

## Editorial

# Manifesto for evidence-based practice

DO you neuter a cat at eight to 12 weeks, or wait until it is six months? Some years ago, that question may have prompted some hesitation. Neutering earlier would reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies but would it cause worse or more side effects in the short or long term? Now the evidence is clear: it is as safe – if not safer – to neuter cats between eight to 12 weeks rather than wait six months, which had been viewed as the standard wait time.

This is a good example of how evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) can change practice for the better. In this issue, *Vet Record* publishes an EBVM manifesto for animal health (see p 175) to help all those working in the veterinary professions take practical steps to make their actions more evidence based.

We want the manifesto to make a difference to practice so we are also asking veterinary professionals and veterinary organisations to sign up and endorse it, as well as to start to use it. By breaking the elements of EBVM into clear calls for action, we hope the manifesto will start the thought process about what can be achieved in your veterinary setting, be it sharing evidence with clients, devising relevant research or using existing evidence for quality improvement.

Last year, Rachel Dean, director of clinical research and excellence in practice for VetPartners, wrote a series of articles for *Vet Record* – the Evidence Base. These discussed actions that appear in the manifesto and how they can be approached, so they are a good place to get advice on how to get started (for example, *VR*, 13 July 2019, vol 185, pp 58–59). In this issue, she advises anyone working in a veterinary field to simply use the manifesto to prompt a conversation with any work colleague – as it is widely applicable and should generate ideas (p 177).

This journal does not consider EBVM to be owned by any one organisation and we hope that this initiative will extend more widely than the *Vet Record* audience. To that end, we are making the manifesto open access so it can be easily accessed and reused, and we encourage it to be shared.

Over the years *Vet Record* has collaborated with many different organisations to help promote EBVM, and it is heartening to see the wide range of people

and organisations that have endorsed the manifesto, from practices – both individual and corporate groups – to universities and libraries, associations and individual practitioners, to charities and industry bodies.

Much effort has gone into developing the manifesto – a panel discussion at last year's Evidence Live conference in Oxford kicked off the endeavour and we

have since tweaked it according to views garnered from across the professions. However, we don't believe the manifesto should be set in stone – as Dean suggests, it should develop, adapt and evolve.

You can add your comments as an e-response (<http://doi.org/10.1136/vr.m3409>). *Vet Record* commits to revisiting the manifesto according to the nature and volume of feedback we receive.

With this issue, we are also rebranding our Clinical Decision Making section as 'Evaluating the Evidence'. This will continue to pose a question about a common clinical situation that practitioners may be faced with – this week, the question is on the management of cows with left displaced abomasum (pp 192–193).

*Vet Record* has been publishing these clinically appraised topics for some years now and we often find that the evidence is slim or, in some cases, lacking completely. Although this is sometimes because published studies lack power in their study size, it is often because they cannot be compared or simply that nothing has been published on that topic. So the next question to solve is how to fill this evidence gap. Please suggest your thoughts at [vet.editorial@bmj.com](mailto:vet.editorial@bmj.com)

We hope that combining the manifesto with your own observation and clinical experience will stimulate you to improve your practice.

**Suzanne Jarvis**

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