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B B C Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Contents

Title Page

Introduction

Production Credits

Episode Synopses

Ratings

What the Papers Say

Press Features

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

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BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Healing sick animals is a vocation

National Television Awards 1999
Most Popular Documentary

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

B B C Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

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, regularly appearing in the top 10 of the British ratings chart. The show also turned Trude Mostue, Steve Leonard, Mike Sandiford and their colleagues into household names. Steve was even voted one of *Company* magazine's 50 most eligible bachelors.

The young vets first appeared in the BBC1's hugely successful *Vets' School*, which followed their training. This series follows Trude, Steve and their fellow trainees in their careers as practising vets. As they do their best to treat sick and injured animals, this fly-on-the-wall series has millions of viewers hanging off the edge of their seats with its warmth, honesty and sometimes heart-stopping moments.

The 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

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Production Credits

Series Producer

Rachel Bell

Executive Producer

Grant Mansfield

Directors

Tuppence Stone (Episode 1)

Jonny Young (Episode 2)

Hamish Beeston (Episodes 3, 11)

Mandi Startup (Episode 4)

Colin Naphine (Episodes 6, 12)

Amanda Prince (Episodes 8, 9, 14)

Stuart Napier (Episode 13)

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

1. A Day To Remember

The young vets are now three years into their careers and many of them are thinking of moving on. In Bristol, Trude Mostue is on tenterhooks. She is hoping the postman will bring good news of the job she's applied for, but when the letter doesn't arrive, she is forced to put it to the back of her mind and concentrate on the matter in hand: saving Jenny, a much loved Labrador with a potentially fatal uterus infection. Trude must carefully remove the uterus without it rupturing or the infection will spread and Jenny may die. It's a tense time, will Trude get the job and will Jenny pull through?

In Cheltenham, Trude's old vet-school classmates, Joe and Emma Inglis are settling into married life. Joe's day starts well, but it will be one he will remember as he gets one of the most extraordinary cases of his career. Pepe the cat, who has been missing for a week, is brought in with maggots gnawing away at festering wound in his rump. Joe has to act quickly to save Pepe from the voracious maggots, so he steels himself for a rather unpleasant procedure.

There's no rest for Joe as he gets an emergency call out to Manor Farm, where a cow is seriously ill with 'Staggers', a fatal condition caused by lack of magnesium. Joe's help comes too late to save the cow, and the farmer's wife and daughter are left to care for its distressed and hungry calf. Their care and perseverance pays off and eventually the orphaned calf is accepted by foster mother Tulip.

Meanwhile, Emma is preparing to put her surgical skills on the line. A young boxer called Ralph was born with a crippling hip condition and his owners, David Clemmens and Amanda Ross are relying on Emma, and her boss Barry to perform a life changing operation which could help their dog walk normally. But one slip & they could sever Ralph's sciatic nerve & leave him partially paralysed.

2. Jobs For The Boys

The Leonard family occupies a unique position in the world of veterinary medicine: all four brothers are vets. The youngest, Keith, has only been qualified for a year and is in trouble. Currently jobless, he is back at home with his mother, and big brother Den is not impressed. Brother Steve though is too busy to give Keith much thought. He is seeing how acupuncture can relieve a golden retriever with chronic arthritis. Meanwhile, Tom has his hands full with an emergency delivery of twin lambs. Later, returning to the surgery, he finds a very small, wild orphan waiting for him...

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

3. A Dog's Dinner

Sam Robinson's day at the Swanbridge practice in Hull begins with a visit from Floyd, a heavyweight Great Dane. Owner Jane has brought Floyd into the practice with a cough and an upset stomach. It is unusual for 182 lb Floyd to have lost his appetite! Sam has some bad news for Floyd: he needs to lose weight and his treatment will consist of a health food diet and plenty of exercise. Later, Sam goes to see an old and favourite patient, a racehorse called Leo. He had a tendon injury which meant he might never race again; Sam and John prescribed a course of hydrotherapy. Sam checks up on Leo's progress and watches him in the equine swimming pool. With luck, the swimming might help Leo race once more.

In Cheltenham, Joe and Emma Inglis are having an eventful day. Joe treats Benji, a golden retriever who has swallowed a rubber toy. Joe must operate on Benji's intestine in order to retrieve the toy and try to prevent further complications. Joe finds not one but two toys and sends Benji home to recover. But a few days later he is back in the surgery as his owner fears that he has had a stroke. At Emma's practice, Patch the cat also needs surgery to try and mend a broken pelvis. Patch has been hit by a car and may not walk again. As the operation is complicated, Emma turns to her boss Barry for help. It's a tense time for the French family and their young son Thomas. The operation is a success and Patch is reunited with the family.

Both Joe and Emma have new ventures on the horizon. Joe relaxes outside work and goes grass surfing with his friend Pete. Joe has designed the board himself and is hoping to go into business selling his invention. For Emma, it is also time to try something new. She has decided to leave her job in Cheltenham. Emma has found a new practice in Tewkesbury and hopes that she has finally found the perfect job.

4. Running Out Of Time

After two years at her practice in Bristol, Trude Mostue has decided to move on. She is going to a job in Frome which will give her the opportunity to be trained in the treatment of large exotic animals at Longleat Safari Park. It is a dream come true for Trude, but first she has some smaller animals to tend to before she leaves. Rosie the rabbit needs to have her front teeth removed. The procedure is new to Trude so she enlists the help of fellow vet, Jamie Purvis – the last operation they will ever do together and the end of a happy working relationship. It has been an emotional final day for Trude as she heads off for pastures new.

In Kings Lynn, Craig Beck is chasing a cat around the room. Thomas objects to being X-rayed. What initially looks like a simple chest infection soon turns out to be the feline equivalent of HIV, for which there is no vaccine and no cure. Craig has to give the owners the bad news, and warn them that their other cat, Smokey, may have the virus too and should be tested. Luckily, Smokey's tests come back negative for the FIV virus.

Craig's wife Alison also has a difficult task to perform. The guard dogs at RAF Marham are due for their six-monthly check-ups. Alison is not used to such aggressive animals, but, with the help of the handlers and sturdy muzzles, she manages to escape in one piece. Back at the surgery, she finds two patients much easier to handle: pet rats with wheezy chests which soon respond to treatment.

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

5. In At The Deep End

Fiona Green has left behind her veterinary practice in Reading to travel to the Bahamas with her boyfriend, Nick Allinson. She is looking for work as a vet but meanwhile she and Nick are both working as diving instructors. The dive centre itself produces her first patient, an aggressive parrot who needs his nails clipped. However, Fiona's job as a dive instructor presents her with a greater challenge. Fiona must learn to dive with sharks – and film it. After a lesson in video film-making, Fiona takes her first dive and comes face-to-face with the local shark population.

Keith Leonard also faces a new challenge. He is doing locum work and it is his first day at his new practice in Northumberland where he is running the surgery alone. His first patient is a cat named Kevin Keegan who has lost his appetite. Owner Sheila Cowey thinks that Kevin may have swallowed her arthritis tablet by mistake, but Keith fears a more serious problem with the cat's liver. After a blood test and some antibiotics, Kevin Keegan is given a clean bill of health. Later in the day, Keith operates on Bracken, a border collie with a dislocated hip. Although it is a common operation, Keith has not done it before and is worried it may not be a success. Fortunately, Bracken's x-ray confirms that everything has gone to plan and owner Brian Hepler is reassured that Bracken can continue to live life to the full.

In Preston, Keith's brother Tom is called to an emergency at a local farm. A cow is in labour and is having trouble giving birth to twins. The calves are lodged in an awkward position and may not survive. Tom and the farmer use a winch – and manage to get both calves out safely. Tom also treats a lamb with a badly broken leg. Tom puts it in plaster but farmer Tom Holden will have to wait several weeks to find out if the bone has healed.

6. Unfamiliar Territory

Trude Mostue is now an experienced vet but today everything, including her uniform, is unfamiliar. It is her first day in her new job in Warminster and she is uncertain how she will fit in. Everyone makes her welcome and she is soon trying to get to grips with her new routine. She doesn't know where anything is kept, including the nail clippers she needs to trim a guinea pig's claws and its young owner asks if she knows what she is doing. When she inadvertently removes the wrong, albeit rotten tooth from a cat she encounters for the first time in the operating theatre, her stress levels rocket. But the cat makes a full recovery and Trude begins to think that her new job will turn out even better than she had hoped.

Hannah Pollard is also working in a new environment and having to cope with an animal she knows nothing about. Her practice in Southend has built a state-of-the-art hospital and her first case of the day is a stray collie with a nasty gash in her lip. No one knows how the dog was injured, or who is its owner. Hannah must remove the infected tissue and sew up the wound without leaving the dog with "an Elvis sneer". Later, Buffalo the guinea pig has a nasty sore patch on his rear end where hay mites have been doing their dirty work. Hannah prescribes a daily shampoo to restore him to his normal, fluffy self.

In Kings Lynn, Soda the cat was brought in with two mysterious lumps on his stomach which have now disappeared. Alison Beck must do some detective work to find out what caused them and what to do about them. She is looking forward to the weekend; she's planned a trip to a local health spa with one of her best friends from university.

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

7. A Steep Learning Curve

Trude Mostue has only just begun her new job at Longleat Safari Park in Wiltshire but already she has an emergency on her hands. One of the park's wolves has an eye infection and the only course of action is to remove it. The surgery will be tricky enough, but this animal lives in a pack and the team fear that the wolf may not be accepted back by the others.

In Oldham, Teko the cat has had conjunctivitis for over 10 years. Keith Leonard spots the underlying cause of the problem and decides to operate. He will need a steady hand as he works just millimetres from Teko's eyes.

Keith's brother Steve is on a course to learn animal acupuncture. The students are given oranges to practice on, but back at his practice Steve will be working with live patients. The first animal to receive his new-found skills is Despa, a lurcher dog with an injured leg. Conventional medicine has so far failed to give Despa any relief. Will acupuncture do any better?

8. Vets Have Pets Too

In Kings Lynn, vet Craig Beck fears the worse when he is unable to diagnose the cause of his oldest pet's breathing problems. He always worries when his pets are sick, especially when he is unable to diagnose the cause. Lady, who has had a cough and breathing difficulties, could be suffering from a number of illnesses, including cancer. It is a nail-biting wait for Craig while his colleague investigates.

Meanwhile, his wife Alison is caring for one of the most recent additions to the family – Minstrel, a black-and-white stray cat she has adopted. "We keep getting more and more pets," she admits. Minstrel has been knocked over and so far has had his eye removed and a plate put in his leg. Alison now has to remove the plate in another operation. "He was fairly badly injured and was due to be put to sleep. No one could do it," explains Alison. She adds that adopting strays is costly, even if she does get a discount for all the operations.

With two dogs and four cats, Joe Inglis knows only too well how much pets can mean to people. When a young girl brings in her much-loved hamster Holly, who has a broken leg, he is willing to chance an operation, despite the animal's age.

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

9. One Of The Pack

At Longleat Safari Park, Trude's latest patient is an 11-year-old lame wolf which has been separated from the pack so that its leg can be examined. The cause of the lameness is a mystery. Colleague Duncan Williams suspects an abscess but antibiotics have not worked. The vets decide to x-ray the leg. The sedation only lasts for one hour so they must work fast; also the wolf must not be kept away from the pack for too long or it will be rejected.

Over in Kings Lynn, Alison Beck's first patient of the day is Jess, a lame springer spaniel. Owner Nick Kilham believes he has a broken tendon. Having sedated Jess, Alison discovers that a ligament has snapped, which means major surgery to replace the ligament with an implant and six weeks of taking it easy.

Back at Longleat, Trude spots that the wolf has a ruptured ligament, similar to Jess's. For a wild animal, this has serious implications. The options are: leave the problem and let the wolf enjoy the rest of its life, operate but run the risk of keeping the wolf away from the pack for six weeks, or put the wolf to sleep.

Meanwhile in Kings Lynn, Alison's husband Craig is reunited with a friendly feline face. Nine of Oliver's teeth were removed just a few months ago and now his owners Joan and Ruben Shand suspect he may need more out. Craig is surprised how quickly the tartar has built up, as he had removed it last time.

In Bristol, Trude is confronting her long overdue dental appointment. Her boyfriend Patrick Evans is accompanying her for moral support. Trude gets the all clear, but Oliver is not so lucky and has another two teeth drawn.

10. Better Out Than In

Sam Robinson and John Levison have a big job on their hands. A horse called Jake has been admitted for an operation that could be make or break for him. Two years ago, Jake landed awkwardly after a fall and the accident left him with a severe neurological problem affecting his legs. No one really knows why it works but the operation has a 50/50 success rate. Sam and John's next challenge is to put Fred, a 35-year-old tortoise, to sleep for an operation. In true tortoise fashion, Fred decides to take his time -- six hours!

Emma Inglis has been in her new job in Tewkesbury for less than a week. This morning she arrives and is immediately confronted with an emergency. Twiggy the greyhound has impaled herself in the chest with a stick she was playing with. After performing life-saving surgery, Emma stays all night to make sure her patient has intensive care treatment.

Hannah Pollard's long-awaited veterinary hospital has finally opened and she is seeing up to 50 clients a day. An unusual case is Freya the rat, who is getting over a cold but can't stop sneezing. Hannah suggests some unorthodox treatment. After work, Hannah visits a friend who has some even more unusual pets -- 90 big, hairy, spiders.

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

11. Blood, Sweat And Tears

After a busy weekend on call at the Cheltenham Surgery, Joe checks on the progress of one of his emergency patients. Last night Harvey, a Welsh Springer spaniel, had blood gushing from his ear and only bandages saved his life. Joe now discovers that the problem is polyps which, once they start to bleed, have to be removed in a tricky operation. "The ear leads to the brain. There are lots of important nerves that go across there." Once the polyps are out, the young vet needs all his tailoring skills to reconstruct the ear.

During her weekly visit to Longleat, Trude's first patient is an oryx, an African deer, with a sore hoof. As with many wild animals, half the battle is getting close enough to administer the medication. Trude gets a lesson in marksmanship from keeper Tim Yeo.

Sam Robinson, meanwhile, is examining a ferret with a swollen testicle. It has to be removed but there are also implications for his mate, who will have to be speyed at the same time. Sam explains that when a female ferret comes into season she must be mated or the build-up of hormones will kill her. She reassures the ferrets' owner: "We make everything as safe as we possibly can." However, the operations turn out to be more complicated than she expected.

12. Love Is All Around

Fiona Green is working as a diving instructor in the Bahamas with her boyfriend, Nick. However, The Humane Society is always on the look-out for volunteers and they are delighted to have a fully qualified vet to help out. Fiona loves her new life but feels good to be back working with sick animals: "It's lovely being back in a vets' practice again. You instantly feel at home. It's like being back home."

In King's Lynn, Craig Beck and fellow vet, Sarah Colegrave, are putting in some practice for a sponsored tandem ride. They are fine once they are going, but stopping and starting is proving a problem. Craig is a volunteer for the charity, Riding for the Disabled, and is hoping to raise money for it.

Meanwhile, Craig's wife Alison is treating a sex-mad boxer dog. After barging through a fence to get to a bitch on heat, George has developed lumps on his neck. "The difficulty with skin disease is that there are an awful lot of conditions and they look the same," she says. George has a long day of blood and skin tests to go through before his condition can be diagnosed.

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Episode Synopses

13. Trouble Ahead

At Trude's practice in Frome, a Jack Russell called Taffy arrives with a broken tooth and a badly bruised ego after a painful encounter with a postman. The tooth should be a straightforward procedure but things are not always as easy as they look.

In Lancashire, a dairy cow called Doris gave birth in the night and since then has been unable to stand up. Steve Leonard has to move her across the cold concrete floor and onto a bed of straw – but Doris is far too heavy to shift alone so he enlists the help of a tractor. Later he has another emergency on his hands when a kitten is rushed into the practice in a critical condition. She appears to have eaten something poisonous and Steve has no time to lose.

Steve's younger brother Keith is spending his last day as a locum in Oldham before he moves onto a permanent job in Cheshire. Luckily he hasn't packed his books yet because an unusual patient is waiting for him. Lizzie is a lizard off her food and Keith suspects she could be full of eggs.

At the weekend Keith and Steve join their mother and older brothers, Tom and Den, for a family weekend of rest and recreation in Abersoch, North Wales.

14. Langford Revisited

An invitation to the 50th Anniversary party at Bristol University's Vet School at Langford, where the vets all graduated three years ago, sets off good and bad memories. Former *Vets School* friends Trude, Joe and Emma take a trip down memory lane, reflecting on how they have progressed in their careers. Emma and Joe Inglis are looking forward to returning to Langford, but for popular Norwegian vet Trude it's a different matter. She recalls her famous floundering when she injected a kitten straight through the scruff of its neck, as well as failing her exams and having to resit.

Meanwhile, work goes on and Emma faces the challenge of mending a farm cat with a broken leg. Fourteen-year-old Herbie was trodden on by a horse and his leg has snapped in two. It's such an unusual job that Emma has to go back to her books.

Her husband Joe is also dealing with another farm animal injured by a car. Cap the sheep dog has shallow, fast breathing and Joe suspects he has a ruptured diaphragm. An x-ray reveals all. Meanwhile, Trude has a chance to prove how much she has come on since vet school with a tricky eye operation on a wild rabbit called Biscuit.

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Ratings

Episode	UK Txn Date	Channel	Time On	Viewers	Audience Share
1	27.07.99	BBC1	20.00	6.3 million	31%
2	29.07.99	BBC1	20.00	6.9 million	39%
3	03.08.99	BBC1	20.00	7.0 million	33%
4	05.08.99	BBC1	20.00	8.2 million	43%
5	10.08.99	BBC1	20.30	6.4 million	28%
6	12.08.99	BBC1	20.00	8.1 million	39%
7	17.08.99	BBC1	20.00	7.5 million	32%
8	19.08.99	BBC1	20.00	7.7 million	37%
9	24.08.99	BBC1	20.30	6.8 million	29%
10	26.08.99	BBC1	20.30	6.4 million	28%
11	31.08.99	BBC1	20.00	7.2 million	33%
12	02.09.99	BBC1	20.00	7.5 million	38%
13	07.09.99	BBC1	20.00	6.1 million	25%
14	09.08.99	BBC1	20.00	5.8 million	25%

What The Papers Say

"...all the veterinary group seemed to enjoy their work, as did we. I once asked a vet why they appeared happier than people-doctors. 'That's because we like our patients and they don't,' she replied." *Mail On Sunday*

"

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../1

Mail On Sunday

Our pet vet Trude Mostue, the loveable graduate from *Vets' School*, reveals how she became Norway's hottest export

If you were to ask any hot-blooded, heterosexual British male why they fancy Trude Mostue ... they would probably tell you it's because she's blonde (and they have more fun), Scandinavian (ditto – tenfold) and, best of all, because in the last series she provided viewers with a quick peek down the front of her veterinary coat.

Spotting an opening in the docu-soap market, the BBC launched *Vets' School* in 1997, which followed the fortunes of a handful of Bristol University students in their last year of veterinary science. It became a massive hit, with over 10 million viewers. Not only was it a show that addressed the nation's almost obsessive love of animals, but it also provided viewers with a snapshot of real life – the students' struggles, hardships, jealousies, emotional problems, failures and successes. Trude held the audience in thrall when she fluffed a vaccine injection on a kitten (sparking an unmentionable number of complaints to *Points of View*) and moved them to tears when she couldn't help but blub after learning she'd failed her Finals.

But Trude is blubbing no more. Not only did she go on to retake her final exams and qualify as a vet, she features heavily in the current series of the follow-up, *Vets in Practice*, has filmed a new show in Africa entitled *Vets in the Wild*, knocked out a couple of books and, to top it all, has a new daytime show starting in October which she'll be presenting all by herself. Not bad for a one-time goatherd.

Thin as a pipe cleaner, with enormous blue eyes, a strangely small head and lots of blonde hair billowing about the place, she's not beautiful as such, but in the not-so-heady world of veterinary science, she's a veritable Claudia Schiffer. And she's quite possibly mad to boot. All of which makes her hugely entertaining when we meet up in a restaurant.

"My new show is called *Vets to the Rescue*," she chirps, immediately launching into her sales patter, "and it's my own daytime show, which is just soooo exciting. I told the people at the BBC that I'd love to do more TV and they came up with this idea, which is wonderful. Basically, it's like a vets' workshop based around Chester Zoo and, if it gets good ratings, they might even extend its run. It's my little baby, and they're even tailoring the show to suit my personality! The producers have to struggle a bit with my Norwegian accent because they need to make sure I'm using the proper grammar. But at the same time, they want to keep in what we call 'Trudisms' – you know, my sing-songy way of speaking and my quirky sense of humour.

"But I am nervous, oh yes, and slightly wary because there are so many animal programmes around, there's got to be a saturation point. And the other vets on *Vets in Practice* don't know I'm doing it yet," she grins. "But then very young kids love it and old people love it, so who knows? If people don't like my new series, the important thing is that I've enjoyed doing it."

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../2

For a woman whose second language is English, she talks incredibly fast, hardly pausing for breath. Her voice is quite loud, too, and she almost makes the waitress drop her bread rolls when she says: "We medical people can talk about genitalia all day, you know." Quite.

Trude is understandably excited about her newfound fame and talks at great length about her popularity – less through vanity, you imagine, than through sheer excitement at being considered a star. Nowadays, she gets stopped in Sainsbury's, has to sign autographs for women "whose husbands fancy me" and is recognised "all over Bristol", thanks to a recent ad campaign she did for the South West Electricity Board. "It was very strange seeing my face so large on the side of buses," she giggles. The only downside has come in the shape of the occasional over-enthusiastic admirer. Still, she says, there are too many good things to mention and proudly quotes a Norwegian newspaper article which said: "It looks like Miss Mostue is going to be the biggest export since the Christmas tree." I haven't got the heart to tell her that, frankly, she's the only Norwegian export since the Christmas tree.

But her appeal, quite apart from working with animals, centres on another very British passion – failure. We might have liked Trude when she giggled in Norwegian in front of the cameras, but we fell in love with her when she failed her exams. "People tell me they like me because I'm just like them," she says. "I mean, I hate smells and maggots and things, and if I see an animal in a really horrible state, I don't even pretend to be tough and professional – I just go and scream along with the clients! I didn't like the bimbo image the press gave me at first, but I do think maybe people need to see someone a bit clumsy on TV sometimes. I have," she adds in all seriousness, "become the Eddie the Eagle of television."

With all this talk of stardom, it is easy to forget that Trude still has to do her 9-to-5 job as a vet. She works at Longleat, home to the Marquess of Bath, who is known both for his lions (which are housed in the grounds) and his loins (which have been serviced by a succession of mistresses, gallantly referred to as "wifelets"). Although Trude is currently training to look after the former, she denies any involvement with the latter. "Oooh no!" she squeals. "I haven't been asked to be a wifelet, although if he asked me to become one, of course I would say yes. I don't think he had any say in me getting the job, but I'm not naive – me being on TV made it easier to work there because the contractors who look after the animals knew who I was and knew they could work with me. And, let's face it, Longleat is a business and me working for them is good publicity."

She first came across Longleat while making a personal appearance there as a TV vet, and is gracious enough to concede that making a chance comment to the head warden – along the lines of "I'd really love to work here, please" – wouldn't result in a job for mere mortals. "But I've just been very lucky," she shrugs. "I think my luck is going to have to stop some time."

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../3

Born just over 31 years ago near Oslo, Trude had, she says, a spectacularly uneventful childhood with her two sisters Hilde, 36, now a nurse, and Lene, 29, an engineer. Trude was the middle child, shy, and "so worried about troubling people that I can remember, as a really young child, standing in the corner of the room and, rather than troubling my mum, wetting myself right there. Maybe that's why I like being in front of the camera now, because I didn't get that attention when I was young."

The family had lots of cats and dogs, but it wasn't until Trude realised she couldn't become a ballet dancer (she didn't make the grade) that she thought seriously about becoming a vet. She worked in various animal centres around Norway and as a goatherd ("I would get up at 5am each day to milk 400 goats. I was a proper Heidi!"), before applying to Oslo Veterinary School. "The thing that really made me want to become a vet was the fact that everyone was saying how difficult it was. I like a challenge and needed to prove to myself that I could do the impossible - and this sounded impossible. Norway can only cope with training 40 vets a year, so they send you to England, hoping you'll come back. My English was terrible, so it was even more of a challenge. That's why I did it."

Trude arrived in Britain eight years ago, having secured a place at Bristol University (and a £30,000 loan from the Norwegian government, which she is still paying back), and admits she found it a culture shock. "When I came here, I was so surprised that it was so different. For a start, I was about 21 and therefore three years older than the other first year students, and when I was trying to be friendly and chatty, people just misunderstood me. I didn't realise that when men asked you for a drink, they were asking you for a date, so I said "yes" to lots of drinks. I just couldn't understand why they were so keen on me at the end of the evening.

"Being Scandinavian didn't help either. Immediately people were saying things like, "Oh, we know what you Norwegian women are like", and it's not true at all. British girls do the same as us but we talk about it more openly and are a lot blunter, even though I would say I was a late starter. When I was at college, I was amazed at the English girls because they were sleeping with every single guy they could get their hands on, using the excuse: "Oh, we got so drunk." Norwegian girls are naturally more open."

As it transpired, Trude didn't get up to too much naughtiness because she had come over to England with her boyfriend, a Norwegian engineering student. They were together for four years, after which he returned home, only to write to Trude a year later, asking if she wanted to marry him. Trude turned him down because her career was taking off and she ended up staying in England because, she says, she wasn't "ready to go home and be a wife. I believe he is married back home now."

During her stint on *Vets' School*, she stepped out with a sports journalist called Hector, although the couple split up after 18 months, having struggled to maintain a relationship while she lived in Bristol and he lived in Southampton. What's worse, the whole break-up was captured on screen "because the BBC said I would have to explain where he had gone to so the public wouldn't think I'd cut him up into small pieces and put him in the freezer".

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../4

But not to worry, because Trude has a lovely new boyfriend by the name of Patrick, six years her senior. He has also been introduced to the *Vets in Practice* audience via a selection of schmalzy "dining out" vignettes and manages to look simultaneously smooth and slightly freaked out by the ever-present TV cameras. But Trude insists he's quite laid-back about the wholebusiness "and has even started posing for the cameras now, which makes me laugh".

They met in Sainsbury's "when I looked like ••••". Trude had just returned from Africa, thought she had malaria, but still managed to clock the rather gorgeous Patrick near the frozen foods. "So I just kept staring at him because he is so pretty, you know, and then suddenly he was behind me in the queue. Apparently, we'd met before in a bar and had chatted away, and he'd remembered and started talking to me about it. But we didn't go out straight away. We just met up for drinks and dinners at first because we were both coming out of relationships and it took ages for something to happen. But I'm convinced he's probably the one." The couple have been together for 18 months now and live together in Bristol, with Patrick flitting between London and Bristol for his job as a computer software consultant. Trude, though, furrows her brow and admits that although they have "a fantastic time together, we're so busy, we have very little time in our lifestyles for each other. Even though I live with him, it's not quality time because I'm totally zapped when I get home, but he's such a sweet guy."

Does she ever worry that with them both gadding about they might fall prey to other temptations? "Well, I don't get temptations. I don't really know about him and I don't want to know. We're just so exhausted anyway, it's the last thing on our minds. But he is different to lots of other boyfriends I've had and I would trust him. I could be wrong, but I think you have to trust people until you are proven otherwise. My sister has a great attitude, though. She has told her husband – she's a nurse, he's a doctor – that "if you die and you only try me, I would hate myself." I'm not that liberal and I think that she's got quite a big mouth and doesn't mean it." There are no plans as yet for Trude and Patrick to tie the knot and, typically for a man, he is diplomatically vague about the prospect in interviews. "Marriage scares me a bit," says Trude, "because you've got to be committed to one person for the rest of your life. We don't really talk about the future and, although we both want kids, I don't want them till I'm 37 and he doesn't want them till he's 43, so we're in tune on that one. We'll just take it as it comes."

In the meantime, Trude has more than enough to be getting along with. After filming *Vets in the Wild*, a diary about the vets' three-month stay in Africa (where they do the same vetty things, only with elephants, rhinos and gorillas), she worked on an accompanying book, and a forthcoming book for kids "about mammals" called *Walk on the Wild Side with Trude*. It wasn't, she concedes, all written by her, but she is planning on writing a "more controversial book about breeding and pedigree. I'm very against the practice of docking in this country (where breeders cut off their dogs' tails for no reason other than its apparently aesthetic value) and believe people should stick their necks out and say so," she says, almost angrily.

So, Trude the bimbo is no more. We take it, then, we won't be seeing Trude on the cover of lad mags with nothing but a Yorkshire terrier protecting her modesty? "Oooh, I'd never do any shots where I was topless or in my underpants and high heels," she says to a collective groan of disappointment from the gentlemen diners in the restaurant, "but I don't mind doing sexy pictures."

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../5

Mail On Sunday

Babies? Not yet. Celebrity vets Joe and Emma Inglis often bicker on TV. At home, Emma calls the shots – and she will decide when they have children

Joe Inglis and his wife Emma, stars of BBC1's docu-soap *Vets in Practice*, do not use the front door or hall of their Cheltenham house. The area, furnished with large cushions, belongs to their two dogs, Pan and Badger, who are also cast members of *Vets in Practice*. So when I arrive, three of the celebrities greet me in unison at the side door (Emma is in surgery, seeing to a sick Alsatian). Inglis shakes my hand. Pan darts towards my crotch, using his nose as a missile. Badger stands on his hind legs and places two large paws on my shoulders. I shake both paws. "Tea?" says Inglis.

If you're one of the eight million people who watches *Vets in Practice*, you will know 27-year-old Joe Inglis as the puppyish vet who operates on animals with a sort of earnest, boyish bravado. You might have seen him amputate the hoof of a faun, and, later, the whole leg. "I was a bit suspicious this might happen," he consoled viewers. The cameras have followed his career since *Vets' School* in 1996, and subsequent series of *Vets in Practice*. His and Emma's tropical wedding was filmed as a BBC special. Guests wore fancy dress. He was, he says, inspired to be a vet by watching *All Creatures Great and Small*, the veterinary drama series based on James Herriot's bestselling novels. Now he has written a book himself, called *It Really Does Happen to a Vet*.

Inglis, who is slightly hesitant and shy off-screen and has exceptionally white teeth, looks like a surfer. Indeed, he surfs in his spare time. He wears a Quiksilver T-shirt and leather ankle boots, one of which has a large rip in the top. And as well as being a vet, he is an inventor. "I've invented a mountainboard. It's because I like snowboarding, but there's never any snow. So this is like a snowboard with wheels." He has set up a mountainboard company with several people, including his father, Phil. His mother, an artist, lives in France.

Inglis takes the teabags from a cupboard he built with Emma on TV, while she made snippy comments about his DIY skills. They often quibble on TV. "I think we play that up a bit," says Inglis. "In front of the camera, we quite enjoy taking the mick out of each other. It works quite well." He sits down. The dogs move towards him and settle at his feet. "When it comes down to it, Emma gets the bills paid. She's the responsible one. She wears the trousers."

Inglis is the less responsible one, the boy who likes extreme sports. As a TV vet, he says it's important to have "an interesting animal, one that does something cute, that looks good, or is funny in some way. And to have good owners." The owner's star quality is important. "You can have a really boring case, like a dog with fleas. But if the dog lives with a chicken and is owned by a mad couple, you've got a story." An interesting bit of surgery, he says, might be unusable if the animal's owner is dull. "Ideally you want a nice story with a bit of tension – is the animal going to live or is it going to die? Then you want a good outcome and happy owners."

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../6

In reality, of course, being a vet is usually much more prosaic. The worst thing, Inglis says, is when someone arrives at the surgery with an animal who isn't really ill. "They'll waffle on and you feel that you have to try to give them a good 10 minutes' consultation when there isn't really anything there." He much prefers "an animal with an abscess and lots of disgusting pus, or a constipated cat. If an animal is actually ill, it's easier, because you've got something you can get your teeth into." He sips his tea. A three-legged cat wanders in from the backyard, meowing. "Sometimes, you might be halfway through a cheese sandwich before you realise you haven't washed your hands, and the last thing you did was unblock a cat." The phone rings. It's Emma. Inglis says: "You think it's bad? I thought so yesterday. Okay then. See you in a bit." He puts the phone down. "It's the Alsatian," he says. "It's been vomiting for a while." He puts the kettle on again before taking me on a tour of the house. It's Victorian, with three bedrooms and wooden floorboards. It's pleasantly messy. The front room contains a pool table. Surfboards are mounted on the walls. "We bought it a year ago for £90,000," says Inglis. "But the area is rocketing. It must be worth £120,000 now."

Inglis grew up in a village outside Oundle in Northamptonshire, where his parents ran a music shop. They lived in an old water mill. "People thought we had money," says Inglis, "but we weren't rich." He went to Prince William comprehensive in Oundle. He wasn't particularly academic and his father admits that Joe was more the adventurous outdoor type. However, as the great-great-great-grandson of Charles Darwin, on his mother's side, Joe dreamed of "doing something with his life". He thought he might become a botanist. His parents divorced when he was 16 and, at 17, he applied to do voluntary work on a cattle station in Australia. Inglis set sail for Australia in a cargo ship. In the outback, he witnessed things that, by British standards, were shocking: calves routinely castrated without anaesthetic. "It wasn't very nice at all," he says, "but they do it so quickly, so efficiently, that the suffering isn't that much different. In England, the calf gets an injection in its testicle, which is uncomfortable, and the operation takes five minutes. In the outback, the scalpel comes out and it's all over in 10 seconds." Did you do it like that? "Yes. I wouldn't do it now that I'm a qualified vet. But I can see their point. They don't have access to a qualified vet."

He took his degree at Bristol University. Emma was in the same year. He says that "there'd been a grumbling of flirtation for a couple of years. Nothing had ever happened, but there was always a little undercurrent that something might happen." He fancied her, but found her 'intimidating' and 'cool', and thought she was out of his league. In the fourth year, he split up with his girlfriend; days later, her boyfriend was history. Joe and Emma got together immediately, Joe bemused by Emma's desire. "There wasn't much dillying around," he says.

The book, *It Really Does Happen to a Vet*, is a diary of Inglis' first year as a qualified vet. It logs the disappointments of veterinary medicine, the occasional highs, and the more reliable excitement of being filmed. It's entertaining and full of gore. There is a cow who has a dead calf ripped from her body with a 'calving jack'; there is a comic attempt to anaesthetise a budgie with gas using an ice-cream tub. And there is always Emma, who understands when things go wrong. Still, a sense of disillusionment permeates the book. Herriot's novels, says Inglis, "portrayed such an idyllic picture of life that I'm sure they inspired many children to follow in his footsteps. Now that I am a vet, I suppose I'm sometimes disappointed by the realities of the job."

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Vets in Practice

SERIES 5

Press Features.../7

What Inglis really wanted to be, one surmises, was not a vet, but a television vet. Inglis says that being a vet is 90 per cent psychology, and the hardest part is 'reading' the owners. Some prefer a soft, sentimental vet. Others like a more clinical approach. One of Inglis' most embarrassing moments came when he was talking to a hard-bitten Devon farmer about cows.

His mobile phone rang, and Inglis found himself adopting an entirely different manner for an old lady worried about her budgie. "I felt very awkward," he says. "The trouble with being a vet," Inglis says, "is that I am a dreamer, and you can't dream about a dog with a broken leg." You follow procedure. Sometimes it is exciting. There is a passage in the book in which Inglis, presented on camera with a cat with a broken jaw, writes: "I was trying to maintain a cool professional exterior and not give away the fact that I was really excited by the prospect of fixing the jaw." But even then, while drilling through the jaw, "I found it was really just the same as normal DIY."

Being a large-animal vet can be duller still. "Emma and I," says Inglis, "have both become a little bit disillusioned with large-animal medicine, in that it's quite restricted. You tend to give them antibiotics, or painkillers, or a few other drugs, or shoot them, and it's not particularly professionally satisfying." In small-animal surgery, he has performed hundreds, "or even thousands", of euthanasia operations. Mostly, they run smoothly, although there are occasional problems. "You say to the owner: 'Look, I'm going to put it to sleep, it's going to be beautiful, it'll just go to sleep.' And the dog's there, howling, and you can't find the vein. I think I've probably got better at it." The animal, he says, usually dies within five seconds. He tells owners, "there might be a gasp, there might be a gurgle." Emma arrives. The Alsatian, she says, is not looking too good. What might have been gastritis, or another stomach problem, looks like cancer.

Joe begins loading mountainboards into his car. Emma says she's glad that Joe has settled on them, because they're much less silly than his other inventions. "Like the mutt mask," she says. "And the extreme shoes," says Inglis. She says that she had flirted with Inglis at university, but only took him seriously in the fourth year, when he cut off his "really greasy, shoulder-length hair". They split up after a month, and again after six months, just before their final exams. "It probably stems back to my parents' divorce," says Inglis. It had shaken him badly and he never wanted to go through anything like it again, or put a child through it. Now, says Emma, the BBC are wondering about children. "They wanted to talk about marriage before we were married. They had this big thing of will they, won't they? It spiced up the first series. So practically every interview they do, they say: Any thoughts about children?"

What next? *Vets Have Children?* "We can't really have kids at the moment," says Emma. "We've still got debts to pay off. Joe says he wants some, but in a few years time."

Inglis drives me and the mountainboard to the station. He wears wraparound shades. He shows me a picture of himself, jumping off a small cliff, feet strapped into a mountainboard. Tonight, he is giving a speech at his old school. He says: "It would be nice to think of someone coming up to me in 15 yearstime and saying: 'You inspired me to become a vet.' Better still, a TV vet."

Documentaries

14 x 30 minutes