

The benefits of better data from farms are within reach

Sean Riches of Vetoquinol takes a look at how livestock health data including information collected on farm can be better used for the benefit of individual animal health outcomes, farm productivity and to strengthen the vet:farmer relationship.

It's no secret that livestock farmers face increasing and continual challenges. From ever more scrutiny of farming practices to a demand for traceability and sustainability of inputs and outputs, the need to be more efficient and productive has never been greater.

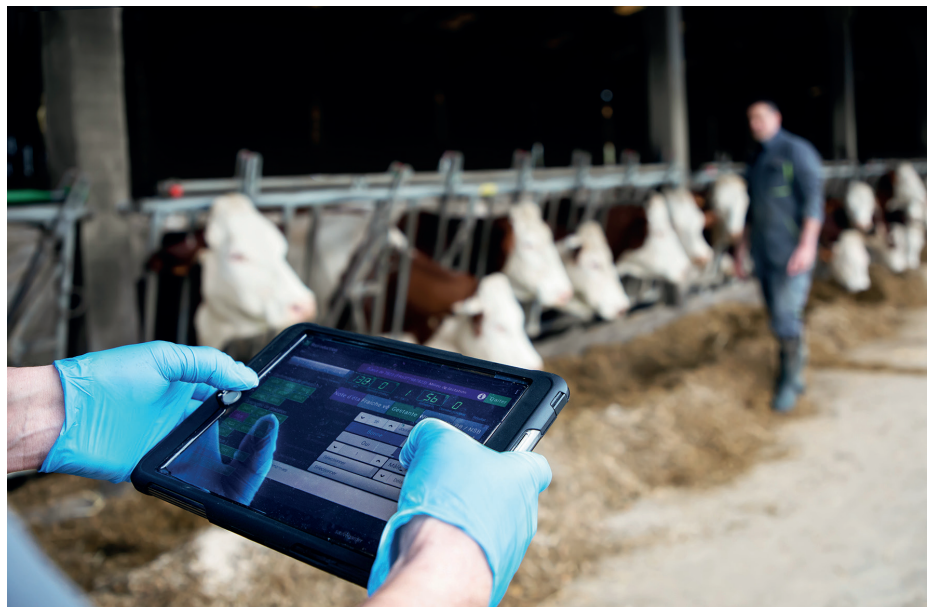
One way to enhance productivity and efficiency is by keeping better data. When it comes to on-farm data and record-keeping related to livestock, there's no one better placed than a vet to collect data and use insights from it to improve herd or flock health and help increase the performance and profitability of farms.

Vets are increasingly using systems like VetIMPRESS to record real-time data, access individual animal records, and look at the insights that matter. This enables better decision-making and better outcomes for farm clients, so every visit counts.

What is VetIMPRESS?

In 2018, Vetoquinol acquired Farmvet Systems Ltd, the home of VetIMPRESS, which was launched in 2010. It is a data management platform delivering "impactful data" at animal, farm, practice, and industry level via cloud-based apps.

The platform offers secure and reliable reporting, combining data from a range of external sources from government and industry schemes, to on-farm IT systems, and farm service providers such as laboratories. It consolidates all of this data with veterinary data



meaning vets can give the best advice to clients, spot any animal health problems early, and make evidence-based decisions on the best treatment plans.

Being able to harness the value of real-time data to deliver the right interventions at the right time is an attractive proposition. It strengthens relationships with clients and increases the value of what vets do, in terms of being a trusted advocate and adviser. So why is there often a reluctance to adopt new systems?

Overcoming barriers

While many vets and farmers want better data and they recognise the need for it, there are barriers to adopting new systems – not least the time that's needed to adapt to something new and realising that it has huge value, rather than just being another thing on the to-do list.

The key to overcoming these barriers is to focus on achieving a few outcomes that will really make a difference. What issues could using a system like VetIMPRESS address and what impact would this have on animal welfare and the productivity on farm?

Knowing this could be the catalyst that encourages both vets and farmers to invest the time that's needed to make a system really work. Collaboration is key – and the only way to create a more sustainable livestock production industry.

Success stories

Vets are using real-time data with VetIMPRESS to improve decision-making on farm. The evidence? The popularity of the reports it can generate, particularly pregnancy diagnosis reports, along with

scanning, body condition scoring, lameness and mobility. These are hugely valued by farmers and make life easier for vets by providing them with real-time data on individual animals.

Providing a permanent record of animal health and history

Having the best data available, all in one place for individual animals, has been a game-changer for vet Lee-Anne Oliver. Knowing an animal's history makes her visits much more efficient and accurate and provides her with a much clearer overview of livestock health.



Lee-Anne Oliver

"The big reason we use VetIMPRESS is to put fertility data in," says Lee-Anne. "It's invaluable for us as a practice to have UK tags and dates of birth, and to be able to log data against that, especially when PD-ing suckler cows. Before VetIMPRESS existed, we would just write things down on a piece of paper and that piece of paper would probably never be seen again. We now have a permanent record from a herd health point of view and that data is recorded forever more, so year on year you build up a picture for that cow, what their calving interval and reproductive history is, and that's fantastic for the suckler beef industry."

Making better decisions

For vet Fiona Dolan, using VetIMPRESS has helped her make better decisions on farm. Better decisions protect livestock health

and welfare and they're what underpins more profitable farms.

"For me, the main reason I use VetIMPRESS is fertility work and PD-ing," says Fiona. "My clients find the reports beneficial, for example being able to get a predicted calving date, and I like that I can set up service protocols for different cows and see the fertility history. This allows me to make good decisions and better advise my clients on what the management plan is going to be going forward."


Staying compliant and having an all-important overview

Another reason for using an accurate and reliable data management

system is that it helps both vets and farmers stay compliant. Nicola Falder of Glenthorne Vets has used it for a number of years and says it's useful for ensuring clinical records satisfy RCVS requirements.


"Personally I think it's easy to use and a great tool for keeping on-farm clinical records which satisfies RCVS requirements," she says. "As a vet, having all the information I need there in front of me rather than having to recall it from memory makes my life so much easier and saves so much time."

Using the system to help accurately label prescribed products is another benefit that helps ensure compliance. "VetIMPRESS enables




Mobility Scoring Report (13/04/2023)

Lameness Dynamics



- Stayed Sound - 88.82% (151)
- Recovered - 4.71% (8)
- New Lame - 5.29% (9)
- Repeat Lame - 0.59% (1)
- Chronic - 0.59% (1)
- Unknown - 0% (0)

Current Scores Breakdown



- Score 0 - 84.12% (143)
- Score 1 - 9.41% (16)
- Score 2 - 4.12% (7)
- Score 3 - 2.35% (4)

Current Scores

Management ID	Animal ID	LF	RF	LH	RH	Score	Comments	Event Date
0253	UK323517401812					3		12/04/2023
0007	UK541990202901					3		12/04/2023
0264	UK323517301832					3		12/04/2023
0329	UK323517202174					3		12/04/2023
0250	UK323517501806					2		12/04/2023
0464	UK323517602675					2		12/04/2023
0438	UK323517202573					2		12/04/2023
0014	UK541990302958					2		12/04/2023
0394	UK323517402421					2		12/04/2023
0384	UK323517702403					2		12/04/2023
0385	UK323517302406					2		12/04/2023
0409	UK323517202517					1		12/04/2023
0294	UK323517402015					1		12/04/2023
0447	UK323517402589					1		12/04/2023
0410	UK323517302518					1		12/04/2023
0488	UK323517202713					1		12/04/2023
0543	UK323517602878					1		12/04/2023
0462	UK323517402673					1		12/04/2023
0343	UK323517502247					1		12/04/2023
0396	UK323517602423					1		12/04/2023
0493	UK323517402722					1		12/04/2023



Nicola Falder

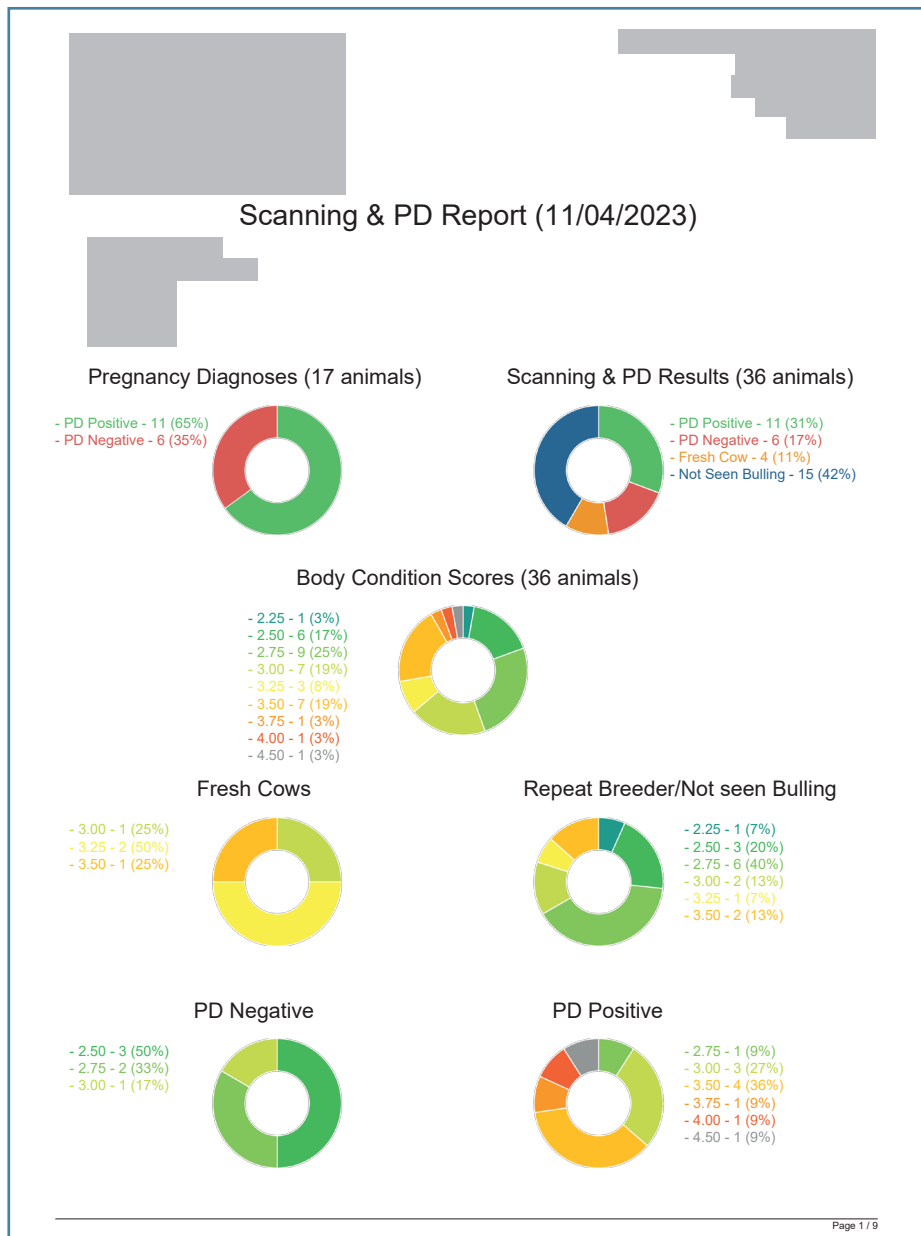
us to label products properly, so in the event of an inspection, everything is present and correct," Nicola adds.

And for farmers it can play an important role in medicines management: "For suckler farmers in particular, the medicine recording capability is really useful. There's a virtual medicine cupboard which helps them stay compliant with their record-keeping requirements."

A theme that comes up time and time again in discussion with farmers and vets is how valuable it is to have a system that gives them a clearer overview of herd health and allows them to make more informed choices. "The reports farmers can generate give them a good overview of key things, like which antibiotics they are using and how much, which really helps to open their eyes," says Nicola. "Then for us as vets, having accurate and reliable information all in one place and having records of things like medicines given and examination results for each cow means we can be much more effective and make good decisions. Less time sifting through data trying to look for what we need means more time for discussions with the client."

The benefits of better data

The undeniable need for better data on farms to improve productivity



and efficiency means that systems like VetIMPRESS are only going to become more valuable, especially when they are linked to farm assurance schemes and processor contracts.

However, for now there's still a lot of inertia around adopting something new. So how do we cross that bridge and make data more about collaborating to make animal health a more sustainable, productive, and profitable industry, and less about it just being one more burden on busy vets and time-poor farmers?

Vets, farmers, and the animal health industry as a whole need to see the value of better data. There are a range of different software options out there, but most are

focused on either vets or farmers.

VetIMPRESS differs by having a focus on both. It encourages collaboration between vets and their clients which makes sense, since they are working towards the same goal; better animal welfare and a more sustainable livestock production industry.

The benefits of more collaboration and having access to better data are clear – more productive farms, stronger farm/vet relationships and understanding and driving down antibiotic use – and they are all within reach.

■ Sean Riches is farm animal product and solutions manager at Vetoquinol.