

RCVS should broaden remit to aid employees

Dear editor,

I am very interested in Shams Mir's comments on the stress caused by employment issues within the veterinary profession (June 2 issue). The cases highlighted in the national and veterinary press perfectly highlight the points he is making. While there are a plethora of rights and obligations under existing employment laws, anyone who believes that this guarantees compliance within the veterinary profession should think again.

No Government body or veterinary body enforces employment law. It is up to individuals to take their cases to an industrial tribunal, so if there is a pattern of behaviour by an employer, this cannot always be factored in by those chairing the tribunal.

With regard to the effect on people's mental health, it should be borne in mind that those most severely affected are those least able and, likely to pursue their cases through an industrial tribunal. Indeed, many such cases have been brought to my attention, all showing the severe effects this sort of treatment can have on the mental health of an individual. The most extreme case resulted in hospitalisation and many people have ended up on medication or receiving counselling.

Large employers are not alone in having this effect on their employees. Many vets, nurses and auxiliaries in private practice are treated in completely unacceptable ways. The people who approach me do not complain about terms and conditions, but focus on emotional and verbal abuse, which appears to be acceptable within our profession.

The RCVS, BVA and BSAVA have a wide remit of obligations, but none of them has the power to intervene in employment issues.

My personal view is that the RCVS should look at broadening its remit to encompass this area of concern, but if this is not possible then I support Dr Mir's suggestion that a British Veterinary Union should be considered.

Yours faithfully,

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