nevertheless, I continued to hold hopes of one day actually encountering some of the creatures I was attempting to study, and treat. Accordingly, when recently invited to speak at a scientific seminar in Denmark, I jumped at the chance to visit a land well known in cryptozoological circles for its rich mythological heritage.

Denmark is replete with legends and sagas about ancient heroes, gods, and the creation of the universe. According to ancient lore, Denmark is populated by dwarves, jötnar (giants), trolls, the feared Fenris (a giant wolf), sea serpents and elves. It was time to see whether any grains of truth might still underlie the old stories.

Hazards of cryptozoology

And so it was that one dark, stormy night in late November, I stepped from the warm interior of a taxi onto the chilly cobblestoned streets of one of Europe's best-preserved mediaeval cities.

The taxi-driver had not spoken false: the cutting wind did indeed appear to have come directly from the North Pole. Its icy breath seemed to have lowered the temperature well below freezing, but cryptozoologists must be able to master the most demanding of environments, and so I clamped my chattering teeth and set forth into the wind.

My first challenge was to locate the accommodation kindly provided by my hosts. The Hotel Bethel was located at

Nyhavn, a side pocket off the storm-tossed harbour of this water-based city. My bracing walk along the harbour wall would provide my first opportunity to search for signs of cryptozoological life.

I was particularly interested in the Jörmungandr, or Midgardsormen, of Norse mythology. This massive serpent was infamous for terrorising fishermen, rising like a column from the water to attack and swallow small vessels and their hapless crew.

Cautiously, I scanned the slick oily water for any glint of the sharp black scales and

famously placed a binocular to his blind eye, stating "I see no white flag!" Not known for his restraint in the face of perceived threat, he then proceeded to destroy most of the Danish fleet, after Denmark unwisely sided with Napoleon. The British also occupied the Kastellet for six weeks, in 1807.

And so it was with a sense of history guiding me that I stole away from my conference at lunch, to cross the bridges over the double-moat, thereby entering within the inner gates. In seconds I gained territory that had costs the lives of many other British visitors, long ago.

The perils of fraternisation

My explorations continued later that evening, when the charming hotel receptionist directed me across the old city to a restaurant said to offer an excellent vegetarian buffet. And so, wrapped against the cold, I ventured once more into the cobblestoned streets.

Beautiful olde European architecture greeted me at every turn, with every second building apparently an art gallery! This was a city clearly rich in both ancient and modern culture. As I lingered by the jewellery and art stores, peals of laughter caught my attention. Turning, I beheld a group of singing teenage girls heading my way. Snatches of English indicated that one of them was turning 17 that night.

As they drew closer, however, my cryptozoological instincts were awakened. The fine features and long blonde hair of the Scandinavian people are believed by many to reveal their Elven (or álfar) heritage. Some interbreeding with humans apparently occurred, which could on occasion be useful, as the ælfen were possessed of magical powers. They could, for

flaming red eyes for which this beast is known, but was rewarded with only salty spray and a rising wind. With mixed feelings, I retreated once more to the safety of the alleyways.

Exactly how one would conduct a clinical examination or treatment of such a monster was a question that would for now remain a mystery. Perhaps it was for the best.

Danish-style venues

My spirits soon rose, however, on catching sight of the noble spires and battlements of the "hotel" in which I was to stay. Clearly, my hosts had both a fine taste in architecture and a deep understanding of the environments necessary for optimal preparation of conference presentations by their overworked lecturers.

It also offered a fine view of the harbour, complete with houseboats and promenade cafés, bedecked with bulbs and glowing lanterns.

My delight continued the next morning as my colleagues and I walked to the conference venue along the harbour wall. We passed the outer edge of the Amalienborg Palace, apparently still inhabited by the Danish royal family.

The conference centre itself was located on a small strip of land between the water and the Kastellet, a massive mediaeval fort, complete with moats and high pentagonal walls, that has formed part of the northern fortifications of this oft-invaded city since the 17th century.

Other British visitors have also been drawn to the Kastellet, since 1801, when Lord Nelson



The location of my hotel at Nyhavn allowed me to scan the harbour for Jörmungandr sightings. Below: the nearby Christianshavns Canal.



example, pass through walls and doors in the manner of ghosts.

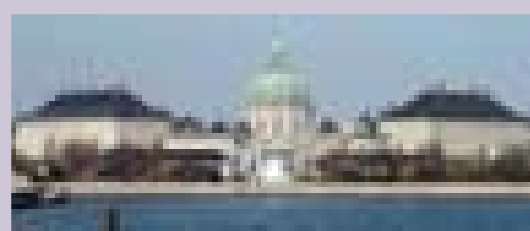
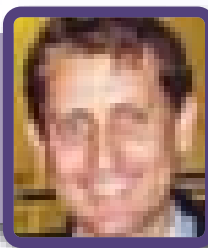
Elf-fraternisation, however, is notoriously dangerous, for not all elves are benign. The infamous elf-bolt was apparently used to injure both cattle and people, and Scandinavians accordingly placed elf-crosses (Alfkors, Älvkors or Ellakors) on their walls to protect themselves against malevolent elves. The prominent cross in my hotel dining room suggested both the existence of an elf problem – and that the old ways were not entirely dead.

Hence, it was with wary eyes that I observed the approaching girls. No elf bows were on obvious display, but my previous failures of female judgement have occasionally proven spectacular. Furthermore, they appeared on the verge of dancing, and men lured into elvish dances are known to be at grave risk of enchantment. Several have reappeared only after many years have passed in the outside world.

Whatever their precise genotype, these women were indeed enchanting – and I was due at work in London the next afternoon. Unfortunately, I was fairly sure my employers would not accept my "elvish entrapment" excuse, should I arrive several years too late. Regrettably, understanding of the occupational hazards facing veterinary cryptozoologists remains as underdeveloped as our financial recompense.

And so I regretfully turned and faced into the icy wind once more, to continue my lonely quest to study, and hopefully one day bring the benefits of modern medicine, to those amazing but woefully neglected creatures, who are considered by mainstream clinicians to be mythical or extinct.

ANDREW KNIGHT
continues the series on his quest
for 'CPD with a difference...'



Amalienborg Palace, seen from Copenhagen's Opera House.

Andrew Knight, BVMS, CertAW, PhD, MRCVS, a London-based veterinary cryptozoologist, hopes to become the first RCVS-registered specialist in the medicine and surgery of supposedly mythical animals (DipCrypt).

A month of entertaining treats...

AN excuse to visit the London theatre is always welcome and last month I was fortunate enough to be treated by my old boss from Animal Health Trust days, Andrew Higgins, to a night at the opera, in particular, the Royal Opera House where the English National Opera were performing Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*.

This production has received mixed reviews and Michael Tanner in the *Spectator* was particularly hard on the opening night, describing it as "musically mainly miserable".

Perhaps it had improved from the first night or, probably far more likely, I am less critical than Mr

Tanner, because whilst *Fidelio* itself would not be my favourite opera (I think that Beethoven's talents were better suited to other genres, as apparently so did he), I thoroughly enjoyed this version. Then again, I am always delighted when a German opera is sung with such clear diction that I can understand much of it!

Conductor Mark Elder, music director of the Hallé Orchestra and a former director of the ENO, came in at

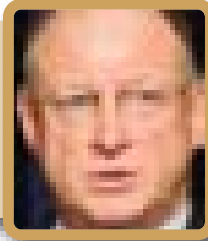
short notice to replace Kirill Petrenko, who had been forced to withdraw due to a back problem.

I liked Elder's interpretation, as well as Nina Stemme's Leonore, and it was also nice to see Willard White's brief appearance in the second act as Don Fernando.

As a first time visitor, I was amazed by the sheer scale of the Royal Opera House with its massive, elegant auditorium and numerous places to eat and drink. It is a fabulous place to visit in its own right.

Fidelio was first

Dr COLIN ROBERTS enjoys a night at the opera in London, along with a play featuring Emma Thompson's younger sister and a cinematic comedy...



performed in Vienna in 1805 when the theatre was full of occupying French troops. Only three performances were given and the following year after two renditions the score was withdrawn by Beethoven who was unhappy with the quality of the productions.

The final version only appeared in 1814, again in Vienna, and it has remained a regular part of the concert repertoire since. The current production, by Jürgen Flimm, premiered

at the Metropolitan in 2000.

Fidelio was the first opera performed at the Vienna State Opera in 1955 after the Soviets left, it was popular in Eastern Europe following the fall of communism and a few years after Nelson Mandela's release after 27 years of custody there, it

was performed at Robben Island in South Africa.

Intriguingly, Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, upon whose 1798 libretto, *Léonore, ou L'amour conjugal*, the opera is based, was a government administrator during the terror of the French Revolution and he claimed that the story was based on

fact. The veracity of this is uncertain but the theme of unjust imprisonment on political grounds remains, sadly, as relevant today as it ever was.

Those looking for something non-operatic in the London Theatre and trying to avoid the torrent of musicals that seems to swamp the capital's boards these days (don't get me wrong, I love a good musical, but the genre, undoubtedly a money-maker, seems all pervading these days; for instance, *Legally Blonde* was a fun film but do we really need a musical of it?) would do well to visit Wyndham's Theatre for Bruce Norris' *Chybourne Park*.

Award winner

Winner of numerous awards including an Olivier award for Best New Play, *Chybourne Park* is set in a suburb of Chicago, the first act in 1959, the second 50 years later. It is concerned in each time with the effects of the sale of the same property as judged by the neighbouring inhabitants of the area.

The play says a lot about perceptions of race but unlike so many pieces that seek to address this subject, it does so in a manner that is fresh and frequently very funny, occasionally shockingly so, and it finds no need to



Sophie Thompson and Lorna Brown in *Claybourne Park*. [Photo by Johan Persson]

preach.

The entire cast, many of whom play different characters in the two time zones, are excellent but I would single out for particular praise Sophie Thompson (younger sister of Emma and an actress whose credits have ranged from *EastEnders* to *Gosford Park*), Stuart McQuarrie, whose first act portrayal of Russ is by turn funny, annoying and heartbreaking, and Lucian Msamati.

Cinematic treat of the month for me is *Submarine*, adapted from Joe Dunthorne's novel and directed by Richard Ayoade. Set in Swansea towards the end of the last century, it follows the somewhat strange 15-year-old Oliver Tate (Craig Roberts) in his struggles to get off with the girl of his dreams, Jordana Bevan (Yasmin Paige), and to keep his parents' marriage together.

It really is a very funny film throughout although I was a little disappointed with the ending, which I felt could have been somewhat more imaginative. The lead actors are fine and Sally Hawkins (previously a winner of a Golden Globe for *Happy-Go-Lucky*) and Noah Taylor are superb as Oliver's rather odd parents.



The Royal Opera House in London.

Northern Ireland pharmaceutical company named in top European growth list and endows chair at university

NORBROOK Laboratories Ltd has been listed in the Top 50 European Growth Companies 2010.

The accolade, which was presented by former German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, at an awards ceremony in Brussels, was awarded to entrepreneurial companies whose "ingenuity, hard work, perseverance and capacity for innovation have shaped a successful and growing business, significantly contributing to the creation of new employment and prosperity in Europe".

Norbrook, with its global headquarters in Newry, Co Down, is currently engaged in an expansion which has seen the company recruit 300 new staff in 2010 in a continuing recruitment drive.

"Our expansion programme has resulted in an ongoing need for additional employees both in Newry and around the world," said Lord Ballyedmond, the chairman and CEO. "We have already taken on 79 new staff so far this year and with a further 75,000 sq. ft of new manufacturing facility currently being added to

our Carnbane (Newry) factory, there will be further recruitment later this year."

■ Norbrook Laboratories has announced that it is partnering with the University of Ulster to establish a chair in pharmaceutical science with a £1 million donation.

The donation will establish the Norbrook Laboratories Professorship within the new Department of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University's Coleraine campus and will directly contribute to the University's Biomedical Sciences Research Institute which is ranked in the top two in the UK in the most recent national Research Assessment Exercise.

The partnership will focus on important commercial aspects of drug formulation, delivery, metabolism and detection and will enable a further strategic expansion of the University of Ulster's Biomedical Sciences base.

James Haughey, a director of Norbrook and a visiting professor at the university, described the partnership as an important step for pharmaceutical sciences not just in Northern Ireland but globally.

Ride quality and smallish load bay keep car out of 'best in class' contention

THERE are, in my opinion, three things in life that the rest of the world will always fail to beat the Germans at.

Number one, as my recent holiday testifies, is getting up before them in order to get a poolside lounge.

Number two is beating them at a penalty shootout in a World Cup, their record of four shootouts without loss ensures they are clearly at the top of the international

penalty shootout league. It goes without saying that England comes last in this league with a woeful record of three shootouts without a win.

Finally, the last thing I fear the world will always remain second best at is trying to break the German's complete stranglehold on the executive car market.

Best hope...

It's not for the want of trying though. The car you see pictured alongside these words is the Volvo S80, which represents Sweden's best hope of knocking the Germans off their perch. The competition, however, is fierce with the likes of the BMW 5 series, Audi A6 and Mercedes E Class casting an imposing barrier to market entry for anyone to overcome in the pursuit of increasing market share.

At present, the BMW 5 series outsells the S80 by a ratio of 3:1, which

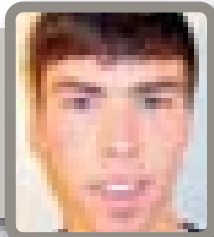
gives an indication of the size of task faced by the design and marketing teams at Volvo.

The S80 may be shorter than its key rivals, but it still offers generous accommodation for two in the rear, with sculpted backrests which split and fold to boost practicality. It's worth you noting that the front passenger chair folds, too.

However, the

ROBBIE TIFFIN

has given the Volvo S80 a good workout and finds it not quite a worthy competitor for some of its long-established German counterparts



422-litre load bay is one of the smallest in sector, and this is further compounded by a rather narrow aperture. Fitting a family of four and their luggage in the car for a family holiday abroad might prove more of a struggle than you might think.

Despite this, the leather seats were plush, well-padded and supportive. Both the seats and steering wheel were fully adjustable, meaning it was easy to manoeuvre yourself into an excellent driving position.

Like the majority of new Volvos, the focus of the interior is on the floating centre console, of which I'm very much an acolyte. To me, it's well laid out, intuitive and simple to use – and far better than the useless iDrive system used by BMW.

In terms of pricing, the S80 provides excellent value too and on a



like-for-like comparison it is cheaper than its main rivals from Audi, BMW and Mercedes. In addition, the residual value figures look fairly strong and running costs should also be fairly competitive. As is always the case with Volvo, the emphasis on safety remains paramount and it should come as no surprise to hear that it is a class leader in this field.

The majority of S80s sold will feature the company's five-cylinder D5 diesel, the mixture of economy and performance appealing to those who will run the S80 as a company car. The vehicle I tested, however, was the punchy T5 petrol variant which, combined with a light kerb weight, provided some really sprightly performance.

Cruising joy

Whilst the giant Swede is never going to be a great sprinter off the line, its muscular mid-range torque made motorway cruising an absolute joy. Between 50-80 miles per hour is where the S80 finds itself in its element with the turbo-charged petrol unit providing sufficient power to propel you past slow moving traffic with minimal amounts of fuss and bother.

Positively, despite some spirited driving, I managed to average around 36mpg over the test period which seemed fairly impressive for a large executive car weighing in at over 1.6 tonnes.

My only gripe with the engine was the slightly intrusive engine note. It was a little too noisy and metallic for my liking and is not as pleasant to listen to as other rivals within the sector.

The ride was also a little too firm and not befitting the level of refinement I was expecting for a car priced at more than £35,000, although some of this may be down to the large 18-inch alloys that were fitted to this car as an £800 optional extra. My advice would be to stick with the factory-fit 17-inch alloys in order to benefit from a far smoother ride.

Whilst the six-speed manual gearbox

AT A GLANCE

Model tested:

Volvo S80 T5 LUX

Price as tested: £36,135 (including optional extras)

Fuel consumption: 36.2mpg (as tested)

CO₂ emissions: 184g/km

0-60mph: 7.1 seconds

Top speed: 143 mph

OVERALL: ++++/5

was slick and easy to manoeuvre, the in-gear ranges seemed a little long-winded, meaning you had to really work the car hard to get it up to a comfortable cruising speed. But in spite of this, all seemed well in terms of handling.

The front-wheel-drive chassis felt alert and receptive and meant that the big Swedish saloon felt planted and capable through corners, with good turn-in, grip and limited roll. Despite

...despite some spirited driving, I managed to average around 36mpg over the test period which seemed fairly impressive

some initial hesitancy, by the end of the week the S80's sprightly engine performance and involving chassis eventually won me over.

I would recommend the S80 as a highly enjoyable drive and definitely worth consideration for anyone

seeking a vehicle of this type.

In conclusion, I feel that whilst Volvo's attempt at beating the Germans in the executive car market has promise, it ultimately falls short. This is for a number of reasons, the main one being the poor ride quality.

In order for the S80 to truly succeed as the "fat cat" executive car of choice, the ride needs to be super absorbent and able to smooth out the countless imperfections that blight our roads. If it could manage to do this then it would definitely be a contender for the title of "best executive saloon car" and might finally knock the Germans from their throne.

This might even, due to some obscure logic, translate to mean that the poolside sun loungers on holiday would then be solely occupied by tanned blonde Swedes. Now isn't that a thought!



- Handling references appropriately
- Is your income adequately protected?
- A Budget for growth – but whose?
- Overcoming common business myths – part 2.
- So you want to buy a practice?

EMPLOYEE REFERENCES: WALKING A TIGHTROPE

PROVIDING a job reference can be a famously tricky business. It's well known that employers who choose to provide a reference for former staff owe a duty of care to both of the other parties in the employment triangle: the employee and the prospective employer. But how easy is this to do in practice?

If your former employee left on good terms and was an exemplary employee, the balance

should be relatively easy to strike. On the other hand, the recent case of Bullimore v. Potheary Witham Weld Solicitors (and others) reminds us that giving a reference against the background of an employee dispute can feel more like a high-wire act.

The (old) 2004 claim

The claimant, Ms Bullimore, had been employed by a firm of solicitors called Witham Weld (which later became Potheary Witham Weld). After a dispute with the firm, she resigned in 2004. She subsequently brought claims (including a claim for sex

discrimination) which Witham Weld settled.

Although this initial complaint of sex discrimination was settled, it is important to appreciate that (1) making the allegation of sex discrimination as she did and (2) her Tribunal complaint for sex discrimination both remained acts separately capable of protection in their own right.

If an employer "victimises" an employee (or a former employee) because he or she previously brought or threatened discrimination proceedings, this can form the basis of a separate claim. It was against this background that Witham Weld was later asked (in 2008) to provide a reference for Ms Bullimore.

The 2008 reference

Ms Bullimore's new prospective employers in 2008 were Sebastians solicitors. They contacted Witham Weld to obtain a reference. The reference received revealed that Ms Bullimore had not had a good relationship with the partners or practice manager at the firm.

In relation to her "strengths and weaknesses", they were told that she was sometimes "inflexible as to her opinions". Perhaps most significantly, when asked how the end of Ms Bullimore's employment

had come about, Witham Weld did not confine itself to saying simply that she had resigned. Instead, the reference went on to give details of the Tribunal proceedings she had brought against the firm which included a claim for sex discrimination.

Sebastians was concerned about this reference. The firm looked into her 2004 claim against Witham Weld, and went as far as obtaining a copy of her claim form. The firm also telephoned Witham Weld to make further enquiries.

As a direct result of the reference and information received from Witham Weld, Sebastians decided to change the terms of its job offer to Ms Bullimore, introducing a six-month probationary period during which Ms Bullimore would be liable to dismissal on one month's notice.

Ms Bullimore refused to accept these revised terms. A subsequent Employment Tribunal found that Sebastians "were not prepared to strive to resume the relationship, because they had come to the view that the claimant was trouble".

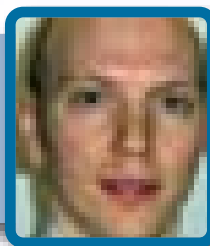
The second (2010) claim

Following the breakdown of her negotiations with Sebastians, Ms Bullimore brought proceedings before the Employment Tribunal for victimisation against both her former employer (now called Potheary Witham Weld) and her prospective employer, Sebastians.

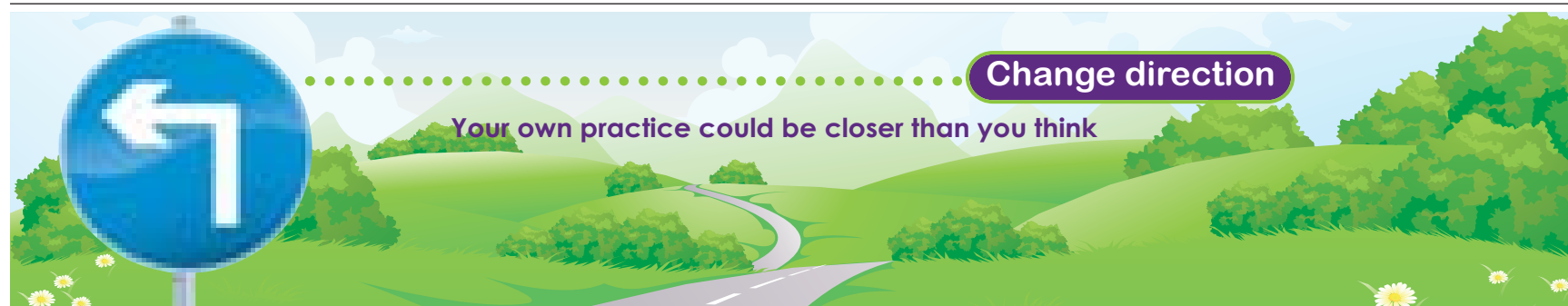
Importantly, the Tribunal found both parties liable for victimising Ms Bullimore under the Sex

CLIVE DAY

discusses the problems that can arise when a reference is requested, the need to have a clear policy in place and to act consistently



Clive Day is an associate solicitor in the Employment Department of HBJ Gateley Wareing LLP; e-mail CDay@hbj-gw.com.



Joint Venture Partnerships

In-Store and standalone opportunities available nationwide

Owning a Companion Care Vets practice means having everything you need to start building your own business, sooner rather than later.

To find out more please call Graeme McConnell on 07917 226790
text jvp to 80010 or visit ccvets.co.uk

**Companion
Carevets**

Discrimination Act 1975.

The reference given by the former employer (Witham Weld) was described by the Tribunal as both “damaging” and “negative”. The reference was found to be directly influenced by the fact that Ms Bullimore had previously brought sex discrimination proceedings against the firm.

In deciding upon the motivation for the negative reference, the Tribunal viewed as significant the fact that the reference went beyond what was necessary to give an accurate picture of employment.

Importantly, an earlier reference given to a different firm (called Carter Bells) contained none of the negative details later provided to Sebastians. In that context, details of relationship difficulties and tribunal proceedings looked to the Tribunal like a gratuitous and unnecessary act of victimisation.

So what view did the Tribunal take of Sebastians, the prospective employers? Its actions (changing the terms on which employment was offered) were also held to have been influenced by the fact that Ms Bullimore had brought previous sex discrimination proceedings.

Those previous proceedings were found to be an underlying motivation to carry out what (in effect) amounted to the withdrawal of the original job offer. This again amounted to unlawful victimisation for bringing previous tribunal proceedings.

The financial implications

Both Potheary Witham Weld and Sebastians were held liable to pay Ms Bullimore significant compensation.

As the prospective employer, Sebastians settled the claim against itself after the finding of

victimisation, and chose to pay Ms Bullimore £42,500 rather than face a separate “remedies” hearing. This sum included a substantial amount on account of lost earnings, even though Ms Bullimore had never worked for the firm.

Initially, Potheary Witham Weld, appeared to have more limited financial exposure. Although it was held liable for victimising Ms Bullimore, the Tribunal limited the award to £7,500 on account of “injury to feelings”. Importantly, the Tribunal refused to go further and declined to award damages against the ex-employer for loss of future earnings caused by the discriminatory reference.

Decision reversed

Worryingly for employers, however, the Employment Appeal Tribunal reversed this decision. If an ex-employer unlawfully “victimises” a former employee (giving an poor reference because he or she previously complained of discrimination) that ex-employer can also be liable for loss of earnings where the job is then withdrawn.

A discriminatory decision by another party to withdraw the offer of employment doesn’t get the ex-employer off the hook, or (in legal terms) “break the chain of causation”.

What Ms Bullimore might now expect to receive from the ex-employer (Potheary Witham Weld) for loss of earnings is a difficult question, but it could be significant.

Ms Bullimore, it will be remembered, had already received £42,500 as a settlement sum from her

The contents of any reference should be relevant, to the point and answer only the questions asked.

employer. The contents of any reference should be relevant, to the point and answer only the questions asked.

In these circumstances, it is easy to see why some employers might decide not to provide any reference at all. After all, there is no legal obligation to provide a reference, except in certain regulated areas such

as the financial sector.

Alternatively, other employers might decide to limit the information given in the reference to the dates of employment and the position that the employee held.

The important principle to bear in mind, however, is to act consistently. For example, in the Bullimore case, a Tribunal found that the extra information provided to Sebastians went beyond what it had been necessary to provide to other potential employers, and was therefore motivated by the sex discrimination claim previously brought by Ms Bullimore.

Equally, a refusal to provide any reference, in circumstances where references are provided for other employees, amounts to differential treatment which could also be viewed as victimisation.

Establish procedures

Given these risks, an employer should consider taking steps to protect its position and reduce the chance that claims will be made.

An employer will always have to deal with reference requests so in order to establish how it should be done a policy should be established to set out the procedures to be followed.

This will have the advantage of providing clear guidance to management. It may also help establish a defence (based on a consistent approach) if it is alleged that a reference amounts to unlawful discrimination/victimisation.

The key points that any practice policy should cover include:

- identifying who can and who cannot give references (should this, for example, be limited to senior management);
- noting the working relationship between the author of the reference and the individual;
- the nature and scope of any reference provided – should it confirm only the employee’s details or should it give a subjective assessment of the employee’s work and character?;
- providing strict guidelines restricting the circumstances when and who can provide oral references (when, and in what terms, they will be given);
- putting checks in place to ensure that all the facts in the reference are accurate;
- training managers to understand that any opinions given must be supported by the facts;
- ensuring that the reference does not present an unfair or misleading impression of the employee;
- raising awareness that when recruiting, all applicants should be treated equally regardless of whether a reference refers to there having been complaints of discrimination or other matters raised by them;
- avoiding the inclusion of any information when giving a reference about the employee’s poor performance if the employee has not yet been approached about the standard of his or her work;
- expressly marking the reference as being “confidential”;
- the inclusion of a standard disclaimer on liability arising from the content of the reference.

prospective employers (Sebastians). Potheary Witham Weld would, therefore, be likely to argue that this award should be taken into account to avoid a windfall to Ms Bullimore, and that the settlement was mostly concluded to compensate for lost earnings anyway.

In the absence of a clear breakdown of the settlement by Sebastians, however, there is a risk that Potheary Witham Weld may still be liable for significant ongoing loss of earnings (perhaps tens of thousands of pounds) without full account being taken of the previous settlement terms.

Lessons for the referee

What are the lessons we should take from this case?

Clearly, extra care needs to be taken in giving a reference for an employee where that person has previously made allegations of discrimination against the

VetSurgeon.org member
Miaill Taylor MRCVS



Join vetsurgeon.org today
It's THE online community for vets

Is your income adequately protected?

PUT simply, financial protection is about planning for unexpected events that are likely to impact a person's financial security, such as long-term illness, long-term injury or an early death.

In other words it's about investing in a financially secure future for peace of mind in the good times and protection in the not-so-good times.

Financial protection products provide essential support at a time when a financial helping hand is needed. Within the market there are products available for all types of individual, regardless of whether they are employed, self-employed or at home looking after children.

The need for adequate financial protection has never been greater. With an

unprecedented budget deficit to tackle, the coalition government is cutting back on public spending, which includes welfare support.

The long-held belief that the State has the resources to provide an effective safety net for all is very much a thing of the past. In addition, with the state pension age increasing on an almost annual basis and age discrimination legislation supporting longer working lives, potential periods of incapacity later in working life means there's a need to protect incomes for longer.

At that stage in life, financial protection could not only preserve a person's lifestyle, but also ensure his or her retirement planning remains on track.

Yet given this information, new research shows UK workers are woefully unprotected. Research by Unum, a leading provider of financial protection products, has found that:

- on average, UK workers could survive for just four weeks without full pay;
- 5.5 million UK workers have absolutely no financial back-up should they be unable to work;
- 25% of workers would have to rely

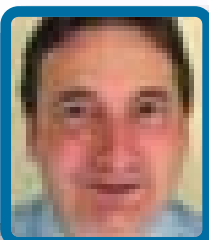
on their partner to support them and 24% of workers would need to rely on their family;

■ two million workers currently in employment have had to take six months or more off work during their career.

It is clear from these figures that UK employees are deciding to bury their heads in the sand and leave themselves woefully unprotected financially in the event that something unpredictable happens which may leave them unable to work. This is despite the average worker saying that he or she could only survive financially for around four weeks without a full current salary.

While, on

DYLAN JENKINS discusses the importance of ensuring you have adequate financial protection in today's economic climate



average, workers expect to receive full pay from their employer for four weeks should they be unable to work due to illness or injury, the reality is often quite different.

Unum's research also showed that around one in 10 of those who have been off work sick for over a week did not receive full pay for any part of their absence. With this in mind, the need for a supplementary income protection policy is imperative for anyone wishing to ensure adequate financial protection is in place.

I'm sure you all insure your home and your car – so it surely makes sense to protect your ability to earn a living as well?

Income protection

If you are like most people and are dependent on earning a living to pay for the basics, such as a mortgage, rent, household bills, loans or a pension, then you should definitely spend the next five minutes or so considering the benefits of an income protection policy.

I am sure that many of you will choose to adopt the "it will never happen to me argument" and will be willing to take your chances and gamble that you will be fine.

Now whilst I appreciate the optimism in thinking of yourself as being immortal, unfortunately

the statistics suggest that good fortune may not be on your side. Figures show the risk of having a long term illness is around one in 6 and that there are currently over 2.6 million people who are unable to work and are claiming benefits. That's around 7% of the working population.

With illness and injury a real possibility and with State benefits so low and taxable*, it's becoming more and more essential to have some sort of financial protection in place. And that means planning ahead, considering all of your financial options and getting some objective financial advice.

We can see from the chart below that most people claiming State incapacity benefit have been off work for more than two years. At this point it is probably worth you considering how you would cope if that was you and whether you have got sufficient savings in place to cover you for this lengthy lay-off from work.

When looking to take out an income protection policy, lots of factors need to be taken into consideration to ensure that it is fully suited to your needs and circumstances. I would therefore recommend you consult the service of

an Independent Financial Adviser (IFA) who will be able to help discuss your circumstances, including what support you would get from your employer if you were off work for a long time, and decide upon a suitable policy to meet your needs.

As with any type of insurance, it's also a good idea to review your policy from time to time. Promotion, changing job, moving house or starting a family can all have an impact on your incomings and outgoings, so it pays to check that the income protection cover you have is adequate.

* State benefits payable in the event of long-term incapacity are only intended to meet the most basic of living costs (around £90 per week in the majority of cases). If you only had state benefits to rely on for income then your quality of life would suffer massively as a result. This is why it is so important to consider alternative provision.

The author can be contacted at: RT Financial Planners Ltd, Mercia House, High Street, Winchcombe, Glos. GL54 5LG; telephone 01242 604066, e-mail djenkins@rtfp.co.uk; website www.rtfp.co.uk.

IFA and State Incapacity Benefit Claimants by duration of claim (August 2009)



Legend:

- Less than 1 month
- 1 to 3 months
- 3 to 6 months
- 6 to 12 months
- 12 to 24 months
- 24 to 36 months
- 36 to 48 months
- 48 to 60 months
- 60 to 72 months
- 72 to 84 months
- 84 to 96 months
- 96 to 108 months
- 108 to 120 months
- 120 to 132 months
- 132 to 144 months
- 144 to 156 months
- 156 to 168 months
- 168 to 180 months
- 180 to 192 months
- 192 to 204 months
- 204 to 216 months
- 216 to 228 months
- 228 to 240 months
- 240 to 252 months
- 252 to 264 months
- 264 to 276 months
- 276 to 288 months
- 288 to 300 months
- 300 to 312 months
- 312 to 324 months
- 324 to 336 months
- 336 to 348 months
- 348 to 360 months
- 360 to 372 months
- 372 to 384 months
- 384 to 396 months
- 396 to 408 months
- 408 to 420 months
- 420 to 432 months
- 432 to 444 months
- 444 to 456 months
- 456 to 468 months
- 468 to 480 months
- 480 to 492 months
- 492 to 504 months
- 504 to 516 months
- 516 to 528 months
- 528 to 540 months
- 540 to 552 months
- 552 to 564 months
- 564 to 576 months
- 576 to 588 months
- 588 to 600 months
- 600 to 612 months
- 612 to 624 months
- 624 to 636 months
- 636 to 648 months
- 648 to 660 months
- 660 to 672 months
- 672 to 684 months
- 684 to 696 months
- 696 to 708 months
- 708 to 720 months
- 720 to 732 months
- 732 to 744 months
- 744 to 756 months
- 756 to 768 months
- 768 to 780 months
- 780 to 792 months
- 792 to 804 months
- 804 to 816 months
- 816 to 828 months
- 828 to 840 months
- 840 to 852 months
- 852 to 864 months
- 864 to 876 months
- 876 to 888 months
- 888 to 900 months
- 900 to 912 months
- 912 to 924 months
- 924 to 936 months
- 936 to 948 months
- 948 to 960 months
- 960 to 972 months
- 972 to 984 months
- 984 to 996 months
- 996 to 1008 months
- 1008 to 1020 months
- 1020 to 1032 months
- 1032 to 1044 months
- 1044 to 1056 months
- 1056 to 1068 months
- 1068 to 1080 months
- 1080 to 1092 months
- 1092 to 1104 months
- 1104 to 1116 months
- 1116 to 1128 months
- 1128 to 1140 months
- 1140 to 1152 months
- 1152 to 1164 months
- 1164 to 1176 months
- 1176 to 1188 months
- 1188 to 1200 months
- 1200 to 1212 months
- 1212 to 1224 months
- 1224 to 1236 months
- 1236 to 1248 months
- 1248 to 1260 months
- 1260 to 1272 months
- 1272 to 1284 months
- 1284 to 1296 months
- 1296 to 1308 months
- 1308 to 1320 months
- 1320 to 1332 months
- 1332 to 1344 months
- 1344 to 1356 months
- 1356 to 1368 months
- 1368 to 1380 months
- 1380 to 1392 months
- 1392 to 1404 months
- 1404 to 1416 months
- 1416 to 1428 months
- 1428 to 1440 months
- 1440 to 1452 months
- 1452 to 1464 months
- 1464 to 1476 months
- 1476 to 1488 months
- 1488 to 1500 months
- 1500 to 1512 months
- 1512 to 1524 months
- 1524 to 1536 months
- 1536 to 1548 months
- 1548 to 1560 months
- 1560 to 1572 months
- 1572 to 1584 months
- 1584 to 1596 months
- 1596 to 1608 months
- 1608 to 1620 months
- 1620 to 1632 months
- 1632 to 1644 months
- 1644 to 1656 months
- 1656 to 1668 months
- 1668 to 1680 months
- 1680 to 1692 months
- 1692 to 1704 months
- 1704 to 1716 months
- 1716 to 1728 months
- 1728 to 1740 months
- 1740 to 1752 months
- 1752 to 1764 months
- 1764 to 1776 months
- 1776 to 1788 months
- 1788 to 1800 months
- 1800 to 1812 months
- 1812 to 1824 months
- 1824 to 1836 months
- 1836 to 1848 months
- 1848 to 1860 months
- 1860 to 1872 months
- 1872 to 1884 months
- 1884 to 1896 months
- 1896 to 1908 months
- 1908 to 1920 months
- 1920 to 1932 months
- 1932 to 1944 months
- 1944 to 1956 months
- 1956 to 1968 months
- 1968 to 1980 months
- 1980 to 1992 months
- 1992 to 2004 months
- 2004 to 2016 months
- 2016 to 2028 months
- 2028 to 2040 months
- 2040 to 2052 months
- 2052 to 2064 months
- 2064 to 2076 months
- 2076 to 2088 months
- 2088 to 2100 months
- 2100 to 2112 months
- 2112 to 2124 months
- 2124 to 2136 months
- 2136 to 2148 months
- 2148 to 2160 months
- 2160 to 2172 months
- 2172 to 2184 months
- 2184 to 2196 months
- 2196 to 2208 months
- 2208 to 2220 months
- 2220 to 2232 months
- 2232 to 2244 months
- 2244 to 2256 months
- 2256 to 2268 months
- 2268 to 2280 months
- 2280 to 2292 months
- 2292 to 2304 months
- 2304 to 2316 months
- 2316 to 2328 months
- 2328 to 2340 months
- 2340 to 2352 months
- 2352 to 2364 months
- 2364 to 2376 months
- 2376 to 2388 months
- 2388 to 2400 months
- 2400 to 2412 months
- 2412 to 2424 months
- 2424 to 2436 months
- 2436 to 2448 months
- 2448 to 2460 months
- 2460 to 2472 months
- 2472 to 2484 months
- 2484 to 2496 months
- 2496 to 2508 months
- 2508 to 2520 months
- 2520 to 2532 months
- 2532 to 2544 months
- 2544 to 2556 months
- 2556 to 2568 months
- 2568 to 2580 months
- 2580 to 2592 months
- 2592 to 2604 months
- 2604 to 2616 months
- 2616 to 2628 months
- 2628 to 2640 months
- 2640 to 2652 months
- 2652 to 2664 months
- 2664 to 2676 months
- 2676 to 2688 months
- 2688 to 2700 months
- 2700 to 2712 months
- 2712 to 2724 months
- 2724 to 2736 months
- 2736 to 2748 months
- 2748 to 2760 months
- 2760 to 2772 months
- 2772 to 2784 months
- 2784 to 2796 months
- 2796 to 2808 months
- 2808 to 2820 months
- 2820 to 2832 months
- 2832 to 2844 months
- 2844 to 2856 months
- 2856 to 2868 months
- 2868 to 2880 months
- 2880 to 2892 months
- 2892 to 2904 months
- 2904 to 2916 months
- 2916 to 2928 months
- 2928 to 2940 months
- 2940 to 2952 months
- 2952 to 2964 months
- 2964 to 2976 months
- 2976 to 2988 months
- 2988 to 3000 months

EQUIPMENT FINANCE I.T. & IMAGING FINANCE REFURBISHMENT FINANCE TAX BILL FINANCE CAR FINANCE

PERFORMANCE FINANCE

Unleashing your capital's potential



t: 01536 52 96 96
e: info@performancefinance.co.uk
w: www.performancefinance.co.uk

FEW of us expected much good news in this year's Budget speech but, after a quick raid on banks and the oil and gas industry, the Chancellor did conjure up some tax improvements.

For practices operating through a company, the early cut in the main rate of corporation tax, to 26% from 1st April 2011, was also good news and

The small companies' rate remains at 20%. Enhancements to the incentives to carry out research and development work are unlikely to benefit veterinary practices. However, with the reductions in capital allowances and the annual investment allowance still scheduled for April 2012, investing in new equipment before then remains attractive.



Businesses with fewer than 10 employees are to be exempt from new “red tape” for the next three years and the Government seems to have set the tone for the future with some limited simplification of employment law now and more planned.

If planning rules are loosened substantially, this could quickly revive the value of commercial property. However, those taking advantage of flat conversion allowances had better act fast – this relief is to be abolished sometime after April 2012.

The current rule that any benefits to the donor must not exceed 5% of the donation will remain but the upper limit has been increased from £500 to £2,500.

As part of a wider package of measures to encourage charitable giving, the benefit limit for donations over £10,000 has been increased.

In addition, a reduced rate of inheritance tax (IHT) will apply for deaths occurring after 5th April 2012 where 10% or more of a deceased's net estate (after all IHT exemptions, reliefs and the nil rate band) is left to charity. In such cases, the current rate of 40% will be reduced to 36%.

Of course, these points of good news have to be balanced against the increases in VAT and national insurance contributions announced in last June's emergency Budget that will cause many families to prune their spending. However, practices that focus on the new opportunities and look to the long term are likely to find that Budget 2011 will help them grow over time.

From 6th April 2011, individuals investing in qualifying enterprise investment scheme (EIS) companies can claim income tax relief at 30% (currently 20%) on the first £500,000 invested and from 6th April 2012, the annual investment limit will increase to £1 million.

The EIS and VCT rules for the qualifying company will also be relaxed that year. In particular, the maximum limit on gross assets held by the investee company before any investment will increase to £15 million and the employee limit to 249. This should expand the range of EIS investment opportunities significantly.

Sadly, it seems that the Government only wants investors to get one tax break at a time: it intends to add activities that benefit from the solar feed-in tariffs to the excluded activities list.

The complex rules for establishing



Caring for the caring profession

How can we help you?

- Partnership structure and financing
- Monitoring performance and income growth
- Practice valuations
- Partnership and personal taxation
- Property issues
- Succession and retirement planning
- Partnership disputes
- AIF issues
- Business support services

Who to talk to

Birmingham David Haines 0121 455 1000	Eastbourne John Haines 01323 821000	Leeds David Haines 0113 255 1000	Manchester John Haines 0161 275 1000
London David Haines 020 7493 1000	Reading John Haines 0118 936 1000	Sheffield David Haines 0114 255 1000	Warrington John Haines 01928 551 1000
South David Haines 01892 551 1000	Worcester John Haines 01902 551 1000	York David Haines 01904 551 1000	Yorkshire John Haines 01904 551 1000

With our help, you can get the most from your practice – and from your retirement too.

PKF UK LLP is one of the UK's leading firms of accountants and financial advisers.

Building value for developing businesses

We work with businesses and individuals to help them build value for the future.

www.pkf.co.uk

Overcoming some common business myths

IN the first article (March issue), we examined business myths originally pointed out in a weblog by information technology professional Ajarn Mark Caldwell¹.

For example, one commonly held myth posited that to be successful in business you must be “first” or “cheaper”. Or what about that oft-used maxim “The customer is always right” – not necessarily.

We then explored tips for using practice management automation and common business sense to overcome these “myths”, which Mr. Caldwell also rightly points out can include “misconceptions, bad advice and outright lies” about what it takes to be successful in business.

To continue...

It's worth considering a few more

myths as they may apply to the veterinary profession. Why? Because how you view the drivers of business

success or failure can have an immense impact on how you manage your practice day-to-day, serve your patients and clients, and affect your ability to prosper.

MYTHS AND TIPS

1. “I’m a good vet, so I’ll be great at running a practice.”

Most veterinarians who have owned or managed a practice for more than 30 days already know this assertion can be faulty. You may have earned the highest marks at the best veterinary school and have a true affinity for treating animals; nevertheless, you soon discover that these animals have two-footed companions attached to them, and that communicating with and educating clients can be your greatest challenge.

There are also those other nagging realities about running a business – budgeting, payroll, hiring and managing employees, marketing, inventory management, to name a few.

Here are a few hints for turning this myth to reality:

- First, be honest with yourself. If

you’re considering opening a practice, ask yourself what you truly enjoy and can master.

Do you love being a veterinarian but dislike the business management that goes along with it? Maybe you should consider a business partner, and certainly an experienced practice manager.

■ Automate for business success as well as quality patient care. Practice management systems today can take much of the “heavy lifting” out of practice management and standards of care processes.

In fact, some systems can automate up to 90% of what it takes to manage a successful practice. If you’re not in business yet, or if your system is woefully out of date, research available system

alternatives and vendors.

Look for practice management suppliers that have a long-term track record of success. That’s a strong indicator that they work closely with their veterinarian clients and build in capabilities over time that practices truly want and need.

Also, ask vendors for hard data that validates how much their veterinary practice clients have saved and/or profited from use of their technology, e.g.:

- (i) the amount saved per-vet per-year, through use of specific system capabilities;
- (ii) the amount of missed charges (typically caused by human error) which can be recovered through automation;
- (iii) the amount of increased profit possible by converting time saved to additional consults.

Taken together, these amounts can be an important factor in your purchasing and/or upgrade decisions. Don’t be shy about thinking like a businessperson as well as a veterinarian!

2. “Knowledge is power” (well, almost)

You could argue that your clients come to you because they perceive your specialised knowledge in caring for animals.

In that respect, your knowledge is power, because it evokes a positive reaction. But what many business owners, including veterinarians, miss is the wealth of knowledge at their

fingertips that is not applied, namely the extensive information captured in your practice management system.

Tips for putting knowledge to work:

■ Understand your knowledge repository. If you have been a practising vet for some time, consider the wealth of client, patient and medical/surgical data that has been captured in your practice management system. After all, staff, including veterinarians, may come and go, but the notes they have entered into your system remain and build upon your cumulative knowledge base.

Practice management systems today are literally packed with capabilities that can make use of this data to increase compliance with healthcare recommendations, strengthen the practice-client bond, manage fees and improve profit.

■ Create a culture of ongoing learning. Unfortunately, after the initial data conversion and staff training on a new system is complete, many practices fail to implement an ongoing educational approach that enables staff to learn the myriad ways their system can be used.

Lack of learning negates the value of your knowledge repository. Take advantage of new ways to learn.

Advanced practice management system vendors now offer a variety of approaches, including eLearning courses via their website (some are free) and webinars that allow an instructor to interact with your staff, thus avoiding the expense of bringing a trainer onsite.

Learning will in turn drive efficiency, better client interaction, improved patient care and superior staff performance. At that point, knowledge truly is power.

3. “Failure is bad. It’s the opposite of success.”

We often learn this negative maxim as schoolchildren, when we are “graded” on our ability to absorb what we are taught.

Deciding to open a veterinary practice or to continue during difficult economic times can be daunting, even if you consider yourself a risk-taking entrepreneur. But the key is to change your perspective and your attitude toward “failure”.

After all, most innovations of true value take many tries to achieve. The same can be said of lasting business success – it can take years to establish the right processes, smooth workflow and positive reputation that lead to

long-term profitability.

Attitude is also important. As Sir Winston Churchill put it, “Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

In fact, most failures are learning experiences that can fuel better ideas and add to your store of knowledge.

Tips for learning from (and minimising) what doesn’t work:

■ Create a culture where it’s acceptable to stumble. From a staff management perspective, true leaders encourage their staff to speak up, offer new ideas, and try new ways of doing things.

They make it OK to fail because they realise that freeing staff from the fear of constant criticism leads to a more innovative and productive work environment. Encourage your staff to talk about failures, including what they have learned from what didn’t work, and what they would do differently the next time.

■ Automate, track, report, learn ... and change. Practice management systems today can be your strongest ally in minimising failure and maximising what is best for your patients, clients, staff and your practice profit.

For example, your system should be able to print an array of reports that show the services and products

that are bringing your practice highest profit – and those that aren’t. You can identify your top clients, how much they are spending and what they are spending it on.

You can create procedures that ensure all fees related to a particular treatment protocol (e.g. a spay or neuter) are bundled

and printed on the invoice – no more missed charges. Don’t shy away from change. Learn what works, what doesn’t, and adjust accordingly.

Here’s one final tip that could be a fun and beneficial staff exercise. During your next staff meeting or training session, recite the list of common business myths we’ve covered in this two-part series. Ask your staff whether they agree or disagree with each statement and why.

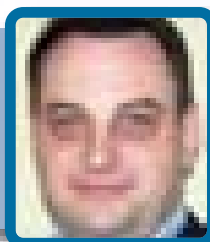
Use this discussion as a springboard for identifying new ways of working that underscore and bolster your practice success.

1. Ajarn Mark Caldwell, Ajarn’s SQL Corner, “Top 15 Myths about Business”, weblog post 30th March, 2005:

<http://weblogs.sqlteam.com/markc/articles/4280.aspx>.

JAMES BARNES

presents the second in his two-part series on common sense tips for overcoming some of the more common myths about running a business



James Barnes is general manager, Europe, of RxWorks Ltd, an international provider of practice management software and DICOM platforms for the veterinary profession. James joined RxWorks in January 2007, having spent more than five years in veterinary practice management as an RxWorks client and a further eight years in optical retail management.

So you want to buy a practice?

PRACTICE ownership? What is it that makes people take this step into the unknown and why are fewer and fewer graduates taking this route?

Owning your own practice and the ensuing responsibilities is something that suits only some graduates and the reasons for undertaking it are wide-ranging: clinical freedom, more money, greater responsibilities, or simply a desire to create something better in your own mould.

There are only three ways to own your own: start up, invest in a joint venture or buy an on-going business.

A start-up can involve many years of hard slog to get it financially to an acceptable level of

income; by buying an established practice you will be paying for the hard work that someone else has undertaken in building it up as a successful unit; and a joint venture gives a half-way house to full ownership.

What are the benefits of buying?

1. You are purchasing a ready-made unit with a structure and systems already in place.
2. You are purchasing an income and profit stream.
3. You are taking on an established workforce with experience of working in the practice.

Obviously, in a poorly run practice, benefit 2 may be minimal and benefits 1 and 3 potentially could be problematic, but these should be exposed as you undertake your due diligence. As a rule, it is still easier to adapt a system than starting everything from a clean sheet.

Why should you pay for goodwill?

Goodwill is the major intangible asset in a practice's value and any value which is in excess of the tangible asset value

(property, stock, equipment) can be defined as the goodwill.

Every type of business that is sold intrinsically has a goodwill value, whether it is hidden in the property price, the lease or stated clearly as an asset, and veterinary practices are no exception. The goodwill value should relate directly to the profitability, potential profitability, or the lifestyle the practice can offer.

But why should you pay for something as intangible as goodwill? The simple answer is that you don't have to.

MALCOLM WRIGHT discusses the various ways of setting about owning a practice and finding the one that's right for you



If you have looked at the financials of the practice and you don't feel that it adds up as a good investment, then you have a simple choice to walk away or offer what you feel the practice is worth and see if the vendor agrees.

If you still don't want to pay anything at all and you still want a practice, you only have one choice: set up your plate. Remember, though, that setting up a practice from scratch is not without cost, you will have no income stream, no guarantee that it will develop, there may be limited expansion, and you can end up working alone with limited borrowing ability.

Remember there is no such thing as a free meal – and you will be no exception to the rule.

Finding practices for sale

This is often the hardest part, so prior to purchasing a practice you should be well prepared, in that you have already a draft business plan and have met up with financial backers with whom you have provisionally discussed your aims. This will both save you time and put you in a much stronger position during the sale negotiations.

Remember, there are limited opportunities to purchase a practice and even more limited opportunities to purchase a good practice. You will be in competition with corporate practices, other private individuals, and local practices looking to expand.

The best practices will have a number of interested parties and any quality practices will sell quickly if the asking price reflects its true profitability. Obviously, the reasons for the sale may reflect in the price of the practice.

There are two approaches when looking to find a practice to buy:

1. Look at practices that are on the

open market through advertisements or via a broker.

2. Look for practices that, although are not on the market, may be willing to sell. It's a more difficult approach but sometimes this can work out. In most cases it requires knowledge of the situation of the potential sales target either from inside knowledge or by word of mouth. Often the jungle drums of sales reps know about these practices!

You will have to approach the practice directly and this should be professional or you will not be taken seriously. If the owner is willing to talk and is prepared to give you accounts, you have to make a decision:

- Ask how much they want for the practice.
- Make your provisional offer based upon the financial information that you are given.
- If these are too far apart, then try and get the owner to agree to a compromise valuation by an established broker.
- Be direct with the owners – they don't want time wasters.

Is the asking price reasonable?

If you have never been involved in a business purchase, this can be difficult, as you will have to respond quickly with the best practices, so what determines the asking price?

To pay the asking price depends upon the purchaser's willingness to pay for the benefits that practice will bring:

1. The income stream from the practice.
2. The professional satisfaction from working in that practice.
3. The lifestyle associated with the practice.
4. The future potential of the practice.

A quick viability check can be easily undertaken by someone with purchase experience. The value of a practice is the sum of the net assets that are needed to allow the practice to function; these assets are described as tangible (practice premises, equipment, cars, etc.) and intangible. (These are not physical in that you cannot touch or feel them but they have an intrinsic value, such as goodwill.)

Care must be taken when practices are offered for sale at values based upon "rule of thumb methods" as these can often result in unjustifiable values such as:

- A practice's value is equal to 75% of one year's gross revenue!
- A practice's value is equal to one year's gross profit!

In some cases the values will match the more accurate and detailed methods of valuation, but in reality rule of

thumb valuations are usually based on tradition, word-of-mouth and non-expert information sources.

There are many valuation methods, each with specific advantages and disadvantages. The application of an inappropriate methodology can significantly undervalue or overvalue a practice.

It is essential that the purchaser understands the various valuation methods and how the final value is achieved.

One of the most popular methods of valuation today is the "multiple of earnings" method and this is the one I have always used when purchasing a practice, as it is based upon profitability.

Multiple of earnings

This method assumes the practice value is related to the amount of free cash it generates: this is normally accepted as the "earnings before interest and tax" (EBIT), and that some multiple of the EBIT is the correct way to value the practice. In some cases depreciation is also included (EBITD) and an alternative multiplier is used.

The multiplier selected on the EBIT(D) is market-driven based on market conditions, comparables and the practice marketability. The multiplier the buyer may be prepared to accept or offer relates to the value he sees in the practice.

The benefits of this method are that it identifies the practice as a trading entity, which can make it more attractive to potential lenders. If the EBIT shows no earnings, a multiplier is sometimes applied to cash flow or even to gross margin.

Other methods used include "fees received", "adjusted net profit" and "discounted cash flow".

So what factors should influence the goodwill multiplier?

- Practice type – small animal, mixed or equine.
 - The practice size.
 - Years the practice has been established.
 - The quality and potential of the premises.
 - The location, including parking, regional demographics and competition.
 - The financial trends of the practice.
 - The level of IT and equipment.
 - The availability of emergency clinics.
 - Staff turnover and loyalty.
 - The ease of staff recruitment in the area.
 - The local and national economy.
 - Special factors such as existing commitments to pensions, etc.
- To be continued next month.*

Malcolm Wright, BVMS, MRCVS, qualified at Glasgow in 1972. He set up Westway Veterinary Group in 1975 which developed into the largest veterinary practice on Tyneside, employing 13 veterinary surgeons with nine sites. In 1994 he set up Vet-Direct Services Ltd which was developed as a short-line wholesaler supplying veterinary practices throughout the UK. In 2000 he set up Firstvets Ltd, with centres in West Midlands, Glasgow, Durham and Tyneside. In 2011 he set up VetbizCPD a training company specifically for veterinary practice. He can be contacted at Malcolm@vetbizcpd.com.



The Practice Management System that can give you change.

We have the software and services that you need including:

- ✓ Our unique live support system
- ✓ The invaluable **Business Barometer** module
- ✓ The communication enhancing **Organiser** tool
- ✓ The seamless **Scheme Manager** application
- ✓ The revenue generating **autoSMS** package
- ✓ Time saving **chip and pin** integration

Plus, much, much more! Call to arrange your free demonstration and start saving today.

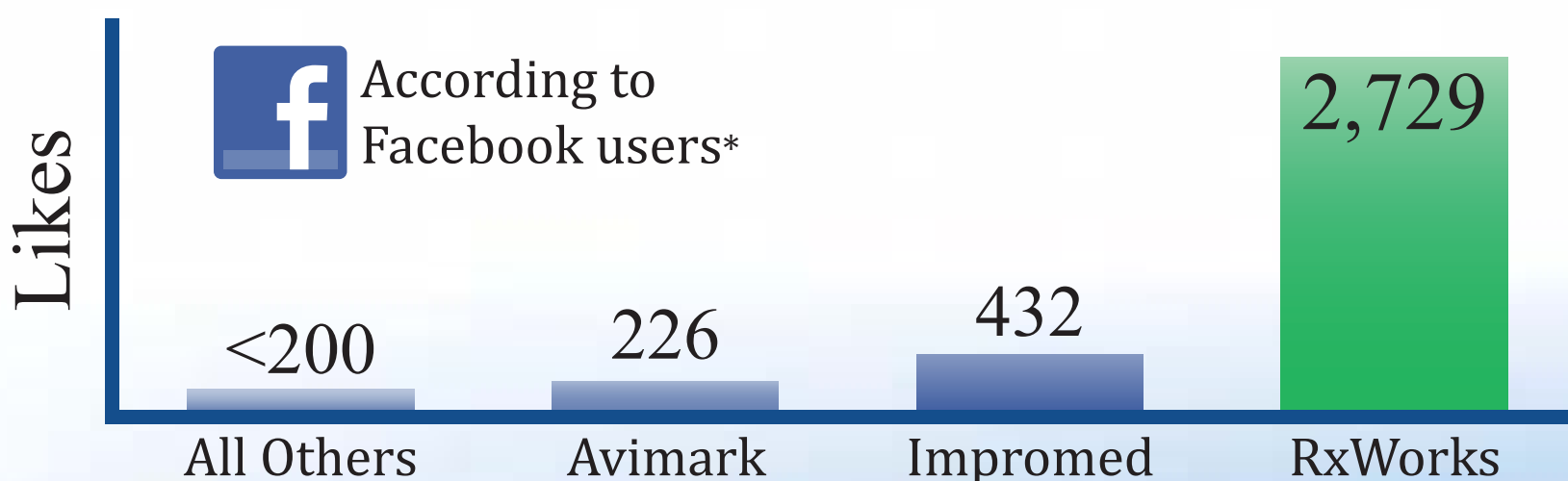
RoboVet 



0131 556 0555 | sales@vetsolutions.co.uk | www.vetsolutions.co.uk



"The world's most liked
practice management software
for the veterinary industry."



Find out why:

www.rxworks.com

www.facebook.com/rxworks

UK: 0845 47 47 445 • NL: 0411 614643 • ZA: 011461 3350 • IR: 019010150

*According to Facebook users on March 3, 2011 - Copyright © 2011 RxWorks, Inc. All rights reserved.