



FAQ for general level abdominal course – Box Moor

Why book with VetArtis and Sarah Keir?

VetArtis ultrasound courses are led by Dr Sarah Keir, which consistently earns 10/10 in testimonials for clear explanations, engaging delivery and immediate applicability. Her approachable style, backed by years of in-practice experience, ensures you leave confident and competent behind the probe and ready to use ultrasound in your daily case load. Delegates consistently award the courses highly for content, teaching style and overall experience. Each day features locally sourced meals and refreshments that attendees rate 10/10, creating a comfortable, inclusive learning environment designed to elevate your ultrasound skills and confidence. Are you ready to elevate your ultrasound skills?

How and why are your courses different to other course providers?

I've designed this course to give **as much practical time as possible** on the workshop days so everyone can learn the skills of abdominal ultrasound at their own pace. I provide lots of models and phantoms with extra ultrasound machines and use these to divide the multi-tasking of performing ultrasound into individual components as much as possible – like learning to drive a car, the technical skills, problem solving and awareness can all be practiced individually and the same is true for ultrasound. I use various models and scannable phantoms to simulate various anatomical challenges and for delegates to focus on particular technical skills such as following a tube in 3D and recognising 3D shape from 2D scanning planes. I carefully choose quiet and relaxed dogs so you can spend as much time as you want practicing your scanning skills on animals. I was also the first in the UK to use a mixed reality simulator, a fantastic tool for learning 3D anatomy.

I don't teach recipe book scanning – put your hand here, turn probe like this and you will see this. This works fine for some of the time but not if the animal is not 'standard' or the problem it has is not 'textbook. And guess what, there is no such thing as 'normal'! I employ a **coaching style of teaching** rather than purely didactic, meaning you will get as much out of this course as you put in. Experiential learning in ultrasound education involving hands-on practice and real-world application to enhance understanding and skill development, emphasising active engagement, reflection, and application of knowledge in practical settings. This approach bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and clinical practice, fostering both technical proficiency and diagnostic reasoning.

The **online course complements the practical** workshop days. This comprehensive curriculum covers theory behind ultrasound and how to use ultrasound in your case. You can go back and review the course as often as you need after the workshop days with the easy to navigate platform.



So, **why is it not all online?** Hands-on psychomotor skills require tactile feedback and muscle memory developed through practice and refined through supervision and immediate feedback. Studies show that although novices can acquire basic image acquisition skills after online modules, their confidence and precision improve dramatically only when they transition to real-time, instructor-guided scanning sessions. I personally find it very frustrating learning a practical skill from just watching videos and the 3Dness of watching and practicing in real time is essential for refining the skills. This is why I don't offer courses that are solely online.

I only teach **small groups** – a maximum of 3 people scanning per animal/station, meaning ample hands-on scanning and personalised coaching, and a maximum of 9 people in total so you can ask me questions or get help whenever you need it, not waiting for the tutor to get round a room of 20 people (yes, I've attended those courses!). That means you get immediate, personalised feedback every time you fumble the probe or struggle to optimise a setting.

The course also doesn't finish after the workshop days. You get ongoing support with post-course mentorship & learning on a group forum so you continue to improve and practice your new skills and knowledge.

What level is this course? Why do you call it general level?

I've designed this general level abdominal course for those who have done a little scanning, or don't get to use their ultrasound skills much, or are unsure how to best use ultrasound in their cases and want to move their ultrasound up a gear but are not yet ready to look for small organs and subtle changes on advanced courses. Many vets aren't total ultrasound beginners but this course is also suitable for beginners and those with limited experience in abdominal scanning through the structured approach to learning ultrasound from the ground up. This course is also great for those with less confidence in their ultrasound skills, moving from guesswork to a repeatable, systematic approach. This is why I call this course 'general level'.

It is super important to have strong foundations before attempting more advanced concepts and technical skills. Many courses miss out crucial aspects of scanning that make the difference from remaining unconfident and struggling with ultrasound to really understanding it and progressing your journey. The pancreas and adrenal glands seem like the holy grail of abdominal ultrasound, but realistically we can help our patients more by performing a thorough and confident scan of everything else. The main focus of the course will be on the approach to the larger abdominal organs (liver, gall bladder, kidney, spleen, bladder, gastrointestinal tract) and recognising normal ultrasonographic anatomy of these organs. Finding the main organs is not the same as confidently assessing them in their entirety and noting the subtle changes that occur. In my courses, you'll discover that locating an organ is



only the first step—it's the confident, comprehensive assessment that really matters. By breaking the examination into easy to understand steps delegates are often surprised at how much deliberate technique and attention to subtle echogenic changes is required to spot pathology. This rigorous, hands-on approach ensures you leave not just able to find an organ, but skilled in thoroughly assessing its health and confidently documenting every nuance. And do you know what? When you are confident of all the rest, the pancreas and adrenals literally appear to you when I show you the landmarks and have learnt how to finely manipulate the probe.

What does this course cover?

This comprehensive course covers:

- How to build confidence in US and how to get better over time so you can continue to improve your ultrasound skills beyond the length of the course.
- Driving the machine – getting the best from what machine you have, recognising what limitations may be imposed by the machine, the patient, and disease states.
- Imaging fundamentals covering image formation and artefacts – why you see what you see and why it is not always the truth.
- POCUS for the abdomen, and recognising fluid, gas and mineral – these are key findings in any ultrasound scan and will help you determine what you are seeing even when you don't know what you are seeing!
- Thinking like a sonographer and diagnostician – how to use ultrasound in your clinical cases to best effect.
- Approach to structured abdominal scan and the many facets to consider in this.
- Scanning the main abdominal organs – how to scan, how to assess and interpret what you're seeing, and the normal and diseased appearance for the common conditions seen in dogs and cats.
- Build foundational technical skills – hand-eye coordination and probe manipulation, spatial visualisation of 2D objects for 3D conceptualisation, using ultrasound terminology to describe what you are seeing, tracking a tube in 3D, 3D anatomy of the abdomen.
- Learn ultrasound-guided cystocentesis and FNAs – theory and as much practice as you need on phantoms. Ultrasound does not tell what is happening at a cellular level and so biopsies are complimentary to many ultrasound examinations.
- Many case examples to build a mental library of normal and abnormal and practice your approach to clinical cases.



What do you get for the course fee

1. **Online preparatory course** - online videos and interactive activities for self-paced learning that you can go back and review as often as you need on an easy to navigate platform (Teachable).
2. **2-day practical workshop** with largely practical time. A couple of hours of clinical presentations each day on each organ/system and then demonstrations of how to scan that organ with the rest of the time to practice to re-enforce the muscle memory and correct any issues.
3. **Post-course mentorship & support** for ongoing learning and support through a WhatsApp group for the weeks after the course – use as much or as little as you like. The online course also includes sections to return to after the workshop days.
4. **Detailed notes, protocol posters, practising guides and laminated quick-reference guides** for each participant.
5. **20 hours** of RCVS-accredited CPD with certificate of completion.
6. Top-rated hospitality with locally sourced lunch and refreshments on the workshop days.

What ultrasound machines do you provide?

There will be a variety of ultrasound machines of varying quality available for use. I hire machines that are of good quality as I know there is nothing more frustrating when learning to scan than just seeing grey fuzzy images. There will also be some lower quality machines which are common machines found in veterinary practices to allow you to become familiar with a range of machines. These machine are the ones that you will use for practicing ultrasound-guided sampling and scanning phantoms.

I'm worried I'll never be good at ultrasound and this is a waste of money

It's completely natural to feel daunted by ultrasound—many vets tell me they've been in your shoes, worried it's too complex or that they'll never get it right, or even that they're too old to learn. What makes this course different is that it's built around steady, supportive progress rather than overnight perfection. Every step is broken down into manageable pieces with immediate, personalised feedback. By the end, you'll have a clear, repeatable scanning protocol, a stack of laminated guides on your desk and the confidence to tackle any abdominal scan your patients need. Many past delegates who doubted themselves at the start now incorporate ultrasound into daily practice—finding faster diagnoses, better patient care and a tangible return on their investment. If you can drive a car, you can do an ultrasound examination!



Can I come if I'm a locum?

Of course, you can! I locumed for several years and understand the unique needs of a locum learning new skills, especially the barrier of how to practice. I have a resource just for locums on the online course and I provide a range of ultrasound machines that are the typical ones found in veterinary practices, allowing you to become familiar with the types of machines you will come across when you locum.

Do I need to bring a dog?

No—you don't need to arrange your own dog. I know finding and transporting a suitable dog can be a barrier, so I provide a roster of "volunteer dog heroes" for every session. Each dog is temperament-tested to ensure a calm, cooperative scan, and I include a range of body shapes and sizes so you can practise adjusting machine settings and appreciate the limitations of scanning larger patients. This way, you focus entirely on building your skills rather than on logistics. For welfare and RCVS requirements, dogs are not sedated. Only well dogs are used for the workshops not ones with known problems, but this doesn't mean to say we won't find something.

If you have a dog that is suitable and you want to bring them, this is great! You will get a £100 discount on the course (refunded after the course to show your dog is suitable) and I can provide a crate for the workshop days and suggest accommodation that allows dogs.

I work in a feline-only practice. Does your course cover scanning cats?

Yes, the preparatory online course includes an in-depth feline ultrasound module. You'll learn cat-specific abdominal protocols, tricks for optimising image quality on smaller patients, and the key anatomical differences to watch for. The core skills—probe positioning and movement, image optimisation, systematic organ assessment—are identical, so you can seamlessly transfer everything you practice on dogs to your own feline patients back in practice. I cannot provide cats for the practical workshops as I cannot ensure their welfare.

How long do I get the online course for and when will I get access?

You are given access to the online course once the full payment for the course is received. I recommend starting the course about a month before the workshop days. After the workshop days you have access to the online course for a further 3 months to allow you to go back and refresh your knowledge and to finish watching any of the content you did not have time to do previously. You can rewatch any of the videos and access any of the parts of the online course during this time. I set a time limit as otherwise it is easy for time to slip away and you won't get the benefit.



What is the format of the practical days

Refreshments are served from 9:00 to 9:30am while everyone arrives and registers. We then have an hour to an hour and a half presentation and discussion/questions first thing (9:30-11:00am), then a short break followed by practical scanning sessions until lunch (1:00-2:00pm). In the afternoon it will be a similar pattern of an hour of presentation and discussion/questions (2-3:00), a short break and then practical scanning until we finish (3:30-5:30pm). There will be a short debrief at the end of each day and the day finishes at 5:30pm.

Where is the practical course venue?

The workshop days are held at [The Box Moor Trust, Box Moor](#), Hertfordshire. This is an easy to access venue with free parking and walking distance from a mainline train station, with a wide choice of accommodation in the area, set in the lovely Chiltern hills and near the town of Tring - I recommend a visit to the Tring branch of the [Natural History Museum](#) and see the taxidermy dogs!

Is accommodation provided?

Accommodation is not included in the course fee, as everyone has unique preferences and budgets. Instead, you'll receive a curated list of recommended options in the local area—hotels, bed & breakfasts and self-catering cottages—covering a range of styles, comfort levels and price points so you can choose what best suits your needs. I recommend you book the accommodation when you book the course as at some times of the year, accommodation in the area can become limited.

How do I get to the venue?

The venue for the workshop days, [The Box Moor Trust, Box Moor](#), is easy to access from major road networks (the M25, M40 and M1 are all very close) and walking distance from Hemel Hempstead railway station which is a mainline station connecting into London Euston and north via Milton Keynes. The venue is also accessible from major airports including Luton and Heathrow.

What do I need to bring?

I recommend you wear a scrub top as there will be hair and ultrasound gel. No open-toes shoes are allowed in practical sessions. Apart from this, you do not need to bring anything.

What ND adjustments do you make

Our goal is to create an inclusive, low-stress learning environment that respects different neurotypes. This is through multiple adaptations – no group introductions, small groups, individual skills focus stations, quiet zones, clear visual schedules and checklists, flexible break times, and short presentation sessions. I provide a pre-course leaflet detailing all the information you may need to know about the course, venue and what to expect on the day.



VetArtis

Are you ready to elevate your ultrasound skills?

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or are ready to book - sarah@vetartis.co.uk