

# No excuse for poor managers in profession

Dear editor,

I have just been through the torment of an appraisal at work with my employer, who is a veterinary surgeon. It was an hour-and-a-half of criticism, negativity, ultimatums and thinly veiled threats. My colleagues and I are treated with disdain, pretty much most of the time, and they have endured a similar torment during their appraisals, so I don't think it's just me.

As a relatively new employee, I have received no induction, no training, no reviews of my progress, no contract, no direction and a hastily typed-up job description of about four lines. And yet, somehow, the responsibility for my perceived inadequacies has been thrown firmly back to me with a "shape up, or ship out" message attached.

Meanwhile, my employer continues to communicate by muttering and sighing, barking orders, complaining and criticising. I found the whole thing insulting to me as an employee, as an experienced competent VN and as a human being.

This is not the first vet-as-boss position I have had and there is a definite pattern emerging. Most of the appraisals I have had have consisted of the boss doing all the talking, having saved up a year's worth of niggles. Not very constructive at all.

In previous incarnations as head nurse and practice manager, I would never have dreamed of approaching an appraisal with any of my team members in this way.

My conscience would not have allowed me to treat a fellow worker like that. Before I approached my first appraisal as appraiser, I read many books and articles, attended a training session and spoke to friends and colleagues about their experiences and what was good or bad about them. We hear the excuse that there is very little management training in the curriculum for veterinary surgeons, but that just does not hold water any longer. There are many, many sources of help and inspiration out there for managers, whether you are a veterinary surgeon, nurse or receptionist, and to ignore these sources does you and your staff an extreme disservice.

As an employer, you have a duty of care for your staff and a responsibility to ensure their welfare while in your employ. Your employees should be nurtured, valued and respected if you want to get the best out of them. You only get out what you put in, so if your employees are demoralised, leaving in droves or just not up to the job, take a long, hard look at how they are managed before blaming them for not being what you wanted them to be. You deserve good staff and your staff deserve good management. Not everyone makes a good manager, even with all the training in the world, so if you're no good at it, get someone who is.

I hasten to add that I know a great many vets out there who are excellent managers, whether through some innate ability or through training, and they should be rewarded. So, if your bosses are among this number, the next time you talk to them, tell them that they're great and thank them for being good bosses. Give them a virtual hug and say well done. As for the others...

Yours faithfully,

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

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