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REVIEW BLASTS 'NAÏVE' AND 'SOFT' ANIMAL GUIDANCE

A GROUP of vets, biologists and scientists has slammed guidance intended to help update Britain's pet shops and local authorities on husbandry and sales practices, claiming it "unfit for purpose" and "naïve".

In a review for the *Journal of Animal Welfare, Science, Ethics and Law Veterinary Association*, BSAVA past-president Mike Jessop, biologist Clifford Warwick and Animal Protection Agency director Elaine Toland, among others, claim the Model Conditions for Pet Vending Licensing (MCPVL) document from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) has an "absence of important basic information", worsened by some "questionable or misleading content".

They also claim an emphasis on pet trade-led information is "naïve and potentially harmful", which "may result in animal husbandry conditions that could contravene UK law".

The group said problems exist throughout the document, which was consulted on with organisations including the BVA, RSPCA, Defra, Dogs Trust, the Pet Industry Federation, the Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association and International Cat Care.

The review says: "The front cover depicts a hamster resting on a plain wooden cage furnishing, while the text itself states wood should not be used in hamster cages."

The reviewers also felt quality of advice was lacking in some species.

"We found certain contributions, for example dogs and cats, to be relatively well prepared. In contrast, other small

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mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians and fish, for example, to be poor. In our view... a significant amount of the material for these sections has been produced by parties with trade-vested interests rather than impartial and objective contributors."

The review criticised "extremely minimal" advice of "low instructional value" on public health, while some information, such as on primates and invertebrates, has been omitted completely.

The group regards the MCPVL as "important and timely", but also described it as a retrograde step. In addition, they noted 10 participants originally signed up to develop it had dropped out.

"The guidance is arguably an example of what occurs when consultations go wrong, science is ignored, and soft options adopted. While strong reviewer cautions resulted in a considerable amount of poor material being deleted since prepublication drafts, in our view the MCPVL remains unfit for purpose."

"However, improving material by expunging much of its substance must be considered a guarded compliment."

Mr Jessop believes the document "needs a rethink and to be properly constructed with wide consultation".

"The structure is therefore flawed and

would have been more useful to have followed a standardised protocol for each species section."

He said the CIEH should "rewrite the guidance relying more on what evidence is and is not known".

"It should be web-based for easy updating, it should have key points for easy access of data for inspection [and] it should be a resource for educating the trade in proper management of pets and not simply a means of passing an inspection," he said.

BVA president Robin Hargreaves said the association got involved as Defra had failed to repeal and replace the Pet Animals Act 1951 (the act requiring pet shops to be licensed) when the Animal Welfare Act was introduced in 2006. He said compromises were necessary to get buy-in from a range of stakeholders.

"BVA believes it would be useful to get feedback from local authorities on how the conditions are working in practice," he told *Veterinary Times*.

Citing the MCPVL as an "interim" measure until updated regulations can be introduced, Mr Hargreaves said the MCPVL is an "important tool" for local authorities when inspecting pet shops.

The CIEH rejected the criticism. Chief executive Graham Jukes said: "Having considered the information presented to us, the guidance represents good practice in the field and is designed to assist those who set licence conditions in such premises," he said.

Visit <http://bit.ly/1vk8DU6> to read the review, or visit <http://bit.ly/1u1Ss2c> to read the MCPVL.



CPD for overseas vets

MORE than 50 overseas veterinary graduates either working or considering working in the UK attended a free day of CPD.

The event – jointly organised by the RCVS, the BVA and the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) – aimed to give overseas graduates an introduction to life as a practising vet in the UK, and was attended by surgeons from countries including Iran, Mexico, Nigeria and Norway.

The college said it wanted to advance communication skills and reduce the risk of overseas veterinary surgeons having concerns raised against them. Speakers from all three organisations were on hand to provide information in areas such as developing skills and knowledge, finding the right job, employment rights and the support on offer if a concern is raised.

Luis Sainz-Pardo, managing director of VetAbroad, which provides coaching and consultancy to prepare non-UK vets for working in the UK, gave one of the talks. Speaking about his experiences working in the UK, he gave advice on client and colleague relationships and how to fit in with the UK regulatory environment and practice life.

There was also a paid-for master class in communication skills from the VDS. This featured role play from professional actors to illustrate how vets can effectively communicate during everyday working life.

RCVS director of communications Lizzie Lockett said: "With overseas graduates making up such a key part of the UK veterinary workforce, it's essential we give them support, and delegate feedback suggests this has been a useful event."

More superb courses from the RVC



Webinar Plus: Soft tissue surgery principles

Monday 3rd November - Sunday 30th November

This four week online course is for vets who wish to review, consolidate and update their knowledge of surgical principles and techniques. It will also be good preparation for anyone working on the CertAVP B-SAP.1 module.

Managing osteoarthritis - a practical approach

Wednesday 5th November

The aim of this course is to enhance management of osteoarthritis in the 21st century.

Feline orthopaedics

Thursday 13th November and Friday 14th November

This lecture and practical course aims to increase awareness of specific feline orthopaedic diseases and how to manage them.

For full course details about these and our other courses see www.rvc.ac.uk/cpd

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To register or for further information contact the RVC CPD Unit: Tel: +44(0) 1707 668865 or Email: cpd@rvc.ac.uk

Onsite courses are held at the RVC's Hawkshead Campus, Hawkshead Lane, North Mymms, Herts. AL9 7TA

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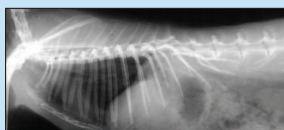
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