

Case Study: A Healthier Nottingham PetScreen

Britain is known as a nation of animal lovers, and anyone who has cared for a pet understands how they become part of the family - their death can be devastating. Cancer in household animals in particular is a significant problem, with one in four dogs dying of the disease.

PetScreen was formed to apply the most advanced cancer screening and treatment technologies to help improve cancer care and survival rates in pets. The company has done pioneering work in making sure that more animals than ever before can beat the disease. Last year they scored a world first, developing a cancer screening service for dogs. They are currently working on a screening system for the major cancers found in cats.

Starting the business

Two experienced entrepreneurs, Graeme Radcliffe and Kevin Slater, who have each built and sold businesses in different sectors, formed PetScreen. A chance meeting between the founders revealed the need and potential technological solutions to help address the problem of cancer in animals. The company provides a cancer screening service to vets based on "proteomics" which is the most advanced means of detecting cancer biomarkers - early indicators of disease - currently available. The company also uses the latest cell culture techniques to help vets find the most effective cancer treatment for an individual patient.

The founders privately fund the company with additional support from a Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (formerly Department for Trade and Industry) Grant for Research and Development managed by East Midlands Development Agency.

Benefits of being based in Nottingham

PetScreen is located in BioCity, which provides an ideal environment for science-based start-up companies. As a service business supplying veterinary practices throughout the UK, the central location of Nottingham is a strong benefit.



Kevin Slater comments: "Setting up a new business is never easy, but seeing your ideas come to commercial fruition is extremely gratifying. We are proud to have done this in Nottingham and are grateful for the invaluable support from emda, UKTI and BioCity who have all helped to put PetScreen where we are today."

Achievements

PetScreen's screening system for dogs was launched in November 2006. The current test is for lymphoma, the most common canine malignancy. In addition, PetScreen's "DCA" test is the only one of its kind to help vets select the most effective chemotherapy treatment for both cats and dogs. Both tests are already helping to minimise the impact of cancer on pets. Development of additional screening tests for other high incidence cancers are at advanced stages.

They have established high-level contacts with key organisations involved in animal health.

Plans for the future

PetScreen have already begun exporting to the USA and Canada, where the total dog population is greater than the human population of Great Britain. As the USA has the largest and most advanced pet care industry in the world, PetScreen is currently in the process of establishing a new laboratory in America, to penetrate this important market.