

Veterinary Business Development Ltd

IPSO Annual report - Period covered: 1 January 2020 - 31 December 2020

1. Introduction

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

Based in Peterborough, we have a staff of approximately 20, including editorial staff, production, design, sales and accounts, all headed by a CEO.

Our publications are funded through advertising revenue and are supplied free of charge to qualifying readers. Titles/products falling under IPSO's remit for the qualifying period 1 January – 31 December 2020 were:

Veterinary Times: Market-leading, news-led weekly journal. Published 50 times a year (plus occasional supplements Veterinary Times Equine and Veterinary Times Livestock, each twice a year). Features news and clinical and other articles for veterinary surgeons. Business Publication of the Year 2017 at the PPA Independent Publisher Awards. Controlled, free, ABC-audited circulation for January to December 2019 (latest publicised figures in this period are for Jan-Dec 2018): **15,871**.

VN Times: News-led journal for VNs and trainee VNs. Monthly (published 12 times a year). Features news and clinical and other articles aimed at a veterinary nursing audience. Finalist in the Business Publication of the Year 2017 category at the PPA Independent Publisher Awards. Controlled, free, ABC-audited circulation for January to December 2019 (latest publicised figures for this period are for Jan-Dec 2018): **12,738**.

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

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

vettimes.co.uk: Online resource for veterinary profession, featuring daily news updates, articles from our journals, blogs, videos, additional articles/content, CPD listings. Supplemented by Facebook and Twitter accounts (some publications also have their own social media presence). Supplementary websites: vettimesjobs.co.uk

and cpd.vettimes.co.uk

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

The publications' responsible person is **Paul Imrie, Head of Content**.

2. Our editorial standards - requirement 3.1

The editorial department consisted of a full team of 7 (6 FT and 1 PT) at the start of 2020. VT editorship, previously split, was realigned during the period of this report solely to James Westgate, with Paul Imrie becoming Head of Content, with a remit chiefly on clinical content commissioning.

The year posed logistical challenges for the team, with the pandemic seeing everyone in the company working from home for much of the year. Some members of the company were furloughed for three months. A staggered return was instigated later in the year, but numbers were restricted throughout the business to maximise social distancing.

Our journalists worked from home through remote connection to their office computers. The team was in twice-daily contact with each other via Zoom, and constant contact on day-to-day tasks through communication on WhatsApp. We were able to commit to producing all publications throughout the period, sending out a weekly Vet Times every week.

The year saw a vast increase in our digital traffic. We adapted to providing a lot of our hottest news stories via the web ahead of print and introduced new digital content in this period. We continued with our weekly podcasts.

While a B2B publisher, we have for a long time adopted a regional newspaper structure, and we continue to have editors of each publication and a chief sub. We have a content specialist and a sub-editor, who also works on digital innovations.

The structure of the editorial team encourages cross-working, closer team work, and also contributes to maintaining our high standards. Most of our team has been trained by either NCTJ or equivalent bodies, or has studied journalism or media at university/colleges. VBD also has an ethos of training. Legal refreshers are arranged when necessary, and we continue to engage the same media law provider on an annual retainer to provide us with media law advice when we require it. This has tended to be in management of complaints from readers or for pre-publication help with stories or letters on controversial subjects.

His services were utilised in 2020 when required for pre-publication checking of news stories and some letters. Depending on scenario, content was either not published or cut to ensure compliance with the editors' code. We received no significant post-publication complaints during the period.

All editorial staff and the wider company are aware we are members of IPSO. The

“IPSO regulated” logo appears in our publications and on our website vettimes.co.uk

All staff have been informed of our official complaints procedure (hosted online at <https://www.vettimes.co.uk/veterinary-business-development-editorial-complaints-procedure/>)

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

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

All editorial staff are reissued with these when updates are made. Additional to these, reporters are given one-to-one guidance as necessary.

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

The editor has extensive news experience, and is fully immersed in the profession. He and I handled a lot of the news writing during this period (our senior reporter left during the report period).

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

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

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

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

We have an editorial board of vets who we will seek advice from if needed on clinical content within submitted features. This has reduced in number in the past few years, but this will be addressed in the future.

As part of work to ensure company-wide compliance with new GDPR legislation, during 2018 we revised our author agreement and resent to all existing authors, among other reasons to ensure we were still able to keep their contact details. We continued to send this form to all new authors in 2019.

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

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

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

Copies or updates of the Editors' Code are supplied to the full editorial team, and our membership of IPSO is reiterated to each team member. Relevant updates as supplied by IPSO are also conveyed to the team.

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

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

We did not contact IPSO for pre-publication guidance in 2020, but we would do so whenever we are concerned about adherence to the code, and most likely specifically for any guidance on privacy or public interest issues.

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

We use the WoodWing Content Station programme, which saves versions of all

content (for print and online), and therefore allows to check fully all content and investigate any complaints. WordPress also logs who has worked on content published to the web. WoodWing was in the process of being updated late in the period of this report and new computer equipment purchased.

3. VBD's complaints handling process

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

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

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

Pre-publication guidance issued by IPSO would be heeded and taken into account by all editors. Editor James Westgate or Head of Content Paul Imrie would be first points of contact for sharing such guidance. They would then speak with the team to discuss the guidance and implement any actions. All staff would be advised of policy changes via email or staff meetings.

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

4. Our training process

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

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

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

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

5. Our record on complaints – requirement 3.2

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

We received no **formal complaint under our Editorial Complaints Procedure** during this period.

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

6. Appendices

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

- 1. VBD Style Guide**
- 2. VBD Staff Handbook**
- 3. Author guidelines**
- 4. External complaints in handbook**
- 5. Editorial Complaints Procedure**
- 6. Example info panel**
- 7. Clarification example 1**
- 8. Clarification example 2**

VETERINARY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT LTD AUTHOR GUIDELINES

VETERINARY TIMES, VN TIMES AND VBJ INTRODUCTION

Thank you for considering writing for our publications. We really do value our contributors, and are striving to attract top authors from across the profession. Our aim is to only publish original feature material that has not appeared elsewhere.

These guidelines are based on our publishing requirements and feedback from our readers – they are by no means exhaustive or set in stone.

We carry at least one veterinary focus article in each issue of Veterinary Times on a clinical topic and support this with other clinical and veterinary/animal health relevant articles. We also feature news, letters, classified and recruitment sections.

We work mostly by seeking out authors on a particular subject that we want to focus on, but we are also happy to accept pieces sent in speculatively by contributors.

Veterinary Times – a weekly publication, distributed to UK vets, final-year students, VNs, practice managers and industry specialists.

VN Times – a monthly journal, read by UK veterinary nurses.

The Veterinary Business Journal – a monthly publication covering management, financial and personnel concerns in the veterinary world.

Congress Times – Distributed with Veterinary Times or VN Times and produced to coincide with BSAVA, BCVA, BVNA, BEVA and London Vet Show congresses.

Relevant editorial contacts

Veterinary Times:

Editor - James Westgate - jameswestgate@vbd.co.uk

Head of content - Paul Imrie - paulimrie@vbd.co.uk

VN Times:

Editor - Rachael Buzzel – rachaelbuzzel@vbd.co.uk

Veterinary Business Journal (VBJ):

Editor – James Westgate – jameswestgate@vbd.co.uk

Congress Times:

Editor – Tom Jackson – tomjackson@vbd.co.uk

Please note we are primarily publishers of clinical and practice-based articles. We do not carry peer-review articles, although some are reviewed/read by members of our editorial board/s. We rely on our contributors to be sure of the facts they are presenting and, if necessary, to pass their copy to a senior vet for checking prior to submission. They must also obtain all permissions necessary. Veterinary Times is happy to credit others for images and references. Please make us aware of all credits at time of submission.

We only accept articles from independent vets, researchers and other professionals. **We do not publish features from PR companies or from or on behalf of technical vets or product managers in commercial organisations.**

Due to the GDPR rules and regulations that were introduced in 2018, a completed author agreement must be received prior to an article being published.

VBD Ltd retains the copyright for any article we publish, both in print or for use online, and, therefore, as original author, you should not offer or publish the article elsewhere without our prior permission.

Payment for articles is made on publication and depends on the length and complexity of the article, the seniority of the contributor and the nature of the content.

Sending articles

Please send your article via e-mail, along with any covering message stating any agreements made or special circumstances, for example if the article is one of a series, if it is time sensitive, seasonal etc.

Focus articles will have deadlines as they are planned for specific issues. After agreeing in advance to write a focus article, please let us have a bullet-pointed summary of the article as soon as possible. This summary is utilised by our sales team to advise potential advertisers about the content of your article.

Together with the Focus article, please include an abstract of what will be covered. This should be approximately 200 words, with four or five key words. This does not form part of the word count.

The article is to be sent as a word document, using British spelling throughout.

Articles, especially clinical, practical or review pieces, are more likely to be accepted for publication if accompanied by images. All images must be sent with the article as jpegs and not embedded in the document, nor as PowerPoint slides (refer to them in the text as Figure 1 etc, and include captions at the end).

Images are best sent via e-mail, although they can be sent on a memory stick. **Please do not embed the images in the word document, they have to be extracted and can loose quality in doing so**

Full captions for each image are required.

The images must be sent in high-resolution jpegs 300ppi (pixels per inch) and a minimum 10cm wide in resolution.

For copyright purposes, please confirm that the images sent are your own. If they are not your own, please confirm that you have permission to use them and add the required credit in the caption.

We are also keen to add digital content for articles received onto our web site. We don't expect a huge amount of interactive content and it is desirable rather than mandatory, but we feel that the clinical and practical nature of many of our articles lends itself to certain enhanced content, including:

- short audio files (examples of normal/abnormal heart beats, breathing/lung sounds etc)
- short video files (example of gait analysis, software demos, practical demonstrations, etc)
- Resources (templates, slideshows, PDFs, sample files for software, etc)
- Hi-res and/or additional image files

Video content is desirable not mandatory.

If you are able to offer one or more of these types of content, it would be of huge benefit to our readers / users, and would allow us to offer them examples of content that print alone cannot offer.

I'm also not expecting high quality HD video productions – something filmed on a smartphone is more than acceptable.

Tables should be formatted separately and referred to as Table 1 etc.

Ensure you have any copyright permission (if applicable), for all images and diagrams that are not yours prior to sending them through and advise of the credit/acknowledgement required.

Articles also appear online in digital editions or in online archives (<http://www.vettimes.co.uk>) so ensure permissions cover this use or advise us accordingly.

Give your article a title; this is what the article will be filed under. The title will help the sub-editors to write a headline, but may not be used as you have supplied it.

If the article is part of a series, please make clear which part you have sent through. For example “Part one of two” If sending all parts and images of a series, please make it clear what part the images are for.

All articles must be original. We can only accept articles that have not been published by, or offered to, other journals or websites.

Please complete the checklist for authors prior to sending your article.
Writing the article

Please feel free to contact us by e-mail as often as you feel necessary to iron out details of your article.

If your article has not been specifically commissioned, but you still wish to send it in for consideration, please email the title and a brief outline of the contents to paulimrie@vbd.co.uk.

The length of articles varies for the type of article it is, and the complexity of the information it is conveying. Focus features and clinical or practical articles for Veterinary Times are in the region of 1,500 to 2,000 words and 1,500 to 1,800 words for VN Times. There is scope for longer or shorter articles; veterinary issues, politics point-of-view topics etc, are in the region of 800 to 1,200 words.

Academic articles are very popular, as vets like to know what the latest research and thinking is, but most of our readers are practising vets who want to know how the research applies to them.

Veterinary Times is very proud of its freedom to publish opposing viewpoints. We welcome all valid contributions. However, if you are aware that your view may not be seen in the same way by all readers, it may be a good idea to begin the sentence with “As some vets (controversially) believe”... or “an alternative viewpoint, which some vets will disagree with...”

Follow general writing advice: Is the writing clear? Does it communicate at the right level? Does it make sense to non-specialists? Have you covered all the points you wanted to? Avoid repetition. Does it follow a sensible structure? Is it written in the most readable way? (Read it back to yourself after time away from the text). Does it sound “right” when read out aloud? It’s a very good idea to show the article to a colleague to double-check the pitch of the article, as well as the facts.

Ensure any mention of trade names is in context with the article, and where possible refer to a treatment by its active ingredient only.

Provide full, accurate, up-to date references and fully check their accuracy before submission. We welcome either references numbered in the text and listed in sequence at the end, or a full list in alphabetical order at the end. The format of each reference should be: author/s, year of publication in brackets, name of article, name of publication it appeared in and volume, issue and any page numbers. References can be added to the bottom of your submitted article. References in the text must be annotated in either of the following systems.
More than 50 per cent of cats suffer from laziness (Arnold 2009)
More than 80 per cent of dogs like two or more walks a day¹

Author biographies

Authors should supply a mini biography and a clear high resolution (300ppi 10cm wide) head shot to go alongside their articles. The biography should be 40-50 words and should include qualifications.

So you could write

XXX qualified from xxx university in xxxx and is currently leading the blob research team in the study of blobs and blobs. Previously of the Blob Institute with a special interest in blobs. Xxx is currently the vice-president of the Blob Protection League.

Focus and clinical articles

Focus articles are read by students and graduates for the technical information they cover, non-specialists in the field, colleagues who want to read about information and the views and methods of another vet, and vets interested in current research and new developments. They are generally 1,500 words to 2,000 words in length.

They can have a clinical, surgical, technical, research or procedural angle

Scientific research articles separate various focusing, or that you have specific knowledge of.

-A practical approach, outlining the features of an animal/disease/case, its occurrences, treatment, diagnosis and management and your own personal experience of it.

-A discussion of new developments in treatments/studies of the disease.

They can be broad and cover disease/treatment in general, or more usually, they are quite specific and focus on a very particular area of a topic.

Focus feature articles should be written by someone with extensive knowledge and experience of the topic. We aim to use only specialist vets or leading researchers to write these articles, as they are authoritative, challenging and informative.

They should be current and relevant. They should be thoroughly researched and make use of the very latest information. They should not be a review of current thinking, they should aim to educate and inform an already well-informed readership.

We know from our readership surveys that our readers particularly like to read about procedural tips and methods and to learn about other vets' way of doing things. Also, they want to know about new research being carried out, and how this applies practically to them as vets in practice.

The features must include suitable images/diagrams/tables etc. They must be captioned. Captions can either be sent with the images in a separate document or listed at the end of the text.

Reviews of events/meetings/conferences/congresses

These articles should be in the region of 1,000 words but can be longer – depending on the complexity of the content.

Please provide the name of the event, the location and the dates that it took place.

Specialist speakers at events often have interesting views and this is a great opportunity to get them published and read.

Do not be afraid to go into technical detail of material that was covered.

Keep to the useful content of the meeting. It is fine to mention things such as ticket price etc., but avoid discussing irrelevancies.

Companies often sponsor conferences in the veterinary sector. Often a method of treatment will be discussed that focuses on a product the company produces. As with other articles, use trade names sparingly in context and avoiding any hint of bias or over-promotion.

As with all other articles, images are helpful and improve the chances of publication. Images may be available from the organisers after the event. Please send all images with the article rather than after the event and include any necessary credits.

Who can write for us?

We only accept articles written by independent vets, researchers and people involved in the veterinary profession. We do not accept articles written by PR agencies on behalf of or from technical vets or product managers working in commercial organisations (ie nutrition or pharmaceutical companies), however well researched and written they are. However, we will accept press releases for possible inclusion in our news pages.

We can commission authors to write on topics suggested by commercial organisations and we are happy to hear or discuss any ideas.

General Advice

We cannot let authors know, in advance or on receipt, which issue your article will appear in. Only the focus features are decided a year in advance.

Because of the tight deadlines we work to, it is not possible to send a proof copy back to authors prior to the issue going to print.

We will keep all articles submitted, but acceptance of an article is not an agreement to publish. Most articles commissioned will be published, but those submitted speculatively may not be.

The editors of all our publications reserve the right not to publish any article that is sent in, and to edit them as they see fit, in line with our in-house style guidance.

Veterinary Times, VN Times and VBJ have editorial boards, consisting of people with extensive knowledge in their fields of expertise and, on occasions, we will forward an article to them for review and comment

Articles for VN Times, must be reviewed by a colleague/vet/specialist prior to submission. The reviewer must be someone who is willing to have his or her name and qualifications added to the article as being the reviewer. This does not mean they are listed as co-author.

Company policy is that payment for all articles is made on publication not on submission. You will be sent an invoice with the details to fill out on publication.

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

Complaints Procedure

Veterinary Business Development (VBD) believes in, and strives for, the highest standards of journalism, and is committed to accuracy and fairness in its journals and digital content. However, despite our best intentions, mistakes can sometimes happen, and where we have got something wrong we will endeavour to rectify it as soon as we can.

We take all complaints about editorial content seriously, and, as members of the new **Independent Press Standards Organisation** (IPSO), VBD is committed to abiding by the rules, regulations and **Editors' Code of Practice** IPSO enforces.

About this procedure

VBD's **Editorial Complaints Procedure** applies to printed editorial content in publications and digital content it controls in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

The procedure does not cover complaints regarding:

- taste/decency, or due impartiality;
- advertising (this is regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority);
- complaints about “user-generated content” (ie material on digital services, including websites or apps, that was not posted by us or on our behalf) that we have not reviewed or moderated; or
- complaints about books.

How to complain

You must clearly state if you are making a formal complaint under our **Editorial Complaints Procedure**.

Complaints should be made no later than **four months** after publication. If an article remains accessible on any digital platform, complaints will be accepted up to **12 months** from its first posting. VBD will consider formal complaints under this policy from:

- a. any person directly affected by the matter complained of; or
- b. from a representative group affected by an alleged breach of the Editors' Code that is significant and of substantial interest; or
- c. from a third party seeking to correct a significant inaccuracy of published information.

Complaints should preferably be put in writing, either in an email to the relevant editor of the journal/website (contact details are below) or by writing to him/her at VBD, Olympus House, Werrington Centre, Peterborough PE4 6NA.

- Veterinary Times:
 - Feature content (print and online): paulimrie@vbd.co.uk
 - News content (print and online): jameswestgate@vbd.co.uk
- VN Times: rachaelbuzzel@vbd.co.uk
- Veterinary Business Journal (VBJ): jameswestgate@vbd.co.uk
- Congress Times: tomjackson@vbd.co.uk
- Other online content (blogs, careers features etc): nigelwoodbine@vbd.co.uk

You can also telephone 01733 325522 and ask to speak to the editor of the publication. If you are making a formal complaint under this procedure, you will be asked to document it in writing as below.

Complaints to us must:

- clearly state you are making a formal complaint under our **Editorial Complaints Procedure**.
- fully reference (publication, volume, issue number, page number and article title, or link to a webpage or web address) the article you are complaining about.
- outline the nature of your complaint, with specific reference to the **IPSO Editors' Code of Practice**.
- provide any documents that will help us assess your complaint.

Note: we reserve the right to reject, without further investigation, complaints that show no breach of the Editors' Code; that are trivial, hypothetical, abusive, offensive, or otherwise insignificant. If you are taking legal action, we may be unable to consider your complaint.

What will happen next

The relevant editor, on his own or in conjunction with other members of our editorial team, will investigate your complaint. If we find an error has been made, we will aim to rectify it as quickly as possible. We aim to acknowledge your complaint within **5 working days** of receipt. Complainers should agree to respond promptly to any request for

additional information. If we receive multiple complaints about the same issue, we may make one response to all.

We will resolve your complaint to the best of our ability within **28 days** of receiving everything we need from you to allow us to investigate. We will treat any complainant courteously and with respect, and expect the same in return from any complainant.

Failure to agree: complaining to IPSO

If we fail to meet the timescale, or you are unhappy with our final response to your complaint, you can complain to [IPSO](#). IPSO offers a without-charge complaints handling service to the public in cases where there has been a disagreement between complainants and publishers over whether the Editors' Code has been breached.

Policy changes

VBD reserves the right to amend this policy as required to ensure compliance with IPSO and its regulations, and will update the guidance here or another url. Any complaints will be considered against the published policy at the date of receipt of any complaint.

December 1, 2020

Concern CVO 'may have misled' on culling policy

Letter to UK CVO Christine Middlemiss about statements relating to the issuing of new badger control licences



Dear Prof Middlemiss,

We are writing to express our concerns relating to statements you made on BBC Radio 4's *Farming Today* programme on 9 September 2020, in defence of the issuing of 11 new badger control licences in England. We are also concerned by the differing statements you made to the High Court earlier in 2020.

We would welcome your professional opinion on the disease report forms used as risk pathway questionnaires – data from which are being presented as fact in bTB epidemiology reports.

The 'phasing out' of badger culling

You stated in the *Farming Today* interview: "We are planning and working on moving away from supplementary badger culling once intensive cull areas are completed, to vaccination."

The Government response¹ to the Godfray review did not indicate that badger vaccination would only be considered as an alternative to supplementary badger culling. It is also in direct contrast with the actuality of continuing to license supplementary culling in all seven cull zones which had completed four years of culling under their original licences in 2019 (areas 4 to 10 inclusive). Perhaps you would be kind enough to explain this apparent fluidity of policy?

Contrasting assertions regarding whole genome sequencing

When asked about the rationale of licensing two new cull zones in the low-risk area (LRA), you stated to *Farming Today*: "...Because we had conclusive evidence that badgers are involved in the spread of infection in those areas. Through whole genome sequencing [WGS], which is a fantastic tool, we can look at the gene sequence of the bacteria both in cattle and badgers, and see that there is infection spread between the two. We know there is infection in the badgers there and we want to be able to control it."

We are unconvinced by this statement. For example, out of 313 badgers killed in Cumbria (LRA) in 2019, only 3 were positive for the bTB spoligotype responsible for the outbreak in cattle (17:z)², which resulted from importing infected, but ineffectively screened, cattle from Northern Ireland.

In relation to WGS, a Government report published in September 2020 stated that in Cumbria², "the presence of shared sequences across the two species provides more evidence that possible cattle-badger and/or badger-cattle transmission has occurred in the area. However, direction of transmission cannot currently be inferred from this data".

We would request sight of the "conclusive evidence" you cited, demonstrating that badgers are involved in the spread of infection in the LRA.

Conflicting statements to the High Court regarding the Derbyshire cull zone

According to High Court documents published in May 2020 (High Court Judgement 13/05/20 Case No: CO/4817/2019), in late August 2019 you "positively endorsed proactive badger culling in the Lunar area in Derbyshire as 'the best available option'". Soon afterwards, this advice was reversed, ostensibly at the prime minister's behest.

In your evidence, you stated that shortly after your initial advice to allow culling to proceed, you then suggested culling should only be licensed in the high-risk area, and not in edge areas such as Derbyshire. You acknowledged this represented a departure from the views you had expressed previously.

As of September 2020, your advice appears to have changed yet again, such that culling in Derbyshire has been given your approval.

Two studies on found-dead badgers completed in 2018 have only just been published³. In the southern edge area, the overall prevalence of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB) complex infection in badgers was lower than one per cent³. In the northern edge area there was not only a low prevalence of MTB complex infection found, but of these 92 per cent were latent and, therefore, unlikely to be infectious.

Malcolm Bennett, responsible for the northern edge survey, is on record⁴ as stating that "...there is no evident support of badgers driving the cattle epidemic in Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire in the period when we were doing the testing".

Were you not aware of Prof Bennett's findings and conclusions in this regard? If you were aware of this, we can understand why you might have withdrawn your support for culling in Derbyshire in 2019, but why did you then go on to authorise culling in 2020?

Given the above inconsistencies, we are extremely concerned your statements may have misled the public, the farming industry and members of the veterinary profession, and threaten to undermine confidence in the independence of the CVO's advice to Government.

Furthermore, we note the use of pie charts in the APHA's epidemiology reports based on risk pathway questionnaires (disease

risk forms [DRFs]) completed by the attending vet. These ascribe an astoundingly high percentage of breakdowns as being due to badgers – a great deal more than any of the published epidemiological studies would indicate.

These DRF pie charts are being quoted as if they represented fact by multiple authors to incriminate badgers as the source of the overwhelming majority of herd breakdowns. Given that the Government response to Godfray described these forms as being in need of replacement (and, therefore, not fit for purpose), are you happy the current robustness of this analysis is sufficient to warrant inclusion of these pie charts in epidemiology reports as factual evidence?

We are sure you would agree the badger cull is an unprecedented assault on a protected wild mammal species that should not be undertaken lightly, and certainly not without due regard for the very latest scientific data, in addition to animal welfare and ethical concerns.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you as a matter of urgency, to give you an opportunity to clarify the apparent inconsistencies in your statements and advice to Government. Yours sincerely,

MARK JONES, BVSc, MSc(Stir), MSc(UL), MRCVS, head of policy, Born Free Foundation;

IAIN MCGILL, BSc(Hons), BVetMed, MRCVS, director, Prion Group;

RANALD MUNRO, BVMS, MSc, DVM, MRCVS, chairman, Independent Expert Panel on the Pilot Badger Culls;

ANDREW KNIGHT, MANZCVS, DipECAWBM(AWSEL), DipACAW, PhD, PFHEA, FRCVS, University of Winchester; European and RCVS specialist in animal welfare science, ethics and law;

RICHARD SAUNDERS, BSc(Hons), BVSc, FRSB, CBiol, DZooMed(Mammalian), DipECZM(ZHM), MRCVS, RCVS specialist in zoo and wildlife medicine (mammalian).

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ALASTAIR MACMILLAN, BVSc, MSc, PhD, FRCPath, MRCVS, veterinary advisor, Humane Society International/UK.

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- Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (2020). Local group online talk – badgers and bTB survey: the results with Professor Malcolm Bennett, <https://youtu.be/BfXkrS19LE0>



Email your letters to jameswestgate@vbd.co.uk

Article may unduly fuel 'fear factor' about RCVS



Dear editor,

We should like to respond to some of the points made in the article by Sarah Keir MRCVS ("Dangers of defensive medicine"; 17 November issue) as regards the RCVS, its disciplinary committee (DC) and the concerns investigation processes.

While we welcome the aim of the article to reduce the "fear factor" for many veterinary professionals while practising, we find some of the points the author makes about the RCVS are inaccurate, and that these inaccuracies may serve to unduly fuel the "fear factor" that some veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses feel about the college.

The statement "Currently, for whatever reason, the RCVS keeps the DC – and the rules and standards it seeks to uphold – as a closely guarded secret until you find yourself standing in front of it" in particular is false.

At the RCVS, we go to a great deal of effort to keep members of the profession aware of the codes of professional conduct and its supporting guidance (the aforementioned "rules and standards it seeks to uphold"), as well as up to date with decisions from the standards committee and RCVS council that may change these.

The code and supporting guidance in its entirety can be found on our website (www.rcvs.org.uk/code), and is easy and convenient to access on mobile devices.

Furthermore, our standards and advice team is on hand all weekdays to respond to calls and correspondence from members of the professions who are seeking further advice about the code and guidance.

We also produce regular updates outlining any changes to the standards, as well as producing case studies to help veterinary professionals understand how the guidance applies in everyday situations. Updates and case studies are generally distributed to the profession via our monthly RCVS News, which is sent to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

The suggestion anyone with a concern raised against them would not know what rules or standards they are alleged to have breached until they have reached the DC is also false.

From the early stages of a concern being raised about an individual veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse – and at all stages of the investigation thereafter – they will be given details of the allegations against them and how these may breach the code,

so they are able to gather their own statements, evidence and so on. This is to ensure all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who have had concerns raised about their professional conduct get a fair hearing, and are able to defend themselves against any allegations.

Furthermore, as noted in recent decisions from the DC, it judges the conduct of veterinary surgeons appearing before it against the standard of what would be expected of an ordinarily and reasonably competent veterinary surgeon in general practice, responding to real-time events and without the benefit of hindsight, rather than by any real or notional "gold standard".

One final point – the writer of the article suggested the RCVS could move to a "jury-style" DC, with veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses being empanelled as members of the public, as with criminal trials, to make decisions on cases. This would not be practical for a number of reasons:

- It would require a new Veterinary Surgeons Act to be passed by Parliament.
- DCs are not criminal trials and, even in criminal law, jury trials are reserved for hearings in crown court concerned with serious crimes.
- To our knowledge, no other health care regulator uses a jury-style system in its disciplinary hearings, nor indeed do employment tribunals, many civil cases, family courts and so on.
- The DC is currently constituted of highly qualified appointed veterinary professionals and laypeople whose remit is to make decisions not in the interests of the profession, but animal health and welfare and public protection.

As with the code and supporting guidance, all the information on the DC and our concerns investigation processes are readily and easily available on our website via www.rcvs.org.uk/concerns – and you can find the DC procedure guidance at www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/disciplinary-committee-procedure-guidance

The concerns section of our website also includes documentation concerning individual DC hearings, which outline decisions made by the committee and why.

Yours faithfully,

ELEANOR FERGUSON,

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vettimes



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June 9, 2020

Got a story? Call the news desk on 01733 383561/383562

Vet nurse sew dedicated to face mask making

AN RVN has been filling her time during lockdown to good effect by making face masks for non-NHS workers to use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since being furloughed, Claire Pasquier Olcott, 51, from Deal in Kent, decided to dust off the sewing skills her half-French Second World War evacuee grandmother Mary Hall taught her as a child and produce the fabric masks.

Describing them as washable replicas of the masks she wears at work, Mrs Pasquier Olcott's teenage daughter helped her set up a Facebook page called Maskeraid (<https://bit.ly/2AGI4Yd>) to show others how to make and wear the masks.

Mrs Pasquier Olcott said: "When you're furloughed, it's heart-breaking because you feel totally useless. As a nurse, you're used to helping the community and sewing helps me to feel useful again.

"I thought there was a need for someone to make face masks for non-NHS staff and help others do the same."

Mrs Pasquier Olcott has made hundreds of masks and supplied them free of charge to local care homes and charities.

She added: "The fact I'm able to stay at home and respect the lockdown while contributing indirectly to helping the front line is, for me, extremely important, and I'm pleased I can do this."



Claire Pasquier Olcott making her masks.

In brief

FRIENDLY FOXES: Urban red foxes are becoming more similar to domesticated dogs, according to University of Glasgow researchers. A study found urban foxes had smaller brains and were developing a different snout shape that was better adapted for urban foraging. The team said the changes mirrored the evolution of dogs and cats to become domestic pets. Read the study at <http://bit.ly/3gRMqLV>

WORM STRIKE: Farmers have been told not to be complacent when it comes to monitoring worms in lambs during the dry spell as a bout of wet weather could cause a spike in numbers. Sheep vet Fiona Lovatt has warned that while the current risk of worms is relatively low due to dry weather, as soon as rain hits, farmers will have to get on to worm control very quickly.

CLARIFICATION: Grads To Vets has asked us to point out that while it works closely with the BVA, the association was not part of its graduate survey (V750.22) and it mentioned the BVA in its results in error. It said it will use the results of its graduate survey to tailor the graduate scheme for 2020-21 and ensure it tackles the unique challenges faced by this year's cohort of veterinary graduates.

DIAGNOSTICS GROWTH: The global veterinary point-of-care diagnostics market size is projected to reach US\$2.4 billion (£1.9 billion) by 2025 from US\$1.4 billion (£1.1 billion) in 2019, Research and Markets has reported. Increasing prevalence of zoonotic diseases among companion and livestock animals, and the growing need for rapid disease detection, are major factors driving growth.

WELLVET ACCESS: Organisers of the WellVet online well-being conference are making the content available for those who missed the live event. They are re-opening access to session recordings and the conference community app, with full access until May 2021 to 500 minutes of CPD. Tickets are limited and on sale now until 30 August 2020 – visit www.wellvet.co.uk/tickets

DOG DAYS: Dog-friendly holiday company PetsPyjamas reported a 41 per cent increase in forward bookings in May against the month prior. In a survey, 19 per cent of customers said they would travel with their dog as soon as lockdown was released, citing the "need for a break".

Got a story? Contact the *Vet Times* news desk

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'Tough decisions' looming for practices in wake of COVID-19

THE veterinary sector is facing the prospect of practice closures and job losses due to a contraction of the economy in the wake of coronavirus.

Some economists have predicted a "90 per cent economy" as the new normal once the furlough scheme ends and restrictions put in place to reduce the impact of COVID-19 have been lifted.

Revenues at practices across the country have already plunged as much as 60 per cent or more, while many clients are struggling in a climate of financial uncertainty and job losses.

Thousands of jobs have already gone due to the impact of the pandemic and, while income is predicted to improve for veterinary practices in the short term, fears exist that it will never return to pre-crisis levels.

Veterinary business consultant and vet Alison Lambert said: "The 90 per cent economy is a very real prospect and we are seeing all business sectors experiencing shrinkage, and I expect veterinary care to be the same.

report by

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"People often say pet care is recession proof, but the data from previous recessions shows that while the pet sector may be, the veterinary spend is not.

"People will buy food and accessories, but hold back on the elective procedures and bigger ticket activity. So it is likely some sites will close – especially branches and those sites that were in trouble pre-COVID.

"If we go back to a 90 per cent economy, that doesn't sustain 100 per cent of the wage bill, and that will mean changes in the way we work and how many people work in these practices."

Despite a loosening of restrictions in past weeks, with practices able to do more planned interventions, revenue continues to fall, while changes to the furlough scheme will also start to have an increasing impact.

From August employers will have to cover all National Insurance and pension contributions, while the Government contribution to the wages of furloughed staff will continue to reduce until the scheme ends on 31 October.

Bleak winter

And while practices are likely to get busier as they tackle the summer peak and a backlog of essential work delayed in lockdown, Mrs Lambert is predicting a bleak winter for some.

She said: "The end of furlough will be a trigger for so many things as wages go up and revenue may not yet have caught up. Nothing triggers action quicker than monthly trading losses.

"I guarantee that July, August and September will be busy – it is the summer – but I think things will go back down again once we get into October, November and December.

"So practices must be flexible, make more effective use of the vet hours they have at their disposal going forward and be prepared to make some tough

decisions," Mrs Lambert added.

In a bid to offset these revenues losses, some practices have increased prices for certain services, but VMG president Rich Casey warned that raising fees would not work in the long term against the backdrop of a 69 per cent rise in welfare benefit claimants in April*.

He said: "What practices shouldn't do is try to 'shoehorn' their previous ways of working into the new normal we are emerging into.

"Increasing fees, for instance, will simply penalise those already hit hard by the pandemic and, in so doing, risk the welfare of thousands of companion animals in need of veterinary care.

"Instead, they should think about new ways of working that will enable them to maintain income levels, while maximising client/team safety, workforce well-being – and still meeting client expectations.

"For instance, if the layout of their practice makes social distancing difficult, they could consider having a smaller team

on-site, but extending their opening hours so that they can see the same number of clients over a longer period of time during the day. Many are already doing something similar with A/B teams.

"This would actually enhance the level of service they provide to their clients in our increasingly 24/7 'on demand' culture, while supporting a better work-life balance for their team."

'Effective'

Mr Casey continued: "In fact, while the lockdown has been difficult in so many ways, we're already seeing new ways of working that are proving more effective than expected and, while new working practices can take longer while they're 'bedding in', it will be a different story in six months' time.

"The way ahead won't be easy, but it's not about working harder – it's about working differently, and our members are already responding enthusiastically to the challenge."

*Office for National Statistics.

Hill's partners WSAVA on wellness

A MAJOR global initiative by the WSAVA to support the health and well-being of veterinary professionals has received key support from Hill's Pet Nutrition.

The two organisations have teamed up on the Professional Wellness Group (PWG), which aims to "enhance veterinary wellness globally" by working in partnership with national associations such as the BSAVA.

With research consistently linking careers in veterinary medicine with an elevated risk of mental health issues, the PWG will raise awareness, and create the tools and resources to support veterinary teams.

The PWG is headed by clinical psychologist Nienke Enderburg from Utrecht University in the Netherlands, and one of its particular aims will be to aid member associations in countries where ready access to help and advice is lacking.

Hill's is a gold partner of the WSAVA, supporting its Global Nutrition Committee. It said its partnership with the PWG is part of its continued commitment to support the global veterinary community.

Hill's director of global academic and professional affairs Iveta Becvarova (pictured) said: "Positive mental well-being is critical for the future of our profession. At Hill's we are eager to support the WSAVA's PWG in its mission, and to help it develop tools that can combat anxiety and depressive symptoms or suicidal thoughts."

WSAVA president Shane Ryan said: "The interim findings of the PWG's global survey into veterinary wellness, launched during WSAVA World Congress 2019 in Toronto, confirmed stress and diminished well-being are concerns for all members of the veterinary team and in all areas of the world.

"This already serious problem is likely to be exacerbated by the additional pressures many of our members are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an issue the PWG is already addressing with Hill's support as a key focus for its work this year."



iCatCare fire causes 'considerable damage'

INTERNATIONAL Care Care (iCatCare) is counting the cost of a fire that has badly damaged its headquarters.

The blaze, on 2 June, started in a building adjacent to offices iCatCare leases at the Fonthill Estate in Tisbury, Wiltshire. No one was injured. Charity staff are to conduct a full inventory to assess the extent of the losses in the fire, but it is understood to have caused structural damage. Much of the office contents have either been destroyed by fire or smoke and water damage, and its IT servers have also been badly damaged.

In a statement, the charity said: "We're sad to confirm a fire took place in a building adjoining our charity's headquarters in Tisbury.

"Thankfully, the property and our offices were unoccupied, and no one was hurt; however, both have suffered considerable damage – the full extent of which is still unknown. The cause of the fire is under investigation, and we're working closely with the fire service and local agencies.

"While this is a major disruption, we're fortunate that through our COVID-19 contingency planning we're able to continue operations remotely and deliver online resources to provide as normal a service as possible.

"We'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service for their swift action in tackling the fire, and to our landlords the Fonthill Estate, as well as our neighbours Messums and The National Trust, for their support. We look forward to sharing further news when we know more."

Although the fire's cause is being investigated, it is thought to have been accidental, and started in The Mess café – part of an art gallery on the site. A local resident spotted the fire at 4:46am and dialled 999.

Animal health professionals not eligible for free copies of *Vet Times* may subscribe. For more details and rates, contact Vetfile on 01733 383539

In brief

NEW-LOOK FEEDS:

Spillers has celebrated the return of equine events following the COVID-19 pandemic by refreshing its feed packaging. Spillers Slow Release Energy Cubes and Slow Release Energy Mix are highly digestible fibre, low-starch feeds for controlled performance, while Spillers Instant Energy Competition Mix is an oat-based performance mix. All three contain protein for muscle tone and topline, oil for a healthy skin and coat, and elevated levels of vitamins and minerals to support athletic performance, including vitamin E.

VMA ACADEMY: Animal health marketers can access a new CPD platform that provides bespoke marketing to help develop their skills and knowledge. Launched by the Veterinary Marketing Association (VMA), the VMA CPD Academy is a new platform developed exclusively for VMA members, the organisation said. The portal offers a range of bite-sized and easy-to-follow video tutorials, marketing templates and guides on a wide range of marketing topics. For more details, visit <https://vma.org.uk/cpd-academy-teaser>

DENTISTRY COLLECTION: Veterinary professionals looking to brush up on their dentistry skills can access specific BSAVA content via the association's Congress on Demand website (bit.ly/3gVYcU4). The collection, sponsored by IVC Evidensia, includes "Dental radiography: why and how", "Dental trauma", "Lingually displaced mandibular canines in pups and adults: a new epidemic?" and "What makes extractions easier?"

CLARIFICATION: In the article "Red mite: advice to give owners as treatment extends to backyard birds" (*Vet Times Livestock* 6.2), we wish to point out mites are inactive at 9°C and not 90°C as was quoted in the article. Also, on page 4 of the same issue, the headline should have referred to vitamin A deficiency, and not vitamin D as stated. We apologise for any confusion caused by these errors.

CARBON NEUTRAL: Animalcare has achieved carbon neutral status as part of its commitment to run its business sustainably. The specialist veterinary product company assessed its carbon emissions output earlier this year and has since worked to reduce them, while instituting offsetting measures such as tree planting to enable it to become carbon neutral.

NEW CHAIRMAN: Amanda Boag has been appointed chairman of the RCVS Knowledge board of trustees. Ms Boag, group referral director at IVC Evidensia, takes up the position with immediate effect following an election at RCVS Knowledge's annual meeting. She succeeds Jacqui Molyneux, who had chaired the board since 2014.

Study finds breed loyalty could fuel 'brachy boom'

CONCERNS have been raised over a "breed loyalty" displayed by owners of flat-faced dogs that has seen brachycephalic pets dramatically increase in popularity over recent years despite campaigns warning of their health issues.

According to a new study¹, 93 per cent of owners of flat-faced dogs would opt for the same breed again, despite the heightened risk of often painful and distressing conditions and welfare problems common to these dogs – such as eye ulcers, breathing problems and heatstroke – relating to their typical body shape, particularly their characteristic face.

Recommended

The research, led by the RVC in collaboration with The University of Edinburgh and Nottingham Trent University, also revealed that two-thirds (66 per cent) of owners would recommend their flat-faced breed to others, including first-time owners – a situation that has seen the French bulldog become the UK's most popular breed registered with The Kennel Club (KC).

More than 2,000 owners of brachycephalic dogs were

report by
Nigel Woodbine

asked the key reasons they would recommend "their" breed. Answers included:

- the perception such dogs were affectionate, loyal, comical, "clown-like" and playful.
- a belief they were suitable for households with children
- a perception flat-faced breeds require little exercise, so are suited to sedentary lifestyles with limited space

Participants were also quizzed about the negative aspects of owning such breeds, which highlighted high maintenance requirements, behavioural issues, health issues and high vet bills.

Yet only a small number of owners cited concerns over ethical and welfare issues associated with breeding flat-faced dogs – such as irresponsible breeding practices and suffering associated with body shape – as a reason they would not recommend them.

Rowena Packer – leader of the study, and lecturer in companion animal behaviour and welfare science at the RVC – said such breed loyalty was a serious concern because it promotes the proliferation of these breeds, despite their substantial health risks.

She said: "With a multitude of stakeholders trying to tackle the current brachycephalic boom in the UK, our results are of real concern to these efforts.

"Understanding how breed loyalty develops towards brachycephalic breeds, and whether it can be changed once established, is key to reducing the popularity of short-muzzled breeds.

"If first-time owners of flat-faced dogs choose these breeds for the rest of their lives then the current crisis could continue for decades."

To control the brachycephalic population boom, Dr Packer said campaigners trying to dissuade new puppy buyers from choosing brachycephalic breeds should also turn their attention to current owners.

She said: "Priority should be given to developing

evidence-based strategies to help these owners consider lower-risk, healthier breeds when acquiring future dogs.

"Our novel findings start this process by highlighting the key behavioural characteristics this owner group value."

Campaign

Bill Lambert, head of health and welfare at The KC, said: "We are concerned about some owners who may not be so well informed and are simply unaware of potential health issues, placing looks first without finding out more about the breed or researching a breeder who prioritises health.

"This research will certainly inform and accelerate our ongoing collaborative, evidence-based approach alongside breeders, vets and welfare organisations – which aims to reduce mass demand for these dogs – resulting in smaller numbers of better-informed owners acquiring the healthiest examples."

Reference

1. Packer RMA et al (2020). Come for the looks, stay for the personality? A mixed methods investigation of reacquisition and owner recommendation of bulldogs, French bulldogs and pugs, *PLOS One* 15(8): e0237276.

Image: Katy Price



The study found 93 per cent of owners of flat-faced dogs would opt for the same breed again.

Donkeys a favourite despite 'stubborn' myth

DONKEYS are one of the UK's favourite animals, even though more than half of people quizzed for a survey wrongly believed they were stubborn.

A YouGov poll for The Donkey Sanctuary found donkeys were "Britain's second favourite farm animal" with 17 per cent of votes. Horses topped the poll with 24 per cent of votes.

The charity said donkeys had long suffered an unfair reputation, borne out by 55 per cent of people quizzed in the survey wrongly believing they were stubborn.

Ben Hart, animal behaviourist for The Donkey Sanctuary, said: "Donkeys' stoic nature means, when compared to horses, they show more subtle body language

when in pain or distress. Donkeys also have a strong sense of self-preservation and are unwilling to do things that they perceive as dangerous.

"The donkeys' stoic nature, minimal body language and their natural propensity to freeze when threatened or frightened, combined with a reluctance to put themselves at risk, results in donkeys commonly being mislabelled as stupid or stubborn. I believe anyone who calls a donkey stupid has simply been outsmarted by one."

The research found 89 per cent of people were aware donkeys carried out an important role in helping communities around the world. A report by The Donkey

Sanctuary in 2019 stated 500 million people in some of the world's poorest communities still rely on working donkeys to support their livelihoods.

Charity chief executive Mike Baker said: "It's great to hear people understand just how important donkeys are.

"Owning a working donkey means survival for some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the world. They enable owners to participate in work and boost economic capacity. They help enable children to receive an education and help promote gender equality by allowing women to be economically active.

"The role of these animals is vital and their status should never be underplayed."

MSD awards research bursaries

FIVE veterinary students and one RVN have been awarded research bursaries by MSD Animal Health.

The awards of £1,000 have been made under the MSD Animal Health Research Bursary Scheme, with one of the six to receive £1,000 for the best presentation and a runner-up receiving £500.

Four of the awards went to students from The University of Edinburgh Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. They are:

- Lauren Collins ("Investigating the genetics of 'hardiness' in a short wool, dark faced native sheep breed, the Norfolk horn")
- Georgie Everest ("Assessment of bovine alveolar macrophages and roles in immunity")
- Beth Thompson ("The role of TTC4 and HSP90 in replication of BoHV-1")
- Andrea Ang ("Closing the life cycle: co-localisation of *Stylaria* species and *Myxidium streisingeri*")

The fifth vet award went to Jack Rust from the University of Bristol for "A study of the effectiveness of a detergent-based California Milk Test (CMT)".

The veterinary nurse bursary went to Emily Gorman from The University of Edinburgh Hospital for Small Animals for her research in "Evaluating different methods of peripheral intravenous cannula fixation".

VN vlog comp: can you take it fleasy?

VNS are being called to assist in pet owner flea education, and treatment and prevention advice, by entering a vlogging competition from the makers of Seresto and Advocate.

The "Take it Fleasy" campaign wants VNs to pick up a camera and film an educational video for their clients on flea prevention and control.

Vicky McAlister, senior brand manager for Advocate, said: "Veterinary nurses play a huge role in advising pet owners on the care and well-being of their animals – especially when it comes to parasite control.

"We wanted to highlight the incredible work they do and give vet nurses the opportunity to shine with our new competition. I am excited to see what they can create."

The winning entry – to be chosen by *Vet Times* readers and users – will receive a Sonos system and CPD voucher. Three runners-up will also receive a £50 Amazon voucher.

For more details, visit www.vettimes.co.uk/?p=217590