Join the SPVS Leadership and Management Stream at VetEdge Congress 2026

The leadership stream at the VetEdge Congress has become a genuinely valuable space for veterinary leaders to step away from the day-to-day pressures of practice life, reflect on where the profession is heading, and return with practical ideas, renewed energy, and stronger connections, *writes Pete Orpin, SPVS president*.

Running and leading a veterinary practice has never been more challenging – or more important. Across the profession, practice owners, clinical directors, managers and aspiring leaders are navigating a rapidly changing landscape. Financial pressures continue to rise. Recruitment and retention remain difficult. Client expectations are evolving. Technology is advancing at pace. And alongside all of this, practices are preparing for significant market and regulatory change over the next few years.

In times like these, leadership matters. That is why the SPVS leadership stream has been designed to be practical, supportive, interactive and highly relevant to modern veterinary practice.

Delivered in partnership between SPVS and *The Veterinary Edge*, the congress brings together experienced speakers, business experts and practising veterinary professionals in an environment that feels welcoming, personal and refreshingly different from many larger conferences.

A different kind of congress experience

One of the defining features of VetEdge Congress is its scale and atmosphere. Hosted at Sandy Park just outside Exeter, the event offers a more personal and accessible alternative to larger conferences. With strong transport links, on-site accommodation and a well-regarded conference environment, it provides the ideal setting for focused learning without the distractions often associated with larger-scale events.

More importantly, it creates space – something many veterinary leaders rarely have. Delegates consistently highlight the value of being able to step away from the day-to-day pressures of practice life to reflect, engage and think more strategically about their business, their teams and their leadership approach.

Moving beyond passive learning

The SPVS Leadership and Management stream has been deliberately designed to move away from traditional lecture-heavy formats. While expert speakers and high-quality content remain central, the emphasis is firmly on interaction, discussion and shared learning.

Workshops and facilitated sessions encourage delegates to engage with real-world challenges, exchange ideas and explore practical solutions alongside peers facing similar issues. This collaborative approach reflects the reality of veterinary leadership – where there are rarely simple answers, but significant value in shared experience.

The focus throughout is on actionable insight. Topics will include leadership in practice, team development,

communication, business resilience and building sustainable veterinary businesses – both financially and culturally.

Grounded in real practice

A key strength of the programme is its grounding in the realities of veterinary practice. The speakers and facilitators are not removed academics or theorists; many are actively working within the profession and understand first-hand the pressures facing today's practices.

This ensures that discussions remain honest, pragmatic and directly relevant. Whether addressing recruitment challenges, team dynamics or financial sustainability, the emphasis is always on what works in practice – not just in theory.

The power of peer-to-peer learning

While formal sessions provide structure, some of the most valuable learning often happens outside the lecture room. Informal conversations over coffee, workshop discussions and shared reflections frequently generate ideas that delegates can take straight back to their practices.

From improving communication and strengthening teams to making better use of technology or enhancing client relationships, these peer-led insights are a hallmark of the VetEdge congress experience.

For those working in independent practice in particular, the event offers a valuable opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals who are equally committed to building strong, sustainable veterinary businesses.

Supporting the next generation of leaders

At its core, the Leadership and Management stream reflects the ongoing mission of the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons: to support veterinary professionals in developing the skills and confidence needed to lead effectively.

As the profession continues to evolve, leadership will play a defining role in shaping its future. Creating resilient, adaptable and people-focused practices will require not only clinical excellence, but also strong leadership capability at every level.

Investment in your practice – and yourself

For veterinary professionals seeking more than just CPD hours, VetEdge Congress offers a compelling proposition. It combines high-quality content with practical take-home value, meaningful discussion and a genuinely supportive professional environment. Above all, it provides an opportunity to pause, reflect and refocus – something that is often overlooked, but increasingly essential in today's fast-paced veterinary landscape.

As the challenges facing the profession continue to grow in complexity, events like this are not simply beneficial; they are necessary. Veterinary leadership matters. And the future of practice will be shaped by those willing to invest in developing it.

For more information about the programme and to sign up, visit **spvs.org.uk/vet-edge-congress**

DAY 1: Tuesday 29th September Operational and Financial Excellence

Optimising your Operational Efficiency	Sharing practical strategies to simplify processes, minimise waste and increase team capacity to balance long-term growth with outstanding client care.
Financial Insights in a Changing Veterinary Landscape	Exploring the financial challenges practices are facing and a look at what the future holds for growth and succession.
Understanding and Improving Your Practice Finances	Learn how to use your management accounts to help with future planning, decision making and improving financial performance.
Understanding and Improving Your Practice Finances: A Continuation	A follow-on from the previous session, in this interactive session attendees can bring their own practice figures and work out how to improve efficiency and profitability.
Enhancing Your Practice Offerings with Upskilling, Remote Specialists and Peripatetics	A look at how best to expand practice capabilities to improve operational efficiency. Exploring when to consider referring, when to integrate remote specialists and peripatetic clinicians, and when to offer in-house by upskilling your team.
AI and Tech in Veterinary Practice: How workplaces are adapting	A look at what AI and technology are doing right now in vet practices, how they're likely to evolve, and where they can support the running of a business, including improving processes, front of house and using AI to analyse data.

DAY 2: Wednesday 30th September Optimising Communication and Improving Team Culture

What Makes a Great Day: How practice culture transforms the working day	Exploring what shapes a 'great day' in veterinary practice through team culture. To include collaborative wordcloud and practical, culture-focused takeaways.
Employment Law Update: The latest changes every practice needs to know	Latest employment legislation changes, steps required to ensure compliancy, plus Q&A to address individual queries.
Difficult Conversations & Conflict Resolution	How to manage conflict when the stakes are high and emotions run strong—handling performance concerns, interpersonal conflicts, and emotionally charged client interactions.
Building Resilient, Motivated Veterinary Teams	Evidence-based approaches to boosting morale, reducing burnout and creating sustainable working environments in times of change.
How to achieve contextualised care: insights from the veterinary sector and pet owners	How tailoring care recommendations strengthens trust, improves outcomes and can drive business performance. To include reference to recommendations from RCVS report and roadmap.
The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Teams - And How to Develop it	Exploring how EQ strengthens team cohesion, communication and decision-making in practice, offering practical approaches on how to develop this to create successful teams.
Succeeding in a post CMA world	A panel session of practitioners sharing how they've adapted their communication, pricing structures and clinical decision-making to offer transparency, clarity and client empowerment whilst remaining operationally sustainable.