

In brief

■ FIREWORKS POLICY:

A policy statement has been released by the BSAVA highlighting the most effective treatments for canine firework phobia. The BSAVA Policy Statement on the Management and Treatment of Firework Phobias in Dogs includes information on behavioural management, medications and pheromones and is available on the association's website. The statement has been produced by vets Sarah Heath, of Behavioural Referrals, Chester, and Jon Bowen, behaviour consultant at the RVC. The document states: "Dogs may show signs of fear or phobia of the loud noises associated with fireworks. It is the duty of veterinary surgeons to recommend and support evidence-based therapies in order that they may improve the welfare of animals under their care."

■ TRAVEL OPPORTUNITY:

The BSAVA is offering funding for vets wishing to travel abroad to study any aspect of veterinary science. Vets have until November 20 to nominate themselves for the Frank Beattie Travel Scholarship. The scholarship was established in 1988 in memory of long-standing association member Frank Beattie. The funding, given by Mr Beattie's widow Annie, is worth £2,000. The award is open to BSAVA members engaged in clinical practice rather than university research. To apply visit www.bsava.com

■ SHARK FINNING: DEFRA

has announced stronger controls to tackle shark finning. New controls were announced by fisheries minister Huw Irranca-Davies. The development means permits for fishing boats registered in England, Wales or Northern Ireland that allowed the removal of shark fins at sea have been stopped. Any sharks caught by UK registered vessels now must be landed with the fin attached.

■ NOAH CAMPAIGN: NOAH

has launched a campaign entitled Use Medicines Responsibly. A webpage linked to the campaign (www.noah.co.uk/responsible) includes information about the use of medicines produced by NOAH and other organisations, including the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA).

■ VET HONOURED: CVO for

Wales Christianne Glossop was named as one of the two UK Farming Champions of the Year. Rural affairs minister Elin Jones was the other recipient of the title, presented at the *Farmers Weekly Awards 2009*.

■ TOP CREMATORIUM:

Dignity Pet Crematorium, Hampshire, was named top pet crematorium/cemetery at the Cemetery of the Year awards.

VETS WARNED TO REDUCE ANTIMICROBIAL RELIANCE

WARNINGS have been issued that the withdrawal of certain antimicrobials from veterinary use could result if vets don't reduce their reliance on them.

The growing problem of resistance to antimicrobials was highlighted during an MRSA clinicians' day in London, hosted by the Bella Moss Foundation, which followed on from the second International Conference on MRSA in Animals.

Susan Dawson, of the University of Liverpool, spoke on antimicrobial use in companion animals. She said: "Antimicrobial resistance is an important and increasing problem in both human and veterinary medicine. There is a low prevalence of antimicrobial resistance in the UK at the moment, so we must make sure we keep it that way."

Resistance to antimicrobials has been highlighted as a problem due to the relatively limited number of products licensed for companion animals, meaning choice is further reduced once resistance is established. She said: "There is a slowdown in the development and discovery of new products and generations of antibiotics; therefore, we have to stick with the ones already available."

The VMD produces an annual

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report on antimicrobial usage, and the 2008 report, which details sales in 2007, shows overall use of antimicrobials for therapeutic purposes in all animals had reduced. However, use of fluoroquinolones and cephalosporins increased.

Food-producing animals

The majority of the total tonnage of antibiotics is used in food-producing animals, but there is a trend for increasing use in companion animals, according to the report.

"Most of the antimicrobials licensed for companion animals are broad-spectrum drugs; all licensed preparations are also used in human medicine. These can have a profound impact on the normal bacterial flora, as well as on pathogens. Changes to the bacterial flora may have unforeseen consequences by leaving vacant niches for colonisation, by affecting the immune system and by the acquisition of antimicrobial resistance," Dr Dawson said.

In the chief medical officer's report of 2008, it was suggested that fluoroquinolones and

some cephalosporins should be banned for veterinary use, with the aim being to preserve their use in humans.

Mike Jessop, a past-president of BSAVA, suggested vets should shoulder much of the blame for the routine use of broad-spectrum antimicrobials in practice.

He said: "There is a very real threat from the World Health Organisation that the use of fluoroquinolones and third and fourth-generation cephalosporins will be blanket banned from veterinary use. If we continue as we are, this will come to pass."

"We have been seduced by shiny new antibiotics that have been granted veterinary licences. There is a great belief that if it is new, it must be more potent and, therefore, better."

"What is our love affair with newer, broad-spectrum antibiotics? Could we be brave enough to admit that it is far easier to reach for the quinolones? Not only do we know they reach parts other antibiotics cannot reach, but it also saves us time

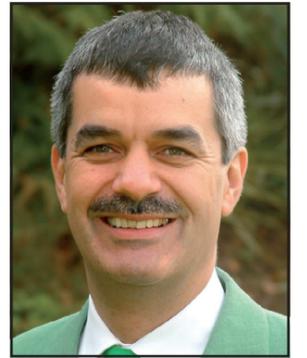
checking to see if penicillin or trimethoprim/sulphonamides are active in the tissues we want to target."

According to Mr Jessop, the pharmaceutical industry and the VMD also have a role to play in promoting responsible use of antimicrobials.

He said: "The VMD is forcing sales of injectable antibiotics – why won't they allow smaller-volume bottles for injectables? The multi-dose bottles force quick use of antimicrobials, because, once broached, we have to use up injections quickly, which encourages over-use."

"Pharmaceutical companies could easily provide smaller bottle volumes to help avoid waste, and the VMD could relax licensing regulations to make it more affordable to do so."

Responding to Mr Jessop's comments, a VMD spokesman said: "Without the cascade, introduced by EU law, vets would only be permitted to use authorised veterinary medicines. If the antimicrobial of choice is not authorised for veterinary



Mike Jessop.

use in the UK then the cascade allows a vet to use a human medicine or a veterinary medicine authorised elsewhere in the EU. The cascade should not, in any way, drive an increase in the use of antimicrobials, as it is not designed to interfere with a vet's clinical assessment.

"It's wrong to suggest that vets are misusing medicines just to avoid waste. This issue is not specific to antimicrobials, but their misuse would be even more significant. The cost per dose from smaller pack sizes to the vet may be considerably higher than larger pack sizes."

BVNA welcomes new president at congress



THE BVNA has welcomed its new president into office.

Donna Lewis (left), of the Pet Care Veterinary Surgery, Erith, Kent, accepted the chains of office at the association's annual meeting at congress on October 11. She replaced Bonny Millar.

In her outgoing address, Mrs Millar thanked BVNA council members and officers for their hard work over the past year.

On taking up her presidential post, Miss Lewis said her biggest challenge would be overseeing the new VN qualification.

She also said her personal aim was to get more VNs interested in BVNA and the work of its council members.

Pharma deal gets US approval

PFIZER'S multi-billion pound deal to acquire Wyeth – the US parent of Fort Dodge Animal Health – has been approved by American regulators.

The tie-up was approved by the EU in the summer. Now the Federal Trade Commission has given the deal the thumbs-up.

Jeffrey B Kindler, chairman and chief executive of Pfizer, said: "Pfizer's newly strengthened company will have some of the best assets, people, pipeline and capabilities in the industry."

The deal is one of a number of large mergers and acquisitions announced this year.

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