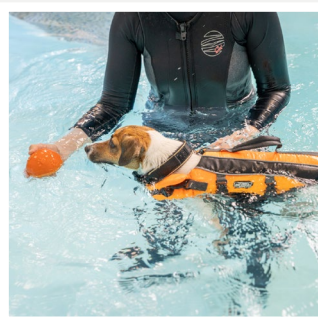


VetPartners Clinical Board Annual Report 2024



Progressing Practice Together

Welcome!

We are delighted to share our fourth VetPartners Clinical Board Annual Report to highlight key achievements across the group over the last year. During 2024 we have been excited to see the continual growth of our clinical communities, welcoming new board members, clinical interest and study groups and creating and sharing resources across our network.



We have continued our Quality Improvement (QI) work spanning topics such as antibiotics and surgical safety and have seen the difference we can make. We have strength together; constantly learning from each other and finding ways to develop practice together and deliver outstanding clinical outcomes.

Our clinical research projects have grown in size and number, both within the group and in collaboration with external colleagues. By collecting and publishing new data, we have demonstrated that real-world, practice-based research is possible and can have a huge impact. This year we were proud to publish our first Project NURSE paper in Vet Record. It is incredible to see the work of our teams come to fruition, and this is just the start!

The Clinical Board's work is based on the principles of evidence-based medicine, which are all about how we generate useful, relevant evidence for the many different options available when making clinical decisions. Across our group we see every day how passionate and engaged our teams are in the patient-centred care they provide. All the progress made in this report is a testament to that and we should celebrate what we continue to achieve together!

We hope you enjoy reading about our work and if you have any questions or ideas to share, we would love to hear from you.

Rach

Dr Rachel Dean FRCVS, Director of Clinical Research and Excellence in Practice

In 2024
we had:

10 Clinical
Boards

71 clinical
interest and
study groups

Developed
202 clinical
decision-making
resources

230
meetings
across
the group

Involved
around 5500
people in clinical
board work



“We are proud to be able to share the work of our group Clinical Board and practice teams once more. Our practice focussed business means our people and the animals and clients we care for is central to everything we do. We are thrilled to continue to share knowledge and give back to the profession, while also supporting our teams as they continue to develop practice and provide an outstanding service to our patients and clients. I am excited about the continued development of our Clinical Boards both in the UK and across Europe and would like to say a massive thank you to everyone involved. We are proud of everything we have achieved so far – together”.

Jo Malone MRCVS, CEO, VetPartners

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Our Main Areas of Focus



Clinical Communities

Our clinical communities are at the heart of everything we do. They give us critical insight into key issues faced in clinical practice so we can provide targeted and relevant support. We are constantly growing our clinical communities across the whole VetPartners group to help us progress what we do in practice.

"I'm very positive and enthusiastic about the potential of our clinical community. A strong, united network with open communication is essential for making evidence-based medicine-delivered-care and continuous quality improvement an achievable reality in all veterinary practices. We are focused on providing our teams with comprehensive support, peer-to-peer collaboration, and targeted training to ensure we all feel valued and equipped to deliver excellent care. Seeing the growth of this community in Italy is encouraging!"

Francesca Bresciani DVM PhD, Clinical Board Lead, Italy



Quality Improvement (QI)

This is one of the ways in which we can progress care together and develop our practice for tomorrow. This is not just for the benefit of the animals we treat, but for our teams' job satisfaction and for our clients too. Anyone within our practices can get involved and you can start making a difference by expressing an interest.

"Since learning of the benefits of post op coding and the very useful data this can generate for our teams, we began encouraging and supporting our practices to get involved. In the past six months many of our practices have started post op coding routinely. Initially we looked at coding neuter surgery wounds and more recently we are undertaking post op coding for all wounds. In many practices now, there is increased enthusiasm as our nurses and vets see the benefits of this project. We look forward to harnessing this data for QI and for pooling our outcomes and experiences to learn as a group."

Austin Donnelly MRCVS, Clinical Board Lead, Ireland



Clinical Research and Innovation

It is essential we drive the creation of new knowledge to progress practice within the group and the broader profession. This enables us to deliver evidence-based care and give back to the veterinary community. By joining together as a big group, we can really make a difference – together.

"I felt encouraged and supported by the VetPartners' Clinical Board Support Team to complete an MSc whilst in first opinion small animal practice. This felt like a daunting task as I had never been involved in a research project before. However, their expertise in study design, statistical analysis, and scientific writing has facilitated my addition to the knowledge base around diagnostic testing in veterinary practice. I have learned many new skills and I'm very hopeful that the results of my systematic review can benefit the profession."

Caroline Scobie MRCVS, Clinical Director, Westway Veterinary Group, Clinical Communities Manager



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Group Clinical Board

Our VetPartners Group Clinical Board is led by Dr Rachel Dean (who also leads the three UK Clinical Boards) and the team is comprised of a Clinical Board Lead in each country:

- Aline Rodts - Netherlands
- Austin Donnelly - Ireland
- Christine Waage - Germany
- Francesca Bresciani - Italy
- Maeva Roman - Switzerland
- Susana García - Spain and Portugal
- François-Xavier Bacot - France



This team lead the development of clinical communities and provide support for our practice teams. They meet regularly online, but London Vet Show 2024 offered the perfect opportunity for the VetPartners Group Clinical Board to meet in person for the second time, following our meeting at WSAVA Lisbon in 2023. The team were joined by Luke Cottis (co-lead of the Small Animal Clinical Board in the UK) and Kathryn Wareham (our Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine Manager). This provided a critical opportunity to grow and build relationships across the group, with the aim of learning from each other to collectively progress practice throughout our business.

We discussed:

- The critical purpose and role of the Clinical Board communities within VetPartners
- Practical evidence-based veterinary medicine for our practices, with a focus on our Senvelgo clinical decision-making resource
- Group-wide clinical Quality Improvement (QI) projects



“At our meeting in London, I was amazed and excited to see how many resources are already being made available to practices and teams. I’m very much looking forward to the task of helping to build up the Clinical Board in Germany, putting the network idea into practice and giving our practice teams the opportunity to exchange ideas and benefit from the experiences of the entire community. I would like to inspire my German colleagues regarding the importance of the Clinical Board for our practices, in order to further increase the quality of our work with patients.”

Dr. med. vet. Christine Waage, Clinical Board Lead, Germany



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Clinical Board Communities

We are proud of the strong clinical communities we continue to grow and develop together within VetPartners.

We now have ten clinical boards across the whole VetPartners group. In Europe each country has a single board that is small animal or multi-species in focus. In the UK we have three boards: small animal, farm and equine.

Our clinical boards work closely with a wide array of clinical interest and study groups which enable people with similar interests to share their knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise across the group providing support and mentorship. Together, we drive new knowledge to support informed choices, providing the right care for our patients and clients, whatever their circumstances.

We are also lucky to have a central Clinical Board Support Team, a designated team with both clinical and extensive research experience and expertise, who are well published and known for the work they undertake. The team are dedicated to collaborating with our communities across the group to facilitate the development of new skills, including the assessment and communication of evidence. They are passionate about evidence-based practice and want to improve our knowledge base for clinical decision-making.

Everyone within VetPartners is welcome to join our network of clinical board communities to share experience and knowledge. To learn more, contact us at clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com



We now have **ten clinical boards** across the VetPartners group enabling us to progress care together.



“Being involved in a wider European clinical board has been an amazing, life enhancing experience. We all have similar but different experiences; this only helps broaden our collective knowledge as a group of colleagues. There is huge potential to grow as a wider community of veterinary professionals with opportunities for collective improvement in areas such as Quality Improvement and Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine.”

Luke Cottis MRCVS, Hampden Veterinary Hospital, Co-lead of the Small Animal Clinical Board

“It’s a pleasure to be part of the Clinical Board Support Team and work closely with our clinical communities across the group to promote evidence-based medicine and collaborate on QI and clinical research projects. We have created an extensive library of evidence-based clinical resources for all members of our practice teams which can be found on VetPartners Learning. We hope these resources will help us to progress practice together while also supporting our teams’ yearly CPD requirements”

Dr Christina Kuhl MRCVS, Clinical and Client Content Senior Manager



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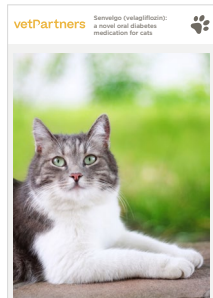


Developing Resources to Support Clinical Decision Making

Throughout 2024 our clinical boards, together with our Clinical Interest Groups (CIGs) and study groups have created numerous evidence-based resources to support our teams in practice, review new medicines which have come on the market and address knowledge gaps that have been reported to us.

Examples of the resources developed this year include:

In 2024 we developed **202** clinical decision-making resources for our teams.

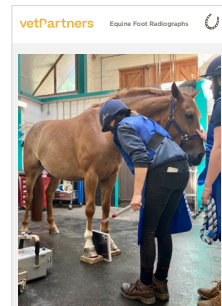
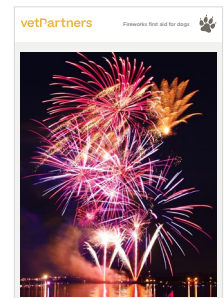


Senvelgo (velagliflozin): a novel oral diabetes medication for cats

This resource includes information on the clinical use of Senvelgo, how it compares to insulin and what patient monitoring is required (including advice from a recent safety update from regulators).

Fireworks first aid for dogs

This resource contains information on managing acute noise phobias in dogs over the fireworks period. It includes tips on managing the environment, pharmaceutical options for reducing anxiety, as well as links for desensitisation programs and behaviourist support.

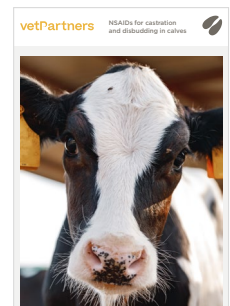


Equine Foot Radiographs

A practical guide to equine foot radiographs, created by the Equine Orthopaedic Clinical Interest Group (CIG). This resource supports teams in creating diagnostic-quality images of the foot.

Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) for Castration and Disbudding in Calves

Aimed at clinicians, this resource describes the benefits of NSAID use when disbudding and castrating calves.



Lambing resources

The Farm Animal Clinical Board have reviewed and curated a selection of resources to assist our teams during lambing time.



We have an extensive range of new and existing resources, spanning across species and available to all our colleagues at VetPartners. Please contact clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com to learn more or visit **VetPartners Learning** to explore the resources available. A handy user guide for the VetPartners Learning UK platform can also be found [here](#).

Email us at clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com or visit **VetPartners Group, MyVetPartners** or **VetPartners Learning** to learn more.



Clinical Quality Improvement

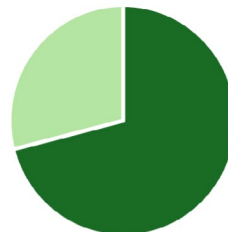
At VetPartners we are always looking at our current standards of care and finding ways to progress these for the benefit of the animals we treat, our clients and our teams. You can learn more about our Quality Improvement (QI) work [here](#).

In 2024 we surveyed our teams in the UK to understand what QI activities they were engaging with in their practices, identify where more support was needed and enable them to share their great ideas. We collected a total of 126 useable responses representing 114 practices. The results showed that:

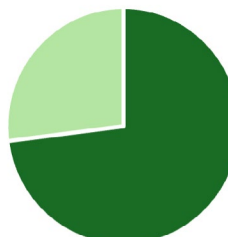
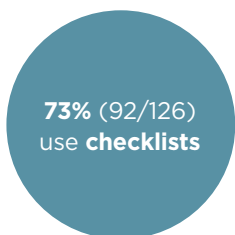
■ Yes ■ Not yet



Clinical meetings are when clinical teams (colleagues who treat animals or talk to clients/customers) meet specifically to discuss clinical cases or processes, new medicines, CPD etc.



Clinical audit is the process of measuring how we are currently doing something so we can decide if it needs changing or not.



Checklists are useful for ensuring key steps in a process are not missed during a busy day and within a potentially distracting environment. A checklist should improve consistency and quality of care.



Significant event audits/meetings may be a separate practice meeting, or part of a clinical meeting when the team discusses something that didn't go to plan, or nearly went wrong that was potentially in their control or avoidable. It also includes talking about things that went really well so they can be repeated!



"The Vetpartners Equine IV catheter QI project is another fantastic example of what can be achieved through collaboration across our equine practices. The data has allowed us to audit our complication rates, which are reassuringly low, and has helped to advance patient care which is what QI is all about. Thank you to all our vets, nurses and support teams who contributed to the project."

Russell Parker MRCVS, RCVS and European Specialist in Equine Surgery,
Liphook Veterinary Hospital

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Antibiotic Stewardship

Working alongside our teams, a key Quality Improvement (QI) measure for our group has been the absolute quantity of antibiotics we regularly prescribe and use. Using the data collected, a key objective of our work is to safely enable us to appropriately reduce and refine our antibiotic use without harming patient outcomes.

Over the last few years in the UK, we have developed a method of monitoring this antibiotic purchasing relative to the number of prescribers (full time equivalent vets – FTE[Vet]) in our organisation.

Across the VetPartners UK team between **January 2024 and December 2024:**

We have **reduced our antibiotic purchasing** (in kg per FTE[vet]) **by 47%** since 2021.



We bought **4,290kg of antibiotics**
(compared to 5,588kg in 2023, 5,713kg in 2022 and 6,772kg in 2021)

On average we bought **2.34kg per full time equivalent vet across the year**
(compared to 3.15kg/FTE[vet] in 2023, 3.48kg/FTE[vet] in 2022 and 4.39kg/FTE[vet] in 2021)

This means we have **reduced our antibiotic purchasing**
(in kg per FTE[vet]) **by 47% since 2021**

This is testament to our amazing teams and their ongoing commitment to progressing practice and safeguarding antibiotic use.

VetPartners colleagues can also access our support material on antimicrobial stewardship on **VetPartners Learning**.

Scan me

You can access the VetPartners Antibiotic Stewardship Report for 2024 **here**.

Email us at clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com or visit **VetPartners Group, MyVetPartners** or **VetPartners Learning** to learn more.

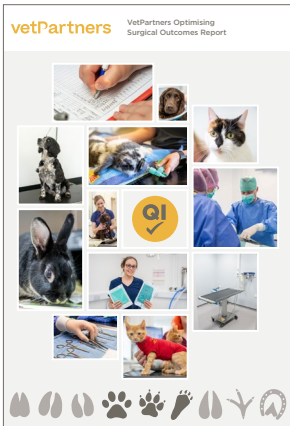




Our clinical QI work on optimising surgical outcomes has continued across all species.

Utilising Post Op Coding for Quality Improvement Work

A post op code is a specific no cost code assigned to the patient within the Practice Management System (PMS) which describes the state of a surgical site following a procedure. We have audited our post op codes for routine neutering (speys and castrates) to look at outcomes for cat, dog and rabbit surgeries. This audit began in the UK in 2021 and extended to Europe in 2024. To date, we have collected data from over 27,000 coded surgeries.



Overall, our data have shown that more than **93% of neuter patients had no or only minor problems** post-operatively in 2024, compared to 92.1% in 2021 when we started auditing. We have also seen increased engagement with post op coding among our teams in 2024, **up 29% compared to when we started.**

You can access our Optimising Surgical Safety Report [here](#).



We have analysed over 27,000 routine surgeries and used these data to help people progress their analgesia protocols and demonstrate excellent levels of patient safety.



Equine Castration Audit

This ongoing audit has to-date gathered information on 658 castrations with follow up on 403 procedures so far, these data have shown that:

- We do the majority of castrates standing and in the horse's stable.
- The type and length of antibiotic use varies amongst clinicians
- We have a complication rate of ~19%



Cattle Caesar Audit

Our audit of cattle Caesars has continued throughout 2024. To date we have had data from 719 Caesars across 509 farms, with follow-up data received on 410 surgeries so far. Data have shown that:

- Feto-maternal disproportion is the biggest reason for a Caesar (63%; 242/386)
- Survival of the dam to 60 days is higher if she is standing (90%; 308/341) at surgery vs recumbent (71%; 32/45)
- The type of local anaesthetic block currently doesn't seem to effect success of wound healing



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Clinical Research and Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine

Clinical research is a key part of how we continue to develop practice across the group. We are a hugely diverse group in our types and geographies of practices, and the species and problems we encounter. All of this provides a huge pool of collective information. Clinical research is a way of harnessing that to make sure we have the best information possible to keep making good decisions, whether it's about diagnosis, treatment, communication, or anything else that's important to our teams. We are proud to be working with colleagues near and far on an array of different projects and have presented our research at a variety of different conferences. Examples of some of our practitioner-lead projects are shown below:

Across our teams we have also published over 45 publications and articles.



- Prevalence of endoparasites in dogs that are and aren't regularly dewormed (VP Research Award). Led by Nicole Dyer (Ash Tree).
- A systematic review of the diagnostic test accuracy of SDMA in the diagnosis of CKD in dogs. Led by Caroline Scobie (Westway).
- A ten-year comparative analysis of ocular bacterial flora and antimicrobial sensitivity in uninfected and infected eyes of dogs, cats and humans (2013-2023): A Scoping Review. Led by Susan Farr (Abbey Veterinary Group)



- Multicentre prospective study to evaluate the effect of the Prineo® closure system on the incidence of surgical site infections in exploratory celiotomies. Led by Andrew Wood (Liphook).
- Increased serum scores of the cyathostomin blood test associate positively with clinical larval cyathostomiasis (BEVA abstract). Led by Tashina Roy Choudhury (Three Counties).



- Development of rapid antimicrobial susceptibility testing (RAST) for poultry (VP Research Award). Led by Cosmin Chintoan-Uta (PHS).



- Prevalence of and risk factors for Udder Cleft Dermatitis in dairy cows (VP research award and BCVA abstract). Led by Will Gratwick and Natalie Parker (LLM).

You can learn more about our clinical research work [here](#).



"The Clinical Board Support Team are here to support practice-based research, whether it's small-scale diploma projects or multicentre trials. We can help with everything from searching the literature and defining your question, to applying for ethical review, data analysis and writing up. We also support practice sessions for practitioners presenting abstracts at conferences including BEVA, BCVA, BVNA and BSAVA. If you have an idea for a project, or would like to find out about getting involved in existing projects, contact us at clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com".

Dr Jenny Stavisky MRCVS, Clinical Research Manager

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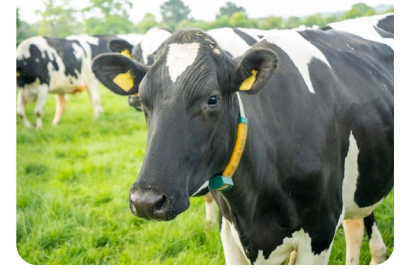




PROJECTFEET

Project FEET explores how the whole mobility team (farmers, foot trimmers, veterinary surgeons and veterinary technicians) perceive the pain associated with various lameness-causing conditions and make choices about managing these conditions, including when and whether to use NSAIDs.

We have published our **first paper** for this study and currently have a second paper in draft ready to submit for publication.



PROJECTDRAPES

'Drapes in Routine Aseptic Procedures for Environmental Sustainability'.

Project DRAPES is our first randomised controlled trial across VetPartners practices, which started in 2022, aims to see whether using disposable drapes in routine surgeries gives different patient outcomes compared with using washable, reusable drapes, which have less lifetime environmental impact.

This project has been making fantastic progress with the 1000th surgery submitted at the end of 2024! The full study protocol can be accessed [here](#).



PROJECTWORMS

'Working to Overcome Resistance and Make for a Sustainable future'.

Project WORMS recognises that veterinary teams and owners need to work together to tackle resistance to worming products. A responsible approach to the use of wormers is crucial to maximise animal welfare and ensure we have effective products available in the future.

We have published **part one** and **part two** of the owner-focused component of this study, submitting four papers for publication overall. We will continue to move this project forwards with our partners.



"It's exciting to see the first stage of Project Worms published in such a respected journal. This project is both timely and crucial in addressing anthelmintic resistance in equines. It's been a true collaborative effort, with CVS, IVC, and BEVA joining forces with VetPartners' Clinical Board members on a research initiative for the first time. This collaboration highlights the importance of this critical issue to the equine industry. The surveys conducted are the largest of their kind in the UK, offering a valuable snapshot of equine keepers' behaviours and decisions around management practices, testing, and the preventative treatment of intestinal parasites in horses. This information is crucial for driving, as well as monitoring, the significant behavioural changes needed in how decisions are made about anthelmintic use in horses. The data also provide a valuable baseline, prior to recent industry initiatives, such as CANTER and BEVA ProtectMeToo".

Julia Shrubbs MRCVS, Three Counties Equine Hospital, VetPartners Equine Clinical Board Chair

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PROJECTNURSE



'Nurturing and Utilising R(E)VN Skills and Experience'.

Project NURSE aims to improve animal health and welfare by addressing the strong interest among our equine nursing teams in developing their clinical roles and providing more client-facing services.



In April 2024 we published **part one** of this study on owner perceptions, before launching and completing part two which asked equine nursing teams about their current role, as well as their thoughts on career progression.

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We are very open to collaboration in clinical research. Working together with others who share our interests and values is the best way to keep progressing practice.

We are also happy to support and distribute a wide variety of projects from undergraduate and postgraduate colleagues, provided they fulfil our three basic criteria:

- They are relevant to colleagues within VetPartners
- They have appropriate ethical review
- A summary of results can be shared with us so we know what they found out

If you have a research project you'd like to carry out or participate in, get in touch at clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com to find out how we can help.

Visit **VetPartners Group**, **MyVetPartners** or **VetPartners Learning** to learn more.