



# PETCARE INNOVATION SUMMIT

**K-LASER**<sup>®</sup> UK

**VIRTUAL EVENT**  
18-19 MAY 2021

*An interview with  
Stephen Barabas  
CEO, K-Laser UK*

*Ahead of the 4th Annual Petcare Innovation Summit we spoke to Stephen Barabas, CEO of K-Laser UK, about the biggest opportunities in the petcare and veterinary space and how telemedicine will affect post-pandemic care.*

*Stephen runs two companies: a human medical company, K-Laser UK Ltd, working with the NHS, sports franchises and private healthcare using Class IV K-Laser therapy, and VBS Direct, providing innovative equipment to vet practices and animal rehab specialists.*

### **What impact has Covid-19 had on veterinary care?**

I think the COVID-19 crisis has actually not impacted veterinary care significantly as a profession except for about 6 weeks in March and April 2020 - appointments

and operations have continued as normal.

In fact, I think the future looks extremely bright for 2021 and onwards due to the huge number of extra dogs and cats taken into families across the UK during the COVID crisis. Individuals and families have had a very extended period to bond with their new pets and although there may be a minor effect of separation anxiety when people return to full-time work and children are back at school, the reality is people have truly bonded and cared for their new and existing pets for many months.

This increased understanding and care of their pets only improves the bond and ensures good pet ownership, hence another 3 million pets in UK households will have a knock-on effect of positive income and footfall to veterinary care



centres across the UK.

In addition, the public awareness of healthcare and vaccinations due to COVID-19 will only enforce the importance of standards of care for pets and the importance of annual vaccinations.

## How do you think telemedicine will change veterinary care post-pandemic?

Telemedicine helped reach people during the worst of the pandemic when people were only taking their pets into the vet clinics for emergencies, but now people and practices are almost back to full working capacity. I do not think it will be as big of a new medical revolution as the people selling “telemedicine” like us to believe. Most pet owners like to speak and see the vet or nurse that is caring for their pet. They like the immediate action and reaction to caring for their sick pet and nothing replaces the face-to-face contact with a local veterinary practice.

Telemedicine may feature more now, but it is not a panacea – vets and nurses are so busy in practice with their existing workload that they rarely have time to sit down and spend hours on phones or Zoom talking to clients.

Outside agencies may assist in giving “general” information but should never take over from a full examination and consult discussion with the pet present. They have no knowledge or access to the pet’s clinical history, so should never usurp or be allowed to take over from the standard consult, especially in regards to prescriptions when no face-to-face consult is given via telemedicine.

## Where do you think the biggest opportunities lie in the petcare market?

I hope that the veterinary profession adopts new technologies to improve their objectivity of monitoring animal’s health in the home environment.

For instance, microchips that monitor blood glucose or sub-dermal inter-cellular glucose levels, allowing the owner to non-invasively monitor their pet from home. Perhaps these link to the practice with regular data downloads to help in properly monitoring and maintaining a steady state and correct insulin dosage.

Or, accelerometers attached to the collars of pets giving daily readings of activity levels for osteoarthritic or post-orthopaedic animals. This would ensure good pain management, and allow the animal to act “naturally” at home to get a better evaluation of additional drugs, therapies and biological products intervention to improve healing and quality of life. Thus, more objectivity will aid in truly understanding the benefits, or lack of benefits, drugs, therapies and other modalities are having on improvements in lameness or quality of life for each individual pet. It allows better incorporation of new products, and reduction in drug dosages without the stress induced by the consultation

room where animals will not react normally to examination.

## What changes would you like to see in the veterinary space?

The adoption of monitoring to objectively monitor changes in pet health, whether skin allergic dermatitis, lameness or other chronic diseases. Also, the ability to talk to owners and spend longer sessions with them to discuss chronic diseases and options available – 10-15 minute consults are too short.

“ Nothing replaces the face-to-face contact with a local veterinary practice ”

Also important is the realisation that pet owners are wanting to have more “natural” long term treatments for their pets, so are willing to listen to new science in laser therapy, regenerative medicine, and high quality supplements, in addition to standard drug therapies, to improve quality of healing and quantity of lifespan.

Nurses are the cornerstone of veterinary practice, empower them, get them more front-facing to pet owners, give them new skills in laser therapy, physio training,

dental skills, parasite detection and weight management and work more closely as a team to manage cases better and earn revenue.

### **How can stakeholders from across the industry work together to improve animal health?**

We are lucky to work in the UK where we have a huge pet-loving population who care about their pets and their quality of life. We need to work collectively with other pet care industries to improve the services we can provide – vets, nurses,

physiotherapists, hydrotherapists, pet behaviourists, groomers, kennels, holistic therapists - to provide what the owner wants and give objectivity on what is the appropriate course for each pet and owner. Provide choice but ensure stakeholders you are working with are good, educated and well-trained to provide the level of service you think your pet owners deserve. Then, give your staff and other pet animal industry clinicians the opportunity to work collaboratively and improve the quality of care we can provide that is tailor made for the individual and their pet. Working together

will help overall communications and standards.

Continual learning and education is essential to ensure we continue to improve ourselves and our staff. Find out what each staff member is really interested in and invest in them to allow them to improve their area of expertise beyond higher education. It is a great time to be in the medical and veterinary profession; there are so many opportunities and so much we can learn to improve our treatments, therapies and overall care.



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The only event connecting  
Petcare Innovators with  
Investors and Strategic Partners

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