



# VetCompass

Health Surveillance for UK Companion Animals



Project newsletter  
Winter 2015

## Celebrating a landmark year for VetCompass!

**More data, wider UK coverage, an expanding team & other exciting developments in 2015**

As of September 2015 our database holds information on more than 4 million individual animals, relating to:

- Over 11 million episodes of care,
- Nearly 40 million total treatments,

Data from 470 veterinary clinics across the UK.

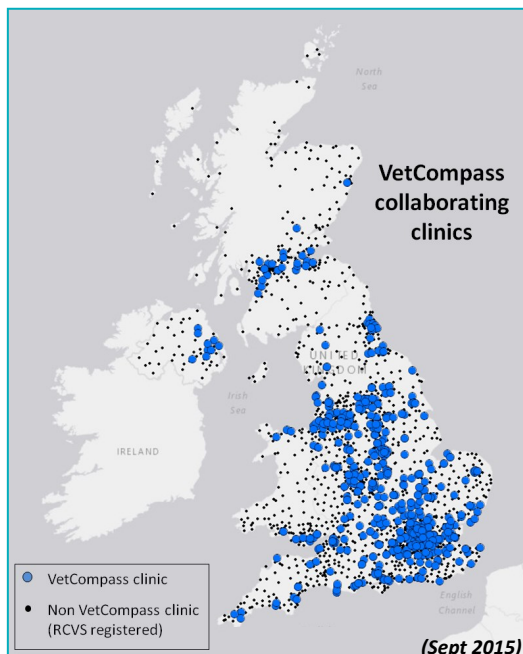
The VetCompass programme continues to expand—you can read more about the widening range of research areas, collaborations & new team members in this newsletter, or via our website, found at [www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass).



**VetCompass Team, Sept 2015**

**Main picture (from left):** Prof. David Church, Dr Jen Summers, Dr Dan O'Neill, Maddy Mattin, Dr Dave Brodbelt.

**Inset (from left):** Dr Emma Buckland, Prof Josh Slater, Megan Conroy, Dr Kristien Verheyen, Steph Marlowe, Sarah Allen.



*As always, we would like to thank all participating practices, their clients & pets for sharing the data which make this important companion animal research possible.*

## BSAVA support for VetCompass!

**We are delighted that the British Small Animal Veterinary Association has now stated full support for the VetCompass programme!**



### **Supporting statement in full:**

*'For the sake of animal welfare and to advance scientific understanding, the veterinary profession needs high quality, large scale disease surveillance & collection of epidemiological data to support research. The British Small Animal Veterinary Association recognises the importance of the work of VetCompass. Information collected by veterinary surveillance projects such as VetCompass will help clinicians working in practice and academia to treat companion animals, & will inform development of policy & educational resources. Veterinary surveillance is important for both animal & human health.'*

**For more information & project updates visit [www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCompass](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCompass)**

## New VetCompass Team members in 2015

### Dr. Emma Buckland

Emma joined us in early 2015 to undertake a Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) funded project, using VetCompass data to describe primary-care veterinary use of antimicrobials in UK dogs & cats. She has a strong background in companion animal welfare research, having recently completed a PhD in the Centre for Animal Welfare at the Royal Veterinary College.

Emma is now a Post Doctoral Research Assistant within VetCompass, funded by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW). Her role involves summarising current knowledge on companion animal inherited disorders, to update reference resources on the UFAW website & highlight significant knowledge gaps.



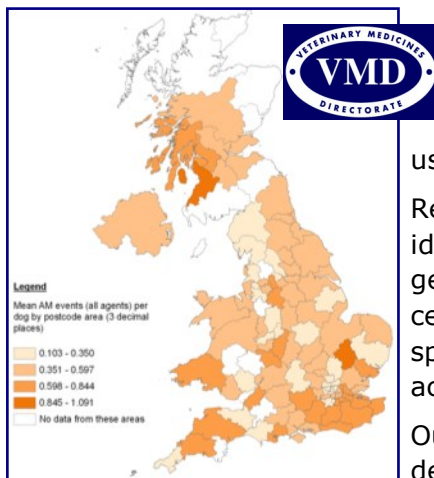
### Megan Conroy



Megan graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 2010 & spent time in first opinion, mixed practice & small animal emergency work before gaining an MSc in Veterinary Epidemiology from the RVC & LSHTM in 2015.

She joins the VC team to investigate the epidemiology of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) in cats, as part of her Master of Research degree studies supervised by Dr. David Brodbelt & Prof. Jonathan Elliott.

This Ceva-funded project will use clinical data from VetCompass to estimate UK prevalence of feline CKD, explore potential risk factors for developing the condition & describe the survival of cats affected.



### Antimicrobial use in UK dogs & cats

There are limited data on antimicrobial (AM) use in UK companion animals. A recent VMD-funded VetCompass study aimed to describe AM use in cats & dogs using UK veterinary clinic data recorded in 2012-14.

Relatively high levels of AM usage in companion animal clinics were identified generally & for certain 'critically important' agents; 3rd generation cephalosporin use appeared particularly common in cats, with cephalosporins & amoxicillin-clavulanate frequently dispensed for both species. Mapping revealed uneven geographical distribution of AM use across the UK, despite correction for population size.

Our final report has now been submitted to the VMD & we aim to publish detailed findings in due course.

## Launch of VetCompass Equine!

**Sarah Allen** has joined us to develop this exciting new VetCompass initiative, supervised by Dr. Kristien Verheyen, Dr. Dave Brodbelt & Professor Josh Slater.

VetCompass Equine is a new practice-based equine health surveillance scheme, aiming to improve equine disease surveillance & guide evidence-based health care for UK horses. Prospectively collected electronic health records from primary-care equine vets will be used for sustained monitoring of general horse health, identification of welfare & research priorities & further development of evidence-based equine practice.

Once the early practice recruitment phase is complete, initial plans are to identify, rank & estimate prevalence of common equine health issues in the UK, before undertaking risk factor analyses on disorders of particular interest.

**For further information contact Sarah Allen by e-mail ([seallen@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:seallen@rvc.ac.uk)).**



## VetCompass research news



### Peer-reviewed journal publications



#### **Epidemiology of cranial cruciate ligament disease diagnosis in dogs attending primary-care veterinary practices in England**

Taylor-Brown F, Meeson R, Brodbelt D, Church D, McGreevy P, Thomson P, O'Neill D. *Veterinary Surgery*; June 2015 [[OPEN ACCESS](#)]

This study used health records from 953 dogs diagnosed with cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) disease from a population of 171,522 dogs attending 97 primary-care veterinary practices to estimate the prevalence of CCL disease diagnosis in UK dogs, describe case management & evaluate risk factors for diagnosis in UK primary-care practice.

#### **Disorders recorded in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels attending primary-care veterinary practices in England**

Summers J, O'Neill D, Church D, Thomson P, McGreevy P, Brodbelt D. *Canine Genetics & Epidemiology*; April 2015 [[OPEN ACCESS](#)]

This Kennel Club Charitable Trust funded study describes the most commonly diagnosed health disorders recorded in a randomly selected group of 1,875 CKCSs presented for primary health care in England over a 6 year period.



#### **Epidemiological associations between brachycephaly and upper respiratory tract disorders in dogs attending veterinary practices in England**

O'Neill D, Jackson C, Guy J, Church D, McGreevy P, Thomson P, Brodbelt D. *Canine Genetics & Epidemiology*; July 2015 [[OPEN ACCESS](#)]

This study explored upper respiratory tract disease and brachycephalic associations in dogs by comparing 3 extreme brachycephalic dog breeds (Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pug) with commonly owned breeds of moderate or non-brachycephalic head shape.

#### **Prevalence of and risk factors for degenerative Mitral Valve Disease in dogs attending primary-care veterinary practices in England**

Mattin M, Boswood A, Church D, López-Alvarez J, McGreevy P, O'Neill D, Thomson P, Brodbelt D

*Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*; March 2015

In this study electronic patient record (EPR) data from a population of 111,967 dogs attending 93 VetCompass-participating clinics were used to estimate the prevalence of DMVD in dogs attending primary-care veterinary practices in England. Potential risk factors for the condition were also identified & evaluated.



#### **Degenerative mitral valve disease: Survival of dogs attending primary-care practice in England**

Mattin M, Boswood A, Church D, McGreevy P, O'Neill D, Thomson P, Brodbelt D

*Preventative Veterinary Medicine*; May 2015

This retrospective cohort study evaluated survival characteristics of dogs diagnosed with degenerative mitral valve disease (DMVD) & dogs classified as possible cases (i.e. with heart murmurs consistent with DMVD) using electronic patient records from primary-care veterinary practices in England from January 2010 to December 2011.

**Find further details on all VetCompass publications, many with links to the full text, in the Learn Zone area of our website: [www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCompass/learn-zone](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCompass/learn-zone)**



# VetCompass Learn Zone: Our findings online!

As part of recent development work on our website we've added a multi-media 'Learn Zone' area, to present VetCompass research in a variety of different formats. These include interactive, pictorial & audio-visual resources, alongside journal publication listings.

Here's a sneak preview of the different areas available to explore:



## Publications Library

Contains a fully comprehensive list of peer-reviewed VetCompass journal publications & articles related to the programme or specific study findings.

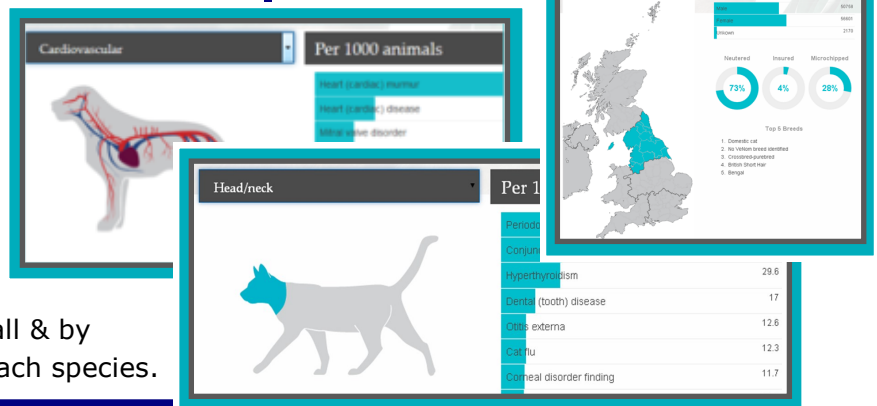
## Open Access

Many of these articles & publications are available to download in full, via links to the original Open Access journals or through RVC self-archiving.

## Interactive resources

Visitors to our clickable 'infographics' page can now explore VetCompass findings on:

- Canine & feline demographics, for the UK as a whole & by geographical region,
- The disorders most frequently diagnosed in UK dogs & cats, overall & by organ system or body location in each species.



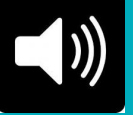
## Posters

VetCompass study results, presented visually as eye-catching posters with various styles & target audiences, including:

- Academic conference posters, with detail on study design, results & discussion of conclusions made,
- Simple 'infograms' summarising the main findings of key papers in lay terms for all.

## Audio-visual Library

Listen to recordings of VetCompass talks given at major meetings/conferences & watch e-lectures available online via the VetCompass YouTube channel & RVC's VetTalks series.



## Contact us!

**By post:** Royal Veterinary College, Hawkshead Lane, Hatfield, Herts, AL9 7TA

**Website:** [www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCompass](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCompass)

**E-mail:** [vetcompass@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:vetcompass@rvc.ac.uk)

**With thanks to our current funding partners:**

