Clinical Research Abstract

Use of radiography in small animal practice in the UK and Ireland

S Morley, N Booth, R Ewers

Introduction
Radiography is an important diagnostic tool in veterinary practice. The use of radiography has been changing significantly over recent years with the introduction of digital radiography and increasing use of alternative imaging techniques. However, there is little research into how this is carried out on a day-to-day basis in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Aim
To assess the current use of radiography in small animal practice in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Materials and methods
The target population was various clinical members of the veterinary team in different tiers of small animal veterinary practice. Online and paper-based questionnaires were distributed via e-mail, social media, web links and in person at a range of veterinary and veterinary nursing conferences. Statistical analyses were performed using Minitab 16.

Responses were analysed to determine:

- Demographics of respondents
- Use of radiography: members of staff involved, restraint, training received, perceived usefulness of radiography, selection of exposure factors
- Types of radiography system: DDR, CR, film-screen
- Use of other imaging techniques within the practice

Results
One thousand, two hundred and twenty four respondents completed the questionnaire, 66% online.

Key findings included:

- 77% of respondents worked in first opinion, 15% in mixed first opinion/referral and 8% in referral only practice
- 73% of respondents used digital radiography in their practice (64% CR and 9% DDR)
- The most common reason given for not switching to digital radiography was cost
- Radiographs were taken most frequently by veterinary surgeons (60%) and veterinary nurses (25%)
- General anaesthesia was the most commonly reported method of restraint (50%), followed by sedation (36%). 3% of cases were manually restrained for radiography
- 32% of respondents reported not having received radiation safety training in their current practice
- 81% of respondents found radiography very useful when working up a case
- Ultrasonography was used at least monthly in 87% of practices
Discussion/Conclusion
Significance of key findings are discussed. These results provide a current assessment of the use of radiography in small animal practice in the UK. This information can be used to inform assessment of the veterinary imaging market and priorities for training, which may currently not reflect the needs of veterinary practice in the 21st century.