

Dick Vet News



Newsletter for the Alumni & Friends of
The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, The University of Edinburgh

Issue No.19 Spring 2008



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Save Lives in Uganda



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of Professor
Daniëlle Gunn-
Moore

Dick Vet Sweeps the Board at RCVS Trust



RCVS Trust has supported
equine diagnostic imaging

Dick Vet staff have been successful in winning almost half of the record £1 million awarded by the RCVS Trust* this year. A total of £430,000 will find its way to the School and our collaborators to boost clinical research in Edinburgh.

The major award is a £250,000 Golden Jubilee Award to David Argyle for a study generating stem cells in dogs for treatment of cancer, cardiovascular disease and osteoarthritis. Other successful projects include generation of stem cells in horses, a study of the genomics of osteoarthritis in the feline elbow, veterinary diagnostic pathology in Mongolia, dental disease in donkeys in Mexico, and welfare assessment of African Wild Dogs.

Our ever-innovative Teaching Organisation received significant funding for development of 3-D animations as a teaching aid. Two residencies are being funded – one in Rabbit and Exotic Animal Medicine, another in Equine Diagnostic Imaging.

We were also successful in building on our strategy of

partnering the profession, which started a year ago with the appointment of Rachel Whittington as Director of Extramural Veterinary Education. RCVS Trust funding will now support two collaborative studies, one looking at the prevalence of suicide in the profession and the other evaluating support for new graduates.

Professor Elaine Watson, Head of School, said: "I am delighted that the excellence of our programme, researchers and clinicians has been recognised in this way. The fact that we punch well above our weight was first highlighted in the DEFRA Veterinary Training Research Initiative where we, and our collaborators, won more than a third of the available funding. The RCVS Trust awards will help our clinicians to gain a firm footing in our new £58 million research institute. It will also ensure we continue to play a significant role in investigating very important societal issues for the profession such as support for new graduates, an area we are already addressing at the Dick."

* The RCVS Trust is an educational and animal welfare charity, set up in 1958 by the RCVS to provide an educational grants programme and a Library and Information Service. Since 2005 it has disbursed £1.5 million in practice and university-based grants across a wide range of species and disease areas. This year saw the 30th anniversary of the programme, which was marked by two special Golden Jubilee Awards, to the value of £250,000 each.

MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL



Elaine Watson at the
2007 Graduation

You will have noticed that this edition of *Dick Vet News* seems to have arrived sooner than usual. Unlike Christmas, which only seems to come round every six months, we now intend to publish an edition of the *Dick Vet News* twice a year. This is our way of keeping you in touch with all the developments going on in your School.

We are very keen to get your feedback on the *Dick Vet News* – let us know what you think.

In this edition I have included a couple of new articles which will become regular features. There's a profile of one of our staff, well known to most of you – Professor Danielle Gunn-Moore – and an alumni page, with updates on where folk are, and what they are up to. I would like to encourage more news from the alumni, so please send any pieces of news that you think would be of interest to your classmates, to Bev Montgomery (Beverley.Montgomery@ed.ac.uk; telephone: 0131 650 6149).

The theme of the School this past year has been geared towards forging partnerships with other world class groups and organisations, in the Edinburgh area and beyond.

All of the Roslin Institute staff joined us in May, and we have closer links than ever with the Moredun and SAC via formal research collaborations within the Easter Bush Research Consortium (EBRC), and formation of joint posts and teaching activities. We have two new Professors shared with the Moredun Research Institute: Jacqui Matthews who is taking a leading role in the research track option for our students and will be working closely with our molecular parasitologists and equine clinicians, and Ruth Zadoks who will be continuing her research on food-borne pathogens, and playing a role in delivery of our public health curriculum. You can read more about Ruth and Jacqui on page 3.

We are building on our links with the Animal Welfare group at SAC, who already jointly deliver our MSc in Applied Animal Behaviour and Animal Welfare. Professor Alistair Lawrence will be leading animal welfare teaching over all five years of the undergraduate degree course. Alistair is also developing closer interactions with the clinicians' research, and the everyday animal welfare issues that face us in the clinics.

Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with the University of Stirling's Institute of Aquaculture, reported in the last issue of the *Dick Vet News*, and also with Bristol Vet School to look at opportunities for collaboration that will be of mutual benefit.

Rachel Whittington and Ronnie Soutar are forging stronger links with practices and the shelter medicine sector, and we are actively involving external practitioners and other stakeholders in curriculum review. Alumni activities, now under the supervision of Rachel Whittington, are growing, with reunions being planned in advance for milestone years.

Fundraising for the new teaching building and cancer centre is now well underway. We have been talking to alumni, clients, friends and corporate supporters and have now raised over £1 million. One recent high point was the dinner hosted by the Princess Royal at the Palace of Holyrood House in January, featured in this edition.

Marketing is inextricably linked with the School's profile and success in recruitment at all levels – undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff, increased revenue for the hospitals and practices, promoting our commercial CPD Unit, and fundraising. We have deliberately invested in the School's branding and marketing material by engaging with the University's marketing department and appointing a design company. The first example of our suite of brochures, is the CPD leaflet, which appears to have been outstandingly successful. Tudor Jones is leading upgrading of the website, and the University's Information Services department, along with our external design team, should have this in place in early summer. We are now frequently featured in the press, and the heightened profile we are achieving nationally is entirely due to the remarkable accomplishments of our staff.

I would like to finish by thanking everyone most sincerely – staff, students, donors, clients, and alumni – for their contribution to the *Dick Vet's* continued success, and our three core values of being World-Class, Cutting Edge, and most importantly, Friendly!

Professor Elaine Watson

Moredun Chair of Veterinary Immunobiology Professor Jacqui Matthews



Jacqui graduated from Glasgow Vet School and completed a PhD on identification of antigens involved in stimulating immunity to the bovine lungworm. She then accepted a lectureship at Glasgow and combined research with trying to spread enthusiasm for parasite life cycles to veterinary undergraduates. Latterly Jacqui also started to work on equine parasitology. In 1998, she moved to the Philip Leverhulme Large Animal Hospital at the Liverpool School under funding from the International League for the Protection of Horses. Here, Jacqui consolidated her interests to equine parasites and gastrointestinal disease, and in 2004, she returned to Scotland to the Moredun Research Institute, where she continued her lungworm and cyathostomin research and developed a collaborative programme on host immunity to an important stomach worm of sheep, *Teladorsagia circumcincta*. In February, Jacqui took up a joint appointment between the Moredun Research Institute and the Dick Vet, and has already started involving Dick Vet undergraduates in her research area.

Moredun Chair of Veterinary Epidemiology Professor Ruth N. Zadoks



Ruth Zadoks has joined us from Cornell University where she was a Senior Research Associate, and Director of the Molecular Laboratory at Quality Milk Production Services in Ithaca, NY, USA. Her work focuses on molecular epidemiology and detection of mastitis, foodborne and zoonotic pathogens in milk and dairy cattle. Ruth started her professional life with a veterinary degree from Utrecht, where she stayed on to complete a PhD, combining mastitis research with work in the Ambulatory Clinic of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. This Chair is shared with the Moredun Research Institute where Ruth will head the Division of Edpidemiology and Population Biology. Her expertise in molecular epidemiology will complement the Moredun and Dick Vet's current livestock research on bacterial, viral and parasitic diseases.

New School Administrator

Richard Shone joined us as School Administrator in November 2007. Richard is well seasoned in university management and business development having previously been Director of Operations, Durham Business School, School Administrator, Lancaster University Management School, and Assistant Registrar, University of Kent. He also brings to us some research funding experience having worked in several roles at the Economic and Social Research Council from 1988-1995. We are very pleased to welcome Richard to the management team.

Library of Progress

New building to boast UK's most innovative vet teaching and learning area



A student collects a milk sample from a hi-tech model cow.

The Dick Vet's £42 million teaching building, scheduled for completion in 2010, is to incorporate a 'First Floor Learning Zone'. This innovation features the 'Library Study Landscape', a resource hub where the boundaries between traditional library function and modern teaching and learning no longer apply.

Students using the Library Study Landscape will be able to access anything from textbooks to 'hands on' learning using simulations anatomical models, skeletons and the award winning 'Virtual Veterinary Practice'. Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the Library Study Landscape has been funded by a £600,000 grant from the Robertson Trust.

"The beauty of this facility is that it enables us to reinforce the students' knowledge based competences with resources that can accommodate their many different needs and learning styles," explains Professor Susan Rhind, Director of Veterinary Teaching.

"In addition to this there will be a student-centred Clinical Skills Lab, an expanded version of the one currently at Summerhall. This makes it possible for students to develop core clinical techniques in a safe and non-threatening environment before graduating."

The Clinical Skills Lab includes a communication skills training suite which allows students to role play scenarios that can then be videoed and critiqued. Professor Rhind's team will also be developing a 'Teaching studio'. This moves away from the traditional 'transmission' mode of teaching, facilitating group work by using new technology to allow students to lead discussions and presentations.

New Postgraduate Studies Committee Convenor



We have a new Convenor of our Postgraduate Studies Committee, **Dr Bernadette Dutia**. Bernadette said "Over the next three years the goals of the committee will be to ensure that there are streamlined procedures for monitoring postgraduate progress so that students achieve their potential and to establish a vibrant postgraduate community across the whole school".

A Thriving Postgraduate Community

The postgraduate community at the Dick Vet continues to grow with around 130 students currently enrolled on research degrees. Students are spread across all of the school sites and are involved in a wide range of disciplines from molecular sciences to directly applied research projects. The school also has 31 students enrolled on taught Masters programmes in Applied Animal Behaviour and Animal Welfare and in Equine Science, and 28 Clinical Scholars in advanced veterinary training.

E-learning Specialists join CPD team



The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Unit is part of a new initiative at the Dick Vet, led by Rachel Whittington, to allow vets in practice, as well as undergraduates, increased access to specialised teaching equipment, facilities and expertise.

Now Sharon Boyd and Andy Cavers, e-learning specialists, have joined the CPD team to develop specialised online courses for vets in practice and the first course in small animal internal medicine will start in May 2008.

The idea is that small groups of vets will enrol on a course at the same time, allowing for the

formation of an online community where participants will be able to share experiences and knowledge online, allowing group learning.

The online courses permit distance learning that is available to everyone, regardless of their location or their ability to be away from their practice. They also provide the support and motivation gained from discussion with other vets with similar interests, together with direct access to our experts' opinions.

We look forward to welcoming our alumni as participants in our CPD courses as part of their programme of lifelong learning.

BBSRC award PhD places

The recent award of BBSRC Doctoral Training Grants to the Centre for Infectious Diseases and Easter Bush Research Centre will provide places for PhD students over the next three years. The award of these highly competitive grants reflects the quality of research programmes in the School and our commitment to train scientists with a wide range of skills and broad scientific base.

For further information, contact vetpgresearch@ed.ac.uk

E-learning Opportunities

The School is developing a range of e-learning programmes aimed at students who want to continue their education but who are not able to study full-time in Edinburgh. The potential for sharing the Dick Vet's expertise is enormous. An e-learning Masters Programme in International Health (IAH) was launched in 2006 and is attracting students from around the globe. Exciting new on-line Masters programmes in Equine Science and Emerging and Neglected Infectious Diseases (ENID) will be available from autumn 2008. These new courses have already attracted considerable interest from prospective students. The IAH and ENID programmes are supported by the Commonwealth Scholarships Commission and will enable many more students from developing countries to gain higher degrees.

New Course in Emergency Surgery and Medicine

Participants on the course working with a hi tech resuscitation mannequin

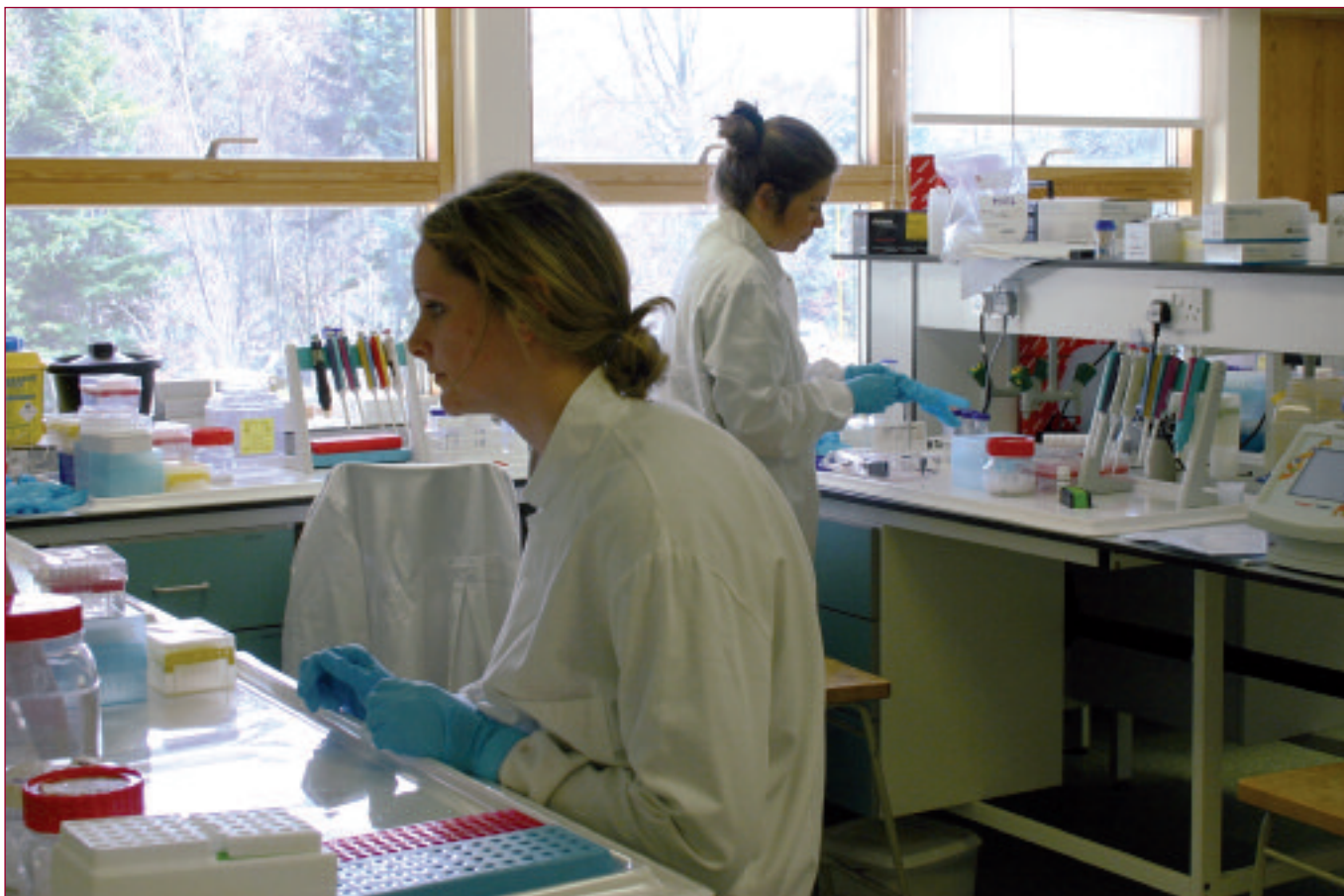


In November 2007, **Alison Ridyard** and **Liz Welsh** ran a weekend training course for vets to brush up on their emergency techniques. Our canine mannequin was used to simulate a whole range of emergency situations and the delegates worked in teams against the clock putting what they had learnt into practice.

One participant commented – “The practical bits were fantastic, working in teams, being timed doing the resuscitation was really useful.”

For further information on any of our current or upcoming courses, contact **Antonia Doonan**, tel: +44 (0)131 650 6294, email: cpd.vet@ed.ac.uk

Combating the World-wide Vet Researcher Shortage



From August 2009, graduate entrants to the Dick Vet will be able to enrol on a new combined BVM&S/PhD degree programme. This will allow them to carry out research towards a PhD alongside their veterinary training, producing veterinary clinicians who have a unique insight into veterinary research.

The programme is the first of its kind in a UK Vet School and entrance to the programme will be highly competitive with only a few top students enrolled each year. A handful of the best US vet schools, and a few UK medical schools, notably Cambridge, have a clinician scientist training programme, where the research training is integrated with their veterinary studies. At the Dick, with our new research institute opening in 2010, we will be very well placed to provide a similar level of research tracking, mentorship and support.

The programme has been developed in response to a global shortage of research-trained veterinarians. The veterinary degree, with its solid foundation in comparative medicine, is well

recognised as the best first degree for those wishing to enter biomedical research. However, neither veterinary researchers nor clinician scientists are being produced in adequate numbers to keep up with demand.

Worldwide, many of the veterinary schools are expanding in response to the prediction of the shortfall in veterinary surgeons in a growing marketplace – not just in practice, but in public health and food safety, veterinary research, comparative medicine, and the pharmaceutical sector.

A recent study from the USA has shown that veterinary medicine is ranked as 9th in the 30 fastest growing occupations over the next 10 years, and there will be a 35% increase in requirement over that period. The shortfall in numbers of students being trained for careers in research and public health, is further compounded by insufficient numbers of academic clinicians available to staff the vet schools. The Dick Vet is well placed to help address these issues.

Dick Vet Scientists Save Lives in Uganda

A group of researchers from the Dick Vet, working alongside colleagues from the University of Makerere in Uganda, have been saving human lives in sub-Saharan Africa by using the School's extensive experience of the transfer of diseases from animals to humans to control Sleeping Sickness.

Sleeping Sickness, which kills 50,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa each year, represents a public health crisis in Uganda. Until recently the two varieties of the disease – acute and chronic – occurred in separate geographical areas but they have steadily been approaching each other. Recent infection of five new districts had brought them less than 100 miles apart.

Convergence of the two forms would create a catastrophic situation as diagnosing which of the two forms is present is difficult. Worse yet, the treatments for chronic and acute Sleeping Sickness differ greatly, so misdiagnosis is disastrous for the patient. However, thanks to a partnership between the Dick Vet, Makerere University, international veterinary laboratory Ceva Sante Animale, and the private equity firm Industri Capital, convergence is being prevented.

In 2001 Professor Sue Welburn and colleagues identified the SRA gene, the determinant for human infection, and went on to determine the role that cattle were playing as silent killers carrying



Screening programme in Uganda.



Treating cattle with insecticide.

the infection. The group demonstrated that sleeping sickness could be eliminated if over 86% of animals were cleared of infection.

Treating humans is expensive and carries unpleasant side effects. Treating cattle with drugs and also an insecticide to repel the tsetse flies that carry sleeping sickness, is less expensive and more effective.

A team of Scottish and Ugandan vets and final year students have now treated almost 91,000 cattle. This represents more than 86% of cattle in the newly infected areas, rendering levels of infection to be safe. No further outbreaks of early stage acute human disease have been reported.

Horse Trust Funds Research in 'Mint' Pain Killer to End Lame Horses' Suffering

A new synthetic treatment inspired by ancient Greek and Chinese remedies could bring relief to horses suffering from a painful condition that affects their hoofs.

Professor Sue Fleetwood-Walker and colleagues are to start testing whether a compound of cooling chemicals, which has the same properties as mint oil, can be used to treat laminitis – a common cause of lameness in horses. The disease affects seven per cent of the British horse population and is particularly prevalent in Scotland.

The project has been funded by The Horse Trust and builds on previous work of Sue's group that has established that, although the initial pain of laminitis is caused by inflammation in the hoof, the subsequent chronic pain is nerve pain. This neuropathic pain is not relieved by anti-inflammatory drugs.

Sue's team discovered two years ago that the 'mint' chemicals have a pain-killing effect when applied in small doses to human skin. This summer they will begin their investigations into whether this synthetic treatment could help horses with laminitis.

Dr Theresia Licka, senior lecturer in equine surgery, said: "Laminitis is an awful condition, because it causes a lot of pain sometimes for weeks or months. As a vet, I'm often confronted with animals really suffering, and that's distressing for the owners



Horse acutely affected with laminitis.

too. Sadly, we often come to the end of the line therapeutically, despite having done everything we can to deal with the pain. Using menthol gives us an extra opportunity to try to reduce the pain, and save the horse, and we are now using it in selected cases of chronic laminitis."

Dick Vet Scientist Wins Prestigious Medal



Giles Hardingham
and sleeping passenger.

Dr Giles Hardingham, Reader in Veterinary Biomedical Sciences, has been awarded the 2009 Colworth Medal. The Biochemical Society's Colworth Medal has been awarded annually since 1963 to a UK-based scientist under 35 'for outstanding research' who works within the broad field of biochemistry and molecular/cellular biology. Nominations are invited each year for consideration by the Society's Awards committee, and must be supported by eminent scientists, which in Giles' case included Professor of Veterinary Anatomy, Peter Brophy. This is a very prestigious award, and previous winners include Hans Kornberg, Phil Cohen, Miles Houslay, George Brownlee, Greg Winter, Ron Laskey, and George Radda.

In response to his success, Giles said "I was surprised and delighted to hear of this award. It is a tremendous boost that my research and that of my lab members has been recognised in this way. Our work since arriving at Edinburgh has benefited from a fantastic research environment created within the College and the Dick Vet in particular, thanks to great technical staff, supportive senior academics, and outstanding new appointments. I am privileged to play even a small part in the long and illustrious history of neuroscience research at the Dick Vet."

For further information on the Colworth Medal see www.biochemistry.org/medals/colworth.htm

British Poultry Council Scholarship Medal for Dick Vet PhD Student



Gillian Hunter and Jonathon Shaw MP.

On 4 December 2007, at a ceremony held in the House of Commons, **Gillian Hunter** was awarded the British Poultry Council Scholarship medal by Mr Jonathon Shaw MP, Junior Minister at DEFRA.

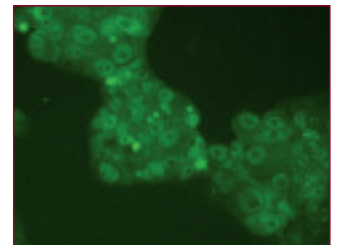
Gillie (shown here with Mr Shaw MP) is a second year PhD student working with Bob Dalziel, Bernadette Dutia and Tony Nash and is funded by a BBSRC CASE award in partnership with the poultry breeding company, Aviagen.

The award of a medal plus £1000 towards research costs is for outstanding scholarship in the field of poultry research. Gillie was proposed for this prestigious award by Dr Barry Thorpe of Aviagen, for her research investigating the role of specific virus genes in the pathogenesis of Marek's disease virus. Aviagen also presented Gillie with a quail to show their appreciation of her achievement.

Petplan Charitable Trust Award for Professor David Argyle



Paul Watt



Bone cancer stem cells in culture.

Professor David Argyle has been honoured in recognition of his research which includes looking at the causes of cancer in animals.

Professor Argyle was presented with the 2008 Petplan Charitable Trust Award at a ceremony in Birmingham on 3 April as part of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Conference.

The annual award, which is in its fifth year, is given to an individual who has consistently made a major contribution to veterinary research in the United Kingdom.

Professor Argyle said: "It's wonderful to have my work recognised in this way by The Petplan Charitable Trust. Cancer is a key clinical issue in veterinary medicine, affecting one in three dogs and cats. But cancer in animals also has a wider significance as our research can contribute significantly to our understanding of comparable diseases in humans."

Professor Argyle is to head the £3 million cancer centre, which is due to open in 2009 at the Hospital for Small Animals. The centre is a key fundraising focus of the University of Edinburgh Campaign.

The centre will combine radiotherapy with new advanced imaging technologies and be able to offer the most comprehensive range of cancer therapies in Europe, placing it in the top five veterinary cancer centres in the world. The

imaging facilities will be able to take both large and small animals, from a racehorse to a chihuahua.

Says David Simpson, Chair of Trustees for the Trust, "We have supported the University of Edinburgh with financial grants for many years and the award presented to Professor Argyle is a testament to his dedication and contribution to veterinary research. The Petplan Charitable Trust hopes that the partnership with both Professor Argyle and the University can continue and in doing so, clinical research such as the causes of cancer in animals, can advance even further.

Professor Argyle, who took up the University's William Dick Chair of Veterinary Clinical Studies in 2005, is involved in research that includes the development of gene therapy for cancer in dogs, cats and horses.

He recently identified a rogue stem cell in dogs with osteosarcoma, which accounts for 85 per cent of canine bone tumours. The rogue stem cell makes copies of cancer cells in the bone that enables them to proliferate and spread through the body.

As the disease is histologically and molecularly similar to osteosarcoma in children and young adults, the research may also have implications in understanding the condition in humans.

Radiofrequency Ablation available at Small Animal Hospital



In 2007, the Dick Vet's Cardiopulmonary Service became the first referral centre in the UK to routinely offer Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) and one of only three centres worldwide to offer this service.

RFA is used to treat rhythm disturbances and involves the insertion of catheters containing multiple electrodes into the heart via the femoral and jugular veins under general anaesthesia. The heart is then mapped electrically through intra-cardiac ECGs. The location of the accessory pathway can then be identified.

Patients usually present with sudden onset extreme lethargy, gastrointestinal signs and owners notice a very rapid apex beat in their dogs. However, RFA results in complete cure and avoids the need for lifelong rate control medication.

The R(D)SVS is looking to develop further its RFA service and is keen to receive more cases as referrals.

Sirius, a 20 month old golden retriever is positioned under the C-arm fluoroscopy unit. Fluoroscopy will help guide the catheters into the correct positions.

State of the Art Scanner for the Cardiopulmonary Service

Geoff Culshaw, head of the Cardiopulmonary Service, was delighted to receive a Vivid 7 BT06 cardiac ultrasound scanner with money kindly donated by the Council of Friends of the Dick Vet, represented by Alan Rowland, a past Chair (middle). The scanner was provided by Fraser Yule of Mount International Ultrasound (MIUS).

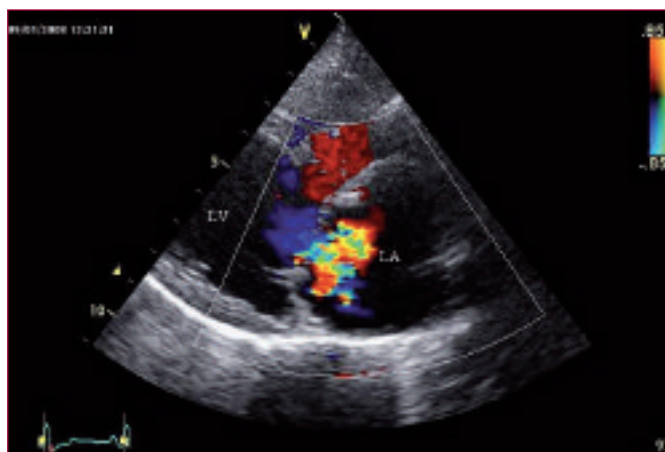
The scanner is state of the art with superb resolution capacity. Not only does it provide two dimensional cardiac imaging of the highest quality, it is used for detailed analysis of cardiac function and detection of subtle cardiac lesions. It also incorporates the latest tissue Doppler imaging techniques including tissue tracking and strain and strain rate imaging. These applications allow the synchrony and function of localised areas of myocardium to be assessed and can be used to detect early cardiac disease or monitor response to different therapies.

The scanner is now the new workhorse of the Cardiopulmonary Service and comes with a unique 4D package that constructs three dimensional moving images of normal and diseased hearts. This will prove to be an invaluable tool for undergraduate teaching and CPD training as well as the diagnosis of cardiac disease.

Regurgitant blood flow through a leaky mitral valve due to myxomatous disease (endocardiosis) is seen as a mosaic of colours on colour flow Doppler. LV= left ventricle, LA= enlarged left atrium.



L-R: Fraser Yule, Alan Rowland and Geoff Culshaw.





A View from Outside

An article by the Dick's very own peripatetic journalist and Council of Friends' member: Nick Henderson

As an ex-service man, if you accept pilot training in the Fleet Air Arm as a justification, training at the Dick Vet between 1945 and 1951 certainly affected my nurture response or my DNA. I'm sure it does this for most people enjoying that unique experience. In those far off days there was no veterinary school at Bristol or in Cambridge. They were the new guys on the block with Cambridge setting out to be perhaps slightly elitist and, in many academic ways, significantly different.

Dublin and Liverpool at the time were floundering a little in the shallows, as perhaps was Glasgow. Glasgow transformed itself when William Weipers was plucked from a highly efficient and commercial small animal practice in Glasgow to put the vet school on the map. He did this with bells on. Of his day he was one of the few of our profession to be honoured with a knighthood.

Edinburgh also had its star and shining knight, Sir Alexander Robertson who taught animal husbandry and hygiene, was an intense academic. He strongly disapproved of what he believed was my dilettante Dick lifestyle, particularly performing in the college plays staged in the assembly hall at Summerhall.

It is dangerous to fall into the trap of reminiscence bearing in mind that most of the readers of this newsletter could find it maudlin and self-indulgent. Suffice to say that Edinburgh was a joy as a student and remains a significant source of pride throughout one's life. The balance of gender in the old days was massively male dominated but just like professions such as medicine, law and pharmacy and many others, high achieving school leavers seem to favour women over men if the criteria for entry is confined entirely to academic achievement at an early stage in one's maturing life. I challenged one senior academic at Cambridge over this problem. I argued that veterinary professional life is not simply an academic activity but an all embracing vocation concentrated on the health and welfare of the animals under our care. I suggested that high academic achievers were not necessarily best suited to move in to the veterinary professional life and thereby we might lose a high percentage of graduates. Disillusion might follow soon after leaving those studies and facing the daunting pressures of anal gland evacuation, loan repayment, mortgages, relatively low wages and extreme pressure of work and hours.

Not unreasonably he asked me to think of an alternative when there were thousands of applications for a very limited number of places. I rather facetiously suggested that candidates should be put into the sty of a farrowed sow with 14 excitable offspring. The academic place should go to the first candidate to catch a piglet or

even the sow herself. This, I suggested, was a test of one's vocation and aptitude, but equally appropriate. The proposal is still on the table.

More importantly perhaps is a problem I have considered elsewhere and that is related to government ministers reviewing the cost of veterinary education to the community and the State and recognising that we make a much smaller contribution to food supply than perhaps in the immediate post war years. The highest proportion of graduates goes into small animal practice and this might be regarded as a poor return on investment related to the contribution to community benefits. The counter argument could also be that pet ownership is an important function of human welfare and happiness and our profession provides, certainly from the Dick Vet, probably the finest veterinary professional service to their patients available anywhere in the world.

This is a source of enormous pride to me and I hope to many contemporaries and those who followed. As a member of the Council of Friends of the Dick Vet I have a unique opportunity to see the growth and strength of the Dick burgeoning year by year. I am well prepared to defend my argument that Edinburgh offers the best veterinary facility in Europe and probably in the world. We are currently embarked upon a major expansion and development which will be the envy of many other veterinary schools in this country and elsewhere. Today's students are indeed enriched by the dedication and investment of effort by today's academic staff and the high standard they expect should be an automatic reflex response from those benefiting from it.

The moment of graduation is truly a golden one. It is like the wedding after a long love affair – the emotional rollercoaster, the late nights, the highs and lows, the triumphs and disappointments are all behind. The world of limitless opportunity is opening up and one is tempted to rush head-long into the arms of life after university. Sadly, this is all a dream, perhaps just as some marriages are. The hard work continues, the dedication is sorely tried, the patients are wonderful but clients, well we all know about that. We are like paediatricians, treating a totally inarticulate patient with a highly voluble parent. Happily, my practice days were before the internet provided cast iron proof that this condition could be cured by that treatment. Yes life's a struggle and, as we know, many of our colleagues and friends can get mightily depressed. However, we are really all part of a global family. That is something I have always felt and hope I will to my dying day.

Nick Henderson

Alumni in the Spotlight

Stephen V. Blizzard (Class of 1953)



Originally from Trinidad, W.I., Stephen Blizzard attended the Royal Dick Veterinary College from 1948 – 1953, graduating BSc, MRCVS.

After returning to work for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for 5 years, he emigrated to Canada in 1958. His first job was that of Graduate Assistant in the Department of Large Animal Surgery at the Ontario Veterinary College, now part of the University of Guelph.

In 1959, he entered Medical School at the University of Western Ontario, graduating with an MD in 1963. Although he ceased practising Veterinary Medicine at that time, he maintains that the knowledge he had acquired served him in good stead particularly during the clinical years. In final year he won the Class of 1971 Prize for Proficiency in the Four Phases of Medicine.

His studies were subsidised by the Royal Canadian Air Force, in which he served for 16 years. He was channelled into Aviation Medicine

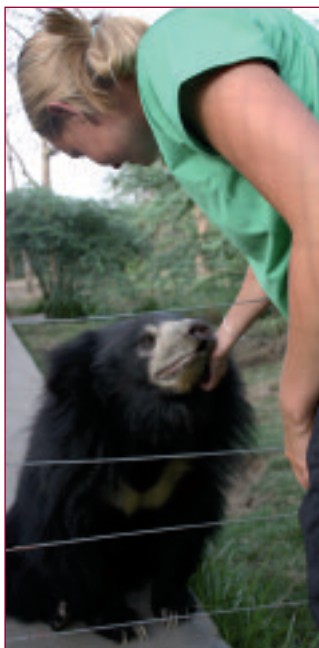
and obtained the Diploma in Aviation Medicine. After military service, he worked with the Federal Government as a Senior Consultant in Aviation Medicine for 12 years, and was then made responsible for Eye Examinations and Refractions until his recent retirement due to ill health.

Dr Blizzard has been inducted into the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine whose membership worldwide is limited to 250, and is also a Fellow of the Aerospace Medical Association.

Speaking of his time at Edinburgh he says “The bottom line is that the training I received at the Dick Vet enabled me to pursue a very interesting Medical career for 42 years. As a result, I was recently granted Emeritus status by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.”

For more details see: www.airforce.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/news_e.asp?id=5572

Laurence Eve Van Atten (MSc Class of 2006)



Laurence Eve Van Atten with one of the rescued bears.

Laurence Eve Van Atten’s lifelong interest in animal welfare eventually led her to a degree in wildlife conservation at the University of Massachusetts, a head keeper position at the Franklin Park Zoo, and an advanced degree in Animal Welfare at the Dick Vet in 2006. Now it fuels her tireless campaign for the welfare of India’s dancing bears.

“The cruel practice of training bears to ‘dance’ on their hind legs dates back to the 16th century, when sloth bears entertained Mughal emperors and Rajput kings,” explains Laurence.

“Over the centuries, the practice became more widespread in India. In the face of abject poverty, many Qalandar gypsies, both Muslims and Hindus, until recently eked out a living by teaching bears to perform for tourists along India’s highways.”

Sloth bears selected for the dancing circuit are kidnapped as cubs, their teeth and claws are removed, and often they’re intentionally blinded. Worst of all, a hot poker is used to bore a hold through the roofs of their mouths to their snouts, then threaded with a rope so handlers can manage them more easily.

“Parliament outlawed dancing bears in 1972, although officials had nowhere to bring the

confiscated bears,” says Laurence “Zoos would not accept them because of their deformities. With their teeth and nails removed, they couldn’t be returned to the wild, as they would be unable to eat properly, dig, climb or defend themselves.”

Economic and political factors made it difficult to enforce the law until recently, when the International Animal Rescue (IAR) organization stepped in with a plan to build facilities for the orphaned animals and to retrain bear handlers.

Laurence bonded with some of the rescued bears while she earned a graduate degree in Applied Animal Behaviour and Animal Welfare from the Dick Vet. For her master’s dissertation, she took a three-month internship at IAR’s bear rescue facility in Agra, India. Laurence devised programs to facilitate the bears’ acquisition of lost traits and hopes to publish her results in a scientific journal.

Meanwhile, her volunteer work has become her vocation and she has opened the first IAR office in the US. As well as being behind the bear sanctuary, IAR goes farther toward bringing an end to the dancing-bear trade with its holistic approach involving teaching bear owners new skills by which to make a living.

Jenny Walton (nee Smith) (Class of 1998)

Jenny Walton has hardly been out of the news since she's been involved in the launch of the first pet blood bank in the UK. Jenny is the Veterinary Supervisor at Pet Blood Bank UK, a national canine blood bank supported by Vets Now Ltd and the first service of its kind to collect, process, store and supply pet blood products. Vets Now put together funding for the charity after a trial run by Jenny and the director of the blood bank, a veterinary nurse called Wendy Barnett. The trial was run in the north east of England and involved investigating blood banking and producing blood

components for local use. The trial was successful and the charity was set up and launched in March last year at Crufts. PBbuk now has 330 registered canine donors so far and sold over 990 units of canine blood components to vets around the UK for treatment of critically-ill animals.

In her spare time, Jenny is a member of the Council of Friends of the Dick Vet, an organisation set up to support the work of, and fundraise for, the School.



Jenny Walton at a Pet Blood Bank UK blood drive.

The Council of the Friends of the Dick Vet – 17 years on

The greatest asset of any academic institution is its alumni, who are a source of advice, influence and monetary support at extraordinary levels. The sense of loyalty and belonging, and the resultant philanthropy, is probably foremost amongst veterinary graduates – and none more so than at the Dick Vet.

However, alumni are not alone in supporting the Dick Vet and it was with this in mind, in 1991, that it was decided to form a Council of the Friends of the Dick Vet. The idea was to build on the fact that many alumni, clients and others were indeed ‘friends of the Dick Vet’, and would welcome some type of more formal recognition and structure.

The then Principal of the University, Sir David Smith, invited a number of prominent alumni and others to join. The first meeting was held on June 28th 1991, coinciding with the first visit to the School of HRH The Princess Royal as our Patron. The remit of the Council was, and still is, to advise the Principal and the Dean regarding the mission of the school, its interaction with society, its future goals and plans, and to assist in obtaining resources to implement these goals.

The initial fundraising drive was one of the most successful ever undertaken by the University, in terms of the proportion of those approached who contributed. Anyone donating £30 was termed ‘A Friend’, and those contributing £200 or more were deemed to be ‘Life Friends’, and their names were recognised on a plaque in the entrance hall. Those becoming friends have generally been alumni, although staff, clients and many others who have reason to be appreciative of the School and its programmes, have also donated.

Shortly after the founding of the Council, the Dick Vet News was developed as an occasional publication to enable alumni to keep in touch with their alma mater. The Council also funded a part-time alumni administrator – a post that became so important that it has now been taken over by the School.

Initially, the aim of Council was to raise ‘seed money’, with which more major fundraising efforts could be undertaken. In addition, many members of Council have contacts that facilitate the generation of funds for major funding drives – indeed this was how the funding was put in place for the Hospital for Small Animals. Similarly, Council is assisting with the major drive to secure funding for our planned new school at Easter Bush.

It is also able to provide funds for specific items that are needed urgently – for example a new ultrasound scanner was recently purchased for the Cardiology section with Council funds.

Collectively, members have a wealth of experience and influence, and are able to help in numerous ways. The Council

does additionally provide an important means of contact with alumni and encourages their continuing interest and support of their alma mater. The Council also encourages the holding of reunions.

Council is always exploring ways in which it can be of further assistance to the School, and would welcome comments and suggestions regarding its role. In addition, of course, it is anxious to enrol further ‘Life Friends’. A single gift of £500, or five annual gifts of £100 will be acknowledged on the roll of Life Friends on the plaque in the hallway, and, yes, there are plans to move these plaques and display them in the new school! You can be confident that your gift will play an important role in helping the Dick Vet achieve its ambitious plans for the 21st century, and maintain its leading role in Britain and the world.

For more information on the Council of Friends, contact **Beverley Montgomery**, Beverley.Montgomery@ed.ac.uk telephone: 0131 650 6149.

Members of the Council of Friends

The first Chair of the Council was Dr Brian Singleton, a member of the class of ‘45. In 2001 the role was assumed by Alan Rowland (class of ‘56) who was well known by many generations of Dick graduates as a member of the pathology staff. This role was taken on by Professor Richard Halliwell, former Dean, in 2005. The current membership is:

Professor Richard Halliwell, Dean 1991-1995 and 2000-2002
 Mr Nigel Griffiths, MP for Edinburgh South
 Mr Brian Hoskins, class of ‘61 and former BVA President
 Dr Bob McCracken, class of ‘66 and former BVA President
 Professor Brendan Corcoran, Dick Vet Staff
 Professor Danielle Gunn-Moore, class of ‘91 and Dick Vet Staff
 Mr AC Rowland, class of ‘56 and former Dick Vet Staff
 Professor Karl Linklater, class of ‘62, and former BVA President
 Mr Ronnie Soutar, class of ‘80 and Dick Vet Staff
 Mrs Anne Irons, wife of the former Lord Provost
 Mrs Caroline Freedman, client and volunteer fundraiser
 Mr Graham Fuller MBE, Chief Executive of Wood Green Animal Shelters, Hertfordshire
 Mrs J Walton, class of ‘98
 Mr N Henderson, founder of the Henderson Group and Veterinary Times
 Professor Elaine Watson, Dean, ex officio

Class of '67 Reunion

Congratulations to the Class of 1967 (shown above in the anatomy lecture theatre) who came back to Edinburgh on October 6, 2007 for their 40th anniversary reunion. Their weekend was jam-packed with both tours of Summerhall and Easter Bush, and a special reunion dinner on the Saturday evening. This occasion was marked with a class gift for £300 to be put towards the new teaching building. Thanks to everyone who contributed.



Class of '67

Back row: John Cross, Neal Stephenson, Murray Gibson, Kate Cross*. Second row: Neville Turner, Meurig Cartwright, Chris Turner*, Mrs Meurig Cartwright*, Dorothy Pegg*, Donna King*, Alastair Knox, Mrs Alastair Knox*. Third row: Mary Walker*, Rob Walker, Mike Pegg, Ian Smith, Ethel Smith*, Archie Hunter, Eryl Tucker (nee Smith), Tyn Hunter*. Front row: Gordon Murray, George Cooper, Bob Moore, Trevor King

*spouse

Class of '72 Reunion

The Class of 1972 celebrated their best reunion yet on September 22, 2007 with tours and talks at Summerhall. Many thanks to Colin Warwick and Alastair Macdonald who managed to entertain, as well as inform, the group with their talk on the history of the Dick Vet.

Class of '82 25 year Reunion

A grand total of 35 1982 graduates plus assorted wives, husbands, partners and family made it to the 25 year reunion held at the Carlton Hotel in Edinburgh on 20th November 2007.

A few hardy souls made a full weekend of it, turning up on the Friday and revisiting the delights of Rose Street. I'm sure there were fewer pubs in the old days!!

Saturday saw the rest arriving. For some this was the first visit since graduation. A trip had been arranged to visit the new small animal hospital and a small group took advantage of this and were well looked after. They all returned with stories of how great the place looked but still managed to see some of the old yard where we had spent many a cold winters day listening to the great Joe Fraser and trying to figure out which leg the horse was lame on. Still it was nice to see some things don't change. Paddy Dixon was there though now elevated to Professor. Oh, happy times.

The evening of the 10th was one of fine food, great speeches courtesy of Colin Stead and Jim Wallace. The Celidh Band worked well and managed to get everyone up dancing even if we were all a bit rusty to begin with. But most of all this weekend was about catching up with people



Class of '72

Back row: Nancy Massie (nee Milne). Second row: Jenny Scott*, Colin Scott, Bill Taylor. Third row: Nigel Hopkins, Richard Hollands, Donald MacDougal, Andrew Kennedy, David Franklin, Helen Franklin, Di Welsh*, Liz Rhys Jones. Front row: Teresa Warwick*, John Ruben, John Harris, Bob Warwick, Sue Ruben*

*spouse

we had all shared such good times with when we were at college and for some reason had over the years lost contact because of the busy lives we all now lead. The best part for me was seeing how well everyone was looking after all this time and still recognisable!

Anna Martin



Editor's note: Class of '82 have donated £400 towards the cost of moving the stained glass windows from Summerhall to the new teaching building.

Attention all alumni who graduated in a year ending in a '3' or '8'

In June of last year, we welcomed back to Edinburgh almost 300 of our graduates and friends from across the years and around the world to an Alumni Homecoming Weekend. Following the success of this event, many of the attendees asked whether we could organise a similar event every year. So we have decided to hold an annual reunion dinner and ceilidh for those graduates celebrating a milestone anniversary. We are, therefore, inviting all our alumni who graduated in a year ending in a '3' or '8' to join us on Saturday, 6th September 2008

for this special reunion, so please keep this date free in your diaries.

The cost of the event will be in the region of £45.00 per person. The format will consist of an open day at Summerhall with tours and a lecture on the history of the Dick Vet, followed by a dinner and ceilidh at South Hall, Pollock Halls in the evening. Dress is informal. To register your interest, please contact Beverley Montgomery, Alumni Officer, Beverley.Montgomery@ed.ac.uk, +44 (0)131 650 6149.

VDS Annual Reunion

The Veterinary Defence Society is running their annual Edinburgh Graduate Reunion for 2007 graduates which will take place on Saturday 6th December 2008. The event involves a useful communication workshop during the day at Summerhall followed by a reunion dinner and ceilidh at the Holyrood Hotel. This provides a

welcome opportunity for graduates to catch up with their colleagues whilst gaining CPD points.

For further information, contact Marina Baxter, The Veterinary Defence Society Ltd, 4 Haig Court, Parkgate Estate, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8XZ. Tel: 01565 652737. Fax: 01565 751079. Email: mbaxter_vds@wyenet.co.uk.

Annual Dick Lecture

The Annual Dick Lecture is to be held in London this year on Thursday 3 July in the Apothecaries' Hall on the subject of biological warfare. It will be presented by Bruce Vivash Jones of Vivash-Jones Consultants Ltd, a company he founded in 1965 to provide specialist analyst services to the international pharmaceutical and animal health industries.

Title: Biological Warfare

Presented by: Bruce Vivash Jones

Introduced by: Lt. Col. Neil Smith

Date: Thursday, 3 July 2008

Location: Apothecaries' Hall, Black Friars Lane, London EC4V 6EJ

Time: 6pm Drinks Reception
7pm The William Dick Lecture

Information: Rachele Norry, tel 0131 650 2240, or email Rachele.Norry@ed.ac.uk

Vetcraft and Dickery – students, staff and alumni have a ball

On April 27, 2007, for one night only, Summerhall was turned into the 'School of Vetcraft and Dickery' by our vet students for a champagne reception before going on to the Edinburgh Corn Exchange for their annual ball.

Over 400 staff, students and alumni attended the meal, with 100 more attending the after-dinner ceilidh and disco. Guests were treated to a complimentary bottle of potion and a spell book.

Special thanks go to the students who donated £650 (out of a total amount raised of £2,540) to the R(D)SVS for the preservation and transport of the Summerhall stained glass windows to the new vet school. Donations were also made to the Mossburn Animal Centre, an animal rescue facility in Pitlochry, and the Sandpiper Trust, which provides rural Scottish communities with emergency medical equipment.

The ball was organised by the fourth year students. Over a year's worth of planning and



College Ball Committee:
Rachael Frew, Niamh Lewis, Clare Wellbrook, Annatasha Bartel, Alex Davis, Katie Gray, Caroline Farrant.

much hard work went into the ball's success. As a letter from the Sandpiper Trust eloquently stated, "I never quite understand how someone doing one of the hardest courses at University finds time to spend so much time organising a ball and indeed managing to raise quite so much money!" *Editor's note:* Ha...it was ever thus!

Burns' Supper 2008

On Friday, January 25th, 2008 one hundred and thirty of final year's finest students and staff members, both preclinical and clinical lecturers alike, met to celebrate the traditional Burns' Supper and Ceilidh at Summerhall. It was a fantastic evening with dramatic recitations of classic Burns poems such as 'Address to a Haggis' and 'Ode to a Mouse' by staff members Gordon Goodall and Maxine Pelagi, respectively. Final year students Graeme Stevens and Tara Rana gave two witty and poignant toasts to the

lads and lassies and everyone enjoyed a fine meal of haggis, neeps and tatties! The excellent and generous meal was followed by a lively ceilidh and some notable dancing skills, particularly by the anaesthesia department. A raffle was also held and all profits of the evening were donated to the exotics department to help with the purchase and upkeep of the new teaching rabbits coming to the HFSA next year! A fabulous time was had by all in attendance.

Annatasha Bartel V



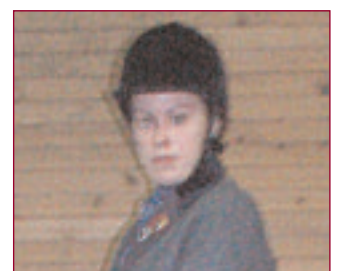
Vet students enjoy themselves in the Main Hall at Summerhall in time-honoured fashion.

Horse Society News

Judith Findley at Gleneagles

Final year vet student Judith Findley has combined academic commitments with sporting success as a member of the Edinburgh University Equestrian 1st team this year. The team, who compete in the British University Sports Association, qualified for the regional championships which were held at Gleneagles in March, after winning three of the four qualifying

competitions by a convincing margin. The team competed against Glasgow, Strathclyde and Stirling universities. Sadly the team was pipped at the post, with Newcastle going forward to the National Final. Judith was the most consistent individual on the team, finishing within the top four at all of the competitions including an individual 1st.



Princess hosts Holyrood Palace Dinner



The School's Patron,
the Princess Royal.

2008 got off to an excellent start with a special dinner held on 24th January at the Palace of Holyrood House hosted by the Princess Royal, patron of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. The event enabled a small group of Dick Vet alumni, supporters, clients and friends to hear more about our plans for major investment at Easter Bush and gave them the opportunity to get actively involved in the campaign to unite teaching, research and practice at the Dick Vet on one key site.

Assembled company heard how 2008 is set to be a crucial year for the fundraising campaign with the creation of a new Cancer and Imaging Centre expected at Easter Bush by the end of the year. The Centre will make an enormous difference to the work of the Dick Vet, allowing more cancer patients to be treated with better outcomes. The new facilities will provide advanced imaging technologies for both small animals and horses.

Dr Neil Cross, a PhD alumnus of the University of Edinburgh and a key supporter of the new Cancer and Imaging Centre, was one of those

who addressed the audience, explaining his family's very personal reasons for supporting the work of the Dick Vet and the new Cancer Centre:

'The Cancer Centre is of particular interest to my wife and me as, twenty years ago, our first dog developed bone cancer when she was only two years old and was given experimental radiotherapy at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge...the idea was to aid research into the treatment of both animal and human cancer and the new Dick Vet Centre will enable further advances to be made and, indeed, some promising work on dogs is already showing signs of benefit to humans'.

Throughout the coming year we will be reaching out to the Dick Vet's alumni and friends to spread the word about our campaign and to ask for support. We look forward to keeping you regularly updated by newsletter, events, e-mails and through our website in 2008 and beyond.

If you would like to know more about the Veterinary Campaign please contact:

Chloe Kippen, Development Officer,
Chloe.Kippen@ed.ac.uk +44 (0)131 650 2232.

Artist's impression of new Cancer and Imaging Centre, attached to the Hospital for Small Animals.



A Day in the Life of

Professor Danièle Gunn-Moore, Chair of Feline Medicine

Based at the Dick's Small Animal Hospital at Easter Bush, Professor Gunn-Moore (pictured) is a busy veterinary surgeon seeing referral cat cases and teaching the veterinary students. She is also Director of the Feline Advisory Bureau and Associate Editor of the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery. Her work, for example on feline asthma, diabetes and obesity, and senility, has won recognition around the world and generated intense media coverage.



I'm generally in work by 7.30-8.00 to check the cases before the residents' rounds at 8am. The residents might then want to discuss interesting cases or ask about anomalies or high level diagnostic queries. The student rounds are at 8.45, where they present their cases and there's always a good discussion of what's going to happen that day.

Some days there'll be emergency procedures to do. For example, the other day I had to do an endoscopy on a gorgeous little Siamese called Oliver, who had an oesophageal stricture. Sometimes there'll be full upper and lower intestinal scopes for our own Service or for others, for example the Oncology Service, which is a new and very fast growing service. There's always lots of endoscopy – if there's an orifice I'll happily stick a scope into it. We see many different types of cases.

My job is about caring for the cats but it's also about caring for their owners. Yesterday I had a revisit with a long haired grey cat. He had had terrible diarrhoea and I mean terrible, due to eosinophilic enteritis. The owner arrived, triumphant, with a solid poo in a plastic bag so that we could all see it!

We also perform clinical research. For example, using left over blood we look at biochemical data so that we can work out how to treat cases better and so help vets to treat their feline patients more appropriately. Our studies are always based on changing clinical need. We try to answer questions that concern us and are currently causing problems for our patients' so we're always undertaking different studies on disparate topics.

There's no point in seeing cases and gathering all that information and not disseminating it. I try to spend half my time on clinics collecting and assimilating the information and half my time

disseminating it. We run Study Days and CPD (continuing professional development) days for vets, vet nurses, cat breeders and a whole cross section of people who come from all over.

I also run road shows, often travelling in blocks of up to two weeks at a time. This often means perhaps three cities in three days: master classes for higher level vets and University clinicians (usually very case based and interactive) with big lectures for a few hundred people in the evenings. I lecture all over the world as well as extensively in the UK. It's fun getting to do things like that. It's great to know you're doing your best.

Cats are now the number one pet in the UK and the US, and cat owners can be demanding – I know, I am one! They often want cat-only vets and there are more and more cat-only clinics. A few of us have become feline specialists, but there aren't that many in the world, so we are in demand. The lack of specialist cat vets is also why I am so passionate about improving CPD provision and clinical training in feline medicine. We desperately need more vets with a really interest in treating cats.

As far as I'm concerned I spend my days caring for the best species there is – I really do believe that the reason I was put on this planet was to help cats. The day I stop hurting when a cat is hurting or their owner is upset is the day to give up. I'm empathetic with cats so their owners can see their cats like me. It really helps me to do a good job. I believe that good vets are vets who care.

I don't see the need for a hobby, but to unwind, a good Scottish Malt helps. I have my friends and my ever wonderful husband of 22 years. My special day? Curling up with a story book and my own two cats Mortlach and Teaninich.

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