

Name:	Roddy Dunse
Location:	Galloway
Occupation:	Dairy vet
Hobby:	Mountain search and rescue volunteer

Roddy Dunse: "I can fit callouts around work, if they are near the practice"

Search and rescue

text Rachael Porter

Being a busy vet, it can be hard to make the time to enjoy the great outdoors – a shame when the outdoors is the beautiful Dumfries and Galloway. So Roddy has combined his love of hill walking with a worthy cause – he's been a member of the Galloway Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) for the past 12 years.

"I spent a lot of time in the Galloway Hills as a teenager. Later in life, and just after the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, I became reacquainted with the more remote parts as I walked many a hill farm looking for clinical signs of FMD before issuing movement licences," he says. "A chance conversation with one of the emergency drivers for the out-of-hours doctor, based at the local hospital across the road from our house, led to me joining the team. He was, at the time, team leader of Galloway MRT."

The Galloway Hills are remote and beautiful, but they also have few way-marked paths. "They're not as high and rugged as the Highlands, which can make some visitors complacent about the challenges they can pose," explains Roddy, who works at the Dunmuir Veterinary Group.

But it's not just walkers, climbers and mountain bikers that may need help. There have been callouts to search for despondent or elderly people or missing teenagers, as well as farmers and people working alone in remote areas.

All members are volunteers and receive no remuneration. Training involves first aid, hill craft, navigation, radio procedures, off road driving, the use of harnesses and ropes and rescue equipment for dealing with injured climbers. They also have to get to know the local hill walking, climbing and mountain biking areas.

MRT callouts can vary as to how much time commitment they will require. "Often I can fit callouts around work if they are near the practice. I have been known to stop off to help with a difficult calving on my way to a call out.

"My colleagues are very helpful and supportive in covering for me when necessary. And the work of the MRT is well regarded and valued by our farm clients, who understand that they are the ones working alone in remote locations and are not very good at telling people where they are!"

He adds that being in the MRT is a way to put something back into the community: "Donating time and energy to such a worthwhile cause is important to our practice and I also enjoy being part of such a vital team."

