

**Recruiting a representative sample of British veterinary practices for conducting a generalisable epidemiological study of equine laminitis, 2009-2011**

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Equine epidemiological studies frequently use convenience rather than random sampling, recruiting horses under the care of volunteering veterinary practices. This study aimed to recruit a representative, sample of compliant veterinary practices to study the epidemiology of equine laminitis in Great Britain. As no complete data on the British horse population exist, analyses were undertaken to establish if the recruited sample represented the underlying veterinary population with results applicable to the general horse population. Initially, 1169 Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons-registered practices dealing with horses were contacted to make them aware of the study. Those willing to help further were sent more information and invited to submit answers to 8 questions on requirements for study data collection, with practices asked to provide data on cases of equine laminitis and the population of horses seen by them over a 24-month period between 2009 and 2011. Initially, 175 (15.0%) of 1,169 veterinary practices responded and of these 148 (84.6%) expressed interest in co-operating with the study. Sixty five (43.9%) practices were willing to provide data with 28 (18.9%) practices finally recruited on the basis of their eligibility responses. Of the 28 recruited practices, 2(7.1%) were in Wales, 4 (14.3%) were in Scotland and 22 (78.6%) were in England. Spatial analysis suggested the 28 practices were geographically representative of the underlying British veterinary practice population. Epidemiological data exceeding required sample size estimations were collected over the planned 24-month study period from the participating veterinary practices. The methods adopted facilitated recruitment of a geographically representative sample of veterinary practices, which provided generalisable epidemiological data on equine laminitis in GB between 2009-2011.