Workshop: The future of veterinary epidemiology
Presented by Dr. L. Boden¹ and Dr. M. Brennan²

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Since the first SVEPM conference in 1982, the practice of epidemiology and the nature of the profession have changed. Technological developments such as improved and portable computer power, ‘big data’, advances in modelling and statistics and broader incorporation of interdisciplinary methods (adopted from social sciences, anthropology, geography and physics) have influenced the scope and application of epidemiological research. This has brought opportunities, but also challenges to what defines the veterinary epidemiology discipline and its role in the clinical veterinary profession, and wider animal health industry. In the future, there will be new, unanticipated challenges and opportunities for epidemiologists in the animal health sector which need to be considered. In this participatory workshop, we will explore the focal question:

What is the long-term future of veterinary epidemiology?

And consider important scientific, technological, political and environmental drivers influencing the profession and the development of epidemiological principles and approaches. Our aim is to facilitate strategic thinking about future opportunities and challenges facing epidemiology and its role and value in animal and human health and welfare research and policy.

Learning outcomes

1) To facilitate dialogue between epidemiologists working in different sub-disciplines and professional contexts about current and future challenges in veterinary epidemiology and public health.
2) To identify short- and long-term opportunities/strategies to enhance the value of the epidemiology discipline and to identify pathways to achieving these goals.
3) To summarise the findings of the workshop in a position paper for SVEPM.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites apart from interest and/or expertise in veterinary epidemiology

Content and structure

This workshop is a participatory workshop comprising small group and plenary discussions:

1) Introductory presentation.
2) Plenary discussion of the drivers of the epidemiological profession
3) Small group discussion: exploration of future opportunities and challenges for the field of epidemiology.
4) Small group and plenary discussions to develop strategic approaches to improve the future of the epidemiological discipline in light of possible unanticipated uncertainties
There will be some slides and perhaps a very brief presentation to accompany some of these discussions.
Materials
Those attending can bring examples from their own experiences working in epidemiology. The session organisers will provide all other materials for the workshop.

Maximum number of participants
25 people

Instructors

Dr. Lisa Boden
Lisa Boden is a RCVS and European (DipECVPH) specialist in veterinary public health & population medicine, with a PhD in veterinary epidemiology and a Masters of Laws in medical law and ethics. Since 2011, she has had a ‘knowledge-brokering’ role in EPIC (Scottish Government’s Centre for Expertise in Animal Disease Outbreaks www.epicscotland.org) to provide policymakers with rapid access to emergency scientific advice and analyses to prepare for and respond to emergency exotic and novel animal disease outbreaks. Her work includes translation and communication of science as effective and ethical evidence for policy, contingency planning and emergency outbreak response and management, risk assessment and communication and horizon scanning and scenario planning work to facilitate strategic thinking about risk and long-term future resilience to disease outbreaks.

Dr. Marnie Brennan
Marnie Brennan is a MRCVS and Diplomat of the European College of Veterinary Public Health in Population Medicine. She is currently Assistant Professor in Epidemiology at the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham. She is a veterinary graduate from Murdoch University in Australia and conducted a PhD in veterinary epidemiology at the University of Liverpool before joining Nottingham in 2009.

Marnie is Deputy Director of the Centre for Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine where she is involved in a number of projects she likes to describe as ‘clinical epidemiology’, which involves working directly with veterinary practitioners to generate practice-based research. She also has a large role in synthesizing and making available the published evidence on clinical questions for vets and vet nurses to use in their decision-making.

Her other research interests include the use of disease prevention and control measures across a variety of animal health sectors, and the use of sociological research methods applied to veterinary science.