

Mark Pass is the Store Manager at Beeston Animal Health

Describe a typical day:

"My day has changed considerably as my RSQP role has developed. I frequently receive a phone call to my mobile before I even get to work! It's perhaps a dairy farmer asking my advice. They get up very early! After discussion there may be an on farm delivery of product needed, a bulk milk test kit to send out or even a phone call to a vet, for more advice. I may even ask the vet to ring the client.

On arrival at work I:

- open up the store;
- discuss task priorities for the day with my colleagues;
- check my emails;
- book stock onto the system;
- advise and serve customers on the phone and over the counter;
- interact with local vets;
- joined up a visit with one or more vets, giving up-to-date knowledge;
- deal with the Beeston and Willows Sheep Club;
- check NADIS reports and the SCOPS website for the latest news;
- make appointments with pharmaceutical company representatives;
- place my daily orders.

What's the hot topic?

In the cattle sector, late season lungworm was quite a problem during the last few months of 2014. In sheep, ewe nutrition is very topical as we have some early lambing flocks here in South Cheshire.

And what's not?

Equine feed supplements, except for the essentials, have slowed down recently.

Favourite new product/innovation?

There has been a growing trend of keeping back garden poultry (hens). We have



had a lot of success with the relatively new layers pellets containing in feed wormer as an alternative to the popular tub of 1% medicated premix.

Most effective marketing idea?

We have a couple of very good local agricultural shows and these are always good for customer relationships old and new.

Farmers meetings are a useful interaction between vets, clients and SQPs. I've run these for five years.

Monthly newsletters are always good as long as you can find something interesting to say – a few bits of staff news always help!

Winning Over The Counter Farm SQP of the Year in 2013 enabled us to showcase my knowledge and skills. The local vets and the XL Vet group got behind my success by sending out newsletters and asking me to attend seminars. It was an opportunity to explain what the award meant and raise the profile of the SQP Animal Health adviser.

What are your future training aspirations?

The Gold Standard SQP status is an excellent way of further cementing your role as an animal medicines adviser (RSQP). I hope to encourage my colleagues to go down this route.

I always enjoy conferences like AHDA, courses run by Harper Adams and the excellent CPD modules in the *Over The Counter*. I am also lucky to be invited to a lot of CPD at the Willows vet practice.

How do you increase profit margins?

Knowing your customers' requirements before they do and also being one step ahead regarding new products. Added value is the real key – the best advice saves clients time and money.

What do you think the future holds for the industry?

I am passionate about the animal health industry and feel it has a great future, although the latest drop in milk price may affect the dairy sector in 2015.

Detecting anthelmintic resistance is paramount and we can promote this by recommending more faecal egg counts both pre- and post-treatment. The way forward has to be increased uptake of strategic worming programmes.

We need to offer individual farm advice, including more active client/customer education. I foresee more collaboration between RSQPs and vets on shared health planning.

Best part of the job?

It gives me a lot of satisfaction to hear that the strategies and education put in place have yielded results.

How would your colleagues describe you?

Hopefully, passionate about animal health, dedicated and good at my job! I was overwhelmed by the messages of congratulation I received from my colleagues and significantly from all the local vets, when I won Farm SQP of the Year in 2013, and then Overall SQP of the Year 2014. It was also a real thrill to be part of the Beeston team that won the Innovation category at the same OTC awards presentation in 2014. I think that my enthusiasm may sometimes drive my colleagues, Helen and Angela, up the wall!