

Tipp vet practice moves up a gear

With traditional large animal vet practices moving more into small animals, Jack Kennedy profiles a new development in Tipperary

How traditional large animal practices are evolving to meet the demand from clients for more small animal care is evident in the Tipperary-based O'Connor Julian veterinary partnership.

Recently, a move from the original premises on Cashel's main street to a new site close to the main Dublin-Cork motorway has transformed the experience for farmers and small animal owners accessing the new veterinary facilities in south Tipperary.

What was traditionally a two-vet practice with one assistant is now a five-person team with four full-time vet nurses and one part-time vet nurse.

Brothers Derry and Patsy O'Connor are known across Ireland for their veterinary service for over 50 years. In 2007, Derry's son Michael came to work in the practice having graduated from UCD, and in 2009, together with vet Tom Julian who was already well established within the practice, formed a new partnership.

Around the same time, given their office location in the main street in Cashel, pressure came on existing facilities in terms of storage and parking availability for clients. A plan to relocate was developed, a two-year planning process was completed and in December 2014 a new site was purchased on the outskirts of Cashel.

Conack Construction Ltd started building in December 2015 and, nine months later, new state-of-the-art facilities were up and running.

Michael O'Connor says: "The intention from the start was that if this project was going to happen, then we were going to do it right. So, from planning all the way through, our aim was to achieve the highest accredited status from Veterinary Ireland, called "Hospital" status. Thankfully, we have achieved that goal and met the standards."

Significantly, in 2010, the new partnership joined an umbrella organisation

for vets called XLVets, and Michael maintains that involvement has kept the practice focused and relevant.

What drove change?

Michael explained that new live vaccines require proper storage facilities, along with all other pharmacy-type products. A more extensive paper trail requires more administration space and more business means more waiting room facilities, etc.

On the subject of how the small animal part of the business has grown down through the years, Michael says: "In fairness, Derry started it years ago and got involved with treating greyhounds, etc. Since then, standards and expectations from clients have increased considerably and we have had to up our game."

The O'Connor Julian vet partnership now has five vets – Patsy, Derry and Michael O'Connor; Tom Julian; and Emma Corbett Coffey, who recently joined as a fifth vet in the practice.

It is fair to say that the large animal practice is still the mainstay of this Cashel-based practice and, given its geographical location, clients are based far and near.

Horses and greyhounds (track and coursing) are in abundance in the hinterland around south Tipperary, so first-opinion work on sick foals, routine horse work, orthopaedic work on large dogs, fracture repairs and cruciate surgery are all part of everyday work. An expanding dairy herd in the locality is the mainstay of the practice.

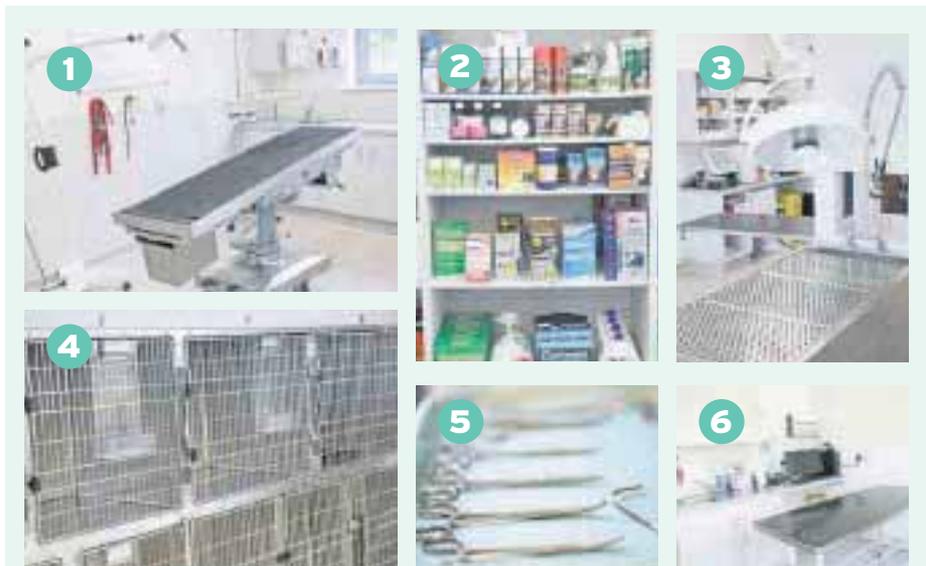
What to look out for

Michael explains that while the weather was extremely mild in October, they had a lot of small animals presenting with external parasites, such as fleas, mange and mites. He says: "The cold weather and frost will clear this but then you need to be aware of pets indoors and the problems that heat can create." He explains that central heating can cause skin allergies and dermatological problems which can be managed with routine parasitic management for internal and external parasites. The proper feed with good quality protein sources are important. Michael stressed that overfeeding and overweight pets can lead to osteoporosis problems, a tendency for diabetes and other metabolic problems.



Tom Julian, Derry O'Connor, Catherine O'Connor, Patsy O'Connor, Aengus Ryan, Declan Ryan and Michael O'Connor at the opening day of the new O'Connor Julian premises in Cashel, Co Tipperary.

The new facilities



- 1 Operating theatre.
- 2 Reception and retail.
- 3 Treatment room.
- 4 Kennels (separate kennels with purpose-built stainless steel cages for small dogs and walk-in kennels for large dogs).
- 5 Surgical sterilisation.
- 6 Consultation room (two in total).

Other facilities

- Grooming parlour and accommodation.
- Separate cattery from dogs.
- Isolation facilities for infectious diseases.
- Full in-house laboratory.
- Separate surgery and radiology room.
- Adjoining facilities to allow in-house bull fertility testing/mare reproductive work.

Take a walk on the wild side

Daphne Scott talks to Patrick Donohoe about her Co Cavan business Precious Pets

Daphne Scott does not have your usual career path. The Co Cavan woman has spent the best part of a decade building up her pet suppliers and board kennels business. Now Precious Pets is flourishing.

She started taking in dogs at her home outside of Cavan town when she was 14 and has been growing the business ever



Daphne Scott with some of her animals.

since. She completed a dairy business degree in Moorepark before hitting the road as rep for fertiliser company Grassland Agro. She recently decided to pack in the day job to pursue her dream job.

"I left the job with Grassland Agro in May and have been full-time at home since. I'm busy all the time really. November is usually the quietest month but there are good few here too," Daphne explained to the *Irish Farmers Journal*.

The kennels have grown steadily over the years and Daphne now has 22 to her name. She houses dogs mostly, but also cats, birds and cockerels. All owners leave their pride and joy with Scott and, while all animals are different, the requests from owners are often the same.

"Oh yeah, everyone knows what they want. It's the denta-stick in the morning,

the treat in the afternoon and the kiss good night. Every owner wants the best for their animal and that's what we try to do," she said.

What is the most unusual creature she has had to look after?

"I suppose the fish and goldfish would be the more unusual ones, but we look after everything here."

Daphne has also taken on a feed sales element of the business, noting that her customers wanted to buy feed too. As well as that, she has sparked up a mobile animal zoo which visits shows, schools and other such events.

Daphne explained that she has everything from ponies to pigs and from bearded dragons to guinea pigs.

"It's going really well and it's something a bit different," Daphne added.