



Shelter Medicine: A Broad Discipline for Diverse Teaching

Authors: Bree Merritt¹, Ruth Serlin², Rachel Dean^{1,6}, Louise Allum², Genevieve Smith², Maureen Carnan³, Karen Hiestand^{4,7}, Bridget O'Farrell⁵, Angela McAllister^{5,8}, Jenny Stavisky¹

Background:

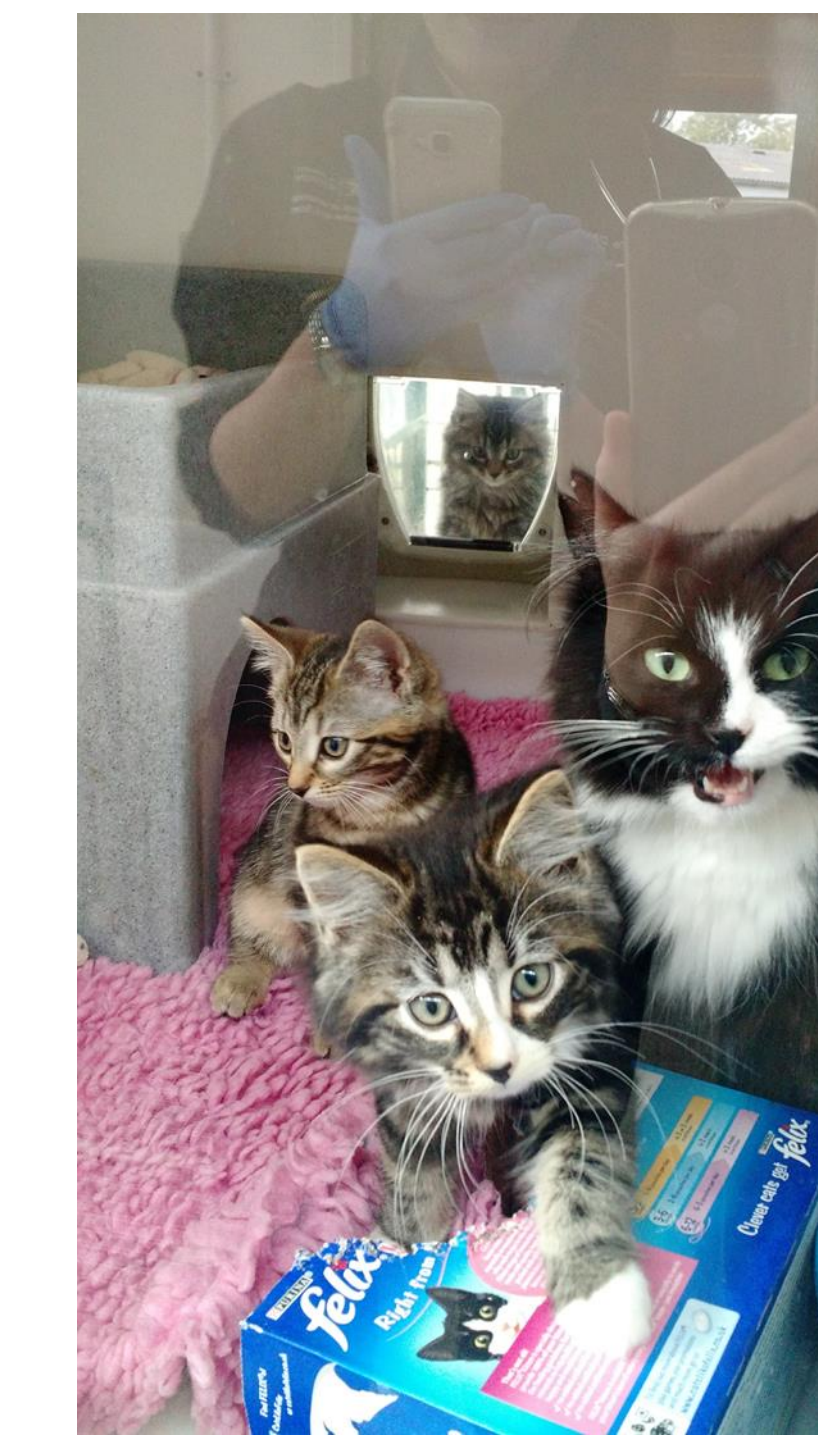
Shelter Medicine is an emerging discipline in veterinary practice. It is concerned with the health and welfare of the unowned population of pet species, both in shelters and the community. Practicing shelter medicine requires the skills and knowledge of general practice, often with constrained resources. In addition it includes examination of demographics and population control, as well as health and welfare in the multi-animal environment. The work of many general practitioner veterinarians includes some shelter medicine, and it is used in the teaching in many UK veterinary schools.



Challenges:

- Lack of awareness of the scope and transferable skills of Shelter Medicine as a discipline
- Finding space in a full curriculum
- Costs and payment for veterinary services
- High volume and efficiency of service

Year of study	Skills	Population health	Welfare and Behaviour	Population control	Community engagement and professionalism	Mode of Delivery
1	Animal Handling				Introduction to shelter medicine	Shelter visit
2			Housing, enrichment, handling			Lecture
2		Biosecurity Infectious disease				Workshop
2	Animal Handling					Shelter visit
3	Varied original research projects over 10 to 12 weeks					Research projects
3	Communication	Outbreak management				Workshop
4		Outbreak management, Health screening and associated decision making		Prepubertal and paediatric neutering	Animal charity policy	Workshop
4		Infectious disease				Lecture
5	Clinical skills (history, examination, record keeping), Decision making with limited resources and data Surgical skills	Organisational and housing design (shelter as a patient), Infectious diseases, Biosecurity Diagnostic testing	Housing, Enrichment, Handling, Behaviour, Welfare in shelters, Neglect and cruelty	Animal charity policy and law	Principles of shelter medicine, Compassion fatigue, Welfare prosecution, Rehoming and euthanasia Reflective practice	Shelter visit And Small group teaching in clinical setting



Benefits of teaching within shelter medicine:

- Meets most primary care day one competences across medicine, surgery, pathology, epidemiology, welfare, and communication.
- Ethical community engagement: activities are for the benefit of the community, rather than a resource to be used.
- Cultural competency when students are of different cultural, class, social or ethnic origins.

Conclusion: Shelter medicine is happening, and teaches lots of core competencies, broadening exposure of students to a variety of practice, alongside population health for small animals.

1. University of Nottingham, 2. Royal Veterinary College, 3. University of Glasgow, 4. University of Surrey, 5. University of Edinburgh, 6. Currently at Vet Partners, 7. Currently at Sussex University, 8. Currently at

