THE VETERINARY GENDER PAY GAP:

By Katie Roberts, Cambridge and AVS JVP

Let's face it, we all know the gender pay gap exists in other professions, but how many of us have considered the impact it will have on us when we graduate in just a few years?

The Vet Record recently published an article entitled 'Gender pay gap exists across the profession' which shed light on just how significant the pay gap is in our profession. The data used in that article (and this one) come from two recent surveys carried out into veterinary pay by CM Research and the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons.

As an example, CM Research found that, on average, full time female vets earned £41,152, while males earnt £46,921. This is a difference of almost £6,000, or 12%. What is perhaps even more worrying is that the gap gets greater the more senior you are: according to the same survey, female partners earn, on average, £51,315 a year, while their male counterparts earned £69,755. That is a staggering £18,440 difference, with males earning 36% more for a job of the same grade.

As well as receiving more lucrative pay packets, men hold a greater proportion of these high ranking jobs, with 55% of partners and practice owners being male. This discrepancy is emphasised when you consider that only 32% of full-time vets are male. It seems that, like in countless other professions, women are at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining positions of seniority, whether it be because they are discouraged from applying, or considered less able for the job.

Encouragingly, the survey by SPVS found that women who have been qualified for less than ten years are being paid more, albeit marginally, than men in the same position. However, once qualified for more than eleven years, the difference between pay becomes an astonishing 20% once more. As we spend most of our practising careers having been graduated for more than ten years, this is obviously a significant problem. These numbers also seem to suggest two equally concerning possibilities: either, women are being paid less than men for the same work, or men are holding a greater proportion of the more senior roles, a hypothesis the data in the previous paragraph supports.

The female presence in the veterinary profession is one which is ever growing; according to RCVS Facts 2014, the veterinary graduates of 1993 were 44% male and 56% female, while in 2013, 23% of graduates were male and 77% female. With the need to tackle this problem growing, hopefully our voice and ability to do so will too.