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 Veterinary Editor-in-Chief, whose first task has been to appoint a veterinary-qualified scientific 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
Essential to the goals we have set is the attraction of good pieces of clinical research, and intrinsic in that is to offer rapid decision-making. While numbers of submissions have risen consistently in the past five years, selection has remained very competitive, with an acceptance rate of some 30 per cent. Moreover, decision-making times have dropped substantially. The median time from submission to first decision (ie, reject or refer to referees) is currently 21 days, and from submission to acceptance for papers subject to review is 58 days. As stated above, from acceptance to online publication is only 28 days, so authors can now reasonably expect to have their work published online within three months of submission (Box 3).

As well as quality, we aim to be relevant to our readership – the practising veterinary surgeon. In addition to the primary research articles, we are commissioning expert editorial comment to accompany the most significant papers published in Veterinary Record and publishing summaries of the most interesting research published elsewhere. We will also be commissioning reviews of topical and important subjects of interest to practitioners. All this is intended to better enable the veterinary practitioner to make informed decisions.

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