

Proposed veterinary union

Why do we need a British Veterinary Union (VR, September 12, 2009, vol 165, pp 328)? What are the BVA, SPVS and the RCVS, which have a somewhat different remit, doing that is wrong, inadequate or unrepresentative?

I am totally unable to comprehend what Shams Mir and colleagues and their proposed British Veterinary Union hope and expect (these are not the same) to achieve which our long-standing professional organisations and hard working officers and staff have not achieved over the years (and often cannot achieve). All the specialist divisions, which were not set up to have political roles, are increasingly and effectively politically active in their own fields, and this rubs off into the national veterinary arena. We can all have an input into the election of our leaders. All can attend specialist and territorial division meetings and make their opinions known and one can write to the presidents. You have to do some work if you wish to have an input. How many of the union's supporters have voted in the last four or five RCVS elections, put forward candidates for BVA officers and helped to select BVA Council members at divisional meetings? People who do not take part in democracy have no justification for complaints. I expect most, or even all, of us find that our leaders do many things we do not like or want and fail to address items we find personally important; democracy was always like this.

I can see that many younger colleagues find that the veterinary political situations are inscrutable and cannot be challenged or changed, that they appear to have no voice and that nothing done at the centre appears to be directed at or of help to them. When I qualified, I recall being uninterested and unable to understand what went on within our profession, but I always voted for the RCVS Council, without of course having at that time any real idea about the issues or the candidates. I am not clear whether this was and is the correct or best course of action; but one learnt. Together, our profession needs to support our diverse endeavours and opinions about many of today's issues. In a profession of rugged individuals there will always be many different opinions and criticisms of actual and apparent shortcomings. We have to live with this and support the consensus majority when we cannot persuade them otherwise. This critique is no doubt heavily influenced by my being well past a personal use-by date.

I cannot envisage what another, probably smaller and possibly unrepresentative, organisation will achieve.

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