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February**



**London-Budapest
IVSA exchange**



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Opportunities abound

By Seth Kennard, JAVS Editor

What kind of vet do you want to be? It's the age-old question that you'll be asked on first day in halls; your first day of an EMS placement; the first – and last – day of rotations. To me, it's a great thing that you don't need to decide before you start your degree, when you finish your degree or, in fact, ever. You could be graduated 30 years and one day decide to change direction entirely and work in a new field, or work a new country. People in our profession have easily transferable skills and are in demand – we are privileged in that respect.

Our course may be long and, perhaps, tiring compared with others but, at the end of the day, it can't really be compared. No other course demands as much time or effort and no other can match the need for such a variety of skills and disciplines. Not even medics can really compare as they only deal with one species (which can talk) – how hard can that be?!

The theme for this issue of JAVS is careers and opportunities, of which there are plenty. As usual, you'll find many stories in the following pages of exotic EMS and exciting trips. I hope they inspire you to think more about making the most of your time at vet school. Opportunities are open to everyone – no matter what your financial circumstances. Grants and funds cover a wide range of research and EMS opportunities. More details can be found on the BVA's website (www.bva.co.uk) under 'Travel Grants for students'.

For those who attended the AVS Congress at Cambridge this year, I hope you all had as much fun as I did. The organising committee did an incredible job and put on a really great weekend. The same goes for AVS Sports, which may feel like a distant (and hazy) memory. I hope you're all looking forward to this year's AVS Sports (Edinburgh, November 3 to 5) and AVS Congress early in 2018 in Bristol. Planning is under way – these are not-to-be missed events for vet students – keep your eye on our AVS Facebook page for details about tickets.

AVS is about more than just having an incredible time with new friends. Make sure to read about Glasgow's mental health month (supported by AVS). Read about the IVSA (our sister organisation) exchanges, and take a look on our website for any polls that we're running. We need your input so that we know what you want when we're lobbying for change – be that changes to EMS, student loans or the welfare of pugs.

I hope you enjoy reading JAVS and have a good summer.

Seth Kennard.



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Budapest and London IVSA Exchange

By Tavisha Pandya, 3rd Year RVC

After much anticipation and driving around to avoid the ludicrous price of Luton airport's pick up zone, the RVC minibus took aboard the six Hungarian exchange delegates. Little did our intrepid Hungarian explorers know what an adventure they'd have.

Exploring vibrant Camden made the first morning fly by and it was soon time to check in for the RVC's Global Health Society's 'Disaster' symposium.

Organised by the RVC students, the symposium enlightened us on issues facing global health, with talks such as 'The health economics of antimicrobial resistance' and 'Disasters and diseases'.

With our heads full of information, we made the short walk over to the Haxby, the student-run bar. As we had made good friends by this point we felt it would be cruel to subject our visitors to a night out at the famous Zoo Bar. Instead, we thought it would be nice to show them a slight-



IVSA group at a Camden Lock

ly classier night at Piccadilly Institute.

Day 2 saw the group travel back into London to see which team could successfully complete the inaugural 'London challenge'. The challenge saw teams dashing across London to see as much as they could, with points awarded for landmarks and those willing to go the extra mile: kissing strangers, photobombing tourists and reciting sonnets outside the Globe Theatre.

There was cheating aplenty, and with hundreds of points available to the team that could

get the Queen in their photo, all three teams managed to fake Her Majesty's presence to gain points. The winning team remains up for debate, but we are confident that all involved are now expert at tube travel. After a classic curry at London's famous Brick Lane, it was time to head back to the Hawkshead Campus.

The RVC's Queen Mother Animal Hospital may be the busiest referral hospital in Europe, but we were given a detailed tour on day 3.

Later that day, we were able to embody the epitome of fashion as we strolled around Bolton's Park farm in our boiler suits, visiting the dairy herd. It was then time to dress back down for the last dinner in London before a trip to the Top Secret comedy club.

Sadly, the final day came around all too quickly, and after a tour of our equine hospital and clinical skills lab, we all sat down to a quintessentially English afternoon tea with cake and scones before bidding our heartfelt farewells.

Exchangers around London





The group at Bolton's park farm



With BVA junior vice-president, John Fishwick

London to Budapest

On November 12, the 10 RVC exchangees landed in Budapest, and we quickly headed over to Ankert, one of Budapest's famous ruin bars, for dinner and a well-needed catch up. This was followed up with a night out at Instant – a club with more edge than a hipster in Shoreditch and better art than The Tate Modern.

On day 2 we met in the market – Szimpla – before heading off to experience the sights and tastes of Budapest. Lunch

consisted of traditional langos, something our hosts were worried we wouldn't like, but deep frying bread is a genius idea that we all enjoyed.

We had a fantastic day walking around the landmarks such as the Chain Bridge, the Basilica and fisherman's bastion with our hosts as our tour guides. Seeing a foreign city hosted by a local really changes your perspective of it.

A highlight of the trip was the Hungarian evening of dancing and revelry that started with

homemade goulash washed down with palinka spirit, before being taught some incredibly fun traditional Hungarian dances. Everyone came away sweaty, aching and ecstatic.

On the third day we had a thorough tour of the Szent Istvan campus and small animal hospital and were in awe of the beauty and history the campus had to offer.

It was interesting to hear that it claims to be older than the RVC, something the RVC prospectus fails to mention



Mounting the cow before graduating is said to bring bad luck and forever curse your chances of graduating from Budapest, but as that didn't apply to us, we jumped on





Time to say adieu . . . the sadness didn't last long as we knew in a mere three weeks we would all meet again in Budapest!



Don't mention the elephant in the room: IVSA exchange in the RVC Lightwell following the symposium

when claiming to be the second oldest in the world. After a Hungarian lesson, we were ready to use our new lingo on the locals as we embarked on a sightseeing tour followed by a dip in the thermal baths.

On day 4 we managed to explore even more landmarks, including the Parliament and Citadel.

In the evening our remaining energy was channelled into cycling round the city, fuelled



by beer on one of Europe's famous beer bikes. Our final dinner came all too soon and we bid each other a final goodbye before heading back to sunny England the following morning.

We all had the most fantastic time during the two weekend exchanges – soaking in the culture, sharing ideas and making firm friends. If your university doesn't have a IVSA exchange, I absolutely recommend you to organise one!

Impromptu visit to Denmark's vet school

By Seth Kennard (JAVS editor)

What do you do when you're in a foreign city: drink lots, go partying or visit the vet school? I know what I wanted to do when I visited Copenhagen with friends.

With little notice, Miriam and Amalie, IVSA's incoming and outgoing exchange officers agreed to welcome us and show off their lovely vet school for this unofficial IVSA expedition.

IVSA Denmark has a long history, founded in 1951, with the vet school itself having an even longer history, starting in 1773.

The vet campus beautifully blends modern architecture with the regal buildings of old, cleverly making use of the spaces between the buildings. An outdoor gym is overlooked by the library so that in warmer months those studying are given impressive displays of anatomy.

The small animal hospital is pretty, modern and a pleasure to observe; with more natural light than a greenhouse, and wide corridors that make it feel calm and relaxed – perfect for staff and patients. Although in our brief tour we were unable



to sit in on any lectures (not speaking any Danish may have been a small issue), it was very insightful to compare teaching methods and course structure. It was also interesting to hear the issues that they face, both as a profession and at their school and compare them to our own.

It was great to see another vet school, especially one with such a great onsite bar (opposite the small animal hospital, no less). If you're planning a weekend away on the continent then I would highly recommend getting in touch with an IVSA branch.

Let's talk mental health

By Hannah Hunter (3rd Year, Edinburgh)

Sitting on chairs in a circle, discussing feelings with a group of friends may not seem too daunting. How would you feel about doing so with a group of strangers instead?

For some members of the group, opening up about their feelings was the first obstacle to overcome in the peer support programme here at the Dick vet school. This was also the first step in our journey to building confidence, developing self-awareness and improving our crucially important communication and listening abilities. All the while, learning how to help others in crisis or those simply having a bad day.

This is the fifth year of the peer support programme, which was started by Stacy Spielman. Stacy coordinates the Dick Vet Peer Support Programme and delivers peer support training. The programme evolved after she was asked to provide more access to formal support from classmates. The formal training now leads onto a more informal structure whereby supporters can be approached when and where fellow students feel comfortable.

The course involves three- to four-hour Saturday sessions where exercises and thought-provoking post-exercise discussions take place. As I write, it's week 3 of this year's programme and our day 1 'confidentiality pact' is the bond that glues us together. We now possess a sense of security within the group and strong friendships too. This strength, along with her guidance, has helped us all feel that we have a voice and that our inputs and opinions are always valued, never judged and definitely not wrong.

How did that experience make you feel?

'How did that experience make you feel?' is known as the triad

exercise. It requires us to take on three roles: a questioner/listener, a talker and an observer. The questioner is encouraged to consider their wording in a way that draws the most out of the talker; for example –

■ Open questions and 'feeling' questions are deemed to be most effective. Translate this into a real life situation and you can begin to understand why someone who's hesitant to talk might need these questions in a safe space to encourage them to open up.

■ Our individual experiences of mental health and its impact on us were likely to be the motivators to join the programme – I know mine were. In return, the programme has given us an ability to relate to one another, paired with an eager and open-minded attitude to learning. Each session provides a time where you can forget about your upcoming hand in or your bank balance; instead, it offers a chance to focus on engaging your mind while working towards something of real significance.

Emotional intelligence is the

ultimate goal in this experience – the ability to accurately perceive your own emotions and those of others through acknowledging the different forms of communication. Vets require this in all aspects of their job, whether handling clients, coworkers or 'the boss'.

A good sense of emotional intelligence can offer a feeling of success and a capability to take action in all aspects of your life. Sure, we all know our course is hard – but sometimes it may be more than that. Depression, among all mental health illnesses, can feel like a weight on your shoulders in everyday life.

Depression is something you can't unburden and may go unnoticed by yourself and others. Whether at vet school or in practice, being there for each other emotionally is vital. It may even help you in return.

Peer support has had a positive impact on our group and hopefully the individuals we go on to help. Education of this kind is a good first step to achieving the end goal – a community where people don't suffer in silence. Don't be afraid to seek help or a little advice when you need it.



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Feel good February

By Glasgow

In February, Glasgow vet school ran a new wellbeing campaign called 'Feel Good February'. It had an amazing effect on the atmosphere around campus, partly because we got people chatting more about how they feel!

We wanted to encourage everyone to be more open about how they feel by talking to their friends a little more honestly. For example, how many times a day do you answer the question 'How are you doing?' with 'Yeah, I'm fine thanks!' or 'I'm good, you?', but are you actually okay or is that just an automatic response?

The campaign's aim was to encourage staff and students in our vet school community to have a more positive feeling around campus. 'How are you doing?' has become a greeting rather than a question and, as a recently published article reported, we often answer that question more than 10 times a day.

At Glasgow, our idea was that if you could try to answer at least one of these times honestly about any stresses going on that day then it might help to take a little weight off your



Feel Good 5k, all in it together

shoulders – after all, a problem shared is a problem halved!

We also want to encourage anyone who is struggling – study related or not – and think they don't have anyone to talk to, to be able to make the decision to tell someone, be it a friend, family member, a peer supporter or a member of staff. The first step to get help needs to come from them. From this message we have the hashtags #howyoudoing? and #Utakecareofyou.

We really wanted this campaign to be a whole student body effort, co-ordinated by our Vet Student Society (GUVMA)

presidents with input and events from as many representatives on our committee as possible. A special thank you goes to our peer supporters and our SAVMA Chapter who both rose to the occasion and organised various events throughout the month. We chose February as everyone needs a boost after January and there were lots of great events in our calendar for February already. We wanted to build on these, which included Vetball, Mr Vet School, Old Boys and Gals Sports Day, 3rd year's Halfway Ball and the GUVMA elections.

Our Feel Good February events included 'Cup of Tea Tuesdays', which were sponsored by a different society each week, as well as support from Vets4Pets and a charity bake sale by Students for Animals In Need (SAIN). Having a cup of tea and cake, as well as a chat, can make everyone feel better.

'Throwback Thursdays' were organised by SAVMA and Peer Support. Each week hosted a lunchtime talk (with snack) with a different vet school clinician or lecturer who shared stories of their own experiences they passed on some useful advice.

For the last Saturday in February we organised a Feel



Cup of tea Tuesday hosted by Vets4Pets

Some of our favourite motivational quotes

'We're all in this together!'
Troy Bolton, High School Musical

'D is for Degree, you only NEED to know half, 50% is a pass . . . now that's much more manageable already!'

'ALWAYS speak to someone, everyone is in the same boat and feels the same way!'

'Just do your best and the rest will fall into place!'

'Vet School is a family and everyone will help you through'

'You have made it through every bad day so far, you will make it through the rest!'

'Take a day and get away from vet school. Go for a hike, see a movie, read a book that has nothing to do with school'



Feel good freebies!

Good 5k run, which, despite the weather, had a great turn-out and everyone really enjoyed themselves! A big thank you to April and the team at Garscube for their support.

Peer Support hosted a Finding Dory movie night, complete with popcorn and other movie treats, a 'De-Stress not Distress' seminar and 'Massage Your Worries Away' head and neck massages. Guide Dogs Scotland also came to visit in March for a day of doggie cuddles.

Prior to the start of our campaign, we sent out a survey asking questions such as: 'Do you regularly feel stressed at Vet School?' and 'Do you think it's normal to be stressed during a veterinary degree?'

We received 314 responses from vet students and vet bio-

science students, which really opened our eyes to how things are at Glasgow specifically. Some answers were shocking but there were lots of lovely messages of support and we decided to use these throughout the month, so 'Motivation Mondays' were added to the line up of events!

We are also privileged to have final-year student - double European Indoor Running Champion over 1500 m and 3000 m - Laura Muir as our classmate, who said: 'Running during my vet studies has been a huge help in coping with the stresses of studying for exams. When you go for a run it allows you to think about things, clear your mind - and you feel so much better afterwards - both mentally and physically.'

To round off the month we put together a video which summarises some of the statistics from our survey and the events which were run throughout the month as well as some of the motivational messages from our students, it can be viewed on our GUVMA Facebook Page

Thanks to our sponsors

Thank you so much to our sponsors who we couldn't have run the month without: GUVMA, our Peer Support Group, SAVMA, The University of Glasgow School of Veterinary Medicine, Vets4Pets & Companion Care, AVS, BVA, SPVS, MediVet, DMS Plus, Burns Pet Nutrition, with freebies sent by Vetlife, the RCVS Mind Matters Initiative and Tunnocks!

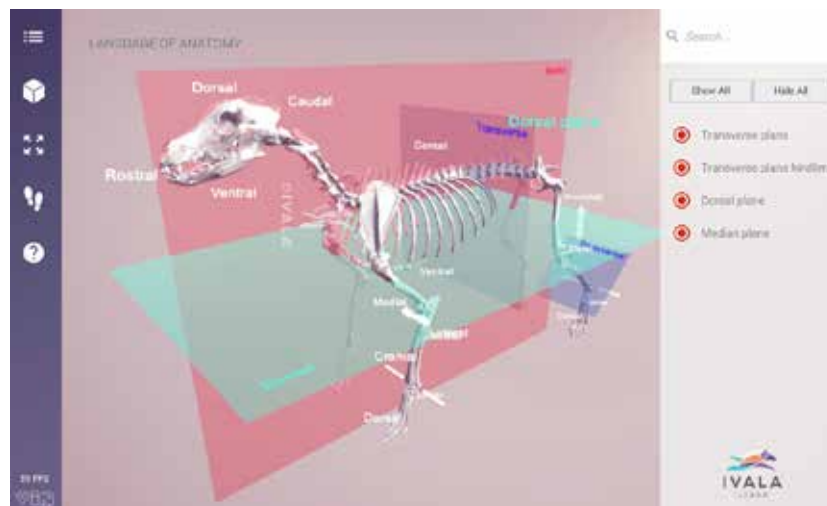
The future for anatomy

By Dave Charles (AVS junior vice-president and Bristol rep)

In first year, an anatomy lecture was one of the few things that could actually excite me for a 9 am lecture (something that biochemistry always failed to do). But there were times when the teaching felt a bit dated – which was understandable given that anatomy hasn't changed for years.

Photographs of old specimens and a tattered second-hand copy of Dyce, or Pasquini, left me and fellow students feeling like anatomy wasn't moving with the times in the way that the clinical teaching was. Clinical students are learning using cutting edge technology such as the haptic cow, while pre-clinical students are still stuck in the library pouring over black-and-white line diagrams.

In second year, the intricacies of locomotor anatomy were definitely made much harder by having to learn 3D structures from a 2D representation, unless we could get into the dissection room or go to the vet museum to look at potted specimens. Don't get me wrong these are both great resources, but they can be hard to access



at busy times when everyone is cramming for exams.

With that in mind, it may come as no surprise that I was one of the first to sign up to take part in a lunchtime study that gave us a one-month free trial to IVALA Learn (www.ivalalearn.com). IVALA Learn is an online, 3D anatomy teaching software, and when we were offered the free trial it was subscription-only and in its early days.

I loved using IVALA Learn for my locomotor anatomy revision because it did what a textbook

couldn't do. It provided a 3D representation of a structure, meaning you could view a limb from all angles and deconstruct it layer by layer to trace deep muscle bellies, nerve routes and digitally recreate impulses to visualise the action specific nerves have on different muscles. Over the past year the number of different models available has grown and is still being added to, with recent additions including feline skulls and interactive radiographs.

Having discovered how great this software was, I was surprised that many of my fellow AVS reps at other universities hadn't heard of it. As a result, it means it's even better news for all vet students that IVALA Learn announced in October 2016, that it had teamed up with the Veterinary Information Network (VIN), www.vin.com (another valuable resource for vet students), meaning that vet students in the UK and Ireland can access IVALA Learn's anatomy resources completely free!

This incredible piece of anatomy teaching is now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week anywhere you can get a wifi signal.

My only question to you is, when are you going to sign up?



Fenner's Veterinary Virology, 5th Edition

Edited by N. MacLachlan and Edward J. Dubovi

602 pages, hardcover, £78.99

ISBN: 978 0 12800 946 8

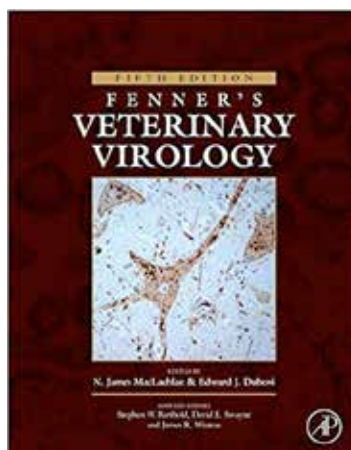
Publisher, Elsevier

A lot has happened since the fourth edition of Fenner's Veterinary Virology was published in 2011, which probably accounts for the new, 5th edition being 15 per cent bigger.

The past five years have seen several new emergences and spillover events; some significant, yet unnoticed by the general public.

Schmallenberg virus was first identified in Germany in 2011 and confirmed present in the UK at the beginning of 2012. There were 266 outbreaks in the UK in that year. In recent years, outbreaks of African Swine Fever virus have been seen across six eastern European countries where farming practices and wild boar populations are able to sustain the virus.

Fenner's Veterinary Virology begins in the way that any comprehensive virology text book should, with the basic principles of viral life-cycle and disease. Diagrams taken from the recently updated 'Principles of Virology' (2015) [1] make a nice addition in this section and are accompanied by extensive figure legends to give a graphic understanding of viral replication. It's a shame, though, that some images reproduced from selected review papers are of insufficient resolution with visible noise in the print and digital version of this book.



Basic information on antiviral immune responses, innate and adaptive, principles of vaccinology and information on laboratory diagnostics precede an updated chapter on epidemiology and control of viral disease. This chapter begins with an, for now, up-to-date list of important (re-)emerging zoonotic and veterinary viral infections.

The far larger second part, 'Veterinary and zoonotic viruses', is a comprehensive review of different viruses. It's nice to see this part is much more clinically focused than other pure virology textbooks. Fifteen chapters on different viral families, including one 'other' and one on 'prions', are divided into genus sections and viral subsections of the main players. Indeed, each chapter begins with family-specific virion properties and replication cycles. Such information is valuable in understanding and underlining the pathogenesis and prevention of viral disease.

The viral subsections are focused on pathogenesis, diag-

nosis and prevention in an ordered way that is easy to read and understand. Important details such as host species, signs and transmission method are quickly accessible in whole-page tables at the beginning of each chapter. This makes this edition great as both a sit-down read and a grab-on-the-go reference book.

The in-depth section on African swine fever virus, which includes electron micrographs of the (rather beautiful) icosahedral enveloped virus captured at the Institute for Animal Health, explains some causes of the recent emergence in Europe. The transportation of infected pigs, along with transmission by tick species other than *Ornithodoros erraticus* are discussed. The authors also explain transmission 'without any apparent requirement of ticks' through consumption of tissues from acutely infected pigs or warthogs.

The reference list at the end of the book is more brief than I would like and chapter-specific references are absent. On the other hand, the book is well indexed with important search terms, viral nomenclature and colloquial disease names.

Fenner's Veterinary Virology would make a sound addition to any student's library and is a must-have for anyone with a keen interest in virology and zoonoses. A good guide to an increasingly important subject in this ever-changing world.

[1] FLINT, S. J., RACANIELLO, V. R., RALL, G. F. & SKALKA, A. M., (2015). Principles of Virology, 4th ed. ASM Press

Reviewed by Ben Smith

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Know your cats

By Lauren Witter (3rd Year, Liverpool)

You've all heard of the Kennel Club . . . but are you familiar with the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy?

With the growing popularity of pedigree dog ownership, it's not surprising that owning a pedigree cat is becoming more popular too! Imagine this. You are the vet in a small animal consulting room and a clients walks in with their prize-winning stud cat, removes him from the carrier and places him on your consulting-room table.

You quickly realise that you have absolutely no idea what he is. Is he a moggy? Is he a Bengal? You soon find out from his aggrieved owner that he is, in fact, an Egyptian mau.

In order to develop a better relationship with your cat-owning clients, I think it's crucial that small animal vets/vet students have an understanding of popular breeds and, most importantly, the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF).

What is the GCCF?

GCCF is the registration body for cats in the UK. I think of it as the Kennel Club for cats!

What does it do?

- Registers pedigree cats and kittens;
- Publishes breed standards;
- Offers breeding advice - they have a GCCF breeding policy and outcrossing policy;
- Import and export information;
- Emphasises health, welfare and ethics;
- Runs regular cat shows across the country.



A winner in several cat-egories

If you'd like to see what else the GCCF does (or if you're like me and just love cats) then go to www.gccfcats.org. It's a helpful website and is a great resource if you want to look at individual breed profiles and health information.

Would you ever consider going to a cat show?

Some people find the idea of going to a cat show totally bizarre and they can get a bit hectic at times! But I've had several great opportunities to volunteer and steward at cat shows

across north west England and the experience has proved to be invaluable. I have assisted vets with the health checking and vetting in for all entries to the show and it's always been a great opportunity to develop handling skills, as well as familiarise myself with breeds, temperaments and health features. If you're keen, keep checking the GCCF website for show details.

I hope I've convinced you to look into the GCCF, it could one day be you in front of the client with the Egyptian mau!

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

Big cat conservation

By Heather McKay (3rd Year, Nottingham)

I first became aware of Dr John Lewis during a nursing placement at Twycross Zoo. His name is synonymous with globally respected wildlife and conservation medicine. So, when he came to speak to the University of Nottingham's Veterinary Zoological Society about his work with big cats, I wasn't going to miss the opportunity.

Just short of 100 vet students returned to university on a dark and blustery evening to hear Dr Lewis outline the work of Wildlife Vets International (WVI) and his role in the conservation of some of the world's most endangered big cats.

WVI is involved in projects across the globe, from tackling distemper in Zimbabwean painted dogs, to working to save bird populations of the Seychelles. But what we had all gathered to hear about were the Amur tiger and Leopard projects.

The Amur tiger project has a number of aspects including clinical field services, disease investigation, research, training of local vets and the provision of web-based information.

Clinical field services can include activities such as providing the expertise in field anaesthesia to allow the fitting of radio collars to enable tracking of these evasive animals. While we all know that anaesthesia comes with inherent risk, field anaesthesia has additional challenges: working on endangered animals, that might have been trapped and darted to begin the procedure, on a forest floor, with kit that's limited to what can easily be transported to, for example, a remote part of the Russia-China border. Monitoring is done without

machines and normal parameters are less well understood. It is no wonder that WVI works with local zoos to help with the training and preparation of vets for these challenges.

Disease challenges to these animals are a hot topic for research. Surprisingly, 90 to 100 per cent of two-year-old Amur tigers are seropositive for feline parvovirus. Since they reach sexual maturity at about three years of age, they are already immune before breeding begins. Disease risk does, however, come from prey species such as deer and boar, and understanding the diseases of prey animals is essential to understanding the hazards that Amur tigers are exposed to. Worryingly, canine distemper virus is a growing threat, with increased incidence of encephalitis and the associated loss of fear of people.

Amur tigers are elusive and, with a population of around 50 individuals, Amur leopards are even more so. Habitat loss, hunting of prey species and organised poaching of the cats themselves all pose challenges to their survival. Smaller, more fragmented habitats means increased interface with livestock and domestic animals, where the big cats can pick up diseases, either directly or from prey.

When it comes to tiger rehabilitation and release, the Russians stick to the rule book – they strictly limit human contact, monitoring is done via CCTV, tigers are fed live prey



and visitors are strongly discouraged. This bodes well for re-introduction of orphans or tigers specifically bred for reintroduction. The birth of a wild cub to a tigress introduced as part of the release programme, for example, was considered a landmark success.

Finally, Dr Lewis spoke fondly about the Pine Marten Recovery Project. Although these animals don't attract the same attention as the big cats, these small mustelids are charming. They are extremely rare, and WVI is supporting the relocation of pine martens to sustainably repopulate range areas in Wales – a project that is clearly close to his heart.

To hear Dr Lewis' presentation, and to chat to him afterwards when he told us some rather more 'adventurous' anecdotes from working with Russian big cats, was entertaining and inspiring. With projects at home and overseas, the work of WVI is elegant and well informed. From pine martens to Amur leopards, WVI is making a difference to endangered populations across the globe.

Has the vet degree lived up to the hype?

By Gareth Jones (5th Year, RVC)

With a few months until I graduate, I would like to reflect on my time at vet school (also, it makes for great revision/rotation procrastination!). But first, a little bit about myself: I'm from Kent and went straight from school at 18 to study at the RVC.

Remembering back to first year: the excitement of being at university where I was finally studying to become a vet. I mean, who wouldn't be excited?! You get to treat a range of animals, solve complex problems, make an impact on people's lives, be a respected professional in society and, let's not forget, you get to play with puppies and kittens (and other cute animals). University gives you the freedom of living away from home, an opportunity to make amazing friends, a great social atmosphere, and self-control over your studies.

Walking through those doors on the first day, I had no doubts that this was the right thing

'I mean, who wouldn't be excited?'



for me. First-year was full of amazing memories: ranging from lambing for the first time to touring Alicante with the hockey club. When it ended I

couldn't wait for more. Then second year happened. After a summer of AHMS, I was ready to see my friends again and enjoy being back in my own space.

While I started off with the same enthusiasm as first year, I began to feel more and more frustrated. The workload had intensified and the topics were more complex. I sat through many lectures thinking, why do I need to learn this? It won't be useful in the future. My frustration grew as the teaching eluded any clinical focus.

Despite being at university for two years, I started to feel like that I had was not getting any closer to becoming a vet. However, my desire to continue did not falter, because third year and the move to



Hawkshead was on the horizon.

When third year started, I was as excited as I had been in first year. The teaching focused on what I wanted to learn, and I felt as though I was finally becoming a vet.

I remember looking forward to Easter as it was my first EMS placement as a clinical student. It was a total buzz! I wished I could graduate, so I could do it full time and really sink my teeth into it. Third-year went by and then another seven weeks of EMS over the summer holidays approached. This did nothing to reduce my enthusiasm and excitement and as soon



'Would I do the whole thing again if I knew what I know now? ... 100 per cent, yes'

as my placements started, they were over and fourth-year was fast approaching.

After a short two weeks off, I was back into the swing of things. One more term and I would begin rotations. The term flew by, and the dreaded weekend exam came and went. Before I knew it, I had passed and began preparing to start my 14 months of rotations. I couldn't wait. However, for the first time at vet school, I felt nervous. Nervous that I might say something stupid, or not be able to do things my peers could, or generally make a fool of myself in front of some of the cleverest vets that I will come across in my career.

Rotations have been a wonderful experience. I have learned more in the past year than I have in the previous four years. It has also been the most eye-opening. It exposed a side of veterinary medicine that I had seen but had blissfully ignored. I experienced and witnessed the physical and mental drain that being a vet has on you – lack of sleep, the emotional drain, impossible ethical dilemmas, the constant fear of making a mistake that compromises a patient, the countless discus-



sions with vets whose friends had left the profession and the realistic employment prospects for new graduates.

The list is extensive, and the closer I get to the end of my degree, the more I wish I had more time to learn more, and not feel like a fraud who 'blags' their way through.

However, it's not all doom and gloom, because mixed in with all the trouble, there are good bits. The joy of the successful outcomes, the great people you get to work with, solving challenging puzzles and interacting with some amazing clients and animals. You do realise at the end that you do know roughly what you are doing, and that the knowledge of the last five years has made its way into your brain. It's these good things that help you get up in the morning and help deal with the lows.

So has the course lived up to the hype? If I had to answer yes or no, it is a yes, but this is a tricky question to answer. While I have had an amazing experience, there is a side of the degree and profession that 18-year-old me was blissfully ignorant of. I think a better question to ask is, would I do the whole thing again if I knew what I know now? This question is easier to answer, 100 per cent yes.



At the 2017 AVS congress gala dinner at Selwyn College, Cambridge

Stunning and slaughter

By John Hamilton (3rd Year, Glasgow)

Since August 2014 the British Veterinary Association has pursued a campaign for a full ban of non-stun slaughter of livestock in the UK. Despite both British and European legislation requiring that all animals be stunned pre-slaughter, there is an exemption in the UK allowing non-stunned slaughter for certain religious groups.

The subject of religious slaughter often pits animal welfare against the right to religious freedom. It is generally accepted that best practice in an abattoir involves the slaughter of an animal after initial pre-stunning. This has been proven to afford the animal a painless, unconscious death. However, under the Muslim and Jewish methods of slaughter, Zabiha and Schechita, it is specified for the animals throat to be cut quickly while still conscious. According to the European Food Safety Authority, sheep are conscious for 20 seconds afterwards, while cows can remain conscious for upwards of two minutes.

Currently, in the UK, around

85 per cent of Halal meat comes from pre-stunned sources while, 15 per cent of sheep and goats are slaughtered without pre-stunning, along with small proportions of cattle (2 per cent) and poultry (3 per cent). However, in 2015 it was reported that there was a 60 per cent rise in the number of animals killed in halal abattoirs without stunning first.

In 2014, the then BVA president, Robin Hargreaves, called on the leaders of the Scottish Parliament and the Assemblies of Wales and Northern Ireland to join the campaign to end non-stun slaughter as a BVA petition on the subject gained momentum. A debate on the subject finally took place in Westminster in February 2015 after the petition reached 100,000 signatures, triggering parliamentary action.

The petition brought publicity to the subject and showed the concerns of many people over the welfare of the slaughtered animals; however, the debate

'It is of critical importance to have high welfare standards for animals'

simply led to the review of systems in place in other countries with the Prime Minister making it clear on parliament's behalf that there was no aim to ban religious slaughter. In the debate, MPs agreed on the idea of further legislation, many opting support for the practice of post-cull stunning after slitting the animal's throat and pushing for all meat products to be labelled by the means of slaughter.

Veterinary students should examine their own opinions on the subject of non-stun slaughter. While as vets, it is important to have high welfare standards for animals – non-stun slaughter is a reality in the UK and it is important to assess how a balance can be met by delivering on religious rights while finding the best end to an animal's life heading for human consumption. It is important that vets keep a balanced viewpoint on the subject and are able to give an honest, professional opinion when called on to do so.

Veterinarians: clever people

By Vicky Ede (3rd Year, RVC)

A 2016 article entitled 'Veterinary Students as Elite Performers: Preliminary Study' details what I, the rest of my class and no doubt every present and previous generation of vet students could have already told you: vet students are smart.

Vet students can be described as not just smart, but also as 'over achievers' – essentially hard

'When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people.', Abraham Joshua Heschel

working, competitive creatures with a tendency for performance-related anxiety issues.

Being no different to so many of my peers, intelligence was always important to me. Looking back, it probably defined me for a large proportion of my life. I saw intelligence

as what set me apart from others in my class and what would get me into vet school. Conversely, I know classmates who saw so-called aptitude as an obstacle. They were told that they would never be smart enough to get into vet school or struggled with scraping the

grades to unlock their dream course.

Either way, intelligence becomes a heavy label in vet school as a large number of high-achieving students are thrust together to plough their way through an academically strenuous and lengthy course. From comparing what surgeries people have done, to what end of year grades they achieved, intelligence and skill set seem to be everyone's number one priority.

In this mindset, and after hearing 'Oh you're in vet school? You must be so smart!' a few dozen times, it becomes difficult to see the point in anything else. Of course, we all know that being a vet involves more than just book-smart, but to what extent are practical skills or even good communication just other forms of intelligence?

In vet school, thoughts such as 'am I smart enough?' can dominate yet, in many ways it seems impractical to ask instead 'am I kind enough?'. I remember hearing a vet say that one experienced vet nurse was worth 10 new vet graduates, after complaining that the new graduate was, among other things, not cleaning up after themselves.

It would be easy to get in a huff about the audacity of reducing five or more years of academic and practical training down to the act of cleaning up. But it did make me think, 'Am I thoughtful enough?', 'Am I respectful enough?' and 'Am I empathetic enough?'. In my opinion, kindness is not something that can be taught, but it is something that can be actively paid attention to and nurtured – kindness nurtures kindness!

To me, passing tests and equipping myself with knowledge and skills to enter the profession remain a high priority. I am starting to think about what else is important to me and what defines me not just as a vet, but as a person in a professional workplace. I wonder if I am kind enough to people I know and am yet to encounter: people who I might one day work under, with or above, people who are struggling, people with different values to me and people who can simply do nothing for me.

As I get older, I see intelligence more for what it is – hard work and natural ability – but it's not the be all and end all to my future profession. Instead, I think more about how vet school is hard and how people should just be nicer to each other.

What do you want in life?

By Ben Smith, (3rd Year, RVC)

In one of my favourite films, Layer Cake, Mr Price is speaking with his drug-dealing colleagues at the dining table. He says to the main, yet un-named, character 'What do you want in life? A shot at the title, or a seat by the band'. I've thought about that line more than any other.

A shot at the title – a chance to win, be a name, be a somebody . . . or a seat by the band – to have the most comfortable seat, the best view, feel the performance in the most connected way without being on stage.

For me it's easy to choose. I didn't pick veterinary medicine because it would be easy. I wanted to do the hardest thing possible. When I go cycling I don't cycle up hill to be at the top, I cycle up hill because it's harder than going around.

I know many people, to whom I owe a great deal, that are in that seat by the band. They are happy and I don't think of them with any less respect than they deserve. It takes hard work to get to the front among the crowd and I'm can't fault them for taking a seat. There is no play in an empty theatre.

So where does that leave 'the title' and what of my shot at it? I like to think it's a chance to be at the top. The top comes in a variety of flavours: RVCS or BVA president, chief veterinary officer, world expert on bovine viral diarrhoea virus. Each of these is beyond my current reach but not beyond my scope. The holders of these positions are rarely known to people outside the veterinary 'family', but are always with an air of authority and almost automatic respect and trust.

Distilling the concept further, perhaps the title is respect itself. Respect for knowledge gained through intensive and extensive work, not just from juniors but from peers. My secondary school headmaster talked a lot about opportunity. He spoke of how it was to be embraced and not wasted. I think we all have the greatest of opportunities.

I remain excited to discover what lies beyond the horizon, and endeavour to exist open-minded to opportunities of every variety.

Bojack Horseman (star of an animated series of the same name) said: 'The problem with life is; you either know what you want and you don't get what you want, or you get what you want but then you don't know what you want.'

Don't pin yourselves down.

What can be done about brachycephalics?

By Hannah Mason (4th Year, Bristol)

It was recently announced that the French Bulldog is likely to become Britain's most owned dog. This breed was unheard of in Britain less than 10 years ago, but has gained popularity following the same trend of other breeds such as pugs. Many celebrities own them, with one dog's Instagram having more than 20,000 followers.

French bulldogs and pugs are brachycephalic breeds characterised by their squashed faces, bulging eyes and numerous skin folds. They suffer from health complaints directly related to their breeding and extreme facial conformation. Brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS) makes breathing difficult.

That cute 'snoring' noise that brachycephalic dogs often make is them struggling for air. BOAS is endemic within French bulldogs – a recent study found that only 10 per cent of one litter could breathe normally.

This is a serious welfare concern and it seems unacceptable that even in its mildest form, it should be considered normal, even desirable, in a dog.

Are we so determined to breed animals that look a certain way, that we continue even past the point at which nature stops us.

However, we have the power to reverse the process. Outcrossing these dogs with longer nosed breeds would increase the diameter of the airways and increase their quality of life dramatically.

We share a collective responsibility for the health and welfare of our canine population. The veterinary profession must educate the general public about the health implications owning in such a breed. A culture shift is needed to stop them from being seen as desirable and instead the promotion of healthier, cross-bred dogs.

It is not acceptable to continue to breed animals with



anatomical deformities that will suffer for a life-time merely for our personal enjoyment (or a few likes on Instagram).

Don't limit my license

By Seth Kennard (JAVS editor)

What kind of vet do you want to be?

This question seems to be everywhere. It's one that's asked when you go for your first interviews, when you meet your tutor, people in the pub and it's even asked by members of your family.

A retired vet told me not to bother thinking about what sector I wanted to work in as it's a five year course 'and you'll

change your mind by the end'.

It was the flexibility offered by the course that really drew me to it. You can end up treating species that didn't even feature in your course, or you could be content touching nothing but dogs and cats all day; you could be a pathologist or an epidemiologist or work in human pharma. The options are endless.

The issues regarding limited licensure have been discussed before, and with Brexit it has

cropped up again. If we don't have enough vets being produced here in the UK, and we can't guarantee a supply from Europe, then we may need to rethink how we train vet students.

Human medics spend five years studying one species, and dentists spend just as long just to work with teeth, imagine how easy it could be? Limiting licensure would mean that those wanting to treat smallies

Mixed practice or good practice? I'd like to work in both

By Eleanor Robertson (Liverpool, intercalating)

'Young vets don't want to work in mixed practice anymore and prefer to treat pets, says TV vet' ran a headline in The Telegraph.

In the article, TV vet Julian Norton suggested that new vets are unenthusiastic about practising 'the James Herriot way', with all species in an often isolated environment.

We are blessed with many well-staffed, superbly organised, successful mixed practices equipped with excellent equipment and vets who are confident to deal with a huge array of challenges, who always seem keen to teach and inspire. But I believe we shouldn't be condemning young vets who don't want to work in mixed practice as non committal if they choose to circumvent the '19 days without a day off and 11 nights on call'.

There are a number of veterinary students who are interested in working in mixed practice prior to graduation and good

for them; however, the desire to undergo speciality training and lead the profession in an area of interest should be encouraged, not diminished.

The days of James Herriot, with a dairy farm around every corner and a bucket of warm water and a mug of tea to solve every problem, are coming to a close. Patient welfare should remain a priority and, as the veterinary profession evolves to match demands with new technology and knowledge, vets should take the opportunity to advance the care they provide.

Furthermore, the support of new graduates is vital to create a generation of confident, resilient and proficient vets – seeking it cannot be dismissed as individuals being unwilling to challenge themselves, but rather a desire to succeed.

The challenge here, as recognised by BVA President, Gudrun Ravetz is 'how to help provide those that graduates rightly need'. Seeking flexible,

dynamic employment is not cowardice, but essential to ones wellbeing.

Finally, as globalisation accelerates, the role of the veterinary profession is continuing to expand far beyond that of traditional mixed practice. The creativity and drive to diversify and expand into various aspects of the profession should be applauded in our generation as the moral obligation to make a positive impact on planetary health becomes ever more vital. We need to get rid of any idea that if you only treat cats and dogs, if you only do research work, or if you never touch an animal in your working day – you're not a vet and 'real' vets must be willing to work 25 hours a day. Once you graduate, you're always a vet.

As a current vet student, I believe we should be congratulating the expertise and encouraging the enthusiasm of young vets, not criticising them for being unwilling to surrender to an outdated, ineffective norm.

wouldn't need to sit through hours of farm-specific lectures, and those wanting nothing more than to treat pedigree Landrace boar won't need to learn how to trot up a horse. The advantages are obvious: better trained graduates who can treat a select range of animals and hit the ground running in the workplace.

When people ask me what kind of vet I want to be, the only reply I feel confident to

give is 'a good one'. I enjoy farm work, I enjoy smallies, I've met a few horses, I enjoy research and I'm intrigued by policy and decision-making. What kind of course can offer that? How can that be taught if we start restricting the teaching?

Ever since the RCVS made the course a five-year commitment in the 1930s it has remained pretty much the same. Perhaps there is a need to modernise, update and shake things up a

bit, but restricting the scope of the degree isn't what's needed, if anything it's the opposite.

At a time when zoonotic diseases get more challenging and antimicrobial resistance is more than just a couple of buzzwords, we need a workforce of well trained vets that may not know everything about every species, but do have the mindset, the resilience and the skills to cope with anything that walks through the door.

Why did you choose to go to India?

By Dan Cotter (5th Year, RVC)

Luke Gamble, the founder of the Worldwide Veterinary Service, came to tell the RVC student animal welfare society about WVS and sister charity Mission Rabies.

Worldwide Veterinary Service's (WVS's) work – through Mission Rabies – in developing countries around the world for the mutual benefit of human and animal health and welfare. This exemplifies One Health (particularly its tireless efforts to eliminate rabies), through ABC programmes, vaccination and education. When the opportunity to visit India and participate in this work was suggested, I was very keen to go; and what better excuse to get in a little travelling during rotations!

What would a typical day be like?

Most weekdays start at 8 am with breakfast (curry of course) and sometimes a tentative bucket-shower before heading down to the onsite clinic. Students work in pairs – the six anaesthetists go to kennels for clinical rounds to assess the wound-scores of dogs treated the previous day and administer treatments, while the other six (the surgeons) select a dog for surgery, administer a pre-med and set up for induction.

All pairs work together to anaesthetise and prep the first six dogs – although (barely) controlled chaos on our part for the first day, this rapidly became a smooth and efficient procedure (barring any difficulties placing catheters and emptying bladders – something I could never get too much practice at!). The surgery student would then perform the spay/castrate with a scrubbed in vet close to hand if (and when) help was needed.



Recovery room

the anaesthetist paying close attention to the total intravenous anaesthesia . . . a lack of routine intubation was initially slightly terrifying but we soon became familiar and comfortable with the technique and impressed with how well we could cope without all the referral practice toys!

Each student would perform two surgeries a day – one male and one female. Lunch (more fantastic curry) and possibly a cup of chai, out in the sun with the resident dogs, overlooking the stunning Nilgri district, could be squeezed somewhere in between. Evenings were either free – allowing leisure time, a wander through the tea plantations (being aware of leopards) or down to the local town, or featured lectures, with topics from welfare to shelter-anaesthesia. One evening, as is tradition, we were taken out for brilliant dinner and a schooling in Indian dance (we tried our best).

Did you enjoy your time there (would you go back and do it all again?)

Although slightly cliché, there is no other way to describe the weeks working in South India as two of the best of my life. The culture, the chaos, the climate and curry; the wildlife, the work, and – best of all – the company – combined to make an unforgettable experience. Having together neutered 176



Just another day in the office

dogs (and 12 donkeys), and vaccinated over 150 dogs on a sensational vaccine-drive throughout the surrounding countryside (12 white people trundling around in the back of the dog-catching van caused quite a stir locally), I felt that we had managed to use our, admittedly rudimentary skills, to make a difference.

I would suggest to anyone who can see the potential for using

our privileged position as students and professionals, in such a diverse, exciting and ultimately caring profession to push themselves out of their comfort zone, to take an active role towards eradicating disease and championing welfare, to put aside any doubts and embrace this role. Why not use your education beyond your job and studies, and see the world while you're at it?



The team goes exploring . . .



. . . and working

Learning from the best

By Jess Hornby (5th Year, RVC)

UC Davis is ranked as the world's best vet school according to QS rankings. So, I went along to see what I could learn

On an average day, mornings started with patient assessments for our patients that had been hospitalised overnight, medicating, feeding and cleaning their enclosures.

Following this we would divide up the consults for the day and take them when they arrive. Conducting the preliminary consult (history taking) followed by chatting to the clinician where we would perform a physical exam and decide what diagnostic tests we would like to perform. The afternoon would be filled with these diagnostic tests as well as possible surgeries. We would then be in charge of writing up records and ensuring discharge reports were good to go. Throughout this we also

received exotic pet emergencies as well as wildlife cases.

It turns out I really like emergencies and it becomes all that more interesting when a differential diagnosis is rabies.

For the evenings and weekends there was a rota between the other students from UC Davies and myself and a really good point, that I found increased my confidence in my skills, is that you take the emergency phone calls from the clients up to 11 pm (after that the resident takes the phone calls).

This set up really gives you the opportunity to be 'the vet'; of course, every decision was being checked, but I actually felt like I had responsibility and I thrived on it. As I was on CAPE (companion, avian and pet exotics) ward, I solely dealt with those patients which are not that commonly presented in a first-opinion vets such as a Nile monitor lizard and an umbrella cockatoo.



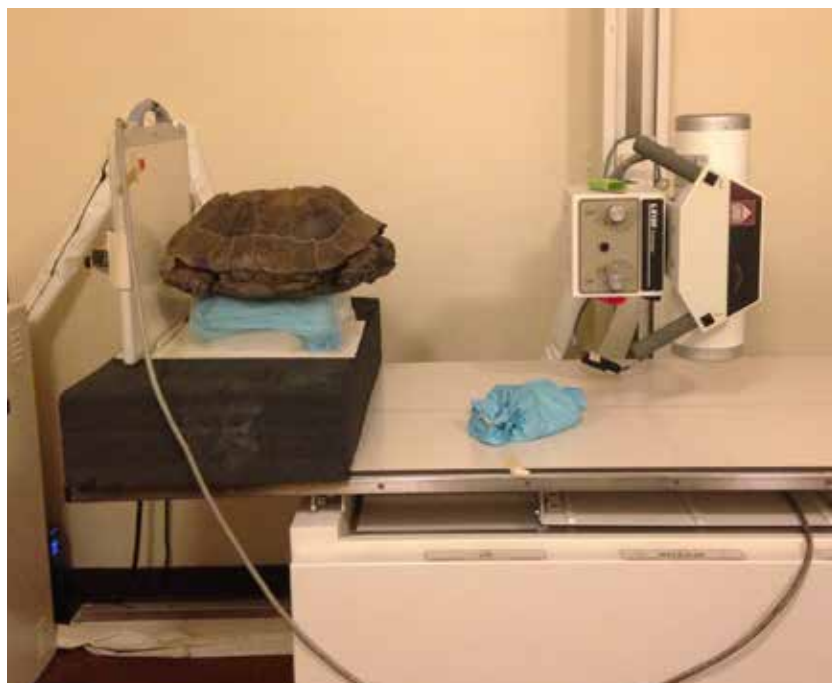
The author with a chameleon in hand

Why did I choose to go to Davis?

Word of mouth. Having heard about someone else's experience, I looked it up and found that it was currently the top vet school in the world (RVC is third). Also, most of the papers I was looking at the time were



The water tower is a US campus mainstay



Not your usual x-ray

in exotic medicine (an area that I've always been interested in) seemed to be coming from UC Davis, so where better to go than the place that is leading this field? It's also in California, a couple hours away from San Francisco.

Would I do it again?

Absolutely loved it and was so sad to leave. Not only did I learn a lot, I got to work with

weird and wonderful creatures, adored the lovely country town that is Davis and I got to meet the friendliest people. The students, the staff, the people in the shops, they were all so lovely I never felt once that I was thousands of miles away from home. I would recommend anyone to go, it is a fantastic experience that I really think has helped me to become a more competent and confident vet.



Seeing the sights

No frills guide to India

By Jessica French and Bethany Dixon (4th Year, Liverpool)

Before you roll your eyes and sigh at yet another account of vet students going to a neutering clinic (see p 18), please hear us out! This is a frank and brutally honest account of our adventures in India. We've found previous accounts have overlooked some essential words of wisdom, so we feel duty-bound to pass on some tips we wished we'd have known earlier! Here is our 'no-frills' guide to surviving India

Expect that nothing will go to plan . . .

Particularly, if it involves the Indian administration. Go for



Smiles all round

one month maximum, and get the e-tourist VISA. If you apply for a full VISA you will have to resign yourself to filling it out multiple times, waste hours at the embassy (of which there are only a few in the country) all to be told that they could revoke it last minute, for no reason (and definitely do not apply mid-third year exams).

Equally, when in India, do not assume that when booking (and paying for) a train to the airport, that you have in fact booked a seat. It is safer to assume that you have actually booked yourself onto a waiting list and may or may not be allowed to board the train on the day. You may be required to desperately seek assistance from a fellow traveller, who you hope speaks good English (as police or train station staff will not assist), and get smuggled on regardless.

Take small change

Be clear that nothing in India is free. You will find it incredibly hard to barter when you are desperate for the toilet, after



Always time for a power nap

a four-hour long drive, armed only with a 1,000 rupee note. In this situation, we had to resign ourselves to buying horrendously overpriced, out of date Pringles to get adequate change to pay off the 'toilet guard'. In short, learn from our mistake and carry small change.

You will have some hairy incidents

These mainly revolved around roads, and crossing them. If you take our hard-learned advice, you will learn to adopt any nearby locals, who will often gesture and kindly designate themselves your road-crossing guardians (this was very much appreciated). If this default position fails, we resorted

to taking a deep breath and a leap of faith and just walking predictably, straight forwards. Somehow, miraculously we lived to tell the tale.

Embrace the fame

Now neither of us would have ever considered ourselves exotic specimens and during our time in India it's safe to say while covered in dust and sweat we most certainly did not look our best! Despite this we still managed to attract a rather large crowd wherever we went.

Initially this was baffling, but by the end of the month it was downright tedious, especially when attempting to admire the Taj Mahal. If you enjoy being the centre of attention - India is for you.

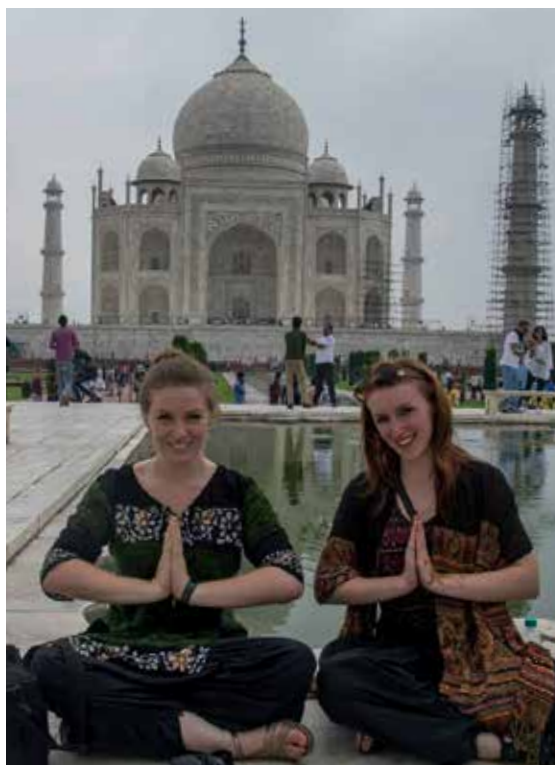
You'll never really be prepared for the chaos

Before we left the UK, we felt pretty prepared for what was to come. We expected the mass of people, the livestock wandering the streets and we expected it to be loud. We were ready to be met by a completely different culture and were happy to embrace it; however, neither of us was fully prepared for the physical hammering we received from suitcases, elbows and being barrelled into.

Having sustained multiple injuries while attempting to get our first bus in India, we gave up and got ripped off by a taxi driver instead. We did have more successful dealings with public transport during the rest of our trip, but it's maybe not one to try after 26 hours of travel.

It's OK to be tired . . .

Being in a foreign country with a different language and culture is HARD and if anyone tells you otherwise then they aren't doing it right! At times, we felt guilty for wanting an early night or to stay in but sometimes it's just what you need to recharge, and occasionally a mid-day nap is in order, as Beth is kindly demonstrating above . . . (she demonstrated this with alarming regularity).



At the Taj Mahal



An unwelcome guest

You won't just 'glow' or 'lightly perspire', you will SWEAT . . .

. . . all the time! It's 40°, and trust us, no amount of showering will sort that out. But it's ok because so is everyone else! In fact, we didn't notice how sweaty we were until we looked through the photos.

Do not tangle with the holy cows of India

Don't assume any of the vast work experience you have done with cattle can prepare you for the holy cows of India.

Their status seems to have manifested as a 'God complex'. They are, in fact, the only form of 'Highway Code' apparent on the roads, and when shooed (if you aren't very careful), you will get launched across the compound. But you can keep them sweet by feeding them chapattis – they love them.

24/7 sensory assault

Prepare your senses as India is a blast of colour, a taste sensation and quite possibly the loudest place on earth. Life seems to be a constant competition to be heard, even the animals and insects join in.

If the heat doesn't keep you from sleeping, the noise will. The smells of cooking, spices and incense surround you like a fog wherever you go. Some of the best smells can be experienced in India . . . but also, some of the worst.

While on our way to our hostel in Delhi we found a stall selling wonderful smelling street food, however no more than

a metre away, there was an open urinal flowing downhill. We can honestly say we have never smelt anything quite so pungent, and as vet students we consider ourselves to have been exposed to some horrendous smells.

No matter how much you love curry you will be craving good ol' British comfort food.

The Indians like their tea breaks, which we were certainly not complaining about. We could fully embrace 'chai o'clock' and consider ourselves big fans of Indian food. However, four weeks of dhal took its toll and we both began salivating about the thought of the full English breakfast and Sunday roasts we had planned to have on our return.

You will be free from all Health and Safety constraints

We weren't surprised by this as this is a country where they pile seven people on a moped, people hang off the roof on trains and they fix power lines that are still live . . . so expect nothing less while working in veterinary practice.

Who says you can't pass a nasogastric tube in a bronking horse, try to give an 800-kg free-roaming bull an intravenous injection or examine a wound on the nose of a rather aggressive camel – all while wearing flip-flops?!

We prayed to all and any Gods, that our toes might survive another day!

Its normal to have 'Bad India Days'

It's a common symptom of four weeks cooped up without air conditioning, frustrating miscommunications, bartering against ridiculous 'tourist' tax, fending off cameras, being 'helped unhelpfully' and being constantly surrounded by suffering. While all these emotions and challenges can be difficult, they are why we went to India and it comes alongside all the surprise, hope and beauty the country has to offer.

Be prepared to make friends with all creatures, great and small.

In a place where the floor can be crawling with biting bugs, and (poisonous) snakes slither past casually – the sight of a gecko or lizard scuttling along the floor will send all men squealing.

If you're terrified of insects India may not be the place for you, particularly after it rains. Then, you will share your room with enough invertebrates to stock the bug isle in Pets At Home and there's nothing you can do to change it.

And finally . . . no matter how hard it's been you'll want to go back!

When booking our flights, a very spiritual lady at STA assured us that we would 'find ourselves' in India. In fact, we didn't – we didn't even get a tan, but what we did find were some amazing experiences, a lot of laughs and, for all our typical English complaining, we'd go back in a heartbeat!

Livestock husbandry in the USA

By Tim Florax (4th Year Bristol)

Things are done differently in America; here's what I saw.

I flew to western Ohio in the USA and was immediately amazed by the cultural differences – straight roads, unlimited drink refills for \$1.75, an inability to use metric units, and injectable antibiotics and anthelmintics that were available over-the-counter.

Western Ohio is mainly agricultural, with corn (maize) and soybean making up the majority of the crop. Jersey cows make up approximately 10 per cent of dairy cows, and the milk produced is predominantly used for cheese making.

Some Old Order German Baptists (similar to the Amish) still live a traditional way of life, with no electricity or phones, but they do use tractors to work the land.

The elderly couple I stayed with used to be farmers, dealing mainly with 'hogs', but they also grew tobacco, which is very labour intensive. The husband now has a smallholding, keeping a few Friesian-Holsteins and some pigs (Durocs and Hampshires), which his grandchildren show at the county fair.

The cows had foul in the foot while I was there, and were being treated with a fair amount of antibiotics. Currently there are two classes of injectable antibiotics available to buy over-the-counter – penicillins and tetracyclines. This means that farmers can inject when see fit, without veterinary prescription, over/under dosing or selecting for resistance. Vaccines (for kennel cough, rabies, bovine leukaemia virus, bovine viral diarrhoea virus, etc) and anthelmintics are also available over the counter (just like firearms).

Crops are sold in bushels,

'Antibiotics are available to buy over-the-counter'



The horse trailer unloading onto the three-horse crate



Antibiotics are available over-the-counter without a prescription



Dairy cows are still docked

an imperial unit that varies in weight depending on the type of crop, and manure is only allowed to be used to supply the crop's demand and not to build up top soil.

I visited several 4000 cow herds during my stay. One farm had three barns where the cows were housed on coarse sand cubicles, many suffering from interdigital skin hyperplasia (corns). The barns were insulated and naturally ventilated, and included fans and mist sprayers to keep them cool in the 30°+ heat. The collecting yard had rotational sprayers to cool the cows. The 36-a-side parallel parlour was rapid-exit and the milk went directly into the truck, so there was no bulk tank. The feed stores were about 60 x 20 x 20 m and the silage clamp spanned a phenomenal 200 m when full. The cows were fed total mixed ration including maize silage, soybean and corn glucose nuts.

When I visited, tail docking was still practised on cows in the USA, but was due to be phased out this year.

I attended the Ohio State Fair and Darke County Fair, which were similar to shows here in the UK, although on a much larger scale. There was also an outbreak of avian influenza, meaning there weren't any birds at any of the fairs.

I was also able to be involved in the transportation of some horses to Saudi Arabia, so I got to see what was involved.

The crates had been steam fumigated beforehand with certificates to prove it. The horses had been in quarantine for a month beforehand and were loaded onto the crates via a specialised ramp so they didn't touch the ground. This was supervised by a USDA-APHIS vet and signed and certified. Biosecurity was paramount and well followed.

I thoroughly enjoyed my trip and experiencing the different way they do things. If you get the chance, go.

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