

VETERINARY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Ltd

IPSO Annual Report – Period covered: 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2018.

1. Introduction

Veterinary Business Development Ltd is a publisher of B2B publications and websites for the veterinary profession (including veterinary nurses) and a provider of services to the same sector. Readers and users include veterinary surgeons (in practice or working within industry), final-year veterinary students, qualified and trainee veterinary nurses, veterinary practice managers, practice owners, additional support staff and marketers/representatives of companies or bodies working within the sector.

Based in Peterborough, we have a staff of approximately 30, including editorial staff, production, design, sales and accounts, all headed by a managing director. An editor of one of our publications left the business during the period covered by this report, prompting a reorganisation of roles (details below).

Our publications are funded through advertising revenue and are supplied free of charge to qualifying readers. Titles/products falling under IPSO's remit for the qualifying period 1 January – 31 December 2018 were:

Veterinary Times: Market-leading, news-led weekly journal. Published 50 times a year (plus occasional supplements Veterinary Times Equine and Veterinary Times Livestock, each twice a year). Features news and clinical and other articles for veterinary surgeons. Business Publication of the Year 2017 at the PPA Independent Publisher Awards. Controlled, free, ABC-audited circulation for January to December 2018 (latest publicised figures in this period are for Jan-Dec 2017): **19,104**.

VN Times: News-led journal for VNs and trainee VNs. Monthly (published 12 times a year). Features news and clinical and other articles aimed at a veterinary nursing audience. Finalist in the Business Publication of the Year 2017 category at the PPA Independent Publisher Awards. Controlled, free, ABC-audited circulation for January to December 2018 (latest publicised figures for this period are for Jan-Dec 2017): **14,076**.

VBJ: Covers management and financial aspects of running a veterinary practice. finalist in the Business Publication of the Year 2017 category at the PPA Independent Publisher Awards. Not separately audited, but monthly, published 12 times a year and sent out to the full readership of Veterinary Times (plus additional practice managers).

Congress Times: Journal for the major veterinary congresses. Produced in partnership with leading veterinary associations and veterinary show organisers. Published periodically, at least 5 times a year. Sent out with pre-show copies of Veterinary Times to species/topic-relevant audience and available at relevant congresses/shows.

vettimes.co.uk: Online resource for veterinary profession, featuring daily news updates, articles from our journals, blogs, videos, additional articles/content, CPD

diary. Supplemented by Facebook and Twitter accounts (some publications also have their own social media presence). Supplementary websites: vettimesjobs.co.uk and cpd.vettimes.co.uk

The above content is also served through a downloadable app available through the App Store or Google Play (launched in June 2018).

The publications' responsible person is **Paul Imrie, VBD editorial manager, and editor of Veterinary Times.**

2. Our editorial standards

At the start of the period covered by this report, the editorial team consisted of 11 people (10 FT, 1 PT), including editors for each of the above publications (joint editor for VN Times and Congress Times). Editors' remit also includes any of their content posted online at vettimes.co.uk (a digital content manager is responsible for other content, but was not managed by the editorial manager at the start of 2018).

Early in the period, an editor departed the business for a job elsewhere. We restructured from within, promoting two members of the team to manage VN Times and Congress Times respectively while retaining reporting and subbing duties. We also made our FT reporter a senior reporter in line with increased, manageable workload. In the same reorganisation, the digital editor's role evolved to content specialist and came back under the editorial manager's responsibility.

While a B2B publication, we have for a long time adopted a regional newspaper structure. A news editor (who is also editor of the VBJ) manages the news team. A chief-sub manages a team of 3FT and 1PT sub editors. As chief sub, she is responsible for style guides, standards, layouts and subbing tasks. We also have an editorial coordinator, responsible for commissioning external content across the publications and additional for online. This is largely clinical feature content supplied by veterinary professionals.

The structure of the editorial team encourages cross-working, closer team work, and also contributes to maintaining our high standards. Most of our team has been trained by either NCTJ or equivalent bodies, or has studied journalism or media at university/colleges. VBD also has an ethos of training. Legal refreshers are arranged when necessary (there was not one in 2018), and we continue to engage the same media law provider on an annual retainer to provide us with media law advice when we require it. This has tended to be in management of complaints from readers or for pre-publication help with stories or letters on controversial subjects.

His services were utilised in 2018 when required for pre-publication checking of news stories and some letters. Depending on scenario, content was either not published or cut to ensure compliance with the editors' code.

All editorial staff and the wider company are aware we are members of IPSO. The logo appears in our publications. All have been informed of our official complaints procedure (hosted online at

<https://www.vettimes.co.uk/veterinary-business-development-editorial-complaints-procedure/>)

We are members of the PPA, and receive updates, advice and guidance from it as necessary.

All new starters in the editorial team receive a copy of:

- The IPSO Editors' Code
- VBD's editorial style guide (*copy enclosed, not for publication*)
- VBD staff handbook (*copy enclosed, not for publication*)

All editorial staff are reissued with these when updates are made. Copies of the staff handbook are also available on Croner Simplify (the HR portal we use). Additional to these, reporters are given one-to-one guidance as necessary.

We strive to ensure all news items are fair and balanced, with parties given full right to reply. Veterinary Times, VN Times and Congress Times are magloid format, VBJ is B5 in format. All contain news, largely at the front of the publications, but also elsewhere as space allows. Our website carries news items daily, many expanded later for print publication, and abstracted news items from our print publications.

The news editor has extensive news experience, with us and in regional papers, and is fully immersed in the profession. He holds regular meetings with the reporting team and has daily discussions with them about story ideas, angle approaches, story structuring and best people to contact.

I also play an active part in discussions on stories and can offer input, guidance and support where needed. The reporters also routinely discuss their stories with each other, and assist one another as required.

If necessary, wider discussions are held with sub-editors, the **chief-sub and editors** on story angles and legal issues. Discussions take place routinely on best choices of headlines to ensure full accuracy. Our retained media law expert is also contacted if needed, and he also supplies media law updates or information on relevant court rulings as necessary, which are then passed on to the wider team as appropriate.

We will go to multiple sources if necessary for verification or quotes for lead stories, and always seek to get as "expert" an opinion as possible. Our ethos is to be questioning in our stories, but not sensationalist in our approach.

We have a **style guide** that is worked to by all editorial staff. The **chief-sub** refreshes this as necessary, and it underwent a full revision in 2015. The guide was resupplied to all editorial staff. Revised updates are made and notified to all staff (*copy enclosed*).

All feature content is from independent veterinary professionals working in practice or academia. In the past few years, we commissioned the majority of articles on our features lists from specialist vets. All commissioned authors are sent guidelines about how to write and submit features (*copy enclosed*). They are also required to

sign an author agreement. We have an editorial board of vets who we will seek advice from if needed on clinical content within submitted features.

As part of work to ensure company-wide compliance with new GDPR legislation, during 2018 we revised our author agreement and resent to all existing authors, among other reasons to ensure we were still able to keep their contact details.

We do not shy away from covering difficult news topics that may affect existing or potential advertisers.

We carry advertising features paid for by companies, both in print and online. These are always clearly marked as such, in line with ASA guidance. Guidance on the standards we expect are supplied to advertisers enquiring about advertising features. Sponsored/native content appearing online is also clearly marked "sponsored".

Finally, as a requirement of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, we supply, on request, to any advertiser a pre-publication version of any feature they intend to advertise against (up to two features per issue are on our pre-publication features list and available for advertisers to buy space against). This is to ensure we and advertisers comply fully with the strict animal health legislation regarding correct use of veterinary medicines. It is also an additional check of information within articles, and while we retain editorial control of all articles and authors are not duty bound to make amendments, such checks have previously revealed errors in information, specifically product and dosage information supplied to us.

Copies of the new Editors' Code, including that of January 2018, are supplied to the full editorial team, and our membership of IPSO is reiterated to each team member. Relevant updates as supplied by IPSO are also conveyed to the team – in particular the updates in 2018 pertaining to reporting of sexual offences and suicides.

Each member of the editorial team understands we must adhere to the standards of responsible journalism at all times and adhere to the Editors' Code. All stories are fully researched and verified before publication, where necessary with quotes from multiple sources, to ensure accuracy. As some of our stories can be clinical and complex in nature, to ensure factual accuracy, contributors are allowed sight of quotes pre-publication on request, on the proviso we retain copy approval.

All feature content is subbed thoroughly, read by the sub-editor, and then by a colleague (i.e. chief sub), corrected/amended where necessary by the original sub-editor before going through to a final read by the relevant editor. Further checks for accuracy of headlines and content are done before print at the PDF stage.

We did not contact IPSO for pre-publication guidance in 2018, but we would do so whenever we are concerned about adherence to the code, and most likely specifically for any guidance on privacy or public interest issues.

All news content, including for online publication, is read and subbed by the news editor before being made available to a sub-editor and going through the aforementioned processes. If copy is amended or corrected online, this is pointed

4. Our training process

The company has an ethos of providing **on-the-job training** when necessary. It also sends members of staff on external courses or has external course providers in-house to run sessions.

These cover specific skills or staff's personal development, for example a confidence-building/assertiveness session to aid a reporter in interview techniques.

No formal legal refresher took place in this time period, although we did call on our retained media law advisor to assist with specific complaints, as needed, or for guidance on handling sensitive subjects in the news section (for instance, court proceedings). Editorial staff are advised we can call on him for assistance as needed. We have not needed to seek formal legal help from solicitors (although we retain their services as needed).

Meetings are held across the business between staff and their direct managers as necessary as part of a performance-related appraisal system. Both the chief-sub editor and news editor meet with each member of their respective teams to discuss personal development and on-the-job training/task needs and how well they are doing in meeting job-related objectives. Set editorial KPOs relate to ensuring near-perfect accuracy at the first-read stage of all print content and development of wider reporter contacts.

Our appraisal process, revised in late 2017, introduced individual performance diaries that staff and their managers could update on a rolling basis. This replaced the formality of the documented monthly one-to-one meetings, but staff meetings still take place as required.

Staff are immediately informed of any style guide or editorial policy changes via email or in one-to-one meetings.

5. Our record on complaints

No complaints received by, or ruled on, by IPSO's complaints committee were received by VBD during this period. Where IPSO finds against any VBD publication or online content, we will comply with the findings and any actions required by the regulator in full.

We received a **formal complaint under our Editorial Complaints Procedure** on 16 August 2018, sent via email and considered under section 1 (accuracy) of the IPSO Editors' Code of Practice. The complainant said an online news item about a practice takeover referred to "Abbey Vets" (the name supplied on an original press release), but because it was a generic name shared by other practices (including his), the reference was inaccurate and misleading. We were asked to print a correction. The article was amended and the name and location of the practice in the story clarified. The complainant considered the matter dealt with. The fact the story had been amended on 16 August also featured at the footer. This can be found at <https://www.vettimes.co.uk/news/vetpartners-acquires-two-leading-equine-hospitals/>

out within the content (example enclosed).

We use the WoodWing Content Station programme, which saves versions of all content (for print and online), and therefore allows to check fully all content and investigate any complaints. WordPress also logs who has worked on content published to the web.

3. VBD's complaints handling process

The company has guidance for handling external complaints (*copy enclosed*). This refers to "customers", but this term applies equally to readers as well as advertisers or suppliers. It lists the process for handling complaints for the first person taking such calls. The guidance is included in the VBD Staff Handbook, copies of which are available to all members of staff (*copy enclosed for information purposes only*).

Editorially, people with a concern will either ring or email the reporter they originally spoke to or the editor of the publication. Concerns/complaints are therefore noted, investigated and outcomes are reached. Editors are expected to reach a satisfactory conclusion as soon as possible. Concerns received in this period covered minor factual errors in print, usually in supplied feature content where either the submitting author has made an error or a subbing error was made. Wherever something has appeared incorrectly, we always try to correct this error by the next available issue. For more serious errors involving dosage or product inaccuracies, where necessary we will reprint the information in full.

A record/database (updated weekly by the editorial coordinator) is held of every article or story we publish in Veterinary Times, including news stories, and this includes any notable corrections. PDFs of all published pages are also available and fully searchable.

In line with IPSO rules, we have developed and published an Editorial Complaints Procedure (*copy enclosed*). This explains we are members of IPSO, how to complain and the full processes. Details of the policy and our IPSO membership are included in the journal information panels, where they are pointed online to <https://www.vettimes.co.uk/veterinary-business-development-editorial-complaints-procedure/> The guidance also features links to the IPSO website and the Editors' Code. An example of the information panel from Veterinary Times is enclosed. Staff were also notified of this procedure. The "Ipsos regulated" logo was added to the panels later in the period covered by their report.

Pre-publication guidance issued by IPSO would be heeded and taken into account by all editors. Paul Imrie, editorial manager for VBD, would be the first point of contact for sharing such guidance. He would then speak with the news editor, sub-editor or the editors of other journals to discuss the guidance and implement any actions. All staff would be advised of policy changes via email or staff meetings.

vettimes.co.uk has additional terms and conditions that cover contributions to message boards, plus an acceptable use policy Available at <https://www.vettimes.co.uk/terms-and-conditions/>.

and copy enclosed. The print version was altered ahead of publication.

Clarifications for minor inaccuracies (complaints not made formally, but clarifications sought by concerned parties) were published as necessary during the year. Examples are included in the appendices.

6. Appendices

Appendices and enclosures should be treated as confidential supplementary documents to this report and are not for wider distribution or publication without consent.

1. VBD Style Guide

2. VBD Staff Handbook

3. Author guidelines/checklist

4. External complaints in handbook

5. Editorial Complaints Procedure

6. Example info panel

7. Clarification example 1

8. Clarification example 2

9. Clarification: resolved complaint submitted under VBD editorial complaints procedure

CHECK LIST FOR AUTHORS

So we don't have to bother you once you have submitted your article, could you please take a minute to check that everything below has been completed/submitted.

1	Have you had this article published elsewhere or has it been offered to another journal?	Yes/No
2	Have you attached a 200-word abstract of your article with five key words at the bottom?	Yes/No
3	Have you submitted your article in Word format?	Yes/No
4	Is your article totally generic? We are unable to accept articles overtly promoting companies and products.	Yes/No
5	Your article is in the region of 1,800 to 2,000 words for Veterinary Times or 1,500 words for VN Times. (Though we are quite happy to accept an article in two parts if it is in excess of the 2,000 word count.	Yes/No
6	Appropriate pictures attached. Pictures should be in separate jpeg attachments, at a minimum resolution of 300ppi at 10cm width. PLEASE DON'T SEND IMAGES IN A WORD DOCUMENT	Yes/No
7	Digital Content included	Yes/No
8	Have you added captions at the end of the article?	Yes/No
9	Have you annotated the pictures in the text?	Yes/No
10	Your article is referenced where appropriate, and a full list of references is included at the end of the article, along with any further reading material.	Yes/No
11	You have avoided mentioning unlicensed drugs, but if it is unavoidable, these have been flagged up at the time of submission.	Yes/No
12	You have attached a short biography including your qualifications; 40 to 50 words is ideal.	Yes/No
13	You have attached a head and shoulders biography picture at 300ppi resolution.	Yes/No

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14	I am aware that Veterinary Times and VN Times retain the copyright to articles that are published and that the article should not be used or published elsewhere without express permission from Veterinary Business Development.	Yes/No
15	I am aware that articles published in our journals will be placed on to our website, www.vettimes.co.uk	Yes/No
16	You have supplied the name and qualifications of the person reviewing the article (where necessary)	Yes/No
17	You have completed the required author agreement	Yes/No
18	I confirm that the images for this article are my own	Yes/No
19	The images are not my own, I have permission to use them and the credit required has been added in the captions	Yes/No

February 26, 2018

Got a story? Call the Newsdesk on 01733 383561/383562

Non-stun slaughter more than doubles

THE number of UK sheep slaughtered without stunning has doubled in the past six years, according to official figures.

The increase has led former RCVS president Lord Sandy Trees – the only vet in the House of Lords – to ask the Upper House, in terms of animal welfare: “Are we going backwards?”

In 2017, just more than a quarter (27 per cent; 3.3 million) sheep/goats were not stunned before slaughter. A Food Standards Agency survey for England and Wales estimated 184 million poultry and 21,000 cattle were also slaughtered without an effective stun in 2017. The figures were published by the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation in its fact file “Non-stun slaughter: key facts” update.

During the debate, “Abattoirs: ritual slaughter”, in the House of Lords, Prof Lord Trees congratulated the Government on the announcement of measures designed to improve the welfare of animals.

In response to a statement from Defra secretary Lord John Gardiner, Prof Lord Trees said: “[I] congratulate the Govern-

ment on the number of measures it has announced recently to improve animal welfare in this country. They are progressive and very welcome. However, on non-stunned slaughter, I am afraid we have not made much progress.

“The latest Food Standards Agency figures, to which the noble lord alluded, showed the number of sheep slaughtered without stunning in Britain in 2017 doubled in the six years from 2011 to more than three million sheep.

“That is three million sheep that had their throats cut without being rendered unconscious first. Does the minister agree, in that aspect of animal welfare, we are going backwards?”

Lord Gardiner said: “The Government would prefer all animals to be stunned before slaughter, but we have been very clear over a long period – since the [Slaughter of Animals Act 1933] – we respect the rights of the Jewish and Muslim communities to consume meat in accordance with their religious practices.

“However, we expect our announcement on CCTV, affecting all slaughterhouses, to be an advance in animal welfare.”

Data protection UK roadshow

THE Veterinary Management Group has announced roadshow dates to help practices comply with new EU data protection laws.

The practical credit control and new general data protection regulations (GDPR) event – in association with debt recovery agency DSL – takes place during daytime working hours and lasts two hours.

Topics are: what customer information you can hold and how to safeguard it, how to capture the right data that ensures you can recover debts, gold standard credit control and debt prevention, steps for debt recovery, and GDPRs with third-party suppliers.

For full details on dates, costs, locations and booking, visit <http://events-by-vmg.co.uk/roadshows>

In brief

■ **PRESCRIPTION FOOD:** Prescription-only bird food to specifically support treatment of liver and renal issues is now available to UK vets. Scarletts Parrot Essentials is believed to be the first UK company to have imported the range to treat specific conditions, from manufacturer Roudybush. The company's Scarlett Delacroix said: “The UK is falling behind other countries without having access to prescription foods. We at Scarletts Parrot Essentials feel it is important to work alongside vets, backing up treatment and care they give with prescription foods, and quality foods in general. It is important to note these prescription foods do not treat conditions – they support treatment given by vets in the first place.” Visit www.scarlettsparrotessentials.co.uk

■ **APPOINTMENT:** Veterinary Business Development (VBD) – publisher of *Veterinary Times*, *VN Times*, *VBJ* and *vettimes.co.uk* – has appointed Claire Edmunds to the newly created senior role of head of marketing. Reporting to managing director Jo Woods, Mrs Edmunds will be responsible for pulling together the marketing functions and working alongside other senior business managers to deliver the marketing and communications strategy for new and existing products and services. She joins VBD with 8 years' experience at Nestlé Purina Petcare, followed by 13 years at Merial Animal Health.

■ **PRODUCT RECALL:** The VMD has issued a product recall alert for specified batches of Omicure 150mg/g doxycycline powder for oral solution (Art No 480573) due to a packaging problem. The product is indicated for treatment of infections of the respiratory tract in pigeons and cage birds. Specified batch numbers are 16L16 741, 16L19 742 and 16L15 739 – all with expiry dates of 12-2019. For more information, telephone Andy Maheer on +32 9 381 31 86 or email comsec@verla.be

■ **CLARIFICATION:** It has been brought to our attention the headline “First grad scheme launched for independent vet practice” that appeared on page 2 in V748.06 may have been misleading. We would like to point out the VetX graduate mentoring scheme pre-dates the Grad to Vets scheme the news item discussed, having been launched in September 2017. We apologise for any confusion.

■ **RESOURCE:** A resource on canine genetics has been added to The Kennel Club Academy's online educational facility. Comprising a film and short assessment, the resources are free and provide anyone interested in dog health with an overview of canine genetics. For more information, visit www.kcacademy.org.uk/shop/all-courses/canine-genetics

Students not ‘well equipped’ for equine dentistry, says vet

A LEADING specialist has accused vet schools of not taking the subject of equine dentistry seriously enough.

Equine Dental Clinic (EDC) founder Chris Pearce believes students are not being properly equipped with the in-depth knowledge required to deal appropriately with problematic – or even routine – dental cases.

Dr Pearce also believes students are graduating without the skills they need to effectively communicate key dental health messages to owners – negatively impacting on health and welfare.

He said: “I have absolutely no doubt there is not enough training at undergraduate level to enthuse vets to understand equine dental examination and treatment is still a ‘day one key skill’ all new graduates going into equine practice should have, and, actually, I don't think they do have it and I don't think they are being very well equipped at undergraduate level.

“The essence of the problem is vet schools are not taking dentistry seriously enough.”

While Dr Pearce concedes the profession's attitude to dentistry has improved to some extent, with more dedicated CPD modules and increased interest, he believes more needs to be done to get the profession up to speed. “I still think we are behind

report by
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the curve,” he said. “There has to be a lot more [work done] at undergraduate level, so when vets first graduate, they aren't having to book straight on to courses to learn equine dentistry at a very basic level.

“Graduates should be coming out with the same level of skill and knowledge in dentistry as they do in medicine and surgery.”

Dr Pearce said such disparity can mean key messages regarding equine dentistry are not effectively communicated to owners, which causes its own set of problems.

He said: “In some areas, there are horses suffering in silence because their owners don't understand the importance of good dental examinations or that their horses may be developing problems without showing symptoms.

“Similarly, in some areas of the country, in some practices and with some dental technicians caring for horses' teeth, this message is not widely understood – and is not being communicated to owners.”

To address the problem, a greater understanding of the issues is required not

only from owners and dental technicians, but vets, too – particularly because many problems can be detected via a thorough examination, Dr Pearce added.

‘Win-win situation’

“Early intervention is key,” Dr Pearce explained. “If problems can be identified early, they can be treated early, there will be less complications and the horses will benefit from that hugely in the long term. It will also be cheaper. It is win-win situation for everyone.”

Results from the National Equine Health Survey showed 5.4 per cent of equines involved were suffering from trouble with their teeth, while dental disease was the sixth most frequently recorded individual disease syndrome in the survey.

Not everyone agrees with Dr Pearce's criticism of vet schools, however. BEVA senior vice-president Vicki Nicholls is coordinator of equine post-graduate professional studies at the University of Liverpool. She said: “All the veterinary schools take a holistic approach to dentistry, which we build on from day one.

“We aren't trying to turn vet students into equine dental technicians – but rather teach them how to recognise pathology and make appropriate decisions for treatment as a ‘day one’

graduate competency.” Dr Nicholls said more equine vets are choosing to undertake additional qualifications in equine dentistry.

This includes the CertAVP(ED) that provides a pathway to advanced practitioner status and the RCVS-recognised specialist qualification in equine dentistry.

However, she did agree early intervention is key to ensuring equines receive the dental care they need, and this requires an increase in owner awareness, which vets can help with.

She said: “There are a plethora of different people offering equine dental care, but how do you help educate clients on the best choices for their horse?”

Safeguarding welfare

Dr Nicholls continued: “Our primary role as vets is to safeguard the welfare of the

horse; this is about making sure the most appropriately qualified person does the job.

“In the same way you wouldn't ask your plumber to look in your mouth just because he or she has an endoscope, we need to help horse owners understand their equine dental care provider has the appropriate qualifications for the job.”

BEVA believes appropriately experienced vets should be the primary provider when it comes to equine dental care and, to this end, is preparing to add an equine dental section to its website, aimed at both horse owners and vets.

Resources will include a digital dental form with a linked guide to dental charting, CPD links and educational resources (including motorised dentistry practical courses), and a list of BEVA members with further qualifications in equine dentistry.



Image: iStockphoto / Adobe Stock

UK vet practice trials New Zealand dry cow therapy

AN innovative on-farm selective dry cow therapy service adopted nationwide in New Zealand is being trialled by a UK veterinary practice.

Meadows Farm Vets in Stoke Prior, Worcestershire, has invested in a purpose-built drying off trailer that allows up to six cows to be treated at the same time – enabling a team of four vets and technicians to treat up to 300 cows per day.

The practice has teamed up with Norbrook to provide

the on-farm service, which, they hope, will significantly lower the rate of mastitis and reduce the use of antibiotics in dairy farming in the UK.

Practice director Richard Aylett said, while many dairy farmers had adopted best practice for teat sealants and responsible use of antimicrobials, many were still anxious. He said: “Protocol changes all the time, so it can be difficult to keep up with new drying off procedures. Our service aims to ease the pressure on

farmers and treats the whole herd on the same day, with each cow being treated individually.

“Our team is able to treat the cows through selective dry cow therapy, applying teat sealant and advising on the use of antibiotics. It's an idea that has been tested and proven in the southern hemisphere, and we hope it gathers pace as a new service for the UK market.”

With the service launch, the practice has created a division, Udder Health UK (www.udderhealthuk.co.uk).

In brief

TOP TURNOUT: The number of veterinary professionals viewing the 24-hour educational live stream of Hill's Global Symposium 2018 has exceeded 5,300 unique viewers worldwide. In addition to some 200 vets who travelled from more than 35 countries to attend the symposium in person. In total, they viewed more than 7,500 hours of quality continuing education. Thanks to the attendance, Hill's will donate £10,000 to Dogs for Good – a UK-based charity that trains and provides accredited assistance dogs to people with physical or mental disabilities.

BACK IN STOCK: Zoetis has announced equine viral arteritis vaccine Equip Arterovac is back in stock. With the company having previously warned the vaccine would be out of stock from the end of November 2017 until mid-2018, its prompt re-availability means many vaccinated stallions and teasers should be able to receive their six-monthly booster dose within the normal designated time frame, it said. For more information, contact your Zoetis account manager or the Zoetis technical team via customersupportUK@zoetis.com or 0845 300 9084 (option 1).

CLARIFICATION: We have been asked to clarify the biography of Victoria Robinson, whose joint article with Hilary Jackson featured in V748.17. While Dr Robinson did return to The University of Edinburgh as a junior clinician and was part of the Rutland House Referrals dermatology service in St Helens, she then became a referral clinician and is undertaking residency training at the Dermatology Referral Service in Glasgow with specialists Hilary Jackson and Peter Forsythe.

RECALL: The APHA is making small animal vets aware of a recall of some Sainsbury's dog and cat food that has been found to contain excessive vitamin D levels. The company has contacted its customer base; however, risk to dog and cat health as a result of consuming the food is considered low and vets receiving client enquiries are encouraged to telephone the Veterinary Poisons Information Service on 020 7305 5055. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2Kze4wT>

CULL COSTS: A freedom of information request has revealed Cheshire Constabulary charged the Home Office £831,093 for policing the county's badger cull operation in autumn 2017. The cull resulted in 736 badger deaths and protesters pointed out, for policing alone, this works out at £1,129 per badger killed. Cheshire was one of 11 new zones where the cull was rolled out in 2017 and 21 separate cull zones exist across the UK, involving 7 police force areas.

Pet owner pushes for law on compulsory cat microchipping

A PETITION calling for cat microchipping to become compulsory has been welcomed by veterinary bodies and animal welfare charities.

If successful, owners would be legally required to microchip their cats – a move that would bring laws regarding felines in line with their canine counterparts, for which compulsory microchipping was introduced in England in 2016.

Pet owner Liam Smith, who is behind the petition, said compulsory cat microchipping should be made law because shelters are already overcrowded with cats that aren't. He said: "I was inspired to start this petition because I couldn't believe all dogs have to be microchipped by law, but cats don't."

"If a cat gets lost or injured and hasn't been microchipped, it makes it much harder for vets and animal welfare charities to reunite it with its owner. "There is a good chance the



owner will never see his or her pet again. Sadly, I feel some people don't realise the reality of this. If this is the case, the animal will likely either go to a shelter or be euthanised without the owner's knowledge. "Collars with ID tags attached can be of use, but are not effective enough due to cats having a habit of losing them. Criminals could also easily remove it, claim the cat belongs to them (especially with the expensive breeds) and sell it."

Coverage

Mr Smith hopes his petition will garner more than 100,000 signatures – enough to have it considered for a debate in Parliament. He added: "I believe it will be helpful if vets sign

this petition because I think with the contacts they have in the industry, it will allow the petition to gain more coverage. "Moreover, I think their signatures will add more substance and credibility. I also believe the majority of vets are in favour of animals being microchipped."

Cats Protection and the BVA are among organisations to welcome the concept. In a statement, Cats Protection said it was calling, in its own capacity, for compulsory microchipping of owned cats across the UK.

"Thousands of cats go missing from their homes each year, which is heartbreaking for owners and means lost or injured cats may never be returned to their homes," the charity said. "If any of these... come into Cats Protection's care, we do our best for them, but it is extremely difficult for us to trace the owner without a microchip or other means of identification, and may result

in us rehoming a cat needlessly. "Compulsory microchipping for owned cats would help solve these problems, so we continue to raise this with politicians in Westminster and other devolved administrations in the UK.

"We don't support petitions unless Cats Protection is the originator or it forms part of a collaborative campaign, but our staff, volunteers and supporters are welcome to sign [this] petition as individuals."

Legislation

Maggie Roberts, director of veterinary services at Cats Protection, said she would also like to see the introduction of legislation that means if a cat is not microchipped, it can be rehomed or neutered and legally returned to the location where it was found.

"If we rehomed a stray cat and the original owner came forward weeks or even months later, he or she always has the

right to reclaim the cat as he or she is chattels in law," she said. "This causes a lot of anguish to both the new and old owners – and could be avoided by microchipping."

The BVA fully supports pet microchipping and the majority of its members recommend it to their cat-owning clients.

BVA senior vice-president Gudrun Ravetz said: "The BVA encourages its members and all vets to talk to owners about the benefits of microchipping and the importance of owners keeping their contact details alongside their pet records up to date.

"We have not previously called for microchipping of cats to be made compulsory in law; however, this is a complex area we would be willing to explore further, should clear evidence of the need for legislation emerge."

To view Mr Smith's petition and for more information, visit <http://bit.ly/2JP4Lb2>

Willows links up with LVS

TWO leading cardiologists from Willows Veterinary Centre and Referral Service, in Solihull, have embarked on a pioneering link-up with fellow Linnaeus Group referral practice London Vet Specialists (LVS).

The partnership will see LVS offer a specialist cardiology service for the first time, with RCVS and European specialists in small animal cardiology Chris Linney and Brigite Pedro working from its Hampstead base once a week.

The pair will work alternate weeks at LVS to provide a continuous service. Dr Linney, head of cardiology at Willows, takes feline and canine cardiac referrals, with a keen interest in congenital heart disease and performing cardiac catheterisation procedures for correction of heart defects. Dr Linney said: "We had been discussing the provision of a cardiology service at LVS for some time, as there is actually little to no access to specialist cardiology treatment within the M25, making the area obviously very under-served. We are really excited by the venture, and the support we have received from LVS and Willows has been fantastic."

Janet Kovak McClaran, LVS' head of surgery, said: "We are very pleased to welcome cardiology to our family of specialists. This addition will help us continue to fulfil our mission of providing state-of-the-art care for our patients. Chris and Brigite are not just top in their field, but lovely to work with as well."

Videos to 'debunk myths'

A FREE four-part video series, "Recognizing subtle lameness", has been launched.

Authors said it will "...debunk the myths and misperceptions surrounding performance and behavioural issues, and shift the blame where it belongs: on pain".

Produced by education centre Equitopia, the videos feature some of the foremost

experts in equine biomechanics. The first video in the series walks viewers through the familiar indicators of lameness before revealing pain's less obvious expressions – not only via movement, but through less common resources, such as reading a horse's facial expressions.

To watch the video, visit <https://youtu.be/01PvxyzSERO>



RCVS election results announced

THE 2018 RCVS council election results have been announced, with (pictured from left) Susan Paterson, Mandisa Greene and Neil Smith securing the top three spots.

A Legislative Reform Order (LRO) that amends the college's governance has completed its passage through the House of Commons and House of Lords, and is soon expected to be signed off by the relevant minister to bring it into law.

Subsequently, it is anticipated only the first 3 candidates out of the 10 who stood will take up their posts. The results, in order of number of votes, are:

- Susan Paterson – 3,976 votes
- Mandisa Greene – 3,819 votes
- Neil Smith – 3,544 votes
- John Innes – 3,502 votes
- David Callow – 3,310 votes
- Malthew Plumtree – 2,677 votes
- Iain Richards – 2,635 votes
- Karlien Heyrman – 2,487 votes
- John Davies – 580 votes
- Thomas Lonsdale – 542 votes

Eleanor Ferguson, RCVS registrar and returning officer for the election, said: "I would like to thank all the candidates who

stood for council this year and, in particular, congratulate Susan, Mandisa and Neil for being re-elected to RCVS council.

"The LRO likely to be signed off in due course will reconstitute the make-up of council – with greater lay and VN input – and also reduce the overall size of council, including the number of elected members. "Because of this, only the first three candidates – as opposed to the first six under previous rules – are likely to be taking up a four-year term at RCVS Day 2018.

"Our commiserations go out to all the unsuccessful candidates – especially in this unusual transitional year – and we thank them for their participation in this year's election."

The total number of vets eligible to vote in this year's elections was 30,693, of whom 6,967 voted (2,330 by post and 4,637 online), making for an overall turnout of 22.7 per cent.

The number of votes cast in last year's RCVS council election was 6,785 for a turnout of 22.8 per cent, while the number of votes cast in the 2016 election was 4,403 for a turnout of 15.6 per cent.

The results of the election will be formally declared at this year's RCVS Day at the Royal Institute of British Architects on 13 July.

Postgraduate emergency practice certificate launched

CPD Solutions and the University of Chester have added a subject to their developing suite of postgraduate certificates (PgCerts) for vets in practice.

Starting in October, the PgCert in Emergency Practice will allow small animal vets to qualify in 12 months.

The programme includes nine full days of hands-on practical clinical emergency training based at the CPD Solutions Training Centre in Studley near Birmingham.

Expert emergency tutors Tobias Grave, Aidan McAlinden, Smita Das and Scott Kilpatrick will help vets refine their techniques and decision making in small group sessions.

The certificate includes modules in essentials of small animal emergency practice, medicine and surgery – each of which starts with a three-day practical attendance session. Assessment is continuous and

based on submission of a reflective portfolio in keeping with the RCVS' move towards outcomes-based CPD.

Students will also have access to online resources, as well as essential emergency textbooks, DVDs and membership of CPD Solutions' Emergency and Critical Care Webinar Club.

For more information, telephone 0151 328 0444 or visit www.pgcertemrg.com

December 10, 2018

Defra 'must come clean on limitations of skin test'

Dear editor,
 Over the past two years, two scientific papers have been published^{1,2} stating the sensitivity of the single intradermal comparative cervical tuberculin (SICCT) test to be far lower than that recognised by Defra³.

Both papers have estimated the median sensitivity to be about 50 per cent; the latter paper stated – even at severe interpretation – the range for sensitivity is between 49 per cent and 60 per cent. Additionally, a paper by the European Food Standards Authority in 2012⁴ cited a median sensitivity of 49 per cent for the SICCT test. These are much lower than the 80 per cent sensitivity used by Defra.

This has implications for the diagnosis and control of bTB, as it means for every 10 infected cattle, the SICCT test may fail to identify between 2 and 5 of these animals – resulting in many herds retaining infected cattle after disease restrictions have been lifted, the animals have been allowed to move again and officially TB free (OTF) status has been restored.

As a consequence, a high probability exists that breakdown herds declared OTF, solely via the SICCT test, are still infected. This means herds are very likely to suffer a further breakdown, movement of these undiagnosed cattle will cause further breakdowns elsewhere, and the disease can be shed into the environment by infected slurry and transportation of infected material.

This is especially the case in the high-risk area (HRA) of England where, in 2017, 90 per cent (2,277) of confirmed breakdowns occurred and only 4 per cent of these cases were subject to supplementary interferon gamma testing⁵. As these herds can then move cattle, this is leading to transportation of undetected infection within the HRA and beyond – to the edge area, low-risk area (LRA), Wales and Scotland.

Defra has acknowledged the scale of infection being missed by the current testing regime, citing in August 2016: "This substantial residual herd infection contributes to the high rate of recurrence we see in the HRA, where nearly 60 per cent of breakdowns occur in herds that have sustained a breakdown in the previous three years."⁶ However, it has done very little, as yet, to address this major problem.

While it has been mandatory since January 2014 for all confirmed breakdowns in the edge and LRA to be supplemented with interferon gamma, to try to ensure herds are more truly free of disease when OTF is restored, this is not the case in the HRA. In 2017, only four per cent of confirmed breakdowns in the HRA were interferon gamma tested⁵. While Defra is intending to extend interferon gamma testing in the HRA, progress to date has been very slow.

Given that, by far, the majority of confirmed breakdowns occur in the HRA and that most are declared OTF on the strength of the SICCT test alone, the residue of undiagnosed infection in these herds poses enormous problems for farmers and the livestock industry. What is extremely worrying is that farmers in the HRA are being told their herds are OTF, when, in all probability, many herds are still infected. This is giving false hope to farmers that their herd is clear and deceiving them as to the true infectious status of the herd.

The ongoing cycle of breakdowns in these herds is causing a great deal of anxiety, stress and financial loss, without the farmers knowing or understanding what is going on to cause these breakdowns. Additionally, farmers who have bought cattle from these recently declared OTF herds in the HRA are being equally misled and unaware the cattle they buy may still be infected.

Perhaps what is most concerning is the Godfray review⁷ failed to acknowledge or cite either of these new papers^{1,2}, despite the authorship of both papers containing many Government scientists.

If Defra is really to get to grips with bTB control then it must come clean with farmers and the livestock industry on the significant limitations of the skin test, and be explicit regarding the scale of undiagnosed infection remaining in herds declared OTF solely by the use of the SICCT test. Farmers should not be told their herd is OTF on this basis. Most importantly, Defra must accept – and be open and transparent, both with the livestock industry and veterinary profession – the true value of the SICCT sensitivity lies much closer to 50 per cent than to the 80 per cent value it is adhering to.

Yours faithfully,
JAN BAYLEY, coordinator,
Animal Welfare Group, Gloucestershire (full address supplied).

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Ask To Pet campaign

Dear editor,
 Since becoming a dog owner, I have been astounded at the number of people willing to present their hands to the faces of dogs they don't know – often while making high-pitched noises that can be stressful for the dog and, potentially, dangerous for the person.

Based on these, unfortunately, frequent encounters, I have set up a Facebook campaign called Ask To Pet, encouraging people to ask an owner before rushing up to a dog to say hello. Asking to pet is important in many situations, such as for dogs in training, nervous dogs, and dogs fearful of certain types of people and situations. As veterinary professionals, we can lead by example – especially in practice – where dogs may not want to be fussed by strangers.

I have designed a poster for veterinary practices (pictured) – if you would like a copy, email asktopet@gmail.com
 Yours faithfully,
BETHANEY BRANT, BSc(Hons), RVN, AET, CET.
Project coordinator, Small Animal Veterinary Surveillance Network, University of Liverpool, Liverpool L69 3BX.

For more details, see December's **Vntimes**

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Call for cases or sightings of sick or dead hares

Dear editor,
 In the past few weeks, an increase of sightings of sick and dead European hares (*Lepus europaeus*; also known as the brown hare) has been observed.

Diana Bell of the University of East Anglia, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Norfolk Wildlife Trust had initially been told about hares found either dying or already dead at different sites around the region, but continuing incoming reports have suggested countrywide mortalities, including events in Wales and Scotland.

Some reported gross findings have been consistent with the classic signs of myxomatosis in rabbits¹. At least three sick hares were taken by members of the public to local vets, where they were euthanased with a presumptive diagnosis of myxomatosis; however, no tissue samples were collected prior to their incineration.

Myxomatosis has been confirmed this summer in the Iberian hare (*Lepus granatensis*). The infection has been confirmed in more than 140 cases by molecular testing, in more than 12 provinces in the centre and south of Spain²; it has also been confirmed in Portugal³. Prior to this, myxomatosis had only been described once in hares, affecting a single brown hare in the UK; the lesion appeared to be in a recovery phase and it was hypothesised the final cause of death was secondary infection with *Staphylococcus aureus* causing fatal septicaemia⁴.

Another hypothesis has been the potential of rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) type two⁵ – causing significant mortalities in the rabbit UK population (both captive and wild) – also becoming infective to brown hares. This will also be a novel presentation in the UK, although already known to have occurred on the continent⁶. Traditionally, hares have been affected by their "hare equivalent" of RHD – also a calicivirus, closely related to the RHD virus – causing the European brown hare syndrome⁷.

The death of any animal is obviously distressing, but we have asked the public firstly to photograph these hares and secondly help

in the collection of carcasses for thorough postmortem analysis, to help us understand what's happening.

To elucidate which pathogens may be involved, vets in the UK are now being urged to photograph sick and dying hares, and share their sightings with Dr Bell, who can assist in the collection of carcasses.

Getting good images and bodies of these hares, along with their exact location, is crucial to rule out or identify possible diseases. If you have seen a sick or dead hare, send a photograph of it (including its head and perianal area) and details of its location, to Dr Bell via d.bell@uea.ac.uk – keep the carcass in cold storage while waiting for Dr Bell's reply.

Yours faithfully,
DIANA BELL, BSc, PhD,
Senior lecturer, University of East Anglia School of Biological Sciences, Norwich,
DANIEL CALVO CARRASCO, CertAVP(ZooMed), MRCVS,
Residency trained exotic clinician, Great Western Exotics, Swindon; Veterinary and ecosystem health officer, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

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