

Major veterinary players unite in commitment to evidence-based veterinary medicine

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In a first for the profession, 15 of the major UK member organisations, vet schools and policy-making bodies have today come together to affirm their commitment to veterinary medicine based on sound scientific principles, in a new landmark publication produced by RCVS Knowledge and the charity Sense about Science.

Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Matters: Our Commitment to the Future represents the first time this broad and influential group have formally united in support of a single issue. This unprecedented collaboration is testament to the importance that veterinary organisations across the profession place on the use of evidence to enhance all types of veterinary medicine.

The publication serves to demonstrate the profound and wide-ranging impact that evidence can have – and has had – on animal health and welfare. It also provides a convincing rationale for all veterinary professionals to contribute to the evidence base and put evidence into practice, to the benefit of animals, owners and veterinary teams themselves.

The signatories to the commitment are:

- Animal and Plant Health Agency
- British Cattle Veterinary Association
- British Equine Veterinary Association
- British Small Animal Veterinary Association
- British Veterinary Association
- British Veterinary Nursing Association
- RCVS Knowledge
- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)
- Royal Veterinary College
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- University of Liverpool
- University of Nottingham
- University of Surrey
- Veterinary Policy Research Foundation

The commitment is set in the context of 14 case studies that showcase the impact of standout veterinary research and evidence in the 20th and 21st centuries. Spanning small animal, farm, equine, nursing, animal welfare and agriculture, the case studies show that different types of evidence have been key to major steps forward in veterinary medicine.

Evidence has been at the heart of the eradication of the cattle disease rinderpest, successful strategies to prevent bird flu, and the rapid and accurate diagnosis of colic – one of the most common causes of death in horses. Evidence has also been core to the development of new techniques to treat Bulldogs with breathing problems, new methods to reduce seizures in dogs with epilepsy, and faster means of detecting antimicrobial resistance, among many other valuable advances.

In their commitment, the group state:

“When rigorous research underpins medical decisions, adverse events can be minimised and patient outcomes can be improved.

“We believe evidence-based veterinary medicine reinforces the sound scientific principles of the profession and strengthens the commitment to put animal health and welfare at the forefront of all we do.”

The charity RCVS Knowledge has been championing the use of evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) for the past five years, and provides a variety of tools, resources and education to the professions. Jacqui Molyneux, Chair of the Board of Trustees, said:

“Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Matters is a milestone publication for the professions, representing the first time the majority of the key institutions have aligned under the same EBVM banner.

“A celebration of decades of incredible discoveries, achievements and improvements in animal health, it also serves to remind us that even the earliest forms of veterinary medicine were underpinned by evidence.”

UK Chief Vet Christine Middlemiss said:

“What’s the evidence? An evidence-based approach is vital in all areas of our profession, whatever is keeping you awake at night. For me, it is the threat of African swine fever and avian flu. The evidence I rely on comes from our specialist surveillance monitoring and testing, veterinary epidemiologists and disease modellers. It enables me to make timely, proportionate risk-based decisions that stand up to scrutiny.

“If you are managing veterinary care in practice, the evidence you rely on to underpin your standards of clinical care comes from multiple sources too. Evidence-based veterinary medicine allows us to refine and tailor strategies to be effective and efficient, making full use of existing and new technologies.

“The profession has taken great strides towards embracing evidence-based veterinary medicine and building on this will strengthen the links between clinical decision-making, policy development and future research.”

Chris Gush, Executive Director of RCVS Knowledge, added:

“We are impressed by the contributions from our co-signatories, which clearly demonstrate the phenomenal impact on patient outcomes that conducting research and using evidence can have. We are also delighted that Sense about Science, a flagbearer for evidence, transparency and rational thinking, has joined with us to highlight the many benefits EBVM can bring.

“The publication also makes a strong case for much-needed funding for research to grow the evidence base, which would put powerful, robust data into the hands of veterinary professionals as they make critical decisions that can affect patient outcomes.

“It is our hope that the calibre, diversity and sheer number of the organisations putting their name to this commitment will galvanise all vets and their teams to expand their use of evidence in practice.”

Sense about Science is an independent charity that promotes understanding and use of scientific evidence. Rebecca Asher, Deputy Director, said:

“This is a showcase of game changers in veterinary care and we hope it will inspire and motivate everyone in the profession.

“We were delighted that RCVS Knowledge approached us to collaborate with them and other leading institutions in the veterinary research community to affirm their commitment to an evidence-based approach to veterinary medicine.

“Everyone expects treatment for humans to be underpinned by evidence. We now expect the same of the whole veterinary community when it comes to the treatment of animals.”

The full commitment and portfolio of case studies can be read in *Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Matters*, available for free online: bit.ly/EBVMMatters.

Notes for editors

1. RCVS Knowledge is the charity partner of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. RCVS Knowledge's mission is 'To advance the quality of veterinary care for the benefit of animals, the public, and society.' The charity meets this mission, primarily, by championing the use of an evidence-based approach to veterinary medicine, inspiring a culture of continuous quality improvement in practice, and making our resources available to the profession and wider public. www.rcvsknowledge.org
2. Founded in 2002, Sense about Science is an independent charity that works to ensure the public interest in sound science and evidence is recognised in public life and policy making. A small team working with thousands of supporters, from world leading researchers to community groups, the charity focuses on socially and scientifically difficult issues where evidence is neglected, politicised or misleading. www.senseaboutscience.org