



Welfare

Chaired by Michael Crane

Sponsored by Redwings



11.00–11.25

Welfare: The Irish perspective

Joe Collins

Equine Veterinary Services, Deerpark, Castletyons, Co. Cork, Ireland.

Introduction

In practice animal welfare standards are determined by the prevailing attitudes, practices and structures within the industry against a background of public perception of animal welfare and relevant legislation. In Ireland, the author and others have reported on this background (Collins *et al.* 2008), on how the perception of welfare differs from and influences the reality (Collins *et al.* 2009, 2010a), on how deficiencies in the legal framework limit its practical value in safeguarding equine welfare (Collins *et al.* 2010b) and on how effective solutions can be identified by an inclusive approach (Collins *et al.* 2010c).

Methods

Multiple visits were conducted over a 3 year period to equine sites and venues to collect quantitative data regarding the breeding, keeping, competing, treating, rehabilitation, impounding, trading, transport and disposal of horses in Ireland. A qualitative approach was simultaneously adopted - to gather views, opinions and perceptions; to raise awareness of the importance of engaging with, not shying away from the subject; and to promote inclusive, rather than imposed solutions to the threats identified. Qualitative work took the form of a web-based interactive survey, recorded semi-structured interviews, focus groups and a professionally facilitated workshop on equine welfare.

Results

Quantitative

The standards of horse health and welfare encountered at the events and venues visited will be illustrated in the presentation (Fig 1).

Table 1: Horse slaughter numbers for Ireland (for export for the human food chain)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 plants)
No. of horses	1995	2060	824	614	822	1486	2002	4251

The movement and disposal of horses was studied in depth. The numbers of horses slaughtered in Ireland at the sole licenced horse slaughter plant from 2002 to 2008 are shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Export figures for horses from Ireland (primarily to GB) from Belfast, Larne and Rosslare ports (none are available from the Dublin ports and the numbers moving by air transport are considered negligible in comparison)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Export	9762	9975	9630	9496
Import	7288	6956	5763	4683
Net export	2474	3019	3867	4813



Fig 1: An emaciated young horse immediately following rescue by an equine welfare charity in Ireland in July 2008.

It is known that some, but not how many, of these are destined for slaughter in approved GB horse slaughter facilities. Provisions of the Tripartite Agreement (governing the movement of horses between Ireland, the UK and France) and of EU 1/2005 (regarding the welfare of animals in transport) are not observed in all cases. Export figures for horses from Ireland are shown in Table 2.

Qualitative

Survey respondents graded the situations where they felt equine welfare was most likely to be compromised in Ireland and this information is illustrated in Figure 2.

Strong enforcement of practical industry standards, reinforced by financial penalties, was seen as a necessary tool in dealing with the worst welfare offences and offenders. Voluntary compliance and acceptance of higher standards through education and training were considered aspirational long-term goals but ineffective in the immediate term.

A prominent theme running through the replies from respondents was that a lack of awareness (or a desire not to know) by some within the equine industries and inadequate enforcement of existing standards by authorities facilitated others (in general 'horse dealers') in profiting from operating in a poor welfare (and thus perceived low cost) environment.

The following were specific proposals by respondents in industry, government and the welfare charities in Ireland:

- Introduce and maintain a comprehensive identification system for horses, in particular at critical control points such as horse fairs and at points of export/import.

- Re-introduce a horse licensing scheme - either for horses generally and/or specifically for stallions - to fund improvements in horse welfare standards and dissuade indiscriminate breeding of horses.
- Develop a licensing system and associated 'Welfare Code of Practice' for horse gatherings such as fairs and markets.
- Ensure that some monies from horse production and registration are ring-fenced and used specifically to fund the humane disposal of horses.
- Develop a single comprehensive conduit for science-based information, education and training on horse health and welfare for the equine industries, using a trusted source.
- Involve 'Champions of Welfare' as profile messengers. The messenger is equally important as the message itself.
- Promote a 'welfare scheme' so that horses that are now not considered fit for purpose can be surrendered for humane disposal, without cost or penalty.
- Adopt a sensitive approach to explaining (to media and the public) the necessity to ensure that unwanted animals are best humanely destroyed, not neglected, abandoned or required to do jobs for which they are patently unsuitable.

Discussion

In the veterinary sciences field, the gathering of quantitative information has historically predominated. There is, however, increasing recognition that for issues, such as animal welfare, with a strong social context this is better informed by the addition of qualitative studies. Such mixed methods have recently been employed in Ireland to identify animal disease threats in the agricultural sector (Animal Health Ireland project) and in the UK to devise appropriate measures for animal welfare assessment (Whay *et al.* 2003) and to explore the impact of government policy on animal welfare (Bennett *et al.* 2004).

During the period of this study the standard of horse health and welfare at unregulated gatherings such as fairs remained at a worryingly low level. Horse identification linked to an accountable owner/keeper is considered to be the key issue that underpins all considerations of horse health and welfare - sustainable breeding, disease surveillance, medicines usage, responsible ownership, legal liability, humane disposal, etc. Effective communication between stakeholder groups is the key component of any strategy to raise standards.

Conclusions

Knowledge exchange is thought to improve the application of research by decision-makers (Gagliardi *et al.* 2008). The work reported here focuses on improving lines of communication between stakeholder groups in Ireland - in government, the equine industries and animal welfare charities. Responsible parties must occupy the 'welfare space'; they otherwise leave the debate open to hijack from those who promote a 'rights based agenda'; there must be an effective veterinary voice not only contributing to but leading the debate. Work is ongoing to improve the dissemination of informed, responsible messages regarding the breeding, keeping, trading and disposal of horses in Ireland.

NOTES

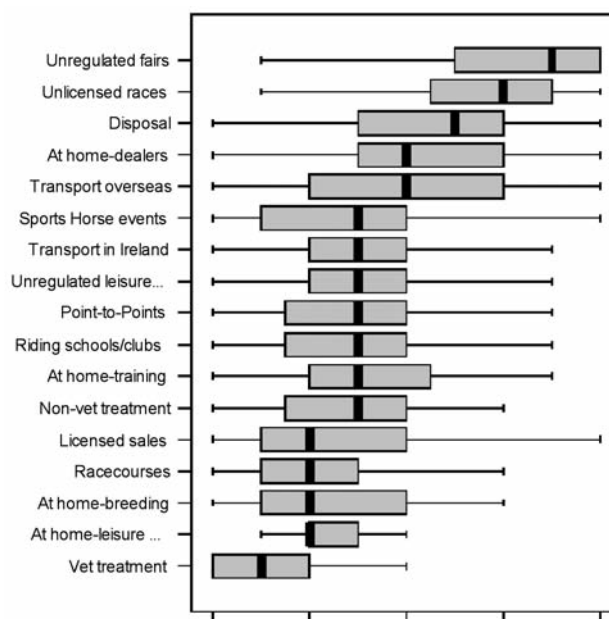


Fig 2: Situations where horse welfare was considered most likely to be compromised in rank order, on a scale of 0 = never, to 8 = frequently. Median is indicated by a bold bar; 25th and 75th centiles by the edges of each box; and 5th and 95th centiles by the elongated arms.

Acknowledgements

This work was generously funded by World Horse Welfare.

References

- Animal Health Ireland. <http://www.animalhealthireland.ie/index.php>
- Bennett, R.M., Broom, D.M., Henson, S.J., Blaney, R.J.P. and Harper, G. (2004) Assessment of the impact of government animal welfare policy on farm animal welfare in the UK. *Anim. Welf.* **13**, 1-11.
- Collins, J., Hanlon, A., More, S.J. and Duggan, V. (2008) The structure and regulation of the Irish equine industries: Links to considerations of equine welfare. *Irish vet. J.* **61**, 746-756.
- Collins, J., Hanlon, A., More, S.J. and Duggan, V. (2009) Policy Delphi with vignette methodology as a tool to evaluate the perception of equine welfare. *Vet. J.* **181**, 63-69. doi: 10.1016/j.tvjl.2009.03.012
- Collins, J.A., Hanlon, A., More, S.J., Wall, P.G., Kennedy, J. and Duggan, V. (2010a) Evaluation of current equine welfare issues in Ireland: causes, desirability, feasibility and means of raising standards. *Equine vet. J.* **42**, 105-113. doi: 10.2746/042516409X471458
- Collins, J.A., Hanlon, A., More, S.J. and Duggan, V. (2010b) Case study of equine welfare on an Irish farm 2007-2009. *Vet. Rec.* **167**, 90-96. doi:10.1136/vr.b4883
- Collins, J.A., Hanlon, A., More, S.J., Wall, P.G. and Duggan, V. (2010c) Challenges and solutions to support good equine welfare practice in Ireland. University College Dublin <http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCD%20Equine%20Welfare-web%20secure.pdf>
- Gagliardi, A.R., Fraser, N., Wright, F.C., Lemieux-Charles, L. and Davis, D. (2008) Fostering knowledge exchange between researchers and decision-makers: Exploring the effectiveness of a mixed-methods approach. *Health Policy* **86**, 53-63.
- Whay, H.R., Main, D.C.J., Green, L.E. and Webster, A.J.F. (2003) Animal-based measures for the assessment of welfare state of dairy cattle, pigs and laying hens: consensus of expert opinion. *Anim. Welf.* **12**, 205-217.



11.25–11.50

Improving the welfare of working animals through collective action

Joy C. Pritchard

The Brooke, 30 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4HH, UK.

Introduction

Over thousands of years working horses, mules and donkeys have supported the livelihoods of rural and urban families in the developing world. Draught and pack animals play a vital role through (i) generation of income for the family, through direct use or hiring out to transport people and goods, (ii) supporting agricultural activities by transporting feed and water for livestock, cultivating crops and taking agricultural products to market, and (iii) reduction of the labour of daily domestic household tasks such as collection of water and firewood, especially for women.

Loss of a working animal, or meeting the costs of treatment in case of injury and disease, can put major stress on its owner's livelihood system. Assuring good welfare for working animals increases their owners' ability to cope and reduces household vulnerability. To improve and maintain animal welfare it is critical to work with communities, because owners and their families make the biggest long-term difference to their animals' lives. They are the primary decision-makers for the working animal and therefore have the strongest influence on its access to resources and services and on prevention of disease, injury and poor husbandry practices.

People working in the international development sector have developed processes, methods and tools to work with communities and facilitate action for change in health care, water and sanitation, agriculture and many other practices. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools have been used for improvement of production livestock health and husbandry, where animal owners benefit directly in terms of a tangible increase in productivity (Kumar 2002). However, we identified a gap in the availability of field-based tools and methods for understanding and creating a positive change in the welfare of working animals.

Materials and methods

Since 2005 the Brooke has been integrating animal welfare science with human development methodology. This is aimed to create collective responsibility within communities for sustainable improvement in the welfare of their working animals, by developing participatory methods and tools specifically for this purpose (van Dijk *et al.* 2011). It resulted in identification and refinement of an animal-centred, group-based process in which the community itself identifies the signs of positive and negative animal welfare. Based on their welfare assessment, the group agrees on both individual and collective action to improve the welfare of all animals owned by group members and monitors its progress towards this goal. The participatory process consists of 6 phases:

Phase 1: Feeling the pulse

Purpose: to understand the community better, gain trust in each other and build animal owners' confidence in their own ability to bring about positive change in their animals' lives by working together as a group.

Phase 2: Shared vision and collective perspective

Purpose: to identify welfare issues and common animal welfare goals within the group of animal owners.

Phase 3: Participatory animal welfare needs assessment

Purpose: to look at the present welfare status of working animals, by bringing the animal to the centre of the group's analysis and visiting all the animals belonging to group members.

Phase 4: Community action planning

Purpose: to move with the group from their new awareness of animal welfare issues, identified from the exercises carried out so far, towards individual and collective action for welfare improvement.

Phase 5: Action and reflection

Purpose: to facilitate the group to implement their Community Action Plan, monitor it regularly and reflect on their findings and experiences together.

Phase 6: Self-evaluation and gradual withdrawal of regular support

Purpose: to assess the longer term impact of the group's efforts to improve the welfare of their working animals and agree how much support the group will need in the future.

The core of the process is 'Participatory welfare needs assessment', in which the community group identifies the physical signs and behaviour of working animals which relate to their physical and mental welfare. Participants generate a list of indicators and a scoring system for animal-related resources, management practices and animal outcomes, in a format that enables the group to carry out its own welfare assessment. The group of animal owners visits each home and assesses the welfare of each animal and its living conditions, keeping records and summarising findings in a group meeting. Based on their findings, members produce a time-bound plan for individual and collective action. The group implements the agreed action and repeats the welfare assessment at regular intervals to monitor progress.

A toolkit of Participatory Action Tools for Animal Welfare (PATAW) is used to facilitate this process: some were adapted from existing PRA tools and new tools were developed by Brooke India's community facilitators where no appropriate PRA tool existed, or where adapted versions did not work well when tested with communities.

Results and discussion

Development of these methods and tools was a process of experimentation with and by the community. The process builds on local people's capabilities: it enables owners to assess the welfare status of their own working animals in the short term, provides a long-term monitoring tool when repeated over time, and this repetition drives an ongoing cycle of animal welfare action and reflection. This mechanism for tracking changes in welfare status over time enables owners to have confidence in their ability to recognise negative changes in welfare, motivates the group to act quickly and provides peer pressure to improve animal management practices.

In 2009, Brooke India built on the success of this process by scaling it up to mainstream programmes and it is currently being used with 29,500 working horses, mules and donkeys in almost 1400 villages and brick kilns.

References and further reading

- Kumar, S. (2002) *Methods for Community Participation: A Complete Guide for Practitioners*. Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, UK.
- Van Dijk, L., Pritchard, J.C., Pradhan, S.K. and Wells, K. (2011) *Sharing the Load: A Guide to Improving the Welfare of Working Animals Through Collective Action*. Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, UK.



Hall 12 ■ Saturday 10th September

11.50–12.15

Donkey welfare internationally - current research

Andrew Trawford

The Donkey Sanctuary, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 0NU, UK.

The donkey is one of the most valuable working animals in the world with estimates of the worldwide population being approximately 44 million (Starkey and Starkey 2004). It is apparent that with an increasing human population and burgeoning oil prices that this number is likely to increase and that donkeys and other working equids will become even more significant in the economic development of many areas of the world. The vast majority of the worldwide donkey and mule population provide essential transport and draught power in developing countries with less than 5% residing in the developed world. The donkey evolved in desert areas and it and its hybrid offspring are renowned for their stoic natures and ability to survive in tough environments on poor quality food making them the work animals of choice in many areas of the world (Starkey and Starkey 2004; Svendsen *et al.* 2008).

Growing numbers of donkeys are also used for leisure in developed countries and are popular as pets. Keeping donkeys in temperate environments can, however, put them at risk of disease particularly those associated with obesity or inappropriate management. Sadly many donkeys are still considered to be small horses, despite studies showing physiological, behavioural and pharmacological differences between horses and donkeys. Extensive further research is required to improve our current understanding of the donkey and the best way to treat, manage and work with this important species.

Research into donkey health and welfare has been limited and has generally been carried out by a small number of enthusiasts. Funds for research are limited; the vast majority of donkeys are owned by subsistence farmers who have no funds to contribute towards advancement of knowledge in this field. Research has to be prioritised, particularly when answers to basic questions such as drug dosages and reference ranges for some blood parameters have yet to be established. Research programmes need careful selection and priority should be given to projects with the potential to impact significantly on the worldwide donkey population. In many cases projects may have positive outcomes for other equids; such positive benefits should be publicised and used as a way of raising the value of donkey research.

Recent programmes have improved knowledge in a number of areas and are being carried out by a number of organisations with qualitative and quantitative approaches answering health, welfare and livelihood questions. Research is varied and although the majority of work currently focuses on veterinary issues other projects looking at the human-animal bond and the importance of the donkey both economically and socially are much needed (Pritchard 2010). Current veterinary studies include the evaluation of the condition of donkeys presented for slaughter in Mexico (Olmos *et al.* 2011) and investigation of risk factors for hyperlipaemia (Burden *et al.* 2010). Qualitative research to investigate the donkey-human bond as part of riding therapy is also in progress as is research using participatory methods to identify traditional methods of parasite control in equids. Research

studies often focus on the answer to a question but not necessarily the use of the answer. In the case of donkey research it is essential that every project counts and they are designed so as to produce a practical outcome. Positive change using the results of research is important and researchers must encourage owners and vets to change practices in response.

Recent findings have led to changes in the way donkeys are treated and managed; examples include removing cardboard bedding for donkeys which can increase the risk of impaction colic (Cox *et al.* 2009) or hyperlipaemia (Burden *et al.* 2010). Implementation of strategic de-worming with more emphasis on targeting 'at risk' equids rather than mass de-worming practices are also being developed using the results of epidemiological studies in Ethiopia and Kenya (Getachew *et al.* 2010). It is also vital to improve our knowledge of how the donkey responds to infectious diseases. Work in Kenya is looking at African horse sickness (AHS) in donkeys including documenting clinical signs; as well as improving knowledge of this disease locally, archived film footage is useful. Should AHS ever reach the UK this will be invaluable for clinicians. Perhaps one of the donkey's most famed traits is its stoicism; detection of pain is notoriously difficult. The Donkey Sanctuary and other organisations are funding work to produce guidelines to enable behavioural indicators of pain to be defined and more easily recognised. Donkeys do show signs of pain just in different and more subtle ways than their horse cousins (Olmos *et al.* 2011).

Donkey research is essential to enhance the welfare of these economically and socially important animals. Research focusing on the importance of donkeys to communities throughout the world is desperately needed as is applied research to enable husbandry, treatment and management to be tailored to the donkey's undoubtedly specific needs.

References

- Burden, F.A., Hazell-Smith E. and Trawford A.F. (2010) Nutritional risk factors for the development of hyperlipaemia in a population of donkeys, *Proceedings of 5th EWEN*.
- Cox, R., Burden, F., Gosden, L., Proudman, C., Trawford, A. and Pinchbeck, G. (2009) Case control study to investigate risk factors for impaction colic in donkeys in the UK. *Prev. vet. Med.* **92**, 179-187.
- Getachew, M., Feseha, G., Trawford, A. and Reid, S.W. (2010) A survey of seasonal patterns in strongyle faecal worm egg counts of working equids of the central midlands and lowlands, Ethiopia. *Trop. Anim. Health Prod.* **40**, 637-642.
- Olmos, G., Gregory, N., Burden, F. and Alvarado-Arellano, A.Q. (2011) Pain assessment of working donkeys in Mexico. *Proceedings of UFAW International Animal Welfare Symposium*.
- Pritchard, J.C. (2010) Animal traction and transport in the 21st century: getting the priorities right. *Vet. J.* **186**, 271-274.
- Starkey, P. and Starkey, M. (2004). Regional and world trends in donkey populations. In: *Donkeys, People and Development, a resource book of ATNESA*, Eds: D. Fielding and P. Starkey. pp 33-45.
- Svendsen, E.D., Duncan, J. and Hadrill, D. (2008) *The Professional Handbook of the Donkey*, 4th edition, Whittet Books.

NOTES



12.15–13.00

The role of the attending veterinary surgeon in equine welfare cases

Peter Green

Mullacott Large Animal Hospital, Charter Veterinary Hospital Group, Ilfracombe, Devon WX34 8NZ, UK.

Veterinary clinicians may encounter equine cases in which the welfare of the animal has been compromised by neglect, wilful cruelty or failure to seek veterinary assistance at an earlier stage. As the investigation and prosecution of these cases is almost invariably delegated by the State prosecution authorities to one of the national animal charities (RSPCA, SSPCA etc.), the veterinary clinician is likely to be instructed and employed by an inspector of one of these charities in the initial examination. It is therefore important for the clinician to be aware of the powers of these inspectors under the current legislation and to be aware of what may be required in terms of evidence should the case result in criminal proceedings.

The full clinical examination of each individual animal will form the foundation of the evidence and should be undertaken objectively and thoroughly. Contemporaneous notes of the examination are invaluable in supporting the subsequent report, statement or opinion and should not be neglected. Notes entered on a computer record subsequently may be discredited, unless they are typed up within a few hours of the examination. The examination of the horse, pony or donkey should include an assessment of the conditions in which the animal has been kept, unless it has already been removed to a sanctuary or clinic. If full clinical examination is impossible, because of conditions at the time or because the animal is unhandled, this should be recorded.

Appropriate samples should be taken, if at all possible before the animal is either treated or moved. These should be examined and tested in a laboratory with established experience in equine clinical pathology and duplicate samples should be offered to the owner or keeper if they are present at the time of the examination. The clinician should bear in mind that definitive diagnosis may not be possible at the time of the initial examination or that the diagnosis may be guided by the later receipt of the sample results from the laboratory.

The clinician should be familiar with the body condition scoring system described in the Defra Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids (2009) and should include in the notes a body score for each animal, based upon palpation not simply visual inspection.

There should be good reason to recommend seizure of the animal into the care of the welfare authorities and consideration should be given to the possibility that the animal could be treated, nursed or restored by leaving it *in situ* and monitoring recovery. Police involvement is essential for any seizure to occur. If the animal requires urgent treatment, this should be administered and if the patient is removed to a sanctuary or clinic other than the home practice, hand-over and transfer of responsibility for care should be undertaken in line with best practice for referrals.

Many equine welfare cases arise because horses and ponies have been neglected. This neglect is likely to have extended into several areas of management and husbandry, including poor diet, poor shelter, poor parasite control and poor daily monitoring. The majority of such animals will be thin, with few other specific clinical signs. Blood and faecal samples will probably indicate internal parasitism. The veterinary surgeon should be aware that the case may be defended on the basis that the animal was suffering from larval cyathostomosis and that the defendant

cannot be held responsible because encysted larvae are untouched by many routine anthelmintics and because the deterioration of the animal was rapid. The examining clinician should be well informed about the clinical signs of larval cyathostomosis and with the published work on the pathogenesis of small redworm disease. The clinical examination of thin horses with few other signs should attempt to establish whether actual or incipient larval cyathostomosis is the underlying problem and the laboratory pathologist should be alerted to this possibility. The defence may argue that the administration of larvicidal anthelmintics at or after seizure was responsible for any improvement in condition, rather than any improvement in feeding and management.

Laboratory results are often intensely scrutinised when equine welfare cases come to court. In particular, any hint of lowered albumin levels are used as evidence of protein losing enteropathy, which is promoted by the defence as a disease of which the defendant could not have been aware. It is argued that despite adequate feeding the horse or pony in question was losing protein through the gut and was suffering what is frequently described as 'secondary malnutrition'. If serum protein electrophoresis has been reported, any evidence of larval strongylosis is likely to be cited in support of the defence case of larval cyathostomosis. Clinicians and laboratory pathologists involved in equine welfare cases should therefore be competent and experienced in the interpretation of laboratory results and should be able to explain both the value and the shortcomings of such evidence.

A retrospective study of over 70 equine welfare cases in which the principle presenting sign was thinness and in which a follow-up history is available indicates that the majority were suffering from a mixed burden of internal parasites consistent with general neglect rather than a specific episode of larval cyathostomosis. A burden of mixed adult and larval strongyles of a wide variety of species will give rise to a degree of protein losing enteropathy and to changes in serum protein electrophoresis profiles. Many cases of equine neglect involve ponies and cold-blooded cob-type horses. Blood samples from these animals should be interpreted cautiously when compared with 'normal' ranges published for sports horses and Thoroughbreds and the clinician should be aware that 'normal' laboratory parameters for young animals may differ from those of adults of the same type.

Further reading

- Abbott, J.B., Mellor, D.J. and Love, S. (2007) Assessment of serum protein electrophoresis for monitoring therapy of naturally acquired equine cyathostomiasis. *Vet. Parasitol.* **147**, 110-117.
- Baetz, A.L. and Pearson, J.E. (1972) Blood constituent changes in fasting ponies. *Am. J. vet. Res.* **44**, 379-384.
- Becvarova, I. and Thatcher, C.D. (2009) Nutritional management of the starved horse. In: *Current Therapy in Equine Medicine*, 6th edn., Eds: N.E. Robinson and K.A. Sprayberry, Saunders. pp 53-58.
- Davidson, N. and Harris, P. (2007) Nutrition and welfare. In: *The Welfare of Horses*, Ed: N. Warren, Springer. pp 45-76.
- Finnocchio, E.J. (1994) Equine starvation: recognition and rehabilitation of the recumbent malnourished horse. *Large Anim. Vet.* **49**, 6-10.
- Frank, N., Sojka, J.E. and Latour, M.A. [2002] Effect of withholding feed on concentration and composition of plasma very low lipoprotein and non esterified fatty acids in horses. *Am. J. vet. Res.* **63**, 1018-1021.



Hall 12 ■ Saturday 10th September

- Green, P. and Tong, J.M.J. (2004) The role of the veterinary surgeon in equine welfare cases. *Equine vet. Educ.* **16**, 46-56.
- Kronfield, D.S. (1993) Starvation and malnutrition of horses; recognition and treatment. *J. equine vet. Sci.* **13**, 98-303.
- Love, S., Murphy, D. and Melloe, D. (1999) Pathogenicity of cyathostome infection. *Vet. Parasitol.* **85**, 113-122.
- Murphy, D. and Love, S. (1997) The pathogenic effects of experimental cyathostomiasis infections in ponies. *Vet. Parasitol.* **70**, 99-110.
- Stockham, S.L. and Scott, M.A. (2008) Protein losing enteropathy and hypoalbuminaemia. In: *Fundamentals of Veterinary Clinical Pathology*, 2nd edn., Blackwell. pp 387-392.
- Whitham, C.L. and Stull, C.L. (1998) Metabolic responses of chronically starved horses to refeeding with three isoenergetic diets. *J. Am vet. med. Ass.* **212**, 691-696.
- Whiting, T.L., Salmon, R.H. and Wruck, G.C. (2005) Chronically starved horses: predicting survival, economic and ethical considerations. *Can. vet. J.* **46**, 320-324.

NOTES



Saturday 10th September ■ Hall 12

Practice Management

Chaired by Chris Shepherd

Sponsored by VDS



14.00–14.25

Communication and concordance

Geoffrey Little

Veterinary Defence Society, 4 Haig Court, Parkgate Estate, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 8XZ, UK.

Compliance is the extent to which the administration of medicines, treatments or surgical procedures are undertaken, according to the regime agreed between the prescriber and the client. Agreement on the regimen is achieved through concordance which involves negotiation between 2 equal parties, respecting the beliefs and wishes of the client in determining whether, when and how medicines are to be taken. When clients do not administer medications or follow treatment regimes as agreed, they are described as noncompliant.

Adherence to the administration of medicines or the acceptance of a surgical procedure is greater in cases of acute illness than it is for long-term medications. This is understandable where owners are faced with a life or death situation and where the veterinarian has been in a position to paint a clear, black and white picture. But, what can veterinarians do to achieve greater compliance in less clear cut, dramatic situations?

Concordance and compliance is all about the move away from the philosophy of clients following what they are told, to shared decision making.

If the prescriber and client achieve concordance there is a greater likelihood that the client will make a conscious effort to follow treatment plans. In order to maximise compliance various steps should be considered.

- Clients should have enough knowledge to participate as partners. This can be achieved by:
 - having a structured approach to the consultation process, and when it comes to shared decision making, concentrating on the *Explanation & Planning* part of the model.
 - relating to the client's ability to understand instructions and their educational level.
 - relating to the health issue at hand and providing realistic expectations of what the medicine or treatment regime can achieve.

- providing accurate instructions without the use of jargon in sufficient detail to be meaningful.
- Clients should be offered choices rather than directives.
- These choices should be accompanied by the associated estimates regarding costs involved.
- Clients should be encouraged to contribute their ideas and suggestions.
- The vet should share their own thought processes, ideas and dilemmas as appropriate. This encourages clients to share their views and forces the professional to order their thinking.
- Care should be given to the explanation of risk and side effects. It is difficult to provide a formula that will suit everyone and a repertoire of skills and approaches is useful in providing a flexible approach.
- In the medical profession 70% of patients wish to be involved but 30% would prefer to leave decisions to their doctor. It should therefore be established as to how much involvement the client would prefer.
- Demonstrations and visual material should be provided.
- The client's understanding should be checked.
- A 'safety net' should be provided in case the treatment plan or administration of medications does not go to plan.

In cases of chronic illness a practice should consider having a system in place to contact owners on a regular basis, to check on the patient's condition. This may involve a return visit, phone call, email or text message, depending on the owner's preferred mode of contact.

It would be a shame, having reached a position of concordance through shared decision making on day one, bearing in mind the effort that may have taken in terms of emphasising the importance of adhering to a particular course of treatment, to end up with noncompliance due to a lack of follow-up by the practice, through a perceived lack of interest.

NOTES



Hall 12 ■ Saturday 10th September

14.25–14.50

Looking after your most valuable asset

Patrick Wall

University College, Dublin, Ireland.

Often when we are asked about our most valuable assets we consider our house, practice, stocks and shares, etc. and it is often only when we suffer from an adverse health event that it dawns on us that our priorities are wrong. For many people it is only when they are sick that they start to make decisions about their health. “Will I have chemotherapy or radiotherapy?” or “will I have stent or a bypass?” may be the first health related questions they address. Diet and exercise are topics vets regularly lecture to their clients about with regard to their animals however these are fundamental to their own health yet many vets often omit to take their own advice. A bout of illness often focuses our attention and in the cardiac rehabilitation clinic it is not unusual for patients to be very proud of the fact that they are “*now walking up to 5 miles per day since they had the bypass!*” when, for a subset of these patients, if they had walked one mile a day before it, they would have never needed the bypass in the first place.

Mental health is equally as important as physical health and like the later asset has also to be invested in. Many professionals’ diaries are populated with work related activities only and no planning is given to keeping the mental batteries recharged on an ongoing basis. Many vets socialise in the same circles as they work and never get a chance to unwind and switch off. Sufficient time needs to be devoted to relationships and families if they are

to be a successful component of your life. The question of who comes first; your clients or your family and loved ones needs to be explicitly addressed. When asked the question we mostly prioritise the latter but actions often speak louder than words and what we think we are doing and what we are actually doing often bear no relationship.

The modern channels of communication means that everyone is an expert, and a vet’s professional opinion can be subject to ‘review by blog’ which adds to the pressure to perform and succeed. Clients can be increasingly demanding with no adverse outcomes considered an ‘act of God’ and somebody has to be blamed when things go wrong. The days of the James Herriot vet drinking tea, and eating scones, after the calls are long gone and with it has come new pressures that have to be managed. The key to sustainability is not to be a workaholic. Some people work hard as they claim to enjoy every minute of it others do so as they feel compelled to. Because there is less of a social stigma attached to workaholicism than to other addictions, associated health symptoms can easily go unrecognised. As with other psychological addictions, workaholics are often unable to see that they have a problem and don’t realise that it has crept up on them. Therefore before retiring each night all of us should ask ourselves: “*What did I do for my most valuable asset today?*”

NOTES



Saturday 10th September ■ Hall 12

14.50–15.15

From intern to owner - career routes in equine practice

David Rowlands

Penbode Veterinary Group, North Road, Holsworthy, Devon EX22 6HB, UK.

A review of career opportunities for equine veterinarians in the UK.

NOTES



15.15–15.40

Negotiating the right employment package

Nick Acworth

5 Priory Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 7QS, UK.

We negotiate and sell things every day of our lives, be it with colleagues such as deciding on the rota or using the ultrasound machine, or with clients when 'selling' them your treatment plan or when next to visit again, to every day with the family! Yet when it comes to negotiating our next employment package, we often freeze and don't apply the logical principles that have probably served you so well elsewhere.

The aim of this lecture is twofold, firstly looking at what the concept of 'negotiation' actually means, and secondly how you then apply these concepts to reach agreement with a future employer on a suitable employment package. By applying these principles, you can search for your next job confident that you will agree a package that leaves you starting the job as a motivated and valued member of that team.

There are many skills that are important during the negotiation. A lot of information is available on negotiation, but it boils down to 3 key things to remember:

- Detailed preparation: research the job, the practice and conduct a self-appraisal of what you want and should realistically expect from any package.
- Understand the value of each aspect of the contract to both parties, which will enable you to identify areas of compromise and levers for bargaining.
- Conclude the deal afterwards quickly.

During your negotiations, it is important to listen to and understand what or whom the employer is looking for to fulfil the job. If you do not understand anything do not be afraid to ask questions and get clarification of the details. Above all remain professional and courteous in your discussions as you will be working with the employer once the discussions are concluded. Your conduct and professional approach will reflect on your overall character.

Ultimately the best negotiations end in a deal in which both parties feel that they have won. In practical terms the employer will be content that they have employed a quality vet who will generate revenue, get on well with colleagues and serve their

clients' best interests. In return, you, the future employee will feel that there has been some personal progression, which may manifest itself with an increased salary or other benefits, career development or simply a change of location and type of work.

So what are you looking for? An employment package is what it says it is - a package. There are many components to consider, and preparation beforehand is vital. Have a goal in mind of what is acceptable to you, but be prepared to compromise on certain individual items if the overall package still reaches your expectations. In the same vein understand what the pressures are facing your employer so that you are realistic in your demands and expectations. You may feel you have a certain worth, but is that backed up by what the role is worth? Should a professor demand a professor's salary if they are doing the job of a taxi driver?

Salary is the obvious starter, but how is it made up? Is it performance related, and on what criteria will any bonus be measured? When will this be reviewed? Additional benefits may include the provision of a car, fuel and accommodation, which may be added in lieu of some salary. Some of these things will have a greater intrinsic value to one party than the other, e.g. the provision of a car that the practice may already have sitting in the driveway. You will need to assess their value to decide if they are worth having instead of basic salary, given you may then be liable for tax as these may be deemed as benefits in kind. Other perks include professional subscription fees, CPD allowance, time-off for study, private health care and income protection. Do not forget to negotiate personal details such as the out of hours rota, flexi-hours, childcare etc. Once you have agreed on the terms of employment, it is important to get it agreed in writing as soon as possible so that it is clearly laid out as to what has been agreed.

Negotiating a package should not be a daunting prospect. Understand and practice the skills required in negotiation. Prepare thoroughly beforehand, understanding both sides' expectations so that together you can reach an agreement that is of benefit to everyone.

NOTES



Practice Management

Chaired by Chris Shepherd

16.00–16.25

Conflict resolution

Geoffrey Little

Veterinary Defence Society, 4 Haig Court, Parkgate Estate, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 8XZ, UK.

It is better to prevent problems arising in the first place, rather than to have to deal with the consequences. Conflict arises mainly through unfulfilled expectations and by not recognising and dealing appropriately with clients' emotions.

Emotions

Emotions are a primary source of communication. If the emotion is not addressed it will escalate until it is dealt with.

- The emotion should be identified and named internally, e.g. sadness, anger, grief.
- The emotion should be reflected back to the client or colleague ("I can clearly see that you are angry") with the correct intensity.
- A way forward should be mutually agreed.

Anger

Anger in clients or colleagues is usually obvious but sometimes anger is expressed in more subtle ways such as discordant messages between verbal expressions and nonverbal communication. The 2 common reasons for fighting shy of dealing with anger are:

- Fear of unleashing more anger.
- Fear of time involvement.

Strategies for dealing with anger apply to clients and colleagues:

- Remain calm, do not take it personally, instead deal with it objectively.
- Good eye contact is essential.
- The client should be left to sound off and calm down without interruption before dealing with them.
- The client or colleague's right to be angry should be acknowledged.
- The client or colleague should be taken to a quiet area if possible, invited to sit down and the vet should adopt a similar position (mirroring strategy) without an aggressive pose.
- Clear, firm, nonemotive language should be used.
- The reason for an angry outburst should be summarised and reflected back to the complainant.
- The client should be provided with an offer of help or a promise to investigate issues. Premature reassurance should be avoided.
- Never blame somebody else for the situation you find yourself in.

Fees

Fees are an emotionally charged topic and are often the triggering factor for a complaint or a claim.

Barriers to clients not taking fees on board include:

- Clients may feel guilty that they don't have unlimited resources that allows treatment without having to deal with money issues and are reluctant to share their financial situation with the practice.

- Vets and support staff often have to discuss finance at a time when the client is already emotionally fragile.

Suggested strategies to avoid money related issues include:

- All team members should understand the fee structure and protocols.
- Team members should never apologise for the fee.
- The client's emotional state should be assessed and then addressed.
- The client's body language should be observed to see how the information is received.
- The language used must be appropriate to the client's level of understanding.
- Options should be provided and the subject of cost should be an integral part of explanation and planning.
- The client should be encouraged to ask questions.
- Estimates can be effective but individuals need to recognise that:
 - clients automatically focus on the lower end of the range.
 - provision of a detailed breakdown of individual components will help clients understand the work involved and any uncertainties.
 - considering an uncertainty factor of 5–10% to take into account fees exceeding the estimate can in some instances be beneficial.
- Clients should be updated regularly regarding in-patients.
- Clients should be contacted as soon as possible if fees look as though they may exceed the estimate.
- A simple explanation of the fees should be given on presentation of the bill and it is important not to be defensive or embarrassed.
- Animal welfare should always be considered when discussing fees and euthanasia may be a valid option.

Failure to deal with conflict may end up in a complaint, something that requires an official response.

A complaint may be presented in a number of ways:

- A verbal comment serious enough to demand a direct response.
- A letter from a client or a friend of a client.
- A letter on behalf of the client - probably from a solicitor or the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

A practice should have a documented Complaints Policy, and should ensure all members of staff, including locums and new members are familiar with it.

Guidelines for initially dealing with a complaint either in person or by phone:

- Individuals should remain calm.



Hall 12 ■ Saturday 10th September

- The client should be taken into a private seated area or the call should be transferred to a quiet zone.
- The client should be thanked for bringing the matter to your attention.
- The client should be asked to tell the story from the beginning, without interruption.
- Empathy should be shown by reflecting back the client's emotion.
- Notes should be taken. These should be shared with the client to ensure that they agree with the content, identify specific issues of a complaint and it is sometimes helpful to ask the client to put something in writing.
- Consider having somebody else to write the notes.
- Active listening should be demonstrated.
- Individuals should say sorry and mean it. An expression of regret will make the client feel heard and understood - it doesn't mean an admission of liability.
- The client should be told which member of the team will deal with the complaint and by when.
- The client should be reassured that the matter will be dealt with promptly and that they will be kept informed of progress.

All details of the complaint should be recorded in a special complaints database or book, separate from the client case notes

(complaints can be flagged in the case notes but individuals should avoid recording details).

The complaint should be investigated and all statements and information recorded in the complaints database. All members of the team involved in the complaint should be happy with the proposed response, before relaying it to the client.

The triple A's

Acknowledgement

Clients want their feelings and their situation acknowledged.

Apology

Effective communicators learn to apologise for what happened and apologise for the fact that it happened without admitting to any personal contribution.

Assurance

Complainants want assurances that what they believe they or their horse experienced will be fully investigated and a full and transparent explanation will be forthcoming. In addition, they want the assurance that the experience will never be repeated. Effective communicators learn to give assurances that they will take steps to prevent the problems recurring and outline any steps already taken.

NOTES



Saturday 10th September ■ Hall 12

16.25–16.50

Results of 2011 survey on equine practice financial performance

Mark Beaney

Hazlewoods LLP, Staverton Court, Staverton, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 0UX, UK.

Mark Beaney is a partner at Hazlewoods LLP who are a specialist accountants and business advisers to the veterinary profession. He is the accountant to many equine practices across the UK.

Hazlewoods are collating the results of a UK wide equine financial survey and Mark will be presenting the results at BEVA Congress. This will include his interpretation of the findings and

what the results mean for the future. The presentation will cover many elements including:

- Turnover per vet for different types of equine work
- Gross profit performance
- Staff efficiency
- Overhead management
- Pricing strategy.

NOTES



Hall 12 ■ Saturday 10th September

NOTES
