

CUSTOMER CASE



“The use of imaging technology in veterinary medicine will continue to evolve, I’m sure. 50 years ago, almost no vet practice had an X-ray system. Now, DR is definitely the future for animal healthcare.”

*Dr. Shane Morrison, principal veterinarian,
co-owner of Christchurch Veterinary Surgery
and Veterinary Referrals*

Christchurch Veterinary Surgery and Veterinary Referrals,
Ipswich, UK

DR takes its place in specialist vet clinic

For Christchurch Veterinary Surgery, Agfa HealthCare’s DX-D 10G digital detector¹ is an essential part of its referral service



If you were building your ideal new specialist veterinary clinic from the ground up, what would you put in it? For the Christchurch Veterinary Surgery's surgical referral practice, which recently did just that, the answer was the latest imaging technology, including Agfa HealthCare's direct radiography (DR) DX-D 10G detector with NX Workstation. "We had a room built especially for the X-ray table with the digital detector," says veterinarian Shane Morrison who, together with his wife Charlotte (a veterinary nurse and manager of the practice) owns the Christchurch Veterinary Surgery. The practice is made up of two distinct but linked services: a first opinion clinic and a specialized referral practice.

Referral practice offers specialist animal surgery

Referral surgery, where a 'family' vet sends a patient to a specialist for a specific treatment, is an important part of animal healthcare in the very large and established UK veterinary sector. "When we first purchased an existing veterinary clinic in Ipswich in 2001, we knew we wanted to build up our referral practice," explains Dr. Shane Morrison, who holds a specialist qualification in small animal surgery from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). Together with colleague John Prior, who has a specialist qualification in orthopaedics (also from the RCVS), they have expanded the referral service. "We do a lot of orthopaedic, soft tissue and spinal surgery, all for small animals: dogs, cats and the occasional rabbit, for example. About 60 first

opinion clinics use us for all their referrals," comments Dr. Morrison. In addition to the two referral vets, the practice has two first opinion veterinarians, ten qualified veterinary nurses and four full-time receptionists.

A room of their own: digital image storage frees up needed space

Christchurch Veterinary Surgery has always striven to be a pioneer in using advanced technology. "Four years ago, we switched from our conventional system to digital, with Agfa HealthCare's CR 30-X computed radiography (CR) solution", says Dr. Morrison. "We were one of the first vet practices in the UK to do this. The CR 30-X was brilliant – the benefits of going digital were really clear to us. In particular, we appreciated the digital storage of our X-rays."

“The DX-D 10G detector is amazingly fast. I love that I can just click a button, walk back into the room and the image is already there.”

Dr. Shane Morrison, principal veterinarian, co-owner of Christchurch Veterinary Surgery and Veterinary Referrals



“We would make some 100-150 images each week. We would keep every X-ray film in the clinic for six months, then move them to an external storage facility. But even so, we had boxes and boxes of images, taking up so much room. Now, it’s all kept on the computer, and we can call up an image, send it by email to referring vets, even give copies of images to our patients’ owners. Plus, we were pleased to get rid of the dark room – which we turned into a dedicated laboratory – and the chemical waste. Finally, the faster imaging procedure is better for the animal: since we have to anesthetize any animal in order to perform X-rays, the less time it takes, the less anesthesia we have to use.”

Agfa HealthCare’s contribution

DX-D 10 digital detector:

- Offers fast image availability after image capture.
- Comes with Agfa HealthCare’s ‘gold standard’ MUSICA² image processing software for consistent image quality and high contrast detail.
- Offers the smallest pixel size available, supporting a more confident diagnosis.
- Is easy to operate, with an NX workstation for smooth workflow.
- Can be used for mobile applications, or integrated in any standard bucky tray.

Designing DR into the plans

Up until summer 2011, the first opinion and referral services of Christchurch Veterinary Surgery shared the original premises in Ipswich, and both used the CR 30-X for all their X-rays. “But with our referral service growing so quickly, there just wasn’t enough room under one roof anymore,” explains Dr. Morrison. So they decided to move the referral practice to another location close by. A new build, it offered the Morrisons the opportunity to design the clinic to meet their exact needs.

As the CR 30-X would stay in the first opinion clinic, they had to choose what imaging solutions to install in the new building. “Originally, we went with a CR system because we could use it with the tiltable table, which was necessary for spinal surgery patients,” explains Dr. Morrison. “But in the new referral practice site we installed an MRI for the myelograms, and a tiltable table wasn’t necessary anymore. That meant we could opt for the faster DR, which doesn’t require plates and cassettes. While it was more expensive, that wasn’t a focus point for us: we wanted the most convenient system.”



Did you know ...

- The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is a regulatory body that sets standards for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses practicing in the UK.
- Christchurch Veterinary Referrals is the only veterinary practice in North Essex and East Suffolk with vets who hold Certificates in Small Animal Surgery (CertSAS) and Small Animal Orthopaedics (CertSAO).
- The CertSAS postgraduate qualification in small animal surgery is awarded to fewer than 15 vets in Britain each year.

This decision was then built directly into the building plans, in the form of a dedicated X-ray room with a DX-D 10G DR detector, which was integrated into a general X-ray table/generator. The DX-D 10G was installed in the new referral clinic during the month before the referral service moved. “The installation went perfectly; the Agfa HealthCare installers were very professional. The DR room was ready to go the moment we moved in. And since the DX-D 10G detector uses the same software as the CR 30-X, we literally needed no training in working with it. That, along with the quality of Agfa HealthCare’s solutions, was one of the big motivators to go with the DX-D 10G.”

“The best piece of kit we’ve got”: DX-D 10G proves its worth

“The DX-D 10G is the best piece of kit we’ve got. It’s absolutely critical for our orthopaedics practice – we use it with every single orthopaedics patient we have. We do a lot of canine total hip replacements, for example – about one every one to two weeks. For those, we take a minimum of four images – two pre-operation and two post-operation. Some other procedures, such as complex fractures, require a lot more images.”

He continues, “The DX-D 10G detector is amazingly fast. I love that I can just click a button, walk back into the room and the image is already there. With both the CR 30-X and DX-D 10G, it is also extremely easy to measure angles. And both are very convenient: we can draw on the X-rays, we can use any exposure – we just alter the contrast and we get a great picture. That kind of convenience is critical to us.”

An indelible part of the future of animal healthcare

With the DR room, plus the MRI and an ultrasound, Dr. Morrison believes that the site offers all of the imaging technology now needed for a specialist practice. “It’s important for people to see that we have the latest technology when they come in; in fact, I think pet owners expect it these days. The use of imaging technology in veterinary medicine will continue to evolve, I’m sure. 50 years ago, almost no vet practice had an X-ray system. Now, DR is definitely the future for animal healthcare. I think in 20 years – or even less – you’ll see digital imaging, and DR, pretty much in every vet clinic.” •

¹ Not available in Canada or the USA

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