Foreword

From our Patron, The Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior

'It gives me great pleasure to see Vetlife developing to meet the changing demands of the veterinary profession and working so closely with other veterinary organisations.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors and the volunteers who help to run Vetlife’s support services.

As always, the charity is grateful for the donations which allow it to deliver its support services to the veterinary community.'

The Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior
What we do

Our Vision

A UK veterinary community with high levels of physical and mental wellbeing.

Our Mission

Vetlife provides support to members of the UK veterinary community and their families who have emotional, health or financial concerns, whilst seeking ways to prevent such situations in the future.

How we do it

Vetlife funds and manages three support services in order to achieve this:

- **Vetlife Helpline** provides confidential emotional support by phone or anonymous email via the website.
  Support is provided by trained volunteers; vets, VNds, and others who have knowledge of the veterinary profession.
  It is a completely confidential, non-judgmental listening service, which gives people time and space to talk. People calling are supported to access specialist help where appropriate.

- **Vetlife Health Support** provides professional support for mental health issues, including those related to stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol, drugs and eating disorders.

- **Vetlife Financial Support** provides financial and other assistance to veterinary surgeons, and their dependants, in the form of regular monthly grants or one-off special gifts. We may also fund professional advice on issues such as debt and State benefits.
  For younger people, this support can mean that they don’t have their homes repossessed or that they are enabled to deal with their physical or mental health problems and return to work successfully. For the elderly or those unable to return to work, the support provides them with an improved quality of life.
Our People

Vetlife Board of Directors

John Moffitt  
President

Nick Coulson  
Honorary Secretary

Geoff Little  
Honorary Treasurer

Rosie Allister

Graham Dick

Bill Mavir

Jo Dyer

Katie Moore

Emily Folwell

Jade Statt

Magda Jaszczak

Mary Thomson

Vetlife Area Representatives

Yorkshire & Humberside  
Agnes Winter

Cornwall  
Jo Dyer

Cumbria, Dumfries & Galloway  
John Moffitt

Devon  
Bob Hooper

Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire  
Hilda Jackson

Nottingham, Derby, Leicester & Lincolnshire  
Ewan McNeill

Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Northants, Bucks & London  
Hazel Bentall

Kent, Surrey, Sussex & Essex  
Paul Ripley

Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside, Staffordshire & Shropshire  
Barry Johnson and Magda Jaszczak

East Scotland  
Rosie Allister and David Rimer

West Scotland  
Mauraid Anderson

North-East England  
Linda Clarke

Northern Ireland  
Perpetua Mcnamee

Somerset, Avon & Gloucestershire  
Peter Clark

Dorset, Hants, Wilts & Oxon  
Nick Coulson

Wales  
Bob Stevenson

Hereford & Worcester, West Midlands, Worcestershire & Warwickshire  
Kenelm Lewis and Vicky Gower

Bungalow Liaison Officer  
Nick Coulson

Mentoring/Recent Graduates  
Austin Kirwan

Vetlife Nominated Representatives

SPVS  
Karmen Watson

AVS  
Hannah Mason

BSAVA  
Julian Hoad

RCVS  
Kit Sturgess

BVA  
Robin Hargreaves
Vetlife’s impact in 2015

29,800 visits to the Vetlife website for information and advice

280 Facebook posts

288 Tweets

2,655 followers on Twitter

962 direct acts of support to the veterinary community

8 individuals provided with specialist debt and benefits advice funded by Vetlife

20 home visits delivered by area representatives to discuss financial and other support

65 veterinary surgeons and dependants given financial support

207 individuals provided with professional mental health & addiction support

662 phone or email conversations with our helpline
Financial Support

‘Vetlife stayed there for me, when even my own family did not. I will be forever grateful for their unstinting support.’

Helping People Back to Work

Vetlife has continued to support ‘at risk’ veterinary surgeons, when consent was given for Vetlife Health to contact them, to enable some individuals to remain in work. This can prevent potential hardship, and ensures continuity in their professional lives.

Vetlife has also helped veterinary surgeons who have been off sick for a period of time to return to work by arranging for them to see practice in a sympathetic environment, gain access to CPD and receive financial assistance to get back on to the practising register of the RCVS.

£109,247 to 36 veterinary surgeons (or dependants) as monthly grants

£20,230 to 60 veterinary surgeons (or dependants) as one-off gifts, usually at Christmas time

New Cases 2015

42 enquiries

11 new applicants were given financial support

£20 could fund a home visit to a vet in financial difficulty
Vetlife Helpline

‘Getting good help is essential. From personal experience, I can applaud Vetlife Helpline for getting me through my own dark periods. I feel that, because so many factors relate to events specific to veterinary work, to have someone at the end of the phone who knows our industry is reassuring.’

Anonymous, Letter to Veterinary Record June 2015

£5 could provide vital support by email or phone from our helpline.
221 enquiries in 2015

64 were taken on as new patients

207 total number of patients at year end

Age of new patients

- Under 30
- 30-50
- Over 50

Alcohol related

Drug related

Mood disorders

Psychotic disorders

Eating disorders

Multiple diagnoses

* Several patients had multiple diagnoses and so the percentages for each year do not sum to 100%
Real Stories:
My husband died by suicide

I cannot adequately describe the panic of finding out that my husband had died by suicide. From the police phone call after midnight, to my repeated vomiting with fear and turmoil while talking to the officer who came to my house.

How was I to tell my beautiful children, sleeping, blissfully unaware for the moment of how their world would be catapulted into chaos, misery and despair.

The hardest thing I’ve ever had to do was to tell my innocent children that their father had died, and by his own hand. A close second is my attempt at maintaining some semblance of normal life for years after when all around was grief, fear and fury.

Suicide is so cruel to those left behind. Children are devastated and will always wonder ‘why’ and ‘why us’, while the remaining adult is unfairly blamed for the death and is left to cope with absolute chaos. In a rural community, where my husband was the local vet, I had to endure hateful behaviour directed at me, the survivor. I can’t describe the depths of grief my children experienced. We were living in a nightmare. Every minute of every day was a nightmare.

I can honestly say that the number of people who genuinely helped beyond the first two week period are few and far between. Folk do not know what to say, or do, to help, and quite frankly, everything is upsetting anyway because no-one can understand the depth of trauma and despair. This is where Vetlife is crucial to the families left to cope with the aftermath of suicide. No-one else is equipped to deal with this particular devastation.

I was phoned immediately by Vetlife when they received my application forms requesting financial help. All my husband’s bank accounts were frozen, so, in addition to dealing with traumatised children, I was immediately plunged into financial instability, with fear of repossession. I’ll never forget their kind, reassuring words, telling me that Vetlife were going to help me financially. I was given monthly cheques initially for a three month period, which was then extended for another three months.

This represented an immediate safety net, releasing me from fear of repossession and of not being able to pay credit card bills. We also received wonderful, gentle, professional counselling from Vetlife Health Support. The National Coordinator came to our home and spoke to me and the children. I still phone him, years later, when I am concerned about an aspect of my childrens' behaviour, because even now, there are consequences to deal with and worries to talk about. On several occasions, he has talked me out of a panic with his calm reassurance. His words give me the strength to carry on when all I want to do is to hide away from worries.

The kindness and empathy of the people in this organisation is overwhelming. Vetlife quite literally have saved me and my wonderful children.

‘The kindness and empathy of the people in this organisation is overwhelming.’
Our plans for 2016

- **Launch** a new Vetlife website
- **Expand** Vetlife Health Support with the help of funding from RCVS and VDS
- **Circulate** a new Vetlife Helpline sticker, specifically designed as a crisis intervention to be stuck on dangerous drugs cabinets, to every member of the veterinary community
- **Recruit** and train more new helpline volunteers
- **Raise** awareness of the help that Vetlife can provide related to CPD

**Vetlife’s Five Year Strategic Objectives**

**2010 – 2015**

- Expand health support capacity to meet increased demand and to address the NHS shortfall in mental health care provision
- Increase the number of Vetlife volunteers and offer other communication channels for accessing the helpline
- Continue to review the financial support that the charity provides and how it is delivered
- Increase representation at vet schools
- Strengthen further the Board’s decision making processes and governance

As an independent charity we rely on the generosity of the veterinary community to be able to continue our work
Financial Summary

Income

Total income in 2015 was £687,068,
an increase of 28.8% on 2014 – mostly due to a one off gift from VDS of £150k to mark their 150th anniversary.

Vetlife aims to add £100,000 per annum to reserves to ensure that adequate support will be available to the veterinary community in the future.

Expenditure

Total expenditure was £447,507,
an increase of 5.8% on 2014.

The full VBF Annual Report and Financial Statements are available at vetlife.org.uk
Thank you!

Ways to support Vetlife
From signing up as a member/regular donor to remembering Vetlife in your will, there is a range of ways to support our work.

Find out more at vetlife.org.uk
Online donations can be made at justgiving.com/vetlife

Donations

The majority of donations to Vetlife come from over 500 veterinary surgeons that are Vetlife members and kindly give regular support or from veterinary practices that add a donation to Vetlife on their Veterinary Defence Society renewal form.

In 2015 we were also grateful for support from the RCVS’s Mind Matters Initiative and the Veterinary Defence Society itself. The Veterinary Defence Society gave us a £150k donation to mark their 150th anniversary.

Other individuals and organisations generous enough to support Vetlife with donations were:

Alresford and District Agricultural Show Association of Veterinary Surgeons Practising in Northern Ireland Ayrshire Veterinary Association Bell Equine Veterinary Clinic Keith Bellringer Stephen Borsberry Alan Brack Andrea Bradley British Cattle Veterinary Association British Small Animal Veterinary Association British Veterinary Association Richard Brown Carl Boyde R V Bunce Cambridge University Veterinary Society Cedar Veterinary Group David Collins Cornwall Veterinary Association Fergus Coutts John E Cox Paul Duff Roger Green Ama Groza Robin Hargreaves David Hassall Heathside Veterinary Practice Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Veterinary Society Martin Hosegood Meopham Vets Michael Hutchison Mike Jessop Stuart Johnston Murray Jones Ross Kelly James Kennedy Lincolnshire and District Veterinary Association London Veterinary Forum Ltd Aileen McCalman-Hart Medivet Group M R Minns North of England Veterinary Association North of Scotland BVA Division Northern Ireland Veterinary Ladies Oakhill Veterinary Centre Niall O’Connor Pig Veterinary Society Priory Veterinary Surgeons Ratcliff Foundation Royal Veterinary College Nick Ryland South East Midlands Veterinary Association South of England Agricultural Society Southern Counties Veterinary Society Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons Surrey Vet Wives Sussex Veterinary Society Heidi Svensgaard University of Bristol Centaur Society Vet Dynamics (UK) Ltd Veterinary Defence Society Veterinary Northern Ireland Roland Vinkesteijn Western Counties Veterinary Association Jim Wright

Donations in Memory
David Bee Louise Seddon Charles Wright

Legacies
Pamela F Cross-Stern Charles James Frank Penelope Gillespie M A Swarbrick