

## Seaweed-eating sheep and other EMS encounters

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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](http://www.avsukireland.co.uk/who-we-are)**

# From the editor

**Katie Kirk, JAVS Editor**



No discussion of 2020 would be complete without the mention of a certain pandemic-flavoured, elephant in the room. Covid-19 has brought a lot of change into all our lives in a concentrated time frame and, along with the rest of the world, we have been forced to adapt. While overuse of the word 'unprecedented' is one such example of change (and one that I can only hope is temporary), many innovations and opportunities have also arisen in the pandemic's wake. In this edition of JAVS, you can find several thought-provoking reflections on the specific issues that have affected both students and the veterinary profession and also on how we have responded.

However, life definitely does amble on. As someone embarking on their final year, the world beyond vet school is starting to get scarily close. There is a certain comfort in being a veterinary student. With our long degrees and the innumerable hurdles we must jump through in the process, much of our life is planned out for the foreseeable future. While this can feel restricting, frustrating and absolutely exhausting at times, it does give us both a schedule and a sense of purpose. The past few months have shown how valuable this is for maintaining a semblance of sanity. But vet school is more than just a routine. It is crammed full of exciting experiences and opportunities to develop your career and, more importantly, yourself in the process. In the following pages, you will find a variety of these: from dancing Spidermen in the streets of Glasgow, to EMS in unusual locations and academic awards. If there is anything I have learnt in the past few months, it's that it's a good idea to make the most of these opportunities while you have the chance!

As always, if you'd like the opportunity to share your own experiences or an opinion of your own in a future edition of JAVS please get in touch. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy reading the articles!



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# Representing and supporting you over an eventful 12 months

Izzie Arthur (AVS President 2020/21)

THE past 12 months have been nothing if not eventful, but that has not deterred us from making the most of the year. AVS Sports Weekend (our biggest and arguably most popular AVS event) is often seen as the start of the AVS social calendar. Glasgow Sports Weekend in November 2019 was one of the smaller Sports Weekends of recent years, but that certainly didn't stop everyone enjoying themselves; some Notts Spidermen even made local headlines dancing in Glasgow city centre!

While Sports Weekend is immediately synonymous with AVS, we offer so much more to our members. We host several events, most notably AVS Congress, which was held for the first time at Surrey in February this year. The huge success of congress was testament to the amazing efforts and dedication of the organising committee, making the weekend unforgettable for everyone. Congress is often seen as the more academic sister event to Sports Weekend, but there is



Izzie Arthur, AVS President 2020/21

definitely a strong social side and the Saturday evening formal is a highlight of the weekend (after the lectures and practicals of the day of course!). Congress also hosts the presidential handover and the AGM, where our new executive committee members ran for their positions.

Although the emergence of the pandemic shortly after congress led to plenty of disruption for everyone, as an organisation we have continued to fulfil our mission to support our members and ensure

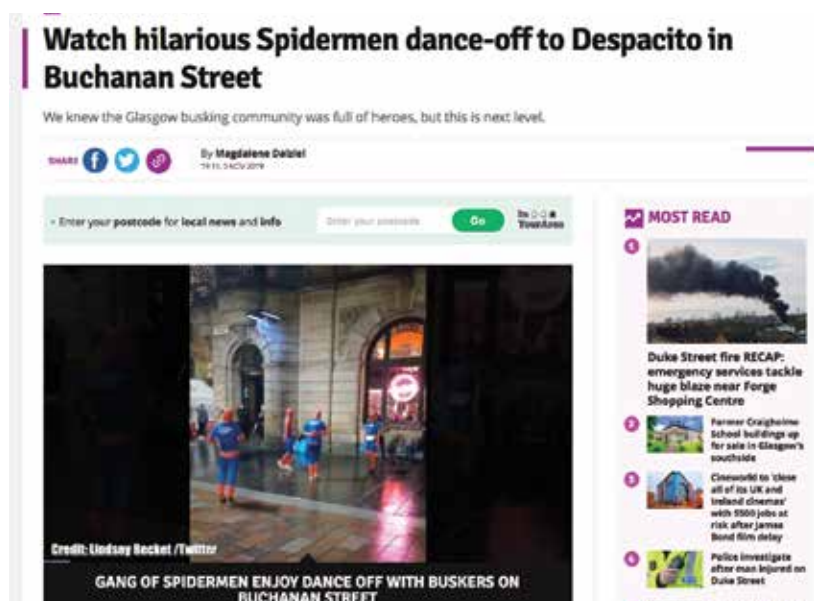
the best outcomes for vet students. With rapidly changing circumstances and mounting uncertainty, it quickly became apparent that students would need strong representation and further rallying of support during these unprecedented times. This led to initiatives such as Student Surgeries,

Carpool Cases and Calm in the Corona.

Our successful Student Surgeries sessions, held in partnership with VDS Training, proved hugely beneficial. With students facing novel challenges, these sessions offered a platform for sharing experiences, tips and advice and to receive coaching on developing strategies to cope. Covering topics from coping with the 'new normal' to taking exams from your bedroom, students were able to access support and advice on a wide range of topical issues while in a safe space.

Calm in the Corona was a VetKind initiative with SkillsTree and was designed to specifically tackle stresses and anxieties brought about by the implementation of lockdown. It quickly became apparent that this would benefit not only veterinary students but veterinary nursing students too. So, in the spirit of support and community, we opened up the event to the nursing community, a move that was much appreciated.

Like the Student Surgeries, Calm in the Corona provided a safe space for students to share what they were struggling with and their worries, and to receive expert advice and support, with each attendee also receiving a 'delegate bag' of links



Some Sports Weekend superheroes really made the news in Glasgow

www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/glasgow-news/watch-hilarious-spidermen-dance-despacito-172068668





Before the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, we held our congress and AGM, at which a new executive committee was elected

and resources to help them in these difficult times.

Unsurprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a marked effect on EMS placements. This served to increase feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy of knowledge/skill among many students. Collaboration between AVS, BVA and FAVS has led to Carpool Cases, the objective of which is to provide case discussions to bolster students' learning in lieu of being deprived of first-hand experiences. Thanks to the RVC graduate class of 2002 and James Russell at

BVA, regular case discussions covering different species allowed students to revisit the theory behind clinical skills and put their learning into practice by asking questions and engaging in thought-provoking conversation around key topics. More dates for 2020 will be announced soon, and there are plans for 2021 too.

While Covid-19 put a stop to many events, not even a global pandemic could deter the graduating class of 2020. Graduation may have been slightly unorthodox this year, but this has simply proven how

strong and adaptable the next generation of vets is.

However, it should still be recognised that transitioning into the profession as a new graduate, even at the best of times, is no easy task. It has become apparent over recent years that, while the clinical/emotional/practical side of what to expect in your first clinical job is generally more readily discussed, there is still a reluctance to talk about finance.

This gap in knowledge and expectations around finance, benefits and prospects prompted AVS and VetYou to team up to run a live discussion on 'What to expect from your first 100 days in practice', covering everything from average starting salaries to pensions and insurance. It became clear that this is something students are very interested to talk about and that it is an area in which we should be encouraging discussion – as shown by the 350+ student attendees!

Unfortunately, it is likely we will be seeing the effects of the pandemic for many months to come and it is for this reason that we made the sad decision to postpone the 2020 Liverpool Sports Weekend to 2021. We are, however, looking into the possibility of having a virtual presence on 7 November, and we'll be telling you more about our plans soon.

We also have VetKind to look forward to later in November – it's set to be a great event so do look out for further information.

AVS endeavours to provide the best support and representation we can to the vet students of the UK and Ireland. The pandemic and all the challenges it has brought has simply prompted us to push that much harder to make sure the student voice is not just heard, but acted on. From mental health, physical wellbeing and inclusivity, to EMS requirements and exams, we have been fighting to make sure you are listened to, and we will continue to do so.

● As ever, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at [avscommittee@gmail.com](mailto:avscommittee@gmail.com)



**Carpool Cases – hospital equine case**  
Friday 12 June

A great opportunity for vet students to learn from Nikki Brown BVetMed CertAVP(EP) MRCVS and discuss hospital equine cases and scenarios.

To find out more visit [www.bva.co.uk/carpool-cases](http://www.bva.co.uk/carpool-cases)

In response to the impact of the pandemic on EMS, BVA, AVS and FAVS have teamed up to offer Carpool Cases, which provide regular case discussions on a variety of subjects

# Sports Weekend 2019: we came, we saw, we cone-quired

**Beth Hall (RVC Senior Rep)**

GLASGOW Sports Weekend 2019 was one to remember. Cones, cheerleaders and chickens (among others) migrated as far north as any of our UK vet schools get – the only thing that would have made the weekend better would have been a toilet on the RVC and Cambridge shared coach!

This was my third AVS Sports Weekend (the best event of the year in my opinion) and my first as an RVC AVS rep. Having sat on the RVC's AVS Congress committee the previous year, I had no doubt that organisation, communication and a good sense of humour would be needed to successfully accompany 50 RVC traffic cones (and three lollipop lady fifth years) to Glasgow.

I took great pride in sourcing our costumes and designing t-shirts, while leaving our senior rep, Nick, to sort the less exciting aspects – like how we were going to make the 397-mile journey north! A personal highlight was seeing our vision come to life as the RVC students put on the cones for the first time, as well



A happy rep en-route to Glasgow

as how much they revelled in their less-than-sexy costumes.

After picking up Cambridge's 'VKs' and completing a quick tour of their campus while searching for a toilet, we were on our way. Despite the mammoth journey ahead, spirits stayed high and the cones and alcopops stayed well hydrated with liquids a little stronger than water. Ten hours later, we finally made it to Glasgow.

Friday night was spent in Glasgow's SU, dancing off our stiff legs and enjoying cultural experiences such as our first 'pint of fun'.

Saturday began how every AVS morning should, with a selection of students from every vet school sprawled across every piece of floor space, enjoying a delicious fry up cooked by our lovely hosts. At the sports field, as

the afternoon drew on and our tummies were contented with a choice of curry, nachos, burgers and pizza, the disappointment of the earlier Rugby World Cup final became a thing of the past. The tents were bouncing with cheesy classics, layers of costumes were removed as the dancing caught up with people, and I stepped back to think how lucky I was to be a part of such an amazing weekend. There's a special shout out to Bristol's Top Gun toy bike, which brought great entertainment (and bruises) while being ridden around the tents.

As the traffic cones travelled back to the centre of Glasgow with all the other vet schools, we were glad to assist in ensuring the safe crossing of many Bristol chickens across the



We found some Scottish brethren



Poultry payback: who's running around headless now?





In-cone-plete: a group photo that didn't include the reps – thanks for that!

road. The 'pub pick and mix' showed us some of the best spots the city had to offer, and tourists flocked to film us – particularly the Spidermen dancing to a jazz band busking on

the streets. After acquiring a mannequin head, several actual traffic cones and being invited into the DJ booth of Pop World we truly thought we had made it! To round

off a great day, we headed to the Strathclyde SU for more good fun!

Fifty traffic cones arrived back on the RVC's campus at around 8 pm on Sunday after a less than fresh coach journey home. Spirits were high, although we were all in need of a shower and a good night's sleep, and were questioning how vital it was to attend our Monday morning 9 am lectures.

Everyone who attended Sports Weekend 2019 cannot thank Glasgow, its committee and reps enough for the hard work that went into making such an incredible event happen.

We came, we saw, we cone-quered – Glasgow 2019 you were a pleasure!

## LGBT+ history month at Cambridge

**Natasha Sumanasekera (Sixth year Cambridge)**

February 2020 was the 15th year that LGBT+ history month was marked in the UK and the third year that Cambridge vet school flew its rainbow flag in solidarity. Before lockdown, we had been holding a variety of fundraising events from badge sales and weekly cake bakes to movie nights. All proceeds will be donated to Stonewall, an LGBT+ charity that works with institutions such as schools, workplaces and the government to provide education and support.

Dan Makin, president of BVLGBT+, was also able to pay a visit to Cambridge and gave an inspiring and hard-hitting talk entitled 'Being LGBT+ in the workplace'. Dan explained the importance of being a good ally and speaking

up in the face of discrimination, as well as constructive ways in which to handle sensitive situations.

The talk became a useful space to bring up concerns and questions and we gained an insight into some of the challenges there are for LGBT+ individuals.

LGBT+ history month was a vital reminder of the progress that has been made in the veterinary profession, as well as of the work still to be done.



Cedlie Johnson, Unsplash

## 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 2018 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](http://www.myvetfuture.com)**



# Making connections, finding inspiration

**Laura Copley (AVS Connect Award recipient)**

IN March 2019, I applied to present my research findings at the European College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ECVIM) conference being held in Milan, Italy, in September the same year. This involved rewriting, reformatting and fine-tuning my abstract to maximise the chance of my research being accepted.

In June, I found out I had been successful, and the ECVIM congress committee requested that I present my research orally. Ever since starting vet school, I'd had an ambition to present my work and eventually get it published, and being given this amazing opportunity both frightened and excited me. I was aware that a lot of preparation was essential to prevent failure at such a high-profile meeting. As part of these preparations, I applied for – and was delighted to receive – the AVS Connect Award, which helped out with the costs of getting to and staying in Milan.

The subject of my presentation was my year 3 research project. All vet students at the University of Nottingham have to complete this to pass their Bachelor of Veterinary Medical Science degree. For my research, I'd compared nine canine serum thyroxine measurement methods and looked at how T4 cross-reacting autoantibodies affected them in vitro.

Unfortunately, my fourth-year exams fell on the same week as the conference. Undaunted, I took on the challenge of sitting six vet exams, flying to Milan, presenting my work and returning to the UK to carry on with fourth year, all within a week!

On the morning of my presentation, I woke at 5 am and patrolled



(above) Laura at the conference and (right) presenting her research

the streets of Milan looking for the congress centre. I left nearly three hours for a 20-minute walk, an indication of just how nervous I was! The conference building was huge: inside there were different stalls and lots of companies showing off their products or offering new courses.

Listening to people presenting their research was incredibly inspiring. It's fascinating how research can bring people from myriad backgrounds together. I found presentations about qualitative studies especially interesting and this might be something I look to involve myself with in the future.

Presenting my work was amazing. Rehearsing my presentation repeatedly proved to be worth it. It felt good to be giving something back from the education I have received. Lots of people came up

to me afterwards to congratulate me on both my research findings and my presentation skills. I felt proud.

Visiting the stalls and listening to people's career paths really gave me an insight into doing an internship or residency. I have always liked the idea of research but have never looked at the possibility of pursuing a career in it. However, I've realised that specialising increases your chances of travelling and this is something I would like my job to involve.

This experience allowed my knowledge to grow and my interests in specific topics to deepen; it broadened my outlook on my future and how best to utilise my vet degree. Leaving Milan, I felt incredibly inspired and so grateful for the Connect Award and to AVS for supporting me.

## About the AVS Connect Award

The AVS Connect Award provides financial assistance of £250 to help a vet student attend an international meeting or event as a representative of the UK and Ireland veterinary student body. You can find more information at [www.avsukireland.co.uk/opportunities](http://www.avsukireland.co.uk/opportunities)



# Q&A with the winners of RCVS Knowledge's Veterinary Evidence Student Awards 2020

THIS year, three undergraduates became the first veterinary nursing students to place in the *Veterinary Evidence Student Awards*. The awards were launched by RCVS Knowledge last year to recognise and support students' engagement with evidence-based veterinary medicine and its application into practice.

The winning Knowledge Summary was written by the trio of Carla Husband, Lauren Sweeney and Abbie McMillan, all studying at the University of Bristol. They highlighted the paucity of evidence regarding the impact of educational interventions on hand hygiene compliance in small animal environments, a highly relevant topic during the Covid-19 pandemic, and called for more research to be carried out to support hand hygiene compliance in the veterinary professions.

Here, they share their thoughts and experience on the writing process, getting published, and ultimately adding to the evidence base, something that they would encourage everyone in veterinary education and the professions to do.

## What drew you to apply to the competition?

**Carla** I had always wanted to contribute to the evidence base and knew I would like to try to publish my work. The thought of being able to potentially have my work published really drew me to entering the competition. I also wanted to represent not only the nursing profession, but the University of Bristol as well. Previous winners were veterinary students and I wanted to prove that veterinary nurses can contribute to the evidence as well.

**Lauren** I was drawn in by the



(from left) Carla, Lauren and Abbie, authors of the winning Knowledge Summary in the 2020 Veterinary Evidence Student Awards

potential of our knowledge summary actually being published at the end. As a student, that seems like something that won't be achievable until much later on in our career; so to have the potential for that as a student is very exciting.

Our course leader at the time was a massive advocate for veterinary nurses contributing to evidence-based veterinary medicine and she told us about the competition and urged us to apply.

**Abbie** I felt that a lot of veterinary care and standards are not well researched and are based on opinions or theoretical ideas rather than a strong evidence base. I wanted to help improve the evidence base for practice and be a part of the community striving for improvement, even if it were only in a small subsection of veterinary medicine.

## Your topic was educational interventions on hand hygiene compliance. What made you want to appraise the evidence around this topic?

**Carla** Even before the Covid-19 pandemic I knew how important hand hygiene was, especially in our

profession. Once we started doing the research and realised how little veterinary evidence there was, we were shocked. I am very driven to practise gold standard evidence-based medicine so I felt that it was important for us to focus on this topic. Hopefully, this knowledge summary can demonstrate to people how important it is to make a contribution to the evidence base.

**Lauren** What drew me most to the area was that the evidence is minimal and, therefore, the veterinary field relies on human evidence to create hand hygiene protocols. We thought it would be important to appraise the available veterinary evidence to assess the quality of experimental data, understand the gaps within the research and to decide whether further research needs to be conducted to ensure that evidence-based veterinary medicine is practised as standard.

**Abbie** A large percentage of hand hygiene compliance research in veterinary medicine surrounds the quality of hand hygiene itself and often lists education as a major tool for improving this, with no supporting evidence. I felt it was important

to look at the efficacy of education to see how valuable a tool it is for hand hygiene compliance improvement.

### What was the writing and publication process like?

**Carla** I was not expecting to find such a lack of evidence. It was interesting to discover how much we rely on human medicine research to create our own policies. It is so important for veterinary research to be done so that we can create more specific and relevant protocols for our profession. We all became passionate about the area as soon as we started our writing and research.

The most challenging part for me was making sure we weren't being biased. Even though there was a lack of research we had to make sure we had a strong, unbiased evaluation of all the papers. However, I felt that we worked really well together and were able to create a really good piece of writing.

I loved sitting down with the others and discussing our main themes for the appraisal. When we came up with a good point we would get really excited and then have to try to remember exactly how we had said it because we'd forget to write it down! I love seeing the finished product and knowing all our hard work has been recognised.

**Lauren** For me, the writing process went as expected. We spent lots of time writing this piece together, but we found it much more effective to do lots of smaller sessions more frequently rather than fewer, longer sessions. The only unexpected part for me was that I found it quite easy to get side-tracked and end up talking about lots of different aspects of veterinary medicine in the one Knowledge Summary, so we had to focus on narrowing our writing to a few key aspects that we could delve deeper into.

For me, the most challenging part was picking apart the statistical analysis of the individual research papers; there are many statistical tests to get to grips with and this required lots of further reading and

understanding before writing about the statistics.

The most enjoyable aspect for me was writing the overall appraisal of all three papers. The appraisal allowed us to draw together all of the papers, while assessing how they had presented key themes and avoided biases like the Hawthorne effect. Appraising the three papers together allowed us to form a well-rounded assessment of the available veterinary evidence in the field of hand hygiene compliance.

**Abbie** I was not expecting a lot of the challenges that co-authoring a paper entailed; for example, scheduling work sessions, and sharing ideas and compromising. It was both my favourite and least favourite aspect. For one, it was excellent practice for co-authoring in the future; it taught me how to be more succinct and take criticism well and also how to be more gentle with introducing new ideas or providing feedback on the work of others. However, it was also difficult finding compromise without becoming frustrated, ensuring we all worked together to form one robust summary of evidence. Despite this, I enjoyed working with the others immensely and I couldn't be prouder of what we created together.

### Was it your first experience of writing for a journal? Was it as you anticipated?

**Carla** I wasn't expecting the publication part of the process to be so easy. The advice from all the reviewers was so positive and helpful, we were able to make the necessary changes quickly.

**Lauren** Yes, this was my first experience of writing for a journal. I enjoyed having my work peer reviewed as it meant that the end

product was of a high standard and could actually contribute efficiently to the veterinary evidence base. The publishing process was actually easier than anticipated; the reviewers and editors were very helpful and allowed us to polish our work together as a group. We only had a few areas we needed to work on so the time it took to publish was much quicker than expected. This has inspired me to continue to try to add to the veterinary evidence base throughout my career.

**Abbie** This was my first experience writing for a journal. The process was not as daunting or difficult as I was expecting. I realised that anyone can improve the evidence base as long as they are passionate about it.

### What would you tell other people who are interested in writing a Knowledge Summary or taking part in the competition next year?

**Carla** I would advise them to go for it! It's a really interesting experience and allows you to get an idea of how the peer reviewers assess your work for publication. As a student, it's a really enjoyable feeling to know that your work will form part of the evidence available in a certain area.

**Lauren** This was a really positive first experience of publishing my work, and it has inspired me to carry on, so I definitely advise anyone thinking of taking part in the competition that they should go for it!

**Abbie** I would tell them that contributing to evidence-based practice is incredibly rewarding and to stick with it. I am proud of our achievement and nurses should know that they can contribute just as well as vets.

### The 2021 competition

Enhance your academic and research skills by writing a Knowledge Summary and submitting it to *Veterinary Evidence*, the open access, peer-reviewed journal of RCVS Knowledge, the charity partner of the RCVS. Also, be in with a chance to win one of three cash prizes. Entries for the 2021 awards close on 11 December 2020 and you can find more information at <https://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/grants/available-grants/veterinary-evidence-student-awards/>



# A day in the life of a zoo vet

Emily Johnston (Edinburgh graduate 2020)

TAKING a nine-hour train ride from Edinburgh to Devon is not the way I usually begin my EMS placements, but then a placement with the vets at Paignton Zoo was a little more unusual than the clinical placements I usually book with my local practices.

Walking into the placement that I'd been looking forward to for well over a year, I had no idea what to expect and every day brought new surprises.

The team at Paignton Zoo is made up of three vets and two nurses, but on most days I worked mainly with the one vet and one nurse who were overseeing the clinical work that day. Throughout my placement, we had a steady stream of inpatients at the zoo's vet centre, including a variety of weird and wonderful birds that the vets wanted to keep a closer eye on than would have been possible if they'd stayed in their usual enclosures.

The first task every day involved attending to inpatients. As someone with little previous experience with birds of any sort, this was a great chance to develop my clinical skills and I was able to be as hands on as judged safe for each patient.

Following inpatient treatment, there could be a variety of cases to see around the zoo or brought to the vet centre. From conscious blood draws in a tiger, to monitoring mobility in geriatric zoo animals, there was nothing the vets didn't do.

While veterinary care in this environment is as hands off as it can be, for both the welfare of the animals and the safety of the staff, sometimes a hands-on examination is required and for the most part this requires a general anaesthetic. Over the course of three weeks, I saw several anaesthetics on a variety of species. The most notable was an echidna due a full health check. General anaesthetics also offer an opportunity for radiographs and bloods to be taken – did you know you take blood from an echidna via a vein in its snout?

A few times a week we ventured across to Torquay, where the zoo's partner site, Living Coasts, is situated. Living Coasts is home to a variety of seabirds and sealife and while much of the work was similar to that at the zoo (the large collection of penguins and other seabirds received check ups and treatments as needed), some of the more

slippery patients provided different challenges. An import check on sea-horses is exclusively a visual examination but other animals, like the stingrays, are target trained (much like many of the mammals) in case they ever need medications in the future.

The final daily task was postmortem examinations. Everything that died in the zoo underwent a post-mortem exam, whether to hunt for an unknown cause of death or to confirm a diagnosis following euthanasia. Most of the postmortems I saw and performed over the course of the three weeks were on birds. Often the findings were incidental and not the suspected cause of death, but regardless this was a great opportunity for anatomy revision and dissection practice, especially when you're trying to dissect a sample of spleen from a 200 g bird!

I learned so much more than I ever expected to at Paignton. With a wide variety of cases every day, there was never a dull moment. Whether you're planning on seeing exotics in general practice or you know your goal is to be a zoo vet, a placement with a zoo is a great experience.



William Picard



Vanessa Fitzgerald

Good to know: import checks on seahorses are purely visual inspections and you take a blood sample from an echidna using a vein in its snout

# Seaweed-eating sheep

Elizabeth Stephenson (Third year, Cambridge)

ONE of the humbling privileges that I find comes with being a vet student is the opportunity to fully immerse yourself in a community while on EMS placements. It gives you a perspective on places far beyond what is gained from merely visiting them. My time on North Ronaldsay was no different, and I learnt and gained so much from my experience.

My desire to visit the island stemmed from when I first heard about the seaweed-eating sheep while on some pre-vet-school work experience at Flett & Carmichael Vets on Orkney a few years back. They sounded fascinating and my eagerness to visit brought together my love of wild and remote places with learning about an amazing breed.

Fast forward a few years and I found myself in my second year of vet school, contacting Siân, the Sheep Dyke Warden on the island, to ask if I could come to stay, help her maintain the dyke that confines the sheep to the island's shore, and learn more about the sheep themselves. I thought it might be a bit of a long shot as it was before she set up her volunteering scheme, but to my delight, she emailed me back and said yes!

After the complex logistics of get-



Norbert and Fang, perfectly at home on the shore

ting to the island, I finally arrived a few days into July and quickly got to meet Norbert and Fang, the wonderful and mischievous pet lambs.

The North Ronaldsay belongs to the northern European short-tailed group of sheep breeds. They are small in size and only mature at around three years old, and so are used for mutton. They are classified as vulnerable by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. The sheep have been on North Ronaldsay for at least 5000 years but, in 1832, the farming

system of the island was reconfigured and a dyke was built to keep the sheep down on the shoreline. The ewes come onto grass to lamb in April, but otherwise it's a diet of seaweed all year round.

The breed has amazing potential for environmental sustainability: phlorotannin, found in brown seaweed, is able to protect some protein in the rumen and prevent it from being broken down, thus reducing ammonia production and increasing the proportion able to be



Making friends: (left) with Sheep Dyke Warden Siân and her partner Oly; and (right) with a member of a most amazing sheep breed





Finished!

utilised by the sheep. Phlorotannin is also able to alter the gut microbiota, reducing the amount of methane-producing bacteria in the rumen.

Additionally, enzymes from the sheep's gut may have a role to play in macroalgae degradation for bio-fuel production.

Siân has also just started a conservation grazing project with the sheep at Westness on the island with the hope of bringing back some rare species to the machair, such as the great yellow bumblebee.

One issue that affects these sheep, and particularly the lambs, is vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency, leading to cerebrocortical necrosis. This can often occur after the lambs are wormed, or after the ewes are moved to a new field, and leads to 'headache-like' signs such as head pressing. It can be reversed in lambs if a thiamine supplement is given quickly and one of the islanders has brought many lambs round this way.

On the behavioural side of things, learning how the sheep shelter from storms up against the dyke wall and form 'clow gangs', which are groups that they stick to in a small section of the shore, was fascinating.

The dry stone dyke that encircles the island is about 13 miles long. The native sheep need to be prevented from going over the dyke as they could crossbreed with other sheep on the island. The dyke was traditionally maintained by islanders; however, due to depopulation

of the island causing a reduction in available labour, a quarter of it is currently in need of repair. This is where Siân's three-year role as Sheep Dyke Warden, rebuilding the dyke and raising awareness, comes in.

My first introduction to dyke building was at Bridesness, rebuilding a section of the pund (pens that the sheep are gathered into) that had fallen down. The section was about 12 metres long and, accompanied by beautiful weather and the lambs, we had it up within the week! Building turned out to be something I loved – after weeks of revision it was so refreshing to be using my brain in a different way and puzzling



Getting to grips with shearing

out exactly where each stone ought to go.

Other adventures during my first week included a dip in the sea with Siân and seeing a seal close-up; getting to know some of the other islanders; and a foray into putting some new climbing routes up on the west of the island.

Siân and her partner Olly grow lots of their own food and I certainly found this a shift from having shops so accessible back home. It challenged me to think more about what I eat and how I could swap some things out for homemade versions.

The second week signalled the start of a new section of wall repair, this time over by Scottigar. The week finished with me helping sheep owners at Lurand in the south west of the island with their punning and shearing. It was my first lesson in how to shear a sheep – I managed four, though there is a lot of room for improvement! Shearing is done with hand shears rather than clippers, as these are too easily blunted by sand in the fleece as well as rusting from the salt. Wool has been used on North Ronaldsay for at least 2000 years – weaving combs were found at the Broch of Burrian, an Iron Age settlement. Nowadays wool is spun into yarn at a mill on the island.

Drawing on some previous EMS skills, I showed them how to trim the hooves of the ewes. Normally this isn't required as the hooves are worn down from being on the shore, but the ewes had been on grass since April so a few had grown a little bit and it was lovely to be able to give back some knowledge.

My third and final week brought the much-anticipated punning of the whole island. Punning involves running hurdles from the dyke down into the sea (so the tide has to be high enough for this to work) and then chasing the sheep into a pund just before the hurdles. It is a fickle job and they don't flock like most sheep do, often running off on their own and doubling back to make the job harder. On Tuesday, we were punning over by Westness and the final pund on Wednesday was by

the Old Beacon and provided much entertainment running about after errant sheep before pitching in with the collective shearing effort.

It was so humbling to see everyone coming together as a community and helping out with the punding. It's fantastic that the flock is still communally managed by the Sheep Court made up of sheep owners and islanders, and that punding brings together so many families and individuals. It is a shame that there are not more systems with a similar ethos and it was fascinating from a veterinary perspective to get to grips with the management of the sheep.

During this week I was also invited out by the Bird Observatory to watch ringing, starting at 11.30 pm. I wasn't sure what to expect, having not had much experience of this, but it opened up a whole new world of bird life that I was utterly enthralled by! The knowledge and care of the ringers was amazing to see and I departed with a newfound love of birds.

Siân's work on the dyke to help preserve this amazing breed is incredible and I'm so grateful to her for allowing me to play a small role in this.

My thanks also go to all the wonderful people of North

Ronaldsay who showed me so much humour and generosity. Being part of your community for a few weeks and learning what it is like to live somewhere like North Ronaldsay (which is not without its hardships) was humbling and insightful. A message of love has to go to the pet lambs, Norbert and Fang, and all the other North Ronaldsay sheep – you were so worth the journey to a beautiful, wild, far-flung corner of Orkney.

Finally, a note of encouragement to anyone thinking of doing something slightly unusual with their pre-clinical EMS – I'd highly recommend it!

## IVSA and XLVets help veterinary students gain clinical EMS via Zoom

**Charlotte Tobin-Williams (IVSA Events Committee Chair & AVS Senior Rep at Liverpool)**

With vet students being deprived of practical clinical EMS (CEMS) due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA) recently teamed up with XLVets to host some virtual CEMS.

The initiative came about after Keeley Orrin (IVSA Liverpool Senior Rep) came into contact with Andrew Curwen (CEO of XLVets) on LinkedIn and explained how students needed support during these tough times. With support from Gabrielle Davidson, Paul Whittle and Ashley Earnshaw at XLVets, the IVSA team at Liverpool (Keeley, Calypso Bressan and myself) created an event like none other in the history of veterinary education and delivered more than 90 hours of case-based EMS over three weeks for approximately 150 attendees from all the UK universities and University College Dublin.

After several Zoom meetings, tutorials and countless emails, Keeley and Andrew hosted the first week, which was dedicated to small animals. It included sessions such as 'What is a vet?' by the then BVA President Daniella Dos Santos; 'Ophthalmology basics' by David Williams; and 'Foreign body surgery' by Lizzie Whiting.

The first week was the week we were most nervous about, as we were not sure if the technology could cope, but everything went to plan and so did the following weeks. To allow as much interactivity as possible, we used breakout rooms and polls on the Zoom app. This meant students could select options and discuss cases throughout the sessions.

The second week, equine week, was hosted by Calypso (IVSA

Liverpool Junior Rep), who commented: 'Hosting the equine week, although initially daunting, was an extremely rewarding endeavour. Equine vets from all over the UK brought to the table a wealth of knowledge that far exceeded our expectations. From "A day at the races" to a description of lead poisoning cases and a view from an equine dentist's chair, very little was left unsaid. I am in awe of what IVSA Liverpool and XLVets have achieved and I am proud to be part of this team.'

I hosted the final week, which was dedicated to farm animal sessions. On a personal level it was an exciting, yet very strange experience to talk to a laptop and know that 150 people were listening! There was a complete range of topics, from 'Bovine obstetrics' by Diether Prins and 'Calf scours' by Miranda Timmerman to 'Health and animal welfare' by James Russell, then Junior Vice President of BVA, and 'Poor pregnancy rates and breeding bulls' by XLVets member practices in Canada.

'We are very grateful that we had the opportunity to connect with the IVSA team to speak about the challenges that they were facing due to the Covid-19 pandemic,' said Gabrielle, who is marketing and communications executive at XLVets.

'We are pleased that we were able to support them in bringing their virtual CEMS idea to life, which was a brilliant way for them and their peers to gain valuable experience during these challenging times.'

'Our members commented on the professionalism and enthusiasm shown by the students and have offered their support for virtual CEMS sessions in the future. It's great to see students finding creative solutions to the problems that they face, and our community is here and ready to support them.'

No one could have imagined how a connection on LinkedIn could lead to three weeks of CEMS that all vet schools confirmed students could submit as a placement (and so count it towards their degree). IVSA and XLVets have achieved unforgettable success, with great feedback. Let's see what the future of online learning brings us!



All paws on deck to help with some virtual EMS



# Zoo EMS featuring two tumultuous tamarins

Jenna Pacini (Fourth year, Surrey)

DURING an EMS placement at a zoo in France, I had the opportunity to follow twin tamarins who were creating some real trouble for their keepers.

On the first day of my placement, the zoo's vet, Adeline, told me: 'OK Jenna, you're going to help us with an ethology study that has caused us quite a lot of trouble.' I was excited, grabbed my notebook and my walkie-talkie and followed Adeline to the tamarins' enclosure.

The moment I arrived I could hear some hissing and vocalisations. Annie, the keeper to those noisy tamarins, quickly explained the situation: 'This one is Nazca, with the fluffy tail and the other one is Tahuan, with the missing finger. They have lived together for four years. We received them last year, but they started fighting in April. Since then we separated them as one ate the finger of the other.'

Adeline continued: 'We implanted them with a new contraceptive implant in April, thinking that the effect of the old one had worn off as it was two years old. We are now following a protocol of rehabilitation so they can be put in contact again.'

'We've just finished phase one of full isolation from each other. We are in phase two now where they can see and hear each other through a window. I'd like you to observe them for the next two weeks and notify me when you think we can pass to phase three, which will consist of putting a new divider between them that allows them to smell each other.'

On the first day of my observations, Tahuan was in the outdoor enclosure and Nazca was inside. Tahuan spent her time marking her territory on branches, and emitting loud, long vocalisations as if she was searching for her sister. However, it



The new divider between the two enclosures allowed the two tamarins to see, hear and smell one another

was too early for me to interpret any behaviours as I didn't know them yet.

The second day, Nazca was the one out in the enclosure. I discovered a little tamarin that had a very strong personality and seemed way more active than her sister. She kept going in front of Tahuan's enclosure, trying to get in, vocalising and marking. She also seemed to pay a lot of attention to Annie, who was working behind the enclosure. I wondered whether jealousy might be a problem, with Nazca wanting Annie's undivided attention.

Over the weekend I decided to do some more research. I discovered that twin tamarins often fight, and that it can be hard to calm the situation down. Long vocalisations and territory marking are often done to establish a hierarchy. I also found out that the contraceptive implant they had been fitted with should begin to influence behaviour within the first week after implantation. However, the twins' implants had been in place for three weeks, which made it unlikely that hierarchical competition was the correct

hypothesis for the ongoing behaviour. I returned to the zoo on Monday feeling rather hopeless. However, Tahuan and Nazca decided to treat me to a very peaceful situation: the occurrence of vocalisation and territory marking had gone down, and I could even see the two looking at each other through the window!

I went to Annie to announce the good news. She was pleased, and after a discussion we decided we could pass to phase three of the protocol once the new divider was ready.

Two days later, I was at the vet lab preparing milk for some baby wallabies when I heard on my walkie-talkie: 'Jenna, we have the divider!' The day was going to be exciting for sure. I took care of the wallabies and then rushed to the tamarin enclosure where the atmosphere was a mix of excitement and stress. How would the sisters react? Would it be positive?

Once the divider was in place, we left the enclosure and went to the back area to observe them quietly. The two examined the separation, but as soon as they realised they were close to each other, a cacophony of hissing began. After 10 minutes things calmed down and the twins went about their daily activities. The novelty of the divider was probably what caused the trouble, and the situation was very positive overall.

That was my last day at the zoo. The experience had been enjoyable and full of excitement. Annie said she would keep me updated on the situation, so I can't wait to find out what happened to those two tumultuous tamarins, who hopefully found a common ground!

# Studying in Switzerland: an Erasmus adventure

**Rebecca Grace (Liverpool graduate 2020)**

HAVING just survived fourth year exams and an Easter of EMS, in April 2019 I moved to the University of Bern in Switzerland for my first day of rotations as part of the Erasmus+ programme. This was equally one of the scariest, most exhausting, but most rewarding experiences I've ever had.

I lived in Bern for three months, during which I spent a month in each of the university's equine, small animal and farm hospitals. Having never been to Switzerland before, and arriving slightly misinformed about the language they speak in Bern (turns out they speak Swiss-German rather than French) and not previously having done any equine clinical EMS, my first days of rotations were interesting to say the least! However, I quickly got into the swing of things and all the students and staff were beyond welcoming.

The university's rotations were organised quite differently from what I was used to in Liverpool. The students spend three months in the hospital of their choice – equine, farm, small animal or pathology – and a month in each of the others, with the remaining time in the year for revision, writing their 'master



Despite sleep deprivation and translation problems, rotations at University of Bern were time well spent

thesis' (a dissertation-type task) and any externships. This meant that there were only between five and 10 students in each of the hospitals at one time. This was great in terms of gaining practical experience, but not so great for the night shifts, which were absolutely exhausting.

The equine hospital was split into

medicine and surgery, and I spent two weeks on each. Students had a lot of responsibilities in the running of the hospitals, especially out of hours, when we were sometimes in sole charge. We had walkie-talkies with alarms, so that if we fell over someone would come looking for us and if we were lucky we had students from lower years helping (especially with foals). This was a bit daunting, especially with my lack of German. One time I spent 10 minutes searching the medication shelf for 'Spazieren', which was written on all the horses' plans, only to find out that it meant I needed to take the horse for a walk!

In the small animal hospital, I spent a week (and many night shifts) in the emergency and intensive care units, which felt like a baptism of fire. There were gastric dilation and volvulus cases, heartworm cases, pneumothoraces and every type of effusion, as well as many wildlife cases. Luckily, most of the clients spoke French so I was



Vetting with a view: both Bern and the surrounding countryside have lots to recommend them

able to consult as well as spending time in ICU triaging. Additionally, I did anaesthesia, radiology, cardiology and medicine, which were fairly similar to Liverpool.

The farm animal hospital was the most different from home and at the busiest we had 35 inpatients. There was a lot of surgery, and every patient had haematology, biochemistry and a catheter as standard on admittance. The animals are worth more over there, and some animals were even helicoptered down mountains to come to the hospital! It was very hands-on. I got to scrub into a caesarean, right and left displaced abomasa and foreign body surgery. I got to practise teat surgery and I really enjoyed being able to work cases up with diagnostic tests and imaging. There was also a dedicated pig clinic where we would do daily clinical exams of inpatients as well as farm visits, creating reports and practising skills

### Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe.

Each of the UK universities does things differently: some don't offer Erasmus+ at all, others only offer it if you intercalate. At Liverpool, you can apply to Oslo, Helsinki, Paris, Ghent, Zurich or Bern. With the complications of Brexit, who knows what is going to happen with this amazing programme in the future, but you should definitely look into what is available nevertheless.

There is a lot of paperwork and criteria to apply, but it is certainly worth it. You are also entitled to a grant (of varying amounts depending on where you go), which is definitely useful as it's free money! However, living costs in a lot of the countries are at least double UK costs. It is possible to do it on a budget, but if you want to fully explore the country while you are there, then costs (especially travel) do add up.

such as blood taking, abscess treatments and castrations.

And then there were routine fertility visits too (I'd never pregnancy diagnosed with a mountain view before). It was lovely getting to know the farmers, as well as being treated to homemade bread, Swiss chocolate and homemade cordial.

I would really recommend Erasmus+ to everyone, it was honestly one of the best things I've ever done. As cheesy as it sounds, I have made friends for life and the confidence and the skills I gained were invaluable. Despite all the sleep deprivation and translation issues, I would do it all again!

## BOOK REVIEW

# Not just for new grads

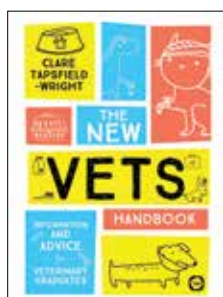
### The New Vets Handbook: Information and Advice for Veterinary Graduates

Clare Tapsfield-Wright  
Paperback, 314 pages  
5m Publishing, 2018  
£24.95

Reviewed by Katie Kirk

The New Vets Handbook aims to provide 'information and advice for veterinary graduates'; however, to say this is all this book does is underselling it.

For the most part, the book does a fantastic job of giving detailed advice about how to transition from vet school to life in practice, without becoming patronising or



demoralising. I particularly appreciated the emphasis on how to balance looking after your health (both mentally and physically) with the pressure to push through and just get on with being a vet in practice, something that I'm sure is a concern for many vet students.

There are anecdotes from vets scattered throughout the text, which helped break it up and also served to reinforce some of the key points of each chapter from another perspective. Many of these

anecdotes (including some from the author herself) help inject humour into the book, providing some comic relief to prevent it from becoming too overwhelming with information.

I think the book is particularly great at demystifying job interviews, in terms of what the interviewer is looking for at every stage and how to make the best impression. It also has a number of hints and tips for running consultations which go beyond the communication skills taught at vet school.

So, to say this is a book purely for graduates is somewhat misleading – there is certainly value here too for vet students in the last couple of years of their studies.



# Some thoughts on life in lockdown

Katie Kirk (JAVS Editor)

I AM sure all of us can agree that 2020 has been just a little bit surreal. With the worldwide emergence of Covid-19 leading to lockdowns both in the UK and further afield, many vet students have seen their plans for the year derailed quite spectacularly.

From virtual vet school to the loss of EMS, we have all had to adapt to the situation and the challenges that have been thrown at us as individuals as well as vet students. Now, as we head into the new academic year and begin to re-emerge into the world, I wanted to find out how

this strange situation has affected vet students across the country and at different stages of their veterinary degrees.

Here are some of their thoughts on the past few months and what lockdown has meant both for them and the veterinary profession.

## How have you been finding life in lockdown?

'I have been quite happy in lockdown. I think I've been very lucky that I've been able to have multiple changes in scenery (isolated with different groups of people in different places), which has helped add spark to the mundane parts. I have basically been treating it like an extended holiday, which has been good for my mental health, but I worry has been bad for my productivity.'

'It was difficult at the beginning due to the huge amount of uncertainty and looming exams! But once I managed to develop a routine, things started to become more manageable.'

'Difficult and boring. I've felt trapped having to live in someone else's house with no transport of my own. Online lectures have helped and studying for exams has kept me busy.'

## What have you found most challenging about lockdown?

'Not getting to go out with my friends in the beginning. I don't have much motivation to exercise.'

'Boredom.'

'The lack of face-to-face contact. I spend large portions of my day Zooming, Skyping and what not, but I think lockdown has really made me re-evaluate how important face-to-face and physical contact is for mental health.'

'Adjusting to finishing second semester of uni at home, rather than having the independence of being in a student house.'



Charles Deluvio, Unsplash

## Have you started doing anything new since lockdown started?

'No.'

'Learning a language.'

'As I was elected to my university's RAG society during lockdown, I have been interviewing companies and university students, as well as setting up meetings for the first time. It's not exactly a hobby, but it has definitely kept me busy. Other than that, I have not started anything brand new,



Elijah M Henderson, Unsplash

rather I have been continuing hobbies that I feel I do not have time for during the academic year, such as reading and playing piano.'

'I made the effort to appreciate spending time with myself, such as going on walks or spending days outside reading/drawing in public spaces.'

'Perhaps a bit of PlayStation!'

### What are you looking forward to most post-lockdown?

'Social life and gyms reopening.'

'Being able to enjoy seeing friends within 2 metres and being able to hug them/do things with larger groups/more households.'

'Shopping and going out for lunch, etc, to meet friends. Going to the gym, and the routine of university life.'

'Freedom to travel again – not just holidays but being able to see friends and family across the UK.'

'Reuniting with university friends.'



Priscilla du Preez Unsplash

### How do you think the veterinary profession will be changed going forward?

'I think there will be an even greater emphasis on disease control and security; and probably a slight shift to online working (such as online consults) despite the veterinary profession being very practical. I think now that vet clinics have had to provide these services, and can now continue to offer them without significant hassle, the online features may be able to benefit certain types of households.'



Ani Koleshi, Unsplash

'I don't think it will be overall, maybe just with regards to how many people can enter a practice/practices won't be able to have multiple people in.'

'Student placements for EMS – may be more difficult to confirm/find them.'

'Maybe more online webinars/EMS/CPD will be made available.'

'Hopefully not much.'

### Is there anything that has changed because of the lockdown that you would like to keep going forward?

'Vet students (and the wider profession) have always had a strong sense of community, but during the last few challenging months, when needed most, we have rallied to help each other. In my opinion, this fostered purpose and spirit, never more evident than now. Whether it has been simple gestures or larger tasks, it has been astonishing to see the combined resilience, adaptability and perseverance among the incredible individuals that make up our combined veterinary profession.'

'Online lecture recordings.'

'I think remote working and online meetings should be an option for the future as I have found them to be far easier and more comfortable in some ways, but I also do not believe they should completely replace face-to-face work.'

'Continuing to appreciate the time I have by myself and be less hesitant about having personal day trips.'

'I'd like to carry on keeping fit and make some more clothes.'

I think it is clear that lockdown (and the changes in our lives associated with it) has had very different effects on students, and that the circumstances they have found themselves in during this period have had a lot to do with that. While it is probably safe to say that the effect on our social lives has been the biggest impact on us as a group of people, there have been some positives

to come from this experience. These are both in changes the profession has made as a direct result of the pandemic, but also changes to our own personal lifestyles, which we can hopefully keep moving forward.

A massive thank you goes to the people who were willing to share their thoughts on lockdown (which can be quite personal and challenging at times). I hope that, as a reader,

this reassures you that there may be other vet students who have had a similar experience to you.

■ The 'opinion & 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 have the UK's pets been affected by lockdown?

Laura Kruszewski (Sixth year, Cambridge)

THROUGHOUT the past few months, we have been frequently reminded that these are unpredictable, unusual and unprecedented times. However, it is not only our lives that have been impacted by Covid-19; the daily routines of our pets have also been disrupted, with inevitable effects on their behaviour. Although we will have to wait for concrete data on the impacts of lockdown on animal behaviour, we can still anticipate some of these effects.

Let's consider how our pets' daily schedules have been disrupted due to lockdown. One of the most significant changes has been owners spending more time at home. For many animals, this has been a welcome adjustment, although others have been left puzzled and stressed. Confusion has been observed in pets wanting to play with their more readily accessible owners, only to be shooed away as people attempt to work from home.

There have also been reports of pets becoming stressed by excessive amounts of playtime, especially with children spending more time at home following school closures. This has coincided with reports of increased nipping and biting by otherwise well-behaved dogs.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, owners have been advised to supervise interactions between animals and young children, as well as ensuring their pets always have access to a quiet space where they will not be disturbed.<sup>2</sup>

As lockdown has eased and more owners have returned to work, there has been apprehension about a spike in canine separation anxiety.<sup>1</sup> To reduce the likelihood of this behavioural problem, animal charities have recommended that owners prepare their pets for any adjustment in routine by introduc-



The nation's pets may have got used to a different lifestyle during lockdown – and there may be a behavioural price to pay as things return to normal

ing short periods of isolation during the day, as well as gradually shifting towards any new timetable.<sup>3</sup>

A significant number of vets have predicted a rise in behavioural issues in the UK's pets following Covid-19. There are also concerns that the development of behavioural issues during lockdown may result in more owners relinquishing their pets. These fears are not unwarranted – a study of over 3000 animals revealed that behavioural problems were the most common and second most common reasons for relinquishment of dogs and cats, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

It is also important to acknowledge that many pet owners will not be returning to work, potentially leading to an increase in pets given up to shelters due to financial restrictions, as was seen following the recession of 2008.<sup>5</sup> In addition, deaths due to Covid-19 will leave more animals without owners, again resulting in an increased strain on rescue centres.

Although shelters are essential and

valued facilities, a sudden change in environment alongside a lack of interaction with their original owners may lead to behavioural issues in relinquished pets.

Conversely, many rescue centres have seen a surge in demand as people have found themselves with more time at home and therefore the ability to care for a new addition to the household.

However, as discussed above, a significant proportion of shelter animals have behavioural problems, which may not be fully appreciated by new owners. A study of over 6000 cats in the UK found that the most common reason for cats to be returned to rehoming centres was behavioural issues.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, there is a risk that shelters may see a rise in the return of recently rehomed animals that exhibit undesirable behaviours, such as spraying in cats and increased vocalisation in dogs.

Similarly, more animals may be returned as owners return to work and find themselves no longer able to look after their new pet; this concern has been highlighted by the Dogs Trust, which has modified its famous slogan to 'A dog is for life, not just for lockdown'.<sup>7</sup>

The puppy trade has also been booming, as demonstrated by a surge in Kennel Club registrations since March 2020.<sup>8</sup> Lockdown restrictions have meant a cohort of juvenile pets has missed out on integral environmental interactions during their socialisation periods, potentially leading to behavioural issues, including aggression towards other animals and newly encountered objects.

To mitigate this, owners have been advised to walk their pets on surfaces of varying textures, allow animals to play with rubbish and household objects under supervision and ensure youngsters are accustomed



to noisy household appliances, such as vacuum cleaners.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, the UK's pets have been extensively affected by lockdown, and this is likely to manifest in behavioural changes in a significant number of animals. Although the demand for pets has soared, there is a risk that behavioural issues developed as a result of lockdown may lead to the relinquishment of increased numbers of pets in the near future.

Now, more than ever, prospective owner education is paramount in ensuring pets are well matched to their new families, thereby prioritising animal welfare.

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# The catalyst of uncertainty

Calum McIntyre (AVS Junior Vice President)

IT'S a strange time to be a vet student. Whether it's been getting used to online learning in pyjamas (perhaps already familiar to some), studying in your home environment, sitting open book exams or facing a shortfall in EMS, like the rest of the profession we have had to adapt to our 'new normal'.

I don't imagine any of us could have predicted finishing the year early or switching to entirely online teaching and exams, let alone the speed of the reconstruction of our degree (all credit to those who made these provisions possible). Moreover, with EMS placements being affected, we found ourselves with a summer of online case-based discussions and webinar learning instead of practical, hands-on experience.

However, an often-quoted phrase that comes to mind is 'Diamonds are made under pressure' and that is true more than ever in the current circumstances. We have faced major disruption, but a crisis is often a catalyst for innovation, creativity and change. The current pandemic has highlighted flaws in our 'norm' as well as the untapped potential of underused resources.

Although right now we find our-

selves in a state of extreme uncertainty, unusual circumstances can offer a change in perspective and approach that we can take forward. As students undertaking a time and volume intensive degree, we often talk about not having enough hours in the day. With cancelled EMS and more flexible online learning, we now have more free time. It is well known that a solid clinical knowledge alone does not translate to being a 'good vet', so why not use this time to bolster skills that will inevitably last a lifetime?

This change in perspective means that not only can we endeavour to *do more* by implementing positive changes, but we can *be more* by developing skills of the 'hidden curriculum' that are so often missed or under-appreciated.

Our degree leads to a lifestyle more than an occupation. 'Being a vet' is part of our identity, although by no means should it define us. Like the aforementioned diamond, we need some chiselling, polishing and refining but, with reflection, creativity and innovation, we can influence the factors that affect our experiences as vet students and surgeons so that the lifestyle works for us, rather than

us struggling to make the lifestyle work.

But with the current uncertainty, in what direction are we heading and what will our new normal be?

I firmly believe that deciding our new normal is up to us.

If we don't change as the world around us changes, we will be left lagging behind and lacking in the key skills for success. We'll become reactive rather than proactive. We'll become frustrated by generalised flaws, or even accepting of them.

But we can, should and even owe it to ourselves to do better. The most conspicuous issues facing the profession need critical examination to avoid the dangers of accepting the status quo. In essence, we should constantly strive for change. I believe that from the very outset of our training, we students have a unique and heightened role to play in challenging ageing, faltering 'norms' – we can be catalysts for change.

As a fellow student, I implore you all to be creative, to identify problems and challenge the 'norm' of the dream profession you hope to enter. After all, there will be many more students to come, following this same journey...

## A 'go-to pig bible'

### Managing Pig Health: A Reference for the Farm, 2nd edn

MR Muirhead, T.J.L. Alexander,  
J Carr (Ed)  
Hardback, 600 pages  
5m Publishing, 2013  
£115.00

**Reviewed by Rebecca Grace**

OVERALL, I really like this book – it has become my go-to 'pig bible'. Initially, on seeing the large size of it, I was concerned that it would be overwhelming; however, on reading, the layout is inviting. From a student's point of view, the sections make it very easy to understand all the different conditions and are great for producing differential diagnoses lists when you are given a clinical scenario.

I also like that it strips things back to basic principles, especially in the first section, with helpful anatomy



date. The book is all encompassing and many chapters could stand alone as books in themselves – such as those on anatomy, management and veterinary subjects.

Some aspects can be confusing, however: For example, when you are looking for information on conditions such as gastrointestinal diseases, this can be found in the relevant section, with the information split into production stages. The text often says something along the lines of 'more information in chapters 8 and 12', which means it can take a bit of time to find all the information you're looking for if a

refreshers, and it is great that it mentions what type of drug is needed rather than giving brand examples that can go out of

conditions affects different production age groups. Now I am used to navigating this, this extra time has reduced.

My favourite part of the book has to be the step-by-step guide to procedures such as blood sampling. I was set 'how to blood sample a pig' as a research task while on EMS, and I remember desperately trawling through Google to try to find out what size needle to use, which blood vessels I should use, and so on. I wish that I'd had this book at that time as the illustrations are great at explaining this.

Being a final-year student with a view to going into mixed practice and with a keen interest in pigs, I have found this book invaluable in the run-up to finals and would recommend it to anyone who works with pigs, whether they are farmers or vets. This book will, without doubt, get a place in my car library on graduation.

## Easy-to-follow guide to ultrasonography

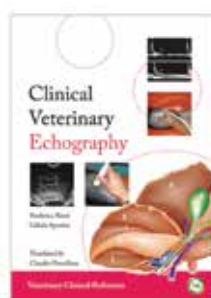
### Clinical Veterinary Echography

Federica Rossi, Giliola Spattini  
Hardback, 192 pages  
5m Publishing, 2017  
£49.95

**Reviewed by Rebecca Grace**

THIS book is very comprehensive, covering patient preparation, positioning and how to scan, as well as the physics behind ultrasound itself and how and why we get images. It usefully illustrates the correct methods of probe handling and where you should be aiming to view different structures.

The translation is perfect and the book is easy to understand and follow, with clear sections and schematics to visualise where you are. The authors mainly focus on dogs, although cats are mentioned



from time to time, and I didn't always find this clear.

The different sections cover the neck region, thorax and

gastrointestinal, reproductive and urinary tracts. Within each section, the authors include lots of ultrasound images, which makes things much easier to understand than if only descriptions of lesions were given.

There is also a lot of discussion of clinical application. I especially liked the clinical sections as the authors go into detail about common conditions, such as how different neoplasms present on ultrasound, and these were in a nice and clear format.

The book also has a section on common artefacts. As a vet student

transitioning into practice with very limited ultrasonographic experience, the thing I tend to struggle with most with ultrasonography is thinking that some artefacts are pathogenic, so this section was great, especially learning that some artefacts even have names. The authors explain why artefacts occur and how to prevent them from happening.

There is a short section on techniques such as fine needle aspiration, which is fairly useful, with good diagrams, and there are also suggestions for further reading on different subjects.

Overall, I think this book is really good value for money and it will definitely have a place on the shelf by the ultrasound machine in my first practice. I would recommend it for any new graduates starting out in small animal practice along with vets wanting to further their knowledge of ultrasound techniques.

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