

BIONIC VET JOINS SPECIALIST LINE-UP AT VETERINARY IRELAND CONFERENCE IN GALWAY



Over 245 vets and vet nurses gathered in Galway to attend a Veterinary Ireland conference starting on Friday 30th January, 2015.

The veterinary star of the BBC's 'Bionic Vet' series and Channel 4's 'The Supervet' was a key speaker at the three-day Veterinary Ireland Companion Animal Society (VICAS) conference in the Radisson Hotel. The conference for vets and vet nurses featured technical and practical presentations by Irish and European specialists on subjects ranging from surgical skills to pain management.

Noel Fitzpatrick – a pioneering Irish neuro-orthopaedic veterinary surgeon - rose to fame as the first vet in the world to apply a cutting edge amputation prosthesis to a cat named Oscar, who lost both of his hind feet in an accident with a combine harvester. Noel now runs a state of the art orthopaedic referral practice in Surrey, UK with over 100 employees.

Noel Fitzpatrick was involved in eight different lectures and presentations at the Veterinary Ireland conference on subjects ranging from Bionics; to diagnosis, routine and advanced surgery for dog and cat spines; as well as pelvic and thoracic limb lameness; and challenging fracture cases.

An open forum looking at the ethics of some modern veterinary interventions and exploring the fact that sometimes vets have to say no to pet owner requests, was led by Manuel Magalhães-Ant'Ana, an AMV, Msc and PhD graduate of the University of Porto, Portugal. He is the current recipient of the VCI Newman Fellowship in Veterinary Ethics at UCD. Ronan Mullins and Claire Deroy from UCD delivered presentations on orthopaedics.

Vet Brian Faulkner based in the UK, led sessions on management and business skills for vets ranging from leadership skills to front of house success; and Conor Lynch from Social Media Ireland explored social media in a nutshell.

Pioneering Treatments – Making Life Changing Differences for Both Humans & Animals

“It is wonderful to see the extraordinary advancements made in veterinary science over the last few years. In clinical practice, we are working at the coal-face of veterinary medicine - but I believe that the lessons we have learned as vets; and those that human doctors are learning with their patients, could be pooled together to help advance further pioneering treatments in the future - which could make a life changing difference to the treatment options and quality of life possible for both humans and animals. This is the concept of Clinically collaborative colleagues in One Medicine,” said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

“It's truly an honour for me to return home to lecture in Ireland. I hope that by reaching out to vets in companion animal practice in Ireland, I can help to raise awareness of the many new options available for those who love dogs and cats, and generally bring a sense of excitement to learning in neuro-orthopaedics. I hope to evoke thought and an examination of the status quo that will inspire the future care of companion animals in Ireland. Importantly I hope to embrace the ethical and moral challenges facing an ever-changing veterinary landscape by exploring how it's not enough to be able to do something from a medical perspective – it must be the right thing to do in each and every case for that animal and for that family at this moment in time.”

Mr. Fitzpatrick concluded: “I believe that it is our moral responsibility to embrace medical advancement responsibly - because change is inevitable – but real progress requires a little work. It's really down to us to shape that change for the greater good of animals and of society. I believe that the litmus test of a responsible and compassionate society is how we look after our animals, and I am very excited about encouraging everyone at the VICAS conference in Galway this weekend to look toward the future with an open heart and an enlightened mind.”



Alan Rossiter, the Chairman of the VICAS Conference organising committee, said: “Irish vets take immense pride in being able to offer the best possible treatments and advice for their patients and clients. The access we have achieved at this conference to scientific pioneers and new veterinary information challenges us all in a positive way. It provides Veterinary Ireland members with up to date knowledge to help us to examine our orthopaedic and neurologic approaches as well as our decision making so that Irish vets can continue to offer world-class advice and care for the patients under our care.”

Veterinary Ireland Sheep Medicine & Flock Day

Farm animal veterinary practitioners attended the Veterinary Ireland Sheep Medicine and Flock Health Day on Friday 30th January, 2015 ahead of the seasonal rush on sheep farms. The first half of the day involved practicals in Teagasc’s research facility in Mellows College, Athenry, covering diagnostic ultrasonography, anaesthesia, parasitology and flock health case study work. Delegates adjourned to the Radisson in Galway for a separate afternoon session on subjects ranging from diagnosis and treatment of neurological conditions to managing weight and ill thrift.

Dr. Phil Scott, from the Edinburgh Veterinary School, demonstrated a range of pain relief methods for sheep, which will be put into practice by the delegates in ewes giving birth over the coming weeks. He also demonstrated the use of ultrasound scanners as a tool in the diagnosis of disease in the chests and abdomens of sheep.

Speaking at the event, Dr Phil Scott said: “Respiratory disease (pneumonia) is common in sheep but it proves difficult to diagnose specific diseases/lesions by clinical examination alone because the respiratory rate and intensity of lung sounds are variably affected by gathering, handling stresses, body condition score and painful lesions. It may prove difficult to distinguish wheezes and crackles, and not all experts agree on what they hear and what pathological changes those sounds represent. Indeed, in many respiratory diseases breath sounds are markedly attenuated or absent. Ultrasonographic examination of the chest allows critical evaluation of the pleurae and establishment of a definitive diagnosis in most cases.”

Dr Barbara Good, from Teagasc Athenry, gave delegates a demonstration of parasitological techniques, which can be carried out by veterinary practitioners in their own practices, as an additional service to their clients. The advent of anthelmintic resistance and wetter climatic conditions necessitate a more holistic approach to parasite control on Irish sheep farms.

Professor Neil Sargison, of the Edinburgh Veterinary School, took up the theme of anthelmintic resistance in the afternoon, by bringing delegates up to speed with current developments in the area of anthelmintic resistance. “Helminth parasites are the most important causes of global production limiting disease of ruminant livestock. Better understanding of the principles of sustainable helminth control, based on collaborative research, will inevitably be beneficial and will help to address the global need for sustainable food security”.

Frank Hynes, Teagasc Sheep Specialist, explained how farmers can monitor the performance of their lambs using weight data. He also discussed a range of nutritional and non nutritional factors such as health, birth weight, and breeding which can affect performance.

Damien Barrett of the Regional Veterinary Laboratory in Sligo, discussed the investigation of abortion. Abortion can be quite costly at farm level, especially so as the incidence increases and as the fecundity of the ewes increases.

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