

Time to stop competing and pose united front

Dear editor,

What a vintage week of letter writing and venting of spleen the June 23 issue provided, although one letter caught my eye more than others. While I would not dismiss lightly the seriousness of suicide in the profession (which was the catalyst for Rachael Naylor's letter), it was the rest of the contents that attracted my interest. I found myself agreeing and disagreeing in equal measure. Maybe I should take the rose tint out of my spectacles, but the reason I became a vet was my passion for animals and science. Of course, I'd like to make a comfortable living on the way, but that's the bonus, not the driving force. When I wake up in the morning I don't think: "Oh good, I'm going to earn some money today." Instead, I get out of bed gladly because I genuinely want to see some interesting and challenging cases and can continue to fulfil those passions.

However, Rachael hits the nail on the head with her comments regarding the failure of the profession to protect its own interests. To use her example, how can we complain about the ruling on free prescriptions when fewer than 100 of us individually bothered to petition the Government, or when our representative bodies are so inept? Most other professions appear to be singing from the same song sheet, with powerful representation and a desire to protect their positions rather better than we do. However, many of our woes are self inflicted because we are too fragmented. Too many vets are providing sub-standard care while misleading gullible clients; there is too much suspicion of each other's practices. We are competing with each other, rather than working together to provide a united front.

While the majority of us want to continue earning a reasonable standard of living, while providing high-quality care to our patients at honest fees for our clients, there are those who think it is clever marketing to undermine the credibility of the profession by advertising loss-leader prices on headline services and, thus, arousing the unfounded suspicion of the public that the rest of us must be charging too much. Then there are those veterinary entrepreneurs who have seen the opportunity to make a big profit in corporate practice, cherry picking in vaccination and neutering clinics or exploiting a niche market, such as online pharmacies. I have nothing, personally, against those whose main ambition is to amass a fortune, but I still have one question for them: if your intention in life is to make as much money as possible, why did you bother training as vets?

To put it bluntly, why don't you clear off into the real corporate world, where there are real riches to be had, and leave those of us who still love the job to earn an honest living alone?

Here endeth my rant.

Yours faithfully,

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VT 38(31)E
18/8/08