BVA AND VETWORK UK FUND VETERINARY STUDENTS ON RESEARCH PROJECTS IN CHAD, ZIMBABWE, MOROCCO, INDIA AND SRI LANKA

The BVA Overseas Group awards grants annually to veterinary students to enable them to undertake projects in developing countries. The scheme was introduced in 1983 as a positive and practical way to provide assistance where required and to enable students to gain invaluable experience in dealing with exotic diseases.

Usually four grants are awarded each year but in 2014 BVA was delighted to be able to offer two additional grants, thanks to the support of Vetwork UK, a UK-based veterinary charity which provides technical and project support to livestock and related livelihoods projects in low-income countries, including development and emergency interventions. So this year six grants of £500 each were awarded by the Overseas Group to students to enable them to undertake research projects in developing countries, and the recipients are:

- Alice Bednall-Brough (Edinburgh): mortality of beef cattle in Zimbabwe
- Fiona Ditcher (RVC): vector borne diseases in dogs in Sri Lanka
- Sophie Ivil (Edinburgh): goat herd health and productivity in India
- Catherine Spedding (Liverpool): ocular disease in working equids in Morocco

With Vetwork UK supporting:

- Rosie Beaumont (RVC): studying captive juvenile elephant collection in Sri Lanka
- Alice Whittle (Bristol): conflict management between farmers and nomads in Chad

On hearing that she had been awarded a grant, Fiona said: “I am delighted to have been awarded the grant and I am very much looking forward to completing the work for the project.”

Sophie said: "I was absolutely delighted to hear the success of my funding application for this trip. It was such a relief to me as securing funding was financially necessary to make this trip happen. I am thrilled to be able to develop my knowledge of small ruminant health in developing countries and I really believe it will stand me in good stead for the future application of my veterinary career."

Catherine commented: "I was thrilled to be awarded the BVA Overseas Travel Grant. I have always wanted to experience the working equid world first hand and this award has given me that opportunity. Thanks to this award I am not only able to gain a real grasp of the work of veterinary organisations here in Morocco, but also the lives of families and their equids who so depend upon them. This award has enabled me to carry out research which I hope will benefit many working equids across the world in the future. It has also given me the opportunity to conduct my own research, and learn about what it takes to do field research in a developing country. I will certainly take home with me a plethora of skills and experiences."
Also pleased was Rosie who said: “I was thrilled and extremely relieved on receiving this award as it meant I could definitely afford to go to Sri Lanka and complete my research project. I will always be extremely grateful to the BVA. The people, wildlife, and most importantly the elephants I met will stay with me for life!”

Alice Whittle was equally delighted, adding: “I am so pleased to have received the BVA overseas travel grant. It has given me the opportunity to visit Africa for the first time and discover a project that helps farmers and their animals in Chad.”

The Donkey Sanctuary was again inspired to link up with the Overseas Group by providing an opportunity for Rachel Argyle (Liverpool) to undertake a project in Ethiopia.

Highlighting the value of the travel grants, Adele Williams, chair of the BVA Overseas Group, said:

“The BVA has long recognised the value in giving students the chance to gain experience in the prevention and control of exotic and emerging animal diseases – ever-present threats in the face of globalisation and climate change. Since 1983 the BVA travel scholarship scheme has also given students an opportunity to develop and adapt their clinical skills, and – perhaps even more importantly – to develop the beneficial life skills of communication, adaptability and open-mindedness.

“In a world where over one billion people depend on animals for their livelihood, the veterinary profession’s role in global animal health and welfare, and public health, is becoming increasingly significant in the face of challenges brought about by emerging diseases, climate change and sustainable development. The Overseas Group is heartened by the considerable interest from veterinary students wishing to work in developing countries.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The BVA travel scholarship scheme, instituted in March 1983, awards grants annually to undergraduates attending a veterinary school in the United Kingdom. Applicants are required to be in their clinical years and should be undertaking a project which includes a strong element of development work. The project should be of benefit both to the student and the country concerned. The work is usually carried out during the summer vacation. Since 1983, grants have been awarded to 108 veterinary students enabling them to undertake projects in 38 different developing countries.

2. Photographs of the award recipients are available to download from [http://www.bva.co.uk/News-campaigns-and-policies/Newsroom/Picture-gallery/](http://www.bva.co.uk/News-campaigns-and-policies/Newsroom/Picture-gallery/)

3. Vetwork UK is a UK-based veterinary charity which provides technical and project support to livestock and related livelihoods projects in low-income countries, including development and emergency interventions.
4. The Donkey Sanctuary awards grants to support veterinary undergraduates visiting a project site in Mexico, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya or India.

5. For further information, please contact the BVA Media Office on 020 7908 6340 (or 07503 190247) or media@bva.co.uk