



29th VETNNET symposium

16th – 18th September 2026

**Diversity in Veterinary Nursing Education:
Teaching for every talent**

Hosted by: Czech Veterinary Nurse Association



Prague, Czech Republic

Registration

Registration for the symposium will close on August 2nd 2026.

Symposium fee

Members2		Non-members	
Early bird delegate (before June 20 th)	€350	Delegate fee (regardless when booked)	€550
Delegate normal fee (from June 20 th)	€450	Pre-conference activity (minimum subscription applies)	€20
Accompanying person	€200		
Pre-symposium activity fee (minimum subscription applies)	€20		

Delegate fee includes:

- VETNNET reception, buffet on Wednesday
- Dinner and party on Thursday evening
- Lectures and workshops on Thursday and Friday
- Tea, coffee and lunches on Thursday and Friday

Accompanying person fee includes:

- Buffet on Wednesday evening
- Dinner and party on Thursday evening
- Cancellation must always be in writing (vetnnet@outlook.com).
- A minimum of 45 days before the first event day the cancellation will be free of charge.
- Less than 45 days before the first event day the full price is charged.

Symposium programme *(Programme is subject to change)*

Wednesday, 16th September 2026, pre-symposium day

Meet at 14.00 at the Panorama by Verdi hotel Group 1: 15.00 - 16.30 Group 2: 15.30 - 17.00	Pre-symposium programme: Prague Underground tour https://bazilika.kkvys.cz/# (Optional, fee €20)
18.45 - 19.00	Welcome and registration at the Panorama Hotel
19.00 - 22.00	Reception at the Panorama by Verdi Hotel

Thursday, 17th September 2026

9.00 - 9.10	Welcome word
9.10 - 9.30	VN education in Czech republic: Jan Křeček
9.30 - 10.30	"Neurodiversity in the Clinical environment: Are We Getting It Right?" - Amy Homer
10.30 - 11.00	COFFEE BREAK
11.00 - 12.00	"Incorporating Contextualized Care in Veterinary Nursing Curricula"- Christina Tran, Kelly Bremken
12.00 - 13.00	LUNCH
13.00 - 13.45	Yellow raincoat : Project update, conclusions and recommendations -Nienke Dijkerman, Tanja Gačnikar, Angelique Withaar
13.45 - 14.30	"More Than Words: Transforming Language into Better Patient, Client, and Team Outcomes"- Kelly Bremken, Christina Tran
14.30 - 15.00	COFFEE BREAK
15.00 - 17.00	Workshops
	- VR Update - Immersive learning factory -Vaughn Lawson
	- Understanding Neurodiversity: From Experience to Education - Nynke Pos & Nadine Kuijper
19.00u -00.30u	Party at the Phenomenon club

Friday, 18th September 2026

9.00 - 10.00	AGM
10.00 - 10.20	2027 host: Portugal City of Coimbra
10.20 - 10.30	Update ACOVENE
10.30 - 10.50	COFFEE BREAK
10.50 - 11.50	Accessibility of practical skills assessments - Jude Bradbury
11.50 - 12.10	Vetrise 2.0- Competing and connecting - Eva Tasič
12.10 - 13.00	LUNCH
13.00 - 14.00	Insights in ADHD – Bieneke Verhaar
14.00 - 14.45	Behavioral design and nudging – Finn Kristensen
14.45 - 15.00	COFFEE BREAK & Networking
15.00 - 16.30	Workshops (choose 2 out of 3)
	- From barriers to belonging: EDI in veterinary nurse education - Nikki Ruedisueli
	- "The hidden curriculum" Exploring the unspoken rules of veterinary nursing education and who they work (or don't work) for - Ali Heywood
	- Creating accessible practical exams – testing low cost solutions - Jude Bradbury
16.30	Conclusions and closing the conference

For more information on travel and accommodation, please look at our website:

[VETNNET Symposium](#)

Sessions

Thursday, 17th September 2026

Amy Homer: "Neurodiversity in the Clinical environment: Are We Getting It Right?"

This session will explore how neurodiversity is experienced by students within the clinical environment and asks whether current approaches are supporting students effectively. Drawing practical example, the session will highlight common barriers faced by neurodivergent students including the impact of a fast-paced setting, unclear expectations, and communication challenges. The session will consider existing support and how clinical teaching can work alongside individual adjustments to provide a inclusive and enjoyable learning environment.

Tina Tran & Kelly Bremken: "Incorporating Contextualized Care in Veterinary Nursing Curricula"

The practice of veterinary medicine has primarily focused on fixing problems with the patient. Veterinary professionals take histories, complete physical examinations, perform diagnostic tests and provide medical and surgical recommendations with the goal of solving their patient's problems. But what we learn with experience, is that the ability to provide optimal patient care often relies on the relationship that we build with the animal caregiver or pet owner -- and on the social, cultural, financial, and lived realities that shape what care is possible. When those contextual factors are overlooked or dismissed, the result can be unintended inequities in communication, trust, access, and outcomes.

In this session, we will discover what human medicine has termed contextualized, or patient-centered, care and apply these same principals to veterinary medicine through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens. By exploring layers of context provided through a relationship between veterinary professional and client/owner, veterinarians and veterinary nurses can better understand how to work with owners to strengthen the human-animal bond and optimize patient care. Alongside veterinary social workers, veterinary professionals can create deeper meaning in the work we do and how we can best serve the animals and the humans that require our care.

This interactive session will focus on practical strategies for incorporating contextualized care in veterinary nursing curriculum and ways to help students build skills in inclusive communication and bias-aware history-taking.

Kelly Bremken & Tina Tran: "More Than Words: Transforming Language into Better Patient, Client, and Team Outcomes"

In veterinary medicine, the words we choose—spoken in an exam room, written in a medical record, mentioned in a client communication, or shared among healthcare team members—shape outcomes. Language can build trust, reduce conflict, improve patient care, and strengthen teamwork. It can also unintentionally escalate emotions, shame clients, introduce bias, gatekeep information and resources, or undermine psychological safety. For veterinary nursing educators, this is an important teaching opportunity. Communication is not a “soft skill,” but a foundational clinical skill that directly affects patient care, client experience and team performance.

This session equips educators with practical, teachable strategies to help veterinary nursing students develop compassionate and professional language across common clinical scenarios. We will explore how word choice influences (1) client understanding and decision-making, (2) team communication and handoffs, and (3) medical record quality and legal/ethical risk. Participants will examine high-impact moments where language matters most, including discussing cost, explaining diagnostics, navigating emotions, documenting client communication, setting boundaries, and communicating uncertainty.

Attendees will leave with plug-and-play classroom and clinical lab activities to include in existing courses. We will also share methods for integrating inclusive, nonjudgmental terminology when describing clients, colleague interactions, and animal behaviour, so students learn to communicate with clarity and empathy under pressure. This information will better prepare veterinary nursing students to enter clinical settings ready to support clients, protect patient welfare, and strengthen veterinary teams through the power of their words.

Workshops

1. VR Update - Immersive learning factory -Vaughn Lawson

This interactive workshop explores the use of Virtual Reality (VR) as a powerful tool for learning, training, and engagement. Participants will be introduced to the fundamentals of VR technology, including hardware, software, and practical applications across a range of settings. Through hands-on experience, attendees will have the opportunity to engage with immersive VR scenarios, gaining insight into how this technology can enhance education, communication, and skills development.

The session will also examine the benefits and limitations of VR, with a focus on implementation, accessibility, and best practice. By the end of the workshop, participants will have a clearer understanding of how VR can be effectively integrated into their own professional environments, along with practical ideas to take forward into their work.

2. “Understanding Neurodiversity: From Experience to Education” - Nadine Kuijper & Nynke Pos

How does learning feel when your brain processes information differently?

In this interactive workshop, participants will experience a variety of activities and teaching situations designed to simulate how neurodiverse students may experience education.

Through practical exercises, reflection and discussion, teachers will gain insight into challenges related to attention, information processing, communication, sensory overload and classroom expectations.

By stepping into the perspective of neurodiverse learners, participants will explore how small adjustments in teaching can make a significant difference in student engagement, understanding and well-being. The workshop aims to increase awareness, empathy and practical strategies that educators can immediately apply in their own teaching practice.

Sessions

Friday, 18th September 2026

Jude Bradbury: How accessible are your practical assessments? Tips on universal design and reasonable adjustments.

Practical skills are an essential aspect of veterinary nursing education which can be assessed in a variety of ways. Regardless of what type of practical assessment you use, the assessment design and delivery play a role in ensuring it is fair for all students. Accessibility in assessment design takes this one step further and asks educators to consider what else can be done to support students and allow them to perform to their maximum potential. This session will explore ways you can support all your students (universal design) and options for individual student support (reasonable adjustments) in practical assessments while still protecting the professional standards they need to achieve.

Eva Tasič : VetRise, competing and connecting

In this presentation, Eva will present the second edition of the competition held in Belgium. She will explain the competition's concept, outline the objectives of organizing such an event, share the main conclusions drawn from the analysis conducted after the competition and what is the idea for the future of the competition.

Bieneke Verhaar: Insights in ADHD

'Not every student with ADHD is fidgeting in their seat. Some may appear distracted, struggle to stay organized, or seem unmotivated, while in reality they are working incredibly hard to keep up.

During this session, you will discover what ADHD really is, how it can present itself in the classroom, and the challenges students may experience in an educational setting. You will gain practical insights to better understand their behaviour and support them more effectively.

By the end of this session, you will hopefully have a greater understanding of students—and colleagues—with ADHD, as well as practical tools and strategies to support them more effectively in their learning and work.'

Finn Kristensen: Behavioral design and nudging. How to develop better advising

Many pet owners do not follow the advice from the vet. In this presentation we dig into the reasons for this, and present how we are working with behavioural design and nudging at HANSENBERG. There is a dual purpose: one is to develop new kinds of advising that works, and the other is to enable the nurse to dismantle a problematic / stressful situation and to understand what is happening. With the right tools the nurse will be able to design new approaches, and thus improving both clinic efficiency and mental health

Workshops (choose 2 out of 3)

3. From barriers to belonging: EDI in veterinary nurse education - Nikki Ruedisueli

This workshop will explore equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) through the lens of student belonging and compassionate teaching. The session will define EDI and equity in practical terms relevant to veterinary nursing curricula, clinical placements and assessment, and examine why EDI matters for access, retention and professional culture.

Participants will consider where bias can appear in education, including assumptions about confidence, language, background, disability, neurodiversity and commitment. Interactive scenarios will help the group identify hidden barriers and consider more inclusive ways of teaching, supporting and assessing learners. The workshop will emphasise that inclusive education is not about lowering standards, but about ensuring fair access to them.

By the end of the session, attendees will have a shared language for EDI, practical ideas for reducing barriers, and realistic strategies they can apply in classrooms, on placement and in assessment. The overall aim is to support veterinary nurse educators in creating learning environments where more learners can feel they belong and succeed.

4. “The hidden curriculum” Exploring the unspoken rules of veterinary nursing education and who they work (or don’t work) for - Ali Heywood

Veterinary education is built on many explicit expectations: learning outcomes, competency frameworks, assessments and professional standards. However, alongside these sits a hidden curriculum - the unwritten rules, assumptions and cultural norms that influence who feels they belong, who thrives, and who may struggle despite having the potential to succeed.

This interactive workshop invites participants to explore how seemingly neutral educational systems can create unintended barriers for learners from diverse backgrounds and with differing life experiences. Through discussion, case studies and collaborative activities, delegates will examine the hidden expectations embedded within teaching, assessment, placement learning and professional culture.

Participants will work together to identify where capable learners may be disadvantaged by factors such as age, neurodiversity, language, caring responsibilities, confidence, cultural expectations or previous educational experiences. The focus will be on practical reflection rather than blame, encouraging educators to consider how small changes in design, communication and support can create more inclusive learning environments without compromising standards.

By the end of the session, delegates will have identified actionable strategies that can be applied within their own educational settings to enhance belonging, reduce unintended barriers and support a wider range of learners to achieve success.

5. Creating accessible practical exams – testing low cost solutions - Jude Bradbury

This session will explore ways you can support all your students (universal design) and options for individual student support (reasonable adjustments) in practical assessments while still protecting the professional standards they need to achieve.

Bio's

Thursday, 17th September 2026



Amy Homer RVN MScVAA GradDipVN NCertACC PGCert Pain PGCert AP FHE,

Amy is a Lecturer in Veterinary Anaesthesia at Bristol Veterinary School, UK, teaching across both veterinary and veterinary nursing undergraduate programmes. She is a neurodivergent academic and serves as Deputy Chair of the Universities staff Neurodiversity Support Network, advocating for more inclusive and equitable working and learning environments. Her work focuses on academic and clinical teaching, both in the classroom and in clinical practice. Amy has a particular interest in neurodiversity, and how thoughtful educational design can improve student experience,

engagement, and wellbeing.



Christina V. Tran, DVM

Dr. Christina V. Tran received her undergraduate degree at University of California, Davis, and her veterinary degree from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She has spent the first part of her career in small animal private practice -- as a full-time associate, relief veterinarian and housecall practice owner. In addition, Dr. Tran has worked in shelter medicine, veterinary telehealth and in academia.

She served as veterinary technology faculty at Portland Community College (Oregon) and as veterinary technology program director at Purdue University's College of Veterinary Medicine. From 2020-2024, Dr. Tran served as founding faculty at University of Arizona College of Veterinary Medicine as an associate professor of practice and Clinical Relations Lead Veterinarian. She was then appointed founding dean of the proposed veterinary school at Hanover College in southern Indiana. In January 2026, Dr. Tran joined the proposed DVM program at Roseman University of Health Sciences as the inaugural Executive Associate Dean.

Dr. Tran is passionate about volunteering and currently serves in multiple veterinary medical organizations including the Multicultural Veterinary Medical Association (past president and founding board member), World Small Animal Veterinary Association (Standards Steering Committee), Not One More Vet (advisory committee), North American Veterinary Community (board member), Veterinary Virtual Care Association (board member) and AVMA's Council on Education (site visitor).



Kelly Bremken, MSSW, LCSW, VSW

Kelly Bremken is the Veterinary Social Worker with Oregon Humane Society. Originally a Midwest native, with a BA in Organizational Communication, Kelly's experiences have crisscrossed the entire country. She has worked in animal sheltering for more than 20 years at Arizona Humane Society, Humane Society of the Treasure Coast, Seattle Animal Shelter, and Oregon Humane Society.

Kelly graduated in Spring 2021 with a Master of Science in Social Work (MSSW) from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a certification in Veterinary Social Work (VSW).

At Oregon Humane Society and in the Community Veterinary Hospital, Kelly serves as Oregon Humane Society's first veterinary social worker and is paving the way in the field for greater workplace wellbeing and community partnership.



Nienke Dijkerman worked in The Netherlands as a veterinarian with production- and companion animals from graduation in 1992 until 2019. Teacher at Zone College at the EQF level 4 veterinary nurse education, from the millennium change. Involved in the Dutch national platform for teachers of veterinary nurse education called DOPA, the accreditation committee for veterinary nurse education Acovene, development of curriculum at Zone College, and the Erasmus plus projects Vet4VN and Yellow Raincoat. Witnessed the changes in the profession of the veterinary nurse from being assistant in early days, towards increased responsibility, and highly recognized professionals that play a central role in teams at the veterinary clinics. This

change towards a highly demanding profession, in a demanding society, needs a change in education, towards stronger development of soft skills and resilience in students. The project Yellow Raincoat aims to better prepare students for the increased demanding profession.



Tanja Gačnikar graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Ljubljana in 2021. After graduation, I worked as a field veterinarian at a veterinary practice Vets4science d. o. o. in Celje for three and a half years. My work focused mainly on cattle reproduction, as well as preventive healthcare and disease management in ruminants, pigs, and horses.

During this time, I also mentored some veterinary technician students and veterinary medicine students during their practical training. This experience sparked my interest in teaching and inspired me to pursue a career in

education.

Since April 2025, I have been teaching vocational veterinary subjects to first-, third-, and fourth-year students at the School Centre Šentjur. I enjoy combining my practical veterinary experience with teaching and helping students prepare for their future careers.

I joined the Yellow Raincoat programme in the autumn of 2025. The programme has helped me further develop my teaching skills, exchange ideas with colleagues from different countries, and grow both professionally and personally.



Angelique Withaar is a veterinary nurse teacher at Zone.college in the Netherlands. After graduating as a veterinarian in 2001 and working in mixed practice, she moved into vocational education in 2007. Since then, she has combined teaching with mentoring students, visiting internships, and contributing to practical assessments.

She is closely involved in curriculum maintenance and development and (international) educational projects. Angelique is passionate about supporting students not only in becoming skilled veterinary professionals, but also in their personal growth.

At the conference, she will co-present the progress of the *Yellow Raincoat Project*, focusing on strengthening resilience among veterinary nursing students in a sector with high dropout rates.



Vaughn Lawson

Development Manager, Immersive Learning Factory | AI Specialist | VR Developer

Vaughn Lawson is the Development Manager of Immersive Learning Factory, where he leads the development of immersive learning experiences using virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and interactive technologies. With a strong focus on education and training, Vaughn creates practical, engaging VR solutions that help learners build confidence,

practise real-world skills, and experience scenarios that would be difficult to recreate in traditional learning environments.

As an AI specialist and VR developer, Vaughn is particularly interested in how emerging technologies can improve learning outcomes, support skills development, and make training more accessible, memorable, and effective. His work brings together technical innovation, learning design, and hands-on development to create meaningful immersive experiences for education, healthcare, veterinary training, and professional development.



My name is **Nynke Pos**, and in 2000 I graduated as a veterinarian from Ghent University in Belgium. Since then, I have done a variety of things: I have worked as a veterinarian in Ireland and the Netherlands, spent a year traveling around the world, and worked in India with a veterinarian who treated only elephants. For several years, I ran my own care farm, and I am now a teacher in veterinary nursing at Yuverta in Den Bosch, the Netherlands



My name is **Nadine Kuijper**. I'm a teacher in the training program for veterinary nurses for Aeres MBO in Leeuwarden in the Netherlands. I work closely with students in both practical and classroom-based education. Through my experience in teaching and student guidance, I've developed an interest in neurodiversity, inclusive education, and the impact of learning environments on student well-being and performance.

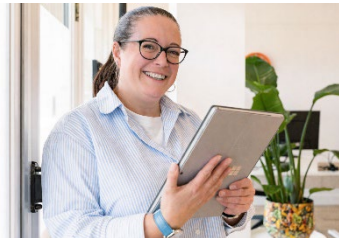
Friday, 18th September 2026



Jude Bradbury is a Senior Teaching Fellow in Primary Veterinary Care Education at the Royal Veterinary College, London UK. In addition to teaching vet and vet nursing students, she leads the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) assessments at the RVC and was previously the Examinations Manager for the RCVS national licensing exam



Eva Tasič is a veterinarian from Slovenia who graduated in 2016. After gaining experience in clinical practice, she joined the team of veterinarians at the Vocational School for Veterinary Technicians at BIC Ljubljana, Slovenia. She primarily teaches practical courses, working with students in small groups and helping them develop the fundamental clinical skills and knowledge required for veterinary practice. Alongside her teaching role, she continues to work in ambulatory veterinary medicine, focusing mainly on equine practice, including both routine ambulatory care and emergency services



My name is **Bieneke Verhaar**, and I am an ADHD coach and teacher. With more than 20 years of experience in education, I have helped hundreds of students and teachers who struggled with concentration, procrastination, and insecurities that affected their ability to function effectively.

As both an educator and coach, I am passionate about creating learning environments in which neurodivergent students and

teachers can thrive. During my work, I focus on practical strategies, self-awareness, and building confidence, helping people recognize and use their unique strengths.

At this conference, I look forward to sharing insights and tools that can help educators better understand neurodiversity and support students in a more inclusive and effective way.



Finn Kristensen:

With a background from shipping companies, economy and projects within experience economy, Finn has been teaching ICT, economy, marketing and communication for 10 years at HANSENBERG. He holds a diploma in vocational pedagogy with focus on how to implement training of mental health in daily teaching

Nikki Ruedisueli



Nikki has worked in a variety of vet practices including Liverpool University Small Animal Hospital and orthopaedic referral and in the charity sector. She moved to work in Mars UK building a career as a regional manager, progressing to working as a veterinary nurse at the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition, then on to the Technical Helpline.

After training veterinary students in clinical nutrition, she moved to Nottingham Trent University to write the FdSc Veterinary Nursing programme in 2008.

In 2019, she jumped at the chance to become the Editor in Chief of the VNJ which is the international, peer reviewed journal of the BVNA. Her main role is overseeing the articles, mentoring authors, and developing the strategy to grow the impact of the journal as well as supporting Council Members with campaigns. She still works in a local veterinary hospital on a weekend rota to keep up to date with her nursing skills.

Ali Heywood, RVN

Principal, Dick White Academy



Ali Heywood is a dedicated veterinary nursing educator and leader with over 25 years of experience in the profession. As Principal of Dick White Academy (DWA), she is committed to developing the next generation of veterinary nurses through high-quality training, coaching, and mentoring. Ali is passionate about creating a supportive learning environment that empowers individuals to grow in confidence, competence, and professionalism.

With a strong background as a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN), Ali brings real-world insight to her leadership and teaching. She is particularly focused on championing women in veterinary professions, working to break down barriers and support female colleagues at all stages of their careers. Through her work, she aims to inspire, guide, and advocate for greater equity, visibility, and opportunity for women across the veterinary field.

Before joining DWA, Ali held senior educational roles, including Veterinary Nursing Director and Programme Manager at the College of West Anglia, where she supported the education and development of hundreds of nurses.