

serious lacerations to its tail. The cat – since dubbed Hope – was otherwise in good body condition and had a pink leopard print collar with a bell, but was not microchipped. The animal welfare charity believes she may have been injured and then deliberately dumped in Lupin Close, Merthyr Tydfil, on or around April 9.

RSPCA inspector Sian Burton said: “The person who found the poor cat only discovered her because they heard her miaowing. It is amazing she still had the strength to cry, as she was so badly injured she couldn’t even move.

The cat was taken to a practice in Newport, where she underwent emergency treatment, including amputating part of her tail. The vets also managed to keep the cat’s kittens in her stomach, where they seem to be doing well despite the ordeal.

So far, says the charity, Hope seems to be responding well and it is hoped she will make a full recovery.

The RSPCA is attempting to trace the cat’s owner, and is appealing for witnesses who may have seen what happened to Hope.

Anyone with any information is asked to telephone the RSPCA on 0300 123 8018.



Hope post (above) and pre-op.

PROFESSION UNCLEAR OVER POTENTIAL GENDER PAY GAP

FEMALE practice owners could be earning significantly less than their male counterparts.

report by **James Westgate**
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Speaking at BSAVA Congress, international veterinary management consultant Pere Mercader presented a study by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) that showed women lag behind when it comes to pay.

Entitled Impact of Management Practices and Business Behaviours on Small Animal Veterinarians’ Incomes, data contained in the report showed the mean income of female practice owners was almost a third less than men in the same position.

Although Mr Mercader could offer no definitive reasons for the disparity, one suggestion during discussions that followed the presentation was that men might be more likely to prioritise practice profitability above empathy with clients.

Whatever the reasons behind the apparent financial gender gap, Mr Mercader believes it needs to be looked at in greater detail.

He said: “I think part of the variation in the statistics is explained by factors not related to gender, such as the number of years in the profession,

being or not being the practice owner, the geographic locations of the practice and, obviously, the owner’s knowledge of finance is also a very important factor in the way these figures have come out.

“Despite all that, there is still an important variation that remains to be explained. This could be an important issue for a profession like ours, with an already large and increasing number of female professionals.

“I don’t wish to be polemic – these findings are from empirical research done in the US, but I think a discussion about this is needed within the profession.”

The study showed that, although the difference in pay between women and men narrowed with more years in practice, the disparity between the sums earned remained significant throughout their careers.

Women with less than eight years’ experience earned on average 31 per cent less than men, a figure that fell slightly to 30 per cent for those with between eight and 14 years’ experience in the profession.

Respondents with 22 years

or more experience showed the lowest gap, but even by this stage, women still earned 27 per cent less than men.

It was suggested the figure might be due to some women in the profession working shorter hours to play a more active part in raising their children. However, another set of data seemed to debunk this idea.

When the same salary information was collected for practice owners who all worked between 40 and 49 hours a week, there was still a significant earnings gap between the sexes.

This was widest for women in the survey with less than four years in practice, who earned 56 per cent less than male counterparts – a figure that had reduced to 22 per cent by the time women had more than 22 years’ experience in practice.

Several factors

Even in those businesses that used “positive business practices” – including client customer satisfaction surveys and measuring staff productivity – there was a big difference between the sums earned by men and women.

The information was collected from US practice owners, however, and, as president of the VPMA Helen Sanderson pointed out, good management is a more important factor than gender.

She said: “It’s not wholly clear that male practice managers or practices owned by men gener-

“This could be an important issue for a profession like ours, with an already large and increasing number of female professionals.”

Pere Mercader.



ate significantly higher incomes than their female counterparts. The groups are likely to differ in a number of ways related to income. The most important of these ways is really just conjecture, as the broad suggestion seems to indicate.

“Several factors could be acting together here. But in general, I would say sound financial management and good communication are both vital components of a successful practice. Regardless of gender, it should be the aim of every manager or owner to be competent in both of these areas, and this is something the VPMA encourages through training and support.”

Petplan practice manager of the year for 2013 Cery Lawson-Tancred questioned the relevance of some of the data in the report, which was first gathered in 1999, but felt there was much still of relevance to the profession.

She said: “The finding that women veterinarians in the study were highly satisfied with income at levels with which men vets were much

less satisfied could well still apply. I would suggest this lack of expectation could be linked with the reported lower level of female self-esteem, which, in turn, could be correlated with the reported average self-esteem scores increasing with years in practice.

“From my own experience of working part-time, it is much harder to achieve a belief you are on top of the job to a level that increases self-esteem if you are not there most of the time. I would also suggest that part-time work is also likely to increase one’s level of ‘fear of negative evaluation’.”

She added: “Both self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation give a high correlation to income in the report, but I would suggest they would also influence a decision to go into management. Therefore, the results reported would have more to do with the influence of part-time working rather than gender and statistics suggest that more women happen to be employed in part-time positions than men.”

Avian influenza found at Bernard Matthews’ Holton farm

BIRD ‘flu has been discovered on a Bernard Matthews farm in Suffolk.

As *Veterinary Times* went to press, movement restrictions were put on the farm in Holton to stop any chickens or turkeys arriving at or leaving the premises while tests were carried out. However, Defra said initial tests had been negative for the H5 and H7 strains, which are potentially lethal for humans.

“The type of avian influenza under investigation is highly pathogenic and has the potential to cause public health concerns,” said

officials in the south-east have ruled out H5 or H7 strains of the disease, which have the potential to be highly pathogenic and spread quickly.

“The premises remains under restriction pending further results and poultry keepers should remain vigilant by looking for signs of disease in their birds. Any concerns should be reported immediately to their local vet or the AHVLA.”

A statement from Bernard Matthews said: “[We] can confirm some of the birds at one of the business’ farms

“The company felt it was appropriate to report this to Defra. It has detected the presence of an avian influenza virus, but not the virulent H5 or H7 form.”

The company said “some restrictions are in place as a precaution” but, as of April 17, expected these to be lifted in “the next few days”.

This is the second outbreak of bird ‘flu at the company’s Holton farm. In 2007, a large number of the farm’s turkeys were killed after the H5N1 subtype of

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