



Veterinary *Pharmacist*

September 2006

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader

I shall keep my ramblings to a minimum this issue for there is lot to pack into the four pages. It was great to see so many colleagues at a luncheon in May to celebrate 25 years of the Diploma in Veterinary Pharmacy. Thanks to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society for its generosity in hosting the event.

The VPG summer conference held in Stratford-upon-Avon was a great success. I reported the event in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* (22 June, p117) but I think the workshop session raised some important action points so on pS3 I am including an additional report from Rob Morris. Some of the action points will be considered by the VPG committee and I will cover this in the next issue of *Veterinary Pharmacist*.

An area in which community pharmacists can be proactive is pet obesity. This issue contains a welcome contribution from Alex German, head of an obesity clinic at Liverpool Veterinary School, University of Liverpool, (pS3) and a news item highlighting the problem (pS4).

A working group of the Veterinary Products Committee has begun to review the classification of over 800 veterinary medicines and any changes will be reported in the *PJ*, as soon as they become known, and summarised in *Veterinary Pharmacist*. Keep an eye out for them because they should represent greater opportunities for pharmacy, although it is also possible that a product could go up the scale to POM-V.

Finally a reminder that next month, the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2007 will replace the existing 2006 Regulations. John Fitzgerald, director of policy at the Veterinary Medicines Directorate outlined the changes in his address at the summer conference (see *PJ*, 22 July, p117).

Steven Kayne

The Society celebrates 25 years of its veterinary pharmacy teaching programme



Four VPG veterans look at some old course photographs (left to right): Roger Odd, Gordon Appelbe, Mike Munro and David Dalglish

A lunch was held at Lambeth on 30 May to celebrate 25 years of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's veterinary pharmacy teaching programme. The President, Hemant Patel, told guests, who included diplomates, lecturers, examiners and course administrators, that pharmacists could play a key role in acting as a link between pet owners and veterinary surgeons.

Bruce Rhodes, a former secretary to the VPG and assistant secretary of the Society, reminisced on the early days of the veterinary diploma and outlined the important contribution made by the late Desmond Lewis (who became secretary and registrar of the Society in 1967) in securing the support of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and steering the idea through Council.

Purpose of the VPG

The Veterinary Pharmacists Group exists:

- To promote the practice of veterinary pharmacy
- To promote the application of pharmaceutical knowledge within veterinary pharmacy
- To put forward to the Society's Council the group's views on policies for development through the policy support unit
- To advise the Council and its committees on any aspect of veterinary pharmacy practice

Rabbit flu claims first human victim in Britain

A 29-year old farmer from Stowmarket, Suffolk, became infected with the bacterium *Pasteurella multocida* after picking up a rabbit on his farm, and died.

A post-mortem examination revealed that the man had died from septicaemia after becoming infected with the bacteria that causes pasteurellosis, which is also known as "rabbit flu". The farmer is believed to be Britain's first rabbit flu victim. — *BBC News*, 21 August 2006



New safety warnings issued for tilmicosin injections after deaths

The deaths of two farmers in North America have been associated with the accidental injection of Micotil (tilmicosin). There have also been reports of serious, adverse reactions to the product in the EU. As a consequence, the safety of Micotil was referred to a European medicines committee, which has recommended additional safety warnings, including that Micotil should only be administered by a veterinary surgeon.

The manufacturer, Elanco, is working with the regulatory authorities of member

states to amend future product labels so that clear warning is given about the potentially fatal effects of self-injection. In line with other member states, UK stock with old labels may still be supplied by wholesalers for a short period. Micotil is indicated for the treatment of cattle and sheep with pneumonia associated with *Pasteurella haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida* or other micro-organisms sensitive to tilmicosin, and for the treatment of ovine mastitis associated with *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Mycoplasma agalactiae*.

Link between breast cancer and dog ownership suggested by German research

Researchers have noted that patients with breast carcinoma appear to own dogs more often than age-matched female controls (*Medical Hypotheses* 2006;67:21-6). The researchers interviewed women with breast cancer (n=69) and compared the frequencies of dog and pet ownership with data from publicly available statistics on women of the same age group in Germany (n=1,320).

The most striking result was that more than twice the number of breast cancer pa-

tients had kept dogs permanently in the past 10 years and at the time of the interview compared with control individuals ($P=0.0000003$, relative risk 3.5).

An internet search on the morbidity of breast carcinoma in dogs showed a protracted course of disease and metastases into lung, liver and bones, resembling the course of the disease in humans. It is postulated that bacteria from dogs could participate in the first steps of carcinogenesis in human.

Cats for people allergic to animal dander

An American company claims its scientists have bred the world's first cats that do not trigger human allergies and is set to sell them in the UK for £7,500 each. The cat is the latest designer pet to emerge from the US and could provide relief for the 2.6 million UK asthma sufferers whose attacks are triggered by their animals.

Cat allergies are caused by a protein in the cat's skin flakes and saliva deposited on the fur when the animal grooms itself by licking. The

protein can trigger an allergic reaction in minutes if inhaled by an asthma sufferer. Scientists at Allerca, based in San Diego, California, analysed the genes of British and American shorthair cats to identify those with proteins that did not provoke a reaction in humans. By breeding the cats over several generations they produced more than 20 allergen-free offspring. Preliminary tests on human volunteers have proved encouraging. — *The Sunday Times*, 4 June 2006

Animal yobbery on the increase

Hooded teenagers are not the only thugs in Britain. A new generation of spoilt, undisciplined cats and dogs, over-indulged by their owners, are responsible for an escalating problem of "animal yobbery". In a study, nearly three-quarters of veterinary surgeons reported a serious deterioration in animal behaviour. This has been blamed for property damage and attacks on other pets and children.

In one case, a 10-inch high bichon frisé called Zephier had become so dependent on his owner that he bit her ankles every time

she tried to leave the house. Meanwhile, tabby cat Mani caused over £7,000 damage by clawing furniture, designer suits and shoes.

Vets and animal behaviour specialists believe the increasing unwillingness of owners to smack animals that misbehave is largely responsible. People are also increasingly "humanising" their pets, allowing them on to sofas and beds. Pampering services such as pet exercise machines and designer animal clothing are also becoming popular. — *The Sunday Times*, 18 June 2006

Competition

Identify this breed and state the specific purpose for which it is farmed. Answers to: vetpharmnewsletter@yahoo.co.uk. Prizes to the first two correct answers that are received by 27 September.



Winner May's competition proved popular and demonstrated the problems of trying to estimate the weight of an animal. The dose of veterinary medicines is frequently calculated on the basis of the animal's weight so it is important to determine the latter accurately. Estimates of Logan's weight ranged from 18 to 84kg. In fact, he weighs 16.4kg. Nearest was pharmacist Louise Collick of Exeter who guessed 17.8kg. She received a prize, donated by Jobsons Farm Health, Cumbria.

Louise writes: When I finished school I trained as a veterinary nurse. This was a rewarding job, (even more so than pharmacy) but the pay rate was an issue (it was before minimum wage). I therefore looked at other careers and got a job with an independent pharmacy as a dispenser. This pharmacy stocked wormers and flea control sprays, which had a steady turnover.

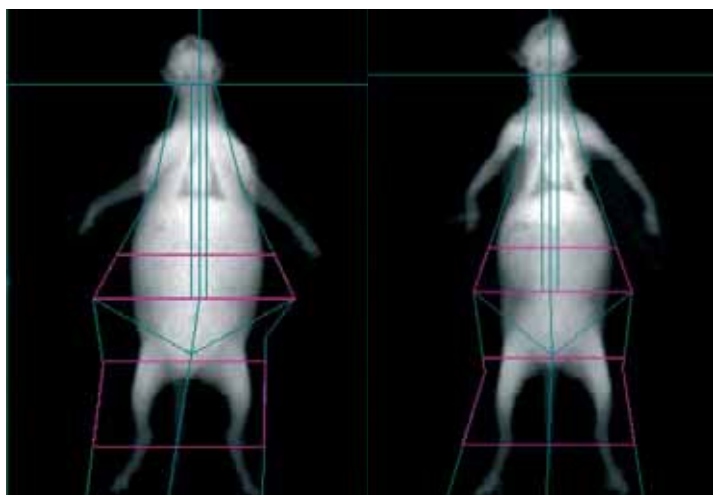
After going to university to study pharmacy, I got a job with Lloyds Pharmacy where I have worked ever since. I believe that if a marketing range that included effective treatments as well as shampoos to treat mild skin irritations could be supplied, this could be the break that veterinary medicine needs in pharmacy. A small range stocked of over-the-counter veterinary medicines could also lead to better relations with local vets.

A weight loss clinic for companion animals

Obesity is a serious disease in animals as well as humans. In this article, **Alex German**, Waltham lecturer in small animal medicine and clinical nutrition, University of Liverpool Veterinary School, describes his work in a weight loss clinic for pets

Current estimates suggest that at least 40 per cent of the UK pet population suffer from obesity. As with humans, the danger lies in the associated disorders that can occur in overweight individuals, including osteoarthritis, diabetes mellitus, incontinence and cardiorespiratory disease. Recent work has also demonstrated that longevity is decreased in dogs that are not maintained in optimal body condition.

Current treatment of obesity involves altering the patient's energy balance, by reducing calorie intake, while increasing energy expenditure through exercise. The Small Animal Hospital at the University of Liverpool has recently opened The Royal Canine Weight Management Clinic, the first weight management referral clinic of its kind in Europe. The main aims of the clinic are to treat obesity and associated diseases and simultaneously to gather information about the causes, consequences and most appropriate therapy for companion animal obesity. The clinic also aims to raise general awareness of companion



Clarence before treatment

Clarence after treatment

Full laboratory profiling at the clinic includes body composition analysis using dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry

animal obesity. It runs a subsidised service and accepts any patient (feline and canine) with obesity and its associated diseases.

All referred cases undergo detailed investigations including full laboratory profiling, blood pressure measurement and body composition analysis using dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA). A dietary plan and

exercise regimen is then drawn up and the cases are followed through their period of weight loss. The patient is re-evaluated after the optimal body weight has been achieved, and repeat investigations (including DEXA) performed. There is no charge for any of the investigations relating to obesity performed at the clinic and the first bag of weight reduction diet is free.

One of my earliest patients was Clarence, an eight-year old domestic shorthair cat. When first enrolled, he weighed 8.05kg and his body fat mass was estimated at 42 per cent (normal <25 per cent). He took six months to achieve his target weight of 6.00kg (body fat mass 19.5 per cent), which he has maintained ever since.

Readers wishing to learn more about the services of the The Royal Canine Weight Management Clinic can contact Dr Alex German (e-mail: ajgerman@liv.ac.uk) or visit www.pet-slimmers.com

Ideas for how to involve pharmacists more in veterinary care

Two workshops were held at this year's VPG summer conference to address the issue of encouraging more pharmacists to become involved with veterinary medicines. One group looked at the large animal market and the other discussed the companion animal sector.

The same three questions were put to both groups and their responses have been collated in this article, as follows:

What factors currently limit pharmacists involvement in veterinary care?

- The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (pharmacists can advise on medicine use for both pet owners and farmers but they cannot prescribe)
- Lack of knowledge
- NHS activities and new contract pressures
- Commercial opportunity not properly understood
- Lack of interest from suppliers to promote veterinary products through pharmacies

- Company policy (eg, not to stock veterinary products)
- Resistance from veterinary surgeons
- Animal owner's ignorance (pharmacists are just not associated with veterinary medicines)

Which areas and categories of veterinary medicines lend themselves to pharmacy involvement?

- Ecto- and endoparasiticides are the obvious choice for the pet sector but in the large animal sector, which includes horses, ecto- and endoparasiticides are again able to be sold by pharmacists in the community
- Fish (the fish market is huge with many valuable ornamental fish needing care and attention)
- Pigeons
- Vaccines (many sheep vaccines are classed as POM-VPS and it is possible that more of the routinely used cattle vaccines will go from POM-V to VPS in the future)

How can we raise awareness of animal owners and others to the existence of veterinary pharmacists and what they are able to do?

- Take advantage of National Pet Week (eg, National Pet Week could be a good focus for starting a business)
- Use posters and point-of-sale material in the pharmacy and display general information on pets (eg, in the form of books and leaflets*) in the pharmacy
- Farmers are more difficult to target because they do not regularly visit pharmacies so advertising in local farming press and attending shows would be useful
- Run competitions for pet owners
- Make suppliers aware that pharmacy is a viable outlet for their products (eg, by talking to them or placing orders)
- Refer to vets when appropriate (This can be a good way of creating goodwill) — *Rob Morris*

*VPG leaflets for pigeon or horse owners are available from Lorraine Fearon (tel: 020 7572 2409).



From the VPG chairman

In July the annual VPG conference was held in Stratford upon Avon. It was well attended and by all reports was a worthwhile experience for the delegates. Robert Clayton, head of practice at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, has well and truly cut his teeth on veterinary issues and his contributions at the conference were received with appreciation. My personal thanks to him.

Frontline, a pour-on flea product for cats and dogs, has been reclassified from POM-V to NFA-VPS making it available to pharmacies to sell as an over-the-counter product. The Society is speaking to the manufacturer, Merial, to identify ways in which it can assist the introduction of the product into the community pharmacy channel. This is the first of a number of products that may be so reclassified. The uptake by community pharmacists will undoubtedly have a bearing on future reclassifications so it is to be hoped that initial signs of success through some specialists will quickly proliferate to the rest of the profession.

It has now been decided that the Diploma in Veterinary Pharmacy will remain in house at the Society, which is good news. Can I remind readers that there is also a Certificate in Companion Animal Medicine available by distance learning? Interested pharmacists should contact Lorraine Fearon (tel: 020 7572 2409) at the Society.

Since the previous issue of the newsletter Baldip Dhariwal, practice pharmacist at the Society, has left the practice division to look after a new addition to her family. She is greatly missed and I wish her the best for the future.

— Andrew Cairns

IN BRIEF

Herd of sheep driven through city

A flock of sheep were driven across the Millennium Bridge, as part of an unusual custom to mark the start of the London Architecture week in June. The Herdwick sheep left Southwark Cathedral for Smithfield Market, making use of the historic droving rights of the Freeman of the City of London. Livestock were driven to market in London until the 19th century. — *BBC News, 16 June 2006*

Hamster survives shredder

A pet hamster accidentally thrown out with the rubbish survived a trip through a giant industrial shredder. The hamster stowed away in a skip and was taken to a recycling plant where he emerged from the shredder without a scratch. Bemused workers at the recycling plant in Flint, North Wales found the shaken creature on a conveyor belt. — *Western Mail, 3 June 2006*

The Dickin Medal for animals

A fascinating programme was aired by BBC Radio 4 this year, tracing the history of the Dickin Medal, the animals' "Victoria Cross". Animals have been used in wars for centuries but only recently has there been recognition for their bravery and extraordinary commitment to duty in wartime. Rather than "for valour", the medal says "for gallantry — we also serve".

The Dickin Medal came into being in 1943 at the suggestion of Maria Dickin, who had founded the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals in 1917. During the 1939–45 war, she was inspired by the bravery shown by animals in active service to introduce a medal to recognise their efforts and, since 1943, 60 animals have been awarded.

Winkie, a messenger pigeon, was one of the first three animals to receive the medal. Winkie was on an aircraft that had to ditch because of engine trouble. As the aircraft hit the water, she broke free. Arriving back at her loft in Scotland, her owner was able to estimate (from the state of Winkie's oiled and bedraggled feathers) how long she had been flying for and how many miles she may have covered. This information aided the search party in locating the downed plane and the crew were rescued.

Only one cat has received a Dickin Medal. Simon was a rat-catcher on the *HMS Amethyst*, which was trapped on the Yangtze river by the Chinese for 100 days in 1949 before the crew managed to make it to freedom.

During the 1939–45 war, a working farm dog — a collie called Rob — played a vital role. Parachuted in behind enemy lines with his Special Air Service unit, his job was to watch over the men as they slept between operations.

Few Dickin Medals have been awarded since the 1939–45 war but the events of 11 September 2001 were to lead to three more medals being awarded, two to guide dogs who aided their owners down more than 70 flights of stairs in the World Trade Centre, and an all encompassing award was made to Appollo, a search and rescue dog. This award was to acknowledge the role that over 300 dogs played in searching through the rubble in the weeks following the tragedy.

The most recent award of the Dickin Medal was made in December 2003. The recipient was the beautiful Buster, a springer spaniel employed by the Royal Army Veterinary Corps in Iraq. — *Adapted from "The animals VC" available at: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4 (accessed 20 April 2006)*

Fat cats put the squeeze on insurers

Rising obesity among Britain's household pets is leading to record insurance claims for weight-related conditions as the lifestyles of fat cats and pampered pooches mirror those of their owners.

Insurers and veterinary surgeons say more pets are growing fat because they are left at home all day or fed the same junk food as their owners. About two-thirds of the UK population is either overweight or obese, compared with 41 per cent of pets, according to a recent survey by the Pet Health Council.

Petplan, which provides insurance for 800,000 pets in the UK, said it had seen a 60 per cent increase in obesity-related claims over the past five years. Diabetes, arthritis and cardiovascular problems in companion animals were all on the rise, it said. Some insur-



ers are introducing restrictions on cover or lowering the maximum age of pets they will insure. There is even talk of exclusions for animals that are overweight. — *Financial Times, 18 February 2006*

National Wildlife Crime Unit moves to Scotland

The engine that co-ordinates information and organises large-scale operations against poachers and exotic animal smugglers, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, has moved to Scotland, where it is expected to make an important impact both on Scotland's biodiversity and its economy. Based in North Berwick police station, officers will work

with over 100 local wildlife officers. Previous investigations targeted the smuggling of exotic reptiles such as venomous snakes and alligators, or the sale of rhino horns, bear bile medicines, rare birds and eggs. It is believed many of these wildlife products sell for more per ounce than Class A drugs. — *The Scotsman, 15 June 2006*