

## Proposed veterinary union

I read with interest Mike Nelson's letter (VR, May 30, 2009, vol 164, p 700) prompted by Sham Mir's letter (VR, May 9, 2009, vol 164, p 604) about a veterinary union.

I would like to share some data that perhaps balances some of the negative material currently being circulated.

I have for the past four years been researching the development needs of veterinary graduates and how they might best be supported during their transition into the workplace. Indeed, I shall be making available a new support package, based on that research, to the graduates of 2009.

As part of this research, I explored the experience and views of 650 undergraduates and 172 graduates about their education, and for the graduates (one to five years qualified), their employment support.

Of graduates in their first job, 74.1 per cent rated their employer positively, with just 8 per cent rating them as very poor and 34.5 per cent rating them as very good (unpublished thesis). I do not suggest that 8 per cent is acceptable, but I do think the debate needs to be balanced and based on clear evidence critically appraised.

In my experience a significant issue is that employers are frequently vets who have usually not been trained in management, managing vets who have no experience of being managed. This is a recipe for difficulties and the answer, I would suggest, is educational.

I have had a lot of contact with undergraduates, graduates and practice owners over the years, as well as considerable experience coaching in the business sector predominantly at the business/science interface. I believe we have two options. We can take a problem-orientated approach (union), which will be confrontational and divisive, or we can take a solutions-focused approach (educational) that builds on the strength of the profession to the benefit of ourselves, our clients and their animals.

Unfortunately, most of us have been trained to be very good problem solvers so the natural tendency is to look for the problem and sort it out without realising that each problem solved is followed by another one (or more!). I would be pleased to share thoughts with anyone interested in a more proactive approach.

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