

# Irish Veterinary Nurses Association Veterinary Nurse of the Year 2017

**Lorraine McDonnell RVN, catches up with this year's Irish Veterinary Nurses Association (IVNA) Veterinary Nurse of the Year, Ailbhe Lawlor, to find out what inspired her to become a veterinary nurse**



**Ailbhe Lawlor and her cat, Troy.**

After qualifying from Dundalk IT in 2013, Ailbhe started working at the busy, small animal clinic at Raheny Veterinary Hospital where she now holds the position of head nurse. Ailbhe works with six vets and eight full-time nurses. In her spare time, she is a wildlife rehabilitator and works with Kildare Animal Foundation Wildlife Unit.

## **Q WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO BECOME A VETERINARY NURSE?**

**A** My love for animals was what determined my chosen career. I want to be able to help as many animals as possible

no matter how big or small, domesticated or wild. I feel that people can get caught up in their own requirements and forget about our animals. I feel that there needs to be people in the world there for animals who need our help.

## **Q WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ASPECT OF THE JOB ?**

**A** I love the 'hands-on' practical aspect of my job. I feel like I have a great relationship with the animals and can do things like, catheter placement, blood sampling and bandaging.

## **Q BEING A VETERINARY NURSE ENTAILS LONG HOURS, DO YOU FIND IT HARD GETTING YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE RIGHT?**

**A** The practice I work in is extremely busy and does require me to work long hours, but I love it. I definitely find the work/life balance difficult to achieve because my work is my life. If I'm not working, I'm looking after some sort of injured wildlife that I have brought home from work, or picked up along the way.

## **Q HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF VETERINARY NURSING IN TODAY'S PRACTICE?**

**A** The role of the veterinary nurse is vital in today's practice. Without nurses, practices wouldn't be able to function. Nurses are so important because we are trained to do everything. We can look after clients, fulfil reception duties, look after patients, maintain equipment, administer medications, etc.

## **Q ARE YOU INVOLVED IN MANY NURSING CLINICS WHERE YOU ARE BASED?**

**A** Yes, in our practice, we do a lot of nurse clinics, such as six-month puppy checks, geriatric clinics, dental and weight clinics, nail clips and anal glands.

## **Q WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE NEW GRADUATES TO HELP THEM AT THE START OF THEIR CAREER?**

**A** The advice I would give is to get as much hands-on experience as possible. It makes such a difference. If they can work in a practice throughout college, it will allow them to put everything that they're learning to use and it will help them understand what they are learning.

## **Q IN RELATION TO VETERINARY NURSING, IN YOUR OPINION, HAVE YOU SEEN MANY POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHANGES WITHIN THE PROFESSION?**

**A** I suppose to answer this truthfully, I haven't been practising long enough to see much of a difference. I have heard from other nurses that have been practising for quite



**Pictured at the awards are: Lisa Joyce, chairperson, IVNA; Ailbhe Lawlor RVN; and Marguerite Treacy, Royal Canin.**

some time that there has definitely been a lot of change throughout the years.

What I do notice is that the Veterinary Council has put structure on what nurses can do. Yes, they have become stricter in what we can do, but they have also outlined the huge amount that we can do. Nurses can perform a huge array of tasks and I am fortunate enough to work in a practice that utilises its nurses so well.

**Q CONGRATULATIONS ONCE AGAIN ON YOUR AWARD. HAS WINNING CHANGED THE WAY YOU LOOK AT NURSING, OR THE WAY PEOPLE PERCEIVE IT?**

No, I don't think it has changed the way I look at nursing but I do think that it changes the way other vets or clients perceive the nurses role in the practice. The IVNA awards are very well-publicised and I have had a lot of clients congratulate me. It is great to be recognised for the work that the nurses actually do.

**Q WHAT WOULD BE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE VETERINARY NURSING PROFESSION?**

A Well, my hopes for the future of nursing would be that nurses can eventually be recognised for the hard work and the skills we have. I work in a great practice, which actually uses its nurses excellently. We do everything. A lot of places don't use their nurses as best as they can and I don't think that all nurses get the respect that they fully deserve.

*The nominations for the IVNA Veterinary Nurse of the Year and Student Veterinary Nurse of the Year will be opening on December 1, 2017 and closing March 31, 2018. If you wish to nominate someone for either category please go to our website at [ivna.ie](http://ivna.ie) to fill out a form.*

**FarmLab**  
DIAGNOSTICS

**The Gateway to Animal Health**

Elphin, Co. Roscommon  
[www.farmlab.ie](http://www.farmlab.ie) 071 96 30792

The Irish Laboratory Awards 2017  
**WINNER**  
Veterinary Laboratory of the Year