



### Tor - 30 years at Avonvale!

Very many congratulations to our lovely Head Receptionist Tor, who celebrates 30 years service with Avonvale Equine Practice. Tor joined us on 1st May 1994 and since then has seen many changes during her long career with us.

Along with colleague Clare, Tor is our client's first line of contact and offers a calm, kind and experienced ear to anyone calling into our Practice. Horses are her passion so she's definitely in the perfect job.

Tor always takes a really keen interest in all our patients and enjoys working closely with the vets and nursing team, ensuring appointments are scheduled correctly, equipment is appropriately allocated, medication is on hand if requested and all paperwork is as it should be. She has extensive knowledge of our catchment area and is a whizz at sorting zone times.

Both Tor and partner Peter come from longstanding farming backgrounds. They live locally and surround themselves with an array of horses, donkeys, dogs, cats, ducks, chickens and even a yard tank full of goldfish!



### Claire returns after maternity leave



Director Claire Maher will be returning to work at the beginning of May following her second maternity leave. Claire now has two lovely boys, Kielan (3 years) and Ryan (9 months), both of which will be keeping her on her toes!!

Claire returns to lead our orthopaedic team as an advanced practitioner in Equine Orthopaedic Surgery. Claire has a particular interest in poor performance, at all levels, working with owners, riders, trainers, physios and farriers to get the best out of every horse.

Claire enjoys performing vettings (pre-purchase examinations) and can travel outside of our usual area if required.

If you would like to make an appointment with Claire, or discuss your horse with her, please contact reception on 01295 670501 or email: [reception@avonvaleequine.co.uk](mailto:reception@avonvaleequine.co.uk).



#### Office Hours

Mon-Fri 8:30am - 5:00pm

#### Contact Us

Avonvale Equine Practice  
Ratley Lodge, Ratley, Banbury, OX15 6DT  
(close to M40 junctions 11 and 12)



24hr Emergency Service

Tel: 01295 670501

[www.avonvaleequine.co.uk](http://www.avonvaleequine.co.uk)

## Case Study - Fred's Third Eyelid Removal

Fred is a 10-year-old Suffolk punch who first presented to vets Naomi and Charlotte as his owner had raised concerns regarding his nictitating membrane, more commonly known as the third eyelid. His owner became concerned when she noticed some small white nodules on his third eyelid. She had also noticed there was an increasing white discharge from the eye.

### What is the nictating membrane and what does it do?

The third eyelid is an anatomical feature that horses have in addition to their upper and lower eyelids. It is pale pink in colour and can be found underneath the other eyelids at the corner of the eye (closest to the nose). The third eyelid is able to stretch across the cornea to protect it from trauma and in response to inflammation.



Beautiful Fred with our lovely Nurse Rosie!

On examination Fred was able to hold both eyes fully open but the third eyelid of the left eye did seem more prominent and the small white granular nodules his owner had described were present. Naomi lightly sedated Fred and applied some local anaesthetic to the eyelid to allow us to fully examine it. The eyelid felt thickened around the area of the nodules. The best way to confirm exactly what the nodule was is to take a sample of it to be sent away to the laboratory for cytological microscopic analysis.

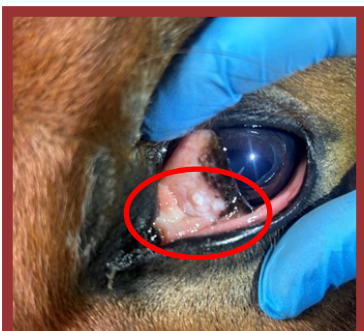


First photo showing white nodule on eye

### What is cytology? What is histology? What is the difference?

Cytology refers to looking at cells under the microscope to understand their structure and function. It is especially useful for the diagnosis of abnormalities and malignancies. Histology refers to looking at tissues and organs under the microscope by splitting them into sections and using special stains. It is useful to look at tissue structure and changes it may have undergone. The main difference between the two is that cytology looks at individual cells and histology examines the whole tissue which will have many types of cells. They are both very useful in the diagnosis of tumours.

Therefore, with Fred nicely sedated and the eyelid numbed the vets were able to take a small scrape sample. The differential diagnosis for the presenting signs of this case included a squamous cell carcinoma or granuloma. Whilst we waited for the results from the lab the owner was left with some steroid eyedrops to ensure the eye was comfortable. If the lesion turned out to be granulomatous then the steroids would have also helped to treat it.



Numbed third eyelid, showing small white nodules

### What is a squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)? What causes it? What is its prognosis and can it be treated?

SCCs are a common type of tumour that we see in horses. They can only occur in areas where there are squamous cells e.g. skin, mouth, nasal cavity, sinuses, stomach, penis, eyelid. Carcinomas are caused by cancer inducing agents (carcinogens) for example exposure to the sun or smegma. SCC can be treated by surgical removal or cryotherapy (using extreme cold to destroy cancer cells). Usually, the removed mass should be sent away for histological assessment of margins to ensure the entire mass has been removed. SCC are usually locally aggressive and the prognosis is poor if the area surrounding is involved. If SCC are treated early then the prognosis is good.

Continued.....

When the cytology results came back the lab were suspicious that the lesion was a squamous cell carcinoma. They recommended removing the third eyelid and submitting it for histological analysis to confirm the diagnosis. We hoped this would also be curative at the same time. Luckily, Fred's owner is extremely astute and had noticed the symptoms very early so Fred's prognosis was good as long as the third eyelid was removed quickly.



Placing a frontal nerve block before removing the eyelid

A week later Fred arrived at the clinic for his eyelid removal. The surgery is a relatively short procedure and is done under standing sedation. Fred was given a bigger dose of sedation and Charlotte then placed local anaesthetic in several locations around the eye to ensure he could not feel the procedure. She then clamped off several sections of the third eyelid to prevent excessive bleeding and to ensure Naomi could visualise what she was removing. Naomi then excised the eyelid and the surgery was complete.

It is not necessary to stitch up where the eyelid was removed from as stitches usually irritate the cornea (surface of the eye) and cause further problems. There are some possible complications involved with removing the third eyelid. These include accidental trauma to the cornea causing corneal ulceration and prolapse of retrobulbar fat through where the third eyelid used to be. Luckily Fred did not have any of these complications and quickly made a full recovery. He was sent home with some oral pain relief and eye lubrication to assist in the healing process.

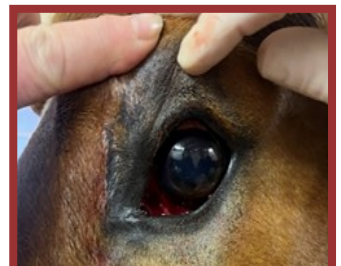


Exteriorising and clamping of the third eyelid to reduce bleeding and reduce movement when removing

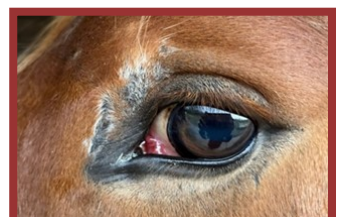
The eyelid was then sent to the lab for histological examination and the lab confirmed that it was a squamous cell carcinoma but it had been removed in its entirety with clear margins. This was excellent news for Fred and meant he did not need any further treatment! In some cases where the tumour has not been completely removed it can be necessary to do cyotherapy treatment as well to destroy the remaining cancer cells. Eye health in horses is very important and can often change very quickly so it is important to check your horses eyes daily for any changes, often if things are picked up quicker the outcome is better.

#### Important signs to look out for in your horses eyes that might require a vet:

- Increased discharge from one of both eyes
- Changing colour of discharge produced from the eyes
- Squinting/unable to hold eye open
- Change in the appearance of third eyelid – obvious nodules, change of colour, increasing prominence etc
- Change in appearance of the cornea (surface of the eye) – change in colour, increased cloudiness etc



Immediately after eyelid removal



2 weeks post-surgery

# Introducing our New Brand Ambassadors

We were thrilled to receive a record number of applications for our Brand Ambassador role this year, it was such a hard decision to make as many were so deserving. However, after much deliberation our four new Ambassadors were chosen and they will join our established team, including Helen Roberts, Molly Perkins, Ruby Donnolly, Lily Morris and Eloise Star.

Here are the new Ambassadors:

## Kelly Ude-Martinez



Kelly and her gorgeous grey Warmblood Aero have spent the last 12 months training and competing in some small unaffiliated competitions and are now excited to be starting their first affiliated eventing season, aiming to qualify for Badminton Grassroots 2025.

Aero is a 17.1hh 9 year old and after focusing on training, Kelly and Aero are now ready to start their competitive career. Back in December they placed at Arena Eventing events locally and placed 9th in their section for the BRC Christmas Cracker Dressage competition, with a competitive score of 66%.

Kelly is a fully qualified Human and Equine Sports Massage Therapist and has a BSc in Equine Science, giving her a better understanding of how she approaches the care and training of her horses, something she is very passionate about. Kelly and her husband Karl run Knights of Middle England, who perform regularly at Warwick Castle. They also help to run the Warwick School of Riding, based in Guys Cliffe, where they offer an array of lessons and have a go days.

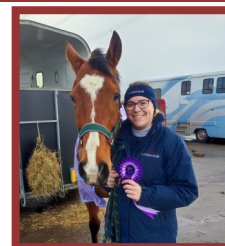


## Grace Hubble

Eventer Grace is based in Coventry. She has a beautiful thoroughbred Tommy who has a fantastic attitude towards work and loves jumping.

Between the ages of 3-6 Tommy was a hurdler, even winning 4 of his races. He's now 9 and enjoys hacking and training, ready to start competing again in March. Before the season, Grace and Tommy went out showjumping, dressage and attending some arena eventing competitions.

Grace started competing as a child doing local gymkhana and then started showjumping 6 years ago when she got her first loan pony. This kick-started her love of showjumping. In 2022 Grace started the season on a loan horse called Bobby at 60cm and ended the season at 90cm, eventing at 80cm. Bobby wasn't the easiest of horses but had a huge love for cross country, where during training sessions he was jumping around BE100 fences at Solihull Riding Club.



## Chloe Woodley



21 year old Chloe has many achievements in Mounted Games, including being part of the winning Pony Club England Team at Royal Windsor Horse Show in 2017, part of the Warwickshire Hunt Pony Club Mounted Games team as a Junior in 2013 and being successful in all senior teams up until the end of 2017.

Chloe was lucky to be selected for Mounted Games Association England teams, competing in Germany, France, Ireland and New Zealand in the u14 and u17 age group.

Her main focus now is show jumping and after buying her first showjumping horse last summer, she has gone from jumping 90cm to 1m15 in the space of 7 months. Chloe has been successful and placed in every show, recently winning a 1m10 class.

Chloe's biggest aim is to get to the Horse of the Year show, a childhood dream. She and Demi are heading to Royal Windsor Horse Show in May for the lightweight working hunter class. Good luck Chloe!



## Jessica Belcher - Junior Brand Ambassador



Jessica is 14 years old and part of the Warwickshire Hunt Pony Club. Back in 2017, she became a member of Rookery Pony Club Centre where she started to learn all aspects of owning a pony, riding and horse care.

In 2021 Jessica got her own pony, a 13.2h Welsh Cross called Bea. Since then Jessica has spent all her spare time down at her yard and is constantly out with the Pony Club and at competitions all over the country.



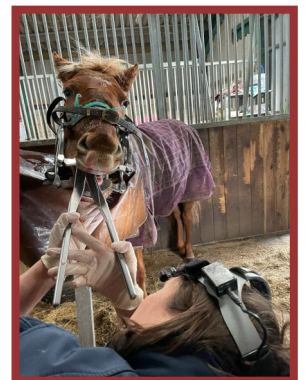
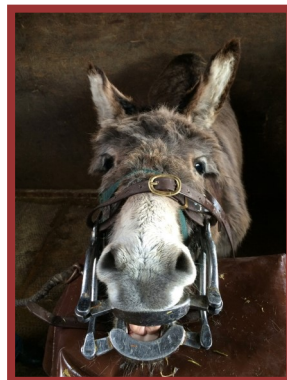
Whilst getting Bea fit, Jessica has been riding her Pony Club Instructor's Palamino called Ramsey and her competition and training journey is now well under way - being out nearly every weekend, riding at every opportunity, especially in school holidays. Last year she was awarded "Most Attended Rallies" at the Pony Club Awards evening. Jessica qualified for the Pony Club Regional Championships at Kelsall Hill Equestrian Centre, once for showjumping and also for the one-day event.

After outgrowing Bea, she went to a lovely new home and Jessica and Ramsey have been competing in the Dallas IXL Showjumping Winter League, qualifying first time out in both the 70cm and 80cm. They are currently top of the 80cm class, a position they have held since the start of the league.

Jessica's aim this year is to move up to 90cm in show jumping, to improve her dressage scores and to qualify for the Pony Club JCB Championships with Ramsey.

## Yard Dental Days

**We offer Yard Dental Days and can offer a free call out, with any vet, on any day.  
Here's how:**



- Is your horse due a dental?
- Do you own or know another four equine friends on your yard who are also due a dental?
- Boom, dental day for you then!

The process is simple.....

- ⇒ Choose your vet
- ⇒ Book your day and time with our lovely reception team telling them details of the five lucky horses
- ⇒ Sit back and let us work our dental magic
- ⇒ Pay at the time for your dentals, NO CALL OUT FEE!
- ⇒ Tell all your friends!
- ⇒ Call us to book your Yard Dental Day on 01295 670501

# Introducing the Nursing Team

It's time for us to introduce you to our fabulous nursing team. Lucy, Fiona and Rosie offer our vets amazing support, both out on the road and back at the Practice. They are always kept busy, whether it be checking on in-patients, running samples, sterilising, ordering drugs, sorting equipment, mucking out stables – the list is endless and there is never a dull moment.

## Lucy Lawson - Head Nurse



This year, Lucy will be celebrating 20 years with Avonvale Equine Practice and was promoted to the position of Head Nurse back in 2012. Lucy has a huge passion for horses and has always worked in the equine field. She studied for her degree in Equine Studies at Moreton Morrell College, completing a 3<sup>rd</sup> year placement at the vet school in Edinburgh, in a dual role working as a yard assistant and research assistant. She worked alongside Paddy Dixon researching equine dental care and techniques. Paddy was a soft tissue surgeon so Lucy also assisted in research into how effective tie backs were.

Lucy's first equine job was at Liphook for over 2 years before moving to Warwickshire with future husband Tom. She started at Avonvale soon after and have been here ever since! Lucy's passion is for surgery and she enjoys her role leading the nursing team. She is a Clinical Coach and is currently supporting Fiona through her studies.

Away from work, Lucy and her two daughters Eleanor and Georgia love spending time with their horse Quilly. They also manage a herd of sheep and the family pet Millie, a Springer Spaniel.

## Fiona Watt - Student Veterinary Nurse



Fiona joined the nursing team in 2019 after spending many years working all around the world, including New Zealand, Australia and Holland. She has a vast amount of experience working in show jumping, eventing, polo, hunting and studwork.

She is currently studying and is in her final year of Level 3 Nursing, hoping to become a qualified Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) by the new year. This is a 2-year intensive work based learning course, with bi-monthly learning blocks based at Liphook Vet Partners in Hampshire.

Fiona grew up around horses and has a passion for show jumping and competed in tetrathlon (running, shooting, riding and swimming). This fuelled her desire to work with equines. Fiona owns two horses, Quigley an ex-show cob and Ganesh, a retired polo pony.

## Rosie Sheppard - Nursing Assistant



Rosie's passion for horses started around the age of 7, at Rookery Team Pony Club, a riding school situated right behind her family home in Warwickshire. Since then, Rosie has always loved riding and she has worked with horses all her adult life.

After leaving school, Rosie completed an apprenticeship at Alscot Stables in Stratford up on Avon and then became a freelance instructor, working at local riding schools and for the Pony Club. Back in 2015 she gained her UK Coaching Certificate in Horse Riding. Alongside teaching, Rosie competed for many years in eventing, team chasing and blood hounding.

Rosie joined Avonvale Equine Practice back in 2018 and worked in our nursing team for a couple of years, gaining invaluable experience along the way. She'd always wanted to run her own yard and was given this opportunity back in 2020, a challenge she relished but the timing wasn't the best due to the pandemic and nursing came calling once again. We were happy to welcome Rosie back into our team in January this year.

Currently Rosie owns Malibu, a retired competition horse and an absolute gem. She also absolutely loves ex-racehorses and has experience of re-training them. Rosie's other passion is travel and adventure and she is aiming to visit 30 countries by the time she is 30!!

### Directors

**Naomi de Pennington** MA VetMB CertEM(IntMed) MRCVS **Claire Maher** BVet Med MSc Cert AVP ESO MRCVS

### Assistants

**Emily Douglas-Osborn** BVSc Cert AVP(EL) MRCVS **Laura Holmes** BVM&S Cert AVP(ED) MRCVS **Carys Morgan** BVSc MRCVS

**Marika Sodano** DVM MRCVS **Mark Vale** BVetMed MRCVS **Charlotte Smith** BVMSci MRCVS