



## **NIVA Newsletter November 2024**

Dear Colleague,

### **Connections**

As autumn draws in, there are some exciting items in the NIVA calendar to look forward to. Meeting fellow members is a key component of our events, connecting and re-connecting, hearing stories of our challenges, ambitions, triumphs and disasters, and getting involved in a few light-hearted debates on the side – please join in and enjoy the social side of our Association!

NIVA members are keen to engage on the tricky topics, and the fantastic interest and turnout of around 90 vets and other key stakeholders at our recent TB@T3 meeting was testament to that. The speakers challenged us to open our minds to consider new ways of approaching the difficult subject of controlling bovine TB. As an outcome, my aim is to lobby with decision makers on the key points raised. Many thanks to VetNI for their hard work in coordinating the event and overseeing the catering arrangements at Café Vic-ryn. It was very rewarding to see so many vets come together at T3's fabulous facilities, and our chosen charity, Daisy Lodge, has received all the money contributed for venue hire. We're already planning to make use of T3 again in the future.

### **Current affairs**

In the Officer team it's a privilege to represent NIVA as we meet with others working in the animal health sector, be that in government or industry, to draw attention to the major issues of the day. Mark Little (Hon Secretary) and I were invited to join the re-constituted Veterinary Medicines Working Group run by the Cabinet Office, and in this forum we continue to emphasise the need for action at the earliest opportunity, to ensure continuity of supply of veterinary medicines to NI. DAERA's Agricultural Policy Stakeholders' Group meets regularly and Esther Skelly-Smith (SVP), Kirsten Dunbar (JVP) and I attend in person as much as possible, representing BVA-NI and through that NIVA, and using the forum to present veterinary views and to advocate for the need for animal health and welfare to feature distinctly in the Department's future farming policy.

Please get in touch with us if you've comments on any topical veterinary issues – we're always open to hearing your views.

### **Council**

The Chancellor's budget hasn't escaped our notice recently, particularly the repercussions for the agricultural sector, however there's much brighter news within NIVA, as our new Treasurer Michael Pratt, and Deputy Fiona McFarland, were elected to their positions at September's EGM. Well done to them both - we welcome Michael to the Officer team and are very grateful to him and Fiona for their willingness to get our finances into smart shape.

Your Council continues to work hard for you, advocating for the profession, and is also currently engaged in discussions on the VetNI Resource Review which Kirsten Dunbar has led for NIVA. There's much historical and political context behind the financial decisions that need to be made, as we strive to find the balance between NIVA's autonomy and the social cohesion that we require to optimise our relevance in a changing veterinary world. I am optimistic that our work can result in a newly defined and more flexible working relationship, that will be for the benefit of NIVA members and also VetNI.

We do need your help in making NIVA flourish – please encourage your veterinary colleagues to join the Association and come to events – there is strength in numbers!

### **Congratulations!**

Our hearty congratulations to *Professor* Simon Doherty on his recent well-deserved accolade from Queen’s University Belfast. Simon’s achievements in the field of One Health and as World Veterinarian of the Year are marked, and as one of our veterinary family, we feel it deeply as he openly shares his current health issues - our thoughts and prayers are very much with him and his family.

Many congratulations to Mark Little too, on attaining his Fellowship of the RCVS – another tremendous achievement by one of our members which we are delighted to note.

### **Diary Dates**

NIVA Council has scheduled several events - I hope that you can fit the dates below into your diary.

### ***Equine Welfare***

For everyone with an interest in promoting welfare in NI, a key event is coming up at Stormont on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November. Esther Skelly-Smith, who presented findings recently, at the Agria Equine Health Forum, of qualitative research undertaken through NIVA’s Equine Welfare Symposium, has put together an impressive line-up of speakers for the launch of NIVA’s Equine Welfare Priorities report. All members should have received individual invitations; please RSVP to [vetassociations@svsvet.co.uk](mailto:vetassociations@svsvet.co.uk) asap. If you haven’t received your invitation, please check your junk mail and if necessary, please contact the e-mail address above. Come along, make an afternoon of it, and give politicians a chance to talk with you!

### ***The Rewilding Debate***

What’s your view on whether rewilding should be part of the sustainability agenda? How far should environmental consciousness stretch, and how informed are you as a vet? Do join in at our next meeting on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November at the Rabbit Hotel with Jonny Hanson, an academic, snow leopard conservationist and former community farmer who specialises in human-wildlife coexistence and rural development. And that’s not all – prepare to be inspired to do some veterinary volunteering, as we look forward to hearing from our very own Susan Cunningham, a small animal vet in Belfast who has been using her “spare” time in recent years to volunteer with the Worldwide Veterinary Service and Mission Rabies in Africa and South America. Further details will follow - do register, let others know, and come and enjoy some social interaction! There will be a short NIVA pre-meeting when you can ask questions and make your views known about current NIVA lobbying and business issues. As well as that, we’ll be taking donations for Ripple Effect, a charity that works alongside farming families in East Africa – please consider making a donation.

My commitment is to seeing our Association thrive, and my priority is to make every member feel welcome at events and a valued part of our community. We are a resilient organisation that exists to serve the veterinary profession - please lean in to support your colleagues and you’ll be guaranteed to benefit.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Very best wishes,



**Sharon Verner**  
MA VetMB MRCVS  
President NIVA and BVA-NI Branch

