

THE ROYAL (DICK) SCHOOL OF VETERINARY STUDIES



Exotic Animal and Wildlife Service Newsletter – SPRING/SUMMER 2010

What a year! 2009 saw some big changes in our service with new members of the team joining us and some leaving. We have a new resident, Elisabetta Mancinelli, who will be with us on placements for a four year period. Elisabetta is the first European College of Zoological Medicine resident in small mammal medicine and is with us for nine months to start off her training. She is currently working towards both her RCVS and European examinations. She spends the rest of her time working at Great Western Referrals in Swindon under the guidance of vet Neil Forbes. Simon Hollamby has now left to go back to Australia, but he became the first person in the UK to have achieved the American Board examinations in Zoo and Wildlife Medicine before he went! Kevin Eatwell obtained his European College Diploma in Zoological Medicine (Herpetological) being the first person in the UK to achieve this. Kevin is now recognised as a specialist by both the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the European College of Zoological Medicine.

Success of rabbit meeting

The evening meeting on 'Rabbit care in Autumn and Winter' held in September, in conjunction with the Rabbit Welfare Foundation, the UK's biggest rabbit welfare charity, was well received. Over 50 people attended the meeting and lecture given by Brigitte Reusch, our lecturer in rabbit medicine and surgery.

Parrots everywhere for parrot week

We were amazed at the sheer numbers of people who came for the parrot week held in September. Over 60 health checks were carried out (including some filming for TV) and the week ended with an evening on how to have a happy and healthy parrot. A total of 60 keen bird owners filled the room at the Hospital. Kevin Eatwell, one of our lecturers, spoke for over two hours and was well received. Our thanks go out to the charity Birdline for joining in parrot week.

Pre hibernation tortoise checks

As always our pre hibernation checks proved popular with over 50 tortoises coming over a two week period. An evening meeting with 30 tortoise owners was held and lectures covered infectious diseases in chelonians and hibernation care of tortoises.

Raptor first aid evening

We also held an evening meeting in January with the Scottish Region of the British Falconry Club on raptor first aid. People who attended included falconers, wildlife hospital rehabilitators and people involved in release projects.



What's in this month's newsletter:

1. News.
2. Staff profile.
3. Future meetings and events.
4. Nursing exotic animals.
5. Patient profile.

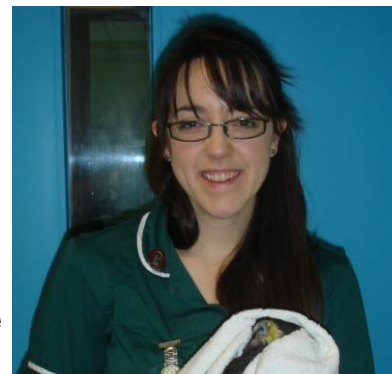
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STAFF PROFILE

Wendy Bament VN BSc (hons) MSc

Wendy started work at R(D)SVS in October 2007 and quickly became attached to working in the busy Exotic Animal and Wildlife Service. Wendy has always been passionate about working with exotic and wildlife species and has had 2 years experience working as a zoo keeper as well as various volunteer experiences, including spending a summer in a seal hospital in Norfolk and another as a wildlife warden on the remote Handa, a NW Scottish island. Wendy enjoys the challenges and diversity involved with the exotics and wildlife service and particularly enjoys greeting familiar furry, feathery and scaly faces and their devoted owners!



Ferret week

This time it is all about ferrets! We will be hosting a free health check week for ferrets between the 3rd to the 7th of May with an evening meeting on Wednesday the 5th, coinciding with National Ferret Day, which is being promoted by the Ferret Research and Education Trust. Lectures will be given on the control of reproduction in ferrets and how to keep a ferret happy and healthy in the home. Please contact reception to book your place for the evening meeting and your free health check for your ferrets.

Rabbit week

The theme for 2010 National Rabbit Awareness Week on the 26th April-2nd May is obesity. Free rabbit health checks will be held as part of national Rabbit Awareness Week between the 19th and 30th April 2010, spaces are limited so please book early to avoid disappointment. An evening meeting for owners will be held on the 21st of April with lectures given by Brigitte Reusch our lecturer in rabbit medicine and surgery and our rabbit resident Livia Benato. The topics for the evening lectures are: "Weight clinics - why do rabbits need them?" and "Update on *E.cuniculi* - whats new?"

Tortoise husbandry evening

Once again we are holding another evening meeting for tortoise owners. This will be dedicated to the finer aspects of tortoise husbandry and include lectures by Kevin Eatwell, who has a vast experience in dealing with these animals. This will be held on Wednesday 12th May. The meeting will be held at the Hospital for Small Animals and all are welcome to attend the evening. Please contact reception to book your place for the evening meeting.

Tortoise research

Part of our role includes looking into disease problems of exotic animals and finding out new information on diseases and how to treat them. We are also launching a parasite survey in tortoises during 2010 to find out how much of a problem they really are in the UK (you get free parasite screens!). Details of this study are on our website and we would encourage you to take part.

Full details of all these events are on our website www.dickvetexotics.com. To book for health checks or evening meetings please phone reception on (0131) 650 7650.

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Nursing of exotic animals – Having patience with our patients! By Wendy Bament

Nursing animals is a challenging job whatever the species, due to the inability to be able offer an explanation for the change in environment and treatment given, which is so easy with people. This issue is amplified further when considering exotic pets as most are prey species and spend the majority of their life looking out for, and evading, potential predators, which include humans!

As a result nurses have a responsibility to help minimise stress when such species are in the hospital as these animals are already feeling ill. This is achieved by providing a safe and comfortable environment. Most animals require a quiet area that they can hide away in, to feel more secure. It is important to consider not only the particular needs of a species, but also individuals when providing food, water, baths, perches, rocks and toys and offering them in a way that helps them to settle in.



As we all know eating can be a great comforter, and it is the same for animals. In fact it can be one of the few effective ways to not only ensure an animal is feeling at ease enough to eat, but also that they are capable of feeding themselves. This latter point is particularly important when considering that many small mammals will have a high metabolism and therefore require regular feeds of high quality food. Subsequently monitoring their weight is an important aspect of our daily routine and weight changes will influence treatment and special nursing considerations e.g. assisted feeding (as seen above!).

Administering treatments to our patients is another role requiring time and patience as they won't be rushed and many can be tentative about being handled. Therefore nursing exotic animals requires species sensitive observations as well as ensuring a calm and quiet environment.

Exotic Animal handling Facility By Gidona Goodman

In November our first group of students entered our new purpose built exotic animal teaching facility. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of exotic pets kept within the Edinburgh area since the Exotic Animal and Wildlife clinical service was set up over 15 years ago.



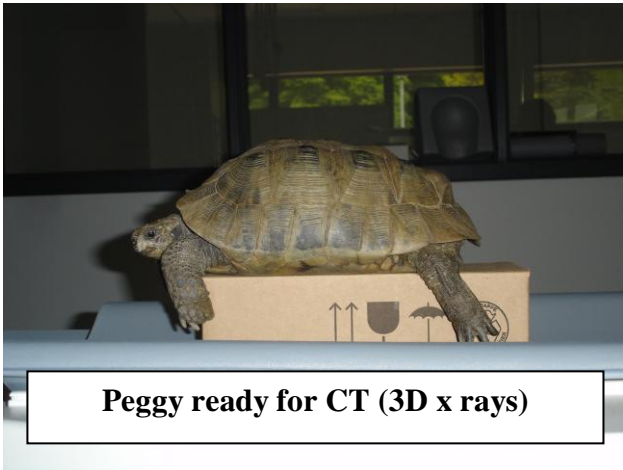
The expansion of our clinical service, as well as the taught component of the veterinary undergraduate degree, is a reflection of the above increase. However, what we were lacking, until now, was a designated unit housing a range of healthy animals, such as rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, chinchillas, lizards, snakes and rats for student teaching. Students will learn how to identify and sex these species and how to house and feed them correctly. Giving students this experience early on is important as it provides them with the skills and confidence to treat exotic animals once qualified.

We would like to thank all of you who have assisted us with providing your pets for teaching before this facility was set up. We also want to thank those who have donated animals and equipment for the unit. They will be well cared for by our students and a designated team of carers.

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Patient profile by Kevin Eatwell



Peggy ready for CT (3D x rays)

As a lecturer in Exotic Animal Medicine and Surgery, I see quite a lot of different animals with a variety of health problems. One of my favourite animal groups is the tortoises. One such character who visited us last year is Peggy a spur thighed tortoise. She has been a patient of the exotic animal clinic for seven years. Middle aged female tortoises (she is 37 years old) can suffer from reproductive problems and their ovaries can get very large with multiple follicles. This is what Peggy was suffering from and they are essentially egg yolks filling up the body cavity. This prevented her from feeding properly and every year she was struggling a little bit more. Sadly despite having a keen boyfriend she never ovulated and her ovaries became static, a condition known as follicular stasis.

This was diagnosed by taking blood samples, x rays, CT and ultrasound! These demonstrated large follicles filling her body cavity. A decision was made to spay her and solve the problem long term.

Once under anaesthetic a square hole is made in the centre of the lower shell. The piece of shell is then moved to one side (while keeping it attached) and then access to the body cavity is possible. Both ovaries were removed via the hole, giving her much more room to breathe. The piece of shell is then replaced and a curative placed over the wound edges to hold everything in place.



At surgery her large ovaries were removed

Peggy was kept awake over winter so her wound would heal quicker. It can take up to eighteen months for shell wounds to heal but they typically do very well. Keeping the attachments to the bone flap is important to keep the blood supply going to speed recovery.

EXOTIC ANIMAL AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

- A. Meredith**, MA, VetMB, CertLAS, DZooMed MRCVS
- K. Eatwell**, BVSc (Hons), DZooMed Dip ECZM MRCVS
- B. Reusch** BVetMed (Hons), CertZooMed, MRCVS
- E. Keeble**, BVSc, DZooMed, MRCVS
- G. Goodman** DVM, MSc, MRCVS
- L. Benato** DVM, GPCert (ExAP), MRCVS
- J. Hedley** BVM&S MRCVS
- E. Mancinelli** DVM MRCVS

Normal opening hours are:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 8.30 am – 7pm, Wednesday & Friday 8.30am – 5pm.

For an appointment or an emergency please phone: **0131 650 7650**

For the latest news visit our website www.dickvetexotics.com

