

IVBA 2026 AGM & CONFERENCE



**KEEPING OUR GOLDEN OLDIES SHINING
SUPPORTING SENIOR PETS PHYSICALLY, SOCIALLY
AND MENTALLY AS THEY AGE GRACEFULLY**

IVBA.IE INFO@IVBA.IE

FRIDAY 24TH APRIL 2026
MALDRON HOTEL, PORTLAOISE, R32 HKN3

WELCOME!



We are delighted to welcome you to our 2026 AGM and Conference. This full day, in-person event will focus on supporting our senior pets physically, socially and mentally as they age gracefully.

We have amazing speakers, who are truly experts in their respective fields, for you to enjoy, along with opportunities to network, discuss cases and meet like-minded colleagues.

Join us to celebrate, learn, and for the opportunity to help shape and continue to develop our Irish Veterinary Behaviour Association for the better!



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Dr Helen Zulch

**BVSc(Hons) MRCVS, EBVS and RCVS
Specialist in Behavioural Medicine.
CCAB FHEA**

Karen Kennedy
RVN, PgD Veterinary Physiotherapy,
CERT Small Animal Hydrotherapy



Dr Hannah Capon
Vet MB

EARLY BIRD PAYMENT & REGISTRATION



Last day for Early Bird rates: Friday 20th February 2026

You may register and pay via electronic bank transfer or via Stripe. Please email info@ivba.ie with any queries about registering or payments.

IVBA Member Delegate	€90	Pay via Stripe here
Full Delegate (non IVBA/affiliated groups)	€150	Pay via Stripe here
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AGM & CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



8.30am	Registration	<i>Tea & Coffee</i>
9.00am	IVBA AGM: Current IVBA members are all welcome to attend	<i>IVBA Committee & Members</i>
10.00am	Meeting Opening	Dr Claire Corridan BVMS PhD MRCVS <i>IVBA</i>
10.10am	“Understanding aging: what’s normal, what’s not and how to tell the difference”	Dr Helen Zulch BVSc(Hons) MRCVS EBVS and RCVS Specialist in Behavioural Medicine. CCAB FHEA <i>Keynote speaker</i>
11.00am	“Pharma support of the ageing pet.”	Dr Oonagh Fitzgibbon MVB <i>MSD Animal Health</i>
11.15am	<i>Coffee Break</i>	<i>Please visit our sponsors</i>
11.40am	“How to keep our pet’s fitter for longer”	Karen Kennedy RVN, PgD Veterinary Physiotherapy, CERT Small Animal Hydrotheraapy <i>Keynote speaker</i>
12.30pm	“Managing osteoarthritis in dogs: a team-based approach to at-home care”	Dr Hannah Capon Vet MB <i>Keynote speaker</i>
13.20pm	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Please visit our sponsors</i>
14.10pm	“Case studies on canine osteoarthritis”	Dr Hannah Capon Vet MB <i>Keynote speaker</i>
15.00pm	“The Latest in Feline Arthritis Pain Management.”	Dr Stephen Walsh MVB <i>Zoetis</i>
15.15pm	“Rehabilitation for older pets.”	Karen Kennedy RVN, PgD Veterinary Physiotherapy, CERT Small Animal Hydrotherapy <i>Keynote speaker</i>
16.05pm	<i>Coffee Break</i>	<i>Please visit our sponsors</i>
16.30pm	“Supporting the psychological and emotional health of the aging pet: from promoting “good” aging to managing cognitive dysfunction.”	Dr Helen Zulch BVSc(Hons) MRCVS EBVS and RCVS Specialist in Behavioural Medicine. CCAB FHEA <i>Keynote speaker</i>
17.20pm	Discussion & Closing Remarks	Anne Rogers BSc (HONS) RBT LLA CAP3 <i>AniEd/ IVBA Vice- Chairperson</i>

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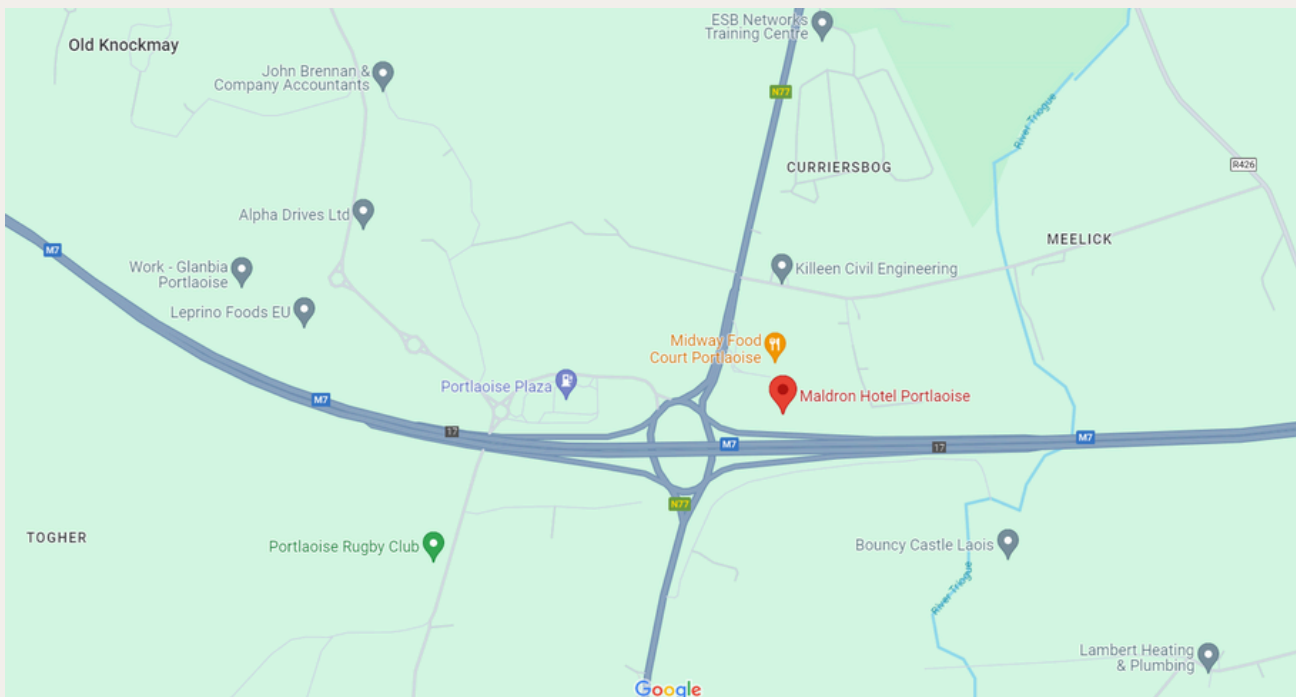
MALDRON HOTEL PORTLAOISE



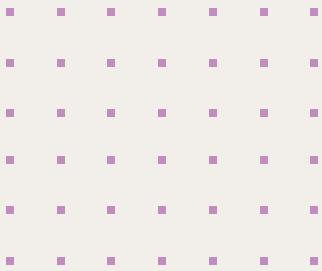
IVBA is delighted to return to the Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise for our 2026 AGM & Conference. This is the perfect base, situated in the heart of Ireland, just off exit 17 on the M7 motorway, 45 minutes drive from Dublin and just over 1 hour from Cork.

The Maldron Portlaoise boasts comfortable rooms, restaurant & leisure centre. The hotel is offering us preferential B&B rates so please mention you are attending the conference at the time of booking (alternatively, competitive rates are available on Booking.com also).

Contact Maldron Portlaoise: Abbeyleix Road, Meelick, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, R32 HKN3
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Having difficulty arranging transport? Please do get in touch as we may have members travelling from a location close to you.



Special Requirements

Please make us aware of any relevant dietary requirements or allergies. If you have any specific requirements, such as bringing an assistance dog, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate your needs. Email events@IVBA.ie

Materials related to each presentation will be made available after the event.

CVE Certificates

We will have VCI CVE credits confirmed shortly.

If you would like a CVE/CPD certificate, please ensure that we have your VCI/RCVS number and full name correct at the time of registration. Your certificate will be issued as soon as possible after the event.



DR HELEN ZULCH

BVSC(HONS) MRCVS, EBVS AND RCVS SPECIALIST IN BEHAVIOURAL MEDICINE. CCAB FHEA



Helen is a Royal College and European Specialist in Veterinary Behavioural Medicine. She is Associate Professor in Clinical Animal Behaviour in the Department of Life Sciences, University of Lincoln, UK and an Honorary Assistant Professor at the University of Nottingham School of Veterinary Medicine and Science.

She has worked in the field of companion animal behaviour for over 25 years lecturing of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, consulting for pet owners and engaging with research across a range of areas in animal behaviour, learning and cognition.

Helen has a particular interest in the interface between physical health and behaviour, the application of learning theory to practice, including in working animals, and the prevention of the development of problem behaviours in pets. She has published in the scientific literature, presented lectures and seminars at international conferences and events, authored and edited books and book chapters and was instrumental in developing the Life Skills for Puppies approach.

UNDERSTANDING AGING: WHAT'S NORMAL, WHAT'S NOT AND HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

- Develop an understanding of normal age-related changes in the brain
- Understand how cognitive dysfunction differs from normal aging
- Understand the behaviour changes that may be indicative of cognitive dysfunction
- Be able to make an informed choice as to when and how to screen pets for cognitive dysfunction
- Understand the carer burden for pets in cognitive decline and what this means for practitioners

SUPPORTING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF THE AGING PET: FROM PROMOTING "GOOD" AGING TO MANAGING COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

- Know which medications may be indicated for treating cognitive dysfunction in pets
- Be able to critically assess the value of nutraceuticals, supplements and other adjunctives for patients with cognitive dysfunction
- Be able to advise owners on behavioural support for senior and geriatric dogs, with and without cognitive dysfunction
- Understand the state of our knowledge regarding factors that may protect against age related cognitive decline
- Be able to support owners in preparing their pets for old age

KAREN KENNEDY

**RVN, PGD VETERINARY PHYSIOTHERAPY,
CERT SMALL ANIMAL HYDROTHERAPY**



Karen qualified as a Veterinary Nurse from UCD in 2006.

During her time nursing, Karen developed a special interest in Small Animal Rehabilitation and went on to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Veterinary Physiotherapy in Harper Adams University followed by a Certificate in Small Animal Hydrotherapy.

For many years Karen has been combining her Vet Nursing and Rehabilitation skills to provide care to small animals recovering from injury and illness, with a particular passion for improving the quality of life in patients suffering with Osteoarthritis. Karen lives in Limerick with her family and their two elderly dogs- Toby & Ted and their mischievous cat-Moana!

HOW TO KEEP OUR PET'S FITTER FOR LONGER

- Recognising the signs of reduced mobility in older pets and the subtle ways in which they alter their movement as they age
- Understanding the consequences of altered movement patterns and the effect they have on the body

REHABILITATION TECHNIQUES FOR OLDER PETS AIMED AT IMPROVING STRENGTH, BALANCE, PROPRIOCEPTION & OVERALL MOBILITY

- Rehabilitation techniques aimed at improving strength, balance, proprioception and overall mobility in older pets.
- Treatment modalities available to help with pain management and to aid healing including electrotherapies and manual therapies.
- Awareness of household adaptations and the not so obvious challenges older pets are faced with every day at home

DR HANNAH CAPON

VET MB



Hannah Capon graduated from Cambridge University in 2002 and has since worked in a wide range of veterinary settings, from sole-charge first opinion practice to emergency teamwork environments. Her career has given her valuable insight into the complexities of veterinary care, particularly in the management of chronic conditions.

Hannah has a strong interest in chronic pain management, geriatrics, musculoskeletal health, and rehabilitation. Her dedication to these fields has been widely recognized, earning her the 2025 World Small Animal Veterinary Association Welfare Award in 2025, the 2020 Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Impact Award, 2019 CEVA Vet of the Year, and a finalist spot for 2019 Petplan Vet of the Year.

She is the founder of Canine Arthritis Management (CAM), an online educational and support platform designed to help both pet owners and veterinary professionals improve the care of arthritic dogs. Through CAM, she has played a key role in raising awareness and providing practical guidance on managing canine arthritis.

Hannah's work continues to support and educate the veterinary community, ensuring that dogs with arthritis receive better pain management and quality of life.

MANAGING OSTEOARTHRITIS IN DOGS: A TEAM-BASED APPROACH TO AT-HOME CARE

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a lifelong, progressive disease that affects dogs physically, physiologically, cognitively, and emotionally. Its complexity extends beyond joint pathology, influencing a dog's overall well-being and quality of life.

Effective management requires an interdisciplinary team approach, ensuring that both the disease and its long-term consequences are addressed.

This presentation explores how a collaborative care model—involving veterinary professionals, canine professionals and the caregivers—can enhance outcomes for dogs with OA.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognise the widespread impact of osteoarthritis on multiple domains of a dog's life.
- Acknowledge the pressures placed upon the caregiver's budgets when managing a dog with osteoarthritis over the long term.
- Comprehend and be able to clearly communicate the comprehensive care strategies needed for effective long-term OA management.
- Appreciate the value of a team-based approach in chronic pain and disease management and learn strategies to successfully implement it in practice

CASE STUDIES ON CANINE OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a complex disease, but its true challenge lies in the significant physical, physiological, and psychological consequences of chronic pain. Each case is unique, as is each caregiver, making a one-size-fits-all approach ineffective. Instead, successful management requires tailored, evolving care plans that consider both the dog's needs and the caregiver's resources.

Through interactive case studies, this session will explore how shared decision-making and a biopsychosocial approach can lead to effective, long-term OA management strategies.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognise the varied presentations of canine osteoarthritis and the importance of an adaptable management strategy.
- Build confidence in using a structured yet flexible framework for case management.
- Understand the biopsychosocial impact of OA and the role of lifestyle medicine in improving patient outcomes.
- Learn to develop tailored, multimodal management plans in collaboration with caregivers.

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CONTACT IVBA



We would love for you to join us for this fantastic programme and are so excited to meet you.

Please get in touch with IVBA with any enquiries about this event and about joining the organisation.

Looking forward to seeing you in the Maldron, Portlaoise on Friday 24th April!



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