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## Maastricht – a Resident's view

BY Cathy Fraser (UK)

THE ESVD meeting this autumn fell between the written and practical examinations of the UK Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Certificate in Veterinary Dermatology. I went to Maastricht therefore determined to be seen by my examiners, all of whom I knew to be attending, but also secure in the knowledge that for the first time, I would be on top of the subject. I hoped both to gain answers to some of the burning questions and to contribute a little from my own experiences. The first day was the Pre-Congress Residents' Day, an opportunity to renew acquaintance with residents from institutes all over Europe and to find out about their research programmes. The renowned Dr Rijnberg lectured on endocrinology and reviewed the diagnosis and treatment of both hyperadrenocorticism and hypothyroidism. The Netherlands approach to diagnosis of hyperadrenocorticism is to use the urinary cortisol: creatinine ratio as a stand alone test, getting the owner to obtain urine samples over a three day period. They also measure the effects of a low dose dexamethasone test on the urinary cortisol: creatinine ratio to distinguish between pituitary dependent disease and adrenal tumour. Treatment for pituitary dependent disease is different from that in the UK. They use hypophysectomy or mitotane administration, in far higher doses than those traditionally used, to ablate the pituitary gland, and rely on permanent substitution therapy for patient maintenance.

Another new concept for me was the idea of the mammary gland as an endocrine organ. Immuno-staining has revealed mRNA for growth hormone, insulin-like growth factor 1, and its binding protein, within mammary cells. The Dutch group have gone on to use medroxyprogesterone acetate in the treatment of congenital hyposomatotropism in the German Shepherd dog, with some success.

The congress proper over the next three days continued in the same vein, with a lot of stimulating new material. My colleague in practice has used selenium sulphide shampoo for treatment of canine scabies for many years much to my scepticism, however Dr Curtis' trial work on the use of selenium sulphide in that most difficult of clinical problems, chorioretinitis in heavy horses, ably showed its acaricidal activity. The refresher sessions were comforting for me (being in the throes of examinations) as they eloquently reviewed current knowledge. I was particularly impressed with the polished presentations of Dr Noli, which were a pleasure to attend.

My own experience of congresses is that their benefit comes not at the time, but over the subsequent weeks when a leisurely review of the material allows for better absorption and the incorporation of new ideas into my daily work. I did pass my exam and discovered that most of my questions at the Congress could not be answered by anyone – so I had better start searching for the answers myself. That must indicate progress of a sort!

IMPORTANT  
AND URGENT  
NOTICE

ALL those readers who are considering taking either Part 1 Diploma examination or the examination for Full Diplomate status, please see the two notices enclosed with this issue of the *Bulletin*. They give detailed information on the procedures to be followed, and names of organisers who must be contacted.

All applications must be sent by January 31st, 1999 for entrance to the full examination, and by March 1st, 1999 for the Part 1 examination.

## New Diplomates of the European College of Veterinary Dermatology

THIS year three candidates passed the written, oral and practical examinations to become

Diplomates of the ECVD. Their diplomas were presented to them by the President, Professor Ton Willemse, in a short ceremony at the Annual General Meeting of the College at Maastricht in September. Their names are:

Dr Emmanuel Bensignor

Dr Rosario Cerundolo

Dr Chiara Noll

A Favate

# The next step?

EDITORIAL BY *Dr Christopher Chesney*

1999 will see the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of the first edition of *Small Animal Dermatology* in 1969, by Dr George Muller and Dr Robert Kirk. Although not the first book in English on the subject, it was a significant event, for the book has become the veterinary dermatologist's bible – and is often referred to as such. Several generations of us have cut our teeth on the hard biscuit of the subject through this book and its succeeding four editions. I bought my copy in 1970, just after I had set up my practice, and I confess, my early dermatology was self-taught, by the not-very-respectable method of 'wallpaper matching' – looking at the pictures until I found one that looked something like the patient of the moment.

Later editions have built upon the strong foundation, and the book's title is now, fittingly, *Muller and Kirk's Veterinary Dermatology*. The work is indispensable, but now, in 1999 it is time for another imaginative step.

A great deal has been learned about our subject in the last three decades, and we have made great progress in 'classifying the spots'. We have given names to many more skin disorders, and we have learned, in many cases, to divide and subdivide the topics. The emphasis has moved from parasites and other infections, to immunological problems, and the great conundrum of that important disorder 'atopy' (This subject is covered in only two paragraphs in the 1969 book). However, there are two approaches to medicine, increasingly adopted by our colleagues in human medicine, which veterinary medicine has barely begun to grasp. These are *clinical audit* and *evidence based medicine*.

## Clinical audit

OUR journals contain many papers in which the occurrence of clinical cases is described, sometimes single, interesting oddities or new syndromes, in others a series of, say 'thirty cases of atopy'. But they remain case studies. Although a follow-up period is often described, there is little evidence of any feedback loop to assess the therapies used and their effectiveness. It is this function which is *clinical audit*. The aim of this process is to introduce a constant cycle of review and change. The current practice and the outcome should be reviewed and compared to an ideal practice and outcome. It may be followed by

a change in policy, by a reallocation of resources, or by counselling and education of individuals, even oneself.

Audit may cover the handling of individual patients: 'Was everything done that could appropriately be done in this case?' It might cover the assessment of different regimes of therapy: 'Is this method really better or worse than that one – and how should we measure the effects?' Good audit must be planned. The topic for review must be carefully chosen, and the reasons for making that choice must be made clear. The aim of the audit must be predetermined – chiefly to improve the delivery of healthcare. Several publications are available on the 'how' of the clinical audit process (see short bibliography below). Everyone involved in the audit should know what conclusions are reached, and crucially, everyone involved should be included in the steps taken after the lessons have been learned.

## Evidence based medicine

IN the literature of human medicine a discipline has evolved during the last decade entitled 'evidence based medicine', although its philosophical origins extend back to the mid-nineteenth century. The discipline aims to integrate the clinical expertise of the individual with the best available evidence from systematic research. As the number of published research papers, even of new journals, multiplies, the problem arises of how an individual is to keep up with the latest evidence to enable informed clinical decisions to be made. In human medicine the answer increasingly adopted is the compilation of systematic reviews of the literature on given topics. Such reviews go beyond the contemporary approach, in which an 'expert' states opinions about the proper evaluation and management of a condition, supporting the key conclusions with selected references. This method has been shown to be both non-reproducible and on average, of low scientific quality.

Evidence based medicine seeks to convert the information needs of the clinician into answerable questions, to enable them to track down the best available evidence, to appraise its validity, and to apply the results of the appraisal into clinical practice. Finally clinicians should evaluate their own performance. The

*continued on the back page*

## EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

### EXAMINATION FOR FULL DIPLOMATE STATUS: 1999

Notification is hereby given that the fourth examination for full Diplomate status of the European College of Veterinary Dermatology will be held in 1999.

There are three possible routes by which to apply to sit the Diploma Examination:

1. By completion of an approved ECVD residency programme. Details of documentation required for submission to the Credentials Committee by residents who have completed or will have completed a recognised programme by the time of the examination will be found in the ECVD Residency Programme.
2. Those who are internationally recognised in the field of veterinary dermatology with assessment by other means at the discretion of the Credentials Committee.
3. By passing the Part 1 ECVD Diploma examination followed by further study. Candidates proposing to take this route should be aware that at the Annual General Meeting of the College in 1997, it was decided that dermatology certificates awarded by other bodies would not be accepted in place of the Part 1 ECVD Diploma.

A fee will be charged for consideration of an applicant's credentials. This is payable in advance of application and is non-refundable in the event that an applicant's credentials are not approved. An additional fee will subsequently be charged to sit the examination.

Requests for further information about the examination should, depending on the information required, be directed to the following:

- Dr Patrick Bordeau, Chairman ECVD Education Committee: matters regarding residency programmes
- Dr Eric Guaguère, Chairman ECVD Credentials Committee: matters regarding the credentials process
- Mr Richard Harvey, Chairman ECVD Diploma Examination Committee: matters regarding the examination

There is no official application form. All persons who feel that they satisfy the required criteria should, prior to submitting an application, contact Dr Eric Guaguère, Clinique Vétérinaire Saint Bernard, 598 Avenue de Dunkerque, F-59160 LOMME, France for further information and directions for payment of the fee for consideration of credentials, as soon as possible. **All completed applications must be received by 31 January 1999. Without exception, incomplete or late applications will not be processed or reviewed.** The decision of the Credentials Committee will be reported to applicants by 1 April 1999.

Dr Eric Guaguère, Chairman ECVD Credentials Committee

## EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY DERMATOLOGY

### PART ONE DIPLOMA EXAMINATION: 2000

Notification is hereby given that the third examination for the Part 1 of the ECVD Diploma will be held in the year 2000.

In order to apply to take the examination, candidates must have:

- 1) Reached the status of full membership of the ESVD
- 2) Attended a minimum of 4 weeks (140 hours) of courses on dermatology accredited by the ECVD, which currently include the courses organised by the ESVD, the EASVS and those for the French Dermatology Certificate
- 3) Attended a minimum of 3 Annual Meetings of the ESVD, or National dermatology meetings of equivalent status

A fee will be charged for consideration of an applicant's credentials. This is payable in advance of application and is non-refundable in the event that an applicant's credentials are not approved. An additional fee will subsequently be charged to sit the examination.

Requests for further information about the examination should, depending on the information required, be directed to the following:

- Dr Patrick Bourdeau, Chairman ECVD Education Committee: matters regarding accreditation of courses
- Dr Eric Guaguère, Chairman ECVD Credentials Committee: matters regarding the credentials process
- Dr Marinus Wisselink, Chairman ECVD Part 1 Diploma Examination Committee: matters regarding the examination (including timetable of deadlines for the credentials and examination process and casebook and examination guidelines, in advance of requesting an application form)

**All applications must be received on the official application form.** These are available from Dr Eric Guaguère, Clinique Vétérinaire Saint Bernard, 598 Avenue de Dunkerque, F-59160 Lomme, France and will be accompanied by a timetable of the deadlines for the credentials and examination process, casebook and examination guidelines and directions for payment of the fee for consideration of credentials. **Completed application forms must be received by 1 March 1999. Without exception, incomplete or late applications will not be processed or reviewed.**

Dr Eric Guaguère, Chairman ECVD Credentials Committee

# So, The Internet *can* be useful

The June issue of the *ESVD Bulletin* carried a sad article by a reader disappointed at his ability to find anything useful on the Internet. Two UK members responded with useful advice and information.

Professor David Lloyd (ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE, LONDON) writes:

Your correspondent's article on 'Surfing? – or Sinking?' illustrates problems which many users of the World Wide Web, and particularly new users, experience. The systems seem very simple to use but effective use of the Internet, as with many computer programmes, depends on some knowledge and a lot of intuition. Sadly, those who write computer programmes and design computerised information systems often assume a degree of expertise which is only acquired after considerable experimentation by the new user.

The problems arise from a number of deficiencies in the system and the fact that the Internet is developing and expanding very rapidly. Internet sites are constantly evolving, and locations and addresses of particular Web pages may change without warning as Webmasters (persons responsible for maintenance of the pages) choose different Internet service providers, or as I.T. managers at the different sites change their operating systems and the organisational structure of their file systems. Even with the best will in the world there is no way that these changes can be notified to all potential users. Thus on any Web site the Webmaster must either check all the links on a regular basis or, as in most sites, depend on users notifying him or her that a particular link has broken. It is for this reason that nearly every site has, on one or more pages, a mail link to the Webmaster so that problems can be identified and corrected. This seems very efficient but must depend on the user, who may be frustrated and suffering from feelings of inadequacy, finding the point on the page where comments are invited and then being able to actually use the mail system to transfer this information to the Webmaster.

Additional problems occur because there are many operating systems and database drivers on the Web; services provided by different Internet databases may thus require quite radically different approaches. The older systems will generally be quite unfriendly and assume substantial knowledge of the system. The newer systems will often have a much more friendly interface but may be less effective. In the end, it is up to the user to find a way of using the system. As a long-term and high volume user of the Internet, I still have great frustration with broken links and databases which are difficult

to understand or which generate huge amounts of largely useless data.

Inefficient or underpowered computers and poorly organised or heavily used networks will also sometimes refuse access or give a response stating that the system is unavailable. This applies to some of the biggest and most heavily used sites in the world. My solution is to log-on at a time when the Internet is less busy. I do some of my most intensive Internetting late at night or early in the morning when the speed and efficiency increases substantially.

My tip for the new and frustrated user would be to get to know the powerful Internet searching systems. These can be accessed very readily from programmes such as Internet Explorer where it is only necessary to type the word *GO* and then the name one is searching for, e.g. *Cheyletiella*, and hit return. This takes one into the *YAHOO* database which find sites using that word. If few sites are found the system offers the option of a much wider search or searches involving other Internet search engines. The pages also offer on-line help in learning how to put your question to the system in the most efficient way. Half-an-hour should enable you to become quite competent in using this system.

*Craig Harrison* – principal of a large practice in Yorkshire, UK, also offered help.

The trick, wrote Craig, with all searches, is to spread your net as widely as possible and use the facilities offered by the search engines. There are several of these creatures roaming the web, but the sites that I find most useful are *Altavista*, *YAHOO* and *Web Crawler*. All of these sites regularly scan the web for new information and delve into the various web presentations to different depths searching for key words. They are effectively the dictionary of the web or the map to the complicated motorways, roads and pathways of the Internet.

A one minute and forty-five second search on *Altavista.com* provided 206 locations referring to *Cheyletiella*, listing not only the usual English references but also ones from Holland, Hungary, Korea and Poland. The species covered included: dog, cat, rabbit, cavies and humans. Unfortunately, my linguistic abilities mean that I am unable to read the, no doubt, comprehensive articles in Korean and Polish, however, the other listings should provide comprehensive biological data, dermatological findings and even photo-micrographs.

I hope this simple solution provides your correspondent with a new insight into the wonderful world of web browsing, which I am sure will provide him many fascinating hours – and commensurate telephone bills!

## Notice to surfers

*ESVD* has its own Home Pages which can be found at this Internet address:

<http://www.rvc.ac.uk/esvd1.htm>

It has information about *ESVD*, its congresses and meetings, its structure and membership. Professor David Lloyd is keen to welcome you there, and to receive your views on the Home Pages.

## APOLOGIES

To two of our members whose names were omitted from the Annual Report of the *ESVD*. They are:

Dr Teodora Muret  
Av. General Guisan 6  
CH-1009 PUILLY  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 21 729 0112

Dr Astrid Schafer  
Viengendaal 22  
NL-6351 HB BOCHOLTZ  
Netherlands  
Tel + Fax: +49 241 374715

**MEMBERS  
GAINING FULL  
MEMBERSHIP  
OF ESVD, 1998**

The following members of the Society, having fulfilled the necessary criteria, were this year admitted to Full Membership, and now have voting rights in the proceedings of the Society.

Avanzi, Marta  
Italy

Chadwick, Anthony  
United Kingdom

Colcuc, Maurizio  
Austria

Delius, Daniela  
Germany

Ghibaudo, Giovanni  
Italy

Groux, Daniel  
France

Heineking-Ehlers,  
Margret  
Germany

Lorente Mendez,  
Carmen  
Spain

Martinsen, Lena  
Sweden

Masserdotti, Carlo  
Italy

Pin, Didier  
France

Runge-Harms, Ulrike  
Germany

Rybnicek, Jan  
Czech

Werbahn, Patricia  
Germany

Zunic, Melita  
Austria

## Bring yourself up-to-date in beautiful historic Helsinki!

The 16th Annual Meeting of the ESVD/ECVD will take place from 12th – 14th of August 1999 in the Marina Congress Centre, Helsinki, Finland. The provisional programme for the scientific session includes: genetics, aetiopathogenesis of immune-related disorders, wound healing, and demodicosis. The Continuing Education themes will include: diet and the skin, otitis externa, immunological update, and the cutaneous ecosystem. The rich social programme will include: a get-together party, an opening ceremony, the traditional gala

dinner and a visit to the attractions of Helsinki. In addition we will have many hours of light to enjoy in the evening! For more information please contact:

The Finnish Organising Committee  
on email: esvd99@sgic.fi or

The Congress Office

Travel Experts Ltd., PO Box 130, 00161,  
Helsinki, Finland.

email: congress.service@travelexperts.fi

Tel: (358) 9 618.73.350 Fax: (358) 9 278.22.29

### The next step? *continued from page 2*

evidence based medicine approach to a literature review on a given topic demands that to minimise bias it should begin with the development of a protocol, just as in any other experimental study. Further, it should contain a 'Materials and Methods' section, to enable the reader to judge the worth of the review, and to assess, for themselves, any likely bias within it. The review should be introduced by a declarative title that will 'tell readers, up front, their clinical "bottom lines"':

I suggest that veterinary dermatology, a discipline full of vibrant clinicians and researchers absorbed in the subject, could set a lead in these fields which would illuminate the whole veterinary profession, to the good of that ultimate beneficiary, the animal patient.

#### Sources cited

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- Duley, L. (1996). *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 89, pp. 242–244.
- Sackett, D.L., Richardson, W.S., Rosenberg, W., and Haynes, R.B. (1997). *Evidence Based Medicine*. Churchill Livingstone, New York.
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### The ESVD Research Grant

If you have a project in veterinary dermatology needing funding, perhaps ESVD can help you. An important aim of the ESVD is to promote the development of dermatological research, and every year the Society offers a grant of 5000 ECU to support a research project related to veterinary dermatology. Preference will be given to novel proposals, including the development of pilot studies, but support of on-going research will also be considered. The deadline for submitting of proposals is April 1st, 1999.

For more information, and guidelines for submission of proposals, please contact:

Chiara Noli, Dip.ECVD.,  
Viale dei Mille 32, 20129 Milano, Italy.  
email: pitnoli@iol.it

### Stirrings in Greece

PROFESSOR Alex Koutinas writes from Greece to report that at the 5th Hellenic Congress in Small Animal Medicine lectures and Free Communications were given on dermatological subjects in pleasingly large numbers. Topics ranged from the use of moxidectin for the treatment of *Otodectes* and *Sarcoptes* infestations to the cutaneous lesions in four cases of canine dirofilariasis. Professor Koutinas is hopeful that more Greek veterinarians will join the Greek Association of Veterinary Dermatology, so that the annual congress of ESVD/ECVD could be held in Greece in the early part of the next millennium.

He can be contacted on email:  
Sanimed@vet.auth.gr