CPD course

In conjunction with CPD vets at The University of Liverpool, TEST-A-PET is running a one-day CPD course on Wednesday 16th September 2009 - Diagnosis of Parasitism in Dogs and Cats.

This course is suitable for both vet nurses and vets and will include analysis of faecal samples for helminth eggs, larvae (including lungworm) and parasitic protozoa, and skin scrapings for ectoparasites.

Practical demonstrations and lectures which accompany sample analysis will be given by:

Professor Sandy Trees
BVM&S PhD DipEVPC MRCVS

Dr. Jackie Barber
BVetMed PhD MRCVS

Dr. John McGarry MSc PhD

The key elements of tick identification that are presented in this issue's in-focus article will be covered in greater detail during the CPD course.

Further details can be found on the course booking form (enclosed) additional copies of which are available upon request or on-line at www.liv.ac.uk/cpdvets.

Free Clinical Advice at TEST-A-PET

As part of the TEST-A-PET diagnostic service, our consultant Dr. Jackie Barber can provide free pre and post-test clinical advice. This service is for veterinary surgeons only and can be accessed during office hours - please see contact details on page four of this newsletter.

TEST-A-PET
The Veterinary Parasitology Diagnostic Service

SAVSNET

Our colleagues in the Small Animal Infectious Diseases group have recently set up the Small Animal Veterinary Surveillance Network (SAVSNET) to monitor the current prevalence and emergence of small animal disease in the UK, initially in dogs and cats.

The scheme has two related elements:

Laboratory Surveillance - To collate test results from small animal diagnostic laboratories (including TEST-A-PET). This will enable numbers of suspected clinical cases to be determined and prevalence of disease to be estimated.

Real Time Surveillance - To explore incidence of disease by collecting data from veterinary practices which use Vet Solutions software, with the aim of obtaining 'real-time' clinical information from consultations.

Resulting data will provide a valuable insight into the status of disease in our small animal population which, due to a lack of surveillance, is something which has not been possible until now.

Surveillance is particularly relevant to small animal health at the moment because of the substantial rise in the number of animals travelling abroad, increasingly open national borders and climate change, which will inevitably affect prevalence of disease in the future. Not only will these factors affect the spread of endemic disease but they also have the potential to facilitate the establishment of exotic disease in the UK, and so it is clear that there is now a pressing need for effective surveillance to help combat these threats.

In meeting this need, the outputs from SAVSNET will benefit veterinarians, animal owners, teaching, research and pharmaceutical companies alike and in recognition of this, TEST-A-PET is participating in the SAVSNET scheme.

SAVSNET co-ordinator Áine Tierney said, "TEST-A-PET plays a vital role in veterinary diagnostics and disease control. Specialising exclusively in veterinary parasitology, it will make an important contribution to the scheme".

Client confidentiality is ensured as only sample references, test results and the first letter(s) from the postcode of the submitting vet practice will be used.

Data will be freely available on the SAVSNET website in the form of quarterly reports.

More information is available at www.liv.ac.uk/savsnet.

SAVSNET is supported by the BSAVA, Defra, the AHT, NOAH, Vet Solutions and seven industrial partners.

Paul Gilmore BSc (Hons)

IN FOCUS
Ticks under the mi

Surveillance for ticks is important both in the clinical context and in the light of proposals to deregulate the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) requirement to treat dogs and cats with acaricide before re-entry to the UK. In this article, John McGarry explains how to identify the important disease vector ticks that dogs and cats may pick up in the UK and Europe. This article is the first of two on ticks, the diseases they carry and treatments.

Ticks, tick-borne diseases and PETS

The hard ticks (Ixodidae) comprise several major genera that parasitise mammals, birds and reptiles worldwide. They are vectors of diverse and sometimes multiple disease agents including protozoa, viruses, rickettsias and spirochaetes. There are some 850 described species of hard ticks worldwide but relatively few have evolved as vectors of serious animal diseases. In Europe, certain tick species pose a serious infectious disease threat to dogs and cats. Current control measures under PETS require a certified tick treatment such as Fipronil within a 24-48 hour window of return, so that ticks and their exotic pathogens do not become established here. The ruling on tick treatment applies to the UK and Malta; it is presently being reviewed and may be removed. In this event, it is inevitable that exotic ticks carrying exotic pathogens will arrive here from other EU states and potentially from anywhere in the world.

This is very worrying because pet travel is likely to increase in future years - the number of dogs and cats which have travelled abroad has increased each year since DEFRA launched PETS in 2000. More than 56,000 dogs and cats re-entered the UK in 2008, the majority having visited European countries between May and September, when tick activity is at its peak. In southern Europe, *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* is the main vector of *Babesia canis vogeli* and *Ehrlichia canis*. Another species, *Dermacentor reticulatus,* occurs in most European states and transmits *Babesia canis canis*, which causes a more severe disease than *B. canis vogeli*. Another type of babesiosis, due to *Babesia gibsoni* (a smaller piroplasm), is less responsive to treatment and is also thought to be transmitted by *R. sanguineus*. Both these tick species occur in the UK at the moment but at a very low density and are rarely seen on dogs. *Ixodes ricinus* is a major pest of dogs and cats in the UK and throughout mainland Europe. It can transmit *Borrelia burgdorferi*, *Anaplasma phagocytophila*, Louping ill virus and *Bartonella* spp. Populations of *I. ricinus* in parts of central and eastern Europe carry tick-borne encephalitis virus (TBE), a serious zoonotic agent, which is not found in the UK.