

## **SURVEY OF EXOTICS AND WILDLIFE TEACHING AT UK UNIVERSITIES**

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With an estimated 1 million pet rabbits in the UK, 68% of which are registered with a vet (PDSA, 2013), and the reptile sector of the UK Pet Industry having been the fastest growing sector for the past 20 years (Federation of British Herpetologists, 2014) it is unsurprising that vets are increasingly expected to have a working knowledge of a broad range of species. In addition to this, a recent survey found that 73% of vets in practice are asked to see five or more wildlife cases each month (unpublished data, Panto, 2013).

At the current time, only two UK universities offering a veterinary degree have a dedicated exotics referral department, which somewhat limits the structured provision of hands-on exotics teaching. Clinical teaching is therefore often outsourced to other exotic pet and wildlife practices through both formal arrangements and extramural studies (EMS). However, whilst many of the universities have minimum core EMS requirements for certain species, none of the EMS guidance documents dictate a compulsory exotics requirement and thus this is dictated by student interest.

The BVZS have developed a list of Day One Skills pertaining to the treatment of exotic species, which all new graduates can reasonably be expected to be able to perform. This presentation will discuss the results of a cross-sectional survey completed by 143 veterinary students and recent graduates from UK Universities, exploring their perceptions of their exotic and wildlife training, and subsequent confidence managing these species post-graduation.

Key conclusions from the survey include a strong weighting of confidence towards rabbits and small mammals, with a large part of all respondents stating that they felt adequately prepared to treat these species groups (52% and 47% respectively), compared to only 20% and 16% confidence with reptiles and wildlife respectively. The majority (82%) of respondents felt that their curriculum should be strengthened towards exotic and wildlife species. There was also a pattern of increased confidence with exotics amongst students from Nottingham and Edinburgh universities, compared to the four other participating universities.

The study intends to establish the status quo and this presentation will consider how the evolution in veterinary exotics teaching is reflected in the overall competence and confidence of the profession in this field of practice.

### References

PDSA (2013) The state of our pet nation [www.pdsa.org.uk/files/Paw\\_Report\\_2013](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/files/Paw_Report_2013) Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Federation of British Herpetologists (2014) Move over Rover [www.fbh.org.uk/move\\_over\\_rover](http://www.fbh.org.uk/move_over_rover) Accessed 10th July 2014