

A varied Veterinary career.

Like many Vets I had wanted to join the profession as long as I can remember and was fortunate that two practices local to me allowed me to come along and see what it was all about. Periods of working on a farm and dog kennels also kept me focused on the path to a Veterinary career.

This path gave me a good understanding of animal behaviour and handling of all species which would stand me in good stead during my years in practice.

In 1968 I finally entered the Royal Veterinary College having taken an additional year to improve my A level grades. I qualified in 1973 after an enjoyable 5 years and had two job offers, one from each of the practices I had joined seeing practice.

University was overall a great experience and like most I ended up in a sports club rowing.



I accepted a role at my local practice in Abergavenny intending to stay for 2 – 3 years. At the time this was still very much in the James Herriot fashion with mostly farm work and occasional small animal surgeries.

Tragedy struck with two partners dying unexpectedly and I found myself offered a partnership and marrying a local girl, also the Veterinary Nurse, in 1976.

In 1977 we were asked to take on OV work in a local meat plant doing intervention boning. The work was well paid and a boost to practice finances. The boners were mostly from N Ireland and would provide enough steak each morning for all to have a steak sandwich for breakfast. Very much different times.

This started my journey into working in the food industry and in 1995 I started working with several slaughterhouses with the implementation of the new WASK (the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations) 1995.

In 1997, as part of this new area of interest, I attended a two-day welfare at slaughter course at Bristol University.

Subsequently I provided advice to a company building a new Turkey slaughterhouse during the planning and development phase which successfully operated with high welfare standards.

During my time in practice I continued with an interest in Animal Welfare although running and working in a busy Veterinary Practice restricted the time doing this.

I had many good friends in our farm clients and would arrange the daily rounds to ensure that you had a know coffee / tea and cake stop at appropriate intervals. This was very much part of the practice daily routine and on one occasion we had an assistant known as “that chap who is too busy to stop for coffee and a chat”.



At that time the Vet was called to do many what are now routine farmer tasks and the only photo I have is copied above where I am vaccinating a clients pedigree flock.

In 2001 I was elected to the Council of the Veterinary Public Health Association (VPHA), subsequently becoming Honorary Secretary and in 2016 Junior Vice President, then President. In this role I was also the Animal Welfare officer and have constantly provided a strong personal push for improving welfare standards.

2002 – 2003 I researched a problem with Turkey leg fractures identified at the premises where I provided OV duties. This was subsequently produced as a paper and presented to a VPHA scientific meeting on completion of the work.

In 2003 with a personal health issue I left practice and worked briefly for the State Veterinary Service (now APHA) in Mid Wales. During this time, I worked on a number of farm related welfare cases providing expert advice and witness statements. These cases resulted in a successful outcome with appropriate penalties.

In 2005 I joined the then Meat Hygiene Service as a Regional Veterinary Advisor covering part of Wales and the borders. This role included driving compliance with both Hygiene and Welfare legislation.

Subsequently I held several roles including a temporary role as a Veterinary Meat Hygiene Advisor which required me to approve slaughterhouses including welfare provisions. During 2011 and then subsequently again in 2013 I developed a welfare survey, producing a published report on the welfare standards across the slaughter industry. This work was shared with Defra and RSPCA, as well as other stakeholders. The findings have been frequently used by the press.

2012 with the impending implementation of new European welfare legislation EC1099/2009 I was seconded to work with Defra and the Devolved Governments on the implementation of this legislation and the development of new domestic legislation to implement this. During the next two years I led the project within the FSA to implement the new legislation, provide awareness and training.

I worked with both red and white meat industry bodies on the development of new Guides to Good Practice which are required by the legislation. These were successfully introduced and approved by Defra and shared with the European Commission. This is required by EC1099/2009 Article 13.

In 2012 I was appointed as a scientific advisor to the newly formed subcommittee of the now Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) to be known as the Welfare at Killing Committee (WAK). This committee is a requirement of Article 20 EC1099/2009.

In 2016 I proposed that the FSA developed a Welfare advisory team comprising of suitably trained Meat Inspectors to carry out unannounced and targeted welfare visits to slaughterhouses. In October 2016 I arranged for the new team to attend the AWO and PWO course at Bristol University along with myself. All attendees were successful in passing the course and able to commence their new role.

Over the last few years I have given presentations to Humane Slaughter Association seminars linked to legislative changes.

Work by myself on behalf of FSA and VPHA, NFU, AHDB, BVA and others chaired by Lord Trees on the “demonstration of life” was successful with the protocol introduced by Defra and Welsh Government.

In early 2019 I was asked by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) to chair an Animal Welfare at Slaughter Working Group. This led to a report approved by BVA with recommendations on improvements to welfare in the slaughter process.

I was nominated as the FSA Vet of the year in 2021, a recognition by my FSA colleagues of the work I had done on welfare at slaughter.

In 2023 I was a recipient of the RCVS Impact award and enjoyed a fantastic day out at the RCVS AGM in London with family.



In the New Year Honours 2024 I was awarded an OBE and attended an investiture by the Princess Royal (Princess Anne) at Windsor Castle. Again, this was a fantastic day out with family.



Overall, a fabulous career and still enjoying working when most of my colleagues have long since retired.

One of my earliest memories of the first days at the RVC was being told that a Veterinary Degree opens up many doors and this is so true.