

## Distance diagnosis for AHT vet

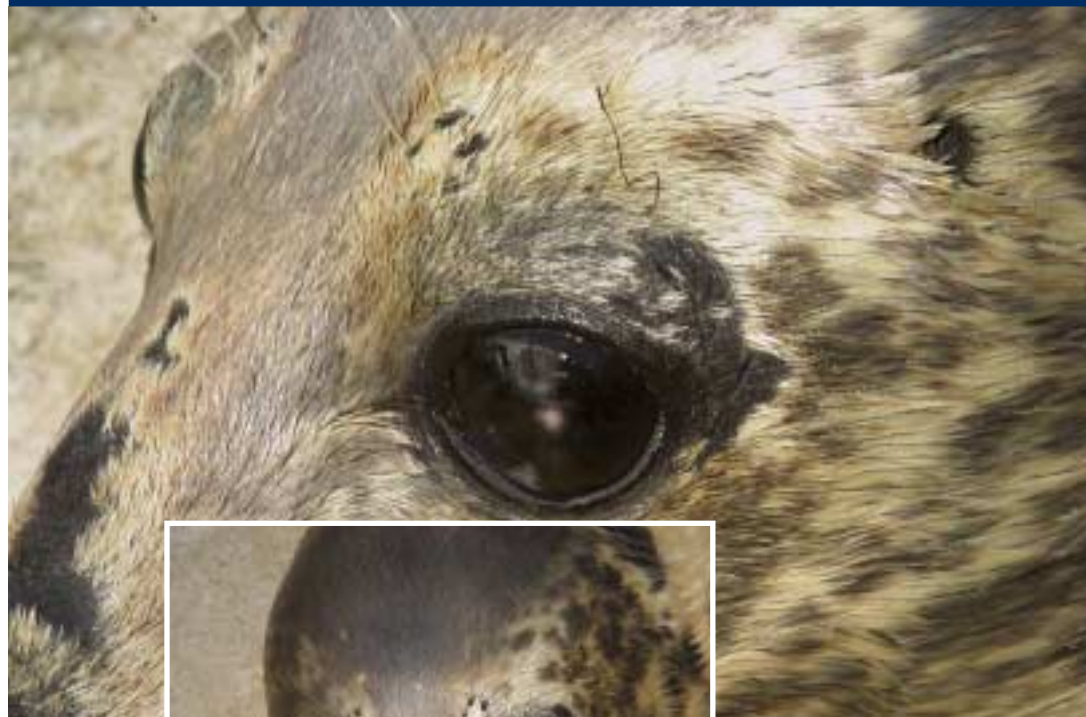
An elderly blind seal has avoided the need for a general anaesthetic after AHT specialist Dr Keith Barnett used computer technology to give long distance advice.

Paula is known to be more than 20 years old and has lived at a sanctuary in Cornwall for about 4 years. Although she has always been blind, a swelling was noticed in her left eye during this summer. The seal remained bright and active and did not appear to be in pain but vets wanted to know whether Paula could be treated.

A detailed examination would only have been possible under general anaesthetic and local vets did not want to take this course of action in view of Paula's age. They decided that specialist help was needed and contacted the Animal Health Trust.

Dr Keith Barnett who, some months earlier, had appeared on television performing a cataract operation on a sealion locally, was asked for his opinion. It was not possible to transport Paula to Newmarket and for Dr Barnett to make the journey to Cornwall to examine her would have been time consuming and costly to both charities. Therefore, the veterinary practitioners in Cornwall took digital photographs of Paula's eye and sent them by e-mail to the Trust. Dr Barnett was able to look at the pictures on his computer screen, while speaking to the vets in Cornwall. Having studied the pictures, and learnt more about Paula's history, Dr Barnett decided that the condition was not serious enough to require treatment and Paula has since been making a good recovery.

Dr Barnett said: "Although this cannot replace a proper examination, in this case the advice based on photographs



sent electronically was the best alternative. We really wanted to avoid a general anaesthetic for this elderly seal unless it was absolutely necessary and she could not easily have been transported to the Trust. The photographs were very good and, under the circumstances, this proved a very good way of advising those caring for Paula. Of course, had I been at all concerned by Paula's condition from the pictures, I would have been more than happy to go to Cornwall to help treat her; but I am delighted that treatment wasn't needed and she is now improving".



### In this issue:

- *Princess Royal unveils new MRI scanner*
- *Major grant awarded for strangles research*
- *New look Show a success*
- *Don't miss the UK Equestrian Awards*

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# Quality of diagnostic service recognised



*Dr Kathy Freeman (centre front) with some members of the diagnostics team.*

The Animal Health Trust's Diagnostic Laboratory staff are celebrating their registration from the British Standards Institution (BSI) for achievement of standards and systems of quality management required by the International Standards Organisation (ISO 9002). The department, led by Dr Kathy Freeman, has been examined for its veterinary diagnostic services for microbiology, virology and clinical/anatomical pathology.

The unit is now eligible to display the BSI Registered symbol as a testament to its commitment to quality. It will also be subject to continuing assessment to ensure the standard is maintained and continuously improved.

Dr Freeman said: "We are delighted to have achieved this recognition and I give credit to the people working in the department as it is due to their hard work and commitment that our assessment by the BSI was successful. Not only is this extremely rewarding for my team to be recognised in this way, but our clients too can be assured that our service will be of a consistently high standard".

The department offers a wide range of laboratory tests to referring veterinary surgeons. These include testing for a number of diseases affecting horses and small animals. Continued excellence in equine diagnostics has been implemented in the last year by addition of a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay for equine herpesvirus (EHV), decreasing the time for identification of this infection as a cause of equine abortion from approximately 8 days to a maximum of 3 days. New developments in small animal diagnosis include the availability of immunological markers for identification and prognosis of canine tumours.

## *Support for Kennel Club Campaign*

The Animal Health Trust is supporting a campaign by The Kennel Club which could raise concerns for all dog owners. The organisation has learnt that 15 breeds of dog have been singled out for specific discrimination in Germany and are now facing a compulsory destruction order, outright ban or severe restrictions under new laws enacted by German states. Of particular concern to The Kennel Club is the inclusion of breeds such as the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Bull Terrier, Bullmastiff and other breeds registered in the UK that are not considered fighting dogs or a danger to the public. Some, in fact, are in the top 20 list of most popular breeds and are considered to be ideal family pets.

Officials from The Kennel Club have been meeting the German Kennel Club, which itself is extremely concerned about the situation. Of more concern is the fear that there may be an attempt to make German legislation European Law by November. Anyone who wishes to support the campaign which, The Kennel Club says, could affect all dogs should contact the External Affairs Department at The Kennel Club for further details.

# Work of AHT in TV spotlight

Watch out on the small screen in the coming months for a number of television programmes featuring the work of the Animal Health Trust. Viewers in the Eastern region will be able to see a BBC documentary about the Trust's work looking at cancer and genetics. It follows the appeal launched earlier this year by Malcolm Brearley, who was Head of Oncology and Matthew Breen of the Cytogenetics Department. If you supported this appeal thank you very much indeed.

The programme is part of BBC East's 'Matter of Fact' series for the Autumn.

We've also welcomed to the Trust another TV crew who are making a series about specialist vets to be shown on cable/satellite TV. The programme makers have been showing the work of our staff in both the equine and small animal centres. It is likely the programme will be shown in the New Year.





*HRH The Princess Royal unveils a plaque to mark the opening of the new unit, watched by Trust staff members Ruth Dennis and Craig Buckley.*

As reported in the last edition of 'AHT News' the Trust has taken delivery of a state-of-the-art Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanner for the new unit. We were delighted that the President of the Animal Health Trust, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, agreed to visit the Trust in July to perform the official opening of the unit.

The Trust now has one of the most sophisticated MRI scanning systems available. The IGE Medical Systems 1.5 Tesla Signa MR/i Echospeed system is still the UK's only static unit dedicated for animal use. It is more advanced than some of the scanners in use in 'human' hospitals and the £1.1 million project has been funded largely by a legacy from Trust supporter Mrs Coco Markus who had a great interest in animal welfare and cancer charities.

The Animal Health Trust has been using MRI extensively since 1992 for neurological and tumour diagnosis in dogs and cats. This new facility will allow our specialists to pioneer the use of MRI in orthopaedic clinical research in lame horses, especially relating to navicular disease and other hoof problems. Veterinary surgeon Ruth Dennis, who is in charge of the scanning unit said: "This sophisticated equipment will give us much greater flexibility for investigation and it is so much faster, making it safer for our patients because they will need less time under anaesthetic. A scan that would have taken 13 minutes with the old scanner now takes just a quarter of that time and the superior image quality and versatility of this scanner is of huge benefit in diagnosis".

At the time of the official opening the scanner had been in use for about 3 months and almost 200 dogs and cats had been scanned. Use of MRI in the last 8 years here has revolutionised our ability to diagnose and treat conditions such as brain tumours.

## Carters Fund for Health and Rescue



We were delighted to welcome to the Trust a group of members of the Carters Fund for Health and Rescue, together with many of their dogs. The Carters are well known at events around the country for their charity collections. Among the breeds that pull the beautifully decorated carts are Bernese Mountain Dogs and Bullmastiffs.

During their visit, members enjoyed a tour of the facilities and heard a series of talks from some of our specialists, including those working with cancer and genetics. The dogs, meanwhile, spent the day in our outdoor kennels. Over the years, the Carters Fund has raised many thousands of pounds for us, contributing to a number of major projects. They have also been regular visitors to our annual Show. We very much appreciate their help and hope they found their day at Lanwades Park enjoyable and informative.



# Christmas Catalogue

Pictured here is a small selection of the Christmas cards we have for sale this year. If you received this edition of AHT News by post you should also have received our Christmas gifts catalogue. Please spare a few minutes to look through it. Every card or gift we sell enables us to continue improving the health and welfare of our pets. If you support us regularly in this way, by buying our Christmas cards and gifts, thank you very much indeed. If you have not received our brochure and would like to place an order please contact our Fundraising Department on 01638 751000.



## Anglesey Abbey M

Despite the unpredictable weather during this summer, the rain managed to stay away for another of our very popular musical evenings at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire. This time, under the title of "Roses and Rhythm", Patricia Cook and the Laurie Holloway Trio performed a medley of popular music in the splendid setting of the Rose Garden. Once again we are particularly grateful to Lord and Lady Fairhaven for inviting us to hold this event at their home and to the National Trust for their support of the evening.

## South of England Show

We are indebted to the organisers of the South of England Show, which took place at Ardingly in June, for making the Trust the nominated charity of the show. It was a pleasure to meet so many people at the show who were interested in finding out more about our work. As well allowing us a generous public relations opportunity we were able to hold a blanket collection in the grand ring on each of the three days which provided over £1000. Many thanks if you were among those who supported us at the show.



## Musical Evening

### Thank You Very Much...

... to the Old English Mastiff Club – £100

... Blakemere Labradors – £332

... Radlett Dog Training – £50

... to everyone who donated to our appeal by Malcolm Brearley and Matthew Breen to buy new equipment for our research into the genetics of cancer. Many people contributed and we cannot mention everyone here but we would like to thank a number of groups including The Pony Club, Brentwood and District Dog Training Club and especially the Carters Fund for Health And Rescue (see page 3) who once again have been extraordinarily generous in their fundraising and support.

We are delighted to be able to thank so many supporters for their hard work in fundraising for the Animal Health Trust. If you are organising an event why not take a photograph and send it to us. We will endeavour to use it in a future edition of AHT News and return it to you after publication.

## Pet Plan Millennium Challenge

Equine projects at the Animal Health Trust have been given a boost thanks to money raised through the Pet Plan Millennium Challenge. Riders from all over the country took part in a number of sponsored rides with the funds being shared between the Sydney 2000 appeal in support of our Olympic riders and 4 other equine charities including the Trust. The event was one of the biggest equine sponsorship initiatives organised in the UK. If you took part in one of the rides – thank you very much. Our thanks also go to Pet Plan and all those who worked so hard organising the rides.

## Charity Polo Match

We are most grateful to the Beaufort Polo Club who arranged a charity polo match in Gloucestershire, in aid of the Trust. Sponsors were Cirencester-based firm Comstor with support from Fort Dodge Animal Health and Champagne Lanson. The event included a Prince of Wales Cup League Match between Woolmers Park and Groeninghe. We wish to thank Simon and Claire Tomlinson and all at the Beaufort for such a splendid day.



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## Pet Blessing Service

Once again our supporters in the West Country organised a Pets' Blessing Service to support the Trust. St John's Church in Keynsham was the venue and the Reverend John Samways conducted the service. Among the congregation were rabbits, cats and dogs. We are indebted to Miss Joyce Knight who worked tirelessly to organise the event.

## Keep on Running

Following the success of our runners, Roy Weston and Neil Scoresby, in this year's London Marathon we have places available for 2001. If you would like to run a marathon to raise sponsorship for the Trust, we would love to hear from you. Let us know if you would like a place and we will endeavour to get you one, subject to availability.

Thanks are due to Debbi Griggs from Kings Lynn, Norfolk, who has set herself the challenge of completing the Great North Run to raise funds for us. Debbi is busy raising sponsorship as well as training and we all wish her well.



# Horse charity funds new research into strangles

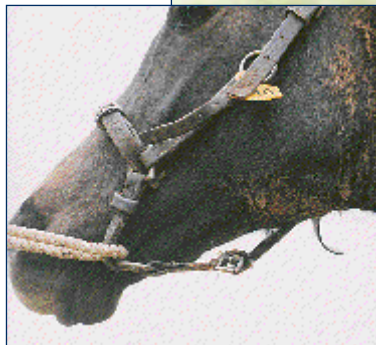
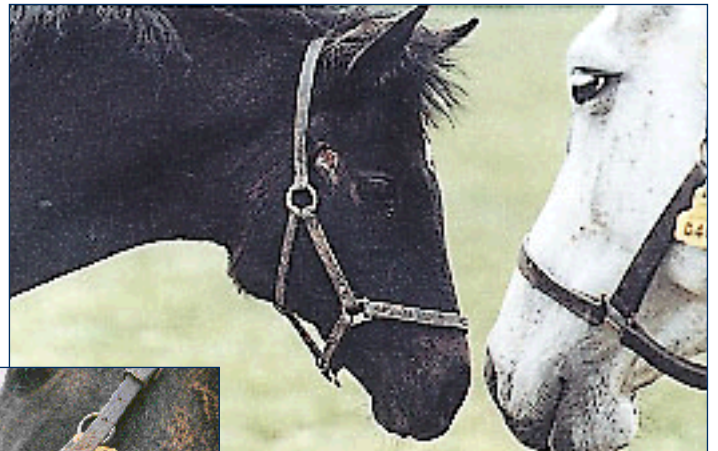
The Animal Health Trust is delighted to have won the support of a leading horse charity, which has pledged to fund research by cutting-edge genome researchers. 'Strangles' is the most common disease worldwide among horses and is caused by a bug that can evade therapy. Genome sequencing will throw light on just how it does that.

One of Britain's leading horse charities has teamed up with genome researchers in an effort to beat the equine disease strangles. The Home of Rest for Horses, based in Buckinghamshire, has financed a £250,000 project to de-code all the genes in the bacterium that causes strangles, (*Streptococcus equi*). Outbreaks of strangles occur each year in the UK. They are often difficult to control and individual cases can be difficult to treat.

Brigadier Paul Jepson, Secretary of the Home of Rest for Horses, said: "The Home of Rest is delighted to fund this work. We thought long and hard and talked to many experts in the field before deciding how best to attack strangles. We are confident that this new approach will lead to breakthroughs in the treatment and prevention of this distressing disease".

Strangles is the most common infectious disease in horses worldwide and the funding by the Home of Rest is the largest grant in its 100-year history for a single one-year project. Researchers at The Animal Health Trust have teamed up with scientists at the Universities of Newcastle and Cambridge and the Sanger Centre, which is a recognised leader in sequencing genomes, to tackle the disease.

Dr Neil Chanter the Trust's Head of Bacteriology said: "Research towards an effective strangles vaccine has been severely hampered by an almost complete



lack of knowledge of how the bacterium causes the disease".

Dr Julian Parkhill, leader of the sequencing team at the Sanger Centre, said: "This unique partnership will provide the first focused attack on the molecules that make up *Streptococcus equi*. We

believe an understanding of how this disease-causing organism is put together will help to identify new targets and to develop vaccines to prevent it".

Strangles is highly contagious in horses and donkeys but is rarely transmitted to other organisms. Strangles is most severe in young horses and complications can be fatal: as many as 10% of infected animals may die. *Streptococcus equi* has been identified as the cause of strangles for over 100 years but, as yet, there is no effective vaccine.

The bacterium is thought to use an array of complex mechanisms to invade tissues of the horse and cause disease. An effective vaccine may have to stimulate the immune system to attack several of these. By identifying all the genes in *S. equi*, the team predicts that the bacterial mechanisms will be pulled apart much more quickly.



## Investigation of racing injuries

Racing injuries, although relatively infrequent, cause concern to those responsible for the sport. In a project funded by the RSPCA, the Trust is studying the occurrence and major causes of such incidents. Records from all 59 racecourses in Britain, covering the period from 1990 to 1999, have been made available.

Most fractures incurred during flat racing involve the limbs, whereas neck and spine fractures are more common in jump racing. Reports suggest that important risk factors include age of the horse, type and condition of the racing surface and type of race. The importance of these factors, and others, is being evaluated.

The majority of racehorse injuries actually occur during training, rather than racing, and the reasons for such a high incidence are also being investigated.

# The Newmarket Horse Show

After more than 20 years as the Animal Health Trust Show, during which time the event has grown and grown, this year it was felt that the show would be too large for the Lanwades Park site.

We therefore joined forces with The British Racing School in Newmarket to put on an event which benefited both organisations and went under the name of The Newmarket Horse Show.

The Show took place in the grounds of the British Racing School in the centre of Newmarket, but retained many of the features that had made it so popular as the Animal Health Trust Show. As well as horse classes, we again held our very popular cat and dog shows with serious and novelty classes. Among the other attractions was a display by the RAF Mildenhall military dog team.

To mark our move into the town and the greater connection with the racing industry, we were delighted to welcome to the Show a number of key figures from racing, including Frankie Dettori who is pictured here with friends - human and canine. A special class for trainers' hacks was well supported and we would like to thank everyone from Newmarket and further afield who

came along and supported the day.

The Chief Executive of the Animal Health Trust, Dr Robin Pellew, said the show had gone splendidly well. He added: "We would like to see the Show become part of the Newmarket horse scene as it provides an opportunity for many riders, particularly children, to take part in an organised event".





# Dates for your

# Diary



Animal Health Trust News

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## 16th October 2000

### *The Animal Health Trust UK Equestrian Awards*

Once again the prestigious Animal Health Trust UK Equestrian Awards are fast approaching. This is one of the most popular events in the AHT calendar and many horse enthusiasts make sure they never miss it. We would love to see you there this year as Olympic years have always made sure it is a particularly special event and we are sure this event will be no different.

We are extremely grateful to our new sponsor, Schering Plough Animal Health, who are supporting us for the first time this year. Thanks are also due to the 2 other sponsors, Clearwater and Bloodlines.

If you would like to attend this event please complete the form below and return it to us with your remittance at the usual AHT address.

### In the next AHT News:

- *Allen Centre for Vaccine Studies nears completion*
- *A full report on the UK Equestrian Awards*
- *New faces at the AHT*



*Monday 16th October 2000*

## THE ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST UK EQUESTRIAN AWARDS LUNCHEON

This popular event will be held at the London Hilton on Park Lane on Monday 16th October. Tickets are £80 each (£750 for a table of 10) which includes a reception at 12.15 pm followed by a 3-course lunch with wines and coffee. Many tickets have been reserved already and we expect to be sold out well in advance of the day – so don't delay in sending for your tickets.

***Please send completed form to:***

Gerald Payne, Animal Health Trust, Lanwades Park, Kentford,  
Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7UU.

Mr/Mrs/Miss: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ tickets/tables for the UK Equestrian Awards Luncheon on Monday 16th October 2000.

I enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_ made payable to Animal Health Trust