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Vets drive CPD in Scotland

The CPD provider, VET Trust, was set up by a group of vets nearly 25 years ago with the aim of making CPD accessible to vets and veterinary nurses in Scotland. Kathleen Robertson reports on the Trust’s aims and its newest CPD prize.

VET Trust is a non-profit making, charitable organisation that is based in Moray in the north of Scotland. Its activities are based primarily, but not exclusively, in Scotland. VET Trust’s objective is to provide, promote, encourage and advance continuing education for those ‘involved in alleviating the suffering of animals and who are engaged in or associated with the practice of the art and science of veterinary medicine and surgery’.

One of the Trust’s main activities is promoting education and it does this in three ways – through its annual conference, by supporting courses and offering CPD awards.

The VET Trust two-day conference is held in Stirling each summer and has taken place since 1992. It has proved popular with mixed general and specialised practitioners from all corners of Scotland (and some from England) who faithfully make the pilgrimage. Its popularity is due to it being the only mixed-species veterinary CPD event staged on one site concurrently in Scotland.

The Trust also actively promotes local groups and practice meetings, especially those involving minority interests and non-commercial meetings.

For some years, the board of directors has offered a monetary CPD award to vets, veterinary nurses, veterinary practices and groups of vets to help them achieve CPD in a specific area. Previous recipients have included junior academics living on grants, vets returning to practice following a career break or illhealth and those who could not get the level of CPD they required in the UK. Such awards have allowed the recipient to stay abroad longer and increase the value of their trip by taking the opportunity to visit other institutions or specialists in their field of interest.

Applicants from areas that are remote from the main sources of CPD are considered favourably. And practices located a long way from centres of specialisation have found that lectures and demonstrations by visiting tutors can offer good value further education. The same applies to groups of practices. In both cases, the award can underwrite some of the expenses of targeted CPD.

While the Trust wants to increase the amount of CPD undertaken, it believes it is more important that the studies are high quality and relevant to recipients’ needs and interests. Therefore, quality and relevance are considered when award applications are assessed.

Application forms and guidelines for the VET Trust CPD award can be found at www.vettrust.co.uk. Applications must be submitted by January 31, 2016.

VET Trust has also linked with Vetlife (formerly the Veterinary Benevolent Fund) to give support, again by offering a free place at its conference to any beneficiary of Vetlife.
who requires extra support in gaining CPD to get back into practice. The small size of the conference lends itself to vets who may find the big arenas of commercial CPD overwhelming.

This year, VET Trust set up a new award. The ‘New Graduate Prize’ was presented to a new graduate from each Scottish vet school. It consisted of a free place at the VET Trust’s annual conference and was well-received by the undergraduates and staff at both universities.

The criteria and assessment of the prize was devolved to the individual universities to make the prize more appropriate to their own undergraduate needs. Glasgow vet school awarded its prize to the student with the best final-year portfolio, which constitutes half of the final-year mark. Edinburgh, however, adopted an alternative approach. It invited the undergraduates to present their own case and asked them to describe how they may have overcome personal obstacles during their studies or why they had a particular justification for the prize.

Mervyn Drever, chairman of the VET Trust board, said he was delighted to have established this new relationship: ‘It is very much in keeping with the VET Trust ethos of promoting education in veterinary practice. Our new graduates are the lifeblood of our profession, so we are delighted to help support and encourage them in any way we can.’

Next year’s VET Trust annual conference will be held in Stirling from June 7 to 8, 2016.
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