

Proceeding Paper

# Farm Vet Champion Delivery of Training and SMART Goal Setting to Improve Antimicrobial Stewardship in Farm Veterinary Practice <sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract:** Farm Vet Champions (FVC) is a collaborative project to unite and empower UK farm vets to establish, embed, and champion responsible antimicrobial stewardship. FVCs support the veterinary profession to improve animal health and welfare standards and provide positive inspiration and leadership towards One Health efforts. The initiative provides farm vets and their teams with free online learning, and an online tool that encourages users to set goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic, within a set time limit.

**Keywords:** antimicrobial stewardship; veterinary; livestock; education; SMART goal



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## 1. Project Overview

Farm Vet Champions (FVC) is a collaborative project to unite and empower UK farm vets to establish, embed, and champion responsible antimicrobial stewardship. FVCs support the veterinary profession to continue to improve animal health and welfare standards and provide positive inspiration and leadership towards One Health efforts.

Farm Vet Champions online learning is accessible for free to all veterinary practice team members and offers bite-sized learning, with users able to select the format (webinars, podcasts) and topics that are most relevant to them. The FVC mantra is to plan, prevent, and protect herds and flocks by predicting disease threats and reviewing animal husbandry and environmental influences on livestock health. FVC also provides users with a SMART goals tool that supports the sustained translation of learning into practice and can be set at an individual or team level. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound goals that help teams turn learning into action.

FVC is led by RCVS Knowledge (London, UK) [1], the charity partner of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), an impartial organisation that collaborates with veterinary stakeholders to provide evidence-based educational materials and promote quality improvement in veterinary practice. RCVS Knowledge is driving behaviour changes in responsible antimicrobial use by improving access to responsible antimicrobial use knowledge for UK farm veterinary practice teams and helping teams to apply their learning to demonstrate accountability and monitor achievements.

As part of Farm Vet Champions, RCVS Knowledge has established an ambassador group of motivated UK farm vets committed to championing responsible antimicrobial use and sharing knowledge. Through education, the SMART goals tool, and the ambassador network, FVC highlights the importance of collaboration in the success of this mission; collaboration that is cultivated both in the practice setting and out on farms with farmers and clients.

## 2. Outcomes and Impact

By December 2022, 800 people had signed up to access the Farm Vet Champion platform. Of these, 500 were RCVS-registered veterinary professionals prepared to pledge commitment to driving antimicrobial stewardship forward in practice and on farms. RCVS registrations suggest there are 3315 farm vets in the UK.

FVC has brought major UK veterinary organisations together, collaborating to drive the core message, 'Plan, Prevent Protect'. Over 41 organisations are part of the Farm Vet Champions stakeholder group, and all UK livestock veterinary associations contribute to the steering group, which has included providing learning materials.

Case study examples have shown effective implementation of 'Plan Prevent Protect'. In one example [2] a farm client was experiencing a daily mortality rate of 1% due to multi-drug resistant *E. coli* associated egg peritonitis. An on-farm investigation by a FVC revealed a series of health, welfare, and management issues.

Working with the farmer, a plan was made to improve flock health, which incorporated the use of vaccinations, vaccination auditing, improved farm biosecurity and water hygiene, parasite monitoring and control, and environmental management and enrichment. In the next flock cycle, the farm saw over 50% increase in net profit compared to the previous flock. The flock's egg production and other production parameters remained above target for the entirety of the flock's production cycle, demonstrating the improvement in health and welfare that had been achieved through the interventions.

Through planning and consideration around prevention techniques, the flock was protected. This is just one example of how putting the FVC principles of 'Plan Prevent Protect' into action can influence the industry and reduce the use of antibiotics.

## 3. Future Development

The Farm Vet Champions' ambition is to make a difference in every veterinary practice, at the point of every vet-farmer conversation. RCVS Knowledge will continue to work with the FVC ambassador group of forward-thinking individuals, in order to widen its reach within the veterinary community. The aim is to establish inclusive and sustainable FVC communities on local, regional, and virtual levels. These groups will share ideas, set and track SMART goals to monitor progress, and showcase good practices for implementation.

The production of "in conversation with . . ." podcasts [3] will continue to allow topical focus on more specific subjects (such as the challenges faced in the lambing season or the 'Plan Prevent Protect' application to backyard hens).

There is an ongoing commitment to promote and recruit new Farm Vet Champions, with a focus around students and recently qualified vets, in order to empower the next generation of farm vets in championing responsible antimicrobial use for the benefit of vets, clients, farmers, animals, and society.

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