

If all can join union, how is it different from BVA?

Dear editor,

I have spent most of my working life in general practice. I care passionately about the welfare of the animals I am privileged to have consigned to my professional care. I am concerned that I have sufficient time to examine and treat them, as well as the clinical freedom to treat them as I see fit and charge their owners fees that I feel are appropriate and with which I am comfortable.

Bullying at work has always been abhorrent to me and the welfare of my fellow workers is always as important as that of my patients. So, can I join your union, Dr Mir?

Perhaps I should have mentioned that I am the sole principal of a small practice? Does that make a difference? At present, I have to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff, endeavouring to offer them a pleasant working environment, adequate holidays, sick and maternity leave, and enough time to devote to CPD, while I take on the lion's share of out-of-hours work to meet the challenge of the European Working Time Directive. If my staff can join a professional organisation from which I am excluded, will this drive a wedge between us and cause friction, dividing the practice into two camps rather than a single cohesive whole? If all the veterinary surgeons in the practice are welcome to join such a union, what would make it different from the existing BVA, which, as Dr Mir observes, exists to promote and support the interests of its members?

I am content to remain as I am, knowing that if I fail to provide an adequate working environment for my staff, I will either fall foul of the law of the land or simply fail to retain employees of good calibre. I see the emergence of a veterinary union as potentially divisive and would prefer to remain within the broad church of the BVA. This stance, however, is threatened by the proposed reform of representation on BVA council, which effectively disenfranchises some of the smaller specialist divisions. A BVA truly representative of all strands of opinion within the profession would enjoy my continuing support and obviate the need to form new splinter groups, as advocated by Dr Mir.

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL WATTS, MVB, MSc, MRCVS,

38 Manse Road, Kircubbin,

Co Down BT22 1DR.

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