

Revision of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966)

27 May 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Below is a template letter for you to copy and adapt, in order for it to reflect your own views on this particular topic. The Right Honourable Michael Jack is Chairing the Select Committee overseeing revision of the Act, so it is important that you inform him (as well as your MP and DEFRA) of your rights to consumer choice in this issue. ARH would also like to keep a database of how many letters are sent, and to whom, so it would be very helpful if you could email us on info@a-r-h.org to let us know who you have contacted. We will use these statistics to make any formal representation that may become necessary as this matter develops.

Meanwhile, thank you for your support in this campaign, and please continue to invite your friends and colleagues to help support this worthwhile cause.

Kind regards,



Karin Mont (ARH Chair)

Template Letter

Dear MP/Defra/ Right Honourable Michael Jack

I understand that the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) is currently under review. I am writing to you as an animal owner/farmer/breeder, to request that the Act is amended to enable me to provide the animals in my care, with the same range of quality healthcare options that I expect to have available for myself and my family.

I am surprised to note that proper public consultation regarding this important review does not appear to have taken place. It is as though the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) are trying to slip this review through without anyone noticing, which is at complete odds with the basic principles of openness and transparency. Animal owners pay directly for the treatment their animals receive, so should therefore have the right to choose both the type of treatment most appropriate to their animal's needs, and who administers the treatment. This is particularly important for a discipline such as homeopathy, which is a complex therapy based upon individualisation. Animal owners can certainly learn enough about homeopathy to self prescribe for straight forward, acute situations, but for more complicated conditions, homeopathy is most effectively practised by a qualified homeopath.

There are currently only around 250 UK vets trained in homeopathy, and less than 12 of them treat farm animals. This restricts the choices available to livestock farmers, which can have particularly serious implications for organic farmers. This potentially limits the availability of chemical/hormone free meat available within the food chain, which in turn impacts upon the health and wellbeing of UK citizens. It is astonishing to consider that under the current Act, it is perfectly legal for a vet with no training in homeopathy, to prescribe homeopathic medicines. On the other hand, a qualified homeopath with animal husbandry training, would be acting illegally if they prescribed homeopathy for any but their own animals. As a consumer of veterinary services, who also pays directly for what I require, I am asking for your help in setting right this anomaly.

Please will you intervene on my behalf, and ask the Select Committee charged with overseeing revision of the Act, to ensure that homeopathy is specifically included as a named discipline in the revised Act? Also, please will you ensure that it is legal for qualified homeopaths with appropriate training in animal husbandry to prescribe for animals at the owner's request?

In conclusion, as a caring, responsible animal owner, I believe that I am best placed to decide the treatment option most appropriate for the wellbeing of my animal. As I also pay for the treatment, I expect the right to choose from whom it is provided. Revision of the Veterinary Surgeons Act offers us the opportunity to bring delivery of animal healthcare into line with that available to people via the NHS. I would appreciate acknowledgement of this communication, and am happy to provide further information relating to issues I have raised, should that prove helpful.

Yours sincerely,