Time off and holidays

Employees are entitled to a minimum of 28 days’ paid holiday, including bank holidays, although some employers may offer more. These matters must be covered in your written statement of the terms and conditions of your employment and in your contract. In addition, other types of leave may also be available.

**Study leave**
Paid leave to an employee who is required to attend outside seminars or similar events, and/or to prepare for examinations in studies that would assist their work capabilities.

**Compassionate leave**
Paid leave for a short period to enable an employee to attend the funeral and carry out related tasks when a close relative or prescribed family member dies.

**Family leave**
Family leave consists of maternity, paternity and parental leave. Parents of both sexes have entitlement to various periods of paid and unpaid leave.

**Social responsibility**
Many employers allow time off for employees who are in organisations like the special constabulary or the Territorial Army. However, your employer doesn’t have to grant this time. Territorial Army members have special employment protection if they are called up.

**Special leave**
A miscellaneous category that may apply to leave for such matters as an employee moving to a new work location.

**Leave without pay**
A period free from work granted to an employee who wishes to pursue personal matters and yet does not wish to terminate their contract of employment.

**Leave in lieu of payment**
Paid leave taken in lieu of receiving money otherwise due to the employee (usually accrued as overtime).

**Personal/carer’s leave**
Paid leave to care for a sick child or relative living with the employee. In some circumstances, the employee has a right to unpaid leave in order to care for dependants in an emergency.

This article is based on advice given in ‘BVA new graduate guide’, a handbook provided to final-year students and graduates up to eight years qualified on joining the BVA, as well as advice on the Government’s website www.direct.gov.uk, where more information can be found.
Brian Perry specialises in livestock health and broader agricultural development issues in the developing world. He graduated from Edinburgh in 1969, and after a short spell in mixed practice, studied tropical disease. Since 1971, he has lived in Ethiopia, Colombia, Zambia, the USA and Kenya. He is an honorary professor at the universities of Edinburgh and Pretoria, and a visiting professor at the University of Oxford; he lives in Kenya’s Rift Valley.

What made you specialise in developing country issues?
As an undergraduate I became fascinated by the challenge of controlling tropical diseases, and after studying for a diploma in tropical veterinary medicine at Edinburgh university, I went to Ethiopia to lead the teams engaged in rinderpest control. Seeing first-hand the multiple and diverse contributions of livestock to livelihoods and the economy stimulated my appetite for a greater understanding of animal health constraints to international development.

How did you get to where you are today?
Much of it has been lucky breaks, backstopped by some important early training support from the Overseas Development Administration (now the Department for International Development, DFID).

After Ethiopia, I took a masters in tropical veterinary science. Armed with this I started a sheep disease investigation laboratory with associated field investigations in Bogotá, Colombia. There, I became frustrated that a disproportionate amount of investment was being made in diseases that were not really a priority for many Colombian farmers, and this drew me into the realms of epidemiology and economic impact assessment.

I then went to Zambia as the epidemiologist with a FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) project, with the task of determining the priority constraints to smallholder farms. From there I was recruited as the epidemiologist at the newly created veterinary school in Virginia, USA, with teaching and research responsibilities.

In 1987, I returned to Africa to establish an epidemiology programme at the International Laboratory for Research on Animal Diseases (ILRAD, now the International Livestock Research Institute, ILRI), having obtained a doctorate for my research on a new disease of horses in the USA. At last I was able to pull together my combined interest in the dynamics of tropical diseases and the impacts these diseases have, building programmes to determine research and development priorities for different regions and species, with a particular emphasis on contributions to poverty reduction.

I left ILRI three years ago after 20 years, and am now involved principally in promoting the greater use of evidence-based tools to inform policies on livestock health and development.

What advice would you give to someone considering a similar career?
The key is building your personal credibility through academic qualifications, first-hand experience and good communication skills. I know it takes more time after so many years at vet school, but a PhD (or equivalent) provides the academic springboard. Field experience in developing countries can be gained with organisations such as VSO, followed by postdoctoral attachments with universities and international institutions in developing country programmes.

What do you like about your job?
I love the intellectual challenge of making what I hope are meaningful contributions to international development processes, and the opportunities for meeting a wide range of interesting people.

What do you not like?
The time lost while travelling, and the hassles associated with air travel.

Why is your job important?
In this world of limited resources – but with so much to be achieved – there is a huge need for good decision-making on disease control strategies, and development policies that are supported by strong evidence of their impacts and importance. This is particularly the case in many developing countries, where poverty levels are high and livestock play such an important role.

What’s the best piece of advice you were ever given?
‘All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy’, by my father. Hard work and dedication are essential, but so is making time for family and sports.

What have been your proudest career moments?
Receiving the OBE in 2002, and being awarded the International Outstanding Scientist award from the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in 2004.

Do you miss your veterinary roots?
The roots are still there, from the great base created by a veterinary degree. I loved the close involvement with farmers, and the highs I got from delivering live healthy calves and lambs; but the routine work did not give me the challenges I thought I should be taking on. Actually, I still do regular emergency clinical work at polo tournaments, and attend to the ailments of my own horses and dogs, which help me to convince myself that I can still call myself a proper vet!

Like most veterinary graduates, I started out as a clinician, and my current job description appears to be a long way away from that.
Ten-minute chat

Brian Perry

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