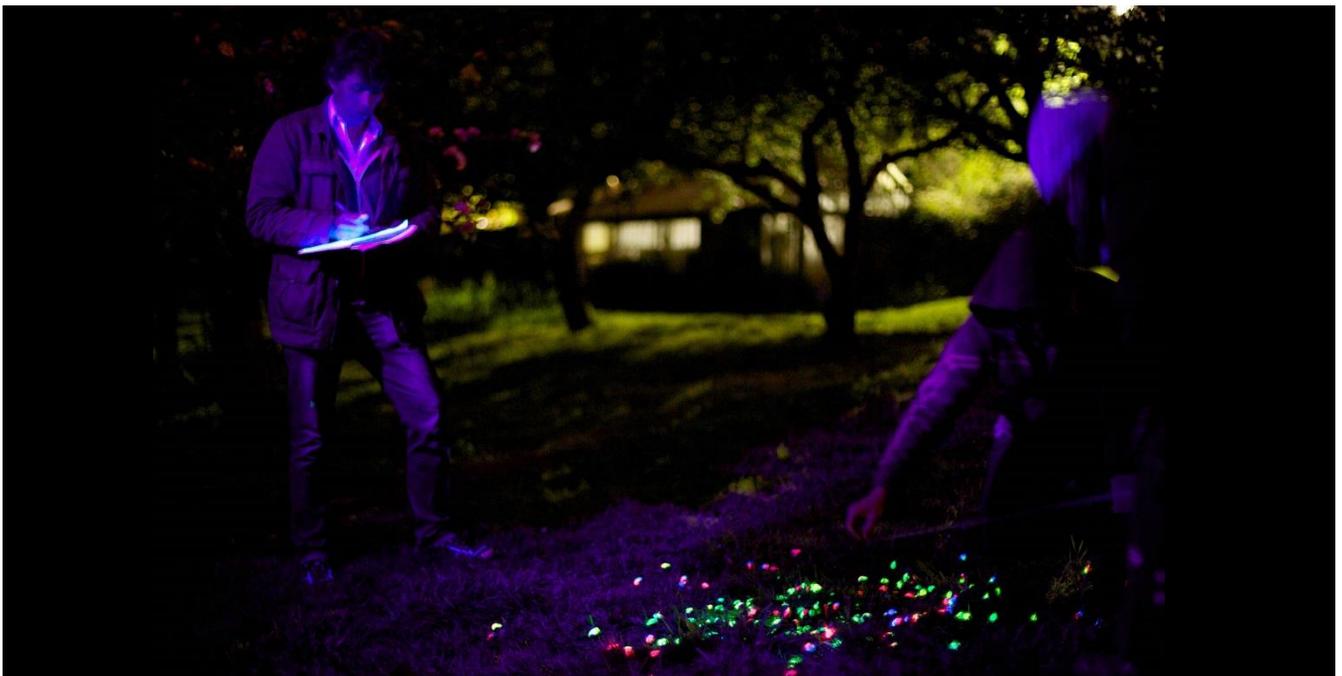

Category: Most effective consumer PR campaign
Entering Company Name: Pegasus
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Client: Bayer Animal Health, Advocate
Campaign title: Be Lungworm Aware, 'Slime Watch'

OVERVIEW

Lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*) is a parasite that can cause serious health problems in dogs and can be fatal if not diagnosed and treated. Slugs and snails can carry the lungworm larvae, and dogs become infected when they accidentally (or purposefully) eat these common garden pests whilst rummaging through undergrowth, eating grass or drinking from puddles. Evidence we sourced from the Royal Veterinary College confirms that lungworm has spread across the UK and is now endemic.

Bayer Animal Health manufactures a preventative treatment called Advocate which is the only product licenced to kill lungworm larvae in dogs. Its veterinary prescription licence means the product and its benefits cannot be communicated to the general dog owning public. Therefore, Bayer's business goal was to mobilise dog owners to ACT, turning awareness of lungworm into action by speaking to their vet.

Revealing the secret lives of Britain's snails, **Slime Watch** - which is a tactical project within the wider **Be Lungworm Aware** campaign - delivered ground-breaking research by tracking nocturnal snail activity for the first time, using LED lights and time-lapse photography. Research among vets and dog owners was carried out before, during and after the campaign to measure behaviour change and identify insights. The project prompted hundreds of thousands of owners to ask about lungworm through website visits and social media discussions, and to treat against lungworm, resulting in a 19% increase of product sales. The campaign has been the most successful PR activity for Bayer Animal Health to date, achieving unprecedented print and broadcast coverage, on a widespread national and global level.



OBJECTIVES

To ensure focus for PR and comms that linked to business success, the following goal was agreed:

To increase Advocate product sales by encouraging and empowering dog owners and vets to ACT on lungworm.

To better understand owner and vet perceptions of lungworm and devise an intelligent campaign that would make a real difference, quantitative and qualitative research was conducted through the following channels: feedback from the Bayer sales teams; surveys among vets and vet nurses; research among UK pet owners and focus groups with dog owners who have experienced lungworm.

Insight planning

From these channels, key insights gained included:

- 67% of dog owners had heard of lungworm but 50% did not think lungworm was a risk in their area
- Despite fairly high awareness, 32% treat their pets less than 3 times a year for lungworm (it should be treated monthly)
- 84% of dog owners don't know the signs of the lungworm parasite
- 35% of vets believe there are a lot of missed opportunities to promote parasiticide products and increase pet owners' compliance
- Anecdotal evidence from the Bayer sales force revealed vets did not see lungworm as a risk in their area and were reluctant to raise the subject with dog owners

Communications objectives

These insights enabled us to define the following communications objectives to help the brand deliver against its overall business goal:

Communicate the growing prevalence of lungworm to dog owners and encourage them to act swiftly by emphasising the risk and moving lungworm up their agenda

Provide a memorable talking point to help vets initiate the discussion of a parasite protection plan with owners, with lungworm as a particular focus

Key metrics

Specific KPIs were established before the campaign launch to measure the success of each element. Key messages were also agreed and analysed in resulting press coverage and content.

Outputs	Outcomes
22 items of print media coverage (including agreed key messages which inspired owners to act)	Increase awareness of lungworm among dog owners
40 items of broadcast media coverage	Drive dog owners to speak to their vet about lungworm prevention
5 case studies recruited	Communicate the real risk to vets and encourage them to mention lungworm in routine check-ups
10,000 conversations about Be Lungworm Aware on Twitter & Facebook	Drive traffic to the www.lungworm.co.uk website
20 charities / organisations recruited to support Be Lungworm Aware and share our content	Drive organic lungworm search to support the paid for PPC activity and improve SEO via linking
	Turn awareness into action and increase sales of Advocate

STRATEGY

The insight research highlighted an urgent need to turn lungworm awareness into action. This was communicated through the 'ACT' acronym; ASK for advice; CREATE a parasite protection plan with your vet; TREAT and repeat to prevent infestation.

To create a campaign that would drive the news agenda and prompt social media discussion, a University-backed study was conducted to highlight the role of the garden snail in spreading the parasite. The 'Slime Watch' research project used unconventional visual research techniques to track snail's behaviour and demonstrate the likelihood of dogs coming into contact with them on an everyday basis. This created an engaging platform to talk about the threat from lungworm and need for action.

'Be Lungworm Aware' is Bayer's disease awareness campaign aimed at vets and dog owners; Slime Watch was a tactical project within this campaign. As this was a disease awareness campaign, measurement was vital to plan an effective campaign and track the impact on attitudes and behaviour change.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Slime Watch project was the first study of its kind in the UK, providing a unique insight into the secret lives of snails, using unconventional visual research techniques to track their behaviour and demonstrate the likelihood of dogs coming into contact with snails on an everyday basis, creating a platform to talk about the potential threat of lungworm for the nation's dogs.

Research was conducted in partnership with the Ecology Department of Exeter, where 450 garden snails, *Cornu apersum*, were collected and marked with non-toxic UV paint and LED lights for visual tracking. These snails were then released in an area of rough lawn typical of an average garden and tracked intensely overnight; tracking continued over a period of seven days.

Report

To launch the research, add gravity and significance to the findings and as a visual aid for those interested in the research, our findings were collated in a 12-page report entitled 'Slime Watch: getting under the shell of snail activity'. The report included a foreword from Dr David Hodgson, who conducted the research, images from the experiment and an introduction to snails and lungworm which included advice to owners on lungworm symptoms, prevention and treatment. The report was hosted online via the Be Lungworm Aware website and on the Facebook page.



Video

Such a visual experiment warranted visual documentation to truly bring the findings to life. Cameras were installed on location to capture over 9 hours of detailed time-lapse footage following the journey of snails as they travelled throughout the night. A crew was also despatched to film the behind the scenes preparation of the experiment and interviews with key participants which was used to further build the narrative to consumers in the form of a video news feature and B / D Roll.



Media outreach

The key report statistics were presented, alongside the study's most striking images, in a press release embargoed to coincide with the campaign's broadcast media outreach. Due to the visual nature of the story, picture editors of national newspapers were targeted, in addition to environment editors and news teams in both the veterinary and specialist canine press. The B-roll and mini-documentary were offered alongside interviews with Dr David Hodgson to TV, radio and online media outlets.



OUTCOMES

Client reporting

Quarterly key metrics dashboards were given to the client to showcase the results of the campaign. A campaign highlights video was also created and shared internally at Bayer.



Results

The Slime Watch PR campaign facilitated a marked behaviour change in pet owners to switch from awareness to action. Throughout the campaign we conducted qualitative surveys with owners and vets, social media analysis, sourced anecdotal quotes from the Bayer sales force, facilitated focus groups with dog owners, and analysed Google analytics and IRI sales data.

Pre campaign KPI	Post campaign result
Outputs	
22 items of print media coverage, generating over 50million opportunities to see	370 items of coverage in titles including Daily Mail, The Times, The Telegraph. Over 400 million OTS created. All coverage included at least 2 key messages, including a links to the website, expert quotes & real life case studies
40 items of broadcast media coverage	80 items of broadcast coverage, including blanket news coverage across BBC News, BBC Breakfast, Channel 4 News, ITV news and Sky news
5 case studies recruited	20 case studies recruited
10,000 views of the Slime Watch video	80,000 views, with 38,000 views in the first three months
10,000 conversations about lungworm on Twitter & Facebook	26,943 people talked about lungworm on Twitter, and 9,000 dog owners engaged (liked, shared, commented) with our lungworm content on Facebook
20 charities / organisations recruited to support BLA & share content	33 groups recruited including Blue Cross, RSPCA, Royal Horticultural Society and The Kennel Club
Outcomes	
Increase awareness of Advocate among dog owners	83% of owners have now heard about lungworm
Drive dog owners to speak to their vet about lungworm prevention	78% of vets saw an increase in the number of dog owners asking about lungworm prevention
Communicate the real risk to vets and encourage them to mention lungworm in routine check-ups	70% of vets now think lungworm is a risk in their area. As a result, 44% added information to their practice Facebook page, 33% added information to their website and 86% now mention lungworm in routine check-ups
Drive traffic to the www.lungworm.co.uk website	17-fold increase in traffic, including 21000 new visitors in one month.
Drive organic lungworm search to support the paid for PPC activity and improve SEO via linking	230% increase in traffic to the website via organic search, 31% increase in traffic from media coverage
Turn awareness unto action and increase sales of Advocate	19% growth in sales of Advocate year on year 1.2 million dog owners use Advocate each month to protect their pet and 93% of vet practices now buy Advocate monthly One vet practice reported a 23% increase in sales of Advocate

Following the success of Slime Watch, new research has been funded to study how the parasite affects the behaviour of its hosts. In addition, academics and vets across the UK have collaborated to combine their data to create a meaningful picture of the parasite's spread across the UK. This has been developed into the first lungworm prevalence map for dog owners and vets.