

# RIG'S PRACTICE GUIDE



*A useful aide-memoire for  
practices employing a  
new locum vet*



*You've booked your holiday, you've booked your locum, all you need to do now is hand over the keys, grab the suntan lotion and leave, right? Well, perhaps not . . .*

### **Time well spent on brief induction**

If you want your new locum to run the practice as you would like, to maintain turnover, fit into the practice team and not upset the clients, it is worth taking some time to prepare, to give them the tools they need to do the best job for you that they can. Investing a little time and trouble in a proper induction, telling them what you would like them to do rather than expecting them to know as if by magic, is certainly time well spent.



*...it is worth taking some time to prepare, to give them the tools they need to do the best job for you that they can.*

### **Useful information to maintain continuity**

Practices are more different than you would think: not in the basics of medicine and surgery, but in the organisational details of *who does what and how*. Do you finish your puppy vaccinations at ten weeks or twelve? Do you ask that your surgical cases be starved from 6pm, 8pm or midnight the previous evening? Do you charge a blood sampling fee as well as the charge for the tests done, or are the

laboratory prices on the computer all-inclusive? Will you issue a repeat prescription if the patient has not been seen for three months, six months, twelve months? The answers to these questions and many others vary widely. Try to find an hour or so to spend on an induction session with your new locum on arrival - give them a tour, an introduction to practice personnel and answer the questions they will have. Think about giving them a crib sheet covering the basic questions they will need to know several times an hour, but which vary from practice to practice, such as practice policy on vaccination schedules, age of neutering and consent forms for off-licence drugs. They will want to know which brand of clav/amox you stock, which brand of flea spot-on, wormer and arthritis medication you prefer them to use and where they can find dosage charts for each if they aren't familiar with them. You could maybe produce a crib-sheet or check-list covering such matters that can be given to every locum, as well as to new permanent members of staff. Where will they find a copy of the NOAH Compendium of Data Sheets and a formulary to find the doses of drugs that you stock which they may not be accustomed to? If they will be dispensing drugs themselves, they will need to know how you organise the contents of your pharmacy shelves: are products in alphabetical order of current brand name, or do you use some less intuitive system?

## **Multi-practice locations and local knowledge**

If you have several branches where they will be expected to work, good maps of how to get to each and where they can park will be invaluable. In addition, if they will be staying locally in a practice flat or b&b, but are not familiar with the area, a sheet of notes on local pubs, cinemas, restaurants, take-aways and supermarkets is a friendly gesture that will help them to feel welcome.

## **A guiding hand?**

Think about allocating a nurse to 'shadow' the locum for the first half day. On day one in a new practice, they won't know practice policy on *anything*, where to find *anything*, how to arrange to admit a

patient for a drip or what to do with that blood sample they have just taken. Until they find their feet, even the most experienced and competent locum will be able to work far faster, making you more money, with a good nurse at their shoulder.

## **Provision of car and/or accommodation?**

If you are providing a flat or a car, think about doing a quick scan around together with the locum and noting any damage before they take possession. Arguments at the end of a placement about whether they caused that dent or if it was there before they arrived can cause quite unnecessary bad feeling, so make sure there can be no doubt.

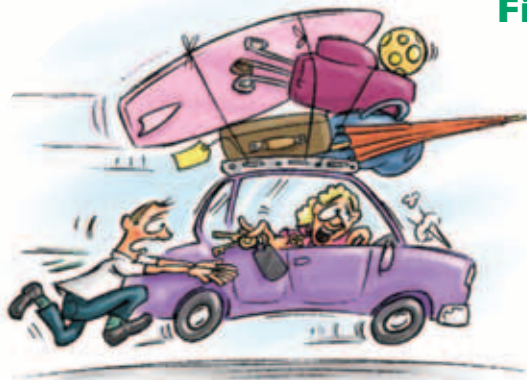


*Think about allocating a nurse to 'shadow' the locum for the first half day.*

## **Special regard for single practitioner practices**

Special considerations apply to the single-handed practitioner handing over to a locum, who will have no-one but the support staff to ask for help and advice. Make a check-list well in advance of items to hand over, so you don't absent-mindedly head off to the Costa Brava with the only key to the dangerous drug cupboard in your back pocket. They will need keys to the building, as well as the dangerous drugs cupboard, they will need to know how to operate the burglar alarm and the answering machine, and they will need to know how to get hold of a member of support staff out of hours if they have an emergency that needs surgery or simply can't find something. If they will be working alone out of hours, they will need to know how to switch on the computer system from scratch, including the log-in codes, how to operate the till and the credit card machine and, of course, your policy on credit. Leave them a phone number where they can get hold of you while you are away. Of course, you don't want

your holiday disturbed, but wouldn't you rather know if there was some genuine disaster rather than have it mishandled in your absence? Worst case scenario, for example if the branch surgery is burned out, would your support staff know which insurance company to contact and which builder to approach to secure the property or would they just think "oops" and await your return? It might be worth preparing some notes on on-going cases for the locum, so they can keep your clients happy and reassured by saying "yes, Mrs Jones made a point of discussing Tiddles' care with me before she left" and so they don't have to spend too long going back over pages and pages of case notes and trying to make sense of them. In a similar vein, for a week or two before your departure, it is worth writing a little more detail into your notes for patients that are likely to be seen while you are away, giving more detail of how your mind was working, what differentials you were considering and what you would like to be done next if the patient doesn't respond.



*They will need keys to the building, as well as the dangerous drugs cupboard.*

## Fit for the purpose?

One thing that practices are likely to overlook, but which is increasingly important as overseas locums become the norm, is to ensure that your new staff member is fit for your purpose, eg working legally, proven identity, has professional indemnity insurance. So have they registered with the RCVS as a home practising member? Those

listed as overseas members are not legally able to practise and, even though EU graduates are entitled to register with the RCVS, they still must actually do so formally. Are they who they say they are? There have been cases of identity theft where unqualified people have obtained locum positions in practices using the name

and registration number of a genuine veterinary surgeon, so if anything they say or do strikes a false note, it might be worth trying to find someone who can verify their identity. Do they have professional indemnity insurance cover? If they are genuinely replacing a permanent member of staff for a period, the practice insurer may well be willing to transfer that cover to the locum for the time that they are with you; but you do need to inform them or, alternatively, some locums take out their own cover and you should ask to see proof of this before they take up the post. It is too late to discover that they are not covered when the expensive claim comes in. Another consideration is that life as a locum can be a good cover for someone addicted to the contents of your dangerous drugs cupboard, as they are not in one place long enough for odd behaviour, mood swings and stock shortages to be noticed, and any previous employer who did develop any suspicions may well have decided simply not to employ them again, rather than make what could be mistaken allegations. Careful candidate screening and interviewing can help reduce this small, but important risk.

## Be prepared

The need for the occasional locum is a fact of life in most practices. A little advance preparation can help to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that your dream holiday doesn't leave you with a nightmare to deal with on your return.



*A little advance preparation can help to ensure that everything runs smoothly...*

**And have a happy holiday!**

If you need a locum, then give us a call on **01392 332858**  
or email us on [info@rigvets.co.uk](mailto:info@rigvets.co.uk)

# Checklist for small animal practice

This checklist is intended to give you some things to think about when writing your own. You may not want to include some of the items here, or you may have others that your own experiences prompt you to add.

## In practice:

- vaccination schedules
  - what is our dog vaccination policy eg annually or DHP every 2-3 years?
  - do we give KC and/or rabies vaccines at the same time as a booster?
  - at what age do we finish puppy vaccinations?
  - do all cats get an FeLV vaccine as well as 'flu and enteritis, or do the owners get the choice?
  - do we vaccinate rabbits against Myxomatosis and VHD at the same time or separately?
- what is our minimum age of neutering for each species and gender?
- what is the practice policy on repeat prescriptions?
- in what circumstances do we use consent forms for off-licence drugs?
- which brand of clav/amox do we stock?
- which brand of flea spot-ons do we stock, and where is the dosage chart?
- which brand of wormers do we stock, and where is the dosage chart?
- which brand of arthritis medication do we stock, and where is the dosage chart?
- which brand(s) of prescription diet do we stock?
- waste disposal: what goes in which bins?
- are there any nurse-led clinics (obesity, training, dental care, noise-phobia etc) that the locum should be referring suitable clients to?
- any current promotions in force, such as a vaccine amnesty or a discount for prompt attendance for boosters?

## Administration:

- give a low-down on who's who in the Practice.
- give a copy of Practice opening times.
- give a quick tour of the computer system if it isn't one the locum is familiar with.
- give details of computer support company.
- give a copy of fire and safety regulations, emergency numbers and alarm codes.

# Any place... Any time...

we have  
permanent  
and locum vets  
throughout  
the UK



## We can offer you:

- Extensive candidate screening, so no time-wasting
- Specialist recruiters who understand your industry
- National coverage. Our service is UK wide with candidates willing to travel – anywhere, any time
- Candidates with a wide portfolio of skills and expertise always available
- No tax or NI liability for your Practice. We do the paperwork
- Locums paid weekly by us. As we said “we do the paperwork”
- No extra charge for recruitment advertising
- Fee payable only when you employ a candidate

To find out more, contact us now on  
**01392 332858** or email  
**info@rigvets.co.uk**, or look on our  
website at [www.rigvets.co.uk](http://www.rigvets.co.uk)

