



Farm



## Farm Graduate Development Programme

VetSkills



**We're not a corporate.**

**So who are we?**

We're proud to be a community of independent veterinary practices.

Membership provides us with the freedom to focus on our people and patients.

**My practice. My purpose.**

## How do we support graduates?

Our community provides young vets with opportunities to develop their clinical and non-clinical skills through the XLVets Graduate Development Programmes, mentoring support, community forums and working groups.

### Join our community ...

To join the XLVets community, you will first apply to and receive a job offer from one of our member practices. As our member practices are independent, the recruitment process is managed by the practice team. Once you have secured your role, you can get involved in our community and all that it has to offer, including our Graduate Programmes.

Search current opportunities at XLVets member practices at

**[xlvets.co.uk/vacancies](http://xlvets.co.uk/vacancies)**

Or follow us on



@XLVetsConnect

### EMS Opportunities

Apply for EMS at our central portal. Our member practices offer a broad range of EMS opportunities, representing Farm, Equine and Small Animal disciplines. Our website will make it easier for you to identify and apply to XLVets member practices in one place.

**[xlvets.co.uk/vet-ems](http://xlvets.co.uk/vet-ems)**

Once you find your ideal job at an XLVets Farm member practice...

All of our members can access the XLVets Farm Graduate Development Programme, which is designed to bring graduates together to work as a team, share experiences and develop contacts. Each graduate can also choose to be supported by a mentor from within XLVets, to help strengthen shared learning across the XLVets community.

## Contents

The programme is made up of three core modules, delivered across eight days, which can be further supported by additional VetSkills modules in the future, plus our annual graduate get together.

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- Driver skills
- Mastering medicines
- Managing your wellbeing
- Pigs & Poultry

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### Dairy Days

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- Calving the cow
- Down cows
- Surgery – an approach to common situations
- Transition management – what is it?
- Lameness identification
- First aid treatment

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### Beef & Sheep Skills and Practical Pathology

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- Diagnosis, treatment and prevention of common diseases in cattle & sheep
- Infertility
- Managing difficult c-sections
- Practical pathology



**Andrew Curwen**

XLVets Chief Executive

*"A very warm welcome. One of the key strengths of the XLVet community is that we can share ideas, knowledge and skills to help each other to develop excellence in practice. The quality of the support that is available to someone starting their career helps define their future success. This graduate programme, provided by members for members, offers a series of modules that are designed to connect you with your peers and equip you with useful skills and knowledge. It marks the next important step in an on-going learning journey. So let's begin."*

## What have recent graduates said about the XLVets Graduate Development Programme?

'The new grad course has been amazing. Sessions were pitched at just the right level, not to mention great fun. Could not recommend more! So much learned and great friends made :-)'

'The right step for new grads at the start of practice!'

'The new graduate course has proved invaluable during my first few months in practice. I have really enjoyed the reassurance and support network that the course has given me and the module contents have been relevant and thought provoking.'

## **My experience of joining an independently owned veterinary practice that is part of the XLVets community by Chris Newson:**

Being in an XLVet member practice for a first job has really suited me. It has allowed me to develop as a person in and outside of work.

My confidence levels have been increasing daily as I am feeling much more relaxed in the environment at work.

The XLVets practice I am based at has very good facilities which allows me to do the best for the animal and the team I work with are brilliant which makes it a much more enjoyable experience.

‘Thank you for a brilliant course. Fantastic content and really great to spend time with other young vets. Highlights include surgical session with Graeme McPherson, post mortem skills with Ben Strugnell, farm walk with Black Sheep Farm Health. The driving session on the skid pan was especially useful and I use those newly learnt car handling skills everyday.’

‘Fantastic chance to share stories and experiences with other vets at similar stages of their careers, as well as expand my knowledge.’

‘I found the course very reassuring to talk to like-minded new grads and swap stories. The course has made me a lot more excited to start work.’

**XLVets Farm members have access to the Farm Graduate Development Programme.**

# Survival skills for new graduates

We start in Yorkshire, with a session on Survival Skills. Our inspiration comes from the RAF, NASA and Formula One: all high pressure, demanding situations requiring clear thinking and a calm approach.



## Driver Skills

A bespoke driving skills session including practical driving skills and a 'skid pan experience'. At the end of this you will have:

- Developed skid control and avoidance skills, including how forward planning and tactical driving can be used to help.
- Benefited from one-to-one driving assessment and advice.
- Received training to improve awareness and develop a positive attitude and aptitude for driving at work and beyond.

## Farm Survival Skills

Achieve better clinical outcomes, improve confidence, reduce stress and minimise the risk of accidents on farm. At the end of this you will:

- Be better equipped to manage challenging situations on farm.
- Have acquired techniques to aid decision-making under pressure.
- Understand new ways to communicate more effectively with your farm clients.
- Be able to minimise the risks of potential accidents on farm.

## Trainers



**Philip Alcock**  
Bishopton Veterinary Group



**Dr Rosie Allister**  
Allister Research and Consulting



**Dave Gilbert**  
Horizon Vets

### Thriving in Farm Practice

At the end of this module you will gain:

- An understanding of your own personality and others around you, as well as how to build successful work relationships.
- Skills to manage difficult situations in practice including:
  - An understanding of the importance, challenges and some solutions to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
  - Communication skills to deal with the situations you may face during your first few years in practice.

### Mastering Medicines

This session will equip graduates on a practical level with the confidence and knowledge to be able to work actively with farmers to help them to use medicines more effectively.

- Explore critical issues relating to veterinary antimicrobial use:
  - 'One Medicine'.
  - Key antimicrobial resistance (AMR) across the species.
- Understand core pharmacological principles and how these relate to both treatment efficacy and resistance development.
- Identify key barriers and the practical considerations regarding best practice principles.
- Understand key components required to achieve improvements at practice level and be aware of the options to achieve them.



## Pigs and Poultry

This session provides a starting point by introducing an awareness of common disease problems in pigs and poultry and how to manage them.

## Trainers



**Duncan Berkshire**  
Bishopton Veterinary Group



**Stuart Young**  
Mount Vets

This session will help you identify the major disease-causing agents in poultry and pigs.

**Practical knowledge of the following systems and diseases in poultry:**

- Respiratory system (IB, Mycoplasma, ORT, Aspergillosis).
- Gastrointestinal system (Coccidiosis, worms, Enteritis).
- Leg problems (growth abnormalities, litter problems, Mycoplasma).
- External parasite infestations (lice, red mite).
- Reproductive system (egg drops, pale egg shells).

**Explaining the development of the disease process in pigs and the how and why to manage and medicate them:**

- Have you seen Greasy Pig, Erysipelas, Mange and worms?
- Other common presentations from scour to sunburn.
- Biosecurity and notifiable diseases.

“Really helpful session covering a lot of basics that will be useful for both large scale and backyard pigs and poultry”

## Dairy Days

Delivered in the dairy rich county of Dorset, on farm and in classroom sessions, the three day dairy module will cement clinical knowledge and develop key practical skills to extend service satisfaction for dairy clients from our new graduates.



### Calving cows, down cows and surgery

- Safe handling of animals.
- Calving the cow:
  - Common presentations.
  - Effective techniques to improve ease of calving.
  - Understanding the importance of appropriate communication throughout the process.
  - Post calving uterine health.
- Down cows.

How to make a diagnosis and test appropriately, then discuss treatment options, prognosis and nursing care with the farmer:

- Clinical approach.
- Effective communication of likely outcomes.
- Ancillary tests and best practice treatments.
- Surgery - an approach to common situations:
  - Aim to understand the correct equipment needed.
  - Practical anaesthesia - where to clip and inject.
  - Cutting and stitching - practical use of cadaver material.

# Trainers



**Gareth Foden**  
Synergy Farm Health Ltd



**Emily Gascoigne**  
Synergy Farm Health Ltd



**Andre Northey**  
Synergy Farm Health Ltd



**Graeme McPherson**  
Synergy Farm Health Ltd

## The farm: transition management

- The transition period (3 weeks pre to 3 weeks post calving)
  - Common problems: down cows, milk fever, ketosis, metritis, LDA.
- The energy deficient cow - how to spot it and how to treat it.
- Displaced abomasums - different approaches to treatment and correction.
- Milk fever - treatment approaches and prevention.
- Understand when and how to ask for a second opinion.
- Understanding the importance of, and how to build good rapport with clients.
- Understanding of communication patterns and how language affects outcome.

## The cow: lameness identification and first aid treatment

- Identify lame cows and recognise which cows need immediate attention.
- Use facilities available to lift and inspect the foot with regard to safety for the vet and the cow.
- Identify the source of the lameness problem and take action to stop the 'disease process' progressing.

## Beef and Sheep Skills

Our highly experienced veterinary trainers will take our graduates through how to approach and manage common problems in beef and sheep - applicable for any farm system.



### Beef

- Kit and how to use it.
- Key topics to diagnose, treat and prevent:
  - Pneumonia outbreak.
  - Neonatal calf scour.
  - Sudden death/scouring suckled calves.
  - Worming protocols.
- Infertility/tightening the calving pattern.
- Practical tips on managing difficult C-sections.

### Sheep

- Kit and how to use it.
- Key topics to diagnose, treat and prevent:
  - Low scanning percentage.
  - Lamb losses.
  - Lameness.
  - Thin ewes.
  - Parasite endo and ecto.
  - Abortion.

“Really useful day which has encouraged a change in our practice’s approach to our beef clients”

# Trainers



**David McCrea**  
Capontree Vets



**Kaz Strycharczyk**  
Black Sheep Farm Health



**Ben Strugnell**  
Farm Post Mortems

## Practical Pathology

This session will introduce graduates to the principles of post mortem techniques across the farm species.

- Practical knowledge of the following systems and diseases in poultry:
  - Recognise key anatomical structures.
  - Recognise common pathological abnormalities.
- Be able to take samples for common further diagnostic tests:
  - Bacteriology.
  - Histology.
  - Virus isolation including tracheal swabs.
  - Blood sampling for serology.

“The skills delivered in this course will help to not only build a better diagnostic picture, but will help pick up on clues about the client’s expectations and identify potential risks.”



### **Rosie Allister BSc (Hons) BVSc MSc PhD MRCVS**

Dr Rosie Allister has received the BVA Chiron Award and RCVS Impact Award for work on veterinary mental health. Rosie manages Vetlife Helpline, a 24 hour support service for everyone in the veterinary community. Her research, based at the University of Edinburgh, looks at veterinary mental health, wellbeing in transitions, and veterinary suicide prevention. She has written and spoken extensively about veterinary mental health in the UK and internationally.



### **Philip Alcock BVetMed CertCHP DipRN MRCVS**

Bishopton Veterinary Group

As well as being a vet and LANTRA Awards approved trainer, Phil provides a complete nutrition service to a number of dairy farm clients of Bishopton Vet Group, holds a diploma in ruminant nutrition from Harper Adams University and is engaged with Reaseheath College/Dairy Co on the dairy herd lean management pilot. Through Bishopton Vets, he employs a number of new graduates and is responsible for their in-practice development.



### **David Gilbert BVetMed MRCVS,**

Horizon Dairy Vets

David qualified from the RVC in 2005. After spending three years in farm practice in southern England he joined Pfizer Animal Health as National Veterinary Manager with responsibility for their dairy and antiparasitic portfolios in the UK. In 2011 he returned to farm practice, moving to the Cheshire/Shropshire borders where he focused on dairy production. In 2017 he founded Horizon Dairy Vets based in Whitchurch, Shropshire. He now divides his time between day to day veterinary work in the practice and providing industry consultancy for a number of dairy sector companies. He is also a senior lecturer Harper Adams University where he received a Teaching Excellence Award in 2021.

**Duncan Berkshire MA VetMB CertPM MRCVS**

Bishopton Veterinary Group

Since graduating in 2004 from Cambridge University, Duncan has always worked in specialised pig practices, initially with Garth Partnership before joining Bishopton Vet Group in Ripon in 2009. Whilst working in practice, he obtained his Certificate in Pig Medicine in 2007, along with his MSc in Livestock Health and Production. He is a regular speaker at pig discussion groups, is the FarmSkills Pig module developer and has led a series of training workshops for pig farm managers through the BPEX Stockman Programme, and for vets on the BPEX Real Welfare Outcomes programme. He won Knowledge Transfer Pig Professional of the year in 2013 at the Pig and Poultry Marketing Awards.

**Gareth Foden BVetMed MRCVS**

Synergy Farm Health Ltd

Gareth joined Synergy Farm Health in July 2011. He is interested in a wide range of farm work particularly cattle lameness, fertility, surgery and medicine. Gareth likes the practical approach to health planning on farm. Gareth is a BCVA Accredited Johne's Veterinary Adviser.

**Emily Gascoigne**

MA VetMB Dip.ECSRHM PG Cert Vet Ed FHEA MRCVS

Synergy Farm Health Ltd

Emily Gascoigne graduated from the University of Cambridge in 2012 and joined Synergy Farm Health in 2012 as an intern. She completed her alternative residency in Small Ruminant Health Management and completed by examination becoming a member of the European College of Small Ruminant Health Management and she is a RCVS Specialist. Emily has a passion for neonatal health management and she is actively involved in both student and farmer training.



### **David McCrea BVM&S MRCVS**

Capontree Vets

David qualified from Edinburgh University in 1998. He has worked in Scotland, Australia and Northern Ireland and has been based in Cumbria since 2006. He has gained a wide knowledge of farming and farm practices. David is a LANTRA-approved trainer which enables him to run workshops and courses on behalf of XLVets. David is a Mobility Mentor and enjoys engaging with farmers trying to reduce their lameness issues. David mentors new graduates at the practice, helping them transition from students at University to students of life.



### **Graeme McPherson BVSc DBR MRCV**

Synergy Farm Health Ltd

Graeme graduated in 1994 and worked in his native Australia before moving to the UK as a farm animal vet, first in Oxfordshire and now at Synergy Farm Health. Graeme is a qualified AHDB mastitis control plan deliverer and completed his Diploma in Bovine Reproduction in 2020. Graeme has varied clinical interests relating to dairy herd health and productivity, as well as considerable experience in camelid medicine.



### **Andre Northey Dr.Med.Vet MRCVS**

Synergy Farm Health Ltd

Andre studied both in Germany and South Africa and graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) Munich in 2005. Sponsored by the Federal German Research Authority (DFG), he spent the following two years as an intern and research assistant at the Chair for Physiology and Pathology of Reproduction at the Clinic for Ruminants with Ambulatory and Herd Health Services of the LMU Munich working as clinician and tutor for veterinary students. His role as one of RAFT's Advanced Breeding Directors has developed, established and led the successful Bovine Embryo collection and Transfer Team.

**Kaz Strycharczyk MA VetMB MRCVS****Black Sheep Farm Health**

Kaz graduated from Cambridge in 2017. After a short stint in Dumfries and Galloway, Kaz came to Black Sheep in January 2018. He then joined the partnership in 2021. Since joining Black Sheep, Kaz has helped coordinate a calving nutrition study with the University of Edinburgh, run various farmer education workshops, spoken to local farmers on how animal health is affected by stewardship schemes and built a practice database. Kaz is currently studying towards a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (Cattle).

**Ben Strugnell BVM&S CertPM MRCVS****Farm Post Mortems**

Ben qualified from the vet school at Edinburgh University in 2002 and worked in mixed practice in North Yorkshire for five years, specialising in farm animals. He then went on to work for the Veterinary Laboratory Agency in Thirsk, where he developed his skills in pathology and his belief that an accurate post mortem can diagnose the majority of diseases in farm animals and can prevent unnecessary losses and improve productivity on farm. He subsequently set up Farm Post Mortems to offer a comprehensive gross post mortem service to give vets and farmers a cost-effective way of diagnosing disease and increasing livestock efficiency, therefore improving profit margin.

**Stuart Young BSc (Hons) BVetMed MRCVS****Mount Vets**

Stuart has a long history within the poultry and gamebird sector including lecturing at the Royal Vet College and the various Duchy colleges in Devon & Cornwall. For this he was awarded the prestigious National Knowledge Transfer Award in the game and poultry industry in 2014. He is a founding member and Chairman of the West Country Layers Association (WCLA) and also sits on the South West chicken association (SWCA) committee.



### **Joe Henry** BVMS Cert SHP MRCVS

#### Black Sheep Farm Health

Joe graduated from Glasgow Veterinary School in 1998 and soon became predominantly a sheep and beef vet with an interest in disease prevention and health planning. As well as working in Northumberland, Joe has also spent time working in New Zealand and Poland.

Joe is an RCVS recognised advanced practitioner in 'Sheep health and production'. He has trained vets nationwide in beef and sheep medicine. He has also provided the veterinary input to the east Northumberland farmer's club benchmarking group since 2004.





## The Graduate Get Together

Each year we host all graduates that have completed the Equine, Farm and Small Animal programme, along with those who are about to start the programme the following year. Coming together to learn, share experiences and have some fun. Always an action packed weekend, which is an excellent opportunity to attend CPD that is intertwined with activities and the chance to connect with your peers and fellow members of the XLVets community.



## Mentoring Programme

Following the introduction of the VetGDP, we have created a community of mentors within XLVets that will provide external mentoring to all graduates undertaking the XLVets Graduate Development Programmes.

These sessions are optional and not designed to be a replacement for the mentoring alongside your VetGDP, but provide the opportunity to seek support from willing mentors from within the community from outside your practice, all of whom are keen to support the newest members of our community.

“Mentoring made me feel more supported and was so nice to get a second opinion on issues in practice and help with goals for the future, it made me feel like I had a plan and achievable goals and made me enjoy being a vet more. “

2020 Graduate at XLVets member practice



## Connecting with the Community

Our vision is '*By working together we can achieve so much more*' and this starts the minute that you join an XLVets practice from University. Being part of the XLVets community offers members great networking opportunities, enabling collaboration as well as encouraging shared knowledge, experience and skills.

Within XLVets we have a number of ways we support members to make connections across the community, these include;

- Regional and National meetings
- Practice exchanges
- Online forums
- Whatsapp groups
- VetSkills training



If you would like more information on our graduate development programme, please call **01228 711788** or visit [www.vetskills.co.uk](http://www.vetskills.co.uk)



## Who We Are

XLVets is a community of independently owned, progressive veterinary practices that work together to achieve the highest standards of veterinary care. The ethos of the XLVets community is that business ownership, and therefore all decision-making, is veterinary-led and in the hands of the people who work within their practice.

Spanning the length and breadth of the UK, XLVets member practices work together; sharing experience, knowledge and skills in order to define and deliver the highest standards of veterinary practice, animal health and productivity. Through this collaboration, XLVets members can link research projects together, access the latest cutting-edge technologies – sharing resources and expertise.

**We believe, by working together, we can achieve so much more.**

Find your nearest XLVets Member at  
[findmy.xlvets.co.uk](http://findmy.xlvets.co.uk)



**To find out more:**

01228 711 788

[admin@xlvets.co.uk](mailto:admin@xlvets.co.uk)  
[vetskills.co.uk](http://vetskills.co.uk)



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