

Educating owners about OA

MERIAL Animal Health reports that it has supported a number of "OA Days" in veterinary practices and is interested in running more.

Kingsnorth Veterinary Centre, part of Cinque Ports Veterinary Group, hosted such a day on Sunday 10th October.

Sarah Startup, branch manager at the practice, writes: "The day was arranged to increase owner awareness of osteoarthritis in dogs, so we invited dogs over eight years of age along to the event, as this is commonly the age that the signs can first appear.

"On arrival the owners were asked a series of questions regarding their dog's health and fitness levels. This was followed by a full veterinary examination by our head veterinary surgeon, Sharon Marsh.

"To help educate owners there were displays and information leaflets in the waiting room showing joint radiographs, diagrams and product information. To keep everyone happy, nibbles were provided for the owners and the dogs as well!

"Once Sharon had examined the dogs, I gave a tour of our surgery to allow owners and their dogs to see behind the scenes, including our operating theatre, laboratory and other facilities available. Our veterinary nurse, Rachael Stooks, was also on hand to



Sharon Marsh examines a patient; below: a display board at Kingsnorth Veterinary Centre.



give advice to owners on their pet's weight and help with any diet-related problems. She was also able to advise about supportive treatments including joint supplements, along with our receptionist, Lorna Tudball.

"Following examination and discussion with the owners, dogs that were found to have signs of

osteoarthritis were prescribed anti-inflammatories to help manage the condition and also a free trial of a nutraceutical (joint supplement of glucosamine and chondroitin) to help stimulate cartilage production.

"Alongside this event, our veterinary nurses also run very successful 'Mobility and After Eight Clinics' which offer owners free advice on how to help look after their older pets and how to help them if they are suffering from osteoarthritis."

Sharon Marsh commented: "It was a very positive day and there were quite a few dogs that were showing signs of osteoarthritis that will benefit from anti-inflammatory medication."

Information on running an "OA Day" is available from Merial territory manager.

■ A call by Merial to veterinary nurses to submit their cases involving successful treatment of canine osteoarthritis resulted in a substantial volume of entries. The winning case study was submitted by Heather Braunton from Witten Lodge Veterinary Practice in Bideford, Devon. This case involved a 12-year-old collie named Holly and outlined a treatment plan with a very successful outcome. Two runners-up were chosen: Antony Vernau from Colne Valley Vets and Sadie-May Phelan from Langford Veterinary Services.

Views sought on new diploma for nurses

A NEW VN diploma is currently in development and Central Veterinary Services is conducting a survey to gather views and suggestions from the profession.

The company says: "Following on from extensive feedback already received, the consultation aims to gather information about how welcome a new VN diploma would be in the veterinary profession, whilst also exploring what the most important elements of a VN training programme are.

"This diploma would be a new entrant into the field of veterinary qualifications and could provide an alternative to the current system. By offering more options for those who supply training and also for those undertaking qualifications, the award could help boost the numbers of nurses entering the profession.

"Collating information relating to how improvements to the current system can be made, we visualise that this diploma will meet the needs of the practice, college and student, the company states."

The survey is open to anyone working within the veterinary profession or industry.

To complete the survey, see www.vetnursing.org, or write to Jan Starmer, project consultant at Central Veterinary Services Ltd, Elmtree Business Park, Elmwell, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9HR, or e-mail vntraining@centralvet.com.

Survey shows nearly half of veterinary surgeons support idea of a union

OF the 500 veterinary surgeons who took part in a recent VetsPanel survey, almost half said they were in favour of the idea/concept of a veterinary union; 36% were against and the rest were either undecided or did not care.

What was surprising was the clear income/age divide between those in favour and those against. Those in favour of the idea of a union were younger and had an annual income of about £37,000 while those against had incomes in excess of £52,000.

Quite a few vets indicated that a union would help those vets who are employed, or assistant vets who currently are "exploited", "overworked" and/or "underpaid".

Some went as far as to say that "Many vets are lousy employers" or that "Something needs to be done to improve working conditions of employed vets." What is clear is that many vets currently feel that working conditions are not ideal and that junior vets need more protection.

It's therefore not surprising that those in favour of a union are also those most stressed. So they are not

only suffering from bad working conditions, but these are also affecting them emotionally and psychologically. Consequently, about 40% of these vets are considering leaving the profession (compared to only 26% amongst those against the idea of a union)

Although some of these vets did acknowledge the BVA and RCVS, they also considered that they were not doing as good a job as they should. Some vets even went so far to say: "BVA and RCVS seem to be against the average vet."

On the other hand those against a union are older and tend to be practice owners. Some said that vet practices are "private sector business/small practices where the ideals of working conditions, etc., just don't seem to apply". They are also in favour of job mobility ("If you don't like your boss, move on!").



Generally they tend to agree that the BVA/RCVS currently protect the interests of all vets so a union would be unnecessary and just bureaucratic and expensive and overall just a bad idea.

The high stress rates amongst the younger vets, and their associated desire to leave the profession, is a warning sign that should be carefully looked at. The role of the BVA and RCVS should maybe be revised, or their remit extended as currently it's perceived that they are not adequately protecting the vets most at risk of being exploited and of leaving the profession.

And the winner is...



Susannah Brown from Bridge Veterinary Group in Gwent has won a limited edition Monkey World portrait and House of Fraser vouchers in the stand competition run by Xograph at the London Vet Show in October. Susannah is shown receiving the prizes from Helen Macdonald (left), veterinary territory manager of Xograph Healthcare.