

EBVM Toolkit 10

Systematic review checklist

There are five key steps to follow in Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM).

1. Asking an answerable clinical question
2. Finding the best available evidence to answer the question
3. **Critically appraising the evidence for validity**
4. Applying the results to clinical practice
5. Evaluating performance

This handout is designed to help you appraise a systematic review. Answering the questions will help you to reflect on how valid the results might be, how well reported they are and whether they are applicable to your local circumstances.

	Yes	No	Not sure	Reason
<p>Did the review address a clearly focused question?</p> <p>Is there a clear question, can the PICO be identified?</p>				
<p>Did the authors select the right papers?</p> <p>Did the papers address the question and have an appropriate study design?</p>				
<p>Do you think the search would have found all the relevant important papers?</p> <p>Look for search methods, databases used, reference list use, inclusion of unpublished studies etc</p>				

<p>Did the authors do enough to assess the quality of included studies? Is there evidence of an assessment of potential bias? Is the process of assessment described?</p>				
<p>If the results of the studies have been combined was it reasonable to do so? Were the results sufficiently similar in design to combine? Are the results of the included studies clear? Are the reasons for any variations discussed?</p>				
<p>What are the overall results of the review? Are you clear about the 'bottom line' results? How are the results expressed (odds ratios, relative risk etc)?</p>				
<p>How precise are the results? Have confidence intervals been presented?</p>				
<p>Can the results be applied to your practice? Is the review relevant to your patient population? Can you gauge benefit and harm for your local situation?</p>				
<p>Were all the important outcomes considered? Are there any questions that you would consider important that were not addressed in the review?</p>				
<p>Are the benefits described worth the harms and costs? What are the possible adverse effects of the intervention? What are the costs?</p>				

Want to try it out?

You could use the following paper to try out the questions:

Nuttall, T. and Cole, L. (2007) Evidence based veterinary dermatology: a systematic review of interventions for the treatment of *Pseudomonas* otitis in dogs, *Veterinary Dermatology*, 18(2) pp 69-77.