



Sunday 12th October 2025 | Pattingham 2 | 12:00 – 13:00

Speaker: Charlotte Prothero RVN

Title: From side eye to tail wags: navigating canine emotions in the clinic



Charlotte worked in a small animal rehabilitation clinic before beginning her veterinary nurse training and qualified as a veterinary nurse in 2014. She has worked in a busy first opinion small animal practice for 13 years where she qualified as a clinical coach. In 2019 she gained the BSAVA Vet Nurse Merit Award in Rehabilitation & Physiotherapy. She moved into teaching at Abbeydale Vetlink in 2023 and has since gained her Level 3 Award in Education and Training.

Charlotte has always had a strong interest in animal behaviour and training and has undertaken courses with the Institute of Modern Dog Trainers. She hopes to inspire the next generation of students in positive reinforcement approaches to animal handling in practice.

Synopsis:

This lecture will explore the vital role veterinary care assistants (VCAs) play in fostering a calm, supportive environment for anxious patients and their owners. Animals entering a veterinary practice may already be experiencing fear, pain, or confusion, and a stressful environment can escalate their anxiety, making examinations and procedures more challenging which can potentially compromise care. Clients, too, may feel worried or overwhelmed, which can transfer to their pets.

Through thoughtful preparation of the environment, VCAs can significantly reduce stress triggers for dogs. Additionally, recognising and interpreting canine body language is essential.

Understanding signs of fear, avoidance, or escalating stress allows VCAs to respond appropriately, ensuring safer and more compassionate handling.

Proper low-stress handling techniques will be discussed, showing how to support the animal's emotional wellbeing during procedures. Furthermore, the lecture will cover communication with clients—how VCAs can educate owners about desensitisation, counter-conditioning, and confidence-building activities at home to "future-proof" their pets' behaviour.

By the end of the session, VCAs will understand their critical influence in creating a fear-free practice and be equipped with practical tools to improve outcomes for both patients and their owners.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the importance in recognising and interpreting canine body behaviour.
2. Learn how to prepare and adapt the environment accordingly.
3. Gain an understanding of future proofing positive behaviours.