Community outreach and conservation in Zimbabwe

New vet school – same old problems?

Clinical EMS guide launched
BVLGBT is open to anyone wanting to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights within the veterinary professions.

We aim to create a fun social network that promotes fairness and equality, and provides support for individuals both working and studying.

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What’s it all been for?

By Seth Kennard, JAVS Editor

‘It takes seven years to be a vet doesn’t it?’

‘No, not quite,’ I answer. ‘It takes longer than that.’

They say hindsight is 20/20, so now that I’m in my final year of the veterinary degree, and now that this is my final editorial in a print issue of JAVS, I feel it’s as good a time as any to reflect on my journey here.

I still remember the excitement of first year, the anticipation of starting something pretty cool. My peers from sixth form were off to spend the rest of their learning days indoors stuck in front of a laptop, or off into the real world of work. I, meanwhile, was psyched to begin training.

First year flashed by in a blur of meeting new people and feeling like my head would explode from cramming too much in. Second year was different – it dragged on and on. I struggled to see the purpose of my work and began to wonder if I’d made an expensive mistake.

I resolved to make it at least to third year before making any rash decisions and, like a gambler, reasoned I was too far in to quit. Before I knew it, I was smashing my way through weeks of clinical EMS and loving it, with placements across the country and working with vet teams that treated me with respect and courtesy.

Despite enjoying clinical work so much, I still had an itch to see what research was like (and keep my options for the future open) so I chose to take a step back from the veterinary medicine course and intercalate in pathology. It was a very odd experience to see my old cohort, the friends I started with whom I’d left to intercalate, graduate this summer, and to see them step out into the real world, but I don’t regret for a moment my intercalated year.

Returning to vet medicine for fourth year was a shock to the system, with just one term of lectures before going straight into rotations. And now, somehow, I’m halfway through rotations and writing my final editorial.

It hasn’t all been roses: the long hours, the gnawing sense that you could be doing more, the awkward car drives on farm visits, the cases with no happy ending. The vet course may be five years for most people, but telling a client that it’s ‘just’ five years seems an injustice to everything that has gone into getting this far and an injustice to everything that has happened over those five fast years.

And how does it feel to be on the final straight? Well, I’m tired; but to have it any other way would be boring!

Seth
As well as being in my final year at Bristol vet school, I have the immense privilege of being your Association of Veterinary Students president. My committee and I have achieved so much since I took over as president in February and with five months left in office there’s still lots to be done!

The big theme for my year (and a large part of my manifesto) as president has been supporting students on extramural studies (EMS).

We hit the ground running in spring, partnering with VDS Training to bring you the first ever AVS EMS Grants. We’ve listened to your feedback and felt that producing grants that are open to any student for any form of clinical EMS (not just research) would allow us to have a real impact and improve people’s time on EMS. Applications for the grants opened on 1 October and you can find the full terms and conditions, and all the details of how to apply, on the AVS website (www.avsukireland.co.uk) or by e-mailing: AVS.EMS.Grants@gmail.com

In August, our Member Services Group finished an 18-month project culminating in the launch of the AVS Clinical EMS Guide. This means we can now support students from their animal husbandry EMS (AHEMS) in first year to their last week of clinical EMS in final year through our amazing student-produced guides.

I was also lucky enough to attend a meeting of the EMS teams at every vet school and as a result both our clinical EMS and AHEMS guides will be freely available via your university in both digital and hard copy. We also partnered with Vets4Pets to stock it in practices across the country. Alternatively, you can download copies from our website, www.avsukireland.co.uk

The third and final arm of the EMS project this year was the EMS experience survey, which had an impressive response rate (approximately 25 per cent of you). Off the back of your feedback we have produced a report that will launch at London Vet Show, alongside resources for vets in practice to help them make EMS placements the best they can be for you. We also secured a multi-year partnership with the team at London Vet Show, allowing our members to attend at a greatly reduced price starting at £39.

Thanks for taking part

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended one of our events this year; from the biggest-ever AVS Congress, to Sports Weekend or any of the fantastic guest lectures our university reps organised. Also thank you to everyone who engaged with our polls, surveys or focus groups – the more we hear from you the more we can ensure we’re the voice in the room representing you on the issues that matter, be that to the RCVS, the BVA, your veterinary schools or anyone else!

We’re hugely looking forwards to welcoming more of you than ever before to Sports Weekend in November (Nottingham have some big plans), and hopefully seeing lots of you at London Vet Show using our exclusive AVS discount. Then in February it’s all about Congress at RVC, where we’ll award our inaugural AVS EMS Grants, open elections for next year’s committee and I’ll hand over to my successor.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible throughout the months ahead. Make sure you stay connected: like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, chat to your university AVS reps and keep your eyes open for further updates to hear the latest news about what your AVS is getting up to – we absolutely love to hear from you to help shape the direction AVS takes!

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Dave Charles, AVS President
In June, responding to a general government consultation on the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991), PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) shocked everybody by calling for Staffordshire bull terriers to be added to the breeds proscribed by the Act. Branding a stereotype on one of the most commonly kept breeds in the UK was, unsurprisingly, not popular among the general public. However, the deeper you delve, the easier it is to see that PETA was making a point we badly need to be reminded of.

PETA didn't have a chance to explain itself and its message before the headlines appeared across the UK media. This coverage prompted more than 180,000 UK residents to sign an e-petition opposing any ban; one MP branded PETA a ‘ridiculous organisation’ for publicly voicing the view. The petition was debated in Parliament, and the government made it clear that within the consultation there were no plans to add Staffordshire bull terriers to the list of banned breeds.

PETA’s stance, the public reaction and the parliamentary debate diverted attention from the real issue behind PETA’s call for a ban. PETA clearly planned to grab people’s attention – and it did that – but proposing a ban on Staffies was a bit too close to home for many dog owners. The media also had a role to play in the confusion; PETA's real message got lost in all the distraction and, as such, the situation became something of a disaster.

So, let’s be clear on PETA’s message. The media reports are true in that PETA supports a ban on breeding Staffordshire bull terriers, but more than that, it would support a blanket ban on all dog breeding.

The regulation of dog breeding in the UK is outdated. Currently, anybody can breed dogs and sell them for profit. Protected by the Animal Welfare Act (2006), dogs cannot legally be farmed or mistreated, but without question unregulated breeding has worsened breed-related conditions. Dogs are freely being bred through a narrowing gene pool and, as such, the law is neglecting their welfare. The underlying message people should take from PETA’s stance is that they should be adopting the thousands of dogs in rescue shelters and pounds, rather than bringing more animals into the world, destined for rescue centres, or worse.

Why are Staffies the focus of this debate? Pit bull-type dogs have their own breed predisposition: they are the worst-treated dogs in the world. The RSPCA claims that 80 per cent of prosecutions for cruelty to animals concern Staffordshire bull terriers. Of course, not every Staffie is mistreated; on the contrary, most are loved as loyal, friendly and energetic companions, but the reputation of the breed is ruined by a minority of people who exploit them. From a utilitarian ethical viewpoint, it makes perfect sense to protect them from being bred into a world that mistreats them.

Breeding dogs in a regulated way, both by health and by population size, would have a multitude of benefits. Vets could have a say on which dogs could breed based on their health, and economists could regulate the population size, so fewer are likely to end up in rescue centres. The difficulties with this lie in the legislation by which we own dogs: they are covered by property law and, as such, people can do as they wish with their dogs. Changing this requires a fundamental shake-up of many of the laws that govern the way we keep animals.

However, dogs have to be protected from haphazard and thoughtless breeding by those who don’t know enough about it, or who have the wrong intentions in mind. Dogs in rescue kennels deserve to be given another chance at life. Perhaps so-called ‘consumers’ also have to be protected from the unbelievable price tag that can come with popular breed puppies.

When you think about it, PETA’s position doesn’t look so radical, after all.
Pet ownership: a right or a privilege?
Laura Holloway (Bristol Paws Project)

After recent debate about pet ownership, and the suggestion by the Labour Party to allow tenants a ‘default right’ to keep pets, the Bristol Paws Project, together with Alison Blaxter, clinical teaching fellow at Bristol vet school, organised a ‘Moral Maze’ event centred around the statement: ‘If you can’t afford veterinary care, you shouldn’t have a dog’ to encourage open discussion of issues vets face in day-to-day life.

The debate was chaired by Sean Wensley (PDSA), with a panel of experts, and Bristol lecturers and welfare researchers Siobhan Mullen and David Main leading questioning around the following key issues:

- Do we have a right to have pets?
- Is looking after the pets of those who cannot afford treatment the best use of our resources?
- What is animal welfare?
- What is the point of the statement above? Does it mean people should be prevented from owning pets, or should they be encouraged to act differently and consider the full implications of acquiring a pet?

Penelope Gatenby from Avon and Somerset Constabulary took the view that pet ownership should not be determined by monetary income. She pointed out that affluent clients could care for their pets poorly, in a ‘gilded cage’ style, while less affluent clients would do everything possible to pay for their pet’s care, including taking out payday loans. She also suggested that it was not realistic to expect owners to assess whether they could afford care in the worst possible emergency scenario before they acquired an animal – if we did that, none of us would have horses.

James Allsop, a first opinion small animal vet, countered this by suggesting that it may be a welfare issue if owners did not consider the potential cost of owning a pet before acquiring one.

He also emphasised the vet’s role in client education and the recognition of compromised welfare. From his experience, the option of euthanasia in cases of lack of funding was very rare; owners often agreed to rehoming the animal instead. Euthanasia was a more likely option in cases of behavioural issues or severely compromised welfare. He also pointed out that the clients who visited vets were already a ‘self-selected’ paying population.

Gabriel Galea of StreetVet commented that the pets of homeless people often have lower levels of separation anxiety and a greater bond with their owners as they have constant companionship. He also suggested that rather than StreetVet providing a service for people who cannot afford veterinary care, it acts as a safety net for those who have fallen on hard times.

Sagi Denenberg, a small animal behaviourist, gave a different perspective based on his experience of the Canadian SPCA, which seizes dogs more regularly than the RSPCA. He asked why vets should have to go through the emotional stress of euthanising a healthy dog because the owners could not afford to keep it – would it not be better to prevent this situation arising in the first place? However, he also made an interesting point that, in the market collapse of 2008, many owners who could previously afford a pet were suddenly unable to do so, and losing their pet was often accompanied by a sense of loss of purpose.

From a behavioural perspective, he suggested that although homeless dogs have more companionship, they may lack a stable routine, and if their owners are moving about they may be unable to get the 15 to 17 hours of sleep that dogs require each day. They could also be exposed to stressful events such as loud noise in a street environment. He further suggested that charities should focus more on improving animal behaviour and owner education, stating ‘behaviour kills more dogs than cancer’ and that behavioural training could be prioritised over vaccination.

The ‘opinion’ and debate’ section in JAVS is a place to share your thoughts on issues of interest. The opinions expressed by individual students may not reflect the official position of the AVS or BVA.
Richard Hammond, head of Bristol vet school and Langford Vets suggested that a sense of societal entitlement could drive behaviours that compromised animal welfare, such as having the right to own pets in rented property irrespective of the landlord’s opinion. This is already the law in France and, with the rising numbers of millennials who are unable to buy houses and who may rent for life, demand for a similar law in the UK may rise.

He commented that pet ownership is a privilege, not a right, and suggested that although charities such as StreetVet have an important role, they may draw the focus away from less visible problems, such as animals with compromised welfare whose owners are still in housing.

Damian Pacini of the RSPCA raised the hypothetical case of an owner with their fifth pug, who could not afford vaccinations despite the cost of the animal. Although this situation frustrates vets and nurses, their priority is to care for the animal and therefore personal feelings have to be put aside. Regarding the right to have an animal, he suggested that veterinary care should not be the primary limiting factor in ownership of an animal: there were five freedoms and each needed to be met, although there may be varied weighting.

However, in a final vote, most of the audience agreed with the initial statement. The audience was also able to contribute and raised the following points:

- Essential treatment should be differentiated from referrals when considering the affordability of veterinary care;
- Should good pet ownership be defined by monetary stability or by welfare?
- Should pet ownership be restricted and if so how – should the elderly not be allowed to buy puppies, for example?

One audience member expanded the debate to include other countries where animals may have good welfare but are simply unable to access veterinary services.

In regard to how we should move forward, it was suggested that pre-purchase consultation should be encouraged to ensure owners have prior knowledge of costs as well as the needs of different breeds.

An enlightening evening was had by all, with refreshments kindly provided by Langford Vets, and the debate carried on in the staff tea-room afterwards. The Bristol Paws Project is hugely grateful to the panel of experts; to David, Siobhan, Sean and Alison; and to our audience.

We also want to point out that all the opinions expressed are those of the individual; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the organisations for which they work.

**New vet school, same old problems?**

**Katie Roberts (AVS Junior Vice-President)**

Very few veterinary students in the UK will have missed the announcement on 15 May this year that a new vet school will be opening as a collaboration between Keele and Harper Adams universities. And I’m sure that, somewhat selfishly, many of us wondered what impact, if any, this will have on us in the near future.

When I heard the news, my first thought was that it could only be a good thing – we’re currently facing a veterinary shortage in the UK, and post-Brexit predictions suggest this will only continue, and likely worsen. Therefore, surely more vet students, leading to more qualified vets, would help? On the surface, it certainly looks like good news from the point of view of our profession and prospective vet students across the country. However, this view could potentially be naive when considered alongside the other struggles the veterinary profession is facing.

How much will putting more inexperienced new grad vets onto the career ladder actually help our employment problems, considering our current issues with retention? It’s hard to tell which is the most sustainable option to help the profession – adding more vets or providing better support for those we already have? However, if the levels of disillusionment currently faced by some new grads continue into the future, it seems unlikely that simply adding more vets will help in the long-term.

Another consideration is who will teach the students at the new school? Are we going to dilute the quality of our education if our lecturers get spread more thinly across the country, or will less qualified individuals be offered positions to make up the teaching staff? If this became the reality, we’d have to consider which is better – fewer, potentially better educated, vets, or more with lower skill levels? To me, the answer seems obvious.

According to recent press releases, the new vet school has no immediate plans to build its own hospitals, and will instead do the same as Nottingham and Surrey, contracting out rotations to local surgeries. These practices will undoubtedly then be better equipped to educate students on EMS, as they will be used to teaching. However, as has already been found, they are also then significantly less likely to take students for EMS, simply because they cannot accommodate any more. This can have impacts on students whose family homes are in the areas surrounding these practices, making it much harder for them to find placements close to home and sometimes leading to them having to pursue expensive travel and accommodation elsewhere to meet the RCVS requirements.

There will undoubtedly be benefits to the new school, making it easier for those who dream of becoming a vet to make it a reality, but I personally believe that to simply state it as only a good thing is a massive oversimplification.
The British pet primate trade: time to bring it to an end

Heather Coupe (Bristol)

Primate usage in scientific and zoological establishments is heavily regulated. Both great apes and wild-caught primates are prohibited in research settings throughout the EU, and ‘special justification’ is mandatory for all other primates.¹ So, why are UK regulations regarding the primate pet trade so nonchalant and, for want of a better word, negligent?

At this very moment, you or I could browse the internet and purchase a primate with little or nothing to stop us. With a quick Google search and a few clicks, I could easily discover adverts such as ‘Baby pygmy marmoset for sale’, ‘Marmoset monkey looking for a good home’ and ‘Capuchin, marmoset, squirrel and spider monkeys for sale’.

Not only is this information shocking, but it highlights several problems with this online trade. Certain species, such as the cotton-top tamarin, are graded as critically endangered by the IUCN² and many adverts fail to specify the primate for sale, simply stating the type, such as ‘marmoset’ or ‘capuchin’.

The primate welfare and conservation charity Wild Futures estimates that anywhere between 3000 and 9000 primates are present within the UK pet trade, but exactly how many is unknown. Local authority data, however, reveal that 339 primates were licensed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act, in 2012.³ Worryingly, the British trade in pet primates shows no signs of slowing down. In 2013, calls about primates to the RSPCA’s cruelty and advice line saw a 73 per cent increase on 2012, representing the highest number in over a decade.³

According to RSPCA data, the predominant ‘pet of choice’ for primate enthusiasts in the UK appears to be the marmoset (81 per cent), followed by capuchin and squirrel monkeys.³ Most of these animals appear to be acquired from breeders and private dealers, although specialist dealers and pet shops have also been implicated in their supply.⁴

**Capacity to suffer**

The ability to experience emotions and suffer is not exclusive to humans within the primate order, and some other species are even able to reflect on past feelings and experiences. This, theoretically, could enhance their capacity to suffer.⁵ Within the past decade, the RSPCA has investigated 497 separate incidents involving at least 937 ‘pet’ primates. This is estimated to be four to 12 times higher than calls about more common companion animals,³ raising a whole range of welfare concerns about our ability to provide for their needs effectively.

Primates are, for the most part, highly social beings forming complex and sophisticated relationships with one another. Social dependence on other group members continues for a prolonged period after nutritional weaning, and the ability to interact with one another provides the opportunity for enrichment, learning, solace and security.⁶

Although it may be fairly obvious to us as veterinary students that primates should be housed in groups, an astonishing 60 per cent of primates in 198 incidents investigated by the RSPCA were housed alone.³

The practice of hand-rearing, used to produce more ‘tame’ animals, is exceptionally common among breeders. Investigating UK websites selling primates, I found high levels of sales adverts for hand-reared indi-
viduals, with one advertiser charging nearly double for hand- vs parent-reared squirrel monkeys, stating that ‘the monkeys will be more sociable and friendly due to the human bond already established’.

However, early weaning is to be strongly discouraged, as it has been linked to copious problems in later life, including abnormal behaviours, reduced breeding and aggressive tendencies.\(^8\) It has also been associated with lifelong medical complications such as dental and bone developmental problems.\(^9\)

**Inadequate husbandry**

Unsuitable housing and poor provision of needs is seen extensively among private primate keepers, whether intentional or not. Primates are exceptionally intelligent beings and providing a sufficient captive environment is nigh-on impossible. RSPCA data reveal that more than one quarter of enclosures were deemed inappropriately small, with some measuring only 0.27 m\(^2\) in floor area and 0.6 m in height.\(^3\) These small housing situations cause unnecessary stress due to restriction of the occupant’s ability to escape both conflict and aversive stimuli.

Monkey World has rescued 78 pet monkeys and apes in Britain since 1989 and reports that these individuals come from ‘some of the worst’ conditions of all those at its sanctuary.\(^10\)

Suboptimal husbandry in primates has been associated with a vast spectrum of atypical behaviours, manifesting as abnormal repetitive behaviours (pacing, rocking), self-harm (self-biting, over-grooming), consumption of urine and faeces and depression.\(^6\)

From a dietary perspective, replicating primates’ specialised nutritional requirements in captivity is challenging, as demonstrated by the high prevalence of wasting marmoset syndrome in captive populations.\(^9\) The high sugar, high carbohydrate, low fibre content of diets provided by owners results in medical issues such as tooth decay, diabetes and heart disease.\(^9\)

**Conservation challenges**

From a conservation standpoint, the international trade in primates has been identified as a significant threat to their conservation status.\(^11\)

The business of trafficking exotic animals is valued at US $12 billion per annum, and evidence links this market to other illegal trades, particularly consumption of bushmeat.\(^9\)

A study of the critically endangered Margarita capuchin monkey investigated the impact of the pet trade on its conservation status. Results revealed that, of the 300 individuals in the wild population, at least 100 had been hunted in the past 25 years for the pet trade.\(^12\)

**Zoonoses**

The suitability of primates for a household setting should also be considered from a zoonotic perspective. A study of pet capuchin monkeys found intestinal parasites known to survive in both humans and domestic species, such as *Blactocystis hominis*, *Strongyloids stercolaris* and *Ancylostoma* species.\(^12\)

The origins of many pet primates cannot be definitively proven, and most species are able to transmit diseases that could pose a significant risk to human health, such as Ebola, herpes B and tuberculosis.\(^9\)

Conversely, there are several human diseases that monkeys and apes potentially have little to no resistance towards, such as the common cold, measles and influenza.\(^9\)

**Flawed legal framework**

There are three main laws currently in place to restrict trade in primates as pets in the UK. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 places a duty of care on private primate keepers (and all pet owners) who must prevent unnecessary suffering in their animals.\(^3\) However, this has two major flaws: first, most pet primates are untraceable so there is no effective way to monitor their welfare; and second, this legislation contains no specific controls for primates.\(^13\)

To combat this problem, Defra created the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Privately Kept Primates (‘Primate Code’) in 2010.\(^6\) Although owners are not legally obliged to follow it, the code can be used in court if required. However, this guidance is decidedly open to interpretation because it applies to all primates, from lemur to chimpanzee. Also, the BVA has concerns that creating the code could be seen as ‘a sign of approval by the general public that it was ethically acceptable to keep such species in their home’.\(^13\)

The second piece of legislation is the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, which restricts the keeping of the majority of primate species without a local authority licence.\(^3\) However, this legislation interestingly does not apply to many of the most commonly kept species, such as marmosets, tamarins and squirrel monkeys. In addition, one study suggested that only an estimated 5 to 15 per cent of owners who should be in possession of a licence actually have one,\(^14\) and those who do not have a licence face minimal consequences.

The third law is the Pet Animals Act 1951, which states that licences are required by any persons selling animals as part of a business.\(^3\) Unsurprisingly, this also has its limitations in that it has proven difficult for local authorities to show that purchases are business transactions, and application of this Act to internet selling has proved challenging in recent years.
Reducing trade
So, what can be done to reduce this trade? Fifteen European countries have imposed a ban on the keeping of specific species and/or groups of primates as pets. To facilitate a ban, most of these countries gave existing owners a time period – usually three to six months – in which to alert the authorities and register the primate in their care.

This approach would be beneficial in the UK as it would avoid having to rehome potentially thousands of primates. However, the BVA has expressed concern as to whether a general licensing scheme would effectively target ‘noncompliant keepers who would be unlikely to participate’. Other countries, such as Denmark, also require individual identification of each primate and forbid the breeding of pet primates.

Several other organisations have released clear statements opposing the suitability of primates as pets, including the Primate Society of Great Britain, the International Primatological Society and Ape Alliance.

If all of these well-respected organisations are speaking out, why is the government not taking action? Even if we can all agree that primates are not suitable pets, implementing a total ban could prove difficult and could drive the market underground.

The best option, in my opinion, would not be to criminalise the trade, but to add in extra regulations, including background checks, obligatory training programmes and certificates. We could then, as a nation, gradually work towards a ban on primates as pets and keep these intelligent, complex and socially sophisticated beings where they belong . . . in the wild!

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7. BEE K. The long term effects of social deprivation on black-capped capuchins (Sapopu apella) rescued from the primate pet trade. The Plymouth Student Scientist 2017:104–27
What did you learn?
So much! We were very involved in the discussion of patient management and any procedures that were performed. Teaching rounds were absolutely incredible, going really in depth on topics such as blood gas analysis, fluid therapy and a practical session of abdominal/thoracic-focused assessment using sonography for trauma. The hospital has a memorial service where owners can donate their pets for education, so we were able to practise placing central venous catheters, tracheostomy tubes and chest tubes and centesis techniques in a wet lab session. I also quickly learnt to have conversions in my notebook for weights, temperatures and common drug names. If you suggest using Hartmann’s in the US, prepare for a lot of blank stares – also, prepare for your spelling to be incorrect (even if it might be correct in the UK).

Who were you working alongside?
I was in a small group with a final year Penn student and another extern from Glasgow vet school. We were able to work closely with all members of the team from vet techs up to senior faculty members. I was lucky to work with Dr Deborah Silverstein who is co-author of ‘Small Animal Critical Care Medicine’, one of the bibles of veterinary ECC.

How did you get this chance and how can other students emulate you?
PennVet offers an externship programme for every clinical service it runs, including its large animal clinics. You can choose to do up to four weeks of externship (one or two services) and the school does not charge you to attend (unlike some of the other US vet schools that offer externships). They were very happy to offer me a place and really helpful with planning knowing I was travelling a large distance to attend. PennVet students are often away on externships of their own, so it was easy to find a sublet a very convenient distance from the school and much cheaper than staying in a hotel. The school is also located close to the centre of Philly which has lots of historic sites and is super easy to navigate. The only regret I have is that I didn’t go for four weeks!
Seth Kennard undertook a research project in the Kruger National Park in South Africa.

Why South Africa?
South Africa, as I’m sure most readers will already know, is an incredibly beautiful country with a mixed past. I, along with three other students from the RVC, was lucky enough to visit the Hans Hoheisen Research Station in the Kruger National Park. The change South Africa has undergone in the past 20 years has been exceptional and makes it a very engaging place to study the One Health interface first hand. You have wildlife living close to domesticated livestock, which in turn live close to a human population that has limited access to healthcare and sanitation – that’s potent risk for zoonoses. That said, One Health is about more than just zoonoses and the zone around the national park (which is technically a foot-and-mouth disease [FMD] zone) also provides a ongoing case study for the socioeconomic factors that play into One Health.

What was your daily routine?
The fortnight was jam-packed with activities organised by the wonderful Professor Audrey Ruple from Purdue University. We visited the University of Pretoria veterinary clinic and joined them for house visits and for FMD surveillance. These visits meant getting up before dawn, an unpleasantness negated by the high chance of catching lions sleeping on the park’s exit road. The afternoons were spent in engaging and fascinating lectures on local diseases many of which either have never existed in the UK or have been eradicated. Visits to a health centre, a school, an eco-village, a cattle grass conservation area and the local market opened our eyes and helped us put our theory into practice.

The second week was spent with rangers and wildlife vets at a nearby reserve. We joined them on their annual rhino census as we collected data, not just for research but also to help with prosecutions if one of the sampled rhino horns later finds its way on the black market – an all too common occurrence. While we were there a rhino was shot (last year in South Africa an average of three a day were poached) and we helped with the postmortem examination which was certainly different from the PMEs I’d done at college as there were no hyenas or lions circling in London!

What did you learn?
I learned too much to put into writing. Several things will stick with me for different reasons. With no refuse collection system many communities would pile up what couldn’t be burnt, resulting in small mountains of nappies and cans. Although it was disgusting, and a serious health risk, how different is it to what we in the UK do? The only difference in the UK is it’s out of sight and out of mind, buried deep for future generations to clear up. I’ll also be more aware when I next travel of where I shop; the roads to the national park were well paved and maintained with tourist shops selling nick nacks, but just the other side of the anti-poaching fences locals saw none of the tourist money. It really made me think.

Who were you working alongside?
We were privileged to work alongside some top-notch vets and researchers working with the University of Pretoria and the local game reserves. The trip was born of Prof Ruple’s hard work, and six amazing Purdue University students and various Pretoria students made it a beautiful mix of nationalities and backgrounds, from Alaska to Swansea, Germany to Great Britain.

How did you get this chance and how can other students emulate you?
For postgraduate opportunities the universities of Pretoria and Antwerp offer a distance learning masters that can be completed while in employment and has a few ‘in the field’ modules in the Hans Hoheisen Research Station.

For students there are chances out there, you just need to ask around a lot and plan far in advance. Paid courses like Vets Go Wild essentially cut out the time wasting for you, but there are plenty of wildlife vets who are keen to share what they know – it just may take a while to find them! Use contacts at your university, such as staff who have done research or worked in the area you want to visit. For funding options, check out the BVA travel grants – www.bva.co.uk/Membership-and-benefits/Students/Travel-grants-for-students/
Megan Rawlins travelled to Tanzania.

Why Tanzania?
I went to Tanzania for my research project. At the RVC we have to do two projects; one in first year and the second in final year. My project was entitled ‘Evaluating antimicrobial resistance in humans and poultry in rural Tanzania and exploring antimicrobial use in this low income setting’ and it contributed to a wider project ‘Strengthening food and nutrition security through family poultry and crop integration in Tanzania and Zambia’ (the project’s short title is Nkuku4U – ‘nkuku’ means chicken in Nyanja, a local language in Zambia). This project is run by the University of Sydney.

What was your daily routine?
For the field-based part of my project, I woke up at around 7 am and headed to the villages where I was collecting my data. The closest was around 40 minutes away by car on rough terrain. We would meet the villagers who were helping with my data collection as the questionnaires had to be translated into the local language. We spent three days collecting samples, one day training the people helping us and then one day at each village. We would eat lunch made by one of the villagers; a common lunch was ‘Chips mayai’ which is essentially chips mixed together with egg and fried (very tasty!).

For the lab-based part of my project I was at the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) in Morogoro. This is the only university in Tanzania to offer veterinary medicine as a degree. The Southern African Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance is also based there. I stayed in a guest house with five other students who were also completing projects at the university or volunteering with the charity APOPO at the university.

I got to the lab for about 8 am every day after a breakfast of cipatti. I worked until about 5 pm. The lab was basic but it was amazing how the researchers had adapted to do their work without state-of-the-art equipment. In the evening we would go out for dinner or to a bar with the other students and locals.

What did you learn?
That I can travel by myself and it not be a disaster (anyone who knows me will know that this is a miracle!). I also learnt to be flexible and ‘go with the flow’ – when doing research abroad not everything will go right but it is important to just try to adapt where possible. I learnt all about the amazing culture Tanzania has to offer; how friendly the people were and even picked up a bit of Swahili. Planning and conducting research abroad is difficult but it helped me learn valuable skills that I can use for the future.

Who were you working alongside?
I was working alongside members of the Nkuku4U project team in Tanzania and professors from the SUA university in Morogoro.

How did you get this chance and how can other students emulate you?
I was lucky enough to get this opportunity from Professor Richard Kock at the RVC who is involved with the project and many other One Health projects. My recommendation if you would like to do something like this is to look around and Google to see if there are projects that you would like to be a part of; ask students who have been involved in similar projects how they got involved; and ask professors who are involved with international projects if you can work with them!
Claire Scott is doing a postgrad internship at the World Health Organization's headquarters in Geneva.

Why Geneva?
Above and beyond it being a very pretty place, Geneva is home to the United Nations and arguably houses some of our most influential world figures. As someone keen to make a mark and kick up a bit of a fuss in the arena of global health I thought it important that I spend a bit of time here, so made it my aim to seek out an internship with the World Health Organization (WHO).

What have you been doing?
Here at WHO I work in the Food Safety and Zoonoses department. I came with an antimicrobial resistance (AMR) focus and some side interests in emergency outbreak investigation, but since arriving my interests in emergency outbreak came with an antimicrobial resistance. Safety and zoonoses department. I here at WHO I work in the Food Organization (WHO).

What have you learnt so far?
Writing down my learning over these few months can’t really do it justice, as most of what I’ve learnt is not academic. Yes I have learnt how to structure documents and increased my breadth of knowledge of issues from AMR to universal health coverage, tobacco taxation and vaccination access. But there are a few more conceptual things that I have learnt that will really shape my life in the years to come:

1) I don’t want to spend life sat at a desk for a good decade or more; it makes my back hurt and I get tired around 2 pm;
2) It is possible to switch off from work and have a normal social life (I’m still no good at paddle-boarding!), but I don’t want to do that quite yet; and,
3) For now, I need to actually see the impact that I am making and receive reassurance that my work is impactful before I could work in an environment in which you must trust that you are doing something with tangible meaning without actually seeing it.

In this way, I have learnt that the place I dreamed of working for the past four or so years isn’t the right place for me just now, but I am so lucky to have had this realisation and it has only opened my eyes to other avenues and made me more determined to pursue them.

Who are you working alongside?
Day-to-day I work alongside microbiologists, epidemiologists, vets and other staff members. We also have a fantastic intern community here, which, for example, allowed myself and a colleague to give a presentation to the group on the role of vets within global health (stunning the medics in the room that their patient’s salmonella could be from their tortoise!). In the bubble of Geneva you are also surrounded by young, highly driven, future leaders in all parts of life, so I would say I have learnt as much socialising here as I have actually at work.

How did you get this chance and how can other students emulate you?
I got this opportunity from a lot of digging, LinkedIn stalking and a bit of luck, but this is changing. The WHO intern selection process is becoming more transparent and applicants now have to apply through official means, hopefully making the system fair. The intern board is also rapid advancing; at the moment we receive lunch vouchers but there are hopes to bring in much more support for interns to make the expense of Geneva easier to bear. There has never been a better time to start investigating the UN and associated organisations and what they could offer to you. I have also been lucky enough to travel with the support of the Sam Hignett Travel Scholarship from the Animal Care Trust at the RVC, so be sure to investigate how your university (or BVA and AVS) can help you achieve your aims.
Michelle Reichart took part in the Veterinary Leadership Program run by Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

**Why Cornell?**
I went to Cornell to participate in the Veterinary Leadership Program, a programme that encourages participation in research. As someone who is interested in research as a career, this provided me with the perfect opportunity to get international research experience.

**What was your daily routine?**
I spent most of my day in the lab. I was working on a project that looked at the role of dietary fibre on glucose regulation, which could lead to new therapeutics for people and animals suffering from type 2 diabetes mellitus. Some evenings we had seminars about career planning and how best to pursue a career in research as a veterinarian.

Everyone on the course lived in a large communal house on campus, so there was plenty of opportunity to get to know everyone. On the weekends, we would go exploring around the gorges and waterfalls of upstate New York and occasionally made the trek to New York City to take in the sights.

**What did you learn?**
I learned a variety of useful microbiology techniques, including PCR, qPCR, genotyping and Western blotting. The leadership side of the course educated me on the different career opportunities available for vets, including industry and academia. I also had a lot of time to network with peers from around the world and made friendships that I hope will last a lifetime.

**How did you get this chance and how can other students emulate you?**
I applied to the Veterinary Leadership Program in November/December 2017 and was accepted in February 2018. At that time I was paired with a research lab at Cornell and started discussing what my project would be. The programme looks for applicants with a strong interest in research, so anyone interested in the course should emphasise this on their application. The RVC Animal Care Trust provided me with a stipend on being accepted to the programme, so the cost of the trip over was completely covered.

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Starting a new job? Check your contract against the BVA contracts of employment leaflet.

www.bva.co.uk/guides
Bush ops: adventures in Zimbabwe

Beth Dixon (Final Year, Liverpool)

Entering the 26th hour of my journey home, still wide awake and having lost all interest in the in-flight entertainment, I had plenty of opportunity to reminisce about an eventful week in Zimbabwe.

I had been part of a team of three vets and two assistants from Wildlife Vets International, a UK-based charity, who had helped to provide veterinary services for a vaccination and neuter clinic community outreach project organised by Painted Dog Conservation (PDC), based in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

We had divided into two teams and our mobile clinics visited villages and numerous nondescript patches of scrubland located near the borders of the Hwange National Park. In four short, busy days, our small but amazing team neutered 44 females and 64 males and vaccinated a total of 1174 dogs (and a few cats for good measure), while treating the plethora of minor ailments we were presented with. To keep us on our toes we had a constant audience crowding around for a good view.

Our clinics were hectic, noisy and fabulous. It wasn’t long before I adapted to the sedate-paced chaos that is ingrained in African culture. Embracing it was liberating! Dogs were everywhere – wheelbarrows of puppies, bikes laden with dogs across laps or in ‘bespoke’ trailers, dogs attached to improvised leads or roaming freely – arriving by the hundreds each day. Together, people and dogs lay peacefully in the dappled shade surrounding our makeshift clinic, patiently waiting for their turn. There was always a long queue.

We operated from dawn until dusk (and in one instance by torch light), thriving in the bustling environment and coping with the added joys that always come with injectable anaesthesia and limited monitoring equipment!

Dogs generally roam freely in Zimbabwe, but they are almost always owned and impeccably behaved, returning to their owner at a whistle or call. The names were a constant source of amusement; winner of ‘best name’ went to the dog called ‘Come Back’ (I would be surprised if most dogs in the UK didn’t already presume that was their name!).

Long queues formed for our services

Helping hands – volunteering for a charity clinic in Zimbabwe provided insight into different attitudes towards animals
Schoolchildren were regular visitors and we told them about the importance of neutering and vaccinating dogs.

Dozens of schoolchildren visited us each day, to sing, dance and recite poetry and in return we taught them about the importance of neutering and vaccinating dogs. Giving owners advice on neutering is something most vets do daily and, as a final-year student, when I consult, it usually involves a pre- or post-neutering check, so I’ve already practised and prepared my spiel. In Zimbabwe, however, people aren’t worried about their labrador having an over-amorous relationship with his favourite toy or their bitch having a litter. So I had to tweak it a little, emphasising that less roaming would mean a dog would be a more loyal guard dog and would fight less and live longer; and if the female was neutered that the neighbour’s dog would stay out of your house and your children would be safer.

It was fascinating to compare the reactions the children had to witnessing induction, preparation and undertaking of the surgeries with how I imagine most British six year olds would react. It was so apparent that the proactive outreach and education programmes that PDC has provided are really leading to a shift in cultural awareness and attitude towards wildlife among the younger generations. I asked one girl whether she had ever seen a painted dog, to which she replied animatedly that they are very rare and then without prompting began to tell me all about painted dogs and how her mother is one of the local artists creating ‘snare art’, which is sold through PDC’s art centre.

On the final day, one of the older students, looking sombre, asked me a question. I had been talking to her about the surgery I was doing on her bitch, which had a small transmissible venereal tumour (TVT). The student must have been around 15 years old, and asked me whether the bitch’s puppies would get the tumours from her. It’s then that I realised we had overlooked something. When explaining TVTs in a simple manner, we had been describing them as a sexually transmitted infection that causes a tumour around the vulva or penis. We all omitted to consider the presence of any other sexually transmitted infections that could be at the forefront of people's minds, such as HIV. Not for the first time that week, I realised just how privileged I am.

We saw numerous TVTs of varying degrees; the more we looked, the more we found. In themselves, these presented a huge ethical dilemma for us. We didn’t have any chemotherapy drugs (surprise, surprise), so the only available options were euthanasia, leave or debulk. None of the dogs we saw appeared otherwise unwell, but knowing that the tumours could only get worse was terrible.

People and animals are tough here and expected standards of living are greatly disparate to our own – so should our attitudes toward animals be altered to accommodate this difference? I don’t know the correct answer, but it is an interesting question to ask.

We made every effort to educate the owners and those around them as to why this had happened, and to insist that future animals were neutered before they could breed. Hopefully as the dog population growth slows, and community participation in these outreach projects increases, the incidence of TVTs will fall.

This was a very interesting dilemma and one that I know people may have strong opinions on, but life isn’t black and white and it’s much more than 50 shades of grey. So if there’s one lesson I’ve learnt it is that nothing is simple, but don’t worry, because it doesn’t have to be.
World-famous vets Dr Gerardo Poli (author of the Minivet Guide), Dr Alex Hynes (star of the Australian vet documentary The Bondi Vet), and Dave Nicol (author of ‘So You’re a Vet – Now What?’) recently delivered an emergency and critical care workshop for RVC students and staff, teaming up with the RVC’s ECC Society for a fantastic day of lectures and frank talks about life as a vet and beyond.

Alex delivered the first lecture of the day, discussing dyspnoea and drawing from her own experience as an emergency vet to share her top tips for stabilising patients. She broke down management of the dyspnoeic patient into six simple points:

1. Oxygen therapy – flow by (FiO₂ 25–40 per cent); mask (FiO₂ 50–60 per cent); oxygen cage (FiO₂ 25–100 per cent dependent on the cage); nasal lines (FiO₂ 30–60 per cent); and intubation (FiO₂ 100 per cent).
2. Sedation – reduce stress and O₂ demand.
3. Intubation – use if the patient looks like it needs it and if sedation fails to improve airway dynamics.
4. Ventilation – if respiratory effort is unsustainable and unable to maintain normal SPO₂ and PaO₂ parameters.
5. Medications – furosemide for pulmonary oedema; bronchodilators and steroids to improve airway dynamics; antibiotics as appropriate.
6. Thoracocentesis – appropriate when associated with a history of trauma and reduced lung sounds on auscultation (Alex added that you should fenestrate your catheter to prevent clogs of tissue blocking it).

Shock (and awe)
Next up, Gerardo spoke to the students about ‘shock’ – fittingly so, considering the star-struck reactions of many of the students to our speakers’ arrival! With regard to veterinary medicine, shock is defined as inadequate cellular energy production caused by poor O₂ delivery to tissues. In his lecture Gerardo delineated the four types of shock:

- Hypovolaemic – blood volume drops, which disturbs preload.
- Cardiogenic – contractility of the myocardium is affected, which subsequently alters stroke volume, resulting in poor O₂ delivery to tissues.
- Distributive – further subdivided into obstructive and vasodilatory. Obstructive shock is a preload issue, and vasodilatory shock is a malfunction of vascular tone.
- Other – anything that doesn’t fit with the above, such as hypoxaemic and metabolic shock.

Top career tips
Dave Nicol joined us to share some careers advice. In both his book and regular podcast ‘Blunt dissection’, he talks about the common pitfalls faced by new grads and how to handle them. In his lecture to us, he gave his top three tips on how to stay in the veterinary profession and avoid quitting:

- Don’t choose your first job based on the money – instead choose a practice that can offer emotional and clinical support, growth opportunities and networking. Put support first when you’re choosing jobs.
- Employers are more desperate than you are – don’t undervalue yourself and jump at the first opportunity you get. Exercise patience when job hunting.
- Imposter syndrome is part of the learning process. Accept this and grow your confidence, as this is required to push through from consciously incompetent (which Dave
Table 1: Types of fluids and their indications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluid Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystalloids</td>
<td>Mineral salts and water-soluble molecules that pass into the intracellular space and do not increase oncotic pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertonic saline</td>
<td>Na⁺ concentration higher than plasma, used to temporarily correct perfusion deficits and to stabilise head trauma patients. Contraindicated in hyponatraemic and dehydrated patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloids</td>
<td>Fluids containing large molecules that exert osmotic pull and retain water in the intravascular space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

believe to be implicitly tied to imposter syndrome) to consciously competent.

Dave finished his talk by reminding us that while animals are a big part of our workload, so are the people who own them. If we don’t appreciate the role owners play in our work, then we’re just setting ourselves up for disappointment and complaints. And nobody wants that.

Fluid therapy all round

Up next, Gerardo delivered a lecture on intravenous fluid therapy (IVFT). Unfortunately, at this point, the air conditioning broke on the hottest day of the year, leaving the entire audience with a bizarre craving for Hartmann’s.

In his lecture, Gerardo defined the goal of IVFT as ‘Correcting intravascular fluid deficits to improve oxygen delivery’. He covered the principles of fluid therapy, which he narrowed down to three concepts:

- Types of fluids and indications (see Table 1).
- Assessment of perfusion and hydration – this includes assessment of cardiac output via pulse quality, auscultation, blood pressure, etc, while perfusion can be assessed by capillary refill time (CRT), mentation, mucous membrane pallor, and peripheral temperature.
- Correction of hydration and perfusion.

IV fluid resuscitation (shock fluid therapy) aims to stabilise patients by improving O₂ delivery to tissues with crystalloids, colloids and maybe blood products as required.

Shock rate for dog: 90 ml/kg/hr
Shock rate for cat: 60 ml/kg/hr

IVFT should be stopped once the patient’s physiological parameters have returned to normal.

We finished the day’s lectures with a joint presentation from Gerardo and Alex on triage, which they boiled down to ‘A CRASH PLAN’:

A = Airway: respiration pattern, airway patency.

C = Cardiovascular: circulation, heart sounds, pulses, CRT.

R = Respiratory: respiration sounds, bruising, wounds to chest.

A = Abdomen: palpate, bruising, wounds, analgesia. Check bladder.

S = Spine: neurological examination, pain, posture, crepitus.

H = Head: mentation, wounds, bruising, eyes, ears, nose.

You can follow Gerardo, Alex and Dave on Instagram at:

- www.instagram.com/drgerardopoli/?hl=en
- www.instagram.com/dralexhynes/?hl=en
- www.instagram.com/drdavenicol/
Eye-opening introduction to the IVSA

Victoria Kwok (winner of AVS Connect Award)

Sat in the presence of like-minded people, sharing the same passion for animals, yet having very different cultures and journeys to vet school, I had never felt a stronger sense of belonging.

That was how I felt when I attended the 67th International Veterinary Students’ Association (IVSA) congress in Krakow in July.

It was only earlier this year that I first heard of the IVSA, and I remember thinking to myself – it’s time to get out of the Cambridge bubble. Before I knew it, I found myself viewing the IVSA website realising just how much I was missing out on. Then everything happened within a month; first, I was elected onto the UK & Ireland IVSA committee and became the Cambridge Junior Rep; then I applied for the congress and frantically researched where to obtain funding (a general theme of student life!). Fortunately I was honoured with the AVS Connect Award, and further grants from Clare College meant that I could comfortably confirm my place as a delegate. The excitement did not stop as my inbox gradually received more updates and information packs about the forthcoming congress.

It didn’t take long for the big day to arrive. Finally getting to know the other 12 lovely delegates from six different veterinary schools across the UK and Ireland really helped me settle in. The first evening in Krakow was absolutely crazy with what felt like a thousand names to learn! Nonetheless, the trip to the local brewery was a nice treat and I think I made an interesting impression with a classic Asian flush after a few sips of beer…

The next day proved to be a little unlucky since it was pouring with rain. Our sightseeing trip of the city centre quickly became a great bonding session in McDonald’s, despite us being cold and wet. However, this all turned around during the cultural evening later that night. With everyone gathered in their respective countries, representing 33 different nations, having prepared various authentic foods and drink, it was so incredible to see how this congress could bring people of all cultures together! And despite knowing we had 6 am wake-up calls, many of us took part in the infamous shot challenge – free alcohol everywhere is hard to resist…

General Assembly

Before attending the congress, I had
It was so refreshing to be immersed in nature against the breathtaking backdrop of the Tatra mountains #wellness #positivelypoland

little knowledge of what a General Assembly was. I learned so much from the first few hours of GA, from the impressive projects the Standing Committees had been working on, to the incredible global opportunities that we as IVSA members can undertake, not to mention the renowned IVSA ‘wobble’ dance. Although there were times when I was super knackered and the ‘amendments to the amendments’, etc, were quite tedious, it was amazing nonetheless to be a part of the work in progress and to witness the flourishing of the IVSA.

"Embarking on this congress was an eye-opening experience and undeniably one of the best decisions of my life"

Seeing the sights
One of the most memorable trips of my adventure was the visit to Zakopane. It was a stunning town in the country, complete with beautiful scenery. We also probably ate a day’s worth of food at the hotel lunch buffet that day, but despite our food babies, we had quality time in the swimming pool straight after. I felt like such a kid again, getting overly excited about a slide and a few floats. Attempting the wobble dance in the pool was also a ton of fun, even though I could barely touch the bottom — my struggles were real.

After a beautiful night’s sleep, we went on a hike in the gorgeous Tatra mountains and managed to spot a wild bear among the bushes. During lunch we sat by the river while one of the organising committee members played her ukulele and sang for us — it was perfect.

As always happens when you’re having fun, the time flew by and before we had got to know each other properly it was the penultimate evening and the official dinner. It was definitely a highlight for me. Everyone looked so ‘prti’ all glammed up. That night, when the newly elected committee was announced and the organising committee members delivered their speeches, I knew this fabulous experience was slowly coming to an end. Nevertheless, the ‘white T-shirt party’ the following evening gave us a last opportunity to bid our farewells and dance the night away.

Embarking on this congress was an eye-opening experience and undeniably one of the best decisions of my life. Importantly, it highlighted to me the significance of student wellness, through multiple workshops on self-care and stress management. As well as all the lasting memories created over the 12 days, I have met lifelong friends, and also become a part of the most incredible IVSA family.

I am very grateful for this experience and I encourage everyone to get involved in the numerous projects and opportunities the IVSA has to offer, including the 67th IVSA Symposium in South Korea in January next year.
New friends, new experiences

James Statton, Rachel Sharpe (Nottingham IVSA reps)

IVSA Nottingham had the pleasure of exchanging with a lovely group of students from IVSA Olsztyn in Poland.

In March we hosted 10 students from the vet school in Olsztyn in Poland and got to show them the sights and delights of the land of Robin Hood, our vet school and some classic British culture. We took them for a Sunday roast at our local pub, a formal evening dinner at our campus and a look round our teaching facilities with a tour of our onsite abattoir and a sheep handling practical. Their visit to us was a great success and come May it was our turn to head to across to Poland.

We arrived in Olsztyn around midnight and were reunited with our lovely hosts. We were shown to where we would be staying, which turned out to be their student accommodation on the university campus. Our first day was spent exploring the campus and touring their vet school, including their in-house practice with some cutting-edge diagnostic machines for large animals.

In the afternoon we all tried something a bit new and played Quidditch, a definite first! This was really fun and surprisingly hard work. That evening we all sat out on the university grounds and sampled some traditional Polish food and drink.

Out and about

The next day we explored some of the area surrounding Olsztyn. We drove to Bukwald to an animal sanctuary that specialises in birds but is home to all types of wildlife, including a raven that could talk!

In the afternoon we saw a traditional song and dance show by some students of the university. They had just come back from a tour of China so we were really lucky to get to see them. That evening we had a barbecue with the extended IVSA family at Olsztyn and were taught a fun drinking game called Flanki. To play this you place a can in the middle of two groups and take it in turns to throw a stone at it and try to knock it down. If you are successful, you down your drink as quick as possible while the other team races to put the can back up. The team that finishes all its drinks first is the winner. It was really fun and I would definitely recommend giving it a try!

We were very lucky with the weather while in Poland so on the Sunday we took advantage of this and went to the local lake beach, where we spent a few hours lying around in the sun and taking a freezing dip in the water. In the afternoon we did a fun scavenger hunt around the old town of Olsztyn which took us to several landmarks, including the cathedral, castle and a statue that granted you luck if you rubbed his nose. We also had a go at an escape room – we were split into three groups and one group managed to break the record by getting out in 18 minutes! In the evening we went for a traditional Polish meal of pierogi (dumplings), before adjourning to a Viking-themed pub where we all drank beer out of horns.
On Monday we were shown around more of the university and had a talk from the head anatomist, who showed us a huge array of specimens he had preserved. He then took us for a look round the pathology museum and we got to see all the weird and wonderful specimens they had!

Afterwards, we were able to take some of the gorgeous teaching dogs belonging to the vet school out for a walk; this was really fun for all. In the afternoon we returned to the lake and were treated to a calm scenic sail around. This was so very relaxing after our busy few days that most of us came off the lake saying we wanted to learn to sail!

That night we went into the town again, where our hosts took us to a bar that served more types of shot than we knew possible. Being the dedicated tourists we were, we made sure to do our best to sample as many as we could!

Tuesday was our final day and after a slow start from the night before we had an interesting lecture on exotic animal parasitology from one of the vet school’s professors, as well as a look at their parasitology specimen collection. After this we went for a final wander around Olsztyn old town for ice cream and to stock up on souvenirs before saying our last goodbyes to our new lifelong friends and heading back to the airport on our journey home.

We all had an incredible time in Olsztyn and would recommend it to any group wanting to explore Poland, see some of its culture and meet some amazing people along the way!

Warm welcomes at home and away

Jacky Chan King Leung (4th Year, Bristol), Olivia Goodwin (3rd Year, Bristol)

This year, the Bristol IVSA branch had the opportunity to organise an exchange with Warsaw. We agreed on a five-day trip to each city.

Just before we broke up for the Easter holidays, 12 students from Warsaw arrived in Bristol, accompanied by an unexpected cold front! However, this did not dim our spirits and we gave the Poles a warm welcome at the pub, where they got to sample some famous Somerset cider.

During the week, we made sure our visitors experienced the best Bristol has to offer: landmarks such as Cabot Tower, an array of drinking establishments, museums and cuisines. One of the highlights was certainly looking out over Bristol from the Clifton Suspension Bridge, with a spectacular view of the River Avon in the snow. We also organised a day trip to nearby Bath, to discover the culture and heritage of the beautiful old city.
Beside the tourist attractions, we also ensured our guests had an educational week, filled with plenty of veterinary-related experiences.

One of our lecturers, Andy Grist, generously took the time to deliver a practical for us, in which we were all introduced to a variety of parasites commonly found in livestock in the UK. It was especially interesting to learn about the significance of these parasites with regard to veterinary public health, and the session was greatly enjoyed by the Polish students.

A tour of Bristol zoo, kindly given by zoo vet and lecturer Rowena Killick, reminded us of the importance of conservation and gave us the chance to see some wild beasts up close. Another fantastic outing saw us take the Warsaw students to visit the wildlife photography exhibition at the M-Shed.

Our sponsor, Vets4Pets, offered us a tour of its small animal clinic. This provided an opportunity for our guests to ask the clinicians any questions and get a taste of what it is like to practise as a vet in the UK.

The five days passed by very quickly. After some emotional goodbyes, the students from Warsaw left Bristol, eagerly awaiting our return visit in two months’ time.

Warsaw bound

After a stressful month of revision and exams, 11 students from Bristol set off to Warsaw to meet our IVSA friends. Despite our flights being delayed, our Polish hosts greeted us with a friendly welcome and offered us delicious pizzas for dinner.

Over the five days we spent in Warsaw, we visited many tourist attractions such as the beautiful old town, the Warsaw Uprising Museum and the Palace of Culture and Science. We were all touched by the tragic history behind the capital as it stands today – it’s hard to believe it once underwent such devastating destruction during the Second World War.

Another attraction worth mentioning is the ‘Invisible Exhibition’, which allows visitors to experience the realities of life as a visually impaired person. Entering different rooms in complete darkness, we navigated a fully furnished kitchen; a street scene featuring cars and bicycles; and an art gallery, trying to identify the objects using our non-visual senses. It is fair to say we all left with a great deal of respect for those who experience life this way every day!

Taking a tour around the Warsaw University vet campus, we were all impressed by how modern, specialised and well-equipped its clinics are for training purposes as well as working veterinary hospitals. The trip also broadened our veterinary horizons, allowing us to attend classes that are not offered as part of the UK curriculum. For example, we all were ‘buzzing’ after being shown how health checks are carried out on a live bee colony, and following this we were lucky enough to have the process of in vitro fertilisation demonstrated right in front of our eyes. A final class on toxicology enabled us to apply our prior knowledge from vet school to clinical diagnostic scenarios.

Taking full advantage of the sunny weather, we spent a few evenings on the beach by the river, watching the sunset, chatting and teaching our Polish peers some English drinking games! Our last day comprised an exhausting but rewarding five-hour kayak trip which, despite never-ending obstructions in the river, no-one complained about thanks to the sunshine beaming down on us all day.

Both trips were amazing adventures. We are so thankful to our new friends from IVSA Warsaw for being such gracious hosts, and we cherish the memories we made together.
Running for rhinos

Seth Kennard (JAVS Editor)

If you take a look at the news at the moment you could be forgiven for thinking that it’s all doom and gloom. Famines, earthquakes, wars, riots, strikes and politicians fill the airwaves with dreary tidings. There are a couple of ways that you can respond to such things: (a) you can stop watching the news and watch children’s cartoons instead; or (b) you can do something about it. I decided to do the latter!

I saw first hand the effects of rhino poaching earlier this year when conducting a postmortem examination on a deceased rhino. I was part of a group from the RVC and Purdue University that was helping to collect data from the dwindling rhino population in the Kruger National Park adjacent to the research station where we were based (see page 10 of this issue of JAVS). Last year, vets surveyed 60 rhino, mostly white, and this year they were hoping there would be at least 40 to count. Instead, only 18 could be found — or 19 if you include the hornless body that was found by rangers several days after the poachers had slipped out of the park.

In 2007, 13 rhino were poached in South Africa but that number exploded to 1215 in 2014 and with the official figures for 2017 now sitting around 1028 the situation isn’t getting much better.

The effects of poaching go beyond the loss of a beautiful animal as the national parks become more militarised and dangerous for those who live around them. Electrified fences two-and-a-half metres high surround the parks, partly to keep animals in but also to hinder poachers. These fences give the impression of a national border, restricting access to land that locals have used for generations. Those who live just outside the park see little benefit from the tourism that funds the fencing, but feel the effects when police conduct raids on houses searching for signs of poaching. Around the Kruger National Park foot-and-mouth disease in the wild buffalo also means that local cattle cannot be exported and rarely sell for their true value, again impacting on local people.

This is why I decided to run the New Forest marathon on 9 September dressed as a rhino for Save the Rhino. The charity is working in countries across the world (with many endangered species of rhino also found in Asia) to protect rhinos through a variety of means. Any support would be gratefully received: https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/seththerhino

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Preparation for that ‘what do I do now?’ moment

Seth Kennard (JAVS Editor)

Starting out in practice as a farm vet seems a scary thing. Unlike those beginning their careers in the warmth of a small animal practice, farm vets work from their car in areas of poor internet coverage – hence why I’m trying to build a mini-library in my car in preparation for my first ‘what do I do now?’ moment. With this in mind I was keen to review Bovine Surgery and Lameness to see how it would fit with my growing collection and I must say I’m impressed.

This edition, the third, is a great tool for the farm vets of today. Economic viability and animal welfare are deftly balanced in the brief but concise discussions, and reducing antimicrobial use is also discussed. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure, and prevention is covered for many of the conditions for which surgical correction may be required.

The experience of the four authors shines through, with some warnings so dire that you won’t forget them in a hurry, no doubt making you a better veterinary surgeon. The particular attention paid to legislation is reassuring and very helpful in stopping you from making errors like prescribing something that shouldn’t go near a food-producing animal. Usefully for those who will work in the USA, differences in legislation are outlined.

The book is clearly organised by body systems, but with sections also on anaesthesia and diagnostic techniques. However, if you were to simply flick through the book, the lack of colour barring and the orange used for the titles may make it look hard to digest. That said, the regular boxed discussion points, tips and warnings make it easy to read when you need it most. Although pictures would be nice, and at times advantageous, the well drawn sketches add a lot of information and make surgical approaches and methods much clearer.

This 350-page edition is great for introducing techniques and as a refresher; but if you want full details, other resources would be better and a good place to look for recommendations would be the excellent further reading list. The book does come with an online resources section, which contains lecture slides and videos – none of them ground breaking but still a nice touch.

Overall I would highly recommend Wiley’s third edition of Bovine Surgery and Lameness. I have used it extensively while on placement and it was invaluable when quickly prepping on the way to a farm so I could assess the case with the benefit of knowledge and be proactive in my approach to it.

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