

The Review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act

The Review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act has been going on for several years and as far as I can see no one has suggested that homoeopathy be specifically included as a permitted therapy. Below is a letter I have written to several MPs to ask that homoeopathy be specifically included in a revised Vet Surg Act. It would be great if as many of you as possible could send a similar letter.

Please feel free to use the template and alter as appropriate. It applies just as well to owners of "companion" animals, and to consumers of animal products so can you circulate it to as many people as you can think of. We need volume of comment to have an effect that is if you do feel that Homoeopathy needs to be specifically included in the Act. At present it is not mentioned and is therefore excluded and it is not therefore strictly legal for a vet to ask a homoeopath to help. We need to point this anomaly out and get homoeopathy named as being allowed within the Act. It does fit onto one page JUST!!

Suggested addressees

Your own MP, (The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA), Rt Hon Hilary Benn (Secretary Environment Food and Rural Affairs), Lord Rooker, (Minister ditto) Rt Hon Michael Jack (chairman of select committee investigating review), Peter Ainsworth (shadow secretary Environment Food and Rural Affairs), David Tredinnick MP (he spoke up to retain Homoeopathic Hospitals), Wilfred Emmanuel Jones (the Black Farmer standing for Conservatives in Chippenham, North Wilts Conservative Association, Unit 15, Forest gate, Pewsham, Chippenham, SN15 3RS), Supermarkets selling Organic products, Jamie Oliver, Hugh FW etc.

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Dear Sir,

I understand that the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) has been under review for some time. I am writing to you, on behalf of the 300 farmers we have taught, to request that the Act is amended to enable them to provide the animals in their care with the same range of quality healthcare options that they would expect to have available for themselves and their family.

As far as I am aware, there has been no discussion about the provision of therapies other than those already included within the Act (manipulative therapies) and I am surprised to note that proper public consultation about such important issues has not taken place. This is at complete odds with the basic principles of openness and transparency.

The public concept of health care has changed very much since 1966 with many owners preferring to use "alternative" therapies, and many pointing to the continued danger of contamination of the food chain (first noted by the Swann Report). Animal owners pay directly for the treatment their animals receive, so should therefore have the right to choose both the type of treatment most appropriate to their animal's needs and who administers the treatment. This is particularly important for a discipline such as homeopathy, which is a complex therapy based upon individualisation. Animal owners can certainly learn enough about homeopathy to self prescribe for straight forward, acute situations, but for more complicated conditions, homeopathy is most effectively practised by a qualified homeopath.

There are currently approximately 250 UK vets trained in homeopathy, and less than 12 of them treat farm animals. This restricts the choices available to livestock farmers, which can have particularly serious implications for organic farmers. It potentially limits the availability of chemical/hormone free meat available within the food chain, which in turn impacts upon the health and wellbeing of UK citizens. As consumers of veterinary services animal owners pay directly for what they require but most have a vet who refuses to offer understanding of homeopathy or refer the animal to someone who does. I am asking for your help in setting right this anomaly. It is astonishing to consider that, under the current Act, it is perfectly legal for a vet with no training in homeopathy to prescribe homeopathic medicines but a qualified homeopath would be acting illegally if they prescribed homeopathy for any but their own animals.

Please will you intervene on my behalf, and ask the Select Committee charged with overseeing revision of the Act, to ensure that homeopathy is specifically included as a named discipline in the revised Act? Also, please will you ensure that it is legal for qualified homeopaths with appropriate training in animal husbandry to advise for animals at the owner's request?

There is considerable evidence of need, as observed by insurance companies as well as homeopaths and farm veterinary surveys. Revision of the Veterinary Surgeons Act offers us the opportunity to bring delivery of animal healthcare into line with that available to people. I would appreciate acknowledgement of this communication, and am happy to provide further information relating to issues I have raised, should that prove helpful.

Yours sincerely,

M. Christine Lees