



***Veterinary Evidence* Student Awards 2021 podcast**

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RCVS Knowledge:

Welcome to this *Veterinary Evidence* Student Awards podcast from RCVS Knowledge. *Veterinary Evidence* is an online open access peer-reviewed veterinary journal. The Annual *Veterinary Evidence* Student Awards are open to all undergraduate students from around the world, studying any veterinary related degree. Not only could you be published in a peer-reviewed veterinary journal and make a personal contribution to the evidence-base, but you could also win one of three cash prizes. To find out more, visit rcvsknowledge.org/studentawards.

Kit Sturgess:

Welcome to this podcast. We are so lucky to have three really bright and talented young women with us today who have all been awarded a student award for a Knowledge Summary that they sent into *Veterinary Evidence* and what I would like to do is to first off ask each of them to introduce themselves and give us all a little bit of knowledge about who they are.

Alex Bartlett:

Hi, my name's Alex and I'm a fourth-year vet student at the RVC in London. And I'm really interested in research, which is why I entered the competition. But my main clinical interests are in foreign medicine, which is what my Knowledge Summary was about.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you.

Ellie Best:

Hello? Yeah. I'm Ellie. I was a final year veterinary student at the University of Bristol. I graduated this summer, so I'm currently working at [inaudible 00:01:33] small animal hospital, which is great. But again, like Alex, I'm really super interested in research, which is why I ended up in the competition and I'm

going to take up a research post in the new year at the University of Bristol. So I'm super excited about that as well, to carry on my research.

Erina Leask:

Hello, I'm Erina from the University of Sydney in Australia. I'm a final year vet student. I've got one more week to go before I'm finishing up, which is fantastic. And my primary interest is in feline medicine and behavior so that's why I chose to put my topic on feline focus. And I'm really excited about going into small animal practice and hopefully pursuing a bit more into feline specialization one day.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. So I guess the place to start and again, Alex, you already started, exactly what motivated you to take part? Because on top of your studies, it's quite a thing to then decide to write a paper and submit it for a peer-review.

Alex Bartlett:

The main thing that motivated me is probably a bit different to everyone else because I intercalated in between my second-year and my third-year. And I discovered then that I really enjoyed research, but my intercalated research project was cut really short because of COVID and I could only do half of my work.

Alex Bartlett:

And I was really disappointed about that so I was trying to look for ways to still be involved with research even though I couldn't be in the lab like I have been. And I saw this competition advertised and I thought it'd be a really good way to keep having a go at research, and trying to improve my skills, and trying to improve my scientific writing skills to make up a bit for the fact that my intercalated research had been cut really short.

Alex Bartlett:

And then it took me a little while to find a topic but once I did, then it was really enjoyable, and it was more work on top of the vet course as well but because I'm quite interested in research myself, then it was kind of nice to do something that was a bit different from the clinical lectures so I quite enjoyed that side of it actually.

Kit Sturgess:

And Alex, what was your Knowledge Summary covering?

Alex Bartlett:

It was looking into the use of NSAIDs in calf castration to see if they're effective at reducing signs of postop pain because in the UK we can legally castrate calves up to eight weeks old without any NSAIDs or anesthesia or anything at all, which isn't really best practice. But I was hoping that if I could add some evidence saying that NSAIDs do help reduce signs of pain, then hopefully that can improve welfare a little bit going forward.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you Alex and moving on to Ellie.

Ellie Best:

Similar to Alex, really. I also escalated and that's when I fell in love with research and just because getting the opportunity to do research projects and everything, it made me realize how important it is to have more veterinary research out there. So when I saw the competition and learned a bit more about Knowledge Summaries, I thought, "Well, that's something that I really want to try and get involved in." I'm quite interested in exotic animals so I did my masters in exotic animals and wildlife conservation and things. And that's when I learned a bit more about how I suppose, exotic to animals.

Ellie Best:

It's quite hard to know when they're in pain so that's why I chose to focus my Knowledge Summary on rabbits and postoperative pain relief in rabbits because I think that's something as a prey animal, it's really hard to know whether we've given them adequate pain relief. There's not much published literature out there on the actual dose of medicines that we should be using. So I thought, "Well, that's a great way combining my love for research and wanting to contribute to the growing knowledge-base I suppose, and making a difference."

Ellie Best:

It's a type of research that you can make a difference in practice today rather than when you do normal research, you publish it, then you have to wait. If you do create a new drug or come up with a new idea, there's a lot of loopholes to jump through before it's actually implemented clinical practice. So a Knowledge Summary I thought was a great way of making a difference to clinical practice now.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you, Ellie and Erina, if you could cover the same area, but also just a little bit about whether you were surprised by how much information was out there or perhaps by how little information was out there.

Erina Leask:

Yeah, certainly. My interaction with the competition was actually a bit of a happy coincidence. I didn't know anything about it when I started the research project because the project was part of the capstone research experience as part of the third-year of the DBM at the university. So essentially over a year and a half, every student executes a research product and produces a paper that's submitted for assignment and while publication isn't required for the purpose of the assignment, it's strongly encouraged.

Erina Leask:

And I always wanted to publish a paper. And so, instead of seeing just how my paper went and then deciding at the end, I started the whole endeavor with the assumption that I was going to attempt publication, which meant that I intended to write the paper from the get-go using the format and the referencing requirements of my targeted journal, which was *Veterinary Evidence*. Because I knew I wanted to do a Knowledge Summary and unlike a lot of other journals *Veterinary Evidence* really likes publishing Knowledge Summaries.

Erina Leask:

So I started from the get-go using the templates and everything like that. And then, towards the end of the whole process, my academic advisor comes to me and says, "Oh look, they're doing this competition

and all the entrants get considered for publication anyway, so you might as well just do it this way." And I was like, "Oh, all right." So that's how I came to learn about the competition and submit and I guess the rest is history. And in terms of the evidence that I encountered with regards to my topic, which is about the efficacy of EMLA cream in reducing pain associated with venipuncture in cats. I think I was actually generally surprised by how much I found.

Erina Leask:

I was expecting maybe one or two good papers. And I probably found about seven that were generally on the topic and of those about four of them really answered my clinical question. And in terms of the strength of the evidence, it was fairly good as well, which I was very pleased about but of course there's always room for improvement. And obviously, that's something that I got to explore in my Knowledge Summary, which was really, really good.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And it is very interesting that all of you focused on pain. I mean, clearly that's a subject that is evolving very fast. 10, 15 years ago, our pain relief was probably really pretty poor. Most vets were not using much by the way of opiates or other drugs, so it's really great to feel that the next generation of enthusiastic vets have got pain at the forefront of their mind and we can do a better job, so that's fantastic.

Kit Sturgess:

I guess the hardest thing sometimes with the paper is the peer-review process because it's hard to get somebody you've never seen, never met who then starts to... You think you've written the paper the best way that you can and then you have sheets of comments or lines of comments. So it'd be really great if we could get a little bit of feedback of how you cope with that because it's not probably something where most people are hugely used to.

Kit Sturgess:

I mean, they get a few comments back from supervisors, but they're not in the length or the depth that you'll get with peer-review. So if we start with Erina, how do you feel about the peer-review? Was it daunting? Was it demoralizing or was it really helpful in terms of feeling you then got a better publication out of it?

Erina Leask:

I actually really enjoyed the peer-review process. I was expecting it to be much, much scarier than it was. As you said, I was expecting someone to tear my paper to shreds and find all the little cracks and just really take a big buy out of it. But I actually found the comments to be very reasonable and the critique was very much, it was feedback. It wasn't attacking in any way, which, part of me expected it to be really harsh, but it was all to better the paper.

Erina Leask:

And I found that all of the comments were extremely useful in making improvements. And well, I was really nervous that I was going to have to change large swaths of my paper, I actually found that many of the changes were very easy to make. So for the most part, I had a very good experience with the peer-review process. And because it was for an assignment anyway, I was getting feedback for it. And so, I

was kind of in that mindset of expecting the comments, so I guess for that part I was a bit prepared for that. But in general, I thought it was really, really good.

Kit Sturgess:

And Ellie, how did you find the process?

Ellie Best:

Pretty similar, to be honest, I really enjoyed it. I didn't have any sort of I suppose, guidance. I just did this as a kind of, "Yeah. Okay. Well, we'll have a go at writing a Knowledge Summary. I want to do some research and we'll see how it goes." So again, I was really expecting it to just be completely torn threads. But actually, it was very, very constructive criticism. Some of the changes were bigger than others and it helped me think about stuff that maybe I hadn't considered including like expanding on stuff in the conclusion and going into a little bit more detail that I hadn't gone into. So that was really, really helpful. And I felt that it produced a much better paper after having gone through everyone's comments than the first draft. So yeah, it was really helpful.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And Alex, how did you find the peer-review process?

Alex Bartlett:

Kind of similar to what everyone else said already. I think I was a lot more nervous for it that I needed to be like after I submitted my paper, when I was waiting to get the comments back from the review, it was like I'd refresh the page every few days and I'd be like really nervous to see if people had uploaded something. And then I remember when I got my first review uploaded, I was really nervous to open it because I was worried that the comments might be ripping my paper apart.

Alex Bartlett:

But the comments were all really constructive and everyone was just quite nice in their comments as well and they were just quite complimentary, which is quite nice because obviously I put a lot of work into it. So it was nice that people could see that I tried really hard. And some changes were a bit bigger than others. And I had to rerun a couple of searches, but on the whole, it was all quite manageable because I was on EMS at the time when I had to get my revisions sent back and I was revising for exams as well. So when I first got it, I was kind of like, "Oh my goodness, I've got a lot on at the moment. Don't know if I've got the time to do this."

Alex Bartlett:

By the time I sat down to do it, it actually wasn't that much. And the suggestions they'd made were all like really good suggestions, especially stuff about analyzing stats a bit more because I'm not very good at stats. And they'd suggested that I should be looking into confidence intervals and things to say how strong my evidence was a bit more. And I think that did really add to the paper and now that means that's quite useful for the rest of my course as well because now, I understand stats a bit more than I would have if I hadn't had a reviewer say to me, "Oh Hey, you could do a bit more work on your stats there." So overall it was a really positive process.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. I guess for me personally, often the hardest thing to do any piece of work is starting. So I wondered whether any of you who had some hints and tips for people who might follow in your footsteps about the way you tackle actually beginning a project. So if Ellie, if you could give us your thoughts on that, that would be great.

Ellie Best:

I would honestly say just start it because I'm denied about it for age and I was like, "Oh, shall I, but then they won't want something from me because I'm just a student they'd want something from a qualified vet, so I'm not going to bother with that." And then I thought, "Oh no, actually, I'm really interested in this." And I just eventually sent an email like it said on the website and said, "I'm going to write one on this clinical query" and just send it.

Ellie Best:

And I thought, "Right. Well, that's the hard bit out the way. Now I can actually just focus on enjoying the research." And I thought "It's kind of a bit of accountability as well. And it kind of sets you on, like you've said that you're going to do this so you can do it by yourself." And so yeah, I'd just say just start it. Just jump in and do it if you're passionate about it.

Kit Sturgess:

Erina, how do you get started on a piece of work?

Erina Leask:

I think it starts with the passion for the topic. Thinking about something, what do I want to learn? What do I want to know? And then from that beginning, just building that clinical query because it all starts with that it's the question that you want answered. So I really wanted to know, for example, can we improve the experience of cats undergoing this extremely routine, very common procedure? Can we make that better?

Erina Leask:

And then from that clinical query, it all just unfolds before you particularly with the RCVS Evidence. If you're starting research there, they've got all these great templates and everything like that and it's just the road is paved for you. So I think once you've got that, you start with the passion for a particular topic, for a particular question and then once you've formulated it, the steps are there and you just go.

Kit Sturgess:

And Alex, what are your tips and tricks or ways to get going?

Alex Bartlett:

Kind of similar to how Erina has said. I knew I wanted to do something to do with farm animal welfare because that's what I'm quite interested in. So I started off looking at the questions that were already available on the website that hadn't been answered yet. Then I had to have a bit of a think and then really, it was kind of like how Erina said, I just thought about what would I be interested in seeing improved in practice. And I thought about pain relief, especially in farm medicine isn't perhaps as used as it could be. And castration is obviously undoubtedly really painful.

Alex Bartlett:

And like I said earlier, I just thought if I could find meaningful evidence that we can do something to improve pain associated with castration, then that would be really good. And then maybe that could be the first to improving it even more so that we do start to use local anesthetics more because they're a bit more difficult to use than NSAIDs at the moment because you've got to wait for them to kick in and everything. So maybe if we could start getting farmers using NSAIDs more, then maybe the next step would be to use local when we castrate. So I thought that would really improve welfare then because I was quite interested in that. That kind of gave me the motivation to do the whole project because that was a change that I really wanted to see in practice.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you for that. Very useful thoughts and tips from all of you. I guess the other thing that helps all of us is when we feel we have support. And I just was wondering how each of you felt, what support you got from your academic institutions, or other mentors, or the journal in general, the journal staff, particularly perhaps with things like setting up the search, which is again, a bit of a hurdle to get going on, on a Knowledge Summary. So how was support for you Alex?

Alex Bartlett:

I think I sent a lot of questions to, I think it was Jennifer in the beginning because I had questions about everything. She was really helpful, always replied really quickly and never made me feel stupid for asking what I thought were really, really stupid questions because I'd never done anything like this before so I didn't really know where to begin. That was really helpful. The library team were great, because there are a couple of papers that I couldn't access through my institution and they accessed them for me for free, which was really, really kind of them.

Alex Bartlett:

And then I think I emailed my draft to my tutor at uni to see if he had any thoughts just about how it flowed and everything, and the grammar, and if it made sense to somebody who wasn't me. So that was quite good to get another pair of eyes having a look at it. So I'd say you get as much support as you ask for, like if you ask help then you will be given help and you will be supported. But obviously if you don't ask then people won't know that you're struggling, but if you are struggling then you'll definitely get as much help as you need really.

Kit Sturgess:

That's really important message I think to get out there is that, if you need support ask for it because there are always people out there who are more than willing to help new younger members of the profession move forward, so that's a great piece of advice, Ellie, how did you find the support process or perhaps you didn't need any support you just zoomed through?

Ellie Best:

No. No, actually Sir, I did do it mostly on my own. I asked, I think it was Claire at the library team and was really helpful with me start my search off to start with because that was one thing that I struggled with. Everyone on the library team was great. My dad was also really helpful at reading my draft because I wrote it just in lockdown, so he was great at reading my draft. He's not a vet or anything, but told me whether it made sense and things, which is great. But yeah, no, everyone was quite helpful. And a gain, I'd stress that if you do need help ask, because whenever I did have a question or even if it was a

tiny one, like the system and which button do I press, everyone at the RCVS team was really, really, really helpful. So yeah.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. And Erina, how was the support for you? You did mention that is part of your coursework, so I guess that was a bit more structured perhaps the support.

Erina Leask:

Yeah, you're exactly right. So because it was an assignment we had, it was all broken down into milestones that we had to achieve and submit our drafts for actually the university to assess as well. And the way that they like to do it is that each student teams up with a member of the academia from the university and it doesn't have to be from the veterinary school. It can kind of be from the general, the school of science and things as well.

Erina Leask:

But I was extremely fortunate to have the fantastic Dr. Ann Quinn, who does a lot of work in animal welfare as my academic advisor. And she was essentially the backboard against which I could pitch my ideas and really help me shape out the beginning, like I said, with my topic and my clinical query. And then from there, she was essentially there to just keep me on track, which was extremely valuable because we had a timeline to stick to and there are parts of the process that take longer than others or take longer than you expect they're going to take, I suppose. S.

Erina Leask:

So she was there as my personal motivator, which was excellent. And she got to read all my drafts and, and give me feedback throughout the process, which I really appreciate. And of course, as I mentioned, she was the one who pointed out the competition to me as well. So if it weren't for her, there's no way I would be here because I certainly wouldn't have had the courage to something without her support.

Kit Sturgess:

That's great. Thank you. One of the things I suppose really interests me is what have you all learned from doing it? Not just about the subject, which I'm sure all of you feel you're much more knowledgeable about that area of veterinary medicine, but learned about yourselves, about your learning styles, about how to write a paper. And so Ellie, if you can give us some thoughts on what you've learned, that would be great.

Ellie Best:

Oh, yeah. I would say I definitely learned a lot about the research process, and the peer-review process, and being on the other side of the peer-review process of being part of the publication, like sending your paper in for publication and how feedback and things work. I also learned a lot about time management and it was very self-motivated this Knowledge Summary. I wrote it actually during the April 2020 lockdown, almost two years ago now. But yeah, so it was very much I was at home, not at that school and was like, "Okay, I'm going to use my time to write this Knowledge Summary."

Ellie Best:

So finding that structure in my day and I learned a lot about time management there and also how to deal with the challenges that I came across and that research doesn't always go plan. So I eventually... Because I wrote it so long ago by the time I submitted it and it had been through the first two rounds of peer-review I think the search had expired so I had to run it all again and start again because it had been over six months. So just finding the motivation to just stick with it, manage your time and overcome the challenges, I think were three big ones for me.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. Erina, how about you? What have you learned?

Erina Leask:

I think my greatest gain from the experience was the time spent honing in and challenging my own critical analysis skills because I suppose that's the heart of the whole process, is taking the evidence that exists and going, "Okay, what's good and what's not good about this and then let's pick it apart." And I'm really glad of that because I see so much value in that. I don't necessarily plan to be a researcher going forward.

Erina Leask:

I probably plan to be more in clinical practice, but those skills are so valuable because it means that when I come across a question in my clinical practice, I can go and look at other Knowledge Summaries or at other original evidence. And I feel like now I'm much more confident in my ability to look at that and say, "Is this quality evidence? Can I use these findings and apply them to what I'm doing right now?" So I think that in of itself is such a prize to have won because it means that I'm going to be hopefully a better practitioner for it. And as well as that, I think understand by doing the process myself, I have a much greater understanding of the merits of peer-reviewed research. And I have a lot of appreciation now for Knowledge Summaries. So I will certainly be utilizing those more in the future for my evidence based practice as well.

Kit Sturgess:

That's great to hear and great that you feel you can carry this knowledge through as transferrable knowledge to other areas of your clinical practice because that's a win, double win really. You've gained a lot and you've gained for the future. Alex, what have you learned from the experience?

Alex Bartlett:

I think kind of similar things to what everyone else has said. I think a big thing for me was being able to practice scientific writing and critical analysis of literature because that's something that I'd struggled with a little bit in the past where I kind of thought that I was better about it than I was. So then I'd done coursework assignments and realized that actually, I could do with a bit of work in that area.

Alex Bartlett:

So entering the competition and getting published really boosted my confidence that if I put my mind to it, I actually could improve in that. And that's been really gratifying because it's just really nice when you work really hard at something and then you see that you get better at it so that's been really nice.

Alex Bartlett:

And I think time management was a big one as well because I was doing this during term time. I think I started in the summer holidays maybe and then carried on during term time when I was in full-time lectures with practicals and stuff as well. So trying to manage my time so that I was doing enough work on my paper and keeping up with uni was a bit tricky at times, but that was a really good skill to learn. And then, like I said earlier, when I was doing the revisions as well, I was also revising for my end year exams and on [inaudible 00:25:07].

Alex Bartlett:

So that was quite a lot to juggle, but I think time management is such a valuable skill, especially as of vet and in a research position as well, that's definitely a transferable skill going forward. So all-in-all it's definitely been a really useful thing to have done for my future career as well as just for being a student as well.

Kit Sturgess:

Excellent. That's really good again, to know that it does more than just produce a paper in the literature. So for me, always the \$64,000 question is, have you been put off writing papers forever or would you if you saw, for example, a really interesting case in practice would feel now much better equipped to write that up and feel confident and competent to present it to a journal for peer-review. So Ellie, would you write another paper?

Ellie Best:

110%, yes. The peer-review process was really, really, really useful. And a bit like Alex said, it really boosted my confidence and it has not scared me away. No, I would strongly recommend getting involved in research to anyone and just get super excited about it. So yeah, I would definitely do it again.

Kit Sturgess:

And have you got any current thoughts about the next topic that you might think about?

Ellie Best:

Yeah. So I'm doing quite a bit of research at the moment on antibiotic resistance and developing new antibiotics because obviously, that's a huge problem in the veterinary profession. So I've been doing a bit of work, started a few years ago now on my masters, but I kind of carried it on. So that's the next and that's what my research position is on next year as well so that will probably be the next few papers if any papers. Hopefully things cross and will come from developing [inaudible 00:26:52].

Kit Sturgess:

That's great. Clearly an area we need more therapeutic options in our armory. So Erina, are we going to see your name in the publication lights again in the future?

Erina Leask:

I never thought that I would really be interested in publishing more, but having done this experience, I could definitely see the potential to write some more papers. And in particular, I think it would probably be a more in clinical situation. You know, if I came across something really interesting or if I had the opportunity to run a clinical trial myself. In particular, the research that I've done and the response that I

got from the paper has really raised some new questions for me such as what is the minimum time you can leave EMLA cream on to get a response?

Erina Leask:

That wasn't really something that was explored in the papers that I looked at. What I looked at was, at these times is it effective? So I feel like if I end up going forward with pursuing specialization, perhaps I understand there is a research component in that process. So these are some of the ideas I've got swimming in the back of my mind for potential topics when I get to that bridge.

Erina Leask:

And in general, in terms of what I learned from this experience and whether or not I'd recommend it to others, I feel that at the worst you learn something yourself and at the best you get to give something to the rest of the industry that's valuable. So there's really no downside to just trying, because you get to improve your own skills. And then if you get published, you get to improve the industry and how we practice, which is just excellent.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you, Erina. Your enthusiasm is infectious, I think. And I think you've hit the nail on the head of any research project. It ends up with more questions that you never thought we needed to know the answer to, but once you've done a bit, you see all the other areas that we need to develop knowledge to be able to perform our roles better and support the welfare of animals. So that's really exciting to feel that...

Kit Sturgess:

And that means that research is never ending. It almost expands exponentially, so going into research is a great plan because then you'll never run out of questions. So Alex, how about you? Where are you with further publications?

Alex Bartlett:

I would definitely like to pursue further publications if I can. Like I say, this process has given me a lot more confidence in myself that I can produce work that is worth publishing. And I think publishing with *Veterinary Evidence* is a process where you're very supported and it's just quite a nice way to start being published I think. So I'd definitely be interested in maybe writing another Knowledge Summary one day and I'm doing a research project next time as part of my degree as well, which I'm fingers crossed maybe going to get a public out of. Hopefully everything goes to plan.

Alex Bartlett:

So that would be quite exciting because we're looking at novel diagnostics of bovine TB, which if it all goes to plan is quite exciting because obviously TB's a really, really big problem in the UK cattle industry. So that would be great if I could get something published out of that because that's where my main research interest is overall with everything so that's where I'm hoping to head at the moment.

Kit Sturgess:

That's fantastic. And I think that's one of the things too, that sounds that you all have taken away that it doesn't need to change the whole universe, but there are lots of small steps that we need to take. And

that means that a project doesn't have to be massive and take years, and years to produce something worth publishing, which is really great to know.

Kit Sturgess:

So we've been chatting for quite a while. I just really wanted to wrap up with the last few points from each of you about when a younger member your vet school rings you up and says, "I see you did well. You won the competition last year. What tips would you recommend that I go for it?" Perhaps a couple of words from each of you about what you would say in response to that person, so if we start with Ellie.

Ellie Best:

I would say to start with probably just go for it and remember that there is always support at the end of the phone or at the end of an email because everyone was really, really, really helpful. So I think remembering that you are not doing it completely by yourself, and there is always someone to ask, and just getting stuck in and making that start, and taking that first step. Because that's the hardest bit I think, is like believing yourself enough to take that step and think, "No, I'm going to make a difference. I'm going to answer that small question because it's going to make a difference in clinical practice." So I'd say go for it and ask for help.

Kit Sturgess:

That's great. That's really good advice. Just jump off into the unknown because there are lots of people to support you on your way down or up hopefully. Erina, what's your tips for the next generation?

Erina Leask:

I would say, my advice would be to pick something that you're passionate about. Pick something that is a change that you want to see. Don't just go for something that you think is maybe important to the industry because the chances are, if you're passionate about it, the likelihood is other people are too. If it's a question that you have probably other practitioners are asking it as well. And to not invalidate that.

Erina Leask:

I was overwhelmed by the response that I got from the paper and it made me realize this is something that people want to know and that people want to implement in their practice. And that was so exciting to see. So I would say picking a thing that you are passionate about is not only going to be really important for motivating you to get through the process, but don't discredit what your idea is, what your question is, and having something that you are really interested in is going to be so valuable for getting you through the whole process as opposed to just thinking, "Oh, this is something that other people want to know" and not being really on board with it. It will make the whole process a lot more sluggish. So I'd say picking something that you're really interested in.

Kit Sturgess:

That's a really perfect piece of advice. Thank you. Alex.

Alex Bartlett:

Similar to what the others have said, kind of jump straight in and to something that you are really keen on so that you can keep yourself motivated. But also, it's important I think to remember that if you start to feel discouraged because like it is quite a big thing to do, especially if you choose a question that gives

you loads and loads of papers to read and you think, "I'm going to be here for the rest of my life reading these papers." There is always support available. And don't be afraid to ask for support because there are so many people who want to help you and will give you great advice.

Alex Bartlett:

And just having that motivation to stick it out, even when it gets quite difficult. Because like, I think Erina has said earlier, even if worst case scenario, then you will have learned something and that will make you a better vet. And best case scenario, then you are adding something to the profession that loads of other people will do, so there will be loads more better vets out there.

Alex Bartlett:

So even if you're finding it really tricky and you're thinking, "Oh, I just want to give up on this because it's so much work." Then the reward is worth it because you will be making a difference to the industry, and to your patients, and other people's patients. And ultimately, that's I think why you entered the competition because you want to make a difference to patients and give patients better outcomes.

Kit Sturgess:

Thank you. So I've really enjoyed talking to you all. It's so motivating for me as I perhaps reach the twilight of my career to know that the profession is in safe hands with young passionate vets or vets to be coming through who are going to drive the subject forward and give us more knowledge, better abilities to treat our patients effectively, better abilities to manage their pain to make their welfare better.

Kit Sturgess:

So that is really fantastic to know and means that I can sleep more soundly at night that I'm not leaving the profession and it will fall apart without me. So thank you so much. And I'm sure that we will hear from you all again in the future.

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