

Caring for much-loved golden oldies

THESE pampered pooches may be in the autumn of their lives, but like many golden oldies, they're still living life to the full.

That's the reason why the focus of this autumn's Senior Pet Wellness campaign is on educating owners that elderly pets can still lead active, happy lives and enjoy their golden years even with medical conditions.

This terrific trio certainly do!

Here's Jewel, who is nearly 10 and owned by Tower Vets RVN Jessica Jaques, along with Rita and Sid, both 11, owned by Jane Ireland, dispensary manager at the practice in York.

Find out more about the campaign and where you can find resources and participate in fantastic CPD in the autumn edition of The Tail.

This month marks the eighth anniversary of VetPartners as we were founded by our CEO Jo Malone on 31st October 2015.

Don't miss an interview with Jo in The Tail, talking about her pride in the VetPartners family and why she is brimming with optimism about the future.

Have you used your volunteering day in 2023? Many of our colleagues have. and you can read about some of the heartwarming ways our team members have been getting out and about in their community - and beyond - to lend a helping hand to those in need.

The days are getting shorter and there is a nip in the air. Don't despair because we've some great tips from the VetPartners Wellbeing Group on coping with dark nights. Plus, you can also win a fabulous pamper pack in our competition.



2

Happy 8th anniversary to VetPartners

3

Helping homeless pet owners

5

BVNA honour for Jo and Fiona

9

Harris' mercy mission to help refugees

12

Meet our Receptionist of the Year

Happy 8th anniversary!



VETPARTNERS celebrates its eighth anniversary on October 31st, marking an amazing journey from small beginnings with three practices to a European family of practices and animal healthcare businesses.

To mark our anniversary, our CEO Jo Malone talks about her pride in VetPartners and how she is as focused as ever on creating a great place to work....

How do you look back on the VetPartners journey?

I cannot help but smile when I think of the last eight years because I have met so many amazing people. VetPartners has not just been part of my life for eight years, it has been my life for eight years. There have been so many highlights as well as so many challenges, but when I think back, it is the faces of all the lovely people I have met that come to mind.

What was the aim of establishing VetPartners and have those objectives changed?

I established VetPartners in 2015 with the aim of looking after my home practice, Minster Vets in York, and all the people in it. I wanted to ensure that we never lost sight of being a veterinary company and we created a place where our clinical, and other, teams could grow and feel like they were at home.



I wanted veterinary medicine, and all the values associated with the profession, to be at the core of the company. I had a vision of creating a group which had the real benefit of local autonomy and leadership but with the benefit of being part of a larger business. As we have grown, I have worried about retaining that. What I have come to realise is that even in a bigger company it is possible to remain true to our values.

What have been the biggest challenges?

I think my biggest challenge is wanting to ensure that all of our teams feel listened to. Before VetPartners was established, I heard a lot about other groups and I heard people from those groups say they felt like a number working for those businesses. I never wanted our team members to feel that way.

Up until we grew to around 1,200 employees, I had met most of our team members and could remember the vast majority of their names. Now, there are

lots of people in the business and I don't know them all. So, one of the challenges we have is ensuring everyone still feels recognised in the business and that we are able to get feedback from them and ensure we have the ability to listen to their feedback.

This is one of the reasons why I want to personally read the 4,000+ comments that were made in the employee engagement survey. It matters to me (and the rest of the senior team) that we can really understand how each of our team members are feeling, so we understand what we are getting right and what we still need to improve.

What have been the highlights of the last eight years?

There have been many highlights and most have involved people. I have seen a lot of team members grow and develop in their existing role, or in new roles and there are many people who have helped make VetPartners what it is today.

It has been rewarding to be able to help our teams through the good times, when we have improved terms and conditions, invested in equipment and extra head count, and support them through the not-so-good times, by continuing the hardship fund and ensuring our teams don't feel alone during difficult times.

Knowing that you are trying to make a positive difference in people's lives is the best bit. We might not get everything right all the time, but the intent is to do just that.

Why do you place so much emphasis on looking after your people and creating a great place to work?

I have had the pleasure of working in a really lovely environment and I have also worked in an environment which was not so good and which had a huge effect on me personally. Until I experienced the difference, I would not have believed the impact it had on me, but it affected every aspect of my life.

For me, a great place to work is an open environment where everyone is treated as an equal and is valued. It's where people are listened to and everyone's opinion

counts. It's where all team members feel cared for, can grow in their careers if they choose to and have the support they need.

Are you optimistic about a bright future for the veterinary profession?

Yes, I am optimistic. We are part of a wonderful profession with a wider network of team members not directly working in a practice. We are all part of a business that cares for animals. In doing so, we help those people who have and keep those animals.

I cannot think of a better job. Yes, there are challenges, like the recent CMA enquiry or the changes to 'under care' that the RCVS has brought in, and they make me worry for our teams and the comments they may receive from clients. We all need to remember those lovely clients who know and value the work we do. Despite those challenges we are still part of a wonderful profession.

What is your vision for VetPartners?

I want VetPartners be the veterinary group of choice, primarily for our team members to choose to work in, but also for clients, our suppliers and all the other partners we work with. I also want it to be the group our patients would choose!



I would like to see the company continue to grow so we can focus on larger scale activities such as sustainability, charitable activities and giving back, as well as being more involved in research and development to improve the care of animals longer term.

At a local level, I want to ensure all of our team members know they are valued and that whatever role they are in, their contribution is vital.

Thank you – and here's to the future!

Bringing comfort to pets of the homeless

VETPARTNERS' Clinical Board colleagues took to the streets of Nottingham to provide care for the pets of homeless owners.

They used their annual volunteering day from VetPartners to reach out to homeless pet owners, offering preventative healthcare treatment and help and support for their much-loved dogs and cats.

They teamed up with the Big Issue street paper and Vets in the Community, an organisation led by staff and students at the University of Nottingham to provide free veterinary care for the pets of homeless and vulnerably housed people in the city.

Our Clinical Board team of Jenny Stavisky, Kathryn Wareham, Natalie Robinson, Hannah Popely and Rachel Davis were joined by Small Animal Clinical Board members Caroline Scobie and Peter O'Hagan.

Vets in the Community was set up in 2012 by Jenny and Rachel Dean while they were working at Nottingham University vet school and has been seeing clients ever since.

Jenny said: "We decided as a Clinical Board to get together for our volunteering day which VetPartners provides for all employees. It really was time well spent as we were able to help many homeless people.

"Pets are so important to many homeless people and are often their emotional lifeline."

Peter, who enjoyed the opportunity to take up his volunteering day, added: "Going out into the community and helping those who are vulnerable and in need was so rewarding. We were able to treat lots of pets and chat to their owners to offer support and advice."



Caring: Clinical Board volunteers with pets, top, and Rachel Davis with visitor to stand."

Gabi rewarded with a Nettle after charity heroics

CARING warehouse supervisor Gabi Gibbons has been hailed a hero after rescuing two colleagues taking part in a gruelling charity challenge.

Gabi, who works at our online retailer VetUK in Knaresborough, has been rewarded with one of our Nettle awards for her selfless actions that prevented a fundraising event ending in tragedy.

After providing first aid to one injured colleague, she then helped another who became ill during the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge.

Despite the drama surrounding her, Gabi, who was acting as support crew, was able to motivate the rest of her team to cross the finish line to raise nearly £1,000 for Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) and Dementia Forward.

Gareth Evans, who nominated Gabi for a Nettle, said: "We're so proud of her. Without her support, collaboration and leadership, the challenge would certainly not have succeeded."

Gabi said: "I'm really proud of myself and my colleagues for tackling the challenge. I was absolutely thrilled to win a Nettle - what I did for my colleagues are things I would do for anyone at any time."

Each month, 10 colleagues receive a Nettle for demonstrating our values of being supportive, dedicated, respectful, approachable, and working collaboratively, and are presented with a cuddly mascot, a £250 Love2shop voucher and a certificate.



Well done: Colleagues nominated Gabi

Embracing a greener future

VETPARTNERS has achieved a prestigious environmental accreditation for embracing a greener future.

Our central support team has earned the Investors in the Environment (iE) silver award for helping to lead the way in making the veterinary profession more environmentally friendly.

Designed to help organisations reduce their impact on the environment by cutting resource use and waste production, the accreditation recognises the work carried out by our central support team to become more sustainable.

VetPartners has already achieved the iE bronze award and, after being presented with the silver award, the central support team is now aiming for green, the top award.

Over the last 12 months, VetPartners' central support office has reduced its carbon footprint by 44% and has been cutting waste by introducing a wide range of environmentally friendly initiatives, such as recycling boxes.

Electricity use is down by 18%, the use of transport by central team members has been reduced by 48% and the use of paper has been reduced by 9%.

VetPartners Head of Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Hannah James said: "Our central support team members are passionate about looking at ways to reduce waste, recycle more and embrace more sustainable ways of working."



Central team colleagues Maisie Brown, Harriet Ferris, Francesca Bell, Ruth Kell and Noah Melling proudly show off the certificates

"We are really proud to have earned our silver award and there is huge enthusiasm to achieve the green award."

Colleagues also raised money for a number of charities and worthy causes through a variety of fundraising events, and took part in a litter pick.

Team members have also been encouraged to come to work by bike through our Cycle Scheme benefit, while eight electric vehicle charging points have been installed in the car park.

Spreading the word on clinical matters

THE VetPartners Clinical Board roadshows have been touring all points of the UK, from Aberdeenshire to Cornwall, spreading the word on how we support colleagues to develop each other and the care they deliver.

Rachel Dean, who chairs the VetPartners Clinical Board, leads the events and is joined by members of the species boards.

Clinical Board roadshows have so far taken place in Cornwall, Devon, Scotland and Wales, and the next event is in the North West.

Rachel said: "By coming together and talking about things, we can improve patient care even more which is one of the benefits of being part of the VetPartners family."

"Our roadshows are for everyone working in practice so it was so good to see front of house colleagues, vet techs, nurses, practice managers and vets coming along to join in the discussion."

"It is a great opportunity to give everyone an overview of the Clinical Board and share how everyone can get involved as it is inclusive and for the whole practice team."



Smiles better: Clinical Board is touring UK to meet teams

Topics under discussion have included new resources available for the VetPartners Senior Pet Wellness campaign, Project DRAPES, the use of anti-inflammatories in cattle and the management of exotic species, the challenges of working in mixed practices, and the development of vets and nurses.

Equine topics have also been on the agenda, with discussions on equine castration and dentistry, as well as the role of equine veterinary nurses.

Eyes on the future at Ireland farm event



FARM and mixed vets from across the VetPartners Ireland family came together in County Laois to discuss how we can create a thriving, successful farm section for years to come.

The Farm Business Day was organised by our VetPartners Ireland Managing Director Gavin McCoubrey and VetPartners Farm Director Ian Cure.

Gavin said: "Our focus was on how we

can look to help the practices in the coming years and support them to deliver the best possible care of farm animals and an outstanding service for clients.

"We're committed to creating a great place to work so this was also an opportunity to discuss CPD on an all-Ireland basis and the structure of a bespoke mixed graduate scheme tailored to all our practices, designed with full input of what our practices need."

European teams join together at world event

WE'VE been spreading the word about VetPartners on a global stage.

Our CEO Jo Malone and country leads from Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Ireland, Portugal, Germany and France attended the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Congress in Lisbon for the first time together.

It was a perfect opportunity to showcase how VetPartners aims to be the veterinary group of choice.

Jo said: "Being at WSAVA together was a wonderful opportunity to showcase VetPartners to the global veterinary profession."

VetPartners Head of ESG Hannah James was a guest speaker at the event, talking about our commitment to sustainability and our charitable activities.



Cheers: VetPartners colleagues from across Europe in Lisbon

Top nursing honour for Jo and Fiona

TWO members of the VetPartners business support team have been honoured by the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA).

Fiona Andrew and Jo Oakden have been awarded honorary membership in recognition of long-standing service to the veterinary nursing profession and their hugely influential roles with the BVNA.

Both are past BVNA Presidents and received their awards at the organisation's Congress.

Since graduating from the Royal Veterinary College in 2008, Jo has worked in a variety of small animal practices as an RVN, clinical coach, senior and head nurse and practice manager.

She joined VetPartners as a Business Support Manager in August 2021 when she discovered her passion was supporting colleagues.

Jo has held a number of roles with the BVNA and was appointed President in 2020, helping to drive greater diversity and inclusion. She represented the veterinary nursing profession on British Veterinary Association (BVA) and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) working groups.

Fiona has been in the veterinary nursing profession for 23 years, qualifying through Edinburgh's Telford College, and has experience as an RVN and head nurse.

She is passionate about helping RVNs to develop their careers and knowledge, as well as developing practice leaders through our senior leadership training since joining VetPartners in 2019.

She was BVNA President in 2015 and chairs the BVNA Advisory Board, helping to inform BVNA Council decisions.



Well done: Jo, top, and Fiona in their roles

Kelly boosts green goals



VETPARTNERS' ambitious sustainability goals have been boosted with the arrival of Kelly Forster.

Kelly has joined the Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) team as Sustainability Manager, and will support our work on meeting carbon reduction targets, as well as looking at ways to ensure our procurement activity and supply chains are as sustainable as possible.

Irish eyes are smiling



ONE of Ireland's most respected vets has joined the VetPartners Ireland family as a business development director.

Austin Donnelly qualified as a vet from University College Dublin - where he is now a guest lecturer - in 2009.

Since then, he has worked in both mixed and companion animal clinical practice in Ireland and Australia. He has a wealth of experience in all areas of veterinary practice management as a clinical director.

Caring Kerrie bringing comfort to grieving owners

VETERINARY care assistant Kerrie Lambert has been praised for helping to bring comfort to owners faced with the heartbreak of saying goodbye to their pets.

Instead of using a clinical consult room, Kerrie has created a peaceful, tranquil bereavement room for owners at Best Friends Veterinary Group's branch in Peterborough.

Owners can be with their pets when they are put to sleep and then have somewhere to grieve until it is time to leave them.

Kerrie turned a former consult room into a bespoke bereavement room with the help of her husband Chris, and the practice has already received positive feedback from clients who say it brought them much comfort at the saddest time.

A sofa with cushions was added to the room, along with twinkling lights, comforting quotes on the wall and a mural. A baby changing unit with a padded mat is used instead of a consult table when pets are being put to sleep.

"We bring owners into the room with their pet and let them have some final moments before their pet is put to sleep," said Kerrie.

"The room is also used when clients want to discuss options, whether it is talking about putting their pet to sleep or discussing cremation.



Peaceful: Kerrie in the bereavement room she created

"I own five dogs myself and I understand this is a hard time for clients, and hopefully this homely environment brings them comfort. We have received nice feedback about the room from clients, which makes it worthwhile."

Kerrie also carefully places fur in vaccination vials so owners have a keepsake of their pet.

Are you ready for our senior pets campaign?

GOLDEN oldies who are still enjoying life are the focus of a new campaign being launched this month in our small animal practices.

VetPartners is supporting practice teams participating in the Senior Pet Wellness campaign, running from October to December.

It is the second year the campaign has been organised, and the aim this year is to show clients that, with the right veterinary care and medication, older cats and dogs can still enjoy their golden years even with medical conditions.

Practice teams can now access support material, such as waiting room posters and information sheets for clients on the general care of elderly pets, along with specific conditions like diabetes, hyperthyroidism, chronic kidney disease and arthritis, on Squirrel.

There is also lots of CPD on offer on the VetPartners Learning platform, with further senior related CPD to be held through the Clinical Board, Nurse Evolve and Client Matters sessions.

To order waiting room posters, printed resources, or for further information about the campaign, please email marketing@vetpartners.co.uk



Happy: Golden oldies Sid and Rita

Get off on the right hoof with new equine campaign



Support: Trot up at Stanley House Vets

OUR new equine campaign to raise awareness of lameness is off on the right hoof.

The Start Off On The Right Hoof campaign is off and running with the aim of getting more owners to recognise that their horse may be lame and encouraging them to have it checked by their vet.

Teams are encouraged to get more lameness investigations done and regionalise the site of the problem, convert more lameness investigations into imaging, particularly tertiary imaging (radiography and particularly MRI), and build better relationships with local farriers.

VetPartners has provided CPD for vets, equine veterinary nurses and support team members, including:

- Assessment of the foot conformation: Jane Boswell/Liphook
- Evaluation of the horse under saddle: Sarah Boys Smith/Rosssdales
- A new stem cell era? Bling, bluff or the bees knees?: Jonathan Anderson/Rainbow

- Enhancing diagnostic imaging for veterinary nurses: Strategies for improved accuracy and efficiency: Suzy Hall/Liphook
- Unveiling nerve blocks for nurses: A guide to their mechanism and applications: Jack Ashby/Equivet
- Decoding ultrasound and radiography for nurses: What are we looking at on a lameness ultrasound and radiograph? Rachel Schneiders/Gillivervet

All materials are available on Squirrel. To find out more, email natasha.wilson@vetpartners.co.uk

Tameside toasts makeover with bigger team

TAMESIDE Veterinary Clinic in Droylsden has had a £100,000 makeover and strengthened its team in a boost for clients and their pets.

The revamp has created a more spacious surgery with a larger prep area, three consulting rooms, an operating theatre and X-ray room. There are waiting areas for cats and dogs, separate kennels and cattery, an isolation area and dedicated laundry room.

The investment by VetPartners also includes a £25,000 state-of-the-art dental suite, while improved facilities for colleagues include a new break room and a large meeting space for training and development.

The work has enabled Tameside Vets to grow its reception team and welcome three new vets to support its sites in Ashton-Under-Lyne, Droylsden, Hyde and Stalybridge.

Practice manager Polly Rickards said: "This is a really exciting time as our veterinary team grows, and the investment in our Droylsden branch means we are able to double our capacity.



Smiles: Nursing manager Mel Shears and vet Gillian Laing at Tameside

"Our clinical director Diarmuid Currid is doing a Certificate in Dentistry, which also means we are able to offer high-end and complex dental work."

Exciting new chapter for Collier & Brock team

COLLIER & Brock Vets has reopened one of its branches for the first time in two years - with a larger team to provide even better pet care.

The small animal practice temporarily closed its branch in Irvine, Ayrshire, in 2021 after two senior members of the veterinary team retired.

The reopening and investment, which includes new high-tech X-ray facilities, marks a fresh chapter for the practice as plans also take shape for a major revamp of its main site in Troon.

Collier & Brock Vets welcomed new clinical director Mara Artuffo Binning in summer, along with experienced vets Aleksandra Strain and Megan Leggo, with another vet due to arrive in November.

They join senior vet Susan McFarlane and the dedicated veterinary nurses and wider support team, led by practice manager Elizabeth Frew who said they were all thrilled to see the Irvine branch open again.



Welcome: Mara, right, with RVN Katie Carmichael and patient Maisy

Practice is the pride of its community

COLLEAGUES at Aireworth Vets are toasting their success after taking home a top accolade from the Keighley & Airedale Business Awards.

The veterinary practice was named this year's Professional Services Business Award winner at a ceremony at Victoria Hall in Keighley.

Team members had a second reason to celebrate after also receiving a long service certificate in recognition of Aireworth Vets' long history. It has been caring for small and large animals since 1877.

Clinical director Peter O'Hagan said: "This award means a lot and we are fortunate to have such a wonderful team of professionals.

"At Aireworth, we really pride ourselves on providing a high standard of service and engaging with the local community so to win this award is really special."

Boost for pets as practice doubles in size



Joy: Broughton colleagues celebrate the expansion of their practice

BROUGHTON Veterinary Group's clinic in Lutterworth has doubled in size after undergoing a major transformation.

Expanding into a neighbouring unit has provided space to increase the number of consult rooms from two to four and create an additional operating theatre. New equipment has been installed, including digital X-ray and dental X-ray machines.

Feline patients benefit from cat-only waiting and consult rooms plus a separate cat kennels with soundproofing, while improvements for dogs include a roomier consult room that's more comfortable for larger breeds.

To enhance customer service, a call centre has been included in the new-look practice so calls can be answered promptly and the reception team can focus on greeting clients.

Clinical director Rachel Warwick said: "We are proud to have created a modern facility for patients and an improved working environment for colleagues."

Excellence with a caring touch at Anderson Abercromby



Facilities

- On-site CT scanner
- Fully air-conditioned kennels
- Separate cat ward
- Walk-in kennels for larger breeds
- Two fully equipped operating theatres
- Dedicated customer parking area
- A welcoming and air-conditioned reception area

Anderson Abercromby Veterinary Referrals is a small animal orthopaedic referral practice that boasts a dedicated and experienced team of RCVS advanced practitioners, specialists and ECVS diplomats in small animal surgery, including Federico Piccinno, Miranda Aiken, Cesar Gomes and Alastair Mather.

Since it was established in 2005, the practice has been committed to providing the highest standards of veterinary care to referring vets and owners and their pets, from the initial referral request to the discharge of patients.

The team performs an extensive range of specialist orthopaedic procedures, from repairing complex and standard fractures to more routine procedures such as cruciate, patella and arthroscopy surgeries. They also offer treatment for more advanced cases, such as total hip replacement (THR), the gold standard treatment for hip dysplasia patients.

Services

- Total hip replacement
- Elbow Dysplasia advanced procedures (CUE surgery & PAUL procedure)
- TPLO surgery
- Patella luxation surgery including patella groove replacement
- Management of joint deformities
- Fracture repairs
- Arthroscopy
- OCD lesions with synACART
- Chronic arthritis consultations
- Radiograph reporting service
- On-site physiotherapy

Our people

Federico Piccinno DVM PgCertSAS MRCVS Veterinary surgeon

Federico qualified from the university of Bologna in 2010 and after graduating gained a wealth of experience while undertaking several internships at multi-disciplinary veterinary hospitals. He became an RCVS Advanced Practitioner in Small Animal Surgery in 2018 and volunteered as a veterinary surgeon at the Food and Agriculture Organisation for the United Nations.

Federico has been a key part of the team at Anderson Abercromby Veterinary Referrals since 2019.



César Gomes DVM MRCVS RCVS recognised and EBVS European specialist in Small Animal Surgery Veterinary surgeon

César qualified as a veterinary surgeon from ICBAS University in Portugal in 2012 and completed an internship at Cambridge University before starting an orthopaedic internship at Anderson Abercromby Veterinary Referrals in 2016. After being inspired by Ralph Abercromby and the late Angus Anderson, César returned to Cambridge University for his surgery training and then returned to the practice in 2021.

César has contributed papers to various journals and enjoys lecturing at events and scientific meetings. In 2022 he became a diplomat in small animal surgery with the European College of Veterinary Surgeons (ECVS).



Contact details:

- Anderson Abercromby Veterinary Referrals is based in Warnham, West Sussex.
- Tel: 01306 621 269
- To arrange a referral online visit: www.andersonabercromby.com/referring-vets/referral-form
- Anderson Abercromby Veterinary Referrals is hosting a range of free CPD sessions open to all. For details, email reception@andersonabercromby.com

RVN Amy and her rescue pooch Flossy bring joy to others



Giving: Amy and Flossy love visiting care homes

KIND-hearted Amy Bevan and her rescue dog Flossy are bringing joy to residents in care homes across the North East.

Flossy was painfully thin and almost bald because of fleas when Amy, an RVN at Westway Vets in Newcastle, adopted her from an animal shelter after the tiny crossbreed was given up by her previous owners.

After settling into her new home with Amy, Flossy is unrecognisable from the terrified scrap brought into the hospital, and proud owner and dog now volunteer with the charity Pets As Therapy.

Volunteers and their pets visit establishments such as care homes, hospitals, hospices and schools, bringing smiles to many faces.

Amy and Flossy are regular visitors to care homes for elderly people and those suffering from dementia, where the playful pooch thrills residents.

Everyone at VetPartners has the opportunity to have paid time off to volunteer one day a year for a charity or worthy cause in their community - and Amy has put her day to good use.

Amy said: "Some of the residents are so excited and pleased to meet Flossy and she loves the attention. Flossy is just happy being given treats and stroked."

"Coming from the background she had and having only given a nervous tail wag when I first met her, it is so lovely seeing her give so much to people she meets."

Interested in volunteering? The one day per year pro rata we provide for colleagues to volunteer can be used as a full day, or an hour or two spread over a few days.

Speak to your line manager to arrange your volunteering day.



Kind: Harris at VetPartners

Harris' daring mission to Georgia

PUTTING people first comes naturally to Harris Edwards in his role as HR business partner at VetPartners.

But Harris went to extreme lengths to show how much he cares for others after joining a 3,700-mile mercy mission to carry aid to refugees in Georgia.

Harris was part of a three-man team making the epic journey to deliver an ambulance to Georgia, as well as providing food, clothes, blankets and medical and dental supplies to a small organisation building a hospice on a farm on the Georgian and Russian border, making it a potentially

dangerous mission.

They set off on October 13th, driving from Harrogate to Italy, where they caught a ferry to Greece and drove across Turkey into Georgia.

The aid will help desperate refugees who have fled from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Ukraine, and the ambulance will enable aid workers to drive the sick, elderly or injured to hospital.

Harris, his friend Mark Brown and a military paramedic called Mark Dodgson volunteered as drivers as part of a humanitarian effort organised by 85-year-old Harrogate man John Shackleton. John has bought and stocked 35

ambulances over the last 30 years to provide emergency vehicles and medical equipment to humanitarian organisations in Eastern Europe and beyond.

As well as using his annual leave, Harris is using the volunteering day VetPartners provides to all employees.

The team have a go fund me page set up to help raise some additional support. You can donate here: <https://gofund.me/2459d740>.

Georgina conquers the Channel to help vet colleagues



Caring: Georgina supported Vetlife

VET Georgina Friend didn't let jellyfish stings put her off completing a charity challenge that raised £3,500 for Vetlife.

Georgina, from Westside Vets in Battersea, teamed up with five friends to cross the English Channel in a relay swim that covered 52.5km (33 miles) and took 14 hours and 14 minutes.

Georgina contributed three, hour-long stints in the sea, before joining her friends in the water to make a triumphant landing on French soil.

She said the most challenging elements were swimming in the dark in the early hours of the morning and encountering a smack of unfriendly jellyfish.

"This was my biggest swimming challenge to date, and I'm so proud to have achieved it," she said. "I did a lot of training and it wasn't as difficult physically as I expected, but it was mentally challenging to keep going for an hour at a time, especially when I was swimming near the jellyfish."

The six swimmers raised a total of £19,000 and Georgina has donated her share to Vetlife.

Jo and Abbie are friends reunited!



Happy: Abbie, left, and Jo are enjoying life at Hampden Vets

Find a Colleague is a VetPartners benefit which provides a financial reward for anyone who successfully recommends a new employee. It's one of the ways we support practices to recruit new vets and veterinary nurses.

Here, equine vets Jo Brant and Abbie Norman reveal how they became colleagues at Hampden Vets in Aylesbury...

WHEN Hampden Vets were looking for a new vet to join their equine team, Jo Brant knew the ideal candidate.

She recommended Abbie Norman for the role at Hampden Vets as she thought she'd be a perfect fit, having met her at a CPD event on foal care at Rosssdales Veterinary Surgeons.

Jo said: "I thought Abbie would be great for the role as she's really hard working and enthusiastic and I thought she'd fit brilliantly into the Hampden team."

Jo received £1,000 through our Find a Colleague benefit for recommending a vet to her practice after connecting with her professional and personal network.

Abbie is thriving and loving life at Hampden Vets, where she has slotted perfectly into the team.

She said: "I really enjoy working with such a supportive and friendly team in a practice that has a varied caseload, lovely clients and the opportunity for progression. I'm glad Jo recommended me for the role. As well as enjoying the work itself, I also enjoy running our monthly breakfast journal club, which brings all the vets and nurses together to discuss papers and clinical cases."

Find a Colleague - How it works

How would you like to receive up to £2,000?

If you have someone in your personal or professional network who's looking for an exciting career opportunity across our family of practices, we'd love to hear from you.

You must have permission to pass on a CV.

Ask your friend to email peopleteam@vetpartners.co.uk acknowledging your introduction.

If your friend is successful in their application for a permanent vet or nurse position, you will receive a bonus. Full Ts&Cs available at <https://squirrel.tillr.io/library/62aeed7e-d0b0-4b38-818c-5d0b55a8ad7f>

Practices helping to find future farm vets

FINAL year university students have been finding out what it takes to be a successful farm vet.

Calweton Veterinary Practice, Penbode Vets and Cornwall Dairy Vets hosted the Farm Vet Academy, providing veterinary students with an insight into the world of farm vetting.

From practical sessions on calving techniques to learning common surgical procedures and tips on how to thrive in their chosen career, 16 students attended the three-day residential course funded by VetPartners.

The academy was held at Calweton Veterinary

Group's training facilities in Callington, Cornwall.

Calweton farm vet Stuart Gough said: "The academy gave students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience of what farm vetting is all about. They were bursting with enthusiasm, and eager to get involved throughout the whole event which was lovely to see.

"Providing an opportunity for students to gain first-hand experience of farm practice and talk to people who currently work in the field is a really beneficial way to smooth the transition from university to starting their careers as farm vets."

Getting careers off to a gallop



VETPARTNERS' equine specialists have shared their best advice with new graduates to help them transition into life as an ambulatory vet.

The Equine Executive Board arranged a week of informative lectures and hands-on practical sessions to welcome new

vets to the VetPartners equine team and help them bridge the gap between learning at university and working in practice.

Hosted by Liphook Equine Hospital, New Graduate Week covered a wide range of topics, including emergencies, medicine, wounds, foaling and lameness, and delegates visited the University of Surrey for sessions focusing on colic.

Tom Hughes, Liphook Equine Hospital clinical director and a member of the Equine Executive Board, said: "We wanted to give our new vets lots of tips and techniques and real-life veterinary skills that will make life easier when they are back in the workplace.

"As well as benefiting graduates, running events like this gives our practices the confidence to employ newly qualified vets as they recognise we're here to help nurture and mentor them."

Graduates will benefit from ongoing support in their new roles, including the opportunity to attend a variety of courses and supervised castration clinics.

Ashley is a flock star!

Work-life balance is so important for our wellbeing, and having hobbies provides a way for people to take time out of busy schedules and do something they really enjoy.

In each edition of The Tail, we feature the fun, challenging and interesting hobbies our colleagues enjoy outside of work.

Here, Ashley Marshall, clinical director at Westpoint Farm Vets in York, tells us about her love of sheep...

EVEN though she spends every day advising farmers on flock health, Ashley Marshall never tires of counting sheep.

Ashley owns her own flock of 45 pedigree Badger Faced Texel sheep, and is enjoying huge success in the show ring.

Edith won the ewe lamb class at this summer's Drifford Show, before going on to be crowned reserve champion in the continental breed class.

It was Ashley's first attempt at showing and the success has made her hungry for more, especially as she is building a reputation as a breeder, selling her first tup at Carlisle Mart for 400 guineas.

Combining a personal interest with her role at Westpoint has given her a deeper insight into farming.



Ewe beauty: Ashley with farmer Gavin and their prized Texel

Ashley said: "I started offering a sheep fertility service at Westpoint and needed some sheep to practice on and a farmer client, Gavin Ogg, suggested buying some together

"We bought a pregnant ewe from a dispersal sale and ended up buying more and breeding more, using the fertility service to increase the flock and improve the genetics.

"It is stressful being on the other side, especially when you are lambing your own sheep.

"I get a real sense of pride when they do well at shows. Having a pedigree breed, you need to be seen at shows and develop your reputation to build up good stock. It is highly competitive for commercial reasons as well as pride."

Banishing the winter blues

EVENINGS are darker, there's a chill in the air and summer feels like a distant memory.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that is dependent on the time of year.

Most people are affected in the winter, but a few people can experience the symptoms during the summer, and feel better in winter.

Symptoms of SAD can include:

- Persistent low mood
- Lack of interest in things that would normally bring you enjoyment
- Changes to appetite
- Lack of energy
- Sleep problems - this can be sleeping more or less than usual

Are you getting the most out of Health Shield, our cash plan benefit provider?

The My Wellness section can be viewed, along with all elements of your membership (including your benefit allowances, who is covered, and submitting claims) on the new Breeze app, which is easy to use and brings all of the services of your membership in one place.

Here, you will find all the My Wellness services, and your Cash Plan benefits in one place whenever you need them.

You will just need to register on the app using your email address, membership number and a chosen password.

Once you have logged in, you can access all of your cash plan details, and you can also complete health assessments to give you an overall picture of your lifestyle, mental and financial wellbeing.

As well as services like optical, where you can claim back

For some, these symptoms can be severe and have a significant impact on their daily lives. If you think you may have SAD and are struggling to cope, then consider speaking to your GP.

If the symptoms are mild, there are a number of things you can do that may help, such as getting as much natural sunlight as possible or using a light box, doing regular exercise and eating a healthy diet.

Feeling isolated?

You are not alone with Health Shield, our health cash plan. Just call **0800 028 1963** and quote VetPartners.

Health Shield has a 24/7 free and confidential helpline with Health Assured, offering practical information and emotional support for stress, anxiety and depression, family issues, finances and debt management, legal advice, medical information and much more.

health shield

eye tests, glasses or contact lens monthly agreements, you also have access to the dental benefit, which includes dental check-ups, and any treatment conducted at your dentist. The health and wellbeing section includes complementary therapies, such as aromatherapy massages and hot-stone massage - a perfect pick-me-up when it's cold and miserable outside!

Children of employees who are under the age of 18 and living at home are eligible for benefit. They receive half the allowance of what an adult is eligible for. The allowance they receive is shared between children.

Don't forget PERKS, where you can unlock a world of exclusive savings and rewards. You can access Perks through your members area, or the Breeze app. Perks is now provided by Benefits Hub.

Spotlight on...

Nicola Thomas -

VetPartners Receptionist of the Year 2022 from Tameside Vets



Winning the VetPartners Receptionist of the Year award was a huge honour and something I will never forget.

I was nominated by our clinical director Loren Shearing, which made the award even more special. I loved reading all the nice things she had said about me in her nomination, and how valued she made me feel.

I can't wait for Loren to come back after maternity leave, as we have missed her so much.

My career started when I was 13 years old when I had a Saturday job working with my mum at the company where she worked. After finishing college, I took on a full-time role because I enjoyed the job so much.

I joined Tameside Veterinary Clinic in 2019 as a receptionist and worked my way up to senior receptionist 18 months later.

The things I love the most about being a receptionist are building relationships with clients and their pets, supporting and helping where I can, and working with the most amazing team.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my girlfriend Alex and my 10-year-old son Thomas. We enjoy watching the best football team in the world - Manchester City, going to the zoo and walking our two crazy dogs, Panda and Peaches around the lake.

We also have four cats Azizi, Zula, Ed and Smelly. It's a busy house and we wouldn't have it any other way.

We all make the tea at VetPartners, but who makes the best cuppa at Tameside Vets?

Alyssa Woods, one of our animal care assistants, makes the best coffee.

What's the best piece of advice anyone has given you?

Treat others how you would like to be treated. I have followed this advice since being a little girl and try to be as kind as I can.

Tell us something about you no one else would know?

As a child I went to Brownies and Girl Guides.

What was it like winning Receptionist of the Year?

It was such an amazing surprise and so special because my nomination came from one of our clinical directors, Loren Shearing.

What would be your last meal?

A roast chicken dinner, with all the veg except sprouts, plus lots of gravy, mini roast potatoes and the added twist of mint sauce.

What are your three favourite songs?

Sam Smith - Lay Me Down
Sam Smith - Unholy
Miguel - Sure Thing



Are you in need of some self-care this autumn?

LET us treat you to some well-deserved indulgence with an opportunity to win this Calm gift set from the M&S Apothecary range.

This carefully curated selection includes a body wash, body butter, hand cream and a votive candle - all designed to complement one another with their soothing scents.

Essential oils of lavender, ho wood, sweet orange and cedar wood infuse each product, to help promote total relaxation. The set also contains an exfoliating bath mitt to complete the self-care experience.

We have three sets to give away to three lucky readers of The Tail.

To stand a chance of winning, simply share, in no more than 100 words, your autumn/winter self-care tips.

We will announce the winners on the VetPartners Facebook page, plus the winning entries will feature in the next edition of The Tail.

Email your entry to amanda.little@vetpartners.co.uk by Friday November 17th.



Got a story to share in The Tail?



Amanda Little | Editor
07970 198 492
amanda.little@vetpartners.co.uk



Jo Browne | Writer
jo.browne@vetpartners.co.uk



Nadia Jefferson-Brown | Writer
nadia.jeffersonbrown@vetpartners.co.uk



Rachel Neill | Writer
rachel.neill@vetpartners.co.uk



Phoebe Fenwick | Graphic Designer
phoebe.fenwick@vetpartners.co.uk