

BVA Congress 2011

'Vets in a changing world' was the theme of this year's British Veterinary Association Congress. This led to a very interesting few days of discussion and debate amongst some of the most prominent veterinary professionals in the UK and overseas. The theme of the congress was also in line with 2011 being the World Veterinary Year, the 250th anniversary of the opening of the first vet school, in Lyon.

One of the highlights of the congress for AVS was the discussion 'Veterinary education – a price worth paying'. The session was chaired by our president, Myfanwy Hill; with speakers Jo Price, Head of the School Veterinary Sciences at Bristol University; and Alex Corbishley, a recently graduated farm animal vet from Cheshire. The session focused on the possible consequences of the recent increase in tuition fees to both vet school applicants and graduates.

Another strong theme of the congress was the role of veterinarians in helping to ensure food security in the years of population growth ahead – in 2050 there will be an estimated 9 billion people to feed (2 billion more people than at present), with a disproportionate increase in the consumption of animal-based proteins alongside this. In the years to come there are big decisions to be made about where this food will come from and how intensive we want animal production to become: should we sacrifice welfare for quantity?

There were also a number of awards presented on behalf of the BVA, including the [BVA travel grants](#), which celebrate the 100th award this year and have been enabling students to undertake research overseas through the award of £500. The projects have been implemented in 38 developing countries – from Tanzania to the Seychelles. An additional award, the Harry Steele-Bodger Memorial Scholarship, was awarded to Francesca Scott (a final year student from Cambridge University), for her work on the economics of bovine tuberculosis in Ghana. Peter Roeder, one of the key members of the research team that helped to eradicate rinderpest from the planet this year (the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme), emphasised the importance of new veterinarians undertaking overseas work in the prevention of 'exotic' disease prevention and surveillance. He suggested a need for the profession to further encourage this, perhaps through the award of vet student bursaries.

The AGM also welcomed in the new BVA President, Carl Padget; and the President-Elect Peter Harlech Jones.

Overall the event highlighted the need for the profession to remain adaptable by identifying and meeting the changing demands placed upon the profession. We need to justify the increased cost of veterinary education by ensuring our undergraduate students remain to get world class education throughout the university course. We need to look overseas as well as to the UK and Ireland in order to predict emerging and re-emerging diseases. And we need to continually think about the ethics and economics of what we do.

Written by Anna Briggs (Marketing Representative)

A few tweets from #BVACongress

@mossposs: Maybe more grads will look at careers outside of practice post graduation? Not sure this is a bad thing?

@Vetsforum: What if prospective students can't even apply because debt would simply be too high

@petethevet: effective new tax of 9% for 30yrs is unfair.will price them out of the Market.

@BritishVets: All in the vet profession must look for opportunities to help new graduates