

**P-05-895 Rosa's Legacy: Introduce a scheme to help people access veterinary care for their companion animals, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 19.01.21**

**To the Chair and Members of the Petitions Committee of Senedd Cymru.**

**P-05-895 Rosas Legacy: Introduce a scheme to help people access veterinary care for their Companion Animals.**

Thank you for having my petition as an agenda item today and for asking me to comment on the correspondence you have received from Dr Mandisa Greene President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons ( RCVS). May I offer my thanks to Dr Greene for her response.

**The Mission Statement of RCVS.**

“To enhance society through improved animal health and welfare by setting, upholding and advancing the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses”.

**The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.**

This act predates the Animal Welfare Act ( England and Wales) 2006 by over half a century. In an House of Commons report in 2008 by DERFA they stated:

" The profession is regulated under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. There appears to be general agreement, within the profession and beyond, that aspects of the Act require modernisation, the RCVS does not have the support of the majority of the profession for it's proposal on compulsory practice standards....Despite working for almost five years on the subject , the RCVS has not yet formulated a detailed plan on how a new Council may be structured.....The Department for Environment and Rural Affairs agrees that the Act is in urgent need of updating, but has said that there is no funding available for work on the White Paper until at least 2011.

It was in response to the regulation of the medical and related professions following the Shipman inquiry, that the RCVS set up a working party in 2003 and 2005 to review the 1966 Act.....The first consultation in 2003 received 470 responses from a total of approximately 20,000 registered veterinary surgeons, 13 responses from organisations and 12 responses from individual veterinary nurses. The second consultation in 2005 received only 86 responses from individual veterinary surgeons, in addition to responses from 36 organisations, four veterinary nurses and 40 others ( mainly members of the public)....

**Any new Act should not overload the profession with unnecessary legislation, but it must safeguard the health and welfare of animals and also protect them and their owners from those who offer potentially dangerous treatments without sufficient knowledge or training."**

It is worth noting I think that the RCVS ' measures to restructure it's governing Council only came into force last year (2020).

**The setting of fees / economic euthanisa.**

The Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons Section 9:5 states

" the RCVS has no specific jurisdiction under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 over the level of fees charged by veterinary practices. There are no statutory charges and fees are essentially a matter for negotiation between veterinary surgeon and client. "

Section 9:7

" pricing policies should comply with the Consumer Protection from unfair Trading Standards Regulation 2008 and other consumer protection legislation, and not be false or misleading. "

Section 9:8 : "Veterinary surgeons should be open and honest about fees for veterinary treatment....Clients should be furnished with sufficient information about the fees associated with treatment to be in a position to give informed consent to treatment. " .

Section 9:18 " If a client is not eligible for the charitable assistance and no form of other assistance can be found. euthanasia may have to be considered on economic grounds ".**1**

As the briefing document that Senedd Cymru research department clearly showed at least two Senedd Cymru Members have raised the issue of veterinary fees on the floor of the chamber as well as other related issues.

I am unaware exactly how many Senedd Cymru Members have been contacted by their constituents in regards to concerns about either the standard of treatment their companion animals have received or any other issues such as the corporate takeover.

### **RCVS Legislation Reform consultation.**

This is the official title of the " under care review " that Dr Greene referred to. As an ordinary companion animal owner I have always been concerned that once again the RCVS would fail to engage in it's duty to involve us in this crucial consultation. In my previous submission I touched on the RCVS ' consultation exercise on out of hours provision ( OOH) for example. In November last year just after the consultation was opened I wrote to Mr Ben Myring of the RCVS to establish who they would be contacting. To assist Members I have attached the said emails.**2**

I didn't find his response at all surprising, nor did I think it acceptable. I do not think it's my responsibility to ensure that the RCVS inform our Senedd Cymru Members particularly the Shadow Ministers who hold this portfolio about this consultation. In my opinion they should be invited to take part. The RCVS should also have a detailed plan on how to reach owners. Especially considering they currently have approx seventeen million pounds in reserves.

This exercise is crucial as it means the RCVS may have a chance of modernising their disciplinary process - which in it's current form has no benefit to the animals that are part of our families, us animal owners or indeed the profession they claim to regulate.

But more importantly it may restore public confidence in a profession that was once highly respected - to once again have the ethical treatment of our family Members at the top of their agenda. Rather than being a licence to print money for the profit driven corporates .**3**

It is crystal clear from many comments on social media exactly what many veterinary surgeons and RVN think of this exercise. Many have contacted me - in confidence to assist Members I provide you with the British Veterinary Union's draft submission to the College on their Legislation Reform.

### **Corporate ownership of practices.**

I have interested to hear Dr Greene's thoughts on this subject but I find them so out of touch with reality. Especially from the body who claims to regulate the **ethnics** as well as the **standards** of the veterinary profession here in Cymru.

In the words of Professor Noel Fitzpatrick MRCVS:

**It is estimated that up to half of all primary care veterinary practices across the United Kingdom are owned by venture capital equity groups.....Some of these groups own hundreds of primary care practices, most have centralised referral centres some have pet crematoria, own brand drugs, online pharmacies, laboratories, out of hours surgeries, locum agencies and both online and retail shops ".3**

Since my last submission the corporate veterinary wagon here in Cymru has moved ever forward.**4**

### **Covid-19**

I am sure I don't have to remind Members about the unprecedented times we find ourselves in. Those we share our homes with - Members of our families even the four legged variety have become more important than ever to our mental wellbeing. But in the more " normal" days to come I think because of the economic crisis coupled with the challenges the third sector will face a difficult road lies ahead for so many.

### **Conclusion/ Actions .**

Animal welfare is the responsibility of our Welsh Government. Many Senedd Cymru Members I am delighted to say can see that how we treat animals sends out an important message about us as a society and Country. Surely our four legged Family Members should be first in this line of thinking.

I have mentioned before the total lack of concern the RCVS showed in regards to the events surrounding My Rosa's death. Despite the fact that I had her clinical notes that clearly showed a crucial test had been performed without my permission. Together with a procedure a veterinary surgeon had difficulty performing without informing me. They could do nothing because their regulation is based on legislation which predates the Animal Welfare Act by more than half a century.

The effect this had on my own well being is very hard to put into words.

I could have taken this matter to a civil court and I am grateful to Gwynedd Council Public Protection Dept who would have supported me in this . But even I could see that the veterinary surgeons involved were only carrying out the policies of the corporate company they worked for. Something the RCVS in it's present format takes no account of .

**1.** Could the Chair and Members please consider contacting the Competition and Markets Authority to see if they have any concerns in regards to the corporate take over of the veterinary profession.

2. Is there any data or information on our Shadow Ministers, Climate Change and Environmental Committee or any Senedd Cymru Members being concerned / contacted in regards to the issues myself CAWGW, and Dr Greene herself has raised ?

If I can assist Members further I will be more than happy to do so .

Cofion Linda Joyce-Jones

1.

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/>

3.

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/policy/veterinary-legislation-review/>

4. Becoming the Supervet 2018.

4.

<http://www.independentvets.co.uk/Under> the Animal