

# Annual Irish Veterinary Nursing Association Conference

*The 5th Annual Irish Veterinary Nursing Association Conference was held in The Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise. Once again kindly sponsored by Allianz, Royal Canin and Zoetis, the lively programme and social evening attracted over 100 delegates, writes IVNA Secretary Lorraine McDonnell*



**The Veterinary Nurse of the Year 2014 - Femke Bot.**  
Photo by Eithne O'Brien



**Melanie O'Donoghue RVN, the winner of the Outstanding Contribution to the Nursing Profession.**  
Photo by Eithne O'Brien

## SATURDAY LECTURES AND COMMERCIAL EXHIBITION

Saturday's lectures covered a variety of topics including dermatology, wound management, pain management, understanding conflict, and obesity.

For the first talk of the day, Sinead Oakes MVB gave a comprehensive insight in to three individual dermatology cases, which also included some dramatic before and after photographs. She reiterated that in dermatology cases it takes time to see results. It does not happen overnight. After a short tea break Shane Guerin MVB CertSAO DVCS Dipl ECVS MRCVS spoke about wound management and the main elements of managing wounds and also four phases of wound healing: inflammatory; debridement; repair; and maturation. He included photographs to identify each stage. Before he finished, he reminded everyone that 100% of wounds are contaminated and gloves should be worn at all times.

After the IVNA AGM and lunch break, delegates had a chance to stroll around the busy exhibitor's hall and meet sponsors. Over 20 stands attended, offering a variety of information on new products and equipment, as well as competitions and freebies galore. Then it was back to the next talk given by last year's Veterinary Nurse of the Year, Mariead Deasy Dip AVN Dip HE CVN RVN. She discussed

pain management of painful and traumatic wounds. She emphasised nurses' responsibility to evaluate pain and the need to look at the whole patient and not just at the obvious problem. Observation is the key. She also discussed pre-emptive, multi-modal analgesia and follow-up analgesia. We also had a chance to investigate the holistic care of ourselves when Br Martin Bennett OFM Cap spoke about conflict in work and the strain it can put on our physical and mental health. He explained the difference between conflict and bullying and then got everyone to participate in a calming exercise, during which we all took a few minutes to relax and meditate.

For our final lecture of the day Shelley Holden VN Cert SAN Cert CAB (BVNA) MBVNA from Royal Canin spoke about tackling obesity. Some very informative points were discussed in setting up an obesity clinic and some simple and easy ways to keep track of patient progress, as well as getting owners involved.

In addition to the days programme, Avalon O'Keeffe gave the results of MRSA swabs, a study that was initiated by Shane Guerin last year and they both thanked the nursing profession for its involvement in the study, which saw 143 delegates take part last year. Results were startling; out of 143 delegates, 13 delegates had MRSA and one had MRSP isolated in their swab. These are only the initial



**Royal Python during the reptile-handling class with Garth de Jong. Photo by Eithne O'Brien**

results as they are still compiling the statistics, which will be completed later this year. It was emphasised that this is a potentially serious to our profession and hand hygiene is a key factor in prevention.

### SUNDAY PRACTICAL SESSIONS

In a change to last year's format, this year there were three streams running concurrently. All three streams were in animal handling, covering canine, feline and exotic species. For the reptile handling class, Garth de Jong, principal reptile keeper from Dublin Zoo gave us a very informative outline of reptiles, husbandry, handling, and safety. He brought to our attention that, currently, there is no law to prevent people keeping venomous snakes in Ireland. He added that venomous snakes can look very similar to non-venomous snakes and showed an example. He suggested taking a picture and sending it to an expert, such as Dublin Zoo, where it can be identified if you are uncertain. He brought along a few companions, including: a Royal Python; a Kingsnake; a Chinese Water-Crested-Bearded Dragon; and a Crested Gecko. Most delegates took to handling them comfortably but some needed a little more encouragement. Garth showed restraining tools used in handling snakes and demonstrated the tube restraint as a safe and easy way to restrain snakes.

In more familiar territory for us, a cat-behaviour and -handling practical was given by Mark McCorry RVN and sponsored by Hills Pet Nutrition. He gave us a 'refresher' on the key points related to cat sense and communication, and what the signs are to look for in acute stress and fear aggression, the safest way to handle, and the best ways the client can help to reduce stress, from the house to the consultation room.

With the help of his feline friends Minerva and Petra, he demonstrated the correct and safe way of restraining from the basic lifting techniques to towel methods (using teddy bears to demonstrate).

Interchem sponsored the dog behaviour practical, where Sarah Endersby BVet Med MRCVS covered handling and restraining of difficult dogs in practice. It started with an overview on canine body language and the ladder of aggression. Sarah discussed various methods of restraint. Then, Cleo (GSD) and Paulie (Rottweiler) came to act as demonstration dogs and were bribed with treats, allowing the delegates to put some of Sarah's tips into place. One of the most useful tips was to teach dogs to be happy to wear

a muzzle. Sarah showed how treats work when training dogs to the muzzle. Cleo picked this up very quickly but Paulie was more reluctant, however, by the last session, if the muzzle was lifted off the table he wanted to put his nose in it. Sarah also demonstrated the use of tape muzzles and the rolled up towel to restrain the head.

The take-home message was that we can use less methods of restraint if we encourage owners to teach their dogs as many positive behaviours as possible to cope with situations that might crop up in the exam room using rewards.

### SATURDAY NIGHT SOCIAL

After a busy Saturday, it was time to celebrate the profession of nursing with the awards and social evening. One hundred delegates, committee and sponsors gathered for dinner, awards, music and dance.

After the meal, Claire Owens from Irish Horse Welfare Trust (IHWT), which is the IVNA's chosen charity for 2014, spoke. She explained about the origin of the charity, which was established in 1999 to help the plight of horses in Ireland. The charity's main aim is to rescue, rehabilitate and re-home horses that have been abandoned, neglected or ill-treated. The IHWT is funded almost entirely through public donations. During the day and the evening prizes were drawn from the fundraising raffle. Prizes included hampers and vouchers. The raffle proved a popular addition to conference festivities and raised much-needed cash for the charity.

The main part of the evening was, of course, the award ceremony. There were numerous nominations in each category and a shortlist of six nominees was given to relevant sponsors from which they choose the winners. We were delighted to join with sponsor Royal Canin to present. The Veterinary Nurse of the Year 2014 to Femke Bot a nurse from All Care Vets. She was a well-deserved winner with many outstanding nominations. Allianz sponsored The Student Nurse of the Year, which went to an outstanding student Irene McKiernan from Athlone IT. Zoetis sponsored the Support Staff of the Year, which this year was awarded to Sonia Latham from Bairbre O'Malley Veterinary Hospital. All three winners received a crystal-engraved trophy and a hotel-break voucher.

This year, we added another surprise award. The award was to recognise the contribution that Melanie O'Donoghue has made to the profession. Melanie helped in the early stages of the setting up of IVNA, as well as advocating for us when she became the Nurses Representative on the Veterinary Council. In a long career, she has worked in every aspect of the profession and, currently, is back in practice in Oran Veterinary Clinic, Oranmore.

Once again, this year we were taken aback by the response and nominations we received in each category. It truly shows how much both colleagues and clients appreciate nurses. Congratulations once again to all the nominees. Check out the IVNA website ([www.ivna.ie](http://www.ivna.ie)) for full nominations and pictures from the congress.

Following the AGM, Eilis Nichol remains as chairperson of the IVNA Committee for another year. Also, we would like to welcome four new members to the committee: Mairead Deasy; Jacinta Codd; Emily Connor; and Corina Fitzsimons.