

# VET SURVEY: 42% OFTEN CONSIDER PROFESSION EXIT

**GROWING dissatisfaction among vets in the UK has been highlighted by a report showing almost half regularly think of leaving the profession.**

From November 2015 to February 2016, CM Research questioned almost 3,000 mainly small animal vets from across Europe and the US, including 817 from the UK, on a range of areas, including finances, future plans, wages and work/life balance.

When asked how often they considered leaving the profession to achieve a better work/life balance, 20 per cent of UK vets said they considered doing so "very frequently", with 22 per cent stating it was something they "often" thought about.

These figures were among the highest reported by any country in the survey; 21 per cent of UK vets said leaving the profession was something they never thought about.

The levels of job satisfaction has also fallen in the UK, with vets who were "very dissatisfied" with the job increasing to five per cent – up two per cent from last year's survey.

Responding to the figures, SPVS senior vice-president Nick Stuart urged managers, owners and practice leaders to do more to understand the dynamics behind the problem.

He said: "As a profession, we need to understand more about what is making our vets and nurses more likely to consider leaving the profession than those from other countries. We should be very concerned about the fact so many vets say they are 'very stressed' or 'somewhat stressed' daily.

"As bosses, managers and practice owners, we need to address this and consider how we can make life in practice better for the staff who work for us. At SPVS, we hope to identify best

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practice via our Wellbeing Awards and share this more widely."

Stress levels among UK vets were among the highest in Europe, with 62 per cent admitting to being either "somewhat stressed" (45 per cent) or "very stressed" (17 per cent).

## More work for less pay

The survey also looked at working patterns with vets in the UK spending 13 minutes per consultation and seeing, on average, 29 patients a day – the highest daily caseloads in Europe and the US.

Consulting amounted to 43 per cent of a UK vet's working day, with the rest breaking down as follows:

- 18 per cent spent in surgery
- 10 per cent spent on call
- 15 per cent covering weekends and emergencies
- 12 per cent on administration
- 2 per cent on "other" activities

Despite seeing more patients than their European and US counterparts, however, UK vets are not among the best paid in the survey, with an average salary of £52,479 per annum, compared to £84,000 in the US, £64,373 in the Netherlands and £62,400 in Germany.

When asked, as last year, how practices in the UK were performing, 45 per cent reported doing "slightly better", while a further 13 per cent were "doing much better" this year.

In total, 34 per cent of the nation's

practices also reported plans to expand and take on extra staff.

In terms of species breakdown, there were few surprises, with UK practices spending 40 per cent of the time treating dogs, 45 per cent treating cats and the rest of the time treating a mixture of equine, large animal and exotics.

Results also showed practices in the UK are larger, on average, than those in the US and Europe, with 56 per cent answering there were four or more vets in their practice. This may reflect the higher proportion of larger, corporate practices in the UK (23 per cent), a figure behind only Sweden, where 26 per cent of practices are owned by corporates or are part of a chain.

When asked how they felt veterinary practices will change over the next few years, 89 per cent of UK respondents answered they expected to see more corporate chains, 67 per cent felt there would be an increase in specialisation, while 47 per cent said they thought it would be more difficult to make a living in the future.

## Antimicrobial resistance

With the fight against antimicrobial resistance on the radar, panellists were asked a final question on how often they used antibiotics in routine small animal neutering.

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Vets in Italy reported the highest levels of antibiotic use in these circumstances, with 76 per cent using antibiotics all the time, while 7 per cent of UK vets reported using these drugs in neutering procedures all the time.

The survey showed 47 per cent of vets in the UK never used antibiotics for such procedures – an increase of 6 per cent from last year.

## Owner sentenced after left with 'horrendous'

**A WOMAN has been disqualified from keeping animals guilty to causing unnecessary suffering to her pet dog by an eye condition for more than five years.**

Trudy Oakley, 46, of Redmile Walk, Peterborough, was Peterborough Magistrates' Court having admitted one offence of unnecessary suffering to Staffordshire bull terrier Pooch, by failing to provide adequate veterinary care for a problem with his eyes.

Inspector Justin Stubbs attended Oakley's property after a public alerted the RSPCA.

Mr Stubbs said: "Pooch was in a terrible state and his eye looked like something out of a horror movie – his eyeball looked red and his skull. Oakley received veterinary advice in December 2010 to have the eye removed, but this was ignored and she failed to seek further professional help."

"That means Pooch was left suffering from what must have been an extremely painful and uncomfortable eye condition for more than five years."

Pooch was seized by the police, placed into the RSPCA's care and taken to a vet, who removed his eye. The dog has a congenital condition that caused his right eye to erupt and it has also affected his left eye.

Oakley was sentenced to a two-year conditional discharge for one offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The court also added six months on to an existing suspended sentence for an unrelated matter and ordered her to pay prosecution costs of £250.

Pooch is being cared for by RSPCA staff and is still undergoing treatment. It is likely the 10-year-old dog will also lose his remaining eye.



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