



## **Farm Vet Champions**

**Pam Mosedale, QI Clinical Lead, BVetMed MRCVS, Chair of QIAB**

**Fiona Lovatt, Farm Vet Champions Clinical Lead**

RCVS Knowledge:

Welcome to the Quality Improvement Boxset by RCVS Knowledge, a series of webinars, podcasts, and video interviews for practices and practitioners.

Pam Mosedale:

Hi everyone. Today, I'm talking to Fiona Lovatt. Fiona, is an independent sheep vet, and also teaches at Nottingham University and is the Clinical Lead for Farm Vet Champions at RCVS Knowledge. Hi Fiona.

Fiona Lovatt:

Hello. Nice to be with you.

Pam Mosedale:

So I want to talk to you about this Farm Vet Champions project. Can you explain what that is please?

Fiona Lovatt:

Well, Farm Vet Champions is quite a major collaborative project, spurred on in terms of responsible use of medicines. So it sort of starts in the ruminant sector, but we, we basically include all food producing animals. So, in the UK, we've just made amazing progress in reducing antibiotics over the last five years, but actually at the level of farm vet out there in a milking parlor or lambing shed, how is each vet making decisions in how they communicate with farmers and that sort of thing. That's where Farm Vet Champions comes in.

Pam Mosedale:

Sounds great. And, and how is this going to work? How does somebody become a Farm Vet Champion?

Fiona Lovatt:

We basically split into two phases and we launched phase one back in May, 2021. And that's more or less CPD. So we've got about 20 hours of material looking at the use of medicines, the legalities, the important need to know stuff. We've got species specific sections, cattle, poultry, sheep, goats, pigs, and that's all been organized by specialist association, so that's real experts in those species. Then we've got a, really, what I think is probably the most interesting bit is the actual behavior and attitude. So we've got some short sections on how do we communicate with farmers? Why do vets, and why do farmers have the attitudes we do about using antibiotics and how can we maybe communicate better practice?

So that's the CPD section. You can go onto the learning platform, sign up, watch those in your own time, and log your CPD points as you go through them. And then we are just at the point of sorting phase two. So that will be delivered by the spring 2022.

Pam Mosedale:

That sounds like an amazing CPD resource. And it's all free, isn't it?

Fiona Lovatt:

Yes, and it's open to anyone involved with farm veterinary practice. So, vet professionals can sign up as a Farm Vet Champion, but any member of the practice team is welcome to sign on and access all the CPD. So I know a number of practices where if they've got some students hanging around between calls, they'll get them to sign on and, give them some really valuable learning to dip in and out of in their own time.

Pam Mosedale:

Sounds really practical. Sounds great. And what's going to happen with phase two?

Fiona Lovatt:

So phase two is more interactive, and probably, an important part of the vision. We just had to split it down to deliver, and it's about setting smart goals. So we really recognize that all farm vets are in a different place. There are some people who have made enormous progress with their clients over the last few years and are actually really, really at the point best practice and they're doing what they can. Can we share what they've been doing, there are people who are a bit further back and maybe a bit more traditional but everybody can make some progress and setting a smart goal, so that's a goal that's specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and with a fixed time point, setting a goal that's relevant to your practice, to your situation. So it may be something like I aim to speak to 20 sheep farmers by the end of December about good nutrition, so that they don't have to use prophylactic antibiotics at lambing time, certainly on those lines, but very specific to your practice. It may be about communication within the practice team or setting good protocols within your dispensary. But something very specific that you know is what you need to do within your practice team.

Pam Mosedale:

I love the fact that they're going to be measurable. So presumably the practices can audit their progress with this within their own practice.

Fiona Lovatt:

Absolutely. So, yes, so we can hold each other accountable, both within the practice and across, you know, different Farm Champions can take ideas from others, can take motivation from others and see what was achievable. What can we do? And actually, yes, tick that off in a measurable way. So we can actually log that progress

Pam Mosedale:

And the great thing with the audit is they can measure, and then they can discuss why they didn't reach the target, if they didn't in fact, and what changes they might need to make to achieve the target next time.

Fiona Lovatt:

Exactly. And part of the goal is just to help people examine where they are and how they can move one step forward and how they can measure that and motivate each other. So it's all, that's kind of where it all is, and to be interactive. So it's not just, here's some CPD, take it away. I mean, it may be for some people that their goal is to actually access and act on each of the modules of CPD you know, it is really what is most appropriate for all the individuals and the individual practice teams.

Pam Mosedale:

And will there be a kind of forum where they can all talk about the different ways they're doing this?

Fiona Lovatt:

Yes. So, and that's still within phase two, but it's, it's kind of two B as it were. Obviously the last couple of years have been quite challenging in getting people together. So, formats for that are changing all the time. Part of the Farm Vet Champions is building a community and being able to encourage and motivate each other. And we've always aimed to want to do that by meeting up in person, and we've been constantly thwarted in that effort in the last two years for obvious reasons. But a combination of meeting in person, meeting regionally, meeting across species, actually, probably the species has worked best because we've worked very closely with each of the associations. So we all met up at BCVA, we've had things at sheep vets, at goat vets, at poultry vets. And we're all doing stuff within our species, but Farm Vet Champions is sort of pulling all that together. So sometimes it be regional, sometimes it's across social media channels, it's all sort of up there, but the smart goals links it all because it's, yeah, we've all got an aim and we are tracking that. So yeah, we can encourage motivate each other.

Pam Mosedale:

So you mentioned like sheep vets and cattle vets, et cetera. But what about someone working in a mixed practice that maybe only sees a few poultry and a few sheep, you know, would that be applicable? Would this be applicable to them?

Fiona Lovatt:

Yeah, absolutely. So, the current CPD there is literally an hour on each of the different species. So it is quite top level stuff. If you are a specialist dairy cow vet, then that hour, you are probably way beyond that. And we signpost you to other things that's appropriate. If you are a general practitioner, mixed practitioner, you know, I went through the poultry stuff and thought, wow, I've learned so much. I don't see poultry professionally but I want to know what's best practice and what we should be doing. And any one of us, however specialized we are because we're veterinary professionals, we get called on to do things that might be slightly out of our comfort zone. And Farm Vet Champions is great for that as this is what you need to know for this species. And this will signpost you to further details if you want it.

Pam Mosedale:

And I really like the fact that the whole team can access it, because then everybody knows what's going on because, okay, the vets are doing the prescribing, but it's really important that the whole team's on board, isn't it?

Fiona Lovatt:

Yes. And often the person at the reception front desk or at the end of the phone gets a lot of flack and a farmer might phone up and say, but I've always been given that, why are you not handing out bottles and bottles before I start lambing? It's really important that all members of the practice team are engaged with it. And yes, it is the vets prescribing, but they may not be the farmer facing bit at every stage of the conversation. And we kind of are all in this together and cross practice team communication is a really key part of it

Pam Mosedale:

And will be part of the team, you know, having the good ideas of how this is going to work, if everybody can participate.

Fiona Lovatt:

Yeah, exactly. As a vet, I know that we vets, we only see a part of the picture and actually every other bit of the practice team is so key and can often bring much better ideas in client contact and communication than we have ourselves. So it is really, really important.

Pam Mosedale:

So how are you going to measure how effectively this is all working, how effectively the whole project's working?

Fiona Lovatt:

Well, we've obviously got all the smart goals. We know where people are setting their smart goals and we've on the program, there are key words, so we can categorize those as people have set them. So we'll know which species or, whether it's involving people or data or on farm decisions. So that's one level. In terms of the data that is really key with antibiotics, so we've got the electronic medicine hub for pigs, and although a lot of commercial pig farmers are already signed up to that, there's huge numbers of smaller pig units who are not necessarily engaged. And on the ruminant side, the electronic medicine hub is, is really important. And in terms of collecting data, encouraging practices to encourage their client to sign up and upload their data. That's where we have nationally decided we are collating the data. So, it's to ensure that we are all pulling in the same direction and making sure the data's in the, in the same place. From a farm level. So for a practice, it may be that they ensure that a proportion or as many as possible of their dairy farm clients or sheep clients are uploading data to the, to the national medicine hub.

Pam Mosedale:

Can the practices access the data for the results from that data?

Fiona Lovatt:

Yep. So, the practice is often involved in helping farmers to register and to put the antibiotic data in. The farmer needs to input the farm specific data, numbers of animals. It's often a joint effort between farmer and vet and the farmer gives permission to the practice to either put in data on their behalf or, and certainly to access it. So it's a kind of collaborative thing between client farmer, client and vet.

Pam Mosedale:

Excellent. That, that sounds like it's going to be really, really useful and really effective. So any mixed practice vets out there, or farm vets out there who are not involved, what would you like them to do?

Fiona Lovatt:

Well, that's a no brainer. Go to the web site, which is very easy to access. So it's [RCVSKnowledge.org/fvc](http://RCVSKnowledge.org/fvc) for Farm Champions, and sign up and start looking through the CPD and bear in mind, the interactive bit, the building, the community, and the smart goals are yet to come, but they will be there within the next six months. And there is a whole community of us already. We have over 500 vets have already signed up. We are kind of, we really want to learn from vets, know what people are already doing and to help share ideas. So, learning with people and learning from people is all part of the thing. And, you know, come and join us

Pam Mosedale:

Excellent. And 500 vets, that's a lot. Do you know how many practices that is?

Fiona Lovatt:

I don't know exactly in practices, so we've got five and a half thousand farm vets nationally, and they're working from between 1000 and 2000 premises. Our aim is to make sure we've got at least one Farm Vet Champion in each area, but actually there is no limit on how many in each practice. And there's also no problem if people who are actually maybe not in practice for a bit, or stopped from maternity leave, their status stays with them and they can move practices. So there's a combination of people setting personal, smart goals and being part of a practice team. And that's flexible, you can move around and take your status with you. But where you are being part of that practice team is quite important. So you've got a common goal.

Pam Mosedale:

I was going to ask you about locum farm vets. So that probably answers that part of my question.

Fiona Lovatt:

Yeah, absolutely. Everybody is included and invited and as well as practice team members. So, we never know who is going to be the driving force in any one practice, and actually we want to kind of harness that enthusiasm from whoever it is in whatever area to run with it and to pull our colleagues along as well.

Pam Mosedale:

And it's such an important thing, isn't it,

Fiona Lovatt:

I'm afraid it is the O'Neill report showed that by 2050, so that's less than 30 is time, we expect there to be 10 million human deaths due to antimicrobial resistance on an annual basis. So globally, which is terrifying. And it actually puts this the current pandemic into perspective. So, none of us want to be alarmist but this is a One Health issue. So it's not just that I want my neighbor to be able to treat his calves or lambs, I want his farm to be able to use antibiotics going forward. But I actually want to know that when my kids go into hospital, that they can have a minor operation and not be scared of

antimicrobial resistance. So it kind of affects every single one of us on farms, pets, family health. And for that reason, it, you know, can't be more important really.

Pam Mosedale:

And animal welfare, because if there's antibiotics couldn't be used in animals, that would have a major impact on animal welfare, wouldn't it?

Fiona Lovatt:

Absolutely. And it's something that, through all our careers, we've just been completely used to there being antibiotics that we could turn to. And, you know, that is changing and we kind of have to be there and recognize the change

Pam Mosedale:

And interesting, you said for pets and horses and so on as well, is this something you think where the farm vets are leading the way and that may spread into the other species?

Fiona Lovatt:

We certainly, right from the start of Farm Vet Champions, we've been engaging with other, the companion and equine groups. And within the last year, we've actually got projects, so Vet Team AMR encompasses Farm Vet Champions as a part of that, equine and companions are pulled in as well. And there's more to happen of interest in there. So yeah, in the farm vet world, we don't usually see ourselves as leading away, but maybe in this, maybe we've sort of set a thing in motion and it's so important for all of us and whether it's treating food producing animals, or whether it's your cat or your dog who you snuggle up in bed with, or your children do, you know, it is really important that we're all using the antibiotics responsibly.

Pam Mosedale:

Yeah. Well, thank you. That's really made me think, especially the statistic about 10 million people. Yeah, it's really scary, isn't it? But it sounds fantastic and, and amazing. And I just can't see why farm practices wouldn't want to join in. It sounds amazing Fiona, so thank you so much for your time. That's been really, really useful, and let's hope that you encourage even more people to join in.

Fiona Lovatt:

Thank you. Thanks.

Pam Mosedale:

Bye

Fiona Lovatt:

Bye-bye.

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