



SAVSNET

Research Surveillance Benchmarking

Summer 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on veterinary practice



Since our last newsletter lots has changed! We would like to start off by saying thank you to colleagues who have continued to work and submit data to SAVSNET over the lockdown period, and continue to do so as restrictions are eased. The SAVSNET team is currently home based, working as hard as ever to collect, clean and analyse the precious data we receive. We are ever conscious of the challenges COVID-19 has brought to the sector, and continuing to receive data has been immensely valuable to our work.

Thanks to continued data contributions, we have been able to prepare a series of reports exploring some of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the veterinary industry, such as diagnostic testing being completed, reasons for presentation, vaccination and vaccine-preventable diseases. Now that restrictions are easing, we are seeing normal consultation volumes return along with more normal vaccination after a period where younger animals were a greater proportion of vaccination consults.

We hope you have found these reports both useful and interesting. You can access them [here](#).

After months of not seeing each other, we enjoyed a socially distanced catch up. Much better in real life than on a screen!



What's Inside?

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Latest from SAVSNET-Agile

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In case you haven't already seen them, BSAVA have published very useful resources and information for supporting vets, nurses and owners throughout COVID-19.

Visit their page [here](#).



BSAVA
BRITISH SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

Outbreaks outbreaks outbreaks!



What a year it's been! Whilst the medics were busy with their own disease outbreak in humans, we were busy with one in dogs. We were alerted to a possible increase in the number of dogs presenting with prolific vomiting by Dr Danielle Greenwood of The Liverpool Vets in January. Such reporting normally remains unsubstantiated. Exploring SAVSNET data identified an outbreak, so we mounted a fast response to collect questionnaire data and faecal/swab samples and provide regular updates.

We were overwhelmed at the response both from practitioners, industry and owners... and very pleased to report in April that the outbreak appeared to be over. We are now preparing this work for publication, and in the meantime you can read more [here](#). This is a great example of how the data supplied by vets can fill a population health need. Fortunately, the outbreak was not too serious for the majority of patients and the experience will be extremely useful for our work in outbreak detection - see the update from SAVSNET-Agile below.



Straight from the horse's mouth



We are very excited to introduce April Lawson who will be starting a PhD to develop the Equine Veterinary Surveillance Network (EVSNET) in September. EVSNET is funded by The Horse Trust and University of Liverpool, led by Dr Gina Pinchbeck and will see equine electronic health records and laboratory results collected for research and surveillance.

April is a veterinary surgeon and will be starting her PhD in September. She will be using the SAVSNET's existing framework to collect equine laboratory data and will be exploring the practicalities of consent for equine consultation data. Opt out consent works for SAVSNET because all participating practices must display a poster in the waiting room, but for equine veterinary practice, visits to where the animals are kept is more standard. April will explore technology that allows equine consultation data to be ethically consented and submitted out in the field.

We're looking forward to welcoming April to our team in September and working with equine veterinary practices and laboratories in the future.



SAVSNET-Agile: an update from University of Bristol and the Animal Health Trust



Carmen Tamayo is the PhD student leading the work into outbreak detection, supervised by Dr Fernando Sanchez-Vizcaino Buendia (University of Bristol) and Dr Richard Newton (Animal Health Trust)



University of
BRISTOL



SAVSNET-Agile includes three PhD students working on different areas of canine health. As the first student to start, we thought we'd check in with Carmen to see what she's been up to over the last few months.



We've built an **active network of stakeholders** that have agreed to contribute their knowledge and expertise throughout the project. This network of stakeholders represent key sectors related to canine medicine in the UK. This is very important since we want our response protocols to be relevant for those who are dealing with canine diseases first-hand and be translated into real-life actions in the future. At present, the network consists of 22 collaborators, including policy makers (DEFRA, APHA, VMD), veterinarians from small and big practices, industry representatives (NOAH, MSD), academics from UK universities (Cambridge, RVC, Edinburgh, among others), animal charity representatives (Dogs Trust, Kennel Club, AHT) and other relevant institutions, such as BVA/BSAVA, RCVS and ESCCAP.



We've been working with these stakeholders to identify which canine **endemic and exotic infectious diseases** are the most pressing in the UK and should, therefore, be prioritised for inclusion in future population health response protocols. In order to achieve this milestone, we used a group consensus methodology to determine which epidemiologic criteria to use for the prioritisation of canine diseases. These were applied these criteria to identify top-priority diseases including canine parvovirus and leptospirosis as endemic diseases, Leishmaniosis and Babesiosis as exotic diseases, and respiratory and gastrointestinal signs as top-priority canine syndromes. These would all benefit from ongoing population-level surveillance.



We are working with colleagues from the University of Manchester to **develop efficient text-mining tools for the early detection of disease outbreaks** using clinical narratives. So far, we have established case definitions for the top priority canine diseases identified by our stakeholders, and now we are refining these case definitions using SAVSNET data from real consultations, in order to adapt to the vocabulary that vets actually use in practice.



We are working with colleagues at the University of Lancaster to **establish statistical thresholds for the notification of disease outbreaks** that correspond with our end-users preferences. For this, we are arranging a focus group meeting with several veterinary practitioners, where we will start a discussion about the level of risk that would warrant an outbreak investigation for each of the prioritised diseases. We don't want to miss an outbreak nor must we report too many, hence the importance of determining the right threshold.

If you use SAVSNET and are interested in being involved in this focus group, [please let us know!](#)



Reporting adverse drug reactions

Pharmacist and PhD student, Heather Davies, is leading the way on exploring how SAVSNET could make it easier for practitioners to report suspected adverse drug reactions.



With SAVSNET Principal Programmer Steven Smyth, Heather has been busy developing new software to include in the existing SAVSNET window which will see data submitted to SAVSNET and the VMD on completion.

thank you

to the practices who have volunteered to be part of the pilot study testing our new reporting software. The invitation to take part is still open and we would welcome more practices, especially those using Teleos software.

With your help, we hope to make the reporting of adverse drug reactions easier for you!

2020 might not have gone to plan but it's been a good year so far for our publications. Whilst our work had largely focused on the outbreak of prolific vomiting, we have also published on mxyomatosis seasonality, factors affecting antibiotic use and cancer surveillance developments. We were also involved in research detecting antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 in cats and dogs from Italy.

None of the research we do would be possible without the participation of the veterinary profession who contribute data to SAVSNET. We are forever grateful for your involvement, but especially so over the lockdown period.



View SAVSNET publications [here](#)



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