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**Contact information for all
AVS Officers, Committee members
and reps can be found at
www.avsukireland.co.uk/who-we-are**

From the editor

By Katie Kirk, JAVS Editor



IT'S sometimes easy to overlook the impact that EMS has on us as vet students. Not only does it give us those invaluable opportunities to improve our husbandry and clinical skills, but the experiences we have in our different placements can help shape the kind of vet we become and the eventual career path we may choose. As well as that, it's often those little titbits of advice you get from a vet that prove the most useful in the long run. As one vet I've recently seen practice with said: it's the art of veterinary medicine, rather than simply the science we are taught at university.

Unfortunately, all too often logistical and financial issues can get in the way of pursuing our dream placements. Given the importance of EMS, it's not unreasonable to infer the limitations these issues may place on our future careers. Last year, AVS, with the support of VDS Training, gave out our inaugural EMS Grants to support five students. In this edition of JAVS, some of the grant winners have reported back on their placements and how these have influenced their goals for the future. If you're in need of some EMS inspiration for a dream placement of your own, we've also got some brilliant stories covering some more unusual EMS placements, both in the UK and abroad.

Beyond the grants, AVS has been working hard to improve the experience of students on EMS through the EMS guides and resources, which have had really positive feedback so far. If you haven't seen them yet, go check them out on our website!

Veterinary mental health is another massive issue facing the profession at the moment, and veterinary students are certainly not exempt from this. AVS has been trying to promote awareness through the 'CV of failure' events held at individual vet schools and the VetKind webinar, which happened last November.

There's also some great welfare advice on various aspects of the veterinary course in this edition of JAVS: from study skills, to how to optimise your mindset for learning, to advice on coping as a new grad.

AVS is constantly working to represent veterinary students. If there's a veterinary issue you think we're missing out on, or you'd like to share your opinion on a veterinary topic in a future edition of JAVS, please get in touch.

In the meantime, in the following pages you'll find an array of amazing articles which I hope you enjoy reading!



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EMS resources and more in a busy year for AVS

Katie Roberts (AVS President 2019/20)

This year has been a really busy one for the team at AVS.

THE results of our first ever EMS survey were released in November last year at the London Vet Show. The survey really helped us to get a much better picture of student opinion on our compulsory placements. For example, we found that the average score out of 10 for how satisfied we are with our EMS placements was only 6.9. An overwhelming majority of students (>90 per cent) thought it would be useful to have a discussion before starting their placement, but this was found to be happening only 12.4 per cent of the time.

Following on from these findings, we launched our EMS resources, starting with small animal, followed by farm and equine resources soon after. The resources aim to make conversations between students and practices easier, by laying out the students' self-judged competencies in a series of year-appropriate skills. This allows all staff members to easily see how confident that individual is, with the intention of prompting conversations about aims for the placement, and hopefully increasing the number of appropriate practical tasks to be undertaken.

I'm very pleased to say that we've had lots of positive feedback about these resources, with both practitioners and students finding them useful, simple to use and informative. If you want to take one to your next placement, you can find all three on our website.

It has been somewhat of an EMS-themed year, as late 2018 was also when we launched our inaugural AVS EMS Grants, in partnership with VDS Training. We offered five grants of £200 to students whose applications were deemed the most



Katie Roberts, AVS President 2019/20

worthy, as judged by a panel. All five students have now completed their AVS-funded placements, and I am happy to report that all had a good time, and definitely made the most of experiences they otherwise would have been unable to undertake. You can read about how three of the successful applicants used their grants on pages 9 and 10 of this issue of JAVS. Applications for our 2019 grants will be opening at the end of this year, so keep an eye out if you want to apply.

As always, we have had two fabulous events over the past year. Nottingham hosted Sports Weekend 2018 in November, and I'm sure everyone who was there will agree with me that it was a good one. Thank you to Tom, Izzie, Pippa and their committee for all your hard work – it really did pay off!

In February this year, we had AVS Congress at the RVC, which was another very successful event. Carla, Nick and their committee put together a really great weekend of talks and practicals as well as organising our annual black tie dinner (which was great!). Thanks to the team for all their work organising the weekend. Keep an eye out for Sports Weekend 2019 in Glasgow, and Congress 2020 in Surrey (their

first ever AVS event) – their committees are already hard at work planning another two great weekends for us all.

We've also been busy representing the student voice in the profession. I currently sit on BVA Council, the RCVS's Diversity and Inclusion Group

and EMS Coordinators Group, and on the Veterinary Schools Council Education Committee. Our Senior Vice-President Dave Charles is representing students on both the Good Workplace Group at the BVA and the Vet Futures project, while our Junior Vice-President Izzie Arthur sits on the Mind Matters Working Group at RCVS and the BVA Member Benefits Committee. This is only a handful of the committees our officers sit on to ensure your voices get heard in the wider veterinary profession.

It's also been a busy year for the rest of the AVS Committee, with our three committee meetings at BVA headquarters in London, and all their hard work on our Welfare, Policy and Member Services sub-committees. I'm constantly amazed by how fab our AVS Committee is – they put in so much hard work, and are a wonderful group of people who I'm lucky enough to regard as friends. Thank you all for your dedication to AVS – you guys rock!

And, of course, thank you to all veterinary students in the UK and Ireland. You always support us (whether in person or on social media), and we can't wait to see lots of you at Sports Weekend and Congress.

Why a growth mindset is key to achievement

Eleanor White (Fifth year, RVC)

Your mindset can influence how you approach your veterinary studies and affect your mental health. Changing your mindset may not be easy but it may help you achieve so much more.

RESEARCHER Carol Dweck uses the term 'mindset' to describe the way people think about their ability and talents. She describes two types of mindset as existing along a continuum. The first is the fixed mindset, which suggests that your abilities are innate and unchangeable. The second is the growth mindset, which views abilities as something you can improve through practice. Someone may have a fixed mindset in relation to certain aspects within their life and a growth mindset for other situations.

In a fixed mindset failure is viewed as permanent, whereas in a growth mindset failure is viewed as a chance to learn. There are many times when I have viewed critical feedback as a personal attack – a classic fixed mindset trait.

In a fixed mindset there is a focus on measurable accomplishments; a growth mindset focuses on the journey of continued improvement. Again, I am guilty of getting frustrated when something hasn't gone the way I intended it to on the first attempt.

People with a fixed mindset will typically document their intelligence and talents rather than trying to develop and improve them. They'll say things like 'I'm really bad at taking blood' – but are they? Or have they just not practised enough?

People with a fixed mindset always want to appear intelligent because they believe they were born with a fixed level of intelligence. These people fear making mistakes and looking 'dumb' because they don't believe



What mindset do you have when approaching learning?

they can redeem themselves once other people see them as being unintelligent.

As I began researching into the two different mindsets, the traits of someone with a fixed mindset resonated with me more and more. I don't think I'm an overly negative person: there are certainly many areas within my life where I'm more than happy to accept my flaws and try to improve upon them (and even laugh at my mistakes along the way). But there's something about vet school that makes me over-analyse everything I do. I'm not sure if it's something to do with the fact that vet students are typically really high achievers. It's easy to feel like you're at the bottom of the intelligence pile and to put yourself down when you're constantly comparing yourself to your peers.

Social media definitely plays a part. I'm sure we've all seen 'that person' who likes to document every milestone they've passed on EMS. No matter how far from the truth it probably is, it's still easy for it to make you feel like you're falling behind and are never going to catch up.

I guess my point here is that I first thought 'My God, I really do have a fixed mindset', then realised so many other vet students probably feel the same way. It seems obvious to me that with practice you will get better at something; nobody learns to play a musical instrument overnight. So I don't know why so many of us (and I myself am guilty of this too) feel as if one misplaced catheter means we will never be able to place one correctly.

Ultimately your mindset influences everything from creative risk taking, to how you view feedback, to whether you finish difficult tasks. In the end it's one of the greatest factors in determining whether you grow and improve in your abilities.

On rotations you're constantly going to face situations where your abilities will be questioned. You may not be able to get a practical skill right on the first attempt, or you might forget everything you've ever learned about metabolism when faced with a stern-looking clinician quizzing you, but you're also going to get feedback. A lot. It's so impor-

tant to try to take everything as a learning opportunity. A fixed mindset in these situations could be really detrimental to both someone's learning experience and their mental health.

Changing your mindset certainly isn't a quick or easy thing to do, but I'm going to end with 10 top tips for developing a growth mindset and hopefully little changes can result in a more positive experience for everyone...

1. Acknowledge and embrace weaknesses: plan around these by setting modest goals and giving yourself time to accomplish them.
2. View challenges as opportunities.
3. Know your learning style and use the right learning strategies.
4. Remember the brain has the ability to change throughout life.
5. Prioritise learning over seeking approval.
6. Focus on the process rather than the end result.

7. Choose learning well over learning fast.
8. Learn to give and receive constructive criticism.
9. Remember that need for improvement doesn't mean failure.
10. Reflect on your learning every day.

Further reading

DWECK, C. (2017) *Mindset: Changing the Way You Think To Fulfil Your Potential*.

Busting myths round fitness to practise

Izzie Arthur (AVS Junior Vice-President)

Every year a cohort of fully qualified vets graduates from each of the vet schools, while a fresh cohort of students starts its journey to that very same goal. Both share one common and frequent thought: "What if I do it wrong?"

Well, it may be a comfort to know that everyone has these thoughts, even the many years qualified vets who are teaching you now. There is also a massive support network around you at vet school and in practice, not to mention friends, family and even the vet helplines, if something does go wrong.

However, while there are occasions when a vet's fitness to practise may be questioned, these are actually not as

common as you might think. There is also a difference between 'fitness to practise' and 'fitness to study'.

It is important to be aware that any disciplinary action relating to fitness to practise is only applicable once you are a qualified vet. Action relating to fitness to study would be carried out while you're still studying.

At the moment there is much worry and confusion surrounding what could cause someone to be subject to either of these disciplinary actions. Therefore, AVS is working on a 'fitness to practise myth buster' resource for vet students to help cut through the grey areas and confusion, and put your minds at ease. Watch this space!

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*Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2019



Grad expectations: adjusting to life after university

Ceri Chick (New graduate, RVC)

Congratulations! All your hard work has paid off. You've passed your exams, walked across the stage in your cap and gown and received your degree...now what?

WHEN I was getting ready to go to university everyone talked about how exciting it was going to be. My academic and social calendars were set. I met new people and made friends. I had so much to look forward to in this new little world.

During my time at the RVC, I received wonderful support from my peers and from staff members. My mental health was improving thanks to the amazing, friendly atmosphere and I was genuinely happy for the first time in years. My university friends and colleagues became my family. I loved them dearly, and having them around every day was a real gift. I felt perfectly settled.

But, eventually (and inevitably), it was time for my studies to come to an end and for me to graduate. I was so excited to receive my degree, and I looked forward to graduation day. But that day came and went, and I found myself feeling lost.

It seemed that everyone talked about the support you can get while you're studying, but now my course had finished, my friends had moved away, and my student support had ended.

I felt completely alone. The structure I'd had to my life for so long was suddenly just gone. The thought of leaving the institution that had become my home, and leaving the person I was at university behind, terrified me. It felt like the carpet had been pulled from under my feet. I suddenly had to adjust to a new life, a new me, all within days. That really took its toll on my mental health, and I started to struggle.



After the enjoyment of studying and the excitement of graduation, there will inevitably be a need to adjust to your new life

Graduating university is so exciting, but it can also be really daunting. When everyone's talking about the good side of life after graduation, it's hard to admit to them (and to yourself) that you're struggling.

If you're reading this and you feel the same way, I want you to know that it's completely normal, and your feelings are valid. It's okay to talk about how you're feeling; you're not alone in this. I'm here to tell you that life after graduation is going to be okay. You're going to be okay. There's something amazing out there waiting for you, so don't give up. Yes, things will change but sometimes change can bring out the best in us. You are strong enough to get through this.

You can still get help; your support doesn't have to end at graduation. If you're struggling and need to talk to someone, here are some numbers you can call:

- Vetlife: 0303 040 2551
- Samaritans: 116 123
- London Nightline: 020 7631 0101

You can also talk to your GP, they're there to help you. Always know it's okay to talk about it.

To look after my own mental health after graduation, I went to see my GP to discuss my medication to make sure the dose was still right for me while I went through this change in my life. I also talked to those closest to me so they knew what I was going through, and could spot the signs if I wasn't doing well. Being open and having a conversation with those around you is an important step when you're recovering. It lets people know how to support you, so you know they have your back. It also helps them feel good in that they know how to help you when you need it.

I want to thank everyone at the RVC who I've had the pleasure of knowing. Each one of you made my time there an experience I will never forget and will always miss. You brought out the best in me, and helped me shape myself into someone I can be proud of. Thank you!

Learning better: the gift to give yourself this year

Jane Davidson (Registered Veterinary Nurse)

You've made it through all your assessments so far – whether that's been to get into vet school or passing another year to get closer to becoming qualified. Yet you might feel that you're not getting the grades you would expect from the time you're putting in. What can you do to change this?

THIS is a really common feeling, especially at vet school. You've gained your place by getting really high grades and now you're working harder than ever, yet this isn't reflected in your results.

Be kind to yourself – it's okay: you're passing! Well done! Getting through vet school is tough. So instead of focussing on your grades, maybe a kinder way to reflect is on how much time you spend outside of taught sessions to get these grades. Is the amount of time you are spending studying impacting on

your ability to enjoy life away from school? Could you try something to improve your work/life balance and maybe improve your grades?

Why listen to me? I'm not a vet, but I've done a degree plus post-grad qualifications; I've taught vets and vet nurses; and worked as an educational development tutor at a vet school so I've got a pretty good idea on how to learn better (I've even written a book on it). I know that there are a few areas of your study life where small changes have big results.

As students we often think that taught sessions are the start of our learning journey so we focus on these sessions. How long do you spend around a lecture topic? I've heard anywhere between two to five hours. Yet you could start learning before you go to that taught session and cut down the amount of time spent on each lecture topic.

Those who learn best have found

the secret is frequent and short recalling of information. Everyone is different so some people might need to repeat things a few more times than others or do it in a different format, so there is scope to make this recall your own. What is the most important thing is to keep sessions short and focussed on what you need to learn. In an ideal world learning around a lecture would be along the lines set out in the diagram below.

This might seem a scary change, but short and frequent recall is proven to work. You might find pictures and images easier to recall than lines of writing, so try different formats for your notes. Don't wait until an exam to see how well you can recall information – get your brain trained while you study.

Further reading

DAVIDSON J. Research and study skills for veterinary nurses: a practical guide for academic success. 2019, 5m Publishing

Pre-reading	Lecture	Recap	Review
Note learning outcomes	Add to your pre-reading notes	Same day or soon after, relate the information you have recorded to the learning outcomes	Before putting your notes aside to be looked at before exams, recap three or four lectures or taught sessions together. Try to link them by learning outcomes
Note what you already know about the subject	Use a system such as Cornell Notes so you can set out questions to answer	Look up the extra information you need to know	Answer any questions you still haven't answered
Note any words or terms you don't understand	Note anything you don't understand – link the lecture information to the definitions you looked up	Keep the learning outcomes in context. Write out the learning outcomes and see what you can recall – check against your notes	Note the linked information across several taught sessions. Write out learning outcomes and see what you can recall – check against your notes
Look up words or terms you don't understand – a general search is fine	Even if you lose track, focus on the introduction and conclusion of a presentation. They will help you put the lecture into context	Don't go too deep – check where the learning outcomes sit for the whole module or where they come up again. You don't need to know everything TODAY	File in such a way that you can easily find the notes again. Consider note-making apps such as OneNote, Notability, or similar
Time spent: 10–15 minutes	Time spent: the set lecture time	Time spent: 15–30 minutes	Time spent: 15–30 minutes

Just how do you train your rat?

Katie Kirk (JAVS Editor)

Acquiring a new pet is both fun and a challenge, and the importance of doing some research beforehand cannot be overestimated.

THERE are many things that come to mind when you think of rats: pests that dwell in the sewers, carriers of the bubonic plague, or even perhaps Orwell's 1984. So it's not too surprising really that if you tell people you have pet rats they shudder, grimace and generally think you've lost the plot.

Just under a year ago now, my fellow vet student housemates and I (with the permission of our landlord) decided to acquire suitable house pets. With the intense nature of the veterinary course and limited financial resources, our options were somewhat restricted to animals of the small furry variety. Rats, being notoriously sociable and reasonably low maintenance, seemed a fairly logical choice within that category. We also followed a 'practise what you preach' philosophy and decided to adopt rather than buy new.

When we went to collect our new pets (a family of a mum and two of her daughters), we were given the reassuring warning of 'Watch the mum, she bites.' Armed only with a naive kind of arrogance I'm sure a lot of us are more guilty of than we'd like to admit (the 'I'm a vet student, how hard can this be?' kind) and a paragraph in our animal management lecture notes, we set out to tame the furballs.

It was hard. While the topic of animal behaviour and appropriate training is floated around vet school in relation to a number of species, I don't think I ever truly appreciated its importance until this point. For the first month or so, all three rats would run and hide if a person even ventured into the room. It's definitely hard to bribe an animal into liking



you if you can't get close enough to give it any food.

After reassurance from lots of other rat owners and more patience than I thought possible, the rats' innate curiosity won out and they started to approach me. Even more patience and another month or so later, they started to take food from me. From there the real fun began.

The past year of rat ownership has been incredibly rewarding. I've now got rats with the ability to perform a few tricks in exchange for the right bribe, and no respect whatsoever for personal space.

I'll admit that (like many of the pet owners we will come across in our veterinary careers) I probably should have done more research into their socialisation and training before getting my rats. It's easy to forget how important that aspect of pet ownership is to the wel-

fare of the animal, when it's their common diseases and the more technical aspects of their husbandry that are drilled into us in lectures. Insufficiently socialised animals invariably end up being stressed by everyday occurrences and as a result express behaviour that is detrimental to themselves and the people trying to handle them.

While there is no simple answer to how to make vets better equipped to deal with animal behaviour, let alone how to go about teaching their carers, it's certainly something we should all consider when examining the animals under our care. It's also something that breeders, shelters and pet shop owners should consider educating their new pet owners about. In retrospect it surprises me that I wasn't told anything about how to socialise my rats when I got them.

So, to anyone who comes across a pet rat, or even decides to get some of their own: they're brilliant. They take a lot of work and patience, but it's definitely rewarding. As for the 'how to train an animal' side of things, I've definitely learned my lesson and will be doing a lot more research on training for any future pets.

■ The 'opinion and debate' section in JAVS is a place to share your thoughts on issues of interest. The opinions expressed by individual students may not reflect the official position of the AVS or BVA.

How ethical is cancer treatment in companion animals?

Laura Kruszewski (Fifth year, Cambridge)

‘So, have you always been a farm vet?’ is one of several small talk questions I have ready when sitting in the passenger seat during EMS placements. Asking this question recently, I was surprised to learn that one of the vets I met had worked in a small animal practice until not so long ago. Why did they switch from small to farm? The reason was interesting: an ethical disapproval of the use of cancer therapies in companion animals.

CURRENT veterinary treatment options for cancer include chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery. The suitability of these for a given case depends on the type, grade and stage of the cancer, as well as on other variables, including concurrent conditions. Factors such as the age of the patient and financial implications for the client mean that palliative care and euthanasia are also often considered. Deciding which of these options is best can be challenging from an ethical perspective.

The main aim of treating cancer is to lengthen the healthy life of the patient. This gives pets the opportunity to have more positive experiences, contributing to an improved quality of life. However, some would argue that extending a pet's life is of more benefit to the owner, allowing them more time to say goodbye to a much-loved family member.

Furthermore, there are questions around whether our pets understand the concepts of time and future life. Are they able to evaluate the negative aspects of treatment against the potential for a prolonged life? Do they even desire to have an increased lifespan in the first place?

The evidence in these areas is

currently minimal.¹ In addition, time added to a patient's life must be balanced against the extended periods spent at the clinic for treatment. Due to the mutagenic nature of some drugs used, patients may need to be kept in isolation, further heightening the anxiety induced by therapy.

Along with stress from procedures, clients may also be concerned about the side effects associated with cancer treatment. Although some veterinary patients under-

“Cancer in companion animals is a complicated issue and it can be incredibly difficult for vets and clients to make treatment choices on behalf of the animals in their care”

going chemotherapy experience diarrhoea, vomiting or lethargy, the severity of side effects is generally reduced compared to those experienced by humans, due to the use of lower doses.² Immediately refusing treatment due to the risk of side effects may prevent a potentially curable case from being optimally resolved.³

To make matters more complex, the subject of cancer can be very emotionally charged; clients may have family members or friends who have undergone treatment, or they may even have faced the disease themselves. The outcome and overall experience of human cancer therapy is likely to bias a client's perspective on whether to choose similar treatment for their pet.

In addition to emotions relating to the disease, the human-animal bond also needs to be considered. Using the 'relational' ethical viewpoint, the

unique connection between owners and their pets is prioritised, therefore favouring cancer therapy and the potential for a cure.¹ However, the RCVS declaration makes clear that vets must prioritise the health and welfare of animals above all other factors.⁴ Therefore, it may not always be appropriate to recommend treatment, even if this goes against relational ethical views.

Cancer in companion animals is a complicated issue and it can be incredibly difficult for vets and clients to make treatment choices on behalf of the animals in their care. Effective communication is of paramount importance to ensure clients fully understand all the options available, allowing an informed decision to be made.

Where economically feasible, a sufficient number of diagnostic tests should be performed to increase confidence in the staging and grading of the cancer. This means that informed advice can be given on the most suitable treatment options and subsequent prognoses. Finally, regular check-ups should be carried out so that the treatment plan can be altered where necessary and further pain relief or euthanasia suggested where appropriate.

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2. Blue Cross. Coping with cancer in dogs. 2019; www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-advice/coping-cancer-dogs, accessed 4 September 2019
3. Moore AS. Managing cats with cancer: an examination of ethical perspectives. *J Feline Med Surg* 2011;13:661–71
4. RCVS. Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons. 2019; www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/#declaration, accessed 5 September 2019

A successful first year for our EMS Grants

In October 2018, we launched our inaugural EMS Grants sponsored by VDS Training. Applications were received from students across the vet schools of the UK and Ireland. Students were looking to fund a variety of placements, from large animal placements to specialist small mammal placements and everything in between!

THE awards provided £200 to five deserving students, chosen by a

committee of AVS and VDS Training members. The aim of the awards was to bridge the financial gap, allowing students to complete EMS placements that they would otherwise not be able to. The awards were announced after the AVS/ BVA Survey found that cost was the biggest limitation for vet students while completing their 26 weeks of compulsory clinical EMS.

In the boxes below and on page 10, three of the grant recipients describe how they got on on their placements.

Applications for this year's grants close on 1 December 2019 and the winners will be notified later in December. The grants are available for clinical EMS placements taking place in practice in the UK and Ireland. They will be awarded at AVS Congress at Surrey vet school in 2020. Application forms are available on the AVS website at www.avsukireland.co.uk/opportunities, as well as on social media. The website also hosts a recorded Q&A session to answer any further questions you may have about the grants.

Molly Garbutt, RVC

I used my AVS EMS Grant to complete a placement at Evolution Farm Vets in Somerset. I had seen practice there in the summer of my third year, and felt that I got a lot out of it academically as it was my first experience of seeing farm practice. However, during my previous placement, I had camped down the road, and had been able to cover my own costs. I wanted to attend the practice again



during February so that I could see as much farm work as possible, but needed financial help to pay for the indoor accommodation required for a two-week placement.

Evolution is a majority dairy practice (which is very much in line with what I want to do once qualified) and spending time there has helped me to learn more about how progressive young practices are run. I got to further my practical skills via scrubbing into surgeries and participating in routine visits, as well as seeing some more unusual cases and practising my clinical reasoning. I also spent some time seeing reproduction work with the equine vets at the practice, which was a great opportunity to learn about something new.

I am very grateful to AVS and VDS Training for allowing me the financial freedom to take up this opportunity, and would definitely recommend applying for a grant; it took some strain off the significant investment often required to see farm practice as a student. I look forward to returning to Evolution in December this year.

Eleanor Robertson, Liverpool

With the support of my AVS EMS Grant, I was able to undertake my hospital externship at a UK equine hospital. I have always loved working with horses, but due to my home location I have rarely had the opportunity to gain hospital experience outside of university.



I absolutely loved working on an equine emergency and critical care service; triaging, providing emergency treatment and initial diagnostics on cases. I found the unknown of every evening exciting and enjoyed the buzz of rapidly constructing a plan of action. Hand-in-hand with this was the opportunity to develop my knowledge of hospitalised patient care, gaining experience in collaborating with the whole team, including nurses and yard staff, as well as vets on 24/7 care to ensure optimum patient welfare. The chance to live onsite for my placement was the reason I applied for this grant originally as, understandably, this was associated with a small cost.

Another key aim for this placement for me was being able to learn more about, and assist with, the innovative research being carried out within the hospital. I loved the experience of collaborating with a team of passionate, experienced vets with a variety of expertise. It was also incredibly helpful to be guided through the process of project design, logistical organisation and ethical aspects of project management. These skills are going to be vital in the first steps of my career.

This placement has guided me a little closer to my postgraduation goals. Thanks again to VDS Training and AVS for the grant that allowed me to develop my passion further and support my early career.

Jamie Enright, RVC

Since receiving my AVS EMS Grant, I have attended Eastcott Veterinary Referrals and gained invaluable experience of advanced veterinary dentistry. I have always been interested in dentistry and found myself to be very intrigued by routine dental procedures during previous small animal placements.



Before attending Eastcott, I was excited about integrating into a highly specialised team and working alongside some of the most prestigious veterinary dentists in the UK. During the placement I was involved in daily procedures and was warmly welcomed by all the staff. I got the chance to develop various clinical skills, including the application of local maxillary and mandibular nerve blocks, dental charting, performing a thorough dental examination, taking and interpreting dental radiographs, small animal CT and routine anaesthesia. I also got the opportunity to enhance my interpersonal skills through working within a veterinary team and interacting with clients.

This placement really encouraged me to consider various treatment options in preparation for my own future patients, including some of the most advanced and modern treatments available. My experience allowed me

to reflect on my own clinical reasoning skills through active case discussions with senior clinicians and through participation in a weekly journal club.

I also observed advanced techniques, such as root canal and restoration treatment, oral surgery, prosthodontics and feline odontoclastic resorptive lesion therapy. The practice provided a comfortable environment to ask questions about various procedures, decision-making and any other aspect of veterinary dentistry. I found every member of staff to be really helpful and approachable during my two-week block, which is always an added bonus while on EMS and helped build my confidence in dentistry.

Before submitting my application for an AVS EMS Grant, I was hesitant about the logistics, as the hospital was not commutable from my place of residence, and I did not have any contacts that I could stay with close by. The EMS Grant helped me cover the cost of accommodation while on this placement and also partially covered fuel and travel expenses too. Without the grant, I would have had no choice but to sacrifice the opportunity and forego such an amazing experience.

With the support of AVS and VDS Training, I have been given the opportunity to really explore if I truly want to pursue a career in veterinary dentistry, which I now know that I do. Working at such an elite standard of veterinary medicine has been inspiring and has reinforced my passion for dentistry. As a result of this placement, I have been invited to apply for Eastcott's dental internship on graduation from vet school. I would encourage anyone interested in dental EMS, or any other specialty, to contact the Eastcott team as they were very facilitating and really eager to teach during my visit.

Find your veterinary future

My Vet Future is an online careers hub offering support for vets and vet nurses at all stages of their career.

The hub was launched in November last year by the BVA and Vet Record and is part of Vet Futures, the major initiative that aims to set out a clear vision for the veterinary profession for 2030. The Vet Futures Action Plan contains 24 actions to help deliver this ambitious agenda. One of these actions is the creation of an online careers hub.

My Vet Future promotes the diverse career opportunities available throughout the veterinary profession, so whether you're thinking of going into practice, furthering your education or pursuing another path – or you're not sure what you want to do – you'll find plenty of helpful information and advice available at www.myvetfuture.com

A screenshot of the My Vet Future website. At the top, the logo 'MyVetFuture' is displayed with a colorful star icon. Below the logo, a tagline reads: 'Find your vet future with our database of diverse vet careers advice. Whether you're still at school, about to retire or looking for a career change, My Vet Future can help you with your veterinary career.' A search bar is present with the placeholder text 'Search our collection of advice'. Below this, a section titled 'Where are you in your career? Click on a section to begin' lists eight categories with corresponding images: 'I am at school (secondary education)', 'I am a vet student', 'I am a vet nurse student', 'I am an early career vet', 'I am an experienced vet', 'I am a vet nurse', 'I am a vet/nurse looking for a career change', and 'I am late in my career/planning for retirement'.

A knight's tale: EMS in the Middle Ages!

Richard Curtis (Third year, Nottingham)



Choosing an EMS placement is always a daunting prospect and finding somewhere that is not out of your depth, but will also push you to learn, can be tricky. Last summer I decided to venture away from the usual student stomping grounds of riding schools and eventing yards to experience life with the Knights of Middle England. Here's a taste of one day of this slightly more unusual EMS placement.

FOR those who don't know, the Knights of Middle England are a jousting display team (and jousting school), based in Warwickshire. In the summer, they perform daily at Warwick Castle.

My day began at their yard at 06:30, helping to rug, bandage and feed the horses ready for transport. Once everyone was ready, we loaded the horses onto the lorry and jumped

into the cab. When we arrived at Warwick Castle, we escorted the horses through the grounds to the knights' camp. Passing between huge trees and making our way down the hill, we crossed the wooden bridge over the river, with the castle ramparts looming high above us.

Tethering the horses to pony lines between the trees, we supplied them with water buckets and removed their travelling gear, grooming them in preparation for the day ahead. Two of the horses were tacked up in full costume and, once the knights were ready, we made our way to the castle courtyard. I was assigned the pivotal role of poo scooper(!) while the knights served as background features for a live Good Morning Britain competition segment with Andi Peters. We were plied with bacon sandwiches by the crew and an hour later headed back to camp before the trebuchet was fired.

We had our morning meeting with the horse and show team, and once the mighty siege engine (a giant catapult) had hurled its concrete payload 200 metres in our direction (at a mere 150 miles per hour), we began prepping the horses. Manes and bodies were brushed; feet picked out and oiled. Numnahs, risers and custom-made trick saddles were carefully positioned and cinched with far more than a simple girth. The head and body elements of the costumes were fitted, while bridles, over-reach boots and bandages were painstakingly applied to grant the horses every protection possible during the show.

I carried helmets and fresh water to the arena while the knights warmed up their horses and the first actors took to the sand to fire up the gathering crowd.

Music, cheers and smoke filled the arena as we passed helm, shield and lance to each of the knights. The



Bacci charges into battle

arena doors opened, and the combatants charged in to thunderous applause, soaring as lances shattered in the first joust. The show recounted the Wars of the Roses (fought between the House of Lancaster and the House of York over many gruelling years) and employed a mixture of fire, sword fighting and mounted stunts to bring life (and death) to a superbly acted retelling.

As stunts were performed, we would tend to the horses as they exited through the arena gates, keeping them cool with water and sponges, changing weapons and checking costumes before they headed back in for the next battle.

The show ended with a lap of honour, riders holding banners high, with red and white smoke trailing

behind them. We caught the horses as they exited the arena and hastily threw back their costumes as we headed back to camp. Untacking as quickly as possible, we hosed each one down. They were then able to drink and graze while we hung up costumes and put away the tack, ready for the afternoon. The whole team devoured their lunches on benches beneath the trees and dived straight back in for the second show.

Following the afternoon performance, we again tended to the horses, ensuring they drank and were hosed down before cleaning the tack. Once everything was stored away and the manure in the grazing paddock removed, we fed the horses and prepared them for travelling once again. Walking back over the

bridge, head torch attached to my hat in the failing light, the drumming of hooves echoed from the now quiet castle walls. The horses skipped eagerly onto the waiting lorry as we walked them up the ramp one at a time.

Back at the yard, the horses were unloaded, and their travelling gear removed once again before being turned out into the paddocks.

Already having an equestrian background, I had set out to use my EMS placements to broaden my horizons and learn new skills. On this placement, I observed horses working in an entirely unique environment and saw the careful attention that was afforded to maintaining their wellbeing and performance.

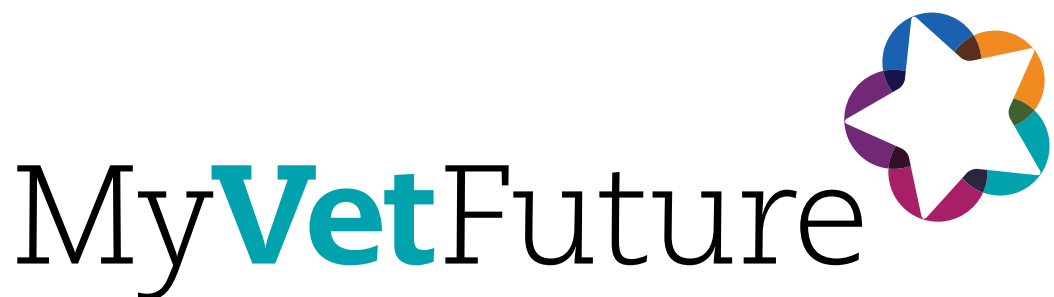
There were long hours, short sleeps and aching feet (especially on days with evening rehearsals) but this added to the adventure. Where else could I walk horses alongside a river through the grounds of a medieval castle with just a few head torches and the moon to light the way?

The whole team was incredibly welcoming and I learned a great deal about working with performance horses while behind the scenes of an amazing show with some of the best trick riders in Europe. I've even picked up a few techniques that I can't wait to injure myself trying in the future!

EMS well spent.



Time for a quick photo during rehearsals



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Over the sea to Skye

Sarah Bate and Kat Gibson (Fifth year, Cambridge)

For the month of July we embarked on an EMS expedition to the Isle of Skye, Scotland, to work at the Rhona Campbell Veterinary Centre in Portree.

AT the end of our 15-hour journey from sunny Cambridge, we were greeted by a typical 'West Highland mist' (a euphemism for lots and lots of rain) and a very friendly vet named Rhona. For the four weeks we were there she very kindly let us stay on her little croft where we helped look after her sheep and pigs.

Rhona's practice – the Rhona Campbell Veterinary Centre (RCVC) – is small, but kept very busy by the Skye locals and their assortment of cattle, sheep, horses, cats, dogs and rabbit (singular).

We loved getting to know the clients and their animals; they won our hearts in no time – from the sheep farmer who used to strap his aged mother to the back of his quad bike so she could still be out on the hills, to the litter of adorable cockapoo pups.

While at the RCVC we were given



the chance to run consults, staff reception and monitor in-patients, shouldering more responsibility than either of us had had previously. We were able to carry out a range of interesting procedures and get to grips with cases. Additionally, we

got to do research in order to produce communication leaflets about kitten and puppy care, as well as diseases such as cryptosporidiosis.

Some of our favourite cases included the poorly pet lamb that was treated better than many children; the stray cat nicknamed Lady Grey of Duntulm who was brought daily supplies of salmon, chicken and mild cheddar cheese by her rescuer; and the RTA border collie that made a miraculous recovery.

Unique things about the Isle of Skye included trim-

ming the fringes of Highland cattle as they were TB tested and the kindly fishmonger who took our medications to the neighbouring Isle of Raasay when we missed the post.

Along with these joys, we were confronted by the challenges of working in a remote, single-vet, island practice where limited resources and the combination of tricky terrain, poor weather and lack of phone signal made conducting efficient farm calls difficult – and we were there in the summer when conditions were at their best.

During our weekends we had great fun hiking, kayaking and watching sheep dog trials, with one of our other highlights being the unexpected birth of three little piglets on the croft – we named them Pongo, Purdy and Poirot.

Overall, we couldn't recommend EMS at the RCVC on the Isle of Skye more highly – just remember to take waterproofs if you're thinking of heading up there yourself!



My Australian EMS

William James (New graduate, RVC)

In my third year at the RVC I decided that the classic small animal clinic EMS wasn't going to cut it anymore. After emailing 15 or so large animal practices in Australia, I managed to arrange a three-week EMS block with Tableland Veterinary Service in Queensland for myself and a friend in January and February.

NOW I know what you might be thinking – isn't that their summer? And yes, it was...in the rest of Australia. However, the wonderful thing about the Tablelands is that they have their own micro-climate, which means that it rains pretty much 24/7, as we found out. Obviously though, as I was going to Australia in the summer, I didn't pack any rain gear – something that, halfway through a horse eye surgery, I regretted. The saying drowned rat didn't do it justice.

Tableland Veterinary Service was founded in 1952 and now has six clinics, including an equine hospital, small animal clinics and a farm team. We managed to see three of the clinics, but the others you have to fly to. They take vet students from Thomas Cook University on farm animal rotations for most of the year.

We were based at the Malanda clinic, which has student accommodation on site for the sum of \$50 a week, and is in easy walking distance of the largest wooden pub in Australia, a local supermarket and shops. The Malanda clinic is also the site of the practice's equine hospital and cattle barns. This was fantastic as we were given responsibility for the treatment and care of the patients, including a dog with a snake bite and a foal with septic joints and diarrhoea. However, milking a mare at 2 am does have its downsides.

The day-to-day work at Malanda was decided on the basis of which



I felt I was getting the hang of equine work after lots of experience with dentals

vet we would be going out with. Mostly we were there for the cattle work (pregnancy diagnosing, lameness, bull semen evaluation, blood transfusions, etc) but there was also the opportunity to get involved with the equine side. After numerous vaccinations and dentals and drawing up the correct sedatives and administering them before dentals, I felt I



There were plenty of different tasks to get involved with

was getting the hang of the equine work.

One of the best things about this EMS was that if there was nothing on in the large animal section, I could easily move to the small animal side and they would give me a task and get me involved. From being the anaesthetist to scrubbing up in surgery, there was plenty to do, rather than just sitting and watching. They were a lovely team and really made me feel welcome.

Another great aspect of going abroad – wherever you go – is the new and exciting diseases a foreign country has to offer. In Australia we had snake bites and tick paralysis in

dogs, three-day sickness (virus) and *Theileria* (parasite) in cattle (spread by mosquitos/midges and bushticks, respectively) and the deadly hendra virus in horses. These created whole new experiences and insights into what an Australian vet encounters day to day. I would suggest to anyone who might be interested in working in abroad in the future that they should try to do EMS in their country of choice as a student first.

A particular highlight was that we had the weekends off. So we rented a car and saw all the sights and sounds the Tablelands have to offer, from breathtaking waterfalls to rock wallabies. There was plenty to do and see around the practice. Renting a car is a must as it also allows you to head down to Cairns and go scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef or up to the Daintree rainforest for some hiking.

All in all it was a fantastic EMS placement and I would definitely recommend the practice and the area around.

Fin-tastic EMS at the Vancouver Aquarium

Holly Ward (Fifth year, Cambridge)

This summer I had the incredible opportunity to complete a three-week externship at the Vancouver Aquarium in British Columbia, Canada, which is home to over 50,000 animals.

I APPLIED for the placement way back in March last year and found out I had been successful last June. While I was at the aquarium, I worked alongside a team of two vets and four vet nurses; as well as dozens of dedicated aquarists, trainers, keepers and volunteers to treat everything from 44 g Jamaican fruit bats to 350 kg California sea lions!

My main responsibilities were shadowing the vets on examinations around the aquarium and writing up the clinical notes for each case. My clinical pathology skills were definitely tested, as students are also responsible for interpreting lab



results and producing a treatment plan for each patient under the guidance of the vets.

The highlights of my placement included spending one day a week caring for rescued harbour seal pups at the Marine Mammal Rescue Centre and being able to participate in their feeding, medical treatments and even surgery. These pups are admitted to the centre emaciated after becoming separated from their mothers, but are rehabilitated and then eventually released back into their natural habitat.

Monday morning penguin feet checks back at the aquarium were also great fun and involved helping keepers wrangle six naughty African penguins!

I would like to thank the dedicated and knowledgeable Vancouver Aquarium staff for the coolest EMS



placement ever: I can't think of any other office where I could step outside and watch a walrus training session, or where visits from sea lions were a daily occurrence!

If you're interested in this placement for the future, you can find more details online by Googling 'Vancouver Aquarium veterinary externships'.



A typical task for Monday morning – checking the feet of a penguin

Join an amazing international family through IVSA

Laura Turner (IVSA President UK & Ireland)

Along with the winter symposium, congress is one of the biggest global events in the calendar for the International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA). In June this year, 12 UK veterinary students made their way to Croatia to attend the 68th IVSA congress.

THE organising committee in Zagreb welcomed 160 students from every corner of the globe, including delegates from Thailand, Ghana and the USA. We had the opportunity to experience life as a student at the Veterinarski Fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu: staying in student accommodation, eating in the cafeteria and travelling by tram to the main faculty every day.

Congress is a very important event because it is when the general assemblies are held. During these assemblies, motions are passed on IVSA bylaw amendments; nominations for host countries of future



Some of the UK & Ireland IVSA delegates ready for the congress formal dinner

congresses and symposia are made; and the next global committee is elected. We were very proud to have had two members of IVSA UK & Ireland elected to the global committee: Laura Scowen from the RVC as the development aid director and newly graduated Tavishi Pandya as chair of the working group for alumni.

As well as general assemblies there were an array of lectures on topics such as the Eurasian lynx (a native species in Croatia) and workshops where students could gain hands-on experience with tasks such as suturing, emergency neonatal care and laboratory skills.

Of course, we also did our fair share of sightseeing! We were split



A nearby lake was a popular venue in the evenings

into groups based on preferences we had selected with our applications and headed off to different activities which included the beautiful Plitvice National Park, a wine tour, an aquarium and a stud farm. Evenings were spent at local bars, clubs or swimming in the nearby lake.

Events were held on most nights, including live and silent auctions to raise money for the development fund, and a cultural evening where delegates bring traditional food and alcohol from their country for peo-

Upcoming events

- 68th IVSA Symposium: Morocco, 11–20 January 2020
- 69th IVSA Congress: Greece, 15–26 July 2020
- 69th IVSA Symposium: Indonesia, dates tbc

ple to try. The final night is always a white t-shirt party, where everyone signs everyone else's t-shirts which then act as brilliant souvenirs to take home.

The congress provided a reasonably inexpensive way to travel and meet veterinary students from around the world. It was brilliant to experience Croatia through the eyes of the hosting students and to be involved in the decision-making that goes on in general assemblies and elections. I really do recommend attending an IVSA congress or symposium. It is so amazing to be part of such a massive international family! Please get in touch with your UK & Ireland committee for more information.

Cambridge goes Greek

Vicky Kwok (IVSA senior rep Cambridge)

Rewind about 11 months and you would have found me having a browse around at the international stands evening during the IVSA congress in Krakow, scouting for potential exchange partners. There I met the lovely ex-senior exchange officer from Thessaly and we immediately clicked as if this exchange was meant to be – I mean, let's be real, who wouldn't turn down an escape to the hidden gems of the Greek countryside?

FAST forward nine months and I'm forever grateful we partnered with IVSA Thessaly. We had no idea what to expect. It was lovely to be welcomed so warmly in Karditsa and we were very touched that our hosts picked us up from the station at 4 in the morning!

Personally, one of my favourite parts of the exchange was the first day of getting to know each other. Originally the plan had been to go out to have a picnic, but the weather conspired against us and actually, I wouldn't have preferred picnicking to what we did instead – sitting in a cosy living room with a bunch of

incredible people. My most fond memory was playing the 'two truths, one lie' game: now I know very many random facts about people, it's fab.

I also really enjoyed the dance class later the same night, which not only gave us a taste of a different culture, but also a glimpse into the intricacies of various regional

dances. Of course, the Greek spirit we had beforehand enhanced the experience!

Although we were a bit unlucky with the weather (classic Brits bringing the rain with us wherever we go), it didn't stop us from having a ton of fun! The Meteora mountains were gorgeous, but what did it for me was the few hours we spent



The mountains were gorgeous, but it was the people who made the exchange an experience to remember



At the veterinary faculty in Thessaly

sat by Lake Plastiras sipping some Greek coffee in a sheltered seating area outside. Despite the plan of going biking around the lake falling through, for us it was perfect, as the mist and fog gave it such a cinematic feel. Besides, it was just really nice to chat and chill out over a warming drink!

As we had a back-to-back exchange, before we knew it our Greek friends arrived in Cambridge. We jam-packed the days to the fullest and were especially lucky with the glorious bank holiday weekend weather.

On the first day we gave them a quick tour of the vet school, followed by a workshop at the Clinical Skills

Centre and Merton Hall Farm with the horses. The weekend involved a lot of sightseeing, college bar hopping, visiting the local food market, a homecooked Sunday roast and, of course, the full Cambridge punting experience where everyone got to have a go!

We also participated in the IVSA Wellness Week with a day trip to Blakeney to see the local wildlife (including the seals) and Cromer for a classic British seaside fish and chips meal. To top off the long weekend we ended with a typical Cambridge formal with style and had a blast at Glitterbomb Cambridge.

At the end of the day, as clichéd as it sounds, it was the people that made it such a unique experience – one that we will always remember. You can go anywhere in this world, but if you don't vibe the same way with your bunch of kids it wouldn't be the same. Thank you IVSA Thessaly for having us!



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