

Cats & Mouse

Richard Hill reports on the rising tide of technology soon to be seen at a vet near you...

You want the best health-care for your cat? But in the ever-changing and advancing field of veterinary medicine, how can you be sure your vet has up-to-date knowledge and is keeping up with the latest clinical techniques?

Soon, you might find your vet having periodic consultations with the surgery computer. But how will you feel if your vet frequently alternates between examining your cat, questioning you about the symptoms, and bashing the keyboard?

Unlike your doctor, your vet has a large range of species to

understand, all of which can be subject to a wide range of diseases and illnesses each with their own range of symptoms. The increased interest in breed-specific cats means that vets in general practice need more information on the conditions which these breeds are predisposed to. Increasingly, vets are coming across rarer conditions, not previously recognised in general practice.

CD-Felis provides multi-media service

As a cat owner, you need to be confident that your vet has access to the very latest infor-

mation concerning your breed. Vetstream, a company providing specialist on-line services to veterinary practitioners, has just produced the second in its series of encyclopaedic multi-media information services developed for vets. Titled CD-Felis, the system is designed to provide vets with instant access, via computer, to the latest in veterinary science using text, sounds, pictures, video clips and animation.

Jos Belgrave is a veterinary practitioner who has developed an interest in information technology and is now Chief Executive of Vetstream. Speaking at a veterinary conference in January, Jos explained the role of the computer in diagnostic and treatment of small animals: 'The first element of a diagnosis process is recognition and observation. This is an area where the keyboard is a fairly poor performer,' said Jos, 'What the computer does is process the result of observations, records and other information sources. There is no doubt that computers are better at handling facts than we are.'

The hi-tech 'cat' that brings it together CD-Felis contains feline information on medicine and surgery techniques with, ECG, radiographs, ultrasonics, breed pictures, videos and hun-

dreds of other illustrations. Information from numerous expert sources has been brought together to provide a complete picture of clinical disease in the cat. A vet using the system is guided through information about the condition, technique and the surgical and medical treatments. A decision tree takes the vet through a checklist of examinations, tests and diagnostic techniques.

Using the results of these tests, the vet can gradually eliminate unlikely diseases and conditions and focus on those most likely to be causing the problem. In treating the condition, the vet can access all the relevant data on available treatments and drugs.

FACT

The system is updated regularly with the addition of quarterly updates and a time-expiry system is built-in to ensure that vets can no longer access obsolete information.

Vital support system for vets

The system can also be used to explain the condition to you, the owner. Your vet can display the causes, the action needed to treat the condition and any operative and therapy options. 'Satisfying the increasing interest of the clients in understanding the health related issues of their pets is likely to contribute to greater client bonding to their practice,' says Jos Belgrave, 'We believe CD-Felis will support vets delivering what their clients increasingly require.'

CD-Felis was launched at the end of March this year. The success of Vetstream's first CD, CD-Canis for dogs, suggests that over the next few months, many vets across the UK will be making use of this technology in the treatment of cats. So, don't panic. Soon, your vet could be a cat and mouse expert. A computer mouse that is.

