EDITORIAL

Advancing the quality and relevance of research in Veterinary Record

A. J. Trees, Veterinary Editor-in-Chief

The Veterinary Record was established in 1888, with its founder William Hunting, commenting at the time, ‘Not only a scientific but a professional journal is our idea of what is wanted. We shall endeavour always to keep abreast of scientific progress and to report the observations and researches of experimentalists. We shall publish articles and essays on scientific matters but, firmly believing that the science of medicine derives even more benefit from the inductive than the deductive method, we shall spare no effort in the attempt to extract from practitioners, clinical reports of all their most interesting and instructive cases’.

While the journal has done, and still strives to do that, there have been a number of innovations in response to changing times. The most recent and notable has been the decision by the BVA to seek an expert publishing house to produce the journal. Since BMJ Publications took over in 2009 there have been a number of major developments. One has been the adoption of online publication ahead of print publication. This now means that, following acceptance, authors can expect online publication in an average of 28 days from acceptance. Another significant development, in common with other major journals, has been the appointment of a veterinary-qualified editorial board who have agreed the strategic objectives for the journal (Box 1). We are pleased to introduce this board to our readers today (see pp. 593-595). Collectively, they represent a wide range of internationally recognised experts in veterinary research and education, whose main task will be to advance the quality and relevance of the peer-reviewed research published in Veterinary Record. To that end the Board has agreed criteria for the type and quality of article we intend to publish (Box 2), and these criteria have been embedded in revised guidelines for authors, and for reviewers (http://veterinaryrecord.

Box 1: Strategic objectives of Veterinary Record

Helping vets make informed decisions, notably:
To be the pre-eminent journal for veterinarians in the UK for translating research into practice
To be a first choice journal for the dissemination of animal health research
To be relevant globally and recognised internationally among the best in its field

Mission statement
To be the evidence base for evidence-based veterinary medicine

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Box 2: Inclusion criteria for technical content

High quality papers describing original studies of efficacy of treatments/interventions, such as controlled, blinded studies reaching statistically significant results.

Case series – descriptions of substantial numbers of cases which can define cardinal diagnostic signs, including biochemical, immunological or molecular markers or other important variables in comparison with ‘gold standards’ or by Bayesian methods to improve diagnosis or treatment.

Occasionally, single case reports, but only when of real novelty or potential significance, for example, novel putative infectious disease such as the first case of BSE.

Substantive epidemiological studies yielding conclusions of international significance or of national significance to the UK on the aetiology, risk factors, prevalence, distribution, incidence or economic impact of disease/ill health; to include public health.

Research on veterinary education, ethics and on aspects of veterinary practice and the welfare of veterinarians.

Research on animal welfare that advances standards of animal care.

Comparative medicine that contributes to human health or wider biological understanding.

Mini-reviews of CPD value.

In-depth reviews of relevant subjects to provide deeper background.

Systematic reviews to provide the evidence-base for clinical decision-making.

Authoritative commentary on research articles or events.

Synopses of significant research published elsewhere (not necessarily in veterinary journals), which may eventually have important veterinary applications/consequences.

In all the above, public health to be included in the scope of coverage as well as purely veterinary topics.

Box 3: Current performance

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<tr>
<td>Acceptance rate</td>
<td>30 per cent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time from submission to first decision (median)</td>
<td>28 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time from submission to acceptance (median)</td>
<td>58 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time from acceptance to online publication</td>
<td>28 days</td>
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<td>Time from acceptance to print publication (research summary)</td>
<td>70 days</td>
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doi: 10.1136/vr.e3912
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*Veterinary Record* 2012 170: 591-592
doi: 10.1136/vr.e3912

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