



UPDATES FROM OPTIVET

Further growth and supporting our primary care vets

Happy New Year to all of our referring vets and to all the other friends and followers of Optivet Referrals. We are delighted to bring you this newsletter full of interesting information, updates, tips and news of further expansion. We hope that reading on will give you a flavour of the services we can offer, not just clinical services, but also the opportunities for free CPD which we present to the hard-working primary care vets in the area. In this issue you will see a write up of our most recent CPD evening, where we learnt about a range of festive-related diseases, both medical and surgical, and in addition we have an article from one of the vets who has come to spend time with us at Optivet Referrals recently. We are always happy to discuss cases, review results/radiographs and to have you come and visit if you want to observe a surgery or procedure involving one of your cases. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wanted to take us up on any of these services.

We take our clinical excellence seriously so please read about some of our team's achievements with post graduate certificates earned by

two of our nurses and a final author study in an international journal for one of our vets.

You will also see that we are continually needing to expand to meet the demand of an ever increasing number of referrals so that more patients stand to benefit from the expertise and facilities that we have here. Among these exciting personnel developments are the addition of extra care staff to allow us to accommodate the increased number of hospitalised dogs and cats. Part of this expansion will allow us to increase our overnight staffing. We already have 24hour nursing care during the week but we will now have even more staff on during these hours to make sure we can keep up with the frequent eye medications for our ophthalmology patients, the pain scoring and close management of our post-operative surgical patients and the intensive care offered to our complex and critical medical inpatients. In fact, our recent growth has been so rapid that we have now expanded our team to include a specific HR manager to ensure we are optimally managing our staff to allow us to ...**continued on page 2**

Optivet Newsletter

Spring 2018

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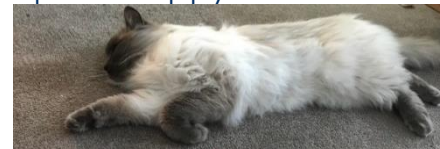
New staff



Please meet some of our new staff as we continue to grow allowing us to offer better and better service into 2018

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Tips for happy cats & clients



We all know that cranky cats make more work. See this article on making life easier and the link to the website for a client handout.

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Professional discounts

There are lots of exciting things going on at Optivet, check out the latest news and developments including how to secure professional discounts for all your staff.



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continue to deliver the high-level specialist care with the personal, tailored and non-corporate attention to patient and client needs that you have come to expect from Optivet as a truly caring independent referral centre.

As part of our mission to provide the best care we pay particular attention to our feline friends. For most cats a trip to the vet is a stressful and difficult time, especially when they feel unwell. Here at Optivet we have a dedicated cat ward which is carefully arranged to prevent cats seeing each other while in hospital and is strictly treated as a quiet area, this is in addition to our cat specific waiting area with tables to allow cat cages to be lifted off the floor. We also have staff training to make sure that cat handling is as sympathetic as possible with no 'scruffing' of cats and the need to show great patience, even where this might be inconvenient. Not only do these approaches make life for our feline patients more pleasant but this also has a huge benefit for us by making our hospitalized cats happier which means they are easier to handle for procedures (blood sampling, catheter placement etc) and tend to eat better and recover faster. This whole process of looking after our cat patients actually begins before they even reach the clinic and you will find on page 5 a discussion of the measures owners can take to minimise the stress of travel. We have a handout for owners that covers these various tips and tricks and this is available on our website – please do feel free to direct all of your clients with cats to our site so as many cats as possible can benefit from this handout.

We are planning a further CPD session on **27th March**, we are pulling out the big guns for this one with a talk from Rob so make sure you save the date!



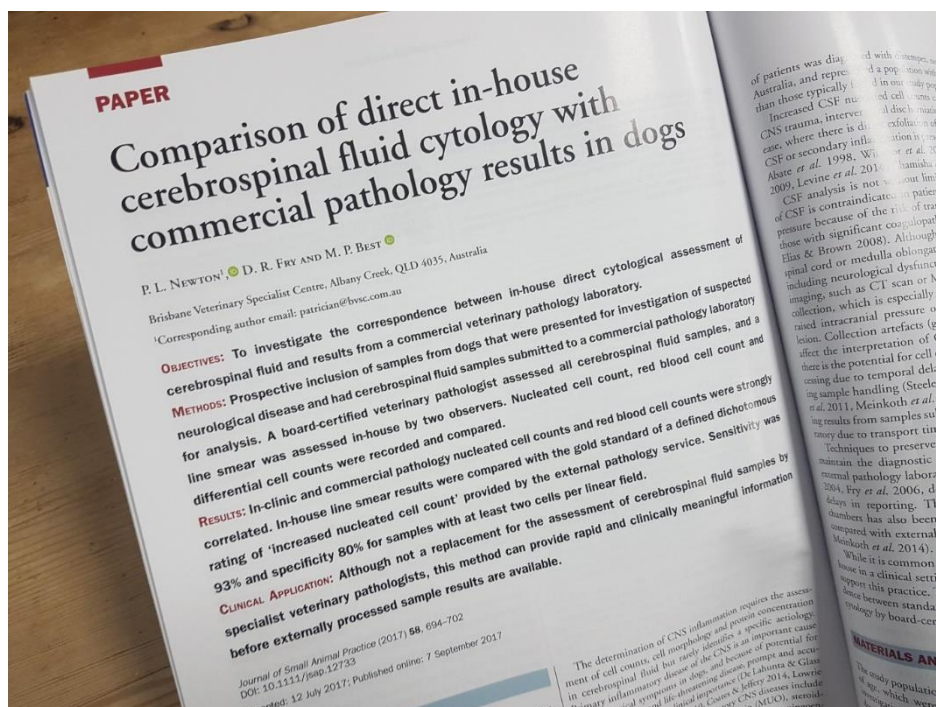
COME AND SEE YOUR CASES AT OPTIVET

I spent two weeks seeing practice at Optivet Referrals and in this time I saw and learnt a huge amount. While I was mainly spending that time shadowing the medicine team, it was very interesting to see how the different departments (ophthalmology, surgery and anaesthesia) work together and how much overlap there was between the cases. I got to watch some interesting surgery and also appreciate the value of CT.

The standard of care for each patient was brilliant and every staff member worked incredibly hard to ensure that each animal had a stress-free experience from the moment they entered the building.

I would highly recommend seeing practice at Optivet as all the staff made me feel incredibly welcome; they encouraged involvement in all the cases and would go out of their way to teach me.

Gisu Jones BVM&S MRCVS



Another last-author publication

Following on from Ian Nicholson's original study in Journal of Small Animal Practice last late last year Matt Best has just been published in JSAP as well. As with Ian's paper Matt's paper is an original study and he appears as the last author. This is a prestigious achievement in such a high-profile journal and reflects the intent of Optivet to give you and your patients access to the

internationally published leaders and innovators in their fields. In this article a new technique for assessing the cell counts of cerebrospinal fluid is described. This is potentially of great use as in-house analysis of CSF has historically been very difficult (not many clinics have a cytopspin machine) and that has left many critical neurological patients having a nervous wait for the external lab results potentially resulting in dose delays and sample degradation in transit. If you had any questions about this topic or would like an off-print of the paper, please do not hesitate to contact us.

LIBBY SHIRES – VETERINARY NURSE

Libby qualified as a veterinary nurse in 2013 having worked in the veterinary industry since leaving school in 2008. After working at a number of local practices she moved to an orthopaedic and neurology referral practice where she worked as a theatre nurse. Libby also has experience as a head nurse at a local primary care practice, but she decided to move back to referral nursing as this is her main interest. She is looking forward to the new challenges that Optivet has to offer her.

At home, Libby enjoys going to the gym and is kept busy by her Jack Russell x Pug and her Boston Terrier!



NEW STAFF

MIRIAM MURPHY – VETERINARY NURSE

Miriam qualified from University College Dublin in 2005 with a BA(hons) in English and Greek & Roman Civilisation, and a first class Higher Diploma in Education, and subsequently worked as a post-primary school teacher of English and Classical studies for 7 years. In 2012 she decided to make a career change to follow another lifelong passion and qualified as a veterinary nurse in 2015.

After working in primary practice and another large referral centre Miriam felt the need for a new challenge. Optivet Referrals offered a variety of specialities that really appealed to her interests, in a professional and forward-thinking, but still personal and friendly, environment. She is a strong believer that animals should be afforded the same medical care and treatment that has been developed for humans, and that the relationship between human and veterinary medicine can be a mutually beneficial one. She aims to pursue further training in veterinary anaesthesia, but she is interested in all aspects of veterinary nursing.

At home she and her husband Greg live with Charlie, a springer, Angel, a Heinz 57 terrier and Scutt, a one-eyed wonder cat. She enjoys hiking, visiting the west end for a show, visiting friends and family as well as a new hobby – scuba diving. She has a wide vegan recipe repertoire, loves reading fiction and keeps balanced with running and yoga.



BEV ELMER – VETERINARY NURSE

Bev has been vet nursing for over 28 years and has been lucky to work all over the world. While her roots are in Suffolk within mixed practice she also has a huge amount of experience working for the Asian-based charity Animals Asia Foundation, and the early stages of the China Bear Rescue. Her role as a Senior Nurse was similar to the challenges of general practice, only bigger, much bigger!

After 7 years looking after over 200 bears on site in China and Vietnam, she decided to come back to the UK and now has a partner, two young children and two cats which keep her busy. She is very excited to be working at Optivet and look forward to adding work at a referral centre as another feather to her cap.



ALICE TIDBURY – VETERINARY CARE ASSISTANT

Alice graduated from University of the West of England (UWE) in 2014 having studied animal management. She then worked as a nursing assistant at another veterinary referral centre for three years before joining Optivet. She moved to Optivet to expand her knowledge in all disciplines and she aims to train as a veterinary nurse in the future.

She spends her spare time with family and friends. She also has shares in racehorses with her partner and enjoys days out at the races all over the country.



KATE HOLLAND – VETERINARY CARE ASSISTANT

We are lucky to have Kate join us for her first VCA job following successful completion of a level 3 animal management extended diploma. She has ambitions to continue to learn and develop her skills eventually aiming to become a qualified veterinary nurse.

She has two Staffordshire Bull Terriers, called Ronnie and Ralph, who have already shown their beautiful natures and life-saving spirits through the donation of blood.



GEORGIA SATTURLEY – VETERINARY CARE ASSISTANT

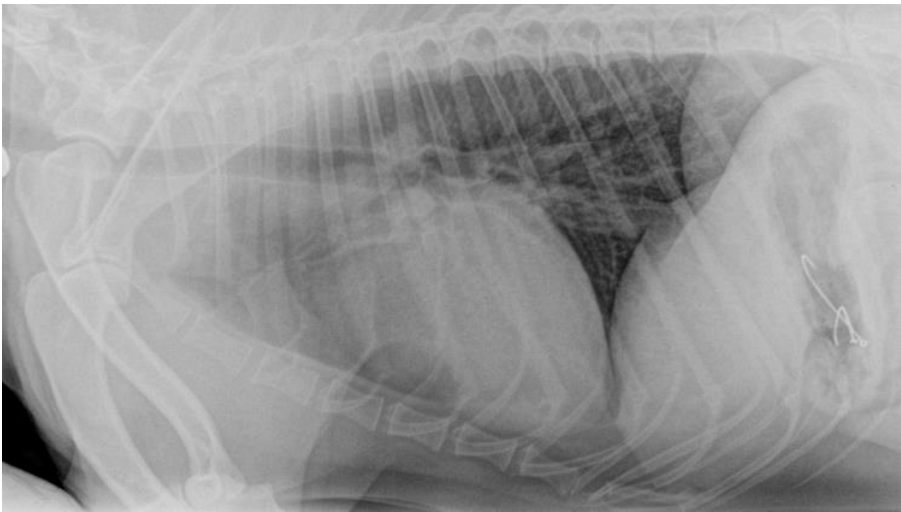
Georgia completed her Level 3 Animal Management Diploma at Brinsbury College in 2014. Working at Optivet is her first job in referral veterinary practice and she is very excited about broadening her knowledge in canine medicine as well as all other aspects of veterinary care.

She has a Siberian Husky called Marley who is 9 years old and she enjoys spending her time away from work taking him for long walks.

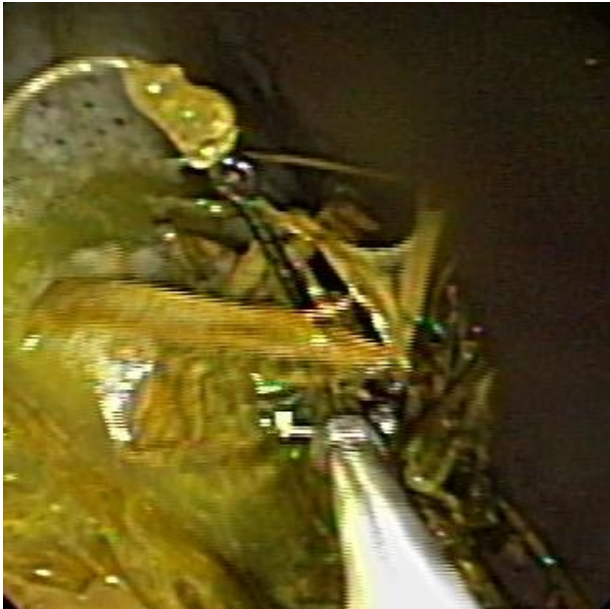


A photo diary of two fish hooks

This 9 year old Springer Spaniel was walking by the sea when she was seen to gulp down a fishy bundle despite her owner's best efforts. The line was seen protruding from her mouth and ingestion of a fish hook was suspected.



She was presented to her primary care vet where lateral radiograph confirmed the presence of two hooks within the stomach.



She was transferred to Optivet for further treatment, specifically endoscopy.

On endoscopy the stomach was filled with vegetation and fluid making safe retrieval of the hooks challenging. With a bit of work the hooks were manoeuvred to allow safe removal with the points all directed backwards. The hooks and line were completely removed within a 5-minute anaesthesia.



We are pleased to say she recovered well and was completely back to normal almost immediately.

CPD Evening – Festive mishaps

In December 33 of our referring vets and nurses came and were treated to exciting, informative and topical talks from Kit and Ian talking about seasonal toxicities and how to deal with GI obstructions from a surgical point of view. The lectures were practical and evidence-based and were enhanced by the input and feedback from the audience regarding their specific experiences. The evening was complemented by the mulled wine (cooked and served by Rob) as well as mince pies and other foods.

If you are kicking yourself for missing out, fear not, our next CPD event is already on the calendar. As usual this will be informative but also of practical application in your practice with the upcoming topics being **corneal ulceration** and the use of **antacids** in dogs and cats.

This will be on **27th March at 7.30pm** for an 8pm start. Look out for the flyers or get in touch to book your place (free of charge).

Keeping cats comfortable at the clinic

At Optivet, we try our best to make all our patients feel safe and comfortable. Compared to dogs, who rely mostly on you ('the pack') for reassurance, cats function in a very different way. To understand why, we must look more closely at cat behaviour. The purry bundle of fluff asleep on your lap is still very close to its wild ancestors in an evolutionary sense, much more so than dog, and a lot of their behaviour today is a reflection of this wild side.

Cats are strongly territorial and creatures of habit, relying heavily on scent marking to define their territory and on the security of familiar objects and smells. They tend to be solitary, hunting alone to provide for themselves and their young. Confrontation with other cats or with other predators (eg dogs) is avoided unless absolutely necessary. Fleeing to the safety of a hidey-hole or up a tree is a much better option; failing this they might freeze instead as perhaps by keeping still the 'predator' won't notice them; fighting is the last resort.

There are many possible causes of stress (see box); how can we help allay their fears? There are some things the cat's human (let's face it, we don't really 'own' them!) can do – please go to our website (www.optivet.com) to see our handout for clients 'Bringing your cat to Optivet – Tips to reduce stress'. This covers carrier familiarity, using Feliway spray, using bedding/clothing for familiar smells, covering the carrier and driving safely – this handout is available on our website: feel free to print and distribute it to your clients.

As vets there are several simple measures that can minimise stress in the waiting room. A separate cat waiting area is ideal but even where this is not possible there are several measures that can be taken. Your

receptionists can shuffle the dogs in the waiting room to ensure that the cat has the quietest spot. The cats should be placed in raised position, eg on a table or shelf, try to encourage clients not to place their cats on the floor. Provide towels to cover the cage so that the cats can feel hidden and bit more secure. Many of these steps will be implemented by your reception team so it is important to train them in cat friendly practice and impress on them the benefits, your cat-loving clients will really appreciate this kind of proactive and caring approach.

While in hospital the stresses placed on cats continue. Separate cat wards are ideal but there are many



provided, these do not need to be expensive – half a cardboard box with an entrance whole cut in it provides a simple cover that can be lifted up to access the cat when needed and can be thrown away at discharge. The cat's own bedding and toys from home can be used as a source of familiar smells.

Any handling required is done calmly and quietly. Train your nurses to handle cats gently and with respect, following the ISFM/AAFP Feline Friendly Handling Guidelines (a full brochure of these can be downloaded from <https://icatcare.org/sites/default/files/PDF/ffhg-english.pdf>). All these measures will pay dividends with cats much more likely to be calm during handling making those tricky procedures such as venipuncture and catheter placement so much easier. As a practice everyone - receptionists, nurses and vets - should remember (and remind each other) that not only should we provide the best care for cats because we are in the veterinary profession and care for our patients as if they were our own pets, but also because it makes our lives much easier if the cats are calm and happy while at the clinic.

If you are referring a cat that has a bit of a reputation of being aggressive at the vets, please pre-warn us, and feel free to call us for advice on potential anxiolytics that could be used for the journey.

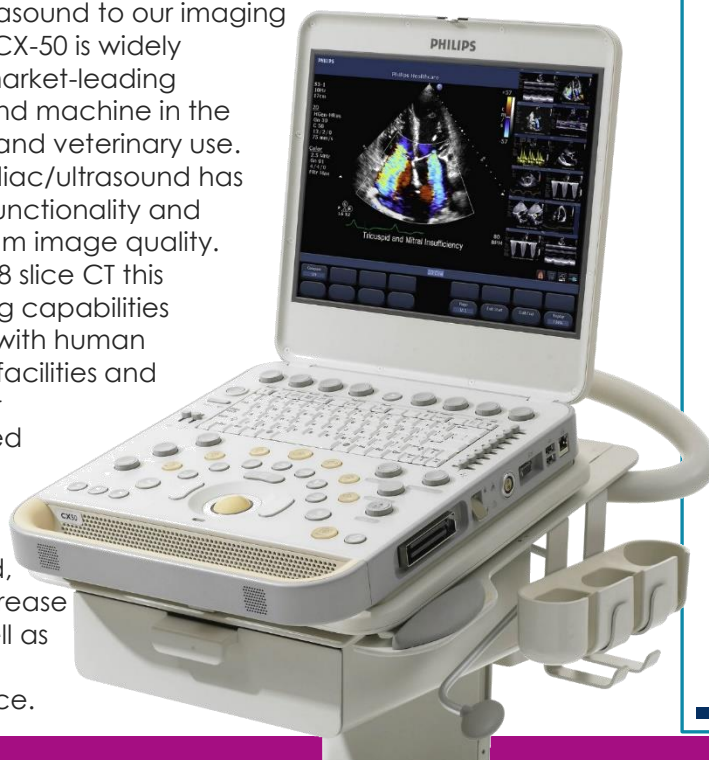
Potential causes of stress for cats at the vets

- being out of their familiar territory
- being trapped in a box they cannot escape from
- travelling in a car (or other means) – a completely alien experience for them
- being in a place full of strange, unfamiliar smells
- there may be dogs present, or the smell of dogs lingering; dogs = predators!
- a strange person starts poking and prodding them.

other important steps that can be taken as well. Cages should be positioned so there is no direct cat-to-cat line-of-sight (this includes not examining cats on tables in front of other cat cages). Hides of various types, such as Burtons Hideaways, and washable igloos can be

Cutting-edge ultrasound

We are very pleased to announce that we have recently added an additional ultrasound to our imaging equipment. The CX-50 is widely considered the market-leading portable ultrasound machine in the world for human and veterinary use. This dual use cardiac/ultrasound has comprehensive functionality and offers truly premium image quality. Along with our 128 slice CT this brings the imaging capabilities at Optivet in line with human hospital imaging facilities and complements our cardiac-orientated GE i-Vivid ultrasound machine, which we have retained, allowing us to increase throughput as well as the quality of our ultrasound practice.



Discounts for our veterinary colleagues

Please do take advantage of the professional discount that we offer here at Optivet. We offer a 15% discount on the total bill for the pets of staff working at our referring vets – this covers all staff including front of house, admin and cleaners as well as the vets and nurses; after all every member of the team is crucial to the service we all offer.

To access this discount please indicate in the referral letter from the clinic that this is a staff pet – we will then apply the discount automatically. We do not want anyone to miss out on this so please do make sure that this information is in your referral letter – we will not be able to apply this retrospectively.

VNs achieving NCert(anaesth)

Congratulations Ros and Emma!

We are very proud that our nurses Rosalind Pearson and Emma Vince have both successfully completed their certificates in anaesthesia and have been entered onto the register of nurse certificate holders with the European School of Veterinary Postgraduate Studies. Our amazing nursing staff are a key part of the specialist service that we offer, they are highly skilled and are strongly encouraged to pursue further qualifications while working at Optivet.

The nurse certificate in anaesthesia is run over a period of 18 months to three years. It provides nurses with an in-depth knowledge on the latest anaesthetic monitoring equipment, anesthetic and analgesic agents and techniques for the safe and effective anaesthesia and analgesia in dogs, cats, horses and exotic animals. Once the course is completed nurses sit a final examination and write a case report demonstrating the knowledge they have acquired. Both Ros and Emma completed theirs with flying colours in 18 months -

Well Done!!



CONTACT US

As always we are very happy to discuss cases with you including your approach as well as what role referral might play. We are also very open to hearing any ideas about content that you would like to see in our newsletters and at future CPD evenings.

On this note **our next CPD evening is on Tuesday 27th March** and will look at the approach to corneal ulceration and the use of antacids in dogs and cats.

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