
Inaugural Rooker Prize is awarded at VLA's International Conference 2009

Dr Simon Carpenter, from the Institute for Animal Health (IAH), was presented with the Rooker Prize at the Veterinary Laboratories Agency's (VLA) international conference held at Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL).

Established by VLA, the Rooker Prize is a new international award which recognises outstanding contributions to veterinary science by improving livestock animal health.

The Prize is named after Lord Rooker, a Life Peer and former Minister of State for the Department for Environment, Foods and Rural Affairs (Defra), who was present at the conference.

Simon Carpenter is a leading veterinary entomologist and heads the Entomology and Modelling Group at IAH based in Pirbright, Surrey. His research has focussed on the role of the *Culicoides* biting midge on the incursion of the bluetongue virus (BTV) in Northern Europe.

During the prize-giving ceremony, Simon gave an informative lecture about his research to conference delegates and he was presented with a glass vase and a cheque for £1000 by Lord Rooker and Peter Borriello, VLA's Chief Executive.

On receiving the award, Simon said: "I am honoured to become the first person to receive the Rooker Prize, especially as I am an entomologist from outside the veterinary mainstream. In recent years the need to work across traditional scientific disciplines has become paramount and this award reflects the success of the vector-borne disease programme of IAH in achieving this aim."

Notes to editors

1. VLA is an Executive Agency of Defra. It is a regional network of 16 veterinary laboratories including a central facility near Weybridge in Surrey. VLA provides a wide range of applied research and consultancy on livestock diseases and surveillance of new and emerging diseases for the Government and animal health industry. It is also a national and international reference laboratory for many farm animal diseases including avian influenza, bovine tuberculosis, classical swine fever and TSEs. www.vla.gov.uk
2. VLA hosted its first international conference, Animal Diseases 2009, at Royal Holloway, University of London, on 2-4 September 2009. Attended by leading scientists and veterinary experts, the three-day programme covered a range of subjects including animal welfare, emerging diseases and vaccines.
3. Dr. Simon Carpenter is a former graduate of Royal Holloway College and after completing a PhD studying the *Culicoides* biting midge at the University of Aberdeen, moved to IAH to work on the role of *Culicoides* as a vector for the transmission of bluetongue virus (BTV). Simon was heavily involved during the BTV outbreak of 2006 and his studies correctly predicted the emergence of bluetongue disease across Europe during 2007. Subsequently, his work has helped to reduce the impact of the disease in livestock and influenced both UK and EU policy regarding livestock movement and bluetongue disease management. <http://www.iah.ac.uk/research/arbovirology/arbovirology.shtml>