IN THIS ISSUE

BVA Council Update

Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF) Discussion Forum

Exam stress management

Other news and opportunities

BVA Council Update

April Meeting

Charlotte Jones

President

BVA Council happens once a quarter and is chaired by the BVA President, currently Anna Judson. There are 43 voting members of council, you can read about the structure here.

Part of the role as AVS President is to represent students at BVA Council, ensuring our voices are heard and to provide a student perspective on current affairs. The day is always filled with policies and issues to discuss and debate, and the April meeting was no exception! Please see the points below for a summary of the meeting.

Competition and Markets Authority Investigation: We received an update on BVA’s joint response with BSAVA, SPVS, BVNA and VMG to the CMA’s recent consultation on a proposed market investigation reference, as well as on the progress of its Transparency and Client Choice Working Group. We unanimously approved the guidance for the profession developed by the group – the publication can be seen here.
Great Workplaces by BVA: We received a presentation on the progress of Great Workplaces by BVA, an accreditation scheme designed to foster and celebrate a healthy workplace culture. Following a successful pilot, the scheme is on track for launch at BVA Live. This is directly applicable to students, not just in looking for your first job, but possibly to assist in selecting practices for EMS.

BVA Working Group – RCVS Governance: We heard from BVA’s Working Group tasked with developing the BVA position on RCVS Governance and RCVS Council composition, and discussed the concerns many of the BVA Council representatives have heard from members regarding the RCVS proposals.

Excitingly, we endorsed Rob Williams as the preferred candidate for BVA Junior Vice President 2024-25. We also received presentations on BVA’s communications strategy, and on the important work of BVA’s Animal Welfare Foundation.

You can view the summary of discussions online. The minutes are available to BVA members here.

**AWF Discussion Forum**

*Jayson Hughes*

*Junior Vice President*

The 2024 Animal Welfare Foundation forum at the Cavendish Conference Centre provided a comprehensive exploration of pressing animal welfare issues, with insightful discussions and distinguished speakers from a variety of backgrounds.

The first session, "Animal Welfare, Ethics, and Rights," set the philosophical groundwork for the forum, engaging attendees in nuanced discussions on the ethical dimensions of animal welfare practices. Following this, "Euthanasia: Better a day too early than a day too late?" provided a platform for ethical debates, prompting reflections on the timing and methods of euthanasia in animal care.

The subsequent session, "Animal behaviour: not just a problem," illuminated the intricacies of animal cognition and its implications for welfare policies and practices. Lastly, "The Minds of Insects and Why They Matter" underscored the importance of considering the welfare of all sentient beings, regardless of their size or perceived cognitive abilities, offering a unique perspective on insect welfare.
The month of May is well and truly here and it brings with it one of the most dreaded times of the vet school calendar: exam season. There's no point in sugar coating it, exams can be really stressful! It's a period of panic cramming, (very) late nights, endless textbooks and eventually resigning yourself to your fate. Although, there are those people that go through the entire thing unbothered and well slept, so if you are one of them then I'm both impressed and more than a little jealous.

Exam Stress Management

Niamh Young
Welfare Officer

These types of events are extremely beneficial to veterinary students. They provide a unique opportunity to broaden one's understanding outside of a traditional veterinary education. I gained valuable insights from experts such as Sean Wensley, Peter Sandoe and Marian Stamp Dawkins that extend far beyond the university walls. I gained insight in how to navigate the ethical complexities of our future profession, gained a deeper appreciation for animal behaviour and expanded my understanding of welfare beyond the familiar species.

In essence, veterinary students should seize every opportunity to attend events like the AWF forum. They provide not only knowledge, but also inspiration, reminding us of the profound impact we can have in creating a more compassionate world for all creatures, great and small.

However, for most of the vet student community, exams are tough and I definitely feel that whole heartedly. I’m currently going into my final year and I still feel the gut punch of exam nerves like it’s my very first one. Luckily, there are some things that you can do to make exams feel less like clinging to the back of a crazy farmer’s quad bike. It’s definitely still a bumpy ride, but it’s much more manageable when you invest in protecting your wellbeing. This isn’t an extensive stress management guide by any means, but here are some key things that make the difference:

Take breaks

I mean it. Taking time away from studying to go for a walk, read a book, have a snack or see someone that isn’t the recorded video of your endocrinology lecturer is probably my number one piece of advice. It might feel like you can’t step away from your desk but you definitely can and should. It will 100% improve your study performance and keep your sanity intact. So go to that gym session, crochet that blanket, see that friend and get outside!
Lean on your family, friends and peers!
The majority of the students around you will be stressed out but you’re all in it stressing out together. There’s a lot of comfort in knowing that you’re not the only one completely overwhelmed by pharmacology and still can’t remember that one random nerve branch. Sometimes the best form of therapy is just having a really good whinge about everything and anything vet school related. Having said this, I can also understand the vet student avoidance method as a room full of peers discussing the exam can be pretty horrible sometimes.

Make sure you are keeping in touch with your non-vet friends and family
They’re there to support you, ground you and make you feel like a normal person again. Confide in them, complain passionately about exams for hours or pretend you never went to vet school for a day with them but please don’t go it alone. Never underestimate the power of talking, connecting and leaning into your support system during exam period.

Seek out support from the university!
Whether it’s student support services, disability arrangements, academic support or just a chat with a professor – your university is there to support you. They want you to succeed and no matter what your vet school journey looks like, you will get to where you want to be. There’s a host of support out there and I do appreciate that sometimes the hardest part if making that initial contact, but I’ve found that a simple ‘can we have a chat’ email to student support can work wonders.

Be kind to yourself!
You genuinely can do this even when it feels like you can’t. You’re in vet school for a reason and you’ve earned your spot there, so never question that. Failures, stumbles and pitfalls are all a key part of life and of vet school and I think it’s important to note that perfection simply does not exist, so never expect it from yourself. Buy yourself treats, take the scenic walk home, watch a new movie you’ve been dying to see and don’t be hard on yourself – you’re doing great. There’s a list of additional resources below which are all worth having a look at and remember: exam stress may suck, but you definitely don’t. Good luck!:

Extra Resources:

10 tips for managing stress at vet school from the BVA
Exam stress resources from Student Minds
How to succeed at vet school - advice from the RVC in Vet Record
Vetlife website or contact them on 0303 040 2551
10 Test-Taking Tips for Vet Students by VetPrep
Exam stress equilibrium - a fantastic article by AVS Past President Calum McIntyre
Other news and opportunities

Sports Weekend 2024 to be in Glasgow
The event you’ve all been waiting for, the notorious Sports Weekend is back and this time we’re heading up to find Nessie! Get your kilts out and get ready for the biggest weekend in the vet student calendar. Keep an eye out for more details soon!
**Date:** 1st-3rd November 2024
**Location:** Glasgow Vet School
**Tickets prices TBD** but will differ slightly depending on where you’re coming from due to cost of transport. Your uni reps will be in contact with you in due course.

Still time to get tickets to BVA Live
**What is BVA Live?** Held annually, BVA Live provides 2 days of lectures and interactive sessions led by world-class speakers.
**When?** 6th-7th June 2024
**Where?** Birmingham NEC
**Tickets?** [Here!](#)
We have a group of AVS Committee members going for both days so please reach out if you’re going solo and want some new friends! Either contact us on one of the links below or email Charlotte at avspresident@gmail.com

JAVS submissions OPEN
Our JAVS editors Phoebe and Jess work on pulling articles from students together to release JAVS (“Journal of the Association of Veterinary Students”) twice a year. We’re currently accepting applications for JAVS 2025, which will be released at Congress in Cambridge, February 2025. We welcome all types of articles, from student experiences on EMS to rebuilding the vet community post-covid. To submit or ask questions, please email Phoebe at javseditor@gmail.com.

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