

yourBIGquestions

- **Why should I join the British Veterinary Union (BVU), what's special about it?**

Our exclusive objective in BVU is to safeguard the individual and collective interests of veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses, and others working within our profession. The BVU focuses on the issues that directly or indirectly impact on you, as veterinary professionals, support staff, and colleagues in other roles in veterinary workplaces. BVU's only agenda is to enhance the welfare of the working lives of its members, and that of the wider profession.

- **Why set up BVU within an existing trade union, and why Unite?**

Unlike an academic group or professional association, a union needs enormous funding, infrastructure, and specialists (including legal teams), even before the first member joins. Membership fees in a newly-formed stand-alone union for vets, nurses and support staff, would have been significantly higher, perhaps unaffordable for lower-earning members of our profession.

When we contacted different unions, Unite showed greater interest and understanding of the problems faced by veterinary professionals, as well as demonstrating a passion to help us address the issues. Unite has great respect for our profession.

- **How does BVU benefit from its partnership with Unite?**

Unite is Britain's biggest trade union with over 1.5 million members, with established infrastructure, support system, offices and meeting facilities, across the UK. Unite's Health Sector, BVU's home, has over 100,000 health care members, and is highly experienced in dealing with issues, whether workplace (industrial) or professional. The partnership between BVU and Unite has opened doors for us to considerable industrial and professional resources, which would have been impossible to generate by a standalone veterinary union. This partnership not only benefits members in supporting them with their individual problems more effectively, but also provides joint political influence and a powerful voice.

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- **What about veterinary employees and their employers being in the same union?**

Employed veterinary professionals may feel they need BVU more than their employers do. However, whether we are employees or employers, most of us do the same work – treating sick and injured animals, looking after herd health, or working in busy clinics and practices, so we face similar challenges. The Code of Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons does not distinguish between vets as employees or employers. If the RCVS holds you to account, it does not matter what your employment status is. The threat of being sued for a surgical or medical error remains the same – regardless of your role. Therefore, more unites employed vets and those who are employers, rather than divides them. Employers are also affected by decisions by authorities which can make their working life difficult. Therefore, the BVU believes that for the most part of our professional work, veterinary employers need representation and a voice, just as much as their employees and staff do.

Most important of all, BVU will be more constructive, more beneficial and more successful for everyone, if it provides a joint platform for employees and employers to come together - to resolve issues and help each other.

Most disputes are best resolved when both parties can work together on solution, around the same table.

Uniting our profession is at the heart of the BVU.

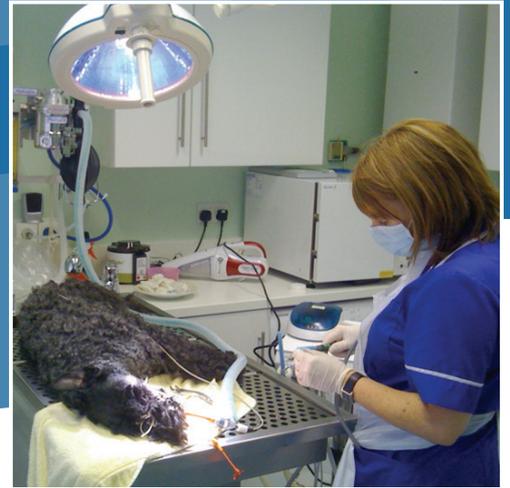
- **Are you worried about your union calling for strike action?**

Strikes are rare, and a last resort in negotiations, and not an objective of BVU. Yes, addressing problems at work is our concern, and BVU will leave no stone unturned to work with members and employers to resolve such issues.

Considering that most of our colleagues work in small units, and the nature of the work we do, it's hard for us in BVU to imagine a scenario where strike action would be beneficial or plausible. After all, we work in a caring profession, like the rest of Unite's health sector. BVU in Unite means that members can tackle issues, like health and safety, bullying and harassment, equality issues, poor practice, or unfairness, together, so no-one need feel they are on their own if anything goes wrong.

The BVU aims to safeguard our working lives as veterinary professionals, highlight any issues and problems faced by our members, offering guidance and support. We believe the presence of a strong union should challenge and deter poor employer practice in our profession. BVU members are stronger working together than any individual can be.

Industrial action (including strike, or action short of a strike) is covered in law, and can only take place when other avenues have been exhausted without satisfactory results. If strike action faces members as a last resort, then a lawful ballot of all members affected must be held.



BVU in Unite – it's your union, for everyone working in veterinary professions and workplaces.

You do a fantastic job, we'd like you to join us!

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