BVA and BCVSp Joint Officers

Thursday 13 May 2021, 15.00

Zoom meeting

Attendees

James Russell – BVA President

Daniella Dos Santos – BVA SVP

Hayley Atkin – BVA Policy Officer

Gayle Hallowell- BCVSp President

Karla Boland- BCVSp Secretary

Minutes of the last meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting of 27 May 2020 were accepted as an accurate record.

Covid-19

1. It was noted that working throughout the pandemic had taken its toll on the profession and the main concern for most was now burnout and ensuring appropriate wellbeing support. K. Boland reported that specialists had seen an increase in case load, it was thought this was due to an increase in pet ownership and clients having more time to observe the health and welfare of their pets.

BCVSp activity update

1. G. Hallowell reported that BCVSp membership and finances were stable, and BCVSp was continuing to engage with the public to increase understanding of the role of specialists, as well as the referral process. In terms of member engagement, activity had slowed due to the pandemic, and due to general webinar-fatigue. It had been agreed that BCVSp were going to delay membership engagement events until they could be held in-person.

EU Exit

1. Recruitment of specialists

It was noted that EU exit had impacted on recruitment of specialists into both academia and private practice. There were concerns that financial barriers to recruitment of non-UK specialists could result in shortages in certain specialist areas (particularly pathology) and a shortage of applicants to residency programmes in 3-4 years’ time. In discussion it was noted that:

* In academia, EU applicants for residencies now have to pay international fees, which reduces the stipend that universities are able to award, and significantly reduces the take home salary (one example being a take home salary of just £4,000).
* In private practice, some employers will not consider non-UK applicants for internships unless they have settled status due to visa costs being seen as not economically justifiable for a one-year post. As residencies are usually 3–4-year posts this is less of an issue as the visa costs are more justifiable for employers.
* It was harder to recruit UK graduates to specialist posts as many do not consider earning potential of specialists and are put off by the initial stipends which may be less than other salaries in the job market.

Action – BCVSp to provide BVA with case studies of recruitment issues, particularly from those specialisms that are hard to recruit to

1. Sentience

BCVSp conveyed their thanks to BVA for spearheading the campaign to enshrine animal sentience into UK legislation. All were pleased to see the recent announcement that government would be addressing this in their upcoming Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill, and BVA updated that they would be engaging with officials on the detail.

1. EU legislation on medicine use in farm animals

K. Boland raised concerns that statutory withdrawal periods where analgesics are used in food producing animals are precluding the provision of adequate pain relief during on-farm procedures, and in turn causing welfare harms. It was noted that change would likely depend on both the upcoming review of veterinary medicine regulations, as well as encouraging drug manufacturers to assess licensing parameters. K. Borland reported that Switzerland had much lower statutory withdrawal periods and this may be something to look into further.

Telemedicine

1. G. Halloway updated that BCVSp felt the BVA position on under care took a sensible approach to the use of telemedicine, recognising that it has a role to play in certain conditions, but is not appropriate on its own. It was reported that specialists do a lot of vet-vet telemedicine, and that this has grown with the development of different technologies. While this technology does make communicating with specialists quicker, it can restrict dialogue and result in diagnoses made with incomplete information about the patient eg. services that remotely interpret CT scans carried out in general practice.

Sustainability

1. J. Russell reported that BVA continued to engage with Vet Sustain and assess where BVA can amplify and add value to their valuable work. BVA had recently teamed up with Vet Sustain, BVNA, and SPVS to launch [The ‘Greener Veterinary Practice Checklist’](https://vetsustain.org/resources/vet-practice-checklist) - a shareable graphic designed to help veterinary workplaces operate in a more environmentally friendly. BCVSp were encouraged to share this with their networks and share any best practice from the specialist sector with BVA going forward.

Date of the next meeting

1. A date for early 2022 would be confirmed in due course.

Action: BVA to confirm date for 2022