

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 4

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Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

British Broadcasting Corporation BBC Worldwide Woodlands 80 Wood Lane London W12 0TT

Tel +44 20 8433 2000 Fax +44 20 8740 1182 Email international.distribution.worldwide@bbc.co.uk Online catalogue www.bbcworldwidetv.com

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 4

Healing sick animals is a vocation

National Television Awards 1999
Most Popular Documentary

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

B B C Worldwide

Vets in Practice

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Introduction

Vets in Practice, a prime-time docusoap, first transmitted on BBC1 in 1997 and quickly became established as a firm favourite with viewers of all ages and turned Trude Mostue, Steve Leonard and their colleagues into household names. As the young vets do their best to treat sick and injured animals, this fly-on-the-wall series has millions of British viewers hanging off the edge of their seats with its warmth, honesty and sometimes heart-stopping moments.

Trude Mostue, Mike Sandiford, Steve Leonard (voted one of *Company* magazine's 50 most eligible bachelors) first appeared in the BBC1's hugely successful *Vets' School*, which followed their training. The series follows them and their fellow trainees in their careers as practising vets.

The young vets take on dramatic, tear-jerking but quite often hilarious animal cases while also dealing with the ups and downs of their personal lives. Their loves, their hates and the inevitable stresses and strains that go with the job are all captured on camera.

Documentaries

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Production Credits

Series Producer

Rachel Bell

Executive Producer

Grant Mansfield

Documentaries

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Episode Synopses

1. The young vets are now two years into their careers but there are still plenty of surprises in store for them. For Trude Mostue, it'll be a day she'll never forget. She must do her first guinea-pig castration - an operation that proves more difficult than one might think when Pepper the guinea-pig retracts his testicles and they disappear out of sight. Her boss' advice is to the point: "Just massage them down, Trude, massage them down." To make matters worse, midway through the operation, the ceiling light starts to shake and crashes and shouts are heard from next door. A fellow vet has just interrupted an attempted burglary. Trude must press on with the surgery despite the rather frightening distraction and, under pressure, she makes a potentially-fatal mistake. In King's Lynn, Trude's fellow graduates, Craig and Alison Beck, are also both hard at work. Craig faces a real medical challenge in Boris - a black-and-white farm cat clinging on to life against the odds - while Alison must solve the mystery of why Jock the West Highland Terrier is off-colour. Off duty, Craig and Alison are pitched against each other's practices in a game of Trivial Pursuit. Meanwhile, Trude has a visit from her parents to look forward to.

2. Cheltenham vets Joe and Emma Inglis come back to earth with a bump after their honeymoon in the Dominican Republic. Joe is forced to amputate a fawn's leg if it is to survive an injury, while Emma faces an ethical question of how best to treat a family cat which has seen its best days. In Hull, Sam Robinson has to deal with a guinea pig's mystery pregnancy and then helps when a show pony has to undergo a tail amputation.

3. Not everything that comes through the surgery door is tame and, once in a while, vets have to deal with something very unexpected. Fiona Green, in Reading, encounters her first hare. She's called Henna and she has caught her hind leg in a garage door. Fiona succeeds in putting the spring back into Henna's step but her next patient is just as unusual. He's a woodpecker, who's been attacked by a cat. In her private life, Fiona is planning to venture to exotic climes with her boyfriend, Nick. Together, they go to DIVE '98 to see if they can get work in the Caribbean as diving instructors. In far-from-exotic Carmarthen, Keith Leonard's work is more down-to-earth as he struggles with a sick cow, a pile of straw and a fork-lift truck. Career-wise, he has the opportunity to advance with a dream job in Chester and, with total confidence, he gives up his job in Wales without confirmation of his new role. It will be difficult to leave Wales - he is now so much a part of the community that one of the farmer's wives seeks his advice about a fertility problem. Keith's elder brother, Steve, is happily settled in Lancaster but he's got some prickly customers on his hands - a posse of orphaned hedgehogs. Once they are well enough, Steve hopes to release them back into the wild.

4. Norwegian vet Trude Mostue faces one of the most heart-rending cases of her career while, in King's Lynn, Alison Beck undertakes one of the most gruelling operations of her life. Trude does her utmost to save a litter of kittens, who have lost a huge amount of blood due to flea bites. She tries heart massage, adrenalin injections and even mouth-to-mouth. For one of the kittens, help has come too late. The others regain their strength but there is a problem that their mother might reject them because they have spent so long away from her. Motherhood is back on Trude's mind when she visits her best friend, Maria, who is soon to have a baby. She has something to tell Maria, too - there's a new man in her life. The couple met at the delicatessen counter in her local supermarket. Meanwhile, newly-wed Alison struggles to save Tiggy, a cat who has been in a road accident, and her husband, Craig, eventually succeeds in treating a rabbit with a bad ulcer.

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5. Reading-based Fiona Green is heading off to the sunshine and a job in the Caribbean as a diving instructor and vet. In her new life some of her clients could be sharks but, in the meantime, she has to help rescue Clyde, a much-loved family cat who has collided with a bus. Clyde's owners are on holiday and their daughter is determined he'll be all right by the time they come home. In Bristol, Norwegian vet Trude Mostue is dealing with the case of Bonnie, a dog with an itch. Bonnie is being looked after by the builder while her family is on holiday and she's picked up something nasty. In Carmarthen, Keith Leonard gets called out on an emergency. A cow has cut her udder and is fighting for her life. Keith must improvise a blood transfusion, in the dark, taking five pints of blood from one of the other cows in the herd and then gently pumping it into the injured animal.

6. Surgery is over for the day but the work is just starting for the young vets who are on call right through the night. In Hull, Sam Robinson has an emergency on her hands with Mandy, a much-loved pony. Mandy could be suffering from laminitis, a disease that can kill, and the vet's diagnosis may be only just in time. Newly-weds Emma and Joe Ingles have a new addition to the family in Cheltenham. Joe's not sure at first about Dave, the rescue kitten, but he can't resist a tabby. Late in the evening, Hannah Pollard is called out to the surgery to treat Carly, a dog with a painful back. She manages to ease its pain but can't leave the surgery until she can persuade the credit card machine to accept payment.

7. It's Craig and Alison Beck's first wedding anniversary but there is no time to celebrate – duty calls for the young vet. Craig's first elderly patient presents him with a heart-breaking challenge. Boris is a much-loved gun dog with a lump in his neck. Craig must find out what the problem is and if it is curable. In Cheltenham, newly-weds Emma and Joe Ingles are also hard at work. Emma's ingenuity is tested by the tricky tale of Tess the rat. The accident-prone rodent injured her tail in an escapade down the back of the sofa. Emma's problem is how to protect the tail from further injury while it is healing. A small plastic box, an old syringe and a great deal of plasters make up the solution. Meanwhile, Joe is taking care of a small dog with big expectations. Pip is a pregnant Jack Russell and it won't be safe for her to give birth normally. A Caesarian is the only answer and Joe is delighted by the healthy litter. He is not so keen on the concept of fatherhood himself. It is a question he and Emma are already discussing, just two months into their marriage. Joe wonders if you can leave a baby at home alone while you go out to the pub? Emma puts him right.

8. Norwegian vet Trude Mostue admits her new relationship could be the one; Hannah Pollard has a new look after losing three stones; and, with a massive workload, Sam Robinson finds she has very little time for socialising. "He's changed my thoughts about settling down with one person. I didn't think that would be possible, but it might be... now," says Trude about her new boyfriend, Patrick. In the meantime she must establish whether Sky, a young doberman, is pregnant. It's poignant for her owners because, if she is expecting, the father is their much-loved other dog Dillon, who has died unexpectedly. In Southend, Hannah has had to put Pebbles the rabbit on a diet as he is becoming dangerously overweight - but his owners can't resist just one more chocolate button. Horse specialist Sam's challenge is to castrate a young stallion, called Wizard, whose eye for the ladies could be potentially fatal. Any over-excitement could lead to a heart attack as he has a very serious heart problem.

Documentaries

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9. Norwegian vet Trude Mostue introduces her new boyfriend to her sister, Leanna, over a traditional meal of reindeer stew. He explains how he swept her off her feet and she warns that there are Nordic rituals he will have to complete in the future. Trude says: "I noticed Patrick because he had a very yellow jacket. I thought, mmm, mmm, he looks quite nice." Patrick adds: "I thought, she looks weak, she looks vulnerable, I'll go in for the kill." There is change for Trude at work as well as in her domestic life. She has an interview at a practice which deals with the famous lions of Longleat, Lord Bath's safari park. During a tour of the park with vet Duncan Williams, she encounters a sea lion who has collapsed and needs emergency treatment. In King's Lynn, Alison Beck has the heart-breaking case of Lucky the cat, who has jaundice. Owners Liz and Dennis Thrower are happy to support their pet through operations and treatment.

10. Young vets Fiona Green and Keith Leonard are on the move to very different destinations but it's business as usual as they work out their notice. Keith has a tricky problem in Carmarthen with Discovery the calf, who needs a life-saving operation to correct a hernia. It's a simple operation but one that Keith has never performed before. In Reading, Fiona is looking forward to a working holiday with her boyfriend, diving in the Caribbean. Before she goes she has to deal with the unusual, but fiddly, job of fitting contact lenses for a King Charles spaniel. Keith's friends in Carmarthen throw a leaving party for him in a barn. All his brothers and his mother turn up for the send-off but the youngest Leonard brother has mixed feelings about his future as his job in Chester has fallen through.

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes



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Ratings

| Episode | UK Txn Date | Channel | Time On | Viewers | Audience Share |
|---------|-------------|---------|---------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | 07.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 8.4 million | 40% |
| 2 | 08.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 7.7 million | 36% |
| 3 | 14.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 8.9 million | 42% |
| 4 | 15.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 7.9 million | 37% |
| 5 | 21.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 9.8 million | 41% |
| 6 | 22.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 7.9 million | 37% |
| 7 | 28.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 8.1 million | 40% |
| 8 | 29.01.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 5.8 million | 28% |
| 9 | 04.02.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 8.1 million | 43% |
| 10 | 05.02.99 | BBC1 | 20.00 | 7.2 million | 35% |

What The Papers Say

"TV programmes such as *Animal Hospital*, *Vets In Practice* and *Pet Rescue* are convincing more people than ever that working with animals is exactly what they want. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Nursing Association and the RSPCA all say television programmes have led to a boom of inquiries from people keen to work with animals." *Daily Mail*

"The vets themselves are very decorative, but that merely heightens the contrast with their patients. Cute little Clyde, for instance, had been hit by a bus... The tone of the programme is gently upbeat ... But nasty old reality keeps intruding." *The Times*

"... Trude; she's sweet, and kind, and Scandanavian in that sing-song way they have – just the sort of person you'd like to have living next door." *Guardian*

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes