

## **P-06-1291 Hold an enquiry into the corporate takeover of the veterinary profession in Wales, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 09.10.22**

### **Petition P-06-1291**

**To the Chair and Members of The Petitions Committee of Senedd Cymru.**

Thank you for having this petition as an agenda item.

### **The Minister's correspondence of 8/9/22**

I would like to thank Lesley Griffiths MS the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales for her response.

It's interesting to note that Lesley is aware of several petitions on this issue that our Welsh Government has had to send to DEFRA and the UK Government.

I am also pleased to hear Lesley putting on the record her view that the same professional standards should be expected irrespective of who owns a veterinary practice.

The Minister is correct in her assertion that the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons - RCVS is seen as the regulator of such matters. But the RCVS has already made clear to our Petitions Committee previously their stance on this **1**.

It is clear that this matter has been raised numerous times with the UK Government and DEFRA over a considerable amount of time. But they have chosen to take no action.

In a letter to me of 3/3/2022 the former Minister Sir Zac Goldsmith informed me " we have not taken a view on the ownership model of veterinary practices" **2** .

Meanwhile our Senedd and Welsh Government have made great progress in animal welfare. I know you and many other Senedd Cymru Members will not find it acceptable that this issue isn't a devolved matter . Especially when it's clear the UK Government show no appetite in acting.

The Competition Marketing Authority - CMA have in the past year chosen to halt the acquisition of two veterinary groups by different corporate stakeholder companies. But the CMA's remit is very limited and does not encompass animal welfare. The CMA have chosen never to take action against one of the biggest corporate stakeholder companies who also hold the largest interest in out of hours provision, Independent Vetcare Evidensia. In 2011 Independent Vetcare Evidensia owned and operated eleven veterinary practice's in the UK to date they run over 1,500 veterinary practices.

In a recent Senedd Cymru committee meeting chaired by Paul Davies MS. The Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales stated she was "monitoring this situation very closely".

**It is very clear in my book and many others too that those that should be acting on these serious issues are failing to do so. Not only that but have failed to do so continually since legislation was changed in 1999.**

I would like to commend the submission of a veterinary surgeon that has also been submitted to Members of the Committee. As I think this explains the situation far better than I can from someone who works within the profession. I pay tribute to this veterinary surgeon for doing this .

## **Next Steps.**

I was very grateful to Joel James MS and Carolyn Thomas MS for meeting with me last week . I think it is fair to say they were very surprised to learn the details of how rapidly this corporate takeover has happened. I also shared with them my intention with others to open a Community Interest Group run Mobile Veterinary Practice here on Ynys Môn **3**. To finance this I have taken out an equity release agreement on my home . I simply cannot let matters stay the way they are especially here on the Island. Where we now have no remaining Independently run veterinary practice's.

**1:** I would like to meet with your Chair Jack Sargeant MS to explain to him further the situation as I know how committed to animal welfare Jack is .

**2:** I would like a meeting with the Minister Lesley Griffiths MS with my constituency MS Rhun ap Iorworth in attendance too as I know Rhun shares my concerns .

**3:** I would like this matter referred to the Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales- CAWWG and the Senedd Cymru's Animal Welfare Group chaired by Carolyn Thomas MS.

**4:** I would like to know from the CMA the reasons they have chosen never to challenge Independent Vetcare Evidensia.

Thank you for your time and attention and as ever if I can assist the Committee further I will try my best to do so .

Cofion Cynnes Dr Linda Joyce-Jones. Ynys Môn 9/10/22.

## 20.07.20 Correspondence - Ro...



Mrs Janet Finch-Saunders  
By email: [petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

**Ref:** Exec Office/P-05-895  
**E-mail:** [b.myring@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:b.myring@rcvs.org.uk)  
**Website:** [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

20 July 2020

Dear Mrs Finch-Saunders,

**Re: P-05-895 Correspondence from the Chair of the Petitions Committee**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Petition P-05-895, proposing a scheme to help people access veterinary care for their companion animals.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is the regulator of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in the United Kingdom, with responsibility for setting and upholding standards of conduct and education. The RCVS has no specific jurisdiction under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 over the level of fees charged by veterinary practices. There are no statutory charges and fees are essentially a matter for negotiation between veterinary surgeon and client. Nor is the RCVS responsible for regulating the ownership of veterinary businesses, including questions of individual or corporate ownership. These are matters for the Competition and Markets Authority and, where appropriate, the courts. Therefore, questions of whether the UK or devolved governments should provide additional financial support to animal owners fall outside of our purview and it is not appropriate for us comment on the petition.

We note that the petitioner states, in their separate comments, that *"the setting of fees by private veterinary practice's is a business decision. But this is a matter the RCVS (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) as the body who claims to regulate the profession in the UK can act on if they choose to do so"*. However, this is not the case; we have no powers under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1996 or our Royal Charter to set fees.

The petitioner mentions our 'under care' review and expresses concerns that the appropriate authorities will not be consulted. We would like to note that the under care review is not directly related to veterinary fees, and that it will include an open consultation that any stakeholder may respond to.

I hope that this response has been useful; please let me know if there are any areas in which we can provide clarification.

Yours sincerely

Mandisa Greene

**President, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons**





Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park  
Minister of State

Dr Linda Joyce-Jones

Our ref: PO2022/04258/DT

[lindabach@btinternet.com](mailto:lindabach@btinternet.com)

3 March 2022

Dear Linda,

Thank you for your email of 7 December 2021 about mergers within the veterinary profession. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I appreciate the concerns that you have raised. Unfortunately, the pressure on my diary is significant and I am sorry it will not be possible for me to meet with you both. However, I understand that you feel strongly about this, and I do hope you both find this response helpful. As a Government, we believe high standards of animal welfare are hallmarks of a civilized society, but we have not taken a view on the ownership model for veterinary practices.

I should like to clarify that veterinary practices are private businesses and neither Defra nor the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) intervene concerning the level of fees nor the models of ownership. Fees are set by the market through agreement between the vet and their clients.

An exception is if individual vets charged prices that were so disproportionate, they amounted to disgraceful professional conduct, then the RCVS could intervene. For background, may I refer you to the RCVS' Code of Conduct for veterinary surgeons, found here:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/practice-information-and-fees/>.

We are continually in touch with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and other groups such as the RCVS on this matter. As you have correctly identified, it is for the CMA to investigate possible irregularities affecting business competition. As I am sure you would appreciate, the CMA does not divulge the details of any pending or active investigations as this could compromise the success of an investigation.

As you are looking into whether an investigation is being launched into mergers within the veterinary profession in Wales and the United Kingdom more widely and whether the CMA is looking at this matter, please see the link below for details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/competition-and-markets-authority>.

Please also find CMA's contact details as below:

Competition and Markets Authority  
The Cabot  
25 Cabot Square  
London  
E14 4QZ  
United Kingdom

Email: [general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk)

Telephone: 020 3738 6000

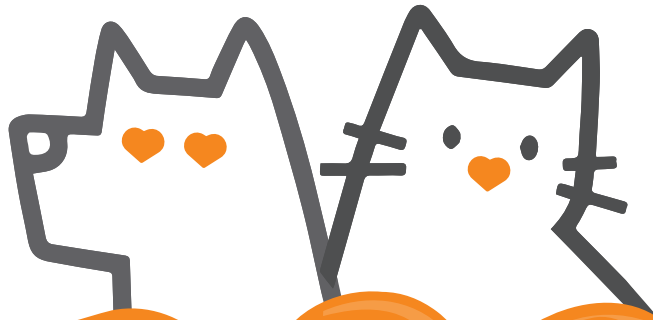
Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance with this or any other matters in the future.

With best wishes,



**THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK**

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