

# Vet Alice is growing her career alongside her family

**When vet Alice Dickason became a mother, she knew she needed a greater work-life balance. It led to her spreading her wings into the poultry vet sector – a decision which has transformed her life and her career.**

RETURNING to work as a vet after maternity leave can be incredibly daunting, especially when you're working in small animal practice as I was before becoming a mum. There are so many different species and developments to keep on top of, while you're adjusting to life as a mother and juggling work and a baby.



So, when I had my little boy Barnaby, who is now three, I had a complete rethink about what I wanted from my career and my life outside of work.

I remembered how a friend in my final year group at university had wanted to go into poultry veterinary work and I started to research the industry. I came across Poultry Health Services and the first thing that impressed me was the company's training programme. They offer an internship, where you can work alongside other vets while you're learning the ropes of being a poultry vet. There is also huge support with courses, access to lectures and training resources.

As well as the training and support, it provided the opportunity for me to have the working hours that I wanted. Within the poultry sector there aren't the same evening on-call commitments as in small animal practice and you have much lighter weekend rotas.

As Barnaby has got older, I've been able to increase my hours, and this is one of the advantages of working for a larger company. If you are at a smaller practice, you can feel like you are letting colleagues down if you want to arrange more flexible working after having a family.

I'm due to have a second baby in March 2022 and won't be returning to work until 2023. It's a weight off my mind to know that when I do return, the team will do everything they can to help make the transition back to work as easy as possible.

Poultry Health Services is part of VetPartners, a UK veterinary group with nearly 180 practices. Their culture of warmth and belonging, and the value they place on ensuring colleagues can enjoy a work-life balance, means I've felt supported and part of the team every step of the way while I've followed a new career path.

If you are struggling with a case, there is always a colleague to speak to and VetPartners' online chat groups are excellent, giving access to such a huge breadth of knowledge which is wonderful to be able to tap into.

Some people were surprised when I told them I was going to become a poultry vet but it's the best decision I ever made. I love being out and about visiting different farms and really enjoy the way you are encouraged to build up a good working relationship with clients. There is a lot of job satisfaction in helping farmers keep their flocks healthy.

Being able to get into the laboratory and do post-mortems has been an unexpected bonus to my new job. I didn't realise how much I would enjoy it. It's a bit like solving a puzzle and then seeing it through to completion and coming up with a treatment plan to make sure the rest of the flock remains healthy.

I can't recommend working as a poultry vet enough. It's really rewarding working so closely with farmers to help keep such large numbers of birds healthy. It's a different kind of work to what I was used to, but I have grown to love it and get a lot of job satisfaction.

**Anyone interested in following a career as a poultry vet and finding out about internships at Poultry Health Services can email [sheriffhutton@poultryhealthservices.com](mailto:sheriffhutton@poultryhealthservices.com) or call 01347 820 366 for an informal chat.**

*Alice Dickason BVetMed&Surgery graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 2016 and went into small animal and equine general practice before joining Poultry Health Services in January 2020.*