



The Dairy Internship

A recent 'Quo Vadis' survey reported that 83% of large animal and equine vets said they enjoyed their job, compared to 77% for small animal vets. The same survey reported that the issue giving least satisfaction to vets in general practice was on-call work (41%, rising to 52-55% for graduates since 1991). The next highest issue was shorter hours (36%, or 35% for graduates since 1991). 42% reported that it was not very easy to combine work with social and family life, and 28% said it was not *at all* easy.

Asked what should be done to reduce the drop-out rate from large animal practice, respondents mentioned:

	All responses	Graduates since 1995
Reduce expectations/prepare for working conditions	43%	33%
More support from seniors	24%	42%
Shorter hours/less on call	40%	58%
More part time, job share, flexibility	34%	35%

Other factors mentioned by young vets interviewed for the report included:

- Little intellectual stimulation in farm work until you get to senior level;
- Social isolation is daunting in rural areas. Young graduates prefer to go into large practices where there are other young vets;
- Difficulty of striking good relationship with farmers, and their tendency to be unforgiving if you don't do a good job first time;
- High admission standards produce bias towards academic types. However 'you'll never get in unless you can show you grasp the realities of farm work'.
- Small animal work is more rewarding and challenging – 'you can do surgery', 'you can use all your skills'.
- Partners won't involve assistants in management: 'we had a weekly vets' meeting at my foster practice that was partners only'.

Other reports into the supply of livestock vets note the need for a better work/life balance, but note that experience is also an issue in modern farm practice. New graduates are often seen as short of hands-on experience of large animal work. It may be difficult to get enough large animal work to develop skills in mixed practice, and in some practices recent graduates can get a disproportionate share of difficult on-call cases which may mean that there is less chance to develop proactive services.

The 'Westley report' commissioned by Defra in 2004, summarised the issues that may be putting young vets off as follows:

- Poor preparation during training for large animal work;
- The weight of on-call work in large animal practice;
- The need for better networking between vets in different practices;
- The need for young vets to get balanced skills development in their early years;
- Resistance to part-time working in large animal practice.

The Lambert, Leonard & May Dairy Internship

In order to help address some of the above issues, and to create an environment that will help develop large animal vets for our practice and others in the future, we have now created an intern training post within the practice.

The post is intended for recent graduates and usually runs for a period of six months to one year. A personal development programme of postgraduate training and education is developed with the intern, and structured according to their own individual wishes and needs.

The intern works office hours, with one half day each week when they are not required to attend emergency calls, and when one practice member provides

one-to-one training and mentoring in specific clinical and non-clinical training areas.

During normal working hours we attempt to ensure that immediate on-farm support is available if required. To begin with the intern is not involved in the out-of-hours rota, but encouragement will be given to attend emergency cases at their discretion. Experienced support and supervision will always be immediately available.

Instruction and mentoring

Lambert Leonard & May is a specialist farm practice and carries out no work for other species and the vets in the practice have a variety of skills and specialist interests. Three vets hold the Diploma in Bovine Reproduction and three hold the RCVS Certificate in Cattle Health and Production. One Partner has been a RCVS examiner in Cattle Health and Production.

One experienced veterinary surgeon carries out no reactive veterinary work and will be responsible for ensuring that the intern's development portfolio is constantly monitored and that they receive the support we promise.

Contact Details

To discuss this programme please feel free to contact the practice at anytime.

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