

A passion for pets

This year's winner of the OvertheCounter Drontal C-SQP of the Year, **Gabrielle Daniels**, from Pets at Home, has a brilliant rapport with customers and clearly cares for pets, says Editor Gillian Rowe

Pet owners often lack a wider understanding of the healthcare needs of their pets or are reliant on the internet for advice and product information. At this year's awards, our judges were looking for individuals who clearly shone out as being able to promote responsible pet care to pet owners, someone who has a good rapport with their customers and who can build and develop trust to ensure that product advice and information can be given.

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Gabrielle centre, receives her award from Adam Henson, left, and Dan White, Bayer Animal Health, right

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The winner of this year's Drontal C-SQP of the Year, Gabrielle Daniels, clearly has these qualities in abundance and impressed the judges with her passion for the SQP profession and for pets. It's this enthusiasm that drives her on. “It's essential to be passionate about animals and their welfare. This creates more of a drive to deliver the excellent service and care that is needed when dealing with all aspects of pets and their parasites. It's

not about the profit; it's about the pets,” she says.

Gabrielle comes from a farming background, but started at Pets at Home as a stopgap after finishing her exams at college. She celebrated her 13th year in the store last month and her years of hard work and dedication have paid off with this year's *OvertheCounter* award. The way Gabrielle keeps her knowledge up to date and passes on that knowledge to both other SQPs in-store and to the customer really impressed the judges.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

“It can be quite complex for customers trying to understand about all the different products,” she says. “What we try to do is simplify things, sometimes through the use of special displays which I create, so that we can take them through the

different steps of what they need to do. I always put the pets first and in some cases it may be in the best interest of the pet to have a vet medicine, rather than an SQP medicine, in which case I'll suggest that they go to another of our branches which has Companion Care.”

Gabrielle says that even though times are tough, if time is spent with customers explaining just what the benefits are for them buying an SQP product and the long-term cost savings to them, then sales can stay buoyant. As Dave Cooper, Gabrielle's manager, who nominated her for the award says: “Gabrielle's store constantly hit her target last year for sales and once again this year has the highest percentage of SQP sales for their store gross figure.”

“We are having to work that bit harder,” she acknowledges. “But when you break it

down for the customer and work out for them how much each pipette is, it usually works out that the SQP product is only about £1 more than what's out there on the shop floor and with the SQP products the flea doesn't need to bite the animal to die. When you mention this the customers realise it's probably a better product.”

CORRECT ADVICE

Generating successful sales doesn't mean pushing products though. “I believe that you should sell responsibly. There are far too many people not giving the correct advice or they don't bother to discuss the importance of providing the correct dosage for the weight of the animal. They just guess and give the box. Customers should be advised correctly and have fully explained all about the product, its benefits and administration to ensure reg-



ular custom and loyalty to SQP brands.”

Gabrielle and her partner both come from farming backgrounds. “We have a number of pets ourselves and are very active in the Young Farmers' Association and go to the Royal Welsh each year and I know quite a lot of local breeders. I like to keep myself up to date with what's new on the market in all aspects of being a SQP. I also enjoy learning about the farming side of the SQP and am hoping to do the exam next year at Harper Adams to become an R-SQP, so that I can fully fulfil my role as an SQP. I attend lots of different events when I can promote my store and SQP, such as local dog and dog shows and even horse shows.”

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She was thrilled to win at this year's awards. “It was lovely to be recognised and to go to the House of Lords was a once in a lifetime experience. I have received some lovely messages of congratulations and not just from our business, but from SQPs across the whole region.”