

EBVM Toolkit 11

Qualitative study checklist

There are five key steps to follow in Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM).

1. Asking an answerable clinical question
2. Finding the best available evidence to answer the question
- 3. Critically appraising the evidence for validity**
4. Applying the results to clinical practice
5. Evaluating performance

This handout is designed to help you appraise the report of a qualitative study. Answering the questions will help you to reflect on how valid the results might be, how well reported they are and whether they are applicable to your local circumstances.

Few papers overtly use qualitative methods in veterinary medicine. While some see qualitative methods to be inferior to quantitative research, the two can happily co-exist and answer different questions. Qualitative research is particularly concerned with making sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. As qualitative research frequently involves interview techniques it will have limited application in veterinary medicine. An example is a study by Litva (2010) investigating owners' perceptions of the causes of crib biting or wind sucking behaviour in their horses¹

	Yes	No	Not sure	Reason
Was the sample used in the study appropriate to its research question? Have the right participants been included in the study? Sample size may not be as important as in quantitative research but sufficient participants should have been included in order to gain an understanding of the issues.				

Was the data collected appropriately? The methods of data collection should be described with some justification of the methods used.				
Was the data analysed appropriately? There should be a description of the methods. Did participants have an opportunity to check the findings?				
Can the results of the study be applied to your own setting? Are the subjects similar to your population? Does your setting differ significantly? Can you gauge benefit and harm for your local situation?				
Does the study adequately address any potential ethical issues, including reflexivity? Was the study ethical? Were potential issues if reflexivity considered? Reflexivity is about the influence a researcher can have on the data collected and should be addressed.				
Overall: is what the researchers did clear? Does what was done make sense?				

References

1. Litva, A., Robinson C.S. and Archer D.C. (2010) Exploring lay perceptions of the causes of crib-biting/windsucking behaviour in horses. *Equine Veterinary Journal*, 42 (4) pp 288-293. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2042-3306.2009.00025.x>

Want to try it out?

You could use the following paper to try out the questions:

Lastein, D., Vaarst, M. and Enevoldsen, C. (2009) Veterinary decision making in relation to metritis – a qualitative approach to understand the background for variation and bias in veterinary medical records. *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica* 51, 36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/1751-0147-51-36>

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We welcome comments and suggestions for improvement to this guide.

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