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**B B C** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

Healing sick animals is a vocation

National Television Awards 1999  
Most Popular Documentary

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

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**B B C** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

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**Documentaries**

10 x 30 minutes

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Introduction

*Vets in Practice*, a prime-time fly-on-the-wall docusoap, first transmitted on BBC1 in 1997 and quickly became established as a firm favourite with viewers of all ages. The series regularly appears in the top 10 of the British ratings chart and was voted the UK's Most Popular Documentary at the 1999 National Television Awards. The show has also turned Trude Mostue, Steve Leonard and their colleagues into household names and spawned several spin-off programmes.

The young vets first appeared in the BBC1's hugely successful *Vets' School*, which followed their training. *Vets In Practice* took up their individual stories after college as they set out on their careers. Three years have now passed since the young vets graduated and their student days are far behind them. They are all well-established in the veterinary profession. Trude Mostue is in practice in Frome and Joe and Emma Inglis have been settled in Cheltenham for over two years. But there are still surprises, shocks, laughter and hard-to-handle emotions in this most rewarding and sometimes heart-breaking of jobs.

As well as the drama of treating sick and injured animals, viewers are also hooked by the ups and downs of the young vets' personal lives and career moves. Their loves, their hates, their aspirations and the inevitable stresses and strains that go with the job are all captured on camera and viewers have come to know the vets as well as they know their own friends.

Series 6 follows Trude Mostue, Joe and Emma Inglis, the Leonard brothers and Maria Lowe as they come to some important personal and career decisions and as they tackle some of the most challenging operations of their lives.

Amanda Prince, producer of the programme, says: "The new series of is packed with the traditional mix of touching and entertaining animal stories, as well as giving an insight into the lives of working vets. The first programme is a cracker – a pheasant gets stuck in the grill of a car and goes for a four-mile ride and a pregnant foxhound gives birth to an astonishing 16 puppies. And there's everything from hurricanes to lion vasectomies to look forward to in the rest of the series."

**Documentaries**

**10 x 30 minutes**

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Production Credits

Series Producer

**Amanda Prince**

Directors

**Hamish Beeston** (Episode 1)

**Debbi Moore** (Episodes 2, 6)

**Colin Naphine** (Episodes 3, 10)

**Emma Hancorn** (Episode 4)

**Isabel Pritchard** (Episodes 5, 8)

**Mandi Startup** (Episodes 7, 9)

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Production Notes

#### Trude and Maria

Trude Mostue, the Norwegian blonde now aged 31, shot to fame in 1997 when fans of *Vets School* watched her struggle to qualify. Trude won Britain's heart and is now the star of spin-off series, *Vets in the Wild* and *Vets to the Rescue*. She divides her time between filming, the Longleat Safari Park and a practice in Warminster, Wiltshire. Now she is planning to branch out by setting up her own practice in Bristol with Maria Lowe, who appears in this series for the first time.

Maria and Trude are best friends and both Norwegian (they are thinking of calling their practice Viking Vets). Maria, 34, also went to Bristol University's Vet School but qualified two years before the BBC began making the *Vets' School* series. She married Andrew Lowe, a farm manager, and settled in Tetbury, Gloucestershire, joining Lansdown Veterinary practice in nearby Stroud and the pair had a son, Jack, in 1998. In this series, Maria discovers that she is expecting her second child in April 2000. Something of a supermum, she intends to use her maternity leave to look for a suitable property for the new business.

"Trude asked me if I would join her in setting up a practice and I decided to go for it," says Maria. "It might seem absolutely ludicrous that here I am, a few months away from expecting my second child, and I'm trying to start a business, but I really think this is a terrific opportunity. I must need a brain scan or something. But the fact is, if I remain as an employee, we won't be able to afford the level of childcare we want, whereas if Trude and I manage to set up the practice, I will be able to have the children with me and hopefully I'll have a mini crèche on the premises. That's the plan, but it's not easy trying to set up your own business. There's no end to the work that needs to be done. We've been to see a small business advisor and we've started putting a business plan together. One of the main investments will be in the computer system we use; I think it's vitally important that we get that right from the start."

Maria, who has been married since 1990, says that with all the press coverage that Trude's love live has been getting, she sometimes feels a good deal older than the three years that separate them. "Trude really feels like a younger sister to both Andrew and I. She's at such a different stage in her life. She's extremely hard-working and great fun and I love working with her, so I really hope we do get this business off the ground. My husband has promised to sell his beloved motorbike to finance the start-up of the business. I can tell you, that's a tremendous sacrifice for him so he must love me, even after 10 years."

When Maria came to England in 1989, she had already met her husband-to-be and discovered that it would "be easier to move a mountain than move an Englishman out of England", so she decided to settle in England after graduating from university in 1994. She appeared briefly in one of the *Vet School* episodes and says she hardly notices the three extra people (*Vets In Practice* director, camera and sound crew) in her consulting room while she's working.

"What I don't like is seeing myself on the telly afterwards," says Maria. "You look at yourself and think, do I really look like that?"

**Documentaries**

**10 x 30 minutes**

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Production Notes

#### **Vets (and film crew) in danger**

Arriving on the beautiful island of New Providence to film vet Fiona Green on location at an animal rescue centre, director Colin Naphine and his crew (cameraman Rob Llewellyn and soundman Darren Tate) were looking forward to a blissful few days in the Bahamas.

Then Floyd turned up. Not the wok- and wine-wielding TV cook Keith Floyd, but 240 kph Hurricane *Floyd*.

They had only been on the island one day when they were evacuated from their hotel rooms in the middle of the night and huddled – together with hundreds of tourists – into a hotel ballroom to shelter from seven-metre waves and storm-force winds.

Colin says: “We had to get stuck in and help Fiona prepare her home to withstand the hurricane while we were trying to film her, then rush back to the hotel to make our own preparations. We had to pack all our belongings into bin liners, fill the bath with water and carry our passports and valuables with us into the ballroom. It was terrifying. We sat there for over five hours, listening to the wind hurling the debris around outside.

“The irony is that I travelled around the world for two years working on *The Travel Show* and *Rough Guides* and the worst weather I ever came across was some torrential rain. A few days out of England for *Vets In Practice* and I got hit by a hurricane!”

Homes were wrecked and businesses destroyed by the hurricane, and two people died on neighbouring islands. On New Providence Island, where there is one dog for every two people, the fall-out from the storm stretched the Bahamas Humane Society (the 75-year-old animal charity where Fiona spends her free days) to near breaking-point.

Viewers can see the devastation in the Episode 3.

**Documentaries**

**10 x 30 minutes**

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Episode Synopses

#### 1. Baby Boom

Joe has to perform the biggest Caesarean of his career on a heavily-pregnant foxhound called Gravel. In a scene reminiscent of *101 Dalmatians*, he delivers puppy after puppy, but sadly there is not an entirely happy ending. From an astonishing 16 puppies, only 13 survive, and the long and bloody operation is too much of a strain for their mother, who dies on the operating table. Joe is distraught, as is Gravel's breeder Julian Barnsfield (she was his favourite hound). Julian sets about hand-rearing the puppies with help from a terrier called Jess, who lost her own litter only days before.

Joe's wife, Emma, also has an unusual case: a pheasant which has hitched a 6.5 km ride stuck in the grill of a Volvo Estate car. It takes Emma's gentle veterinary hand to know just how hard to pull it out without causing any more damage and, once it has made a miraculous recovery from the shock, she releases it back into the wild.

Richie the chihuahua is Jean Richardson's constant companion. She is worried about a lump on his bottom which is growing fast. Trude does a biopsy and, for the first time in her career, is faced with a malignant tumour. It should be a simple operation to remove it, but it is a great responsibility – the dog is Jean Richardson's whole world.

Back at home, Emma is getting seriously broody. She and Joe have been married for over a year and she wants a baby. Trude, however, wants a cat – an orphaned kitten, abandoned at the surgery. Will her boyfriend approve?

#### 2. Horses For Courses

The young vets are starting to specialise. Tom Leonard's passion is large farm animals, his brother Steve prefers to work with small animals and for equine vet Sam Robinson in Humberside, it's horses.

Tom is called out to a farm in Lancashire to see a cow with chronic diarrhoea. After a close examination he discovers the cause: a twisted stomach. It takes brute force, two helpers and a long rope to get it back in position. Also on his mind is Thistle, his girlfriend's Scottie dog. Tom is looking after him while she's away. A hairdo and manicure should have the mischievous pup looking spotless for his mistress' return.

Sam encounters a six-week-old foal called Oriel, who was born with her legs twisting outwards. Oriel's future lies in eventing, if Sam and her boss John Levison can fix the problem. But Oriel's mother, Essey, is reluctant to let her baby out of her sight, and it's the first time Sam has performed this procedure. Sam too has another animal on her mind – her own dog Lottie may have a serious thyroid problem.

Steve's patient is a severely injured cat called Popeye. He had disappeared for several days before the owners discovered him hiding in their garage rafters. It looks as if the cat may have been hit by a car. There are multiple fractures in his leg and Steve has to make some tough decisions to save him from serious distress. Any distress Steve is feeling, however, is quickly dispelled when the whole practice is sent off on a team-building exercise, potholing in the Long Churn caves of the Lake District.

**Documentaries**

**10 x 30 minutes**

**BBC** Worldwide

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### Episode Synopses

#### 3. Stormy Weather

Fiona Green first visited the Bahamas to work with dolphins as part of her course at Langford vet school. Now she's returned with her boyfriend, Nick Allinson, and is working as a diving instructor but she's keeping her vet skills honed by helping out at the Bahamas Humane Society on her days off. Today, the Society's reception area is empty; the residents of the islands have more pressing concerns than routine visits to the vet. Hurricane *Floyd*, one of the most dangerous hurricanes ever to hit the Bahamas, is just a few hours away to the east. All Fiona can do is fasten the shutters on her house, tape the windows, gather her valuables together and wait for the storm to strike.

By contrast, it is a calm sunny day in Wiltshire, but here too a drama is unfolding. Breeder Katrina Stevens has brought her stud German Shepherd dog, Seamus, to see Trude Mostue. He has a mild case of bloody diarrhoea and, after a thorough examination, Trude can find nothing to indicate what is causing it. She sends him home, but tells Katrina to bring him back should he deteriorate. Her worst fears are realised within an hour: Seamus is back at the surgery and collapses almost as soon as he is through the front door. Trude and her colleague, Julian Porter, need to act quickly – but before they can open him up to discover where the bleeding is coming from, he stops breathing. His heart stops and despite their best efforts (cardio compression, stimulants, even an injection into his heart) Seamus slips away. A *post mortem* investigation reveals that that he had tumours on his spleen, one of which had ruptured. The fact that he would have died, no matter what they did, does little to allay the feeling of helplessness that Trude feels.

After a difficult day, Trude can relax with her best friend, Maria Lowe and her husband, Andrew, a farm manager. Trude and Maria became friends at Langford and are now planning to open their own practice together.

Maria has one of the more surprising cases of her career in Hero, an elderly collie who has been brought into her practice in Stroud, Gloucestershire. He has a lump in his groin that has grown so big it is beginning to interfere with movement. Fortunately for Hero, the lump turns out to be a benign tumour made completely of fat. However, it weighs an incredible two kilograms and is so large that Maria compares its removal to giving birth. Hero is so pleased to be rid of it that when his owner comes to collect him he almost bounces out of the surgery.

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

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### Episode Synopses

#### 4. Best Laid Plans

Now that the vets have reached a level of competency in their professional lives, they find themselves starting to question what they really want beyond their careers.

Joe Inglis has reached his goal. He is working part-time as a vet so that he can also follow his dream of getting his mountain-board invention into production. However, he discovers that he might lose his veterinary job in Cheltenham, leaving him and his vet wife, Emma, facing an uncertain financial future. The news sparks Emma into taking some practical action that could drastically change their lives, but she has difficulty persuading Joe that her plan of opening their own practice is the best way forward.

Fellow Bristol graduate Sam Robinson is also considering her options and decides that, for now at least, it would be best to stay at her practice in Hull, where she can follow her ambition to specialise in horse surgery. She gets an opportunity to further her experience when she assists her boss and mentor, John Levison, in removing a tumour from a 20-year-old horse called Sparkey. But even John, with 11 years' experience, loses his cool as he attempts the tricky procedure.

At work, Emma faces professional *angst* when Bitsy the cat is admitted with unusually shaped pupils. Emma soon discovers that his problems run much deeper. The diagnosis of cancer leaves her facing the most difficult decision of her veterinary career.

Meanwhile, husband Joe is nominated custodian of a hamster who arrives at his Cheltenham surgery in a bucket. The adventurous rodent was brought in by a local shopkeeper who found him rummaging in his wastepaper basket. A media campaign ensues to try to find the rightful owner. But the hamster spends several lonely nights at the local animal shelter before his owners come forward to claim him.

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

**BBC** Worldwide

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## SERIES 6

### Episode Synopses

#### 5. Decision Time

After three years of working for other people, some of the young vets are beginning to make plans to set up in practice on their own. Trude Mostue and her best friend and fellow Norwegian, Maria Lowe, are taking their partnership ideas the next step forward with a visit to the bank manager. Meanwhile, Joe Inglis tells his disappointed wife, Emma, that he feels their plans of setting up their own practice and having a baby should be put on hold.

Emma has other important decisions to make at work as she faces one of the toughest challenges of her career. She needs to decide how far to proceed with treatment on Bitsy, a 10-year-old cat with cancer. In Episode 4, viewers saw Bitsy have a cancerous mass removed and begin a course of chemotherapy. He is now back to have a second tumour removed from his eye – but Emma is hesitant to proceed as it initially seems he may not be strong enough to undergo the operation. It's all too much and she breaks down under the pressure.

Meanwhile, Joe is visited by two workers from Cheltenham's local animal shelter who bring in an abandoned Yorkshire Terrier found wandering in a park in a terrible state. Also in a state is Maria's latest patient, Jasper the cat, who is covered in cooking fat after falling into a neighbour's old chip pan. And Trude is struggling with Fred the rabbit's teeth – one has grown so enormously long that extraction seems the best plan. But the tooth refuses to come out!

#### 6. While The Cat's Away

Vet Tom Leonard has been with a practice in Lancashire for five years and is very much a part of the community. Local farmers David and Sara Berry are entrusting him with their entire livelihood as they take their first holiday in seven years, leaving Tom as their farm-sitter for a week. Tom takes to farming like a duck to water and finds that his veterinary skills come in useful. David Berry's only concern is stopping Tom from riding around on his beloved tractor!

For Tom's brother Keith, it's a different story. His plans to practise in Chester didn't work out, so he has accepted locum work in Anglesey, where settling-in involves learning to speak a little Welsh. His new patients include Jasper, a cat with a dangerously high temperature who has been left in the charge of an anxious cat-sitter, a pet ram called Bossy Boots who has become very aggressive, and an emergency call-out to a cow with a displaced stomach. The cow requires major emergency surgery and the main surgical instrument is Keith's left arm. He strips to the waist, makes an incision in the abdomen and announces: "I'm going in..."

A very different landscape has been home to vet Fiona Green. It's been a year since she left her practice in England to move to the Bahamas with her boyfriend, but she's having mixed feelings about living in paradise. She misses the comforts of home and has a passionate craving for a cheese-and-pickle sandwich. At the Humane Society where she works as a volunteer, an unwanted goat has a severely fractured, infected leg. The only option is amputation and she assists boss Peter Bizell with this intricate operation. As the goat still has no home at the end of its ordeal, the Society do the humane thing and decides to adopt him as a mascot. Fiona also encounters her first racoons: Wimbley and Toot are cute 10-week-old babies who have been hand-reared by one of Fiona's colleagues.

**Documentaries**

**10 x 30 minutes**

**BBC** Worldwide

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### Episode Synopses

#### 7. Mum's The Word

Keith Leonard is still struggling to settle into life as a locum in Anglesey, but he is not the only beginner. Keith is acting as mentor to 16-year-old work-experience student, Glesni Arfon, who gets to the bottom (literally) of what being a vet is all about when she helps Keith to check if two cows are in calf. Keith is also asked to undertake routine blood tests for *bruscela*, a disease which causes miscarriage in cows. It has been eradicated from Briain and now the Ministry of Agriculture pay vets like Keith to run routine blood tests to prevent any recurrence. The cows, however, are not so keen and have made a break for freedom...

Trude is perplexed by the case of two-year-old Benson, a chocolate Labrador dog who has an appetite for household objects such as TV remote controls. The normally boisterous dog is very sick with diarrhoea, but no blockage is immediately evident so it's up to Trude to find out what is wrong so that Benson can return to his besotted family.

Maria Lowe has a double reason for celebration. After performing her favourite operation, a Caesarean, three-year-old Barley produces 11 lovely, healthy Golden Retriever puppies. And, to Maria's surprise, she has just found out that she is pregnant again too.

#### 8. Road To Recovery

A dog called Patch is rushed into Emma Inglis' practice by his distraught owner who has just seen him get hit by a car. At first glance Patch seems fine, but Emma admits him for a thorough examination under anaesthetic, as car crash victims often have hidden injuries. Down the road in Cheltenham at her husband Joe's surgery, Jelly the cat has also been hit by a car – but her owner Janet Birt doesn't know it yet. She thinks his tail is just dislocated. Joe quickly realises that Jelly's condition is much more serious. He is paralysed and, as a result, his bladder is filled to bursting point, which could kill him. Despite being relieved, the outlook is not good. Jelly has lost control of both bladder and tail. If the nerves in his tail are broken and he cannot pass water unaided, he will have to be put down. Joe fits the poor cat with a catheter and sends him home. He will have to wait to see if the nerve action will ever return.

The prognosis for Patch, however, is much more cheerful. He is just seriously bruised and Emma decides that he is fit to go home. Emma herself is about to become a patient: at the local hospital her persistently painful right knee needs to be examined with an endoscope. Although it is a fairly routine procedure, it requires a general anaesthetic and, being a vet, Emma knows all the risks and is extremely nervous. Joe, on the other hand, has never had a general anaesthetic and still expects Emma to pack the bags for their weekend away when she gets home after her day in hospital.

In Hull, Sam Robinson is about to try out a little endoscopy of her own. Her patient – a young racehorse called Tommy – has been bleeding from the nose during a run. Sam and her boss, John Levison, feed a 1.5 metre-long endoscope into Tommy's nose and down into his lungs so that Sam can see what is wrong...

**Documentaries**

**10 x 30 minutes**

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Episode Synopses

#### 9. Wanderlust

The three Leonard brothers – Steve, Keith and Tom – are considering their futures. Steve, the eldest, takes the plunge and resigns from his practice in Lancaster, his first and only job since he graduated. It's a tough decision, but after five years' studying and three years' working, Steve has decided it is time to take a break and see some of the world. His last two days are busy. Steve uses acupuncture to treat Bess, an elderly dog with chronic arthritis. On his final day, he responds to an emergency call-out to a farm where a young calf is nursing a broken leg after being attacked by its own mother. Meanwhile in Shropshire, Steve's mother, Bet, is lining up plenty of odd jobs for him to do before he sets off on his travels.

Keith, the youngest Leonard, has also caught the travel bug. He is working as a locum in Anglesey to earn enough money to travel. He is philosophical about his brother's decision to give up his steady job and explains that the traditional job-for-life James Herriot veterinary lifestyle is a thing of the past. These days, a veterinary science degree can be a passport to work around the globe. A touch of the exotic turns up in Keith's surgery. A worried owner thinks that Boris, his Savannah Monitor Lizard, may be going blind. Boris stretches the limits of Keith's veterinary knowledge and, in a quest to find out what might be wrong, the young vet surfs the internet for diagnostic inspiration.

With so much change in the family Tom is also thinking about his future, but decides that, for now, he's happy where he is. Treating a pregnant cow that has collapsed in the stunning Lancashire countryside only confirms his feelings. However, it's back down to earth with a bump when he's assigned to do a routine blood test on 450 sheep.

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes

**BBC** Worldwide

# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Episode Synopses

#### 10. Family Affairs

As part of her job, Trude Mostue has been spending one day a week at Longleat Safari Park. Today she is getting her first chance to tend one of their famous lions. Charlie, the younger of the two males, is disturbing the delicate balance of the pride by challenging the dominant male and getting the females pregnant. Trude cannot castrate him, as the loss of testosterone would mean he would lose his place in the hierarchy. Vasectomy is the only answer, but Charlie is not impressed when Trude and the team arrive to set about their task – and Trude is feeling wary too. She is also worried about her flat. It's a mess and her mother and sisters are coming on a visit from Norway. But they are so pleased to see her, they hardly notice the chaos.

Emma Inglis has a much smaller cat to operate on. Tigger has a badly injured back leg after being hit by a car. She is nursing four small kittens and cannot be separated from them, so the whole family has to come into the surgery while Emma and her boss, Simon Harvey, perform a delicate pinning operation in an attempt to save Tigger's leg. Sadly, however, not all treatment will work and complications set in later on when the pins in her ankle begin to poke through the skin. There's a danger that the bone could fracture again and Tigger could lose her leg. Meanwhile at home, there has been friction between Emma and her husband, Joe. He is being made redundant and, on his last day at the Cheltenham practice, he still hasn't found a new job. The trouble is, he hasn't been looking very hard and Emma isn't happy.

Maria Lowe is expecting her second child and is off to the hospital for her 20-week scan. It's an opportunity for her to experience at first hand a procedure she routinely performs at work – and to discover whether it will be a boy or a girl. At her practice in Stroud, a Weimerana puppy called Oliver has been rushed into the surgery with saliva gushing from his mouth. He has obviously eaten something that has made him very ill. To save him, Maria must first find out what it is.

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes



# Vets in Practice

## SERIES 6

### Ratings

| Episode | UK Txn Date | Channel | Time On | Viewers     | Audience Share |
|---------|-------------|---------|---------|-------------|----------------|
| 1       | 01.02.00    | BBC1    | 20.00   | 8.8 million | 35.4%          |
| 2       | 02.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 6.5 million | 26.7%          |
| 3       | 08.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 8.0 million | 32.5%          |
| 4       | 09.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 6.8 million | 27.1%          |
| 5       | 15.02.00    |         | 20.30   | 7.0 million | 28.2%          |
| 6       | 16.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 6.7 million | 28.0%          |
| 7       | 22.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 8.3 million | 32.9%          |
| 8       | 23.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 6.7 million | 26.7%          |
| 9       | 29.02.00    |         | 20.00   | 8.3 million | 32.6%          |
| 10      | 01.03.00    |         | 20.00   | 7.3 million | 30.1%          |

### What The Papers Say

"The lovely Trude, the Charlie Dimmock of the rectum thermometer set..." **Observer**

"I am acquainted with a highly distinguished veterinary surgeon who, every time *Vets In Practice* came on the TV, would vent clouds of steam from his ears, as critical of their skills as an old general watching his juniors on manoeuvres. But even my friend's crusty heart must be softened (if only I dared to ask him) by the adventures of two of the same group of young vets we have now followed through their training and early days in employment." **Daily Mail**

"You could tell straight away that Fiona Green ... had never experienced a hurricane before. How? Because of what Fiona was doing as the radio announcer increased his rating for the fast-approaching Hurricane *Floyd* from a four to a five ... Fiona was casually lowering her window shutters ... As it turned out, Hurricane *Floyd* swung away into the ocean before reaching the island. Fiona's house suffered only a temporary loss of electricity supply. The animals took the brunt of it ... Here again, Fiona's inexperience shone through. A dog's thigh had been jolted out of its socket when a tree landed on it during the storm. After a more senior colleague at the Bahamian vet's surgery had dealt with clicking the dog's bone back into place, Fiona had to look in her vet school textbook to remind herself how to tie a bandage around the pooch's hind leg." **The Times**

Documentaries

10 x 30 minutes