

# Towards best practice in infection control

**Dr Harley Farmer sets out some key principles for an effective infection control strategy for veterinary practices**

**W**ith recent news that 310 cases of MRSA in animals have been reported to the Government over the last 18 months, it's clear that infection control and practice hygiene are set to move up the veterinary practice agenda.

Generally, of course, UK veterinary practices are thorough and successful at containing infection and they deserve recognition for this. The scale of the problem, compared to the human health sector, is still tiny despite the fact that the use of antibiotics and treatments are similar. But there's no room for complacency. The problem is increasing. Public scrutiny is high. It's important that the animal health profession as a whole takes the situation in hand before it becomes a more serious issue.

The veterinary sector has traditionally had to make do with infection control products created for human health. It's true that vets and human medical staff share many common challenges but vets have certain unique needs. I've developed NewGenn's approach and product range with vets' requirements specifically in mind.

For instance, in the human field, microbes such as parvovirus and calicivirus are not critical, while they are a major concern in the veterinary sector. Our products, which are water-based and derived from plant oils, have been developed to kill these microbes more effectively than products designed for human health.

So, what are the key elements of an effective infection control strategy for a busy veterinary practice? There are five golden rules:

**1. Prevention rather than cure.** There's far too much talk of decontamination in our profession and not enough emphasis on ensuring a progressive reduction in the number of microbes to the point where there are insufficient microbes to cause infections.

There will always be some microbes in every clinical setting but the key is to reduce the number below the critical threshold that results in clinical infections. This is what prevention is all about and too few practices focus their efforts in this way.

**2. Education.** All practice staff must recognise the importance of infection control and keep their skills up to date. Best practice guidelines should be documented in a Practice Standard,

to which all staff are objectivised to adhere. The NewGenn Infection Control System course is the only course available so far which has been designed to help veterinary practices to build up their knowledge and improve and maintain infection control protocols. We provide this course free to regular customers and there's a small charge for non-clients.

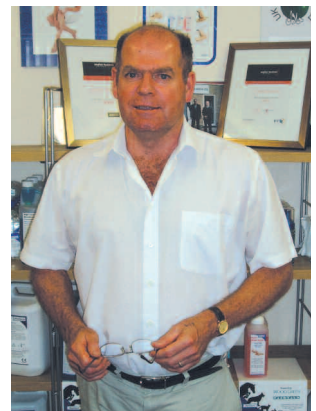
**3. Make it easy.** Products should be so pleasant and convenient that their use becomes almost instinctive. Our hand products, for instance, come in special foam-generating pump bottles that are convenient, quick to use and environmentally friendly. They are also alcohol-free, which makes them even more comfortable to use.

The important thing is to make the products fit the people – not the other way around.

**4. Opt for systematic approach.** It may sound odd but because some big brands have dominated the market for decades, this has sometimes led to products "neutralising" each other. For instance, common soap inactivates chlorhexidine so in some cases the antimicrobial surgical scrub used by vets may not work to full effect. All NewGenn products are based on the same chemical strategy so they work holistically together. Make sure your range does the same.

**5. Confidence.** For them to be effective, all practice staff must have confidence in each other's knowledge of and support for disinfection procedures. Clients must also see that the practice takes the subject seriously, so display relevant qualifications and the Practice Standard in prominent public areas such as reception and waiting rooms. This will give the public confidence in their veterinary team. If a practice isn't seen to be taking hygiene seriously, clients will leave and find a practice that does.

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**DEFRA announced in August that it was setting up a committee to examine the risk of MRSA spreading among animals and to investigate the extent of the problem in veterinary surgeries. This, said DEFRA, is a precautionary measure; it is designing studies to obtain information on the extent of the problem and its possible implications for livestock and people. A report in the *Sunday Times* of August 14 said that 310 cases of MRSA in animals had been reported to the Government in the past 18 months.**

**Veterinary Review reports on some of the products available to help keep the practice environment clean, safe and odour-free.**

# Reducing the spread of infection

Miele Professional, which markets professional laundry equipment, in partnership with NewGenn Research, has introduced the NewGenn System Sanitise. This, say the firms, is designed specifically to reduce infection spread in veterinary premises, including resistant organisms such as MRSA.

The system is designed for use in all Miele Professional Washer Extractors, ranging from 5.5kg to 32kg load capacities, and works using the molecules of natural plant oils which are then modified into detergent to produce what Miele says is a totally safe chemical which is rapidly effective against potentially

dangerous viruses and bacteria.

Les Marshall, sales and marketing director for Miele Professional, says, "It is exceptionally kind to the environment and unlike most other systems, there are no long-term binding contracts. There is also no need to consider the CoSHH requirements."

Trevor Turner, chief veterinary surgeon at Crufts and duty vet at many large championship shows, has used the system for some time and reports no untoward reactions or any skin irritation involving either animals or personnel.

# Clearing animal stains and smells

Pet urine deposits pose a cleaning challenge, often leaving unsightly stains and pungent smells even after repeated applications of various cleaning products. PetFresh Urine-Off, an odour eradication system well-established in the USA, is claimed to eradicate permanently both stains and smells.

Marketed in the UK by Fresh Industries Ltd, this product is described as an environmentally friendly solution that guarantees to remove 100% of urine from all surfaces, combating the effects of behavioural spraying, incontinent pets and those still being toilet-trained.

Vicky Halls, a pet psychologist, said: "I treat animals with serious behavioural problems and the urine stains and smells come with the territory. I have been trialling PetFresh Urine-Off for a while now and so far the results have been very encouraging."

The company states that when sprayed directly onto the offending area, it immediately neutralises the smell and removes all traces, no matter how old the stain.

"Whilst the majority of detergents typically remove urea and urochrome, they only temporarily mask the smell, and fail to remove the uric acid crystals firmly

bonded to the surface of the stained areas. Every time water, humidity or more urine reactivates the remaining crystals, the odour returns," it says.

"The secret to the product's ability to permanently remove even the oldest of urine stains and odour is its approach to removing the non-soluble uric acid crystals. It has a bio-enzymatic formula that literally eats crystals as well as removing the urea and urochrome.

"The formula only attacks the offending urine, leaving a pleasant citrus fragrance without harming carpets, bedding, upholstery, tiles or litter trays. Its non-toxic biodegradable formula can be used in any environment and is free of hazardous chemicals, making it a safe choice."

PetFresh Urine-Off is available, ready for use, in 500ml, 1 litre or 5 litre spray bottles.

An outdoor variant of PetFresh, YardFresh, is available in five litre containers, in concentrate form which, once diluted, produces 100 litres of product. This, says the firm, is designed to keep large areas such as stables and kennels clean and smelling fresh.

Information on the applications of the products is on [www.freshindustries.co.uk](http://www.freshindustries.co.uk).

# Air management system introduced

A NEW air management system which is claimed to kill 99.7% of airborne bacteria and viruses, including MRSA and anthrax, has been developed by Quest International.

Housed within a small unit similar to a standard air-conditioning unit, the AirManager, says the firm, harnesses ozone to kill contaminants in a single cycle, purifying air which could carry bacteria and viruses – the result being an environment free from bacteria and unpleasant odours.

David Hallam, director of research and development at Quest, said: "It has so many applications that people in every field of life will benefit. Whether an environment suffers from unpleasant odours or more

serious airborne particulates such as MRSA, AirManager cleanses the air and makes a room pleasant and, more importantly, safe to be in."

The product uses closed coupled field technology (CCFT), described as a transient force-field process which creates ozone in a way that retains its most powerful properties, the ability to kill bacteria and other contaminants quickly, while remaining harmless to people.

Harry Bennett, managing director of Quest, said: "This technology is the most advanced weapon we have in the fight against infections and cross contamination and there has been huge interest in the product."