

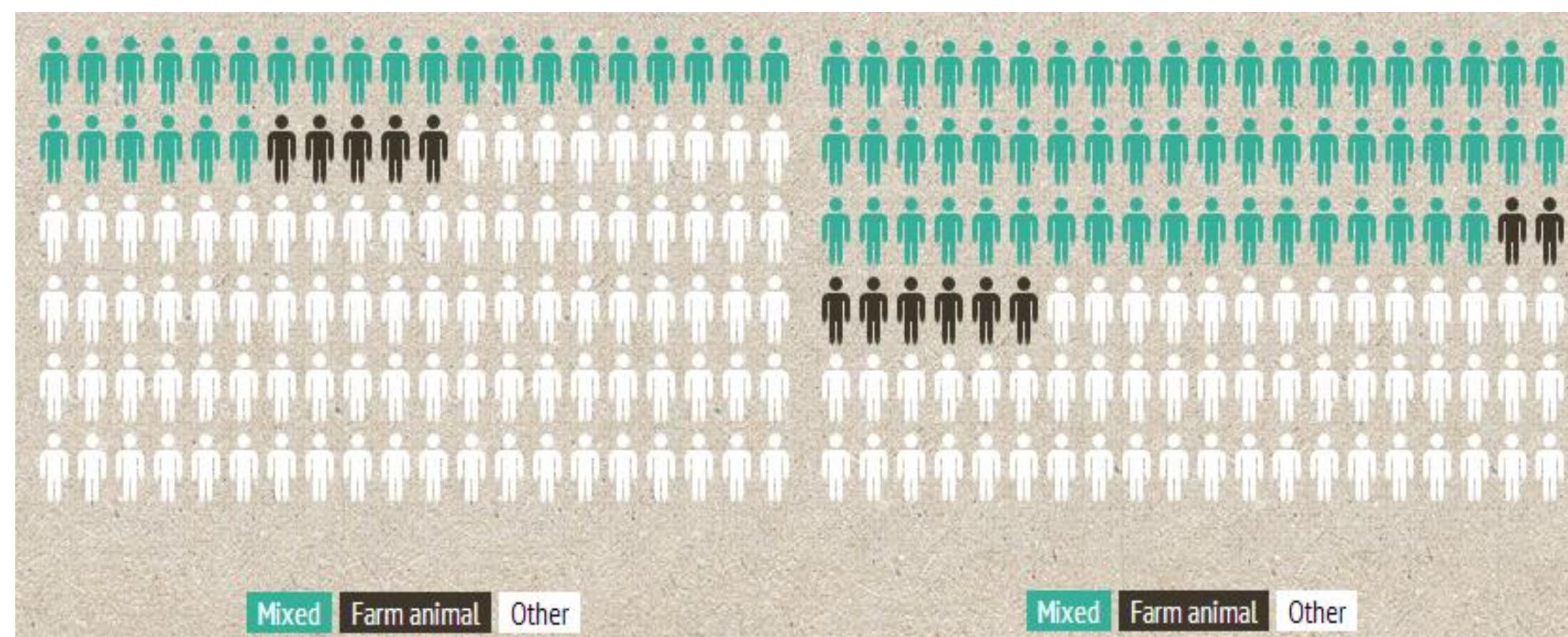
# Retention of veterinary surgeons in farm animal practice

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## What is the problem?

Is there a shortage of veterinary graduates willing to work with farm animals?



UK registered veterinary surgeons who work with farm animals (RCVS, 2010)

Final year veterinary students who plan to work with farm animals (BVA, 2008)

Apparently not! So, is there actually a problem with the supply of farm animal vets?

*"The principal issue mentioned is the difficulty in recruiting **experienced** large animal assistants"*  
Westley Consulting, 2004

*"...it appears that early intentions to work with large animals are being thwarted by experiences..."*  
Institute for Employment Studies, 2004

The issue seems to be **retaining** veterinary surgeons in farm animal practice, rather than encouraging students and new graduates to give it a go...

## Aim



To identify factors associated with veterinary surgeons **remaining** in farm animal work in the United Kingdom

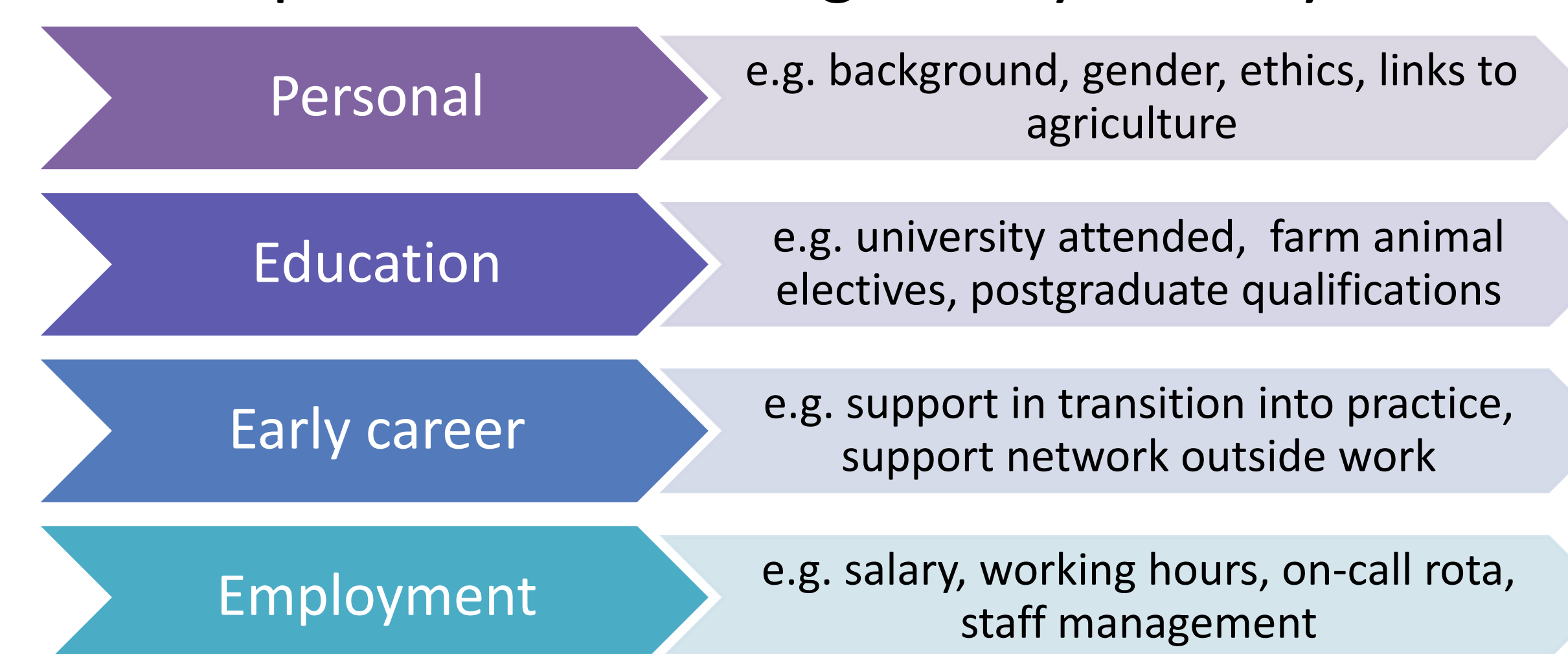
## Methods

### Study design

- **Case control study**
- **Target population:** all veterinary surgeons with experience of UK farm animal work
- **Case definition:** veterinary surgeons working with farm animals at the time of completing the survey
- **Control definition:** veterinary surgeons who had given up farm animal work at the time of completing the survey

### Data collection

Online questionnaire using SurveyMonkey software



479 responses received

→ 361 complete responses included in analysis

### Data analysis

- 1) Preliminary univariable analysis:** (e.g. chi square test, Mann-Whitney U test as appropriate)
- 2) Data mining:** classification tree analysis, due to the high number of significant variables
- 3) Logistic regression analysis:** backwards stepwise elimination, starting with variables selected by classification tree analysis

## Results

**Variables associated with HIGHER odds of vets remaining in farm animal work:**

Variable	OR	95% CI
Staff appraisals	3.68	1.87 - 7.35
Family owned a commercial farm	3.44	1.33 - 9.89
In the first job after graduation, an experienced vet was also on call and would attend if required	2.58	1.32 - 5.20
Proportion of working time spent on farm animals	1.03	1.02 - 1.05



**Variables associated with LOWER odds of vets remaining in farm animal work:**

Variable	OR	95% CI
Accommodation provided by employer	0.36	0.16 - 0.76
Increasing number of years since graduation	0.93	0.90 - 0.96

The effect of the feminisation of the veterinary profession on farm animal practice has been discussed extensively, but there was **no statistically significant association between gender and retention in this study.**

## Conclusions

The main factors associated with vets choosing to remain in farm animal practice are mainly related to **staff management by employers**. The findings suggest that interventions to encourage vets to pursue a career in farm animal practice should focus on employment, rather than education.

## Acknowledgements

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