
EUROPEAN VETERINARY REVIEW 2019

ivcevidensia.com

Improving care, supporting
veterinary professionals

“Creating a
new future
for vets and
nurses”

1250

sites and counting

IN THIS REPORT

FIGHTING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE
EDUCATING BRACHYCEPHALIC CLIENTS
DIGITALISING PET CARE

“We are creating new career possibilities for all our vets and nurses”

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Caring is core to our success

AS IVC EVIDENSIA BECOMES A KEY PLAYER IN THE VETERINARY SECTOR, CEO DAVID HILLIER IS EAGER FOR THE GROUP TO BE A POSITIVE FORCE FOR CHANGE

Since our foundation, we have always wanted to be at the forefront of the profession. Now that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe, we believe we have a responsibility to put our resources and ideas at the service of the wider community.

Whether it's infection prevention, promoting the responsible use of antibiotics or championing different animal welfare issues, we can raise awareness and change attitudes. Likewise, our focus on quality enables us to support lifelong careers through education, coaching and defining best practice in every aspect of clinical work.

WORKING ACROSS BORDERS

One of our greatest advantages is that we can draw on the experiences of a huge number of talented people who may be approaching similar issues in subtly different ways. For instance, Finland is at the forefront of identifying the importance of good dental health in pets. We're taking that as inspiration to ask whether we could be doing more in other countries to help educate our clients, to train in dentistry and to invest in new technology.

My ambition is that this incredible network of leading practices will work ever closer to share the best examples of modern veterinary care that exist across Europe. Making it easier for staff to move around, to share ideas and to learn together – these are some aspects of the business that give me the greatest satisfaction. They are what make the group a group. We support this through our new intranet, which facilitates networking and discussion, as well as by encouraging meetings and exchange trips to, for example, promote referral



work, or discuss marketing, HR or good clinical practice.

SUPPORTING LIFELONG CAREERS

Our size means that we are in an unparalleled position to offer our vets, nurses and managers structured career plans at every stage of their development. This might mean training within specialist hospitals, focusing on individual species, or even working in different countries.

We can offer practitioners the move into management and we can do so not just on a much broader canvas than any other group, but also in a way that we ourselves could not have done a few years ago. Whether you're a graduate vet or a nurse with six years of experience, we should be able to offer you a tailor-made career. It's my ambition that this should be available to anyone who wants to take advantage of it.

Going back a decade, it was becoming clear that a new generation of vets was less attracted by the burdens of owning a practice and more interested in developing their clinical expertise and exploring opportunities for personal development.

This wasn't a trend limited to small animal vets. Over the last few years, we have also been delighted to welcome many leading farm animal and equine practices into the group. With staff putting a greater emphasis on work/life balance, they now want to work within an organisation that encourages that, while maintaining the highest standards of clinical care.

We're well placed to make that happen. There's nothing I'm more proud of than our Graduate Academies in the UK and northern Europe. Opening up possibilities for young vets and giving them the skills, tools and confidence to succeed is thrilling to see. We offer structured training alongside coaching and mentoring, so they never feel alone. Again, it's all down to being part of something bigger.

LOOKING AHEAD

While our focus on clinically led decision-making and personal advancement will never go away, over the coming year I think we will see a lot more of our innovations in the digital space. And we'll be doing some exciting work around wellbeing to improve the lives of animals under our care.

We will also be celebrating the opening of a number of hospitals and specialist facilities. By pushing out the walls on some clinics and investing in others, we will offer a far greater degree of advanced care. These concentrations of skills, combined with our network of first-opinion practices, mean that once again, by acting as a group, we are able to improve our outcomes: for our staff, for our clients and, of course, for the pets and animals who are at the heart of everything we do. ■

David Hillier
CEO, IVC Evidensia



“By acting as a group, we are able to improve our outcomes: for our staff, for our clients and, of course, the pets and animals who are at the heart of everything we do”

DAVID HILLIER – CEO IVC EVIDENSIA



We care

We care for animals and people, keep our promises, treat each other with decency and respect.



We dare

We dare to innovate, encourage entrepreneurial thinking and identify opportunities to succeed in a changing world.



We share

We share knowledge, best practice and make decisions based on trust, dialogue, commitment and engagement.

Our principles

OUR WHOLE BUSINESS IS BUILT AROUND **SIX KEY PRINCIPLES**



1. Belief in people

The success of a practice is down to the individuals that work there. That's why we invest in continuous professional development for all IVC Evidensia staff.



2. Clinically led practices

We believe the best practices are led by vets and we want it to stay that way. That's why we place so much emphasis on our clinical boards.



3. Investment in your practice

We invest our money in refurbishments, facilities, equipment and technology so that you can provide the best possible care for your patients.



4. An independent spirit

Your clinic is the heart of your community and we want it to stay that way. We always keep the spirit of the original practice intact.



5. Exceptional care

We know your primary concern is delivering the best possible care. That's why IVC Evidensia practices always put their patients first.

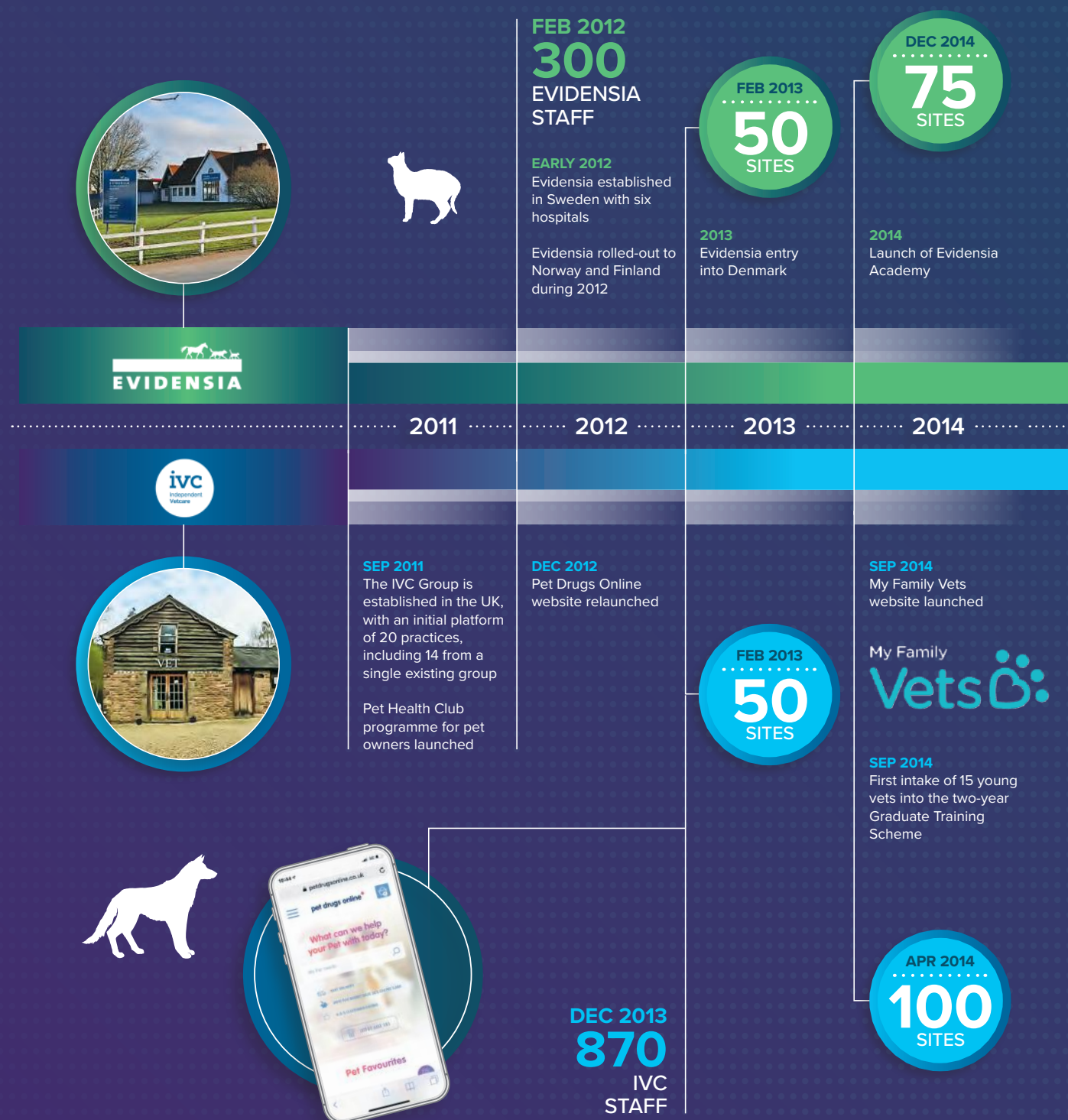


6. Sharing expertise

We're incredibly proud of the depth of talent among our referral clinicians, as well as their state-of-the-art facilities.

Our company's timeline

FROM A SMALL GROUP OF PRACTICES IN THE UK IN 2011 TO A NETWORK CURRENTLY SPANNING 10 COUNTRIES, IVC EVIDENSIA HAS COME A LONG WAY IN JUST A FEW YEARS. HERE'S HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY...



APR 2015

100
SITES

DEC 2015

2,200+
EVIDENSIA
STAFF

THROUGH 2015

Evidensia enters
Germany, the
Netherlands and
Switzerland

MAY 2016

150
SITESDEC 2016
2,600+
EVIDENSIA
STAFF

EVIDENSIA

Djurvårdguiden

Allt om frisk- och sjukvård för djur

Evidensia launches its *Animal
Care Guide* in Sweden as a best
practice guide for all vets

MAY 2017

IVC Evidensia formed

MAY 2017

Clinical boards established in
every IVC Evidensia country

JUN 2017

Centralised acquisition strategy
established across the entire
expanded group

AUG 2017

32 sites added through the
acquisition of Pro-Vets

SEP 2017

First items in a range of own-brand
products available to customers

OCT 2017

Apprenticeships launched



JAN 2018

International Veterinary Academy
(IVA) founded

MAR 2018

The group acquires the Netherlands' largest crematoria

APR 2018

Pan-European headquarters and shared
service centre opened in a converted
chocolate factory on the outskirts of
Bristol, UK

JUN 2018

Pet Health Club, My Family Pet and My
Family Vet are all rebranded

JAN 2019

The acquisition of
Vets Now puts the
number of UK sites alone at

879

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

OCT 2015

Pet Drugs Online
named 'Mobile Site
of the Year' and 'Best
Pharmacy and Health
site' at the Online
Retail Awards

OCT 2015

The Next
Appointment
initiative was
launched

DEC 2015

2,400
UK STAFF

AUG 2016

IVC Academy training
programme launched

SEP 2016

Nurse Academy and Nurse Evolve
training programmes launchedExceptional Receptionist and
Reception Academy training
programmes launched

SEP 2016

3,431
UK STAFF

APR 2016

250
SITES

JAN 2017

Vet Academy and
Vet Evolve training
programmes
launched

MAY 2017

174 sites added from
Evidensia takes the
group total to500
SITES

DEC 2017

700
SITES

AUG 2018

11 sites added in the
Netherlands through the
acquisition of Caressa

SEP 2018

IVA website goes live

150 young vets start the UK's
2018 Graduate Training SchemeIVC Evidensia enters the market
in France and Ireland

OCT 2018

European Graduate
Academy founded

SEP 2018

14,000
IVC EVIDENSIA
STAFF

NOV 2018

1,000
SITES

JAN 2019

16,300+
IVC EVIDENSIA STAFF

JUL 2019

1,250
SITES

1,233

clinics and hospitals
across ten countries.
And counting...

Ireland

11
clinics

We moved into Ireland when we saw the high-quality work delivered by Irish practices

United Kingdom

879
clinics

The group started here in 2011 with just 20 clinics and continues to grow

NUMBER OF ACADEMY GRADUATE TRAINEES:

234



Norway

18
clinics

Evidensia Norway's current initiative is to improve clinical care across all its practices

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

307

Finland

39
clinics

Pet owners in Finland expect the highest levels of care

NEW CUSTOMERS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS:

60,000

Sweden

64
clinics

Meeting customer expectations means combining veterinary care with equally good service

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

150
MALE

1,390
FEMALE

Denmark

8
clinics

Evidensia Karlslunde Referral Hospital provides 24-hour emergency care for animals

NUMBER OF ACTIVE CUSTOMERS:

19,000

Netherlands

187
clinics

Our rapid expansion is being helped by integrated technological solutions

GROWTH IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS:

↑71%

France

2
clinics

2019 is the first full year that IVC Evidensia has been up and running in France

Switzerland

5
clinics

Swiss clinics are sites of referral excellence for the Evidensia DACH region

Germany

20
clinics

Evidensia vets are using heart monitoring vests to monitor dog patients over long periods



“ONE OF OUR GREATEST ADVANTAGES IS THAT WE CAN DRAW ON THE EXPERIENCES OF A HUGE NUMBER OF TALENTED PEOPLE” – DAVID HILLIER, CEO

2.82m

CUSTOMERS RELY ON PRACTICES WITHIN IVC EVIDENSIA TO SERVE THEIR PETS' HEALTHCARE NEEDS

16,300

...AND COUNTING. THE NUMBER OF OUR EMPLOYEES ACROSS EUROPE CONTINUES TO GROW EACH AND EVERY MONTH

4,238

OF OUR VETS ARE WORKING IN TEN COUNTRIES, TREATING SMALL ANIMALS, HORSES AND LIVESTOCK EVERY DAY

1,500

NEW CLIENTS TURN TO IVC EVIDENSIA EVERY DAY SO THAT WE CAN HELP THEM GIVE THEIR PETS THE BEST POSSIBLE LIVES

**“If we can be seen as
a positive influence
across the whole
profession, why
wouldn’t we aspire
to that?”**

ALISTAIR CLIFF – UK CLINICAL BOARD CHAIR





Alistair Cliff, UK clinical board chair, at his small animal practice in Inverness

Doing the right thing

INTERVIEW



ALISTAIR CLIFF
VETERINARY CLINIC CROWN VETS
REFERRALS, INVERNESS
EXPERTISE SMALL ANIMAL
ORTHOPAEDICS
GROUP ROLE UK CLINICAL BOARD CHAIR

THE GROWTH OF IVC EVIDENSIA MEANS THAT WE ARE BECOMING A FORCE FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE VETERINARY SECTOR. WITH THIS POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY... WHICH IS WHY ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AND COMMUNITY-LED ACTIONS ARE SUCH DEEPLY INGRAINED VALUES. VET **ALISTAIR CLIFF** EXPLAINS

Back in the early 2000s, a little-known company called Google added three words to its code of conduct – “Don’t be evil”. The origins have been disputed since – it may have been a lofty ideal or just a sly little dig at its rivals – but in a business as cut-throat as digital, aspiring to simply not be the bad guys has always been regarded as a serious statement of intent.

Of course, for everyone else, not being evil is taken as a given. And as a business founded on welfare and caring, IVC Evidensia has always set its sights so high, it would give anyone in the tech world a neck strain. The group doesn’t just have to be good, it has to aspire to do the right thing, all the time. And Inverness vet Alistair Cliff is proof of that.

THE IVC CLINICAL BOARD

Alistair works in small animal orthopaedics and his “day job”, as he puts it, is running Crown Vets Referrals, a multi-disciplinary referral centre. Since 2014, he’s also chaired IVC’s clinical board, a role that he now regards as his second day job. Created to be the link between IVC’s executive management and its clinical staff, the clinical board ensures that doing the right thing is always part of the process – and never tacked on to business decisions as an afterthought. With the clinical board affecting top-level decisions and IVC’s group veterinary advisors (see page 22) supporting practices, the group ensures that the wishes and experiences of the frontline clinical staff regarding the needs of patients are translated into company policy.

“Non-clinical management teams always listen to us, which never ceases to impress me,” says Alistair. “They will always choose and use products, service approaches and strategies that have clinical interests at the heart and tend to consider the financial aspect only after they have decided which is best.”

The clinical board in action

- Patient safety**
In May, Wellpets in Sheerness became the first practice to be awarded the IVC Evidensia ‘patient safety’ award. This showcases the practice’s attention to hygiene and clinical governance through a self-accreditation scheme.
- Clinical excellence**
Vetstream was announced as an educational partner in spring 2019. It allows access to current, peer-reviewed and relevant clinical information and multimedia, which is available to all vets and nurses through its online platform – Vetlexicon. This is available on internet-enabled devices in clinics, at home and on the move.
- Welfare**
The welfare team has worked alongside marketing to publish the *Brachycephalic Guide*. This is a booklet which can be handed to owners and, perhaps more importantly, to potential owners. It educates them and encourages an upward trend in the welfare of these breeds.
- Purchasing**
The group’s *Vaccination Guidelines* were refreshed at the end of 2018 to support supplier data sheets and WSAVA materials. These give a ‘real-life’ view on using vaccines in practice and help answer common questions. The team is also working on a group bespoke webinar on this topic.



“We make sure, as a group, that we are using the best products and services to ensure the best possible animal welfare”

A rabbit-friendly, staff-friendly approach



A good idea's a good idea, regardless of where it came from. So when Tara Sutton, a veterinary nurse at Lowesmoor Vets in Worcester, came up with a master plan to improve standards of rabbit care, the group was quick to take note.

Tara likes rabbits, that much is clear. More importantly though, she has clearly combined her love of the species with her training and expertise.

Tara noticed that, despite rabbits being the third-most popular UK pet after cats and dogs, only 50% of rabbits are ever brought to a vet for their primary vaccinations. This high no-show can mean that vets can have less experience with rabbits, leading to potential shortfalls in experience on how to deal with specific rabbit ailments.

Tara took the time to put her thoughts down and present them to the company. The 'Becoming a Rabbit Friendly Company' report has now been taken up by the clinical board with a view to rolling out the initiative across the group. With an estimated 1.5 million pet rabbits in the UK, Tara's proposal to move towards a more preventative form of healthcare is a win-win-win situation for vets, pets and owners.

→ The clinical board gathers quarterly to ratify clinical decisions grouped into four focuses – patient safety, clinical excellence, welfare and purchasing – which you can read about on the previous page. In line with the group's policy of giving practices clinical freedom, much of the work they do is supportive and advisory. “One of IVC Evidensia's mantras is to preserve clinical autonomy, so we work by giving strong nudges in the right direction. We provide resources, create best-practice guidelines, promote practitioner and pet-owner guidelines and make sure that as a group, we are using the best products, services, pharmaceuticals, neutraceuticals and even external data sources – promoting the best possible animal welfare.”

Creating lasting change

IVC Evidensia is one of the larger veterinary groups in the UK and already the biggest across the UK and Europe. This puts the business in a position to not just effect change internally but also to change practices and perceptions across the sector.

“We've started to realise that we could, and should, make a mark on the profession,” says Alistair. “Putting industry-busting measures in place is a new concept, but if we can be seen as a positive influence across the profession, why wouldn't we aspire to that?”

To support this ambition of lasting, widespread change, the group veterinary medical board (GVMB) has recently been created to allow the flow of ideas from country to country. Meeting quarterly, staff from each IVC Evidensia country meet to share ideas and approaches to projects. “What this means,” says Alistair, “is that as a practitioner in the UK, I am now influencing projects which are happening in the Netherlands, France and Germany, and vice versa.

Creating joint initiatives based on the very best approaches from across the group has the potential to be absolutely colossal.”

A recent example of why some ideas are best tackled without borders is antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which is talked about in greater depth on page 18. “There's an emerging concept generally termed 'One Health' – the idea that animal health and human health should all be considered within a conjoined approach,” says Alistair. “There are some very scary projections about what the devaluing of antibiotics will mean for both human and animal medicine in the future, so by creating joint initiatives around this, we can effect positive change which will not only help our patients, but also our children and grandchildren.”

By supporting individual clinical teams with equipment and advice, by educating pet owners and by ensuring that IVC Evidensia investment is backing the best possible outcomes for patients, the company truly has made doing the right thing a core part of its business. The clinical board may only be one part of this – but it's a key part of ensuring that the important 'why' never gets left out of the debate surrounding 'what' and 'how'. It's for the welfare of the animals. It always has been. ■



Patient safety accreditation

One of the most recent projects of IVC Evidensia's UK clinical board has been the creation of the UK's 'patient safety accreditation' scheme. This lists all the measures that we put in place to ensure that all animals in veterinary care

are kept safe and in the best possible circumstances. This internal scheme allows any clinical manager to go through a self-accreditation process before submitting evidence of compliance and best practice to the group. Once a practice

has shown that it complies to the group's high standard, it is awarded the 'patient safety accreditation' seal of approval and can use the logo on its promotional material or website to give a message to customers that their pets are safe.

Working for the community

AS A VITAL PART OF ANY LOCAL COMMUNITY, IVC EVIDENSIA PRACTICES ALL ACROSS EUROPE ARE ALWAYS READY AND WILLING TO PITCH IN FOR A GOOD CAUSE...



UK Elisa Best at Rowe Referrals in Bristol founded the 'Blankets for Baby Rhinos' charity in 2016 with a friend. It now has over 3,500 members on its Facebook group and raises funds by knitting blankets to provide anti-poaching units and wildlife orphanages in South Africa with some much-needed equipment.



Denmark Evidensia clinics support organisations across the country including AGRIA and the Danish Kennel Association by providing vets onsite during competitions and charity walks.



UK Terrington Vets in Norfolk recently raised money to help Brewster, a Setter saved by Ravenswood Pet Rescue. When found, he was incredibly emaciated and had numerous skin conditions. The practice raised £600 with a coffee morning to get him back on his feet.



Finland With an estimated 20,000 stray cats in Finland, the Evidensia Rauma clinic agreed to neuter cats at the local animal shelter for cost price. This way, they contribute to the community and do a great service for animal protection, with the neutered animals available for adoption after the operation.

GROUP VETERINARY MEDICAL BOARD

Fighting antibiotic resistance

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE – AMR – IS REDUCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTIBIOTICS AND THREATENING THE HEALTH OF HUMANS AND ANIMALS ALIKE. THAT'S WHY WE ARE RESPONDING TO THIS THREAT SWIFTLY AND DECISIVELY

Medically produced antibiotics have only been available since the latter part of World War 2 yet in the decades since, their effectiveness has been continually eroded. The overuse and misuse of antibiotics has given rise to strains of bacteria that are not only resistant to them but also thrive in environments where the drugs have wiped out all other non-resistant strains.

Resistant bacteria are a well-known cause of hospital-acquired infections (HAI) within human healthcare. Animal HAIs with resistant bacteria also occur and have a negative impact on recovery rates and patient safety. Since antimicrobial resistant bacteria make no distinction between animals and humans, neither should

any solution. That's why IVC Evidensia is working hard on a 'One Health' approach to veterinary care, applying best practice that will not only protect its animal patients but also staff and, in a wider sense, the health of the human population too.

FIGHTING BACK AGAINST AMR

Marlene Areskog has been a practicing vet who has worked in the pharmaceutical industry and academia as well as the National Veterinary Institute in Sweden. As country medical director of Evidensia Sweden, she now works to harmonise best practice by setting the highest possible standards across all the Swedish clinics. As chair of both the Swedish clinical board and IVC Evidensia's veterinary medical

board (GVMB), she meets with the heads of clinical boards and medical directors from other countries to discuss and agree on quality systems, ethical and clinical policies. As you can imagine, AMR is a priority topic.

"The way antibiotics are used worldwide today is quite careless," she notes. "While a new EU legislation limiting preventive antibiotics in farm animals was recently introduced, we've had very strict antibiotic policies in Sweden for the last ten years, even in small animals and equine medicine. Evidensia Sweden goes even further in responsible antibiotic usage by routinely measuring how much antibiotics we prescribe as a percentage of procedures, so we can develop clinical strategies



Country medical director and GVMB chair Marlene Areskog



Group hygiene director Anna-Maria Andersson

and determine how effective different treatments are."

With the Nordic countries leading the fight against AMR, it was the natural home for the group's evolving infection prevention and control (IPC) programme. Group hygiene director, Anna-Maria Andersson, is also a part of the GVMB. With a background in clinical work, research and the National Veterinary Institute in Sweden, she is now working on creating group-wide preventative hygiene standards. "When fully developed and implemented," says Anna-Maria, "the group's IPC programme will be a quality assessed and quality assured programme that will take the lead on prevention and control of infections within veterinary care." This programme is working on two key aspects:

1. Infection prevention

Best practice for veterinary staff such as hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection routines combined with rigorous risk



Simple hygiene protocols can do a lot to minimise the risk of spreading infections



Taking a 'One Health' approach to hygiene protects both the patients and the staff

assessment protocols will create improved patient safety and working environments. Educating pet owners on the importance of vaccinations for preventable diseases reduces the likelihood of disease or dangerous infections and, ultimately, avoids unnecessary antibiotic treatments.

2. Infection control

The GVMB is currently working to implement an antibiotic stewardship programme across the entire group. This will guide vets to optimise the selection of antibacterial drugs as well as their dosage and duration of treatment in order to achieve the best clinical outcome with the least risk of AMR. "We already have a similar programme in Evidensia Sweden's animal hospital Helsingborg," notes Anna-Maria. "Our aim is to expand that model to other clinics." In the common cloud-based record system used in Sweden, antibiotic usage and complication reports are automatically generated, allowing more advanced data analysis and improved guidance. The plan is for the whole group to adopt a similar record system.

EVEN SMALL THINGS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

When it comes to infection control, simple routines can have a huge impact. Protocols such as using alcohol hand sanitisers, or cleaning tables and floors between patients, can do a lot to minimise the spread of any contagious disease brought into a clinic. Similarly, controlling the flow of patients, staff, equipment and air within a facility can avoid the spread of infectious agents throughout a facility and between staff-patients, patients-patients or patients-staff. Simply planning which areas a possibly infected animal can access,

then having effective hygiene barriers, are effective tools to control the potential spread of infections.

Using the gains already made in Sweden, GVMB's group-wide set of quality assessed and quality assured routines will maximise patient safety and contribute to a worldwide One Health approach. As Marlene notes, "A large animal hospital in Sweden, Evidensia Specialistdjursjukhuset Strömsholm, proved that you can perform complicated surgeries without preventive antibiotics, if you have ideal ventilation and good techniques."

With the new programme, the group is taking an important step into the future "The recipe for success and superiority of the frontline quality and patient safety work within the group, lies in the fact that we are medically highly qualified veterinarians put in positions where we can also influence company policies," concludes Marlene. "It's not business managers making clinical decisions – it's veterinarians, who know science, clinical work and risk assessment. The One Health approach of taking responsibility for global sustainability and fighting AMR is just one example of this." ■

Contacts

Contact group hygiene director Anna-Maria Andersson for more information on fighting AMR and the importance of hygiene: anna-maria.andersson@evidensia.se

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CLINICAL BOARD

The true cost of a cute face

DOG OWNERS IN THE UK HAVE FALLEN FOR BREEDS SUCH AS BULLDOGS – BUT ARE OFTEN UNAWARE OF THE UNDERLYING HEALTH ISSUES THE DOGS' CHARACTERISTIC FACES CAN CAUSE. HOW DO VETS INFORM OWNERS WITHOUT SOUNDING PREACHY?

Dogs have become fashionable items at the moment, with certain breeds in vogue – including pugs, English bulldogs, French bulldogs and boxers. Unfortunately, these are brachycephalic breeds, whose sought-after look gives them broad-yet-short skulls. This look has been bred into them, but along with it comes an inbuilt problem with breathing.

Edward Davies, clinical director of Cheshire Pet in Holmes Chapel, believes practices should embrace these pets and their owners, rather than judge them. “Sometimes vets have been accused of finger-wagging at the owners of these pets,” he admits, “but we see things from both

points of view. The problems is that the value of these dogs has risen, making them very valuable to breeders. This cost is also driven by a very strong consumer demand.

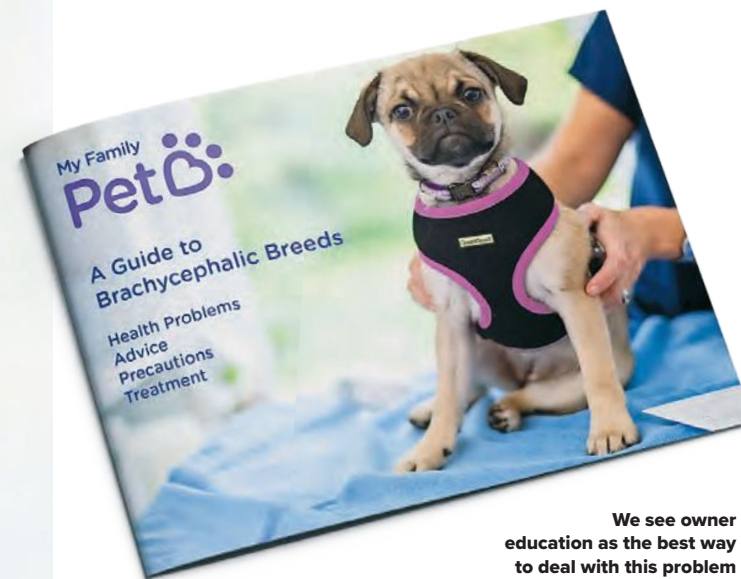
NOT THE ANIMAL POLICE

“We have to accept that these dogs are bred, and we accept that they have clear anatomical disadvantages which affect the quality of their lives. But at the same time, we are not the animal police, so we can't tell owners what to do. That's why IVC Evidensia has taken the decision to advise owners, because the danger of not offering help to these dogs is that their health can suffer. We want to improve their wellbeing,

and also that of the owners. But long term, we would like to change buying patterns and improve the anatomy of these breeds.

“I had a bulldog in the other day which was noisy with its breathing, and the owner said she was embarrassed by it. And that's a great shame. We can do something, but the only way we can help is to encourage owners into our practices.”

Edward says that a key way to help is to encourage a prepurchase consultation. “It's a difficult concept to get people to buy in to but we are establishing it more. It's easier to reach clients who already have a pet because they know us. Reaching people who are not clients is harder, while giving



We see owner education as the best way to deal with this problem

Vets can advise owners about their pets' health needs – without being judgemental



them information on the breed they are choosing is a challenge. This is the purpose of the prepurchase consultation.”

INFORMATION ON THE CARDS

Most pedigree breeds tend to have some associated health issues with them. For that reason, the group has produced a series of information cards on the 50 or so most popular dog breeds in the UK. Each card has information on health issues associated with the breed, plus exercise and dietary advice and details of vet costs.

“People have probably made their minds up to get a brachycephalic dog so you have to tread carefully,” he says. “Telling them

it's a stupid idea is the wrong thing to do. It's better to make people aware that these breeds can require a lot of vet attention.

Insurance policies mean that a lot of brachy dogs fall into select-breed policies, where premiums can be expensive.”

Because of the popularity of some breeds, Edward points out that many are imported illegally, with criminal gangs using puppy farms to cash in. One way to try to avoid this supply is to work with the Kennel Club. “I'd actually like to work even more closely with them,” says Edward. “Vets are sometimes accused of stamping their feet over these breeds when we should be giving out hard clinical

CASE STUDY

Dr Alessandro Andreoni from Switzerland



Sam, a three-year-old French bulldog, is lying on the operating table at the ENNETSeeKLINIK für Kleintiere (ESK) in Switzerland. His body is limp from the anaesthesia and a loop pulls his head up at the upper row of teeth. Surgeon Alessandro Andreoni is carefully cutting pieces of Sam's throat with a laser.

Shortly before his operation, Sam was running through the waiting room – grunting. Sam is a brachycephalic breed, with a skull so flattened that he can barely breathe. He pants excessively to regulate his body temperature. If he runs more

than 20 metres, Sam collapses. That's why Dr Andreoni is shortening his soft palate and enlarging his nostrils. And since he's under general anaesthesia, he is also correcting an umbilical hernia and removing a boil. Yet before that, Sam had to undergo an allergy test, since brachy dogs can have particularly sensitive skin due to overbreeding and also suffer from eye and ear problems.

Sam's owner fell in love with him precisely because he was the smallest, weakest puppy in the litter. “A problem child,” as he puts it. Yet this love has come with a price tag. This current round of treatment costs around 2,500 CHF (€2,250), on top of the 7,000 CHF (€6,300) he's paid out over the past three years.

According to surgeon Andreoni, the number of nose and throat operations on French bulldogs has increased dramatically. He now performs this as a standard procedure around 60 times a year.

facts and information about the issues we see as vets. We need to work more on a mechanism within the group to report deformities seen in certain breeds of dogs to the Kennel Club, so they can act and try to change the process of breeding.

“This will take a long time, obviously. But we often get people coming into the surgery with brachycephalic dogs who say, “This is normal, isn't it?” No, the way some brachycephalics breathe may be normal for that breed, but it is not natural. If we can slowly improve that breed, we will gradually improve the health of dogs. We have to get clients to recognise the problem and find them a solution.” ■



The strength of our group lies in its people

IT'S IVC EVIDENSIA'S ENTHUSIASTIC AND DEDICATED TEAMS THAT CREATE SUCH HIGH CLINICAL STANDARDS. **GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS** HELP THEM BY USING THEIR YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND PRACTICE AT EVERY LEVEL

When the IVC Group was formed in 2011, while it needed to be successful, a core tenet was to make it a veterinary led, ethical organisation. How else could it convince practice owners across the UK – and ultimately across Europe, too – that they should join the group if it couldn't prove that animal welfare always came first?

Since vets needed to have a say in the boardroom, the common sense decision was taken to put vets in contact with the IVC Evidensia board. It took a while to settle on a name but group veterinary advisors – GVAs – were appointed based on experience, enthusiasm and a desire to get things done. On a constantly evolving mission to improve clinical matters, GVAs are now a fixture across the group.

John Dinsdale is the chief veterinary advisor, which makes him the head GVA. Typical of most, he's an ex-vendor with

34 years in practice and broad experience across veterinary care. He's been partner manager of an out-of-hours veterinary service, a graduate support officer for the British Veterinary Association and started a mixed practice with a small pet bias.

After bringing his practice into IVC Evidensia, John could have taken a step back from management. Instead, like all the other GVAs, he has thrown himself into making ethically led decisions and creating clinically determined policies that are shaping the way the group operates.

SUPPORTING CHANGE AND PEOPLE

"Had I come into this business and it hadn't been ethical by living up to its stated core principles, then I would have walked," notes John. "But as GVAs, we've managed to become almost the grandfathers and grandmothers of the group. We've got some analytical GVAs who can see the bigger

business perspective, we've got problem solvers, some great mediators and strong, clinically focused moderators. We're all very different but also consistently calm and measured in our responses to situations. So when someone rings up with a problem, we're very much, 'That's fine. We've seen that before.' We can either offer advice or know someone else who'll help."

The GVAs are seen as the clinical deliverers of IVC Evidensia's business arm. They sit in the operations teams but also have relations with professional bodies such as The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. They feed back on recruitment and retention, as well as on development of veterinary surgeons and complaints. This wide-ranging remit ensures that practical veterinary concerns are always considered when business decisions are made.

IVC Evidensia prides itself on being a business full of entrepreneurs. Instead →



Liz Cox
Group nursing advisor



John Dinsdale
Group veterinary advisor



→ of a rigid, top-down structure, it supports new ideas from its staff rather than dictating to them. It does this by taking the fear away from new managers who have never managed or been financially trained. For the GVAs, this often means helping clinical directors make the right ethical decision while also factoring in the bottom line.

“We realise that the bottom line can be influenced by a massive range of things,” says John, “everything from people and teams, to training, finance and local demographics. But we support the idea that we should always do the right thing and should respect IVC Evidensia’s core principles. We are advisory, helping to implement but also guiding and nudging people along. If our company principles are right, that’s usually the right decision.”

NURSING AS A LIFE-LONG CAREER

“I think there’s a general misunderstanding of what nurses do and we need to change that,” says John. “No practice can function without them – it’s that simple. Yet most don’t want to be mini-vets, they want to be maxi-nurses.”

As group nursing advisor, Liz Cox brings her passion for veterinary nursing and experience to everyday practice. She

visits practices, shares ideas and looks for different ways of working that improve patient care provision and teamwork. Having also worked for The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, she is pleased to help advise on the future direction of the group’s veterinary care.

“IVC Evidensia is committed to developing veterinary nurses as a vital part of the veterinary clinical team”

LIZ COX – GROUP NURSING ADVISOR

“IVC Evidensia is firmly committed to developing veterinary nurses as a vital part of the veterinary clinical team,” says Liz. “We’re helping nurses to not just work better within teams but also lead and manage them. Veterinary nurses have opportunities that were unimaginable just a few years ago and are now recognised as professionals in their own right.

“I’m really keen that veterinary nursing is seen as a career for life and, with the support, training, development and opportunities we offer, I hope that career will be with IVC Evidensia.”

Historically, veterinary nurses have always been well trained and passionate about their jobs, yet often have not seen any progression. Over time, this has been a source of frustration for many nurses who have never been able to fully utilise their vast range of skills. Conscious of this, IVC Evidensia is supporting practices to widen the remit of the nursing role.

With the move in veterinary medicine towards wellness and a more prevention-based model, there are now many areas beyond treating sick animals that nurses are perfectly placed to manage and lead as part of the clinical team. These areas include physiotherapy, blood pressure

monitoring, as well as running specialised renal, diabetic or arthritic clinics.

“With IVC Evidensia meeting the increased interest for training that addresses the ever-changing demands of our patients, clients and staff, I believe it’s a very exciting time to be a veterinary nurse within the group,” says Liz.

SUPPORTING TALENT, STRENGTHENING THE GROUP

The importance placed on GVAs by IVC Evidensia reflects the holistic approach of the whole business. If one aspect of it isn’t

working right, then it will affect another part, so why not try to find a single solution that works?

While the wide remit of GVAs can sometimes appear to be a scattergun approach, it’s one that is clearly working. As part of a support network that includes CPD and one-to-one advice, while at the same time shaping best practice, GVAs ensure that staff enjoy independence, while still delivering progressive, high quality veterinary and nursing care.

“A core group tenet is clinical freedom,” says John. “We don’t set prices for each practice to charge, which the GVAs support. Even if there’s pushback from procurement or other areas of the business, we support our vets’ decisions. We always stick to our core principles.”

Of course, having influence across the company means that the work of the GVA can never be complete. Something John is keen to concentrate on next, for example, is the poor retention rate in the veterinary sector, which sees close to 45% of vets and nurses leaving the profession within the first seven years. “We need to change this,” he says, “and currently, it seems that vets are selected on whether they have been successful students. Perhaps we need to concentrate more on their people skills and whether staff have been given a broader set of skills to survive the business side of it. I don’t know. We’ll see.” ■

Henny Bax: Group Veterinary Advisor for Evidensia Netherlands



What does your GVA role involve?

I’m one of the GVAs in the Netherlands and when I think I can help, I’ll step in. Some GVAs advise on marketing but I’m more on the management and medicine side. I also help with studies for a group of nine vets who want to be specialists in cat medicine.

How did you get to this point?

I was managing a group of 17 practices. Selling these to IVC Evidensia was a big chance to develop them on a larger scale, with access to more specialist knowledge and at a faster pace. You can’t do it alone any more. The strength of this group is that when

you have a strong view backed up with good reasons, they will always support you.

What was your most recent project?

We have built a new hospital and wanted to integrate new personnel ideas. I visited several countries and saw that in Finland, unlike in the Netherlands, they have vets dedicated to emergency work. This is a way for individuals to get specialist training and develop their skills quickly. But it’s also a huge relief to regular vets who can stick with regular work. We’ve now started hiring dedicated emergency vets in the Netherlands.

What’s next for you?

I really love veterinary work – although maybe I don’t want to work as many hours as I used to – so the combination of being a vet, managing and working in an advisory role is perfect for me. I’m now working in the emergency clinic three days a week because when you’re on the floor, seeing how things work, you can have more of an impact than suggesting ideas from a conference room. I try to improve the way people do things but it’s a two-way street, of course. I can always learn new things too.



My IVC Evidensia

We put people first

IVC EVIDENSIA'S VETS, NURSES AND OFFICE STAFF ARE ITS GREATEST ASSET – BECAUSE ONLY THEIR SKILLS, ENTHUSIASM AND DEDICATION CAN MAKE THINGS HAPPEN. SENIOR RECRUITMENT MANAGER **DEBBIE LODING** EXPLAINS WHAT MAKES THE GROUP SUCH AN APPEALING HOME FOR PEOPLE WITH A BOUNDLESS PASSION FOR PETS

While it can sound clichéd to say that any business is nothing without its staff, within such a customer-facing sector as veterinary practice, it's a truism when it comes to IVC Evidensia.

"If we don't have skilled staff, we can't run a practice – it's as simple as that," says senior recruitment manager Debbie Loding. "We aim to attract the top talent, which helps with both our client and staff retention. If we have highly skilled veterinary surgeons and nurses in all our practices, each one will be able to offer more services to clients, which in turn attracts more clients and helps to grow their practice further. They are also an invaluable support for our more junior clinicians."

A CAREER FOR LIFE

From the very beginning of every veterinary career, IVC Evidensia offers training initiatives and promotion opportunities. A vet coming straight from their formal training can aspire to running a practice without ever having to leave because the group is set on developing its business from within its own ranks.

"We offer a complete career pathway for everyone, including non-clinical staff," explains Debbie. "There's a road

for everyone to progress along, with information available via staff handbooks and the intranet, as well as face-to-face during our graduate congress. There are dedicated people within the group for anyone to contact at any time, should they want confidential conversations about their careers."

WHERE OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

As the group continues to expand, it must constantly address a sector-wide shortfall in newly qualified graduates by being the most appealing career destination it can be. "We want to be the employer of choice within the industry," says Debbie, "and that means supporting all your employees from their first day with us. Our Graduate Academy offers newly qualified vets all the knowledge and support they need to progress with us."

The group's more experienced staff are also cared for by the company, notes Debbie. "All our employees need support and the opportunity to continue to grow and develop. At IVC Evidensia, we are providing an excellent benefits package and flexible working hours. Our refresh programme provides training and support to anyone looking to return to clinical work after a break. We also now offer support for the LGBT+ community with the group, with

wellbeing champions that are available for any of our staff to contact if needed.

"We're always looking at what further support and development we can provide our employees. We listen to them and to what they tell us they need. We are also in the fantastic position of being able to offer so many different opportunities to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses across the UK and Europe.

"There isn't another employer that can offer the wide range of opportunities that we can. So if you are an experienced surgeon or nurse, you can rely on us to find you a perfect role. You do not need to use agencies or approach other companies."

IVC Evidensia's International Vet Academy is a key element to both staff and practice development. "We want all our practices to offer a gold standard of care to their patients – and so do our clinical staff. The Academy provides them with access to industry-leading programmes across all levels, from graduate to leadership programmes. They can grow their knowledge and progress their career within the academy. It is for them to choose their career pathway with us."

A PLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH PASSION

As well as driving career development, IVC Evidensia constantly encourages the



former owners turned clinical managers to run their practices with the same entrepreneurial flair.

"You don't learn to run a business at vet school," notes Debbie, "so experience has made our vendors highly skilled veterinary surgeons with entrepreneur mindsets. It's challenging to get a veterinary practice off the ground with so much competition in the industry, so it takes someone with determination and a natural gift for business and management to succeed."

Experienced vets who have been sole traders and who have sold their practices to IVC Evidensia might experience a difficult transition, but Debbie says that's

understandable. "I believe it would be a hard transition for anyone who has been running their own business for so long – but the beauty of our group is that it was created exactly for these vets. It allows them complete freedom to continue to manage and drive their practice forward.

"We give them complete autonomy and it has been wonderful to see these business owners really enjoy their role, without the additional stress of running the business. They can be vets again and still be the boss!"

"It has also been fantastic to see these former vendors move into non-clinical roles within the group. They are working in many of our central functions teams, as

they are a such a great asset with all the knowledge and skills they bring."

PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

IVC Evidensia's significant market share means that the group's culture can have a positive effect on the culture of veterinary practice. "We have a great opportunity now to change some of the factors that have negatively affected our industry for the last few years. Providing a better work/life balance for our employees, excellent career opportunities along with fantastic support and development, are essential to help this culture shift. I believe we are already starting to influence that change." ■

IVC LGBT+ FACEBOOK GROUP

"It's a great idea," says IVC employee Amelia Reynolds



I entered the world of veterinary work back in 2014 after a background in retail and finance management. It was a huge change for me, but I've really enjoyed the move and the challenge.

Our practice became part of IVC Evidensia in 2017. Lots of people were unsure about being part of a large corporate and were concerned they would

be treated as a number. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I have worked for many large companies and nothing compares to IVC. From day one everyone has been friendly and welcoming, no matter what their position in the company.

We are allowed to manage locally, with support if we need it. Many employers promote core values but the group delivers on them. Working for an ethical company is hugely important to me.

I think the IVC LGBT+ Facebook group is a great idea. Sadly I have faced homophobia across several different industries. I hope we can combat ignorance with education and offer support to anyone who may need it.

I find it so refreshing that IVC Evidensia had this put together, I couldn't be more proud to be involved.



My IVC Evidensia

Becoming part of our group



THE KEY TO OUR RAPID EXPANSION HAS BEEN THE ACQUISITION OF WELL-ESTABLISHED PRACTICES. SENIOR M&A MANAGER KIM MOHAN ANSWERS THE QUESTIONS MOST COMMONLY ASKED BY OWNERS THINKING OF SELLING THEIR BUSINESSES

WILL IVC EVIDENSIA CHANGE THE WAY I RUN THE PRACTICE?

The group's CEO, David Hillier, once noted that, "From the outset, we understood that our greatest strength was that the practices were being run by motivated vets with a wealth of management experience." The veterinary skills, local knowledge and established teams that come with every new practice are more important to the group than the bricks-and-mortar of each site. Because we know that you know what's best for your practice, we like to keep it that way. The group offers support – handling procurement and offering HR advice, for example – but regardless of whether you're an independent owner or a group clinical manager, you are still running the practice the way you see fit.

HOW WILL MY STAFF BE IMPACTED?

In the short-term, they might not even notice it. The decision to become part of IVC Evidensia is for you as the practice owner to make, so you can talk to your staff about that in your own way. Once the practice has joined the group, they may only notice that their monthly payment notification looks different.

In the medium- to long-term though, staff will enjoy the benefits of being part of a larger group, with access to extra training and career advice. Through the group's intranet, they will also be able to seek advice and share ideas with other teams across the UK and Europe.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL I GET?

As soon as it joins the group, each practice is assigned a business support manager for on-site help whenever it is needed. These managers won't dictate how you should run things but they can offer assistance and access to the services the group offers. There is a wealth of group expertise in areas such as health & safety, human resources, finance, marketing and continuous personal development for every staff member.

Regional meetings also allow staff from local IVC Evidensia practices to meet their colleagues in a relaxed environment. We really must stress this point – the group doesn't force anything upon a practice. The group's resources are there for anyone to access should they need them.

WILL JOINING AFFECT OUR CLIENTS?

In our experience, the majority of clients rarely realise that a practice has joined the group. Your clients have always come, and will continue to do so, because they value the service they get from you and your team. Joining IVC Evidensia shouldn't change that – we don't rebrand practices, change everyone's uniforms, or interfere in your local culture.

It is important to us that you carry on being a local practice employing people from the local community and offering the same care you always have. We are there in the background to help you with the administrative side of running a practice, allowing you to focus on providing excellent patient care. Ideally, any effects will be positive ones. ■

Contacts

If you own a veterinary practice and are interested in becoming part of IVC Evidensia, contact

NORDICS - axel.lindsten@evidensia.se

UK & IRELAND - kchandler@independentvetcare.co.uk
kmohan@independentvetcare.ie

GERMANY/SWITZERLAND/AUSTRIA - heiner.langbehn@evidensia.de

BENELUX - joop.van.As@evidensia.nl

FRANCE - christophe.farah@evidensia.vet

Investing in careers

THE INTERNATIONAL VETERINARY ACADEMY WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT CAREER DEVELOPMENT AT EVERY STAGE. THE ACADEMY IS NOW FLOURISHING, WITH MORE EMPLOYEES THAN EVER TAKING PART

Whether you are looking for clinical or non-clinical, practical or lecture-based learning, the IVA is here for you!

The group's International Veterinary Academy (IVA) is a valuable resource for those employees who are looking to grow and develop their skills and knowledge within each staff member's chosen career path.

Whether they are a practice manager looking for new ways to work with clients, a veterinary nurse wanting to increase their skills, or a veterinary surgeon wanting to specialise in a new area, the IVA provides a wide range of highly engaging courses on its comprehensive list.

A LAUNCHPAD FOR SUCCESS

Back in 2014, IVC UK launched its Graduate Academy by taking in a class of 15 newly qualified vets and giving these academically qualified recruits a broader set of real-world skills that included such aspects as teamwork and handling the expectations of pet owners.

Such was its success that the UK IVC Academy was created in 2016. This saw the development of the Nurse Academy for newly qualified RVNs and regional Nurse Evolve CPD for all IVC nurses.

IVA courses and programmes are primarily targeted at all members of the Practice Team wanting to develop their skills within chosen fields. Training covers theoretical and practical aspects and can be delivered either as short standalone events or more structured post graduate modular programmes.

IVA courses and training programmes are arranged across the IVC Evidensia Group countries. We also have an international programme, the IVA Graduate Academy.

TESTIMONIALS

Reception Academy

OFFERING COURSES HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RECEPTIONIST IN CREATING AN EXCEPTIONAL CLIENT EXPERIENCE, HOW TO DEVELOP THIS AND HOW THE GROUP'S 'MYSTERY SHOP' SUPPORTS IT



Name: Andy Barwise
BVSc MRCVS
Role: Practice manager
Based: De Montfort Vets, Leicestershire, UK

One area in any practice that always needs some improvement is asking for payment. We don't join the profession with this in mind, but we cannot fulfil our work without the need to ask for payment for what our care is really worth.

Our whole practice attended the 'Taking Payments With Confidence' course, provided by the Reception Academy. Coinciding with our push to reduce the time spent chasing payments, it has been ideal in bringing the team together and giving them the confidence and tools needed to address one of the stressful parts of our job.

"It has been ideal in bringing the team together and giving them confidence"

ANDY BARWISE – DE MONTFORT VETS



Name: Nichola Morris
Role: Practice manager
Based: Burch Tree Vets, Lancashire, UK

I absolutely adored the Leadership course. You might not be able to teach an old dog new tricks – but you can definitely teach an experienced practice manager new tricks! Plus, I got to meet a great bunch of people who I now class as friends along the way.

EXPANSION OF COURSES

2014

SEP 2014
UK GRADUATE ACADEMY LAUNCHED

2015

2015
An Evidensia training academy is established at the Karslunde Animal Hospital, Denmark, with a training company providing two and four year modules (GPC, NCert) for both internal and external trainees. Courses are expanded to Finland, Norway and Sweden

2016

JUN 2016
UK IVC Academy launched

SEP 2016
UK Nurse Academy launched

2017

JAN 2017
UK Vet Academy, UK Receptionist Academy and UK Exceptional Receptionist all launched

MAR 2017
UK Nurse Academy welcomes its second intake

APR 2017
UK Nurse Refresh programme welcomes back veterinary nurses

MAY 2017
Additional Academy training facilities created next to the Karslunde Animal Hospital, Denmark. UK Vet Evolve programme is launched

JUN 2017
The first Nurse Excel Conference is held exclusively for IVC nurses

SEP 2017
UK Exceptional Receptionist courses are delivered at local practices

→ TESTIMONIALS

Vet Development

THE GROUP VALUES EVERY VETERINARY SURGEON AND OFFERS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION YOU WISH TO TRAVEL IN YOUR VETERINARY CAREER



Name: Femmy Stoffers M.Sc
Role: Veterinary surgeon
Based: Mijn Dierenkliniek, the Netherlands

I'm having a good time at the IVC Graduate Academy. It's great to see all the young vets around Europe learning together and sharing their experiences. I'm looking forward to what's coming up on the course!



Name: Sofia Wijkmark
Role: Veterinary surgeon
Based: Evidensia Djursjukhuset Göteborg

A really great initiative to start an International Education Program for newly graduated Veterinarians. I'm happy to be a part of a program investing in further knowledge and development for veterinarians.

Be part of the IVA success story

The International Veterinary Academy Team is committed to supporting our employees in achieving personal development goals. The team, which spans the UK & Europe, is on hand to answer your learning and development queries and to help meet your training needs.

The IVA website is set to become the hub for all programme information, bookings and queries. You can currently gain a list of all of the programmes and events by emailing the team at: IVCL&D@independentvetcare.co.uk ■



For more information and to discuss booking courses, please email academy@evidensia.dk or IVCL&D@independentvetcare.co.uk and we will be able to support you through the process of finding the ideal course.

TESTIMONIALS

Nurse Development

THE GROUP IS COMMITTED TO INVESTING IN NURSING TEAMS BY OFFERING A RANGE OF PROGRAMMES TO ADVANCE YOUR SKILL, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, WHATEVER CAREER STAGE YOU ARE CURRENTLY AT



Name: Debbie Anslow, RVN, BSc, VNS, N Cert Animal Behaviour
Role: Registered veterinary nurse
Based: Clockhouse Veterinary Group, Gloucestershire, UK

As a self-confirmed continuing professional development (CPD) addict, the IVA has been a dream come true. The Nurse Evolve and Nurse Refresh courses are a fantastic update and a great reminder that I do 'know my stuff'. The Nurse Academy recently invited both myself and my head nurse to attend a coaching session, which updated our teaching methodologies and taught me a great deal about my personality type, allowing me to be more patient and effective in my work.



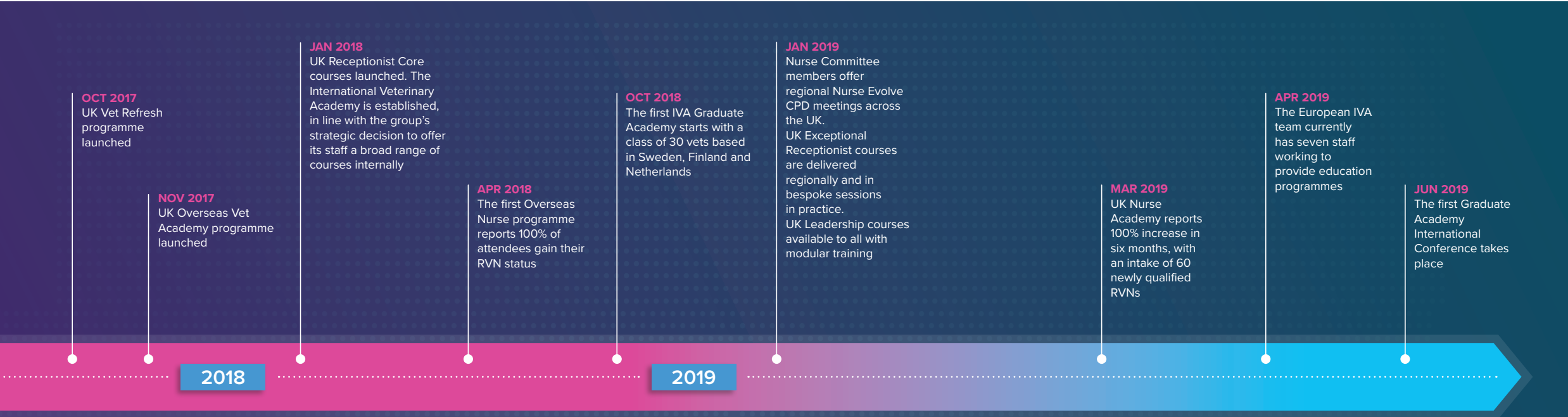
Name: Jane Lewis, BSc, RVN, VNS
Role: Nursing manager
Based: Manor Veterinary Clinic, Kent, UK

The IVA Nurse Academy is great to be involved with. Having seen two nurses attend so far, it's amazing to see how both have grown in their skills and confidence. You can easily track their E-CPD online, as well as completing your own, which is a benefit of mentoring them. Our academy nurses have brought new ideas and enthusiasm back to the practice too. I would recommend sending a newly qualified nurse to the Academy to anyone who can!



Name: Sarah Ramsden
Role: Registered veterinary nurse
Based: Holly House Vets, Yorkshire, UK

The IVA Nurse Academy reminded me that I am a newly qualified nurse, which is easy to forget when you get your badge and greens! It was an opportunity to take back the most up-to-date information to enhance client and patient journeys. The support available via the Nurse Development Team was invaluable. The year went really quickly, but I hope to be back providing support to future Academy nurses, as I strongly believe the year is essential for growth – both personally and professionally.



Our approach to building skills...

- Setting the gold standard**
IVC Evidensia is committed to being Europe's number-one choice for staff working within veterinary care.
- Career development**
We continue to encourage and help facilitate further development of skills and special interests for staff of all skill and experience levels.

Meeting the needs of modern vetcare

IVC Evidensia's procurement director, Johan Gillbro, heads the team that helps all practices get what they need

CASE STUDY

Investing in the future

IVC Evidensia's customers expect their pets to receive exceptional care, which means the group's practices must have access to the very latest medical equipment.

The group's continual investment has ensured that many of its practices now own equipment that, until just a few years ago, would have been found exclusively in human hospitals. CT scanners, for example, are now installed in all the largest animal hospitals in each country but are also increasingly found in small- and medium-sized practices too. Several practices within the group that are near each other have even pooled their resources to share the cost, and use, of a single machine.

The example of Gammelstaden Hospital in the north of Sweden illustrates how efficient procurement helps here. The hospital has been extensively upgraded and extended and, as part of these improvements, it acquired a new CT scanner. "It's been a great advancement for us," says Karin Sandström, chief veterinarian and a small animal specialist. "It enables us to offer more advanced surgery and

more advanced diagnoses in areas such as orthopaedics."

Throughout the process of selecting a CT scanner, the vets at Gammelstaden were provided with expert support. "Evidensia's procurement team helped us compare different machines, were part of the negotiations over the price and also oversaw the installation process. This left us free to focus our time on the clinical work," says Sandström.

The CT has been connected to Sectra, a common PACS system used by hospitals in Sweden. "Sectra enables images to be shared efficiently across different locations," says Kristoffer Persson, regional business manager. "This is important because it allows vets instant access to second opinions from highly experienced colleagues located throughout Sweden and is especially paramount when a case presents an unusual condition or requires a complex diagnosis. Sectra allows us to share the expertise that we hold across the group."

Clients can now be sure that their pets will receive the highest-quality diagnostics close to where they live.

OUR GROUP OFFERS ITS CLINICS AND HOSPITALS EXPERT SUPPORT WITH PROCUREMENT, FROM VACCINES AND STATE-OF-THE-ART DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT THROUGH TO STATIONERY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND UTILITIES

Administrative work is an unavoidable reality for most professionals and one that tends to absorb more time as careers progress. This is certainly the case for veterinarians moving into clinic managerial roles which take them away from their main concern – treating patients.

The process of negotiating terms, organising suppliers and investing in facilities ideally requires focus, time and specialised experience. That's why practice managers working within IVC Evidensia receive the support of a central procurement department that's able to negotiate on behalf of the whole group.

"Our work enables vets to focus on what they are trained to do and be where they are most valued – providing exceptional veterinary care" says procurement director, Johan Gillbro. While centralised procurement can often be imposed purely as a cost cutting measure, that's not the case here. "The task of procurement in the group is much wider," Gillbro notes. "The fact that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe not only provides us the opportunity to buy at very competitive levels but also allows us to buy the right product, from the right partners and at the right time. Our clinics don't just expect competitive terms, they also expect to get

excellent service and high-quality products and services. This is our procurement mission and it's how we create value."

The procurement team focuses on clinical purchases – pharmaceuticals, veterinary diets, medical consumables and medical equipment – as well as non-clinical supplies – office, utilities and insurance. For clinical purchasing, the team works in close partnership with each country's clinical board, which is made up of veterinarians from both referral hospitals and first-opinion practices.

"IVC Evidensia doesn't do clinical procurement in isolation," says Gillbro. "Since we do it together with the clinical

boards, we can ensure that we always receive a clinical perspective on the product choices we make. These clinical boards always have the final say on clinical questions, so we always seek their approval before we put a new product on our recommended buying list."

Although the group is seeking to find similarities between clinics and hospitals in order to be able to negotiate bulk orders and the best deals, there will be times when local variations are needed from a pet treatment perspective. In keeping with IVC Evidensia's culture of respecting clinical freedom, these kinds of individual decision are always supported. ■



Farm and equine veterinary work

OUR FARM ANIMAL ADVISORY BOARD IS WORKING HARD TO BUILD THE GROUP'S EXPERTISE – AND COPE WITH THE DEMANDS OF A RAPIDLY CHANGING SECTOR

The IVC Evidensia group has a growing number of farm animal and equine practices, with the vets who work there facing very different challenges to their colleagues in the small-animal sector. “We all work with large clients, especially in the dairy industry, and economics plays a big part,” says Jan Lievaart, operational director for farm animals and equine with Evidensia Netherlands. “While a pet owner thinks of only one or a few animals, farmers have to look at things on a herd level.”

This scaling up makes for a rewarding, yet demanding, professional life – one that's far removed from the world of Yorkshire farm vet James Herriott, who would spend working days that combined calving, pet consultations and treating the odd horse. “Vets want to specialise,” says Owain Jenkins, chairman of IVC Evidensia's farm animal advisory board. “A small-animal vet would struggle to do what we do, just as we'd struggle to do small-animal work now. They've become quite separate skills.”

As clinical director at Delaware Vets in Somerset, Jenkins has seen farm animal practice change over two decades. He now relishes the chance to use this experience to share best practice and expertise throughout the group via the board. “We've been given a blank sheet of paper to build a support network for practices,” he says.

Much of the board's work is bound up with negotiating changes in the industry. Farms are getting larger. Food hygiene and animal welfare are big issues because of both government legislation and increased consumer interest in standards. There are

fewer owner-farmers who are prepared to work all hours, while younger farmers and herdsmen often need help and support with tasks their predecessors would have done alone.

SERVICE MODEL

To cope with these changes, the group is moving towards a service-provider model, based primarily around preventative care, including areas such as animal welfare and food safety. “Farmers have traditionally done all of their own planning. We're trying to take over certain parts for them now including herd health,” explains Lievaart.

“It's important for our industry to retain our enthusiastic young vets and their openness to new ideas, including their interest in issues such as food safety and animal welfare. Fewer young vets these days graduate as purely farm-animal vets – and that's really quite a challenge for us. We have to offer adequate training and a clear career path, and we have to demonstrate the value of our veterinary services to farmers, in order to retain our young vets.”

Reflecting this, the farm animal advisory board is working closely with IVC Evidensia's Graduate Academy to guide new vets through their first years. The support doesn't stop there. “When the young graduate has turned into the young assistant and is growing in confidence, there's a further need for continuous professional development – CPD – to ensure that fully competent vets can sharpen their skills,” says Jenkins. In February 2020, for example, Delaware will hold a two-day

session on farm-animal work that will be attended by 20 vets.

EXCHANGING IDEAS

It's the kind of initiative that reflects the group's wider ethos of building a mutually supportive network of practices, an ethos it's hoped will help encourage other farm animal practices to choose to join IVC Evidensia. “We've got a wide range of expertise,” says Jenkins. “The guys up in Scotland may be more used to dealing with beef herds, while down here in the south west, we're used to dairy animals. That's why we're building the network, so that any vet can feel comfortable picking up the phone to share ideas within the group.”

With vets from both the Netherlands and the UK forming separate farm animal advisory boards, there's an international dimension here, too. “There are things that we do really well here and vice versa, things where they're excelling at in Holland, so there's a real potential there for collaboration,” says Jenkins. In the near future, for example, the boards hope to start an exchange programme so that young vets from the Netherlands and the UK can work in each other's countries as a way to broaden their experience. It's an initiative that should also be a selling point when it comes to recruiting the best vets, men and women with the combination of skill, imagination and professionalism needed to face the challenges that lie ahead.

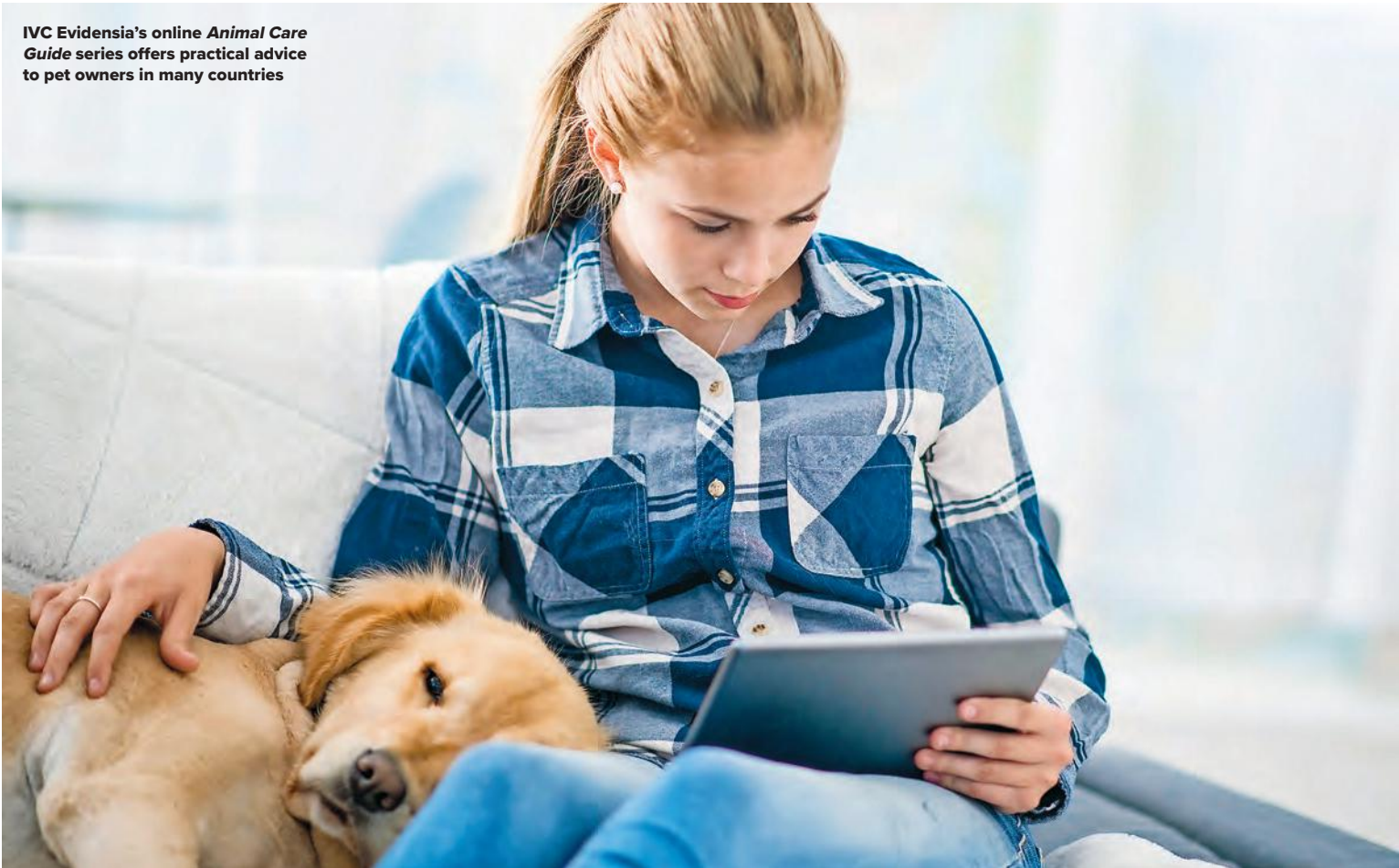
“It's really exciting to see young vets come through and develop, and become really good farm-animal vets,” says Jenkins, reflecting on his 20 years in the sector. ■

Owain Jenkins,
chairman of IVC
Evidensia's farm animal
advisory board, hard at
work in Somerset



“We have to offer adequate training and a clear career path... and demonstrate the value of our services”

JAN LIEVAART – OPERATIONAL DIRECTOR FOR FARM ANIMALS AND EQUINE



Digital transformation

AS WE INVEST HEAVILY IN NEW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, THE WAYS THAT WE LEARN TO ANALYSE PATIENT DATA OVER THE COMING YEARS WILL HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE FUTURE OF THE ENTIRE VETERINARY SECTOR

Shopping, banking, making travel plans... the way we now organise our lives relies on the internet. In the age of smartphones, when we all carry a small computer around with us, we want fast and flexible service.

The veterinary sector has to meet these expectations, to offer pet owners the kinds of digitally driven, 24/7 customer experiences that are already routine in other sectors. This means ensuring that practices all across IVC Evidensia use compatible systems so that colleagues can share consistent and accurate data.

“From a digitalisation perspective, that’s the single most important thing and that’s what we’re working on in each country,” says Karl Skarman, group chief digital officer. “The good stuff comes after that.” Two projects illustrate this “good stuff”:

- The creation of online *Animal Care Guides* to offer advice to pet owners.
 - The use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a second-opinion technology
- ANIMAL CARE GUIDES**
- How do pet owners access information about their animals? Increasingly, they begin online with a search engine such as Google, especially when a pet is ill. Yet pet owners do not use the same terminology as veterinary professionals in their searches. For this reason, our *Animal Care Guide*, an online resource of pet information aimed at pet owners, is based around the kind of language ordinary people use.
- “The old-school way of doing things would be you would write about cancer or hyperthyroidism,” notes Skarman, “but our new site is much more written around the

queries. If a pet owner types, ‘What do I do if my dog eats chocolate?’ then we steer them in the right direction, helping them to understand the most usual underlying question: do I need to come in to the clinic or not?”

If a pet does need treatment, the pet owner can click on a link to book an appointment, although the primary aim of the site is to offer information. “You don’t want to be perceived as selling in that moment, you want to be seen as helping,” says Skarman of dealing with pet owners who may be desperately worried about their animals.

The group has already launched *Animal Care Guides* in seven countries. The evidence is that offering this kind of useful, free advice helps to drive traffic, so that in Sweden, for example, around 4,000 people

visit evidensia.se every day, while the same number again also seek helpful advice from the Evidensia Animal Care Guide on a daily basis.

There are plans to improve the guide by, for example, introducing a traffic light system so that pet owners can see at a glance when a condition is potentially an emergency. Different territories can also translate the *Animal Care Guide* for their local markets when they are ready to do so. “It is a resource that will be there to create dialogues for us for many years to come,” says Skarman.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Looking further ahead, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are going to become increasingly important within veterinary care. IVC Evidensia is preparing for this by investing in AI.

This is one of the reasons that ensuring the consistency and accuracy of shared data across the entire group is so important. Think of a routine area of veterinary work such as blood tests. These produce a vast amount of results which can collectively be used as a diagnostic tool – but only once the AI has learnt how to interpret this data reliably.

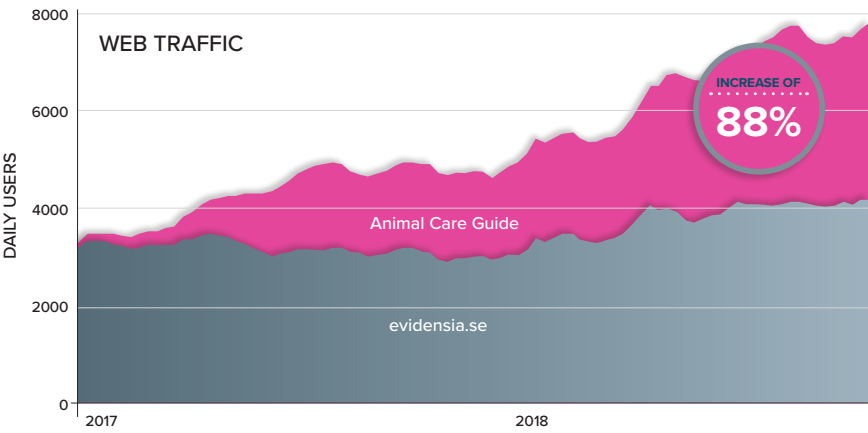
“The way AI works is you take 70% of

the data sets and try to make the AI learn based on that,” explains Skarman. “Then you take the last 30% of data and get it to analyse this information. Since we have the answers to that, we can say with what precision the AI has learnt. It will create the hypothesis on the 70%, then try to use that hypothesis based on the 30%.”

As yet, this is technology that is not ready to be rolled out but IVC Evidensia, working with a development partner, has already achieved impressive results in diagnosing diabetes, hyperthyroidism, abnormal liver function and kidney

disease. However, it’s important to see this as a second-opinion technology rather than as usurping veterinary professionals, which is another reason that the group is proceeding cautiously with its rollout under the supervision of the IVC Evidensia medical board.

It’s a project rich in promise. “Ultimately, it means we can have higher precision with treating animals,” says Skarman. “Getting access to this kind of technology is something we want to offer as a benefit for vets and practices that join our group.” ■





**“With the support
and training we
offer, we hope that
veterinary nursing is
seen as a career for life”**

LIZ COX – GROUP NURSING ADVISOR

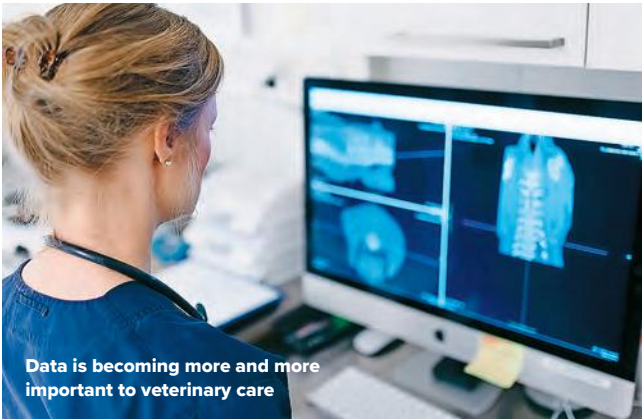
Building referral practice expertise

IN A FAST-GROWING BUSINESS, OUR REFERRAL STRATEGY TEAM IS KEY. IT WORKS TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING ARE HARMONISED IN ORDER TO OFFER PET OWNERS ACCESS TO THE BEST SPECIALIST CARE OPTIONS

While the staff of every one of our clinics and hospitals pride themselves on their expertise, there are still times when certain animals need specialist care. For this reason, our referral strategy team occupies a key role within the wider company. By connecting vets with colleagues, it ultimately also connects owners with the very teams that have the expertise to help their pets. “It has been a really busy time recently,” says Chris Trickey, group veterinary advisor for referral practices. “There are so many different aspects to referral practice that we’re developing.”

THE REFERRAL VETS CHARTER
IVC Evidensia’s first *Referral Vets Charter*, which was published earlier this year, underpins this work by laying out minimum standards that govern how the group works when referring vets and owners. It was produced following conversations with more than 400 IVC Evidensia first-opinion vets, so it really does reflect the day-to-day concerns of working professionals. Over the coming years, the plan is to build on the *Charter*, with the overall aim of offering consistently great patient care while developing strong relationships with owners and referring vets.

While the ambition is to be able to offer referral services across all IVC Evidensia countries, the group isn’t quite there yet, as extensive analysis of geographical areas has revealed. The group’s National Practice Strategy aims to address this by increasingly utilising the expertise and insights of colleagues all across Europe. Then there are the challenges around recruitment. In all areas of veterinary care, the best professionals, vets and nurses are in huge demand. Further complicating matters, the group has a mixture of Diplomat-led practices and advanced practitioner-led practices. Each requires a different approach to recruitment, but



both are just as important to the group’s future and its commitment to offering the best possible care. We have worked on making vacancies more visible, as well as streamlining processes for putting potential candidates in touch with the right practice for them. We are also strengthening links across national borders to give better opportunities for staff looking to move abroad to work.

BUILDING RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE
For those vets and nurses who are already part of IVC Evidensia, career development is vital. This can mean helping first-opinion vets make the transition into being

AP referral vets. The group has increased the number of ECVS residencies it can offer, for example. We also now have our own referral vet development schemes, and are actively developing RVNs to offer a referral career path that is both attractive and rewarding. While much of this work is about empowering colleagues at a local level, we also offers central support. We have a central database of all referral marketing material and are working hard on social media, web design and app development. Finally – and crucially – in the modern age, data is becoming more and more important to veterinary care, whether that

be for benchmarking various clinical outcomes, developing key performance indicators or in clinical audits. When the group uses six different practice management systems in its referral practices, standardising data continues to be a challenge, but basic income-generation data for all referral practices has now been established. ■

“Career development is vital. IVC Evidensia is actively developing RVNs to offer a referral career path that is both attractive and rewarding”





BEFORE

AFTER!

Making a difference: the new reception area is spacious and welcoming, a far cry from the small space used before (left)

Change and continuity

WHEN BLACKNESS VETERINARY SURGERY IN DUNDEE NEEDED TO EXPAND, THE GROUP WAS ON HAND TO HELP IT MOVE TO A NEW SITE – AND TURN IT INTO A FUTURE-PROOF VETERINARY FACILITY

Back in the 19th century, Blackness was the centre of Dundee's jute industry – an area of tightly packed mills and tenements that was regarded as an eyesore. These days, its cobbled streets are such a precious reminder of the city's industrial heritage, it's been designated a conservation area. It has become a part of the city that many want to visit, work in and even live in, with some of the mills now much sought-after apartment blocks.

In May this year, Blackness Veterinary Surgery moved to new premises at a larger location that reflects how busy the practice has become. "We'd definitely outgrown the old surgery," says longtime clinical director Barbara Barnard, who sold the practice to IVC in 2014. "Up until now, we've routinely had four vets trying to work out of two consulting rooms, so staff had to jump

on and jump off the consulting rota. When somebody ran behind, we experienced a small disaster, but whenever there was an emergency, there was no consulting room for them to go in to."

The new clinic, housed in a former office furniture store, is located about half a mile from the previous location, which had first opened in 1967. As befits such a historic area, the story of Blackness Veterinary Surgery actually goes back much further than that.

Barbara worked with former owner, Margaret Cameron, between 1981 and 1995. Over those years, she heard many tales of the practice's past, such as how former owner, Professor Spruell, used to "go about in a Rolls" when the practice was located in a tenement building that was later demolished to make way for a ring road.

SET YOUR SITES HIGHER

Back in 1967, a new surgery was built to be a state-of-the-art facility – but the site has now become too small and it does not have the parking that customers expect. "There comes a point when it's not worth spending money on an old building," Barbara says.

An old furniture showroom doesn't seem like an obvious choice for a new clinic but, as Barbara notes, "As soon as you went in, we could see that it's a nice, bright building on the inside and you could see the IVC head office team thinking, 'Oh well, maybe this place does have potential after all'."

With the new site secured, IVC's help and expertise was key to converting the premises. Not only did the group finance the move and help with myriad pieces of official paperwork, it also found a team of shopfitters who undertook the conversion



BEFORE

AFTER!

State-of-the-art equipment was carefully installed to ensure ease of use for all staff

Staff enjoy the light, bright workspaces in the converted furniture showroom



Barbara Barnard, clinical director of Blackness Veterinary Surgery, loves the new working environment



Blackness is perfectly placed to meet new challenges from its new clients!

work quickly and to the highest standard. Along the way, there were specific problems to tackle, such as ensuring X-ray facilities were properly shielded behind solid walls and that the high roof space above the suspended ceiling was divided up by fire curtains to prevent a small fire from potentially spreading unhindered.

In the middle of May, the much-anticipated move took place. "Our existing animal accommodation came with us," says Barbara, "so that had to be dismantled on Saturday and reassembled on Sunday, ready for Monday to test prior to opening on Tuesday." The speed of the move ensured continuity, which everyone felt was important to maintaining the clinic's high reputation and not inconveniencing existing customers.

"The new surgery is close to where we

used to be, so we hope clients won't mind the move," she says. "It's got good transport links and parking, plus it's a prominent site. That ticks all the boxes, because we hope to get new clients without losing any clients we've got at the moment." The number of customers, Barbara notes, has been growing ever since the practice made the brilliantly simple decision to have a second phone line installed.

The growth in the practice and the move reflect recent changes in both the area and in veterinary care. Where once the Blackness Veterinary Surgery was located in an industrial zone, that area has become a mix of residential properties and businesses, including the kinds of creative companies often attracted to central locales.

On the veterinary care side, customers' expectations are changing as much

in Dundee as elsewhere in the United Kingdom. "People want to do more for their pets than they used to do," says Barbara. "Once upon a time, if your cat was 14 and wasn't very well, you would automatically assume it had come to the end of its days and it would be put to sleep. Nowadays, and if clients can afford it, older cats will probably be blood-tested, put on fluids and X-rayed, to find out what the matter is and to see if there's anything we can do."

The practice's new site offers the space to meet these elevated expectations to benefit both existing customers and new clients. The rich history of Blackness Veterinary Surgery, where at least one client has been bringing in their pets for more than 60 years, is set to continue long into the future. ■

**“I believe it’s a very
exciting time to be a
veterinary nurse within
the group”**

LIZ COX – GROUP NURSING ADVISOR





United Kingdom

GROUPS WORK, SAYS **PAUL COWLING**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, IVC UK AND IRELAND. FROM CENTRAL FINANCE TO TEAMS WORKING TOGETHER, SUPPORT TAKES MANY FORMS

We like to think that by joining IVC, each clinical director knows they are getting the best of both worlds – they have the freedom to work in a practice they often established themselves, but also the security of being part of a larger group.

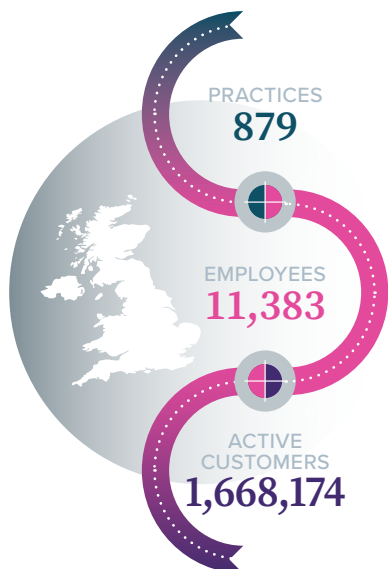
As a group, we can offer the financial support to refurbish existing premises, to develop new ones and to invest in equipment. In the UK and Ireland, many practices have evolved as conversions of a vet's former home and so are not necessarily state-of-the-art clinical centres. From a consumer point of view, such sites can be tucked away, have less ambience or have limited parking, while the vets often have no room to expand. We want to change that.

Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists (SCVS) near Ringwood joined the group in 2015. It's our biggest referral hospital and is located in what used to be farm buildings.

When I first went there, SCVS shared the site with other small businesses but it now occupies the whole place. IVC has made this expansion possible but, more importantly, a planned multi-million pound investment will develop SCVS into a state-of-the-art referral facility.

This is just one example of what can happen when we back our staff's 'give-it-a-go' culture. In the next few years, we also want to invest in equipment, be that ultrasound, dental X-rays or CTs. But great veterinary care isn't all about high-end technology. It's equally important to supply the basics, so that our vets can do a great job for every pet, farm animal or horse, and that our practices have comfortable, reassuring reception areas.

Paul Cowling
Chief Executive, UK and Ireland



Caring for horses and livestock in the field



Name: Kate Matheson
BVM&S MRCVS
Role: Clinical director
Based: Northumberland

How did you come to join IVC?

I joined IVC-owned Robson & Prescott in 2004 after graduating from the University of Edinburgh. After a year away from the practice in 2010, I returned to become a clinical director.

What do you most enjoy about your work?

My farm work is varied, with beef cattle and sheep work taking up most of my time. I also do a bit of dairy, although alpacas and zoo animals can also turn up, too! I have a particular interest in herd health and have found a surprising passion for teaching the next generation of farm vets. That's why I've led one of the practical farm CPD sessions for mixed-practice vets on the IVC Graduate Academy for the last two years.

How do you see IVC supporting agricultural practices?

I was delighted to be asked in 2018 to join the UK farm animal advisory board. The purpose of this board is to advise and drive support for farm practices within IVC. The sharing and development of best practice across our farm network is at the core of how IVC works. It's wonderful to see farm practices working together within the group, which traditional standalone farm practices have rarely done in the past.

INITIATIVE

Prevention is better than cure

WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PETS ENROLLED IN THE PET HEALTH CLUB, PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE IS BECOMING THE NORM IN THE UK

The IVC Evidensia group launched the UK's Pet Health Club in 2014 as a simple, understandable preventative health scheme for cats, dogs and rabbits. Since then, it has become the nation's fastest-growing pet health scheme. Currently more than 500 practices participate and more than 375,000 pets are signed up.



The Pet Health Club includes inoculations, six-monthly health checks and all-year-round parasite treatments. Owners benefit from a discounted annual cost which is spread across monthly Direct Debit payments. The benefit to pets is that they are seen at least twice a year, rather than being taken to the vet only for their annual inoculations or once the owner has spotted something wrong.

And the benefit to the participating vets? Frequent health checks enable conditions to be picked up and treated earlier, rather than waiting for clinical signs to present. And, of course, with pet owners coming in on a more regular basis, they are more bonded to the practice, while also providing clinics with a reliable revenue stream.

David Hillier, CEO of IVC Evidensia, sees the wider potential for the Pet Health Club model. "In some practices," he says, "more than 50% of all pets are benefitting from structured preventative healthcare, suggesting that wellbeing could be promoted in other countries above simply treating conditions once they arise. The vet sees the animal more often – but it's the owner who really becomes more conscious of the opportunities to identify issues before they become problems. By being part of the programme, owners are more aware of the importance of diet, exercise and lifestyle in giving their pets a really happy and rewarding life." ■



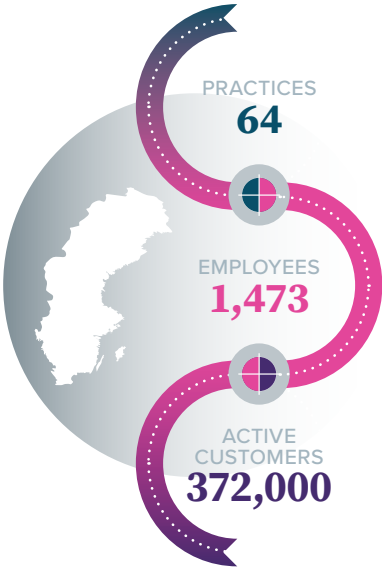
A regular trip to the vets means that each pet has a nose-to-tail check-up, which can spot problems early on

In Sweden, with its high rates of pet insurance, owners demand the best possible treatment



Sweden

COUNTRY MANAGER **JOHAN WIKLUND** EXPLAINS HOW EVIDENSIA SWEDEN COMBINES THE HIGHEST CLINICAL STANDARDS WITH GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE



In Sweden, our customers' expectations are especially high in terms of the quality of care they expect. To meet these expectations, we are currently investing a lot of money refurbishing all our clinics and educating our staff, as well as providing state-of-the-art equipment for clinical work and offering convenient opening hours.

Customers expect us to keep up with the digital developments they see in other sectors, such as retail and travel. They expect online bookings. They want online consultations for their pets through their smartphones. They would like us to have online sales of healthy pet-foods. Working to provide these services is challenging for us, but also fun.

We see a macro-trend of pets becoming more like family members and this influences the care we provide. We are currently investing a lot in offering advanced dental care for dogs

and cats, for example, a customer demand that was uncommon just five years ago.

No parent would be comfortable saying to a child, "You don't have to brush your teeth." Similarly, if you give pets the wrong food and don't take care of their teeth, they can have severe problems. With a lot of dogs and cats, you can see they are not feeling well, but it's difficult to see why. It can actually be that their teeth are bad, so we're working to prevent that.

One reason we have such advanced care is that Sweden has the world's highest pet insurance levels, at more than 80% for dogs and cats. In serving such a demanding market, we have achieved the highest customer satisfaction scores that I have ever seen, in any industry. That can only be a good thing.

Johan Wiklund
Country Manager, Sweden

Working at the leading edge of animal dentistry



Name: Magnus Andersson
Role: Small animal clinic chief veterinary officer
Based: Karlskoga, Sweden

What do you do at Evidensia?
I co-owned my own clinic with my former wife until 2013, when we sold it to Evidensia. Most of my time is now spent on animal dentistry, with about 20% on administration and teaching.

What are the advantages of being part of a bigger group?
Definitely the access to a network of specialists. Being a major actor in the market, Evidensia has the ability to make a big difference. What Evidensia does, its competitors must follow.

Why did you initially decide to specialise in dentistry?
That's funny because a salesman once offered me a great deal on a dental unit and an X-ray machine. I knew nothing about dentistry at the time, so he added a training course as part of the package and told me, "If you don't get a return on investment within one year, I will give you your money back."

I thought he was insane but after four months, we'd hit that point, so he was right! It also made me realise that dentistry is probably one of the most neglected areas of the veterinary profession, and that I found it very challenging and fun in terms of doing surgery. The welfare benefits for the animals are enormous while, at the same time, the work profits our business.

INITIATIVE

World-class referral facilities

MATS WÄNLUND IS LEADING A TEAM THAT AIMS TO BUILD UP THE LARGEST ANIMAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL IN THE WHOLE OF IVC EVIDENSIA

Mats Wänlund has been director of the busy animal hospital Södra Djursjukhuset since January 2017. He has been working hard to build a culture where both animals and staff can thrive. "Last year, around 35,000 animal owners visited us, mostly bringing cats and dogs," says Wänlund. "We have staff here 24 hours a day, every day. We have about 160 staff in total, with 60 vets."

The hospital, four kilometres south-west of Stockholm city centre, has grown quickly, not merely by increasing staff but also by adding expertise. Last January, it had no Diplomates but now it has six. These highly qualified vets, working with skilled nurses, ensure that the hospital can offer top-level care around the clock. "We have every competence that you need here," Wänlund explains. "We are open until 9pm, which is convenient for pet owners."

Recruiting veterinary professionals with specialist skills can be a challenge. "We have to show that we are a good place to come to, because why would anyone leave their good job to work somewhere else unless it was better?" says Wänlund. "That's why it's very important to us to have a reputation for being an employer with good leadership and a great energy in the workplace." Staff welfare is of huge importance to Wänlund, with sports scheduled at lunchtimes and work schedules arranged many months in advance. This not only lets staff plan their lives better, but also allows pet owners to book return visits with the same vets.

The plan is to expand the hospital by an extra 1,000m² in 2019-2020. "By 2023, we will be as large as we can be on this site," says Wänlund. "But we can make more of the space we do have. The dental care department will grow from two operating tables to five, while we will have space for more animals to stay overnight." ■





Customers expect the same hi-tech treatment for their pets as they get themselves!



The Netherlands

MICHEL VAN SILFHOUT, COUNTRY MANAGER FOR THE NETHERLANDS, EXPLAINS HOW EVIDENSIA USES TECHNOLOGY TO HELP RETAIN CUSTOMERS

There are three main areas where technology really helps us provide great service to our patients: medical, communications and the IT technology we use internally.

New medical techniques are being added all the time – ultrasound, CT and MRIs and lab diagnostics. All make the business more capital intensive, so we need to invest more in the clinics to get to this advanced level of clinical care. Customers know about these techniques from human hospitals, so they expect the same treatment for their animals.

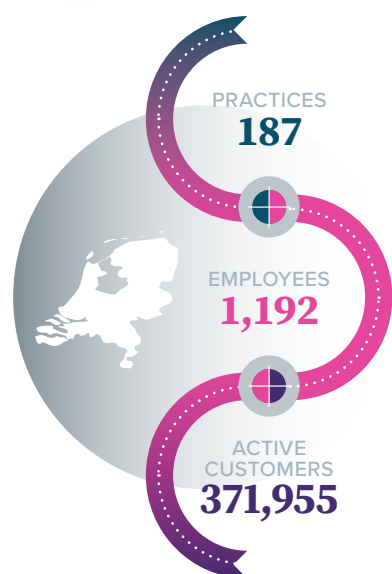
Digital technologies are changing customer behaviour. As soon as you've got online booking for your clinic, for example, the majority of your customers switch to booking this way instead of picking up the phone. We are also working on a customer app and telemedicine. Instead of going to the vet, you might post up some pictures of your dog and

the vet can advise you on whether to come to the clinic or not. These are all technologies that will improve customer service.

Finally, we are using IT technology to improve the way our teams work. We have moved to the same practice management system, which means all our data is on the same platform. We are connected to a data warehouse, so not only is it the same system, but our vets can access and analyse the data. This means that if you want a second opinion, you give your colleagues a call and they can look at the same X-ray and offer advice.

Looking ahead, we're also looking at using artificial intelligence, for example, in the analysis of lab results, where automation can improve quality and speed.

Michiel van Silfhout
Country Manager, the Netherlands



Combining hands-on vet work with project management



Name: Merel Rooijmans
Role: Companion animal veterinarian in the flex pool of Evidensia and project manager

What do you do within Evidensia?
Besides working as a vet, I also work on projects related to veterinary law, regulations and quality assurance. Occasionally I help out clinics with issues regarding practice management.

How long have you been with the group?
I started as an acting companion animal veterinarian and, since January 2019, I've worked as a project manager at Evidensia Support Office. Before joining the group, I worked as a vet and practice manager.

How has your career progressed within Evidensia?
As well as veterinary medicine, I have studied business administration. It is great to be able to mix being a clinical veterinarian with project management.

What's the main advantage of working for a larger organisation?
It's so good to see the many types of veterinary clinics, with their differences in size, culture, patients and clients. By working in several clinics, you can find out which environment suits you best. I like to learn new things, and to pass on my tips and tricks. For instance, after eight years of being a veterinarian, I recently learned a new technique for collecting blood samples – which is extremely handy!

INITIATIVE

Lights, canaries and... action!

EVIDENSIA NETHERLANDS IS STARRING IN ITS OWN TV SHOW! CLINICAL DIRECTOR MARC MAAS EXPLAINS WHY HE WANTS US TO GO BEHIND THE SCENES

Staff at an Evidensia clinic in the south of the Netherlands have recently become television stars. This year, 10 episodes of *Dierenkliniek: Hart van Brabant* (Animal Clinic: Heart of Brabant) have been shown on the RTL5 channel, showcasing the work of the Dierenkliniek De Langstraat and Evidensia Dierenziekenhuis Hart van Brabant – a clinic and a referrals and emergency hospital that share the same site in the city of Waalwijk.

Marc Maas, the clinical director of De Langstraat, explains. "They wanted to make a series about veterinarians, with an emphasis on the relationship between people and animals, rather than the technical side of the practice. They not only wanted to show what goes on in a large hospital with specialists and experts, but also the many unusual animals we treat."

Marc is a member of the Evidensia Netherlands clinical board as well as being a practising vet, so explaining his clinic's work to the public has been hugely important to him. "We talk a lot about the veterinary family, which is one of the reasons we wanted to get involved with the TV series. Obviously, it's great marketing, but the main thing we wanted to show is how much everyone who works here cares about the animals. We've had a lot of positive reactions to how good the staff are and how they are not afraid to show their emotions when something touches them."

Marc also appears on screen, showcasing his specialism in exotic animals, including reptiles and birds. While he couldn't resist tuning in, "you do always criticise yourself and wonder why you didn't brush your hair!"

"As a decently organised company, Evidensia very much let us get on with our own marketing," he notes, "and while the hospital hasn't been open for long, we have seen enormous growth here. Partly that's because we know how to treat exotic pets, which is a service you can't get anywhere else. But we've also seen people come some distance to visit us because they've seen us on television." ■



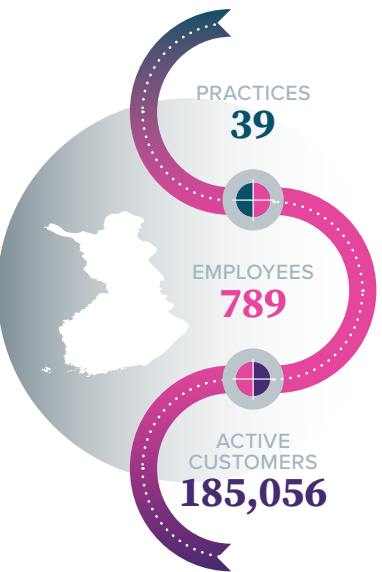
Filming a TV show at a practice in Waalwijk has led to a surge in patients

Evidensia Finland is both treating more pets and working to improve already high standards



Finland

DURING 2018, EVIDENSIA FINLAND BOTH TREATED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE PETS AND INCREASED REVENUE, EXPLAINS COUNTRY MANAGER **JUKKA TOIVANEN**



Last year was a time of vigorous growth and development for Evidensia Finland. Our overall revenue increased 8.5%, while the number of pets we treated increased by 10%. This has been possible due to the hard work of our wonderful staff members.

It's always been very important for myself and our vice-president, Anssi Tast, to visit clinics as often as we can. It's only by seeing what happens day to day and meeting staff that we can get a clear picture of the business.

In 2018, we launched our new strategy mission and overall vision, based on feedback from all of our clinics. We want to encourage customer-driven business processes and aim for profitable, sustainable growth, yet we also want to be agile and innovative.

Having seen that what they say actually makes a difference, we've noticed that feedback from our staff – and even our

customers too – has been getting better and better. They add more details, give more examples and suggest more specific improvements. We're taking this as sign that the direction we have chosen is the right one.

The development of veterinary care and digitalisation, as well as the advent of new service and business models, will transform the veterinary industry. In Finland, we have already invested in building new hospitals, adding new services, buying equipment, training our personnel and engaging the very best professionals. We want to raise the level of veterinary care in Finland and we also want to be the ones redefining the whole business. At the heart of everything we do is our passion for veterinary care.

Jukka Toivanen
Country Manager, Finland

Bringing a hands-on approach to management



Name: Suvi Kosonen
Role: Clinical director
Based: Eläinlääkäriasema Villimys, Lappeenranta

What do you do at Evidensia?
I became a clinical director 18 months ago. While I still do clinical work, management has come with fresh challenges for me, especially within HR.

After working at a clinic in Helsinki, why did you move to eastern Finland?
I'd dreamt about returning here for years and saw my chance when Evidensia Finland moved to a more autonomous clinic model. I called our medical director, Mirja Kaimio, and said that I thought it was crazy to have two small clinics in Lappeenranta, when we could combine them into a single day hospital. Within half an hour, the decision had been made!

How different is this new, single facility?
We wanted to raise its profile by providing high-quality veterinary medicine, so we now have specialists in orthopaedics, cats, oncology, internal medicine, ophthalmology, dental diseases, pain management and so on. We now have patients coming to us from 400km away because we're one of just three cat specialists in Finland.

What's it like to be a clinical director?
I had no previous managerial experience, so it has been a great year of learning. I believe that being sensitive, able to listen and being empathic is a strength, even though I'm perhaps too sensitive to some of the feedback!

INITIATIVE

Collaboration across corporate boundaries

EVIDENSIA FINLAND OFFERS VETERINARIANS THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE WITH COLLEAGUES. THIS BENEFITS THE WHOLE BUSINESS

The idea of providing the best possible care in all situations lies at the centre of veterinary medicine. According to Mirja Kaimio, medical director of Evidensia Finland, this idea doesn't just benefit patients, but also vets, who share in the expertise of colleagues. "When referring vets send a patient to Evidensia for further treatment or examinations, we always provide feedback to the veterinarian," says Kaimio. "Thus, referring a patient is beneficial not only for the patient and the customer, but also for professional development."

In Finland, Evidensia is working to make it as straightforward as possible for veterinarians to refer a patient for further examination or treatment at Evidensia clinics. When a veterinarian refers a patient using a web form, the clinic contacts the client directly within one working day. To ensure this system runs smoothly, every Evidensia clinic now has a referral coordinator.

One especially important area where Evidensia Finland's veterinarians provide expert assistance lies in challenging patient cases. When a veterinarian wants to consult a more experienced colleague, he or she can contact Evidensia's patient consultation group. The consultation group comprises more than 30 veterinary experts in various fields, including all Diplomates working in Evidensia Finland.

"Our experts advise colleagues on request in all areas of veterinary medicine from orthopaedics to dental care and from oncology to the treatment of exotic pets," says Kaimio. "Consultation requests are received daily. In acute situations, colleagues can also call vet-to-vet hotline numbers of our clinics directly."

To ensure this kind of expertise is passed on, Evidensia Finland runs ongoing programmes with students and has an extensive training programme for colleagues. ■



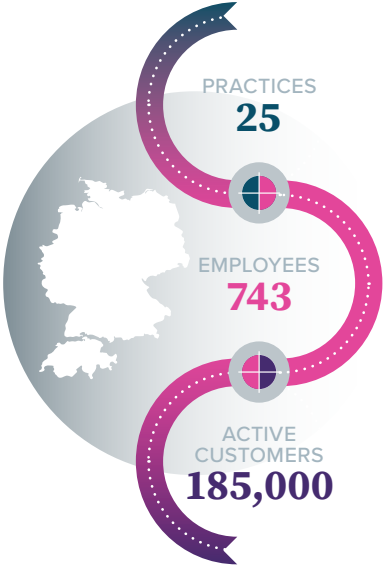


Some of the best ideas come from staff members who problem-solve every day



Germany & Switzerland

CEO **DR CHRISTOPH DÄNZER** OUTLINES HOW EVIDENSIA IN THE DACH REGION IS FOSTERING A TEAM SPIRIT THAT BENEFITS VETS AND PET OWNERS ALIKE



Evidensia in Germany and Switzerland is a young part of the group. We only started to form our team in 2017 and recently moved into new offices in Munich. We aim to establish a culture of trust, collaboration and mutual care across the group.

To do this, we offer a wide range of support to our clinics, from HR, recruitment and IT to procurement and finance. We also help with marketing, both of individual clinics and of the overall group, promoting what we do and who we are.

This is not a top-down process. Our role as the central team is to come up with ideas, as well as gather those from our local teams. Together, we bring these ideas to life and develop the group in a way our staff will like. We can – and will – only be successful if we have a group of professionals who take an active part in Evidensia.

We also encourage and support cooperation on veterinary medicine-related topics. For example, we have a cardiology interest group led by two Diplomates. We have an online discussion forum and members of each interest group also meet in person. We are also working on a training programme for vets and nurses in cardiology. Similar initiatives are planned within dental care.

Where clinics are located close enough, we bring our colleagues together in regional meetings so that staff can get to know each other. This may, for example, lead to local sharing of vets, perhaps because one of the clinics needs a specialist for one day each week. But again, we don't impose this. We always respect our clinics' independence.

Dr Christoph Dänzer
CEO, Evidensia DACH Region

Balancing administrative needs with clinical work



Names: Dr Jochen Sieberz & Dr Felix Sonntag
Role: Clinic directors
Based: Ravensburg, Germany

What do you do within Evidensia?
Jochen: I am a specialist veterinarian for small animals in charge of staff and X-ray procedures. I started working for the Kleintiergesundheitszentrum Ravensburg 20 years ago as an assistant!
Felix: I'm a specialist veterinarian for small animals and small animal surgery. I'm also in charge of quality management, vaccinations and anaesthetics.

What are your main challenges?
We both have full-time roles as doctors, so the problem is to manage the administrative side on top of that. One big challenge shared by all clinics, but especially 24/7 hospitals such as ours, is to find motivated, highly qualified employees, who are willing to work some night and weekend shifts so that we can maintain our emergency service cover.

How does Evidensia help you to cope with those challenges?
The central Evidensia DACH team gives us expert support, with the HR manager, for example, helping to recruit employees, to optimise staff planning processes and to help us be more attractive as an employer. Centralised marketing and IT support also help us achieve our mid-term and long-term goals of providing the best services for our patients and their owners.

INITIATIVE

State-of-the-art data analysis aids cardio care

EVIDENSIA DACH IS USING CANINE MONITORING VESTS ('HOLTER') AND STATE-OF-THE-ART DATA ANALYTICS TO DIAGNOSE INTERMITTENT CARDIO PROBLEMS

By building up expert groups within specialised fields of veterinary care, the DACH region of Evidensia, which currently covers Germany and Switzerland, is extending knowledge across the whole group. One of these projects focuses on cardiology under the lead of cardio experts Dr Robert Höpfner and Dr Guy Tater from Kleintierspezialisten Berlin and Tierklinik Stommeln.

The most innovative part of this cardio initiative is the Holter ECG project. Under this, two expert hubs in Berlin and Stommeln offer both hardware and services to satellite clinics and practices within Evidensia DACH, as well as to referring practices outside the group. Holter monitors, which log ECG heart activity, can be rented or bought. Thanks to new technology, the monitors' data can be evaluated by experts based at the hubs. This new system allows Evidensia DACH to provide a unique cardiology service in a quick, easy, cost-efficient and resource-saving way.

A long-term ECG monitor is used to monitor and assess patients when a single trip to the vets isn't enough – for example, when a dog experiences heart rhythm disturbances. These may only occur randomly and are therefore hard to track. Long-term ECG monitoring is also suitable for some breeds of dogs – Dobermans, for instance – to detect commonly occurring heart muscle diseases at an earlier stage, allowing for a greater chance of successful intervention and treatment.

The cardio initiative is about to offer specialised training for both vets and nurses. To promote its services, Evidensia DACH is creating an information campaign focused on cardiology. This will help to position its experts and teams as highly qualified cardio specialists in the DACH region, as well as to provide relevant information for, and gain the trust of, the wider veterinary sector. ■



Dr Höpfner and Dr Tater with a patient wearing a monitoring vest



“We support the idea we should always do the right thing and should respect the group’s core principles”

JOHN DINSDALE – CHIEF VETERINARY ADVISOR



A new referral hospital has put specialist help closer to more Norwegian pet owners than ever

Norway

AFTER SPENDING 2018 BUILDING BUSINESS FOUNDATIONS, NORWAY'S COUNTRY MANAGER **CECILIE RYAN YTTREEIDE** IS LOOKING FORWARD TO EXPANDING CLINICAL SERVICES

Ever since Evidensia's journey in Norway started in 2012, we've seen steady growth, with the previous 18 months a particularly exciting time. We established a country-specific head office in 2017, so 2018 was very much focussed on establishing support functions for our clinics within HR, finance, marketing, veterinary medicine and administration, since we want our vets to spend as much time as possible with our clients and pet patients.

We are very proud to welcome two new clinics and a crematorium into our group. We also opened a new regional referral hospital in Trondheim, which provides an extended range of services, including a CT scanner.

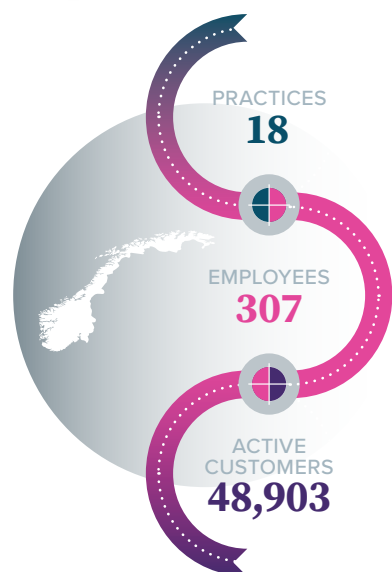
Norway presents Evidensia with a huge opportunity to acquire many high-quality clinics. Our market share is around 10% of a fractured Norwegian market, in which only about 17% of practices are part of a group.

We currently have 18 practices down the full length of Norway, from Tromsø way up in the north to Søgne right down in the south.

Since we have been very focussed on building our foundations until now, our plans include attracting more practices in 2019. We have an ambitious plan to attract and acquire additional clinics in Norway over the next five years and our long-term plan is to create regional clusters both in terms of referrals and cooperation, and for clinical/medical services.

Throughout 2019 and beyond, we will be working on an exciting mix of projects and new initiatives, most of them aiming to give both our customers and employees the best possible experience – which is where our focus and hearts need to be!

Cecilie Ryan Yttreeide
Country Manager, Norway



Improving specialist eye care for pets



Name: Siv Grosås
Role: Nordic Eye Scheme examiner, resident in ophthalmology, vet
Based: Oslo, Norway

What do you do within Evidensia?
I work in a clinic with medical and surgical eye cases, mainly for dogs and cats. Student tutoring and ophthalmology seminars for other vets are another important part of my job, plus I also work on research projects and rounds as a part of the residency programme in ophthalmology.

How has your career progressed within the group?
Evidensia has always been supportive of me, investing in my education and giving me time for academic work as a part of the residency programme. Evidensia sees the opportunities in improving its staff through long-term training.

What benefits of such a large group are seen by the pets and their owners?
By being big enough to support so much training, Evidensia now has specialists across numerous disciplines, so when a complicated interdisciplinary case arises, we can deal with it. A continuous search for improvement and a focus on education provide better experiences and prognosis for the patients. Yet since Evidensia also focuses on professional client communication, we can also all get better at dealing with the owners, which gives them a far better service too.

INITIATIVE

Creating a regional hub

AS THE GROUP CREATES CLINICAL NETWORKS THAT WORK TOGETHER, EVIDENSIA NORWAY OPENS A NEW HOSPITAL TO SERVE AN ENTIRE REGION

Being such a long, thin country, it's hard to say that any part of Norway is in middle, although Trondheim comes close. Norway's third-largest city is a 500km drive north from Oslo but also being over 1,100km further south than Tromsø means there's plenty of tundra between it and the Arctic Circle.

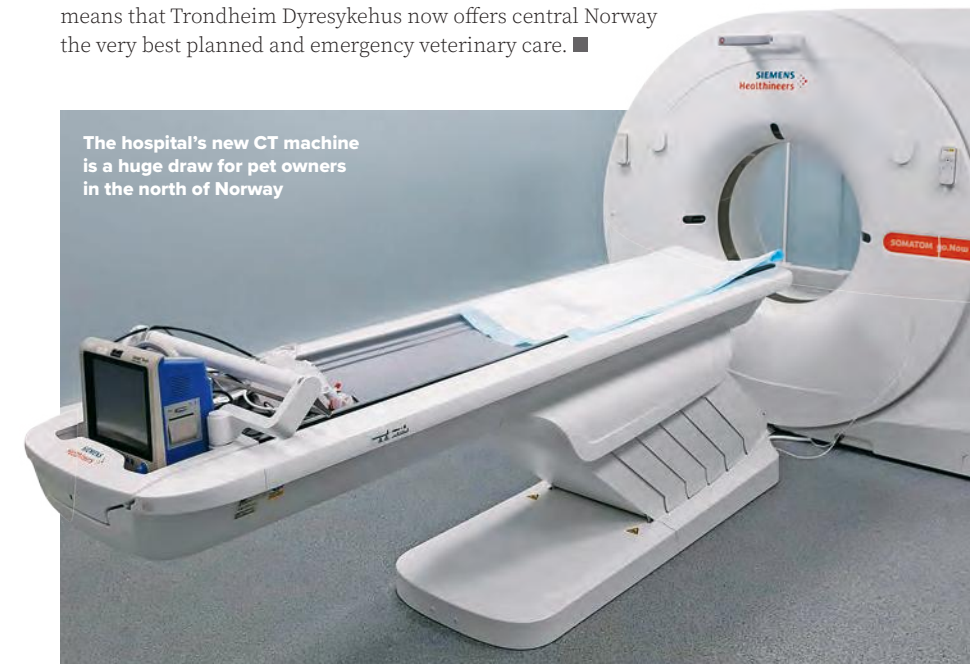
As clinic manager Iselin Elvedahl Solnes explains, these distances were one of the reasons to build and open Trondheim Dyresykehus, a new animal hospital. "Our goal is to become the referral hospital for the whole north of Norway," she says. "Currently, anyone in Norway with a difficult or unusual case has to get to Oslo, which can mean an internal flight or a very, very long drive. We also want to be able to provide 24-hour emergency cover, seven days a week, although that will take a little time to put into place."

Another reason for the new facility is that Evidensia found itself with two small clinics on the outskirts of Trondheim, one of them just five minutes away from a third clinic. By closing two and bringing the staff into a larger, more central facility, the city's needs are being better serviced.

This new facility is in a converted building but while the external walls are still standing, the extensive refurbishment changed everything inside. Twice the size of the previous largest clinic, it has four consultation rooms and two much larger operating rooms. A new X-ray machine, ultrasound and CT machine have also been bought, with the latter being the facility's biggest selling point. "Previously", says Iselin, "pet owners would have to drive for hours but now we can usually offer an appointment on the same day."

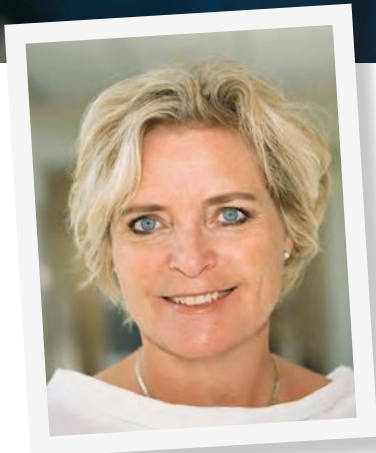
The facility opening in February 2019 and employs more staff than both old clinics combined. Collaborating with other clinics in the area, it has staff on call all night once a week, plus one weekend a month. This combination of better equipment, longer opening hours and ever-improving referral skills means that Trondheim Dyresykehus now offers central Norway the very best planned and emergency veterinary care. ■

The hospital's new CT machine is a huge draw for pet owners in the north of Norway





Sharing practical knowledge and experience means pets are better taken care of



Denmark

BY ENCOURAGING TEAMWORK AT EVERY LEVEL, COUNTRY MANAGER **ULLA PLESS** HAS SEEN EVIDENSIA DENMARK BECOME STRONGER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL PARTS



In Denmark, we have always put a strong focus on working together as a team – both at local practices and across clinics and hospitals. Our emergency service is an excellent example of the value it gives to both our employees and patients when our veterinarians, nurses and students from different clinics work together. Teamwork allows us to share knowledge and practical skills in an emergency situation. It also gives our young students, as well as young vets with only a little experience, a good and safe learning environment since they work alongside experienced nurses and vets. We have a programme of referral hospital internships for both newly qualified vets and experienced regional vets who may have never worked in a larger practice. Such an internship can give our staff much more practical experience within a couple of months than

they would get working for years in just a small practice. We even arrange internships for students, most recently in the Netherlands and the UK. Working as a team has benefits on a local as well as international level too. Teamwork allows nearby practices to share their staff, so during sickness, vacations, maternity leave and so on, we all take the strain. It's a win-win situation because the group can make the most of its existing staff. Good ideas, inspiration and knowledge – all these flow freely around Evidensia Denmark and the wider group, thanks to a growing network of links between colleagues across borders who share a passion for providing the best treatment for our patients.

Ulla Pless
Country Manager, Denmark

Responding to accidents as and when they happen...



Name: Dennis Drostgaard
Role: Veterinarian
Based: Zealand, Denmark

What do you do within Evidensia?
I'm part of a local emergency team at the Næstved Animal Hospital and also the centralised emergency team for Karlslunde. The work gets you out of your comfort zone and forces you to act. Emergency situations drive you to seek new knowledge and to think on your feet. There are no 'normal' days – it often feels more like detective work.

How does working for Evidensia differ from your previous jobs?
Within Evidensia, you have a lifeline at all times. There's such a big network behind you that if you don't know how to resolve a situation, you can almost always get a colleague in to help. Video calls especially mean that if you need a second opinion on an X-ray, for example, they can see what you can see. Image diagnostics is in the cloud, so any vet can access that if you need them to. Telemedicine is the future. It's a way to break down borders across the countries and use specialists throughout the company to make the best diagnosis.

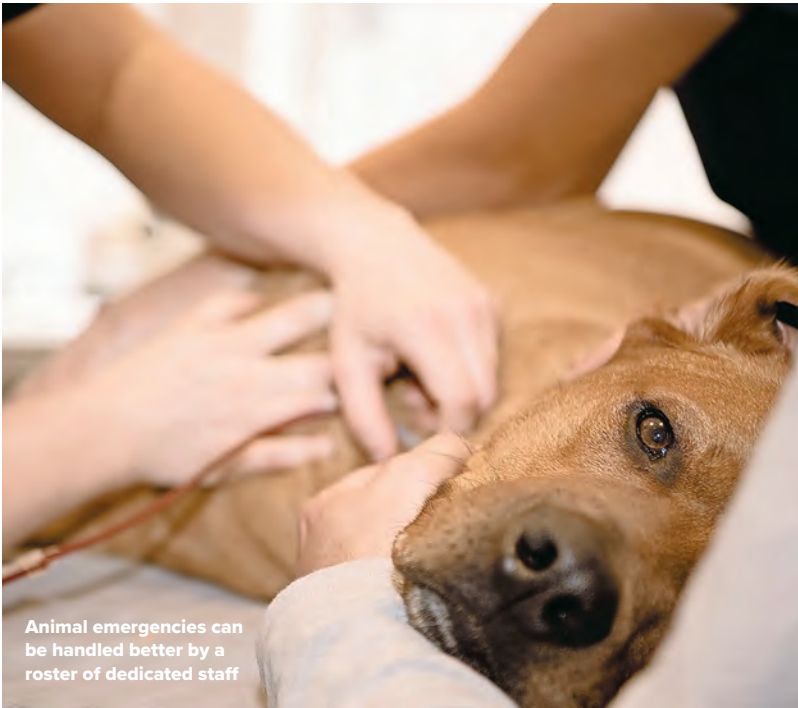
How do the local and centralised emergency teams differ?
In the centralised team, there are more people at work at the same time – a mix of general staff and specialists. So we all get to share knowledge and experience. You also get to know each other across the clinics, so it's easier to call somebody and ask them professional questions.

INITIATIVE

Animal accident and emergency

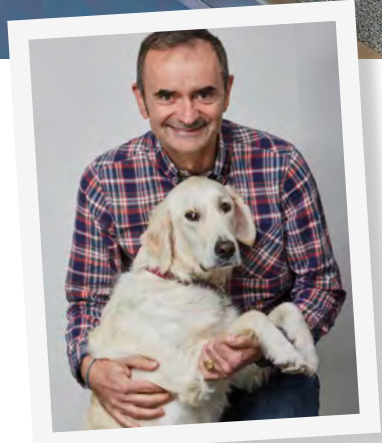
FOR 24-HOUR VETERINARY CARE, **EVIDENSIA KARLSLUNDE REFERRAL HOSPITAL** IS EVIDENSIA DENMARK'S GO-TO FACILITY

When a pet gets suddenly sick or an emergency accident occurs, the need for emergency veterinarian assistance doesn't take office opening hours into account. That's why Evidensia's referral hospital in Karlslunde can take in sick or injured animals at any time. Since it provides 24-hour care for animals, there are always staff on site. The hospital's 'emergency team' consists of veterinarians and veterinary nurses from Evidensia's animal hospitals and clinics across Zealand, whose monthly rota also includes some emergency shifts. In this way, there are always professional staff ready to jump into action should an emergency situation occur. At the same time, the staff get a lot of experience by seeing a lot of different emergency cases. In the event of several emergencies turning up at once – which can easily happen during a weekend – patients with the highest risk and medical condition are treated first. At the same time, the staff are always able to call for further assistance during our emergency service from a senior vet or nurse. From time to time, video conferencing and photo sharing is also used, which mean that even if it's the middle of the night and a senior vet is unable to come to the hospital, patients can still be diagnosed and given the right medical treatment. A combination of veterinary talent, a top professional referral hospital with the latest up-to-date equipment, including smart use of technology, gives pet owners access to emergency treatment 24 hours a day. ■



Animal emergencies can be handled better by a roster of dedicated staff

With a specialist referral hospital at the heart of Europe, Evidensia France is well-placed to expand its business



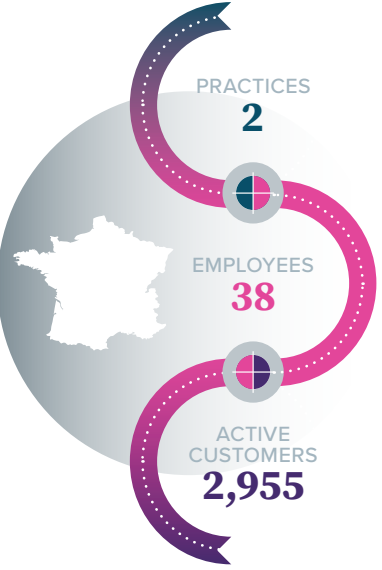
France

EVIDENSIA ONLY RECENTLY EXPANDED INTO FRANCE YET COUNTRY MANAGER **PATRICK GOVART** SAYS IT'S ALREADY SUPPLYING SPECIALIST CARE ACROSS BORDERS

Evidensia France is a recent venture and while we have expansion plans, our base is currently the Oncovet clinic in Lille. It's a very specialised referral centre that has made its name dealing with complicated oncology cases for cats, dogs and sometimes horses too. Lille is very close to the Belgium border, with many of our customers coming from the Benelux region. We also treat pets from the UK and, occasionally, referrals from an oncology centre in Barcelona, Spain. Around a quarter of our business comes from abroad. There are only two radiotherapy centres specifically for veterinary use in all of France and while it may be possible to access similar facilities in some universities, it's usually simpler to travel further and come to us. The owners can stay at a nearby hotel but since some treatments can last several weeks, the pets often stay with us. To cope with this, the

clinic has a room laid out like a living room so that owners can sit on a couch and spend some quality time with their pets for a few hours during these long-term hospitalisations. These complicated treatments are becoming more mainstream as more owners use pet insurance. In France, the percentage is still in single digits but it does mean that when an expensive treatment like radiotherapy is needed, owners can afford it. This location at the heart of Europe is ideal for a referral facility without borders. We are developing a new website in Dutch and English, as well as French, to help bring in more patients. We already know that we have the highest levels of expertise and experience. Going forward, we need to spread the word.

Patrick Govart
Country Manager, France



Managing, caring and sharing ideas with the group



Name: Laurent Marescaux
Role: Medical imaging specialist, partner at Oncovet
Based: Villeneuve-d'ascq, France

How long have you been working for Evidensia?
I have been at the Oncovet clinic for 16 years and before that, I was a lecturer at the National Veterinary School in Nantes. When Oncovet became part of the group in January 2019, I also became part of it.

What does your current role involve?
Almost all of my time – I'd say around 90% – is dedicated to clinical activity, with the remaining 10% spent on administrative activity. I supervise the medical imaging service. This process involves managing medical imaging analysis, taking care of the patients' anesthesia, making a diagnosis and writing medical reports.

You've been a partner of Oncovet since 2004 and are now part of Evidensia. What changes have you noticed from being part of a larger organisation?
I think that by being part of the group can open up new possibilities for the Oncovet clinic. By that, I don't mean just financial resources. As part of a European network of clinics, we are now able to share skills, ideas and experiences with others within the group.

INITIATIVE

Spreading the word about radiotherapy

EVIDENSIA FRANCE'S SPECIALIST ONCOLOGY CENTRE CAN DEAL WITH THE COMPLICATED CASES THAT FEW OTHERS CAN HANDLE

The Oncovet clinic in Lille has concentration of equipment, staff skills and experience seen almost nowhere else. However, this specialisation has created its own problem. "Vets never learn about radiotherapy at university, just some basic concepts about oncology," explains Oncovet's Jerome Benoit. "So what we wanted was to give referring vets enough information to discuss complicated cases with pet owners without always having to talk to us first." The solution was OncoXpert – a bespoke online tool that the clinic offers to its referral vets. Created by a company that specialises in using Artificial Intelligence for analysis and clinical trials in human hospitals, the online system asks vets a series of questions relating to species, type of cancer and symptoms, before returning an outline of an ideal radiotherapy treatment, a prognosis with and without treatment, some cheaper alternatives, plus an idea of costs for each protocol. "It's not an exhaustive evaluation," notes Jerome, "but it does give the vet some level of expertise while they are talking to the client." OncoXpert predicts life expectancy based on the species, course of treatment and type of disease, using data sets that the clinic created by combining its own data with scientific literature. Since radiotherapy is such an expensive procedure, it is used to start a discussion about what the owner wants. Where do they live, how many times can they visit the clinic, what costs and side effects can they cope with? "For example, while the optimum protocol might suggest 20 treatments spread over four weeks," says Jerome, "if your dog is very old and has a radiation-sensitive tumour, it could be that fewer sessions requiring less sedation might be a more suitable, yet still effective, treatment." With the service available in French, Dutch and English, OncoXpert is an innovative way of using available technology to extend expert opinion and market reach across international borders. ■



Jérôme Benoit helped create OncoXpert so that referral vets can give pet owners a well-informed overview

The dedication shown by vets in Ireland fits perfectly with the IVC Group's way of doing things



Ireland

SENIOR M&A MANAGER **KIM MOHAN** ON THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE REGION-SPECIFIC NEEDS OF VETS DURING OUR FIRST YEAR IN IRELAND



Having already forged a strong IVC presence with around 30 practices in Northern Ireland, we were exploring an expansion into Ireland in 2017. I was then working for the UK IVC acquisitions team but when the opportunity came up to go back home to Ireland for work, the lure was irresistible.

Prior to moving, I went to veterinary shows across Ireland to meet people. Compared to many other sectors, the veterinary industry is small but it's even smaller in Ireland!

Everybody knows everybody else, so you need to have a very personal relationship with people. By the time I started talking about IVC, practice owners already knew me as Kim, as well as an IVC Evidensia employee. I wanted everyone to know why I love the group and how important our culture is to me.

Culture is central to our company ethos – the importance of local leadership and

professional freedom sets us apart. The more practice owners I spoke to, the more it became clear that the culture of many Irish practices fitted perfectly with our own model.

Initially, our focus was on small animal practices but we quickly realised that Ireland has a large agricultural base, with most practices outside of the large cities also having a farm and equine element. It was also vital we understand what practices want from us. Financial backing – yes – but many practices prioritise benefits for their employees and also want to be part of a bigger group.

After a strong first year in Ireland, IVC will continue to invest heavily in both people and practices. 2019 should be an exciting year, with many more practices joining our group.

Kim Mohan
Senior M&A Manager, Ireland

Becoming part of IVC in Ireland



Name: Joe Keane
Role: Clinical director
Based: Sunbeam Vets, Cork

When did your practice join the group?
Last week! We've only just signed the paperwork.

Why did you decide to join the group?
There are two equal partners running this multi-branch practice which was founded in 2003 and now employs 32 people. When we looked at how to drive the practice forward, we realised we needed two things. The first is obvious – money to reinvest. The second is the intangible of having the expertise to manage a successful veterinary enterprise. We decided that partnering with IVC would allow us to achieve our aims.

How has the transition been?
It was tough going through the due diligence while still running a busy practice but a week after joining, I already feel some of the weight being taken off my shoulders. The financial element has already been taken away, along with some other management issues too.

What are your aims for the year?
I want to do more of what I trained to do – treat patients. With IVC promising to help with the admin and background work, we have already signed some of our staff onto training programmes within the group. I hope that we will have access to the knowledge and expertise within the group as a whole.

INITIATIVE

Golf, good food and greetings to Ireland

WITH IVC EVIDENSIA MOVING INTO IRELAND IN 2018, WHAT BETTER WAY TO GET TO KNOW THE COUNTRY'S VETS THAN WITH A ROUND OF GOLF?

There's always been a certain caution among vets in Ireland about groups such as Independent Vetcare becoming established in Ireland. So this May, in order to meet in a relaxed atmosphere, IVC welcomed colleagues from the Irish veterinary sector to the Carton House Hotel in County Kildare for a day of golf.

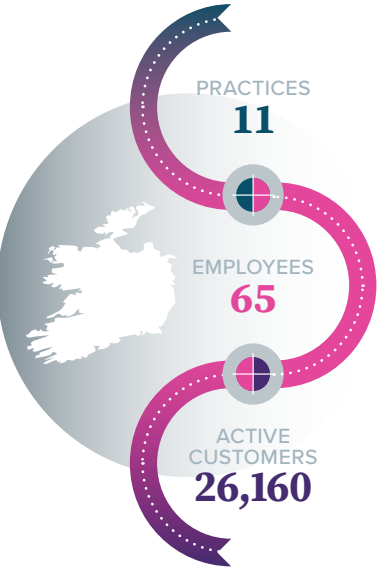
The event was an informal gathering, with some vets who have already joined the group, others in the process of joining, some curious about the whole venture and, of course, members of the IVC team. Several organisers of key Irish vet shows had also been invited.

The day started with a warm welcome over a hearty breakfast before a day out on the renowned Montgomerie golf course. The evening started with a drinks reception followed by a three course meal and a prize ceremony for the winning teams.

"It was important for us to allow the vets to chat with each other to get a true sense of what it is to be part of Independent Vetcare," says Senior M&A Manager, Kim Mohan. "We are delighted with the practices that have joined us in Ireland already and we hope that events like this continue and allow us to meet and chat with like-minded vets in the future. The day ended on such a high and we hope this is the beginning of an annual tradition for IVC Ireland." ■



The Carton House Hotel was the backdrop of our first event in Ireland





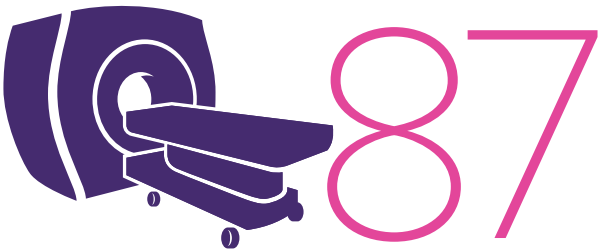
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A day in the life

WORKING WITH ANIMALS IS BOTH AN
ADVENTURE AND A PRIVILEGE, AS THESE
PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE GROUP SHOW

.....





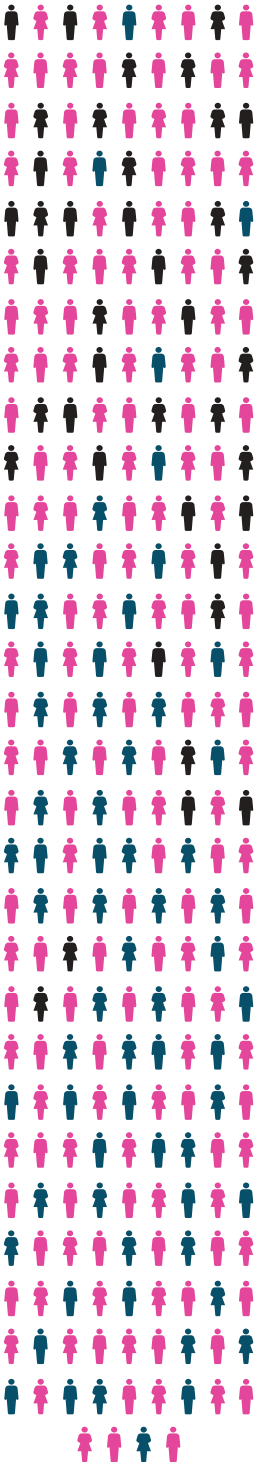
THE TOTAL NUMBER OF **MRI AND CT SCANNERS** THE GROUP HAD ACCESS TO IN JULY 2019



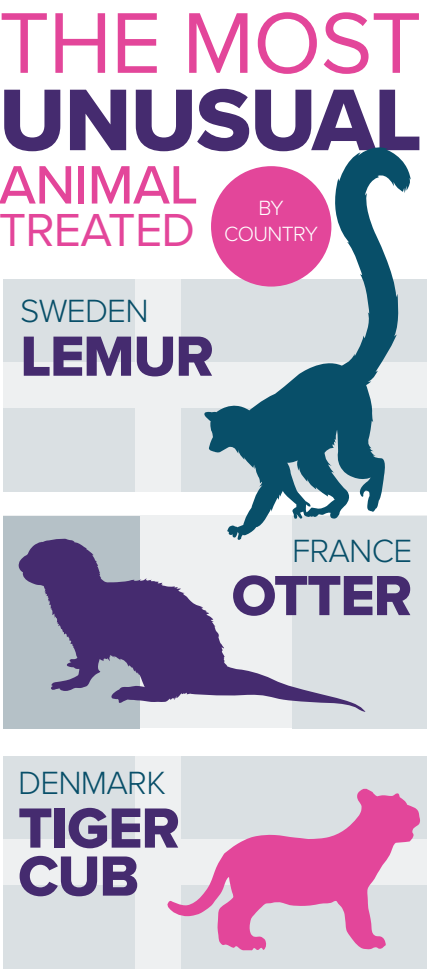
referral centres and hospitals



TOTAL NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS IN OUR UK PRACTICES – AND COUNTING



265 TOTAL NUMBER OF REFERRAL SPECIALISTS IN THE GROUP - 106 OF WHICH ARE DIPLOMATES



“Now that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe, we believe we have a responsibility to put our resources and ideas at the service of the wider community.”

DAVID HILLIER – CEO, IVC EVIDENSIA



IVC Evidensia

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