



Grad Expectations

AS an undergraduate, one has many concerns about becoming a real farm vet; the fear of missing a key clinical sign, of struggling with calvings and lack of surgical experience to name a few. Few graduates worry about how they are going to get to their calls or the mishaps that can happen on the way.

I was approaching the four month mark in my internship and starting to feel like I knew my way around a bit more. I even started finding our frequent users without the need of my satnav.

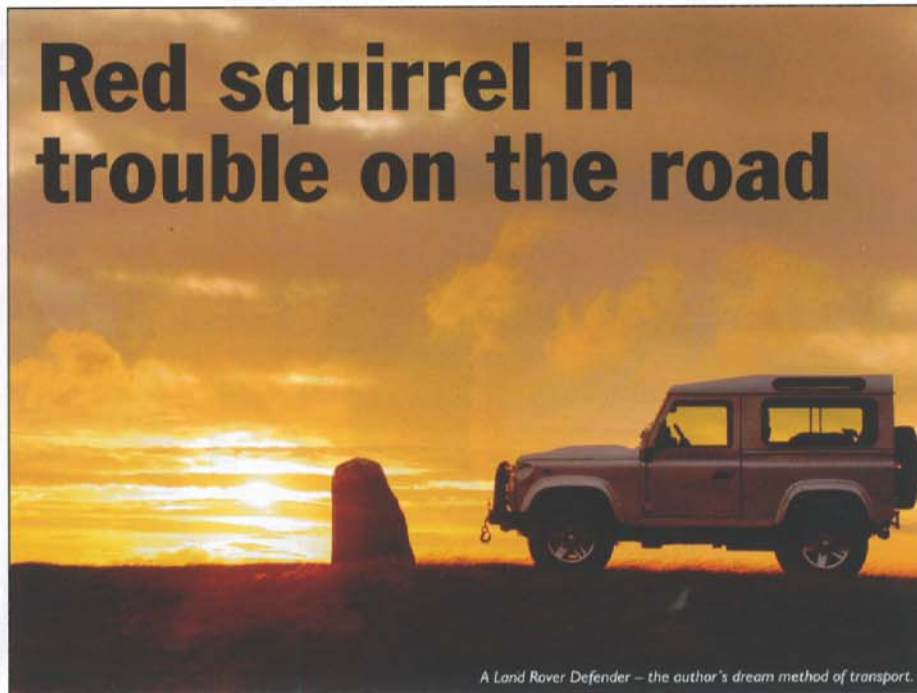
My clinical work was also progressing nicely – six weeks trapped in the office after my unfortunate metacarpal fracture were a distant memory and routine work, sick cow calls and TB testing were thankfully becoming my new reality.

Although my dream method of transport is undoubtedly a Land Rover Defender, as a new graduate I was allocated a Peugeot Bipper van. Despite the lack of four-wheel drive,

height and draughty interior, my Bipper was much loved and nicely decorated with the Synergy Farm Health logo and details of our veterinary technician services. The anonymity of my student car days were long gone.

As well as having many ambitions for my year as the Synergy intern, I also had the personal ambition of achieving my trailer licence. I have a small flock of pedigree sheep and with the possibility of hitting the 2013 Dorset shows looming, I decided to seek out a local instructor and go back to driving school. I practised thoroughly and, thankfully, passed first time.

Back to work the next day and off to visit a pair of coughing cows. The animals had presented with pyrexia, milk drop and, on clinical examination, were found to have increased respiratory noise in the ventral lung lobes. Antibiotics, non-steroidal pain killers and nursing were recommended and a discussion about housing ensued. As an "east side vet", I spend



A Land Rover Defender – the author's dream method of transport.

Photo: LINDA KOEHLER/ISTOCK

my time driving up and down the A35 and A37 – the two main routes through Dorset (the only county in England without a motorway). Our clients are dotted along the routes and I am familiar with every speed sign, twist and turn.

On my way back to HQ from my coughing cow call, I pulled up to a familiar junction and my concentration was rudely diverted by a large crunch from the rear of my vehicle. A well-known pasty company vehicle had parked into my beautiful Bipper. I was very shaken and, having exchanged contact details, I radioed in.

"Red Squirrel to Base,"
"Receiving Red Squirrel,"
"Base... I need rescuing... again"

This message was met with concern. I wasn't quite sure where I was on my route and my van was inoperable. The BMW looked unscathed, but my van was not. The Beast's nose was truly crumpled and undrivable. To add insult to injury, my disinfectant bottle had been loosely sealed at my previous call and exploded in my van. I was covered in reddish brown liquid – much to the horror of passers by who assumed I was bleeding profusely.

As previously mentioned, Synergy vans lack anonymity and I was spotted by two clients and a member of staff. Prior to the collision, I was on my way to visit a freshly calved cow, an abortion inquiry and to read some TB tests on a local farm. I was within 10 minutes of the holding and they decided to rescue me. I was incredibly grateful to my second knight in shining armour who arrived complete with Defender. I was greeted at the farm with a cup of sweet tea and my patients. Despite being very shaken, I carried on with my tasks and a hire vehicle was delivered.

The Beast and a BMW

I was met with concern on

returning to the practice and only a fraction less sympathy. I was shaken and mortified by the whole experience. Surely my bad luck would now be over?

No such fortune. Monday morning began with a flat tyre on my hire van and ended with a cracked fuel sump on a farm drive. My driving confidence was shattered. I had been through three vehicles in four weeks and was building up a reputation as crash bannock.

Good news at last – the Bipper was back in action and we were reunited.

Sadly, any hopes I had for the whole thing being forgotten were short-lived. I hoped I had made a memorable impression during my first few months in practice with my enthusiasm, willingness to learn or other such qualities. The Synergy Christmas dinner suggested otherwise and I was awarded the 2013 edition of *The Highway Code* and a toy tank.

I was recently informed that one in 10 newly qualified vets will crash a vehicle within their first 12 months in practice. I have contributed to those statistics, but, thankfully, haven't contributed to the mortality statistics that haunt many country roads throughout Dorset. I was subsequently consoled by a client who would much rather I was late to calls than didn't arrive at all – a touching sentiment for a newly qualified vet to receive.

The reality is our job is dangerous, on farm and, seemingly, off farm. I have slowed down and become more cautious in the light of my incidents and I would encourage other young vets to do the same. No one wants to be remembered as the vet lost in a car accident and even less so as the "pasty girl".

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EMILY GASCOIGNE is a new graduate from the University of Cambridge and began an internship with the RVC in association with Synergy Farm Health in July 2012. Emily has a particular interest in dairy medicine and surgery, as well as sheep flock management.



Sharing passions, shaping futures

Have you a German Shepherd with Chronic Diarrhoea?



As part of a study investigating Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) in German Shepherd Dogs we are offering free workup and endoscopy.

IBD is considered to be the most common gastrointestinal disease in dogs, and it is particularly common in the GSD. It is characterised by chronic inflammation of the stomach and the gut, causing persistent, recurrent signs such as vomiting and diarrhoea.

The exact cause of this disease is currently unknown, but it is clear that several factors such as diet, abnormalities of the immune system and genetics play a role.

Although IBD can occur in any canine breed it is more prevalent in some breeds such as the GSD. This suggests that a genetic predisposition exists in this breed which increases their susceptibility to IBD.

We aim to enrol a select number of GSDs suffering from IBD onto a new study at the RVC. The samples will be used for genetic analysis to investigate the causes of this disease.

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