

A conversation with...

veterinary nurse **Sarah Woodvine**, who practises in CREDITON, Devon

PROFILE

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| Job title: | Head Veterinary Nurse |
| Practice: | St Boniface Veterinary Clinic |
| Size: | 10 vets, 10 support staff |
| Date you qualified: | 2006 |
| Customer type: | Mixed practice (small animal, large animal and equine) |

BACKGROUND: Sarah had dreams of being a vet nurse from an early age, but her aversion to blood as a child led to her school suggesting an alternative career path: "It wasn't until my mid-20s that I realised it is only human blood I have a problem with, which was a great revelation!" Sarah used to spend every available weekend helping out at a local dressage yard, which in turn placed her in the right veterinary circles.



CAREER CHOICE: Sarah started her career as a receptionist at a rural mixed practice in Devon with a view to studying veterinary nursing when a position became available. "Once my responsibilities moved solely towards vet nurse training I remember being overwhelmed by how much there was to learn," Sarah remembers. "Word of mouth and a bit of luck got me the break I needed and I gained my veterinary nurse qualifications at BICTON COLLEGE."

KEY ROLE: As head nurse, Sarah is responsible for organising the nursing team, sharing out the day-to-day tasks and mentoring the students. "In-patient care is paramount," Sarah says. "Clients entrust us with their pets and I take great pride in treating their pets as if they were my own. Not only is this the most important part of my job it is also the most rewarding." As well as nursing sick patients, Sarah also enjoys hosting puppy parties, providing advice to clients on preventative health care and mentoring students.

KEY SKILLS: Sarah believes the most important skills of a vet nurse are team work, multi-tasking and the ability to keep calm under pressure. "I have always looked up to the head nurse I worked with at my training practice – her ability to stay calm and professional at all times is inspiring." Training and commitment to CPD is key – Sarah is currently enrolled on a line managers' course and the practice has recently moved to a new building, which has enabled them to organise and host their own CPD events. "Of course a cup of tea, a comfy chair and the latest edition of *OvertheCounter* magazine is a great way to keep informed of SQP issues!"

HEALTH ISSUES: Arthritis is a common issue in cats and dogs, with approximately 20% of adult dogs and 50% of adult cats affected. "It is frequently assumed that the animal is just getting old," Sarah explains. "At St Boniface we offer a combination of medical, nutraceutical and complementary therapies (acupuncture and hydrotherapy) and work closely with owners to decide on a treatment plan to suit them and their pet. We also liaise with orthopaedic specialists if surgery is indicated."