Clinical audit is a fundamental element for standards of care in both human and veterinary medicine. However, compared to the human medicine literature, there are few published veterinary clinical audits, suggesting that clinical audit is an under-utilised tool for quality improvement (QI) in the veterinary profession.

This study describes the planning, implementation, outcomes and evaluation of a clinical audit process for the management of canine dystocia in UK small animal emergency-care practice. Other veterinary professionals and stakeholders may find methods to support their own clinical audits and the results as benchmarks to evaluate their management of canine dystocia.

**Clinical Audit: Canine Dystocia**

1. **People**
   - 21 staff volunteered across all Vets Now clinics
   - Auditing team led internally by 4 vets and nurses

2. **Topic selection**
   - Dystocia identified as an area of interest where increased staff confidence in managing cases should have a significant impact on dog welfare

3. **Tools**
   - Electronic Patient Records from VetCompass and the practice management system

4. **Planning**
   - 9 variables relating to clinical management of canine dystocia cases selected for assessment

5. **Pilot study**
   - 40 dystocia cases trialled to develop standard operating procedure
   - Training materials created to support volunteer auditors

6. **Data collection and analysis**
   - Three cycles of audit conducted: 2012, 2019 and 2021
   - Breed risk, mortality, diagnostic methods, and drug usage assessed across audits

7. **Knowledge management**
   - Creation of dystocia checklist
   - Creation of infographics for knowledge sharing
   - Webinar and discussion panel
   - Guidelines updated for analgesia in caesarean section
   - Publication of paper

8. **Assess impact**
   - Feedback from clinical auditors and staff attending the webinar was positive
   - Staff requested further audit projects
   - Progressive improvement in several clinical management parameters of canine dystocia
   - 40 dystocia cases trialled to develop standard operating procedure
   - Training materials created to support volunteer auditors

This study demonstrates the feasibility of veterinary clinical audit. The application of the clinical audit process promotes learning within the veterinary team and improved clinical outcomes.

The methods and template can serve as a helpful tool for others wishing to plan, implement, analyse and review their own clinical audits.

**Conclusions**

**Applying Clinical Audit in UK Veterinary Practice**

Quality improvement using a case study for canine dystocia in emergency-care practice