In this month’s featured Practice Profile, Boyko A. Georgiev, DVM, PhD, describes his practice Viva Vet in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Our Team & Practice
Established in 1991, the Viva Vet veterinary clinic is one of the first private small animal veterinary practices founded after the end of the communist regime in 1989.

The practice has 12 team members—8 veterinarians, 2 radiologists, and 2 clinical specialists—and is equipped with a digital CR system, ultrasound machine, blood and biochemical analyzer, patient monitor, and inhalation anesthesia. All procedures are performed by veterinarians, as Bulgaria does not have a category for veterinary nurses in small animal medicine.

As do all veterinarians in Bulgaria, every member of our team has access to CE seminars and courses, organized by the Bulgarian Association of Small Animal Veterinarians (BASAV), and can visit all WSAVA or Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) events. Two of our team members specialize in horse medicine, and one is working on a PhD thesis on embryo transfer in horses.

Our most frequent cases involve tumors and GI or dermatological disorders, whereas the top veterinary and public health concerns involve parasitic diseases.

Challenges We Face
There are several challenges to providing state-of-the-art patient care in Bulgaria. First, clients are not prone to spending money on prophylaxis and treatment for pets, potentially because most clients have low income levels. In cases where clients do seek medical treatment, they first wait to see if the patient will heal independently. In many cases, clients look for treatment advice on the internet or ask friends.

Second, and of serious concern, owners can buy therapeutics in pet shops, stores, or pharmacies and start treatment without first consulting a veterinarian. As a result of delayed and often wrong treatment, treatment is difficult and often unsuccessful once a veterinarian is consulted.

Yet another problem is the lack of the newest pharmaceutical products, which are unavailable in our country. For this reason, we often have to use human medicines. In addition, there are no referral centers or laboratories, making diagnosis difficult in many cases.

Services We Provide
Our practice performs routine blood, biochemical, and microbiological analysis and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In some cases, we offer home visits, and we deliver medications and prescription diets to clients. Patients needing additional analysis or prolonged treatment are hospitalized.

In Our Region
In Sofia (Bulgaria’s capital), the dominant practice type is small animal; however, in the country the predominant types are mixed or mainly farm animal. Recently there has been legislation that punishes cruelty toward animals, but it has not been enforced.
Preventive medicine is still not a well-established practice among our clients. Pet neutering is not obligatory in Bulgaria, and clients perform this procedure rarely or when medically necessary. For end-stage diseases, we offer euthanasia with client consent; for other cases that are less medically involved, clients may still prefer to perform euthanasia instead of treatment because of financial concerns.

Most clients consider their pets as family members, especially when pets are young and healthy. When the pet needs special medical attention, some clients invest money and time to cure the pet, whereas others are more likely to perform euthanasia or abandon the animal somewhere outside the city.

Bulgaria has several professional associations: The Union of Veterinarians in Bulgaria, mainly involving state veterinarians; the Bulgarian Veterinary Union, created several years ago by the government with the intent to collect membership from practitioners; and the BASAV, Bulgaria’s exclusive organizer of seminars, congresses, and CE events.

**For Your On-the-Go Patients…**

The Summer 2014 *European Journal for Companion Animal Practice (EJCAP)*, the official publication of the *Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA)*, has been released for free access to all veterinarians and veterinary technicians/nurses worldwide. The issue features a special focus on travelling patients, with articles on specific protocols pertaining to their safety. The issue also highlights wellness plans in practice, crystalloid and colloid fluid therapies, and plucking behavior in psittacines.

EJCAP is an online-only journal that provides select peer-reviewed articles aimed at those with an interest in companion animal practice. To view the latest version of EJCAP online, visit ejcap.fecava.org and fecava.org.

**Priorities Agreed for WSAVA Foundation’s AFSCAN Initiative**

The WSAVA Foundation made initial progress toward delivering its *African Small Companion Animal Network* (AFSCAN) project at a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, during which it identified the priority needs of veterinarians in Africa and agreed on a plan for projects with which AFSCAN can help. During the visit from June 18–20, the AFSCAN Project Board met delegates from Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, and Nigeria at the Regional Office of the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The Project Board also visited the veterinary school at the University of Nairobi and met academic staff and student representatives from the One Health Central and Eastern Africa (OHCEA) Consortium.

AFSCAN aims to advance standards of veterinary care across Africa by facilitating a sustainable network of companion animal veterinarians, associations, and specialist groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. All work will have a focus on One Health.