

Plea for vets to help in Romania

A DOG shelter in Romania is looking for vets to visit and help with castrating dogs to reduce aggression in an overcrowded facility – and ultimately help influence national policy towards strays.

On August 1, progress was made in the treatment of strays when a welfare organisation called Millions of Friends, founded by Cristina and Roger Lapis, was made responsible for the stray dog population in the city of Brasov, Romania's seventh largest city, and given the chance to show that the population problem could be controlled by mass sterilisation campaigns rather than culling.

Millions of Friends has until January to prove the castration system can work. If the Brasov pilot is successful the fresh approach could be rolled-out nationally, but the organisation's shelter is described as overcrowded and, as a result, fights between the dogs are common.

If you can help, email Deb Sowards (deb@hauserbears.com). Expenses will be paid.

GUIDELINES AN 'EXCELLENT START' TO BEATING MRSA/P

report by
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NEW advice on infection control has been welcomed by campaigners as "an excellent starting point" to combat and better understand methicillin-resistant bacteria.

Last month, BSAVA released updated guidelines on controlling methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and *S pseudintermedius* (MRSP).

The advice, written by Liverpool lecturer Tim Nuttall and available via the BSAVA's website, details the importance and best practice of hand hygiene, cleaning and sterilisation and protocols for in-patients and screening staff. The webpage (www.bsava.com/Advice/MRSA/tabid/171/Default.aspx) also features videos on hand washing, downloadable posters and an additional paper from Dr Nuttall.

In June, academics and leading infection awareness charity the Bella Moss Foundation (BMF) called on vets to do more to understand MRSP and identify it in practice.

Previously, BMF founder Jill Moss had told *Veterinary Times*

there was a "clear need" for more research into MRSP, as well as more communication by vets to owners on the topic.

Commenting on the new guidance, Ms Moss said while evidence on MRSP was still scarce and academic opinion differed as a result, "BSAVA has gone a long, long way to making information available, much more than in any other country I'm aware of."

Worldwide problem

She said she was delighted the association had produced more guidance for practitioners, while adding pet owners needed additional information about the risks of transmission.

"The BMF is in discussions with the American Veterinary Medical Association to publish guidelines similar to the BSAVA's," Ms Moss added.

"MRSP is now a worldwide

problem in companion animals and we need to keep on top of it with information and data. The BSAVA guidelines are an excellent starting point."

Dr Nuttall is also a clinical advisor to the BMF. He told *Veterinary Times* that strict enforcement of infection control protocols was very important for all practices.

"Having guidelines that are ignored is almost worse than having none at all," he added.

Dr Nuttall also urged vets not to use antibiotics speculatively to treat non-specific symptoms and to make better use of cytology.

"Culture should be used more frequently – especially where there has been treatment failure, where resistance is suspected," he said.

More explanation

Vet Scott Weese is an associate professor at the University of Guelph in Ontario and runs a lab focusing on methicillin-resistant bacteria. He is also an advisor to the BMF.

While welcoming the guid-



The Bella Moss Foundation's Jill Moss and author Tim Nuttall.

ance, he disagreed with Dr Nuttall's stance on decolonisation and said the document could do more to explain to vets the dearth of objective information on MRSA/P.

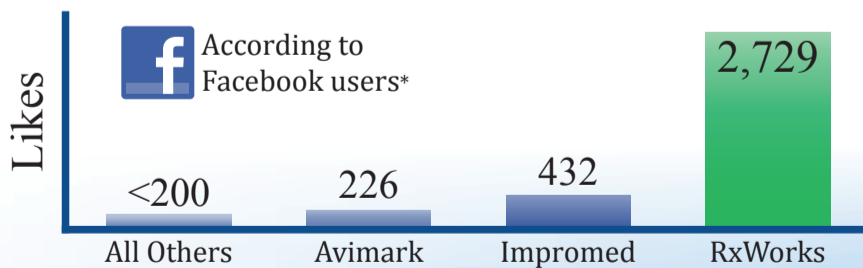
"Overall, it's a good document that emphasises some important key areas," Prof Weese told *Veterinary Times*. "Personally, I'd like to have seen more discussion or explanation of some of the limitations in available information and more equivocal recommendations."

RVN Lorena Hall lectures on

infection control on behalf of the BMF. She said the updated guidelines were definitely an improvement on previous MRSA/P advice. "The emphasis on infection control is excellent as it – especially hand hygiene – is the single most important measure in the prevention, control and treatment of MRSA, MRSP and other resistant bacterial infection or colonisation.

"However, this is definitely an area that needs more research, both in vitro and in vivo, to correlate real incidence."

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Research into long-term effects of tail docking

VETERINARY researchers at the University of Glasgow have begun a study into the long-term effect of Scotland's ban on canine tail docking.

Grant holders David Bennett and Tim Parkin will be overseeing masters student Rose Lederer as she conducts a survey into the incidence of tail injuries among non-docked working dogs in Scotland.

In 2007, tail docking was made illegal in England and Wales, with an exemption for working dogs, while Scotland completely banned the practice.

Prof Bennett told *Veterinary Times*: "Most animal welfare groups are totally opposed to docking and are supportive of the situation in Scotland.

"However, many supporting organisations maintain docking is necessary to prevent injury in later life," he added.

"When the legislation was passed [in Scotland] they didn't make an exemption, but they did make a commitment to review the legislation if tail injuries increased."

"Injury risk is quite low"

Last year, a study by the University of Bristol's veterinary school and RVC researchers found around 500 dogs would need to be docked to prevent one tail injury.

David Brodbelt, co-author of "Risk factors for tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain", published last year by the RVC, said: "It's not surprising that docking reduces injury, but the risk of injury is quite low and you'd have to dock an awful lot of dogs to prevent one injury."

Prof Bennett's team will investigate whether the ban is promoting good welfare, or leading to tail injuries in working animals.

"Puppies born in 2007 will now be old enough to have been working for a considerable period of



Jack Russell terriers were traditionally tail-docked and are an exempted breed in England and Wales.

time – the study is part of a legislative review and to make sure that [the ban] hasn't resulted in more dogs having injuries," he added.

The first part of the study is an online survey of terrier and gundog owners in Scotland. The second part will involve collating data from veterinary practices around the country to determine the incidence and causes of tail injuries.

Prof Bennett said the Glasgow findings were due to be presented before officials by spring 2012 and he invited interested practitioners to get in touch.

Meanwhile, The Kennel Club has welcomed news of the study.

Secretary and communications director Caroline Kisko said: "We are pleased that the Scottish Government has taken heed of our advice to commission further research on this contentious topic, and would urge all those who fit the requirements of the study to get involved."

To find out more about the Glasgow study contact Prof Bennett via David.Bennett@glasgow.ac.uk

To take part in the survey, visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/TAI