

What Moves You?



For its 2016 Conference, the NAVC asked veterinary professionals to share their stories:

What drives you?
What inspires you?
What moves you?

Throughout the year, *Today's Veterinary Technician* will be publishing veterinary technicians' answers to these questions.

What moves you?

Do you have a story you'd like to share? Send it to us at TVTech_submissions@NAVC.com.

Submissions should be approximately 500 words or less and may be posted on our website or edited for publication in the journal.

Tell us your story!

"Sometimes, when I'm running from one thing to another, I feel like SUPERWOMAN! You probably recognize this adrenaline kick."

—Esther Klok

From Holland: Looking Back on a GREAT Adventure



Esther Klok
Dierenkliniek Winsum
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When I graduated 22 years ago as a veterinary technician from the only school for technicians in the Netherlands, I would never have thought that *this* girl would travel at least 10 times to the United States—and definitely not 10 times to one of the biggest veterinary conferences in the world!

I've always felt like the girl next door!

Just doing my job. But my life has become so much more. For me, the motto of the NAVC Conference this year, "What Moves You?", was something that put a big smile on my face. This conference has resulted in big changes in my life.

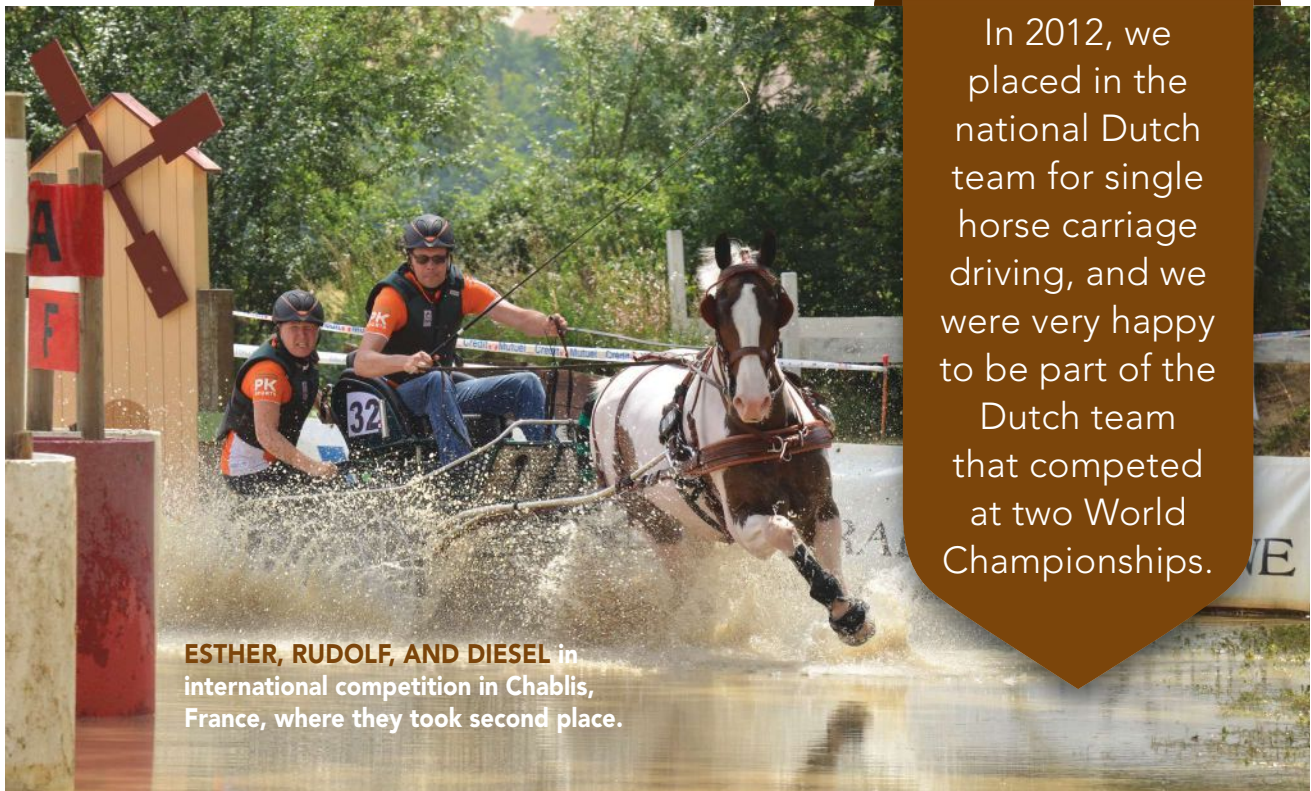
SUPERWOMAN AT WORK

I have worked for 21 years in the same veterinary hospital, a mixed practice in the Netherlands. At this practice, it's still normal for a vet tech to do "all the jobs" that have to get done. You probably know what I mean: I have to be a front desk superstar, then work in the operating room, and then put time in at our lab, or take radiographs of seals at the Seal Centre Pieterburen. Or I might work with wild Konik horses or Scottish Highland cattle. Then, every Wednesday afternoon, I have my own "vet tech appointments," where I see puppies and kittens, perform dental checks, and assist animals with weight problems or arthritis.

Sometimes, in the middle of a day, when I'm running from one thing to another, I feel like SUPERWOMAN! You may recognize this adrenaline kick. The only thing we vet techs are missing is a tight black bodysuit! In one of these Superwoman moments a few years back, I even signed myself up for a Hill's Pet Nutrition weight loss competition for dogs and cats. When I helped 23 animals lose more than 10% to 42% of their body weight (keeping it off for more than 1 year), I won!

The prize? A trip to the NAVC Conference in Orlando, Florida.

I became lost in, in love with, and addicted to the NAVC Conference. I won the trip 3 more times, and after that, I decided to save money so I could go every 2 years (with a little bit of help from my boss). So I did, which made 2016 a celebration because it was my 10th visit. For me, it's always been a big adventure.



ESTHER, RUDOLF, AND DIESEL in international competition in Chablis, France, where they took second place.

In 2012, we placed in the national Dutch team for single horse carriage driving, and we were very happy to be part of the Dutch team that competed at two World Championships.

NAVC CONFERENCE? POINT THE WAY!

My NAVC adventure starts many weeks before the conference, as I look at the program and try to decide which lectures I will attend. Sometimes I fall asleep in the evening with the program in my hand and the lectures of my choice circled in red. But when I wake up, with the program still on my pillow, I change my choices again. There is so much I want to do, and so much to look forward to. The fun of the NAVC has already started!

Next, my colleague Annelies van Zutphen (a veterinarian) and I travel across the world, and the excitement builds. She and I do not want to lose lecture time, so we always go to the Gaylord to get our badges the day before the conference starts. And—promise you won't laugh at me—when I take the big elevator upstairs and walk through the long hall, and I see all the signs, it feels like coming home! My heart beats faster because I know what's coming: days with the best teachers and colleagues from all over the world, with whom I can share ideas. I love learning about new products and just walking around and seeing all the attendees who share my beautiful profession. The fact that I have the chance to be a part of that makes me very happy.

Then the days are flying by, and before I know it, I'm on the plane back to the Netherlands, full of ideas and plans. I learn so much each time I attend the NAVC Conference, and I take home many ideas to share with my practice. But implementing

them when I get home is not so simple! On the airplane, I promise myself not to overfill the rooms of the practice with all my stories and ideas, because that would drive the whole team NUTS. Instead, I tell it week by week, little parts at a time. And that works! I have the best colleagues a person could wish for. They are always enthusiastic and always helping make my ideas into real plans. Some of my ideas we've implemented are:

- My clinic started the first vet tech appointments in the Netherlands.
- We were the first American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP)-approved cat-friendly practice in the Netherlands. Our whole team is working to understand cats better, and appointments with cats are now much easier. Cats, clients, and staff love it.
- We now include exercise therapy in our clinic with a vet-physiotherapist for postoperative patients, arthritis patients, and large-breed puppies.
- From what I learned about public relations and marketing, I have been able to get our clinic mentioned in the press, including magazines, newspapers, radio, and television.

This year, what I want to do is really easy because I fell in love with the Fear Free practice initiative. We already do a lot with reducing patient stress because of being a cat-friendly practice, but this initiative is for *all* animals. I can't wait!

SUPER COMPETITOR AT PLAY

But back to the question: **What Moves You?**

I want to feel happy, useful, and appreciated. I want to make a difference, and I need a challenge. That is what happens at my job. All the new things we have developed at our clinic and which we, as vet techs, are doing every day, results in happy clients and healthy animals, as well as more income for the practice. It makes my job more interesting and exciting. But also, in my private life, I feel more secure about myself because knowledge is power. That is important not only in relationships and work, but also in sports.

For me, competing in sports is very important. My boyfriend Rudolf and I love carriage driving. We started our sport with a Haflinger named Arriba. Because Arriba was too tall for the pony division, we had to compete against horses. Thanks to this awesome, hard-working pony, we became the Dutch champions. After that, with our Dutch Warmblood horse (KWPN) Diesel, we became Dutch champions 6 more times. In 2012, we placed in the national Dutch team for single horse carriage driving, and we were very happy to be part of the Dutch team that competed at two World Championships. It is like a dream, or better yet, a rollercoaster. It's a lot of hard work in addition to having a full-time job.

When competing, I want to feel the same as I do in my job. I want to feel happy, useful, and appreciated. I want to make a difference, and I need a challenge. I want to WIN.

Most vet techs know that it is hard to compete on a high level in addition to having a full-time job like ours. After work, Rudolf and I have to take care of the horses, eat dinner, and then start to train the horses and ourselves. Most times, it's dark, raining, and cold in the Netherlands, and we sometimes train until 11:00 PM. In the summer, we compete all over Europe, so we travel far with the horses in the truck. The real problem is time! In 2015, in the midst of all these competitions, I didn't have a single day of my job where I did "nothing." Still, I love it. I love working with the animals, I love the adrenaline, and I still want to perform and win. For me it's perfect that I can combine my work and sports. For example, in our clinic, I work quite often with horses, and we have created a sports coaching program for horses to keep them fit. We do lactate testing and make training schedules for jumping, dressage, and carriage horses. So now I'm spoiled, because I get to travel to other countries to help people with the coaching program. It is so satisfying to see the horses getting healthier and to make the owners happy.

Still, I sometimes need an extra challenge. I have started to give in-house training at vet clinics to show them how to implement programs in their practices. Also, I give lectures for veterinarians and veterinary technicians for Hill's and Merck (and for Pfizer and Waltham, in the past).

• TECHPOINT •

I believe that we, as veterinary technicians, are a "special breed." We can do everything we want. And most of the time, even more than that!

So, what moves me? It's the same throughout my life: I want to feel happy, useful, and appreciated. I want to make a difference, and I need a challenge.

I believe that we, as veterinary technicians, are a "special breed." We can do everything we want. And most of the time, even more than that! ■

We asked Esther to share the secrets of her success in getting her practice on board with new ideas and turning them into reality. Expect to hear more from her in future issues!



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