



WINTER 2025/2026

*Why choose an Independent Practice / Practice Standards Scheme /
Equine Nursing Role / Hay Shortage advice / Surrey Uni Partnership*

Why Choose an Independent Practice like Avonvale Equine

There has been a lot of publicity lately about the cost of veterinary care following a Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation into the veterinary sector. One headline finding was that on average owners pay 16.6% more at large veterinary groups than at independent vets. In addition, vets are criticised for not providing clear estimates of anticipated costs of procedures.

Avonvale is a totally independent solely equine veterinary practice, owned and run jointly by Naomi de Pennington and Claire Maher. The practice has a long history dating back more than 50 years. The practice was originally a traditional mixed practice catering for all species of animals, and then over 25 years ago the practice split into separate large and small animal businesses. Avonvale equine and farm practice subsequently moved away from offering farm animal services in order to specialise in equines, their area of expertise, forming the business we are today. There is sometimes understandably confusion amongst clients as there is still a small animal veterinary business with the name Avonvale, but this is not in any way affiliated to Avonvale Equine. Hence you will not find any small print anywhere linking us to any large corporation.

The reason for our desire to remain independent is that we do not want to run our business in order to satisfy any shareholders or to have to meet 'targets' or quotas. We want to develop meaningful relationships with our clients to enable us to provide the best possible veterinary service tailored to meet their needs. We do want to try to run a profitable business in order to be able to invest in our staff and their ongoing training and our up-to-date diagnostic equipment. We aim to be totally transparent about our charging and always try to provide estimates for our services and to provide different investigation and treatment options in discussion with the clients to best meet the needs of horse and owner. We never run tests unless we have a good clinical reason for doing so, and we are always happy to discuss different approaches to a case and to explain the costs of our involvement.

We operate our own emergency service so that no matter what happens day or night you will be looked after by one of our own veterinary team, who will always have access to all of your horse's clinical history and information. Our team of vets is supported by two very experienced qualified equine nurses who as well as running the pharmacy and laboratory also come out on the road performing many skilled tasks such as taking Xrays, blood samples and assisting in surgeries for example. We are also trying to inspire the next generation of veterinary surgeons by acting as an affiliate training partner for the University of Surrey Veterinary School (see page 2), as well as taking student vets from other Universities on placements throughout the year.



Director
Naomi de Pennington



Director
Claire Maher



Office Hours

Mon-Fri 8:30am - 5:00pm



24hr Emergency Service

Contact Us

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RCVS Practice Standards Scheme

RCVS Practice Standards Scheme – we have passed again!

Here at Avonvale Equine, we pride ourselves on offering the highest standard of veterinary care and service. In order to ensure this is the case, for many years we have participated in a voluntary accreditation initiative, offered by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). This scheme is known as the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS).



This scheme aims to enhance the quality of veterinary services and provide reassurance to pet owners regarding the care their animals receive. We are assessed a minimum every four years and this includes checks on clinical, governance and regulatory requirements, as well as the facilities and processes in place at the practice.

In October, we had our inspection and are pleased to report that we passed with flying colours. It's an arduous exercise, involving many areas of the business being scrutinised, with many protocols, risk assessments and documents being inspected. Our staff have worked tirelessly to ensure everything is up-to-date and that we follow all the correct guidelines requested by the RCVS.

A huge well done to all the team!

Partnership with Surrey University

As an affiliated training practice, we are so fortunate to have a wealth of experience within both our veterinary surgeon and nursing teams and pride ourselves in providing a supportive environment where students are nurtured and encouraged to develop their skills.

We have always welcomed students to join us for their work placements and this year we have partnered with Surrey University to provide their 5th year students with the final stage of their training. Students undertake a rotation of 4 week placements to gain as much hands on, first opinion experience as possible in authentic work-place settings.

As well as covering equine practice, students also undertake placements in farm and small animal practices as well as a referral hospital rotation and veterinary pathology and public health.

None of this would be possible without the help and support of our fabulous clients, who always make our students feel welcome when accompanying vets on appointments. We'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all clients who have been brilliant in sharing their knowledge and providing a supportive environment for us to teach the next generation of vets.



Hay Shortage Advice - Act Now and Plan Ahead!

Making the Most of Your Forage This Winter

The hot summer of 2025 left many farmers and horse owners facing challenging conditions, with reduced grass growth and the need to supplement feeding earlier than usual. In fact, spring and summer 2025 ranked as the sixth driest since records began in 1836, with rainfall levels 40% below the long-term average.

With hay supplies under pressure, it's understandable that some have turned to bulk-buying — but this can unfortunately drive prices even higher and create unnecessary shortages. The good news is that horses are wonderfully adaptable, and with a few thoughtful adjustments, we can all make our forage go further while keeping our horses healthy and content through the winter months.

1. Reduce Waste

Take a moment to consider how much hay ends up on the muck heap or trampled into the mud. If you're regularly throwing hay away, explore alternative feeding methods such as haynets, hay bars, larger buckets, or purpose-designed feeders. These not only minimise waste but also slow down the rate of consumption, helping your horse's digestive system and your hay supply.

2. Store Hay Correctly

Proper storage can make a big difference. Always keep hay in a cool, dry place, and use pallets to lift bales off the ground to protect them from damp, mud, and water run-off. Good ventilation also helps prevent mould growth and spoilage.

3. Invest in Hay Scales

For a relatively small cost, hay scales are a simple but effective way to manage feeding accurately. Weighing out rations helps reduce waste and lowers the risk of over-feeding — especially important for good-doers or horses on restricted diets.

4. Explore Hay Replacements

There are many safe and nutritious hay alternatives available that can replace part of your horse's forage intake. Options include chopped chaff, soaked sugar beet, grass nuts, and other fibre-based feeds. If your horse is prone to weight gain, check ingredient lists to avoid feeds containing excess oil or molasses. Always introduce dietary changes gradually over 10–14 days to reduce the risk of digestive upset or colic.

5. Maximise Your Grazing

A good winter grazing management plan pays off long-term. Use the drier months to make improvements such as resting paddocks, improving drainage, and establishing a mud management plan for high-traffic areas like gateways and feeding zones. These steps help maintain healthy pasture and reduce dependence on conserved forage later in the season.



New Bank Account Details



We have recently switched banks and now have new bank details. Please now use these bank details when paying us via BACS transfer:

Nat West Bank

Account Name : Avonvale Veterinary Practice Limited

Account Sort Code : 52-21-31

Account Number: 20855060

The Role of a Veterinary Nurse

At Avonvale we are lucky enough to have two amazing qualified nurses, Lucy Lawson an REVN and Fiona Watt, an RVN. Both have a wealth of experience with horses.

Head Nurse Lucy joined Avonvale way back in 2004 and qualified in 2006. Her love of all things equine started age 3 when her parents bought a Shetland pony. She then continued to ride throughout her childhood and attended Moreton Morrell College to complete a degree in Equine Studies. On her year placement, she worked at Edinburgh Vet School and it was there she decided Veterinary Nursing was going to be her vocation and the rest is history!

Fiona joined Avonvale in November 2019 and completed her nursing training with us, qualifying in 2024. Fiona grew up riding on her parents' racing yard in Alcester and competed in all pony club activities and disciplines including Tetrathlon, competing in 2016 for the England team, a real highlight. She has passion for show jumping and polo and travelled the world working with horses including stints in New Zealand and Europe.

REVN & RVN status is a professional title with nurses registered with the RCVS - Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. After a long period of training, either via a university degree or college release within a place of employment, nurses have a huge variety of skills that we value every day within our practice.

Did you know that registered nurses can:

- ♦ Take x-rays
- ♦ Take blood samples
- ♦ Administer medications and sedate horses under vet direction
- ♦ Place and maintain intravenous catheters and manage intravenous fluids
- ♦ Suture small wounds
- ♦ Provide lifesaving first aid
- ♦ Surgical nursing - including monitoring anaesthesia and assisting the surgeon
- ♦ Post-operative care
- ♦ Laboratory testing - including haematology, biochemistry, microbiology and worm egg counts
- ♦ Providing wound care – bandage changes
- ♦ Educate owners on preventative healthcare, such as vaccination schedules
- ♦ Advise on nutrition and body condition
- ♦ Provide therapies –e.g. shockwave therapy

It is important to note that diagnosis of disease remains the domain of vets so please don't worry if the nurses do defer to the vet if disease diagnosis comes up during the course of a conversation!



Lucy Lawson



Fiona Watt



Directors

Naomi de Pennington MA VetMB CertEM(IntMed) MRCVS **Claire Maher** BVet Med MSc Cert AVP ESO MRCVS

Assistants

Emily Douglas-Osborn BVSc Cert AVP(EL) MRCVS **Carys Morgan** BVSc MRCVS **Christina Stuart** BSc(Hons) BVetmed(Hons) MRCVS