**Scottish Parliament elections 6 May 2021
Template letter to PPCs: manifesto pledges**
Details of prospective parliamentary candidates in your constituency can be found at: <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/>

Dear *[insert name]*

**Pledges to enhance animal health and welfare, support the veterinary profession, and protect public health in Scotland**

I am writing to you as a veterinary surgeon in *[name of constituency]* and a member of the British Veterinary Association (BVA), which is the leading representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK.

The veterinary profession in Scotland works to improve the health and welfare of animals, to monitor and control the spread of diseases, to assure the safety of the food we eat, and to facilitate trade. The profession is relatively small, but our reach is significant, and our role is critical to the health and welfare of not only animals, but the rest of society too. We feel the profession is in a unique position from which to offer informed advice on animal health and welfare.

Ahead of the Scottish Parliament elections, the British Veterinary Association Scottish Branch is calling on all parties to sign up to [key pledges](https://www.bva.co.uk/media/4066/bva-scottish-manifesto-2021.pdf?dm_t=0,0,0,0,0) to enhance animal health and welfare, support the veterinary profession, and protect public health in Scotland. The pledges are based on BVA animal welfare campaigns, including those on animal sentience, welfare at slaughter, illegal puppy imports, and ear cropping of dogs, as well as BVA’s commitment to evidence-based disease control, and their call for animal health and welfare to be fundamental to shaping the new agricultural policy for Scotland.

*[Insert a brief description of the work you do]*

I would ask you as a prospective parliamentary candidate to consider and support the following pledges that resonate strongly at a personal and/or local level:

*[Please choose the pledges from the list below that are most important to you]*

1. ***Boost the veterinary workforce***

*Vets play a vital role in trade, protecting public health, food safety and animal health and welfare. To continue to trade, we need enough vets to meet the additional demands for export and import certification associated with leaving the EU. We’re calling for increased funding for veterinary school places and attractive salaries for vets undertaking government work.*

1. ***Protect the welfare of animals at slaughter***

*Slaughter without pre-stunning compromises the welfare of millions of animals. While there’s currently no non-stun slaughter in Scotland, we’re calling for clear labelling of meat and meat products from animals that have not been stunned before slaughter, to improve consumer choice. Millions of fish are farmed each year as part of Scotland’s world-leading aquaculture sector. To maintain Scotland’s reputation as a leader in animal welfare, we’re calling for specific legislative protection for the welfare of farmed finfish at slaughter.*

1. ***Direct agriculture funding towards improving animal health and welfare***

*Public money to replace the Common Agricultural Policy should be used to incentivise and support good animal health and welfare outcomes, based on veterinary expertise. In shaping the new agricultural policy for Scotland, we must ensure that animal health and welfare, sustainability, and responsible antimicrobial use, are central to those plans and vets are involved.*

1. ***Commit to evidence-based disease control***

*Poor animal health leads to welfare problems. It can also result in economic costs for Scottish agriculture and can contribute to climate change as low productivity is not sustainable. Endemic diseases can only be eradicated through partnership working between farmers, vets and government, and maintaining the current level of government resource spent on the scanning surveillance network.*

1. ***Improve welfare during transport for Scotland’s livestock***

*We’re calling for evidence-based improvements to welfare at transport legislation. Proposals should avoid a disproportionate emphasis on journey times and instead recognise the importance of improving journey conditions for animals, while ensuring they are workable for rural and remote areas such as the Highlands and Islands.*

1. ***Enshrine animal sentience in law***

*Animal sentience must be enshrined in law as a priority, covering all animals including decapod crustaceans and cephalopods. This principle recognises that animals are sentient and importantly puts a duty on the state to have due regard for animal welfare in the development and implementation of policy.*

1. ***Strengthen legislation against illegal puppy imports***

*There has been a steep rise in demand for ‘pandemic puppies’ and we’re concerned that people may be turning to illegal breeding activity or imports. We’re calling for strengthened pet travel legislation to clamp down on illegal puppy smuggling by raising the age at which puppies can enter the country.*

1. ***Ban the import of dogs with cropped ears***

*A recent spike in cases of illegal ear cropping points to the need for urgent action to curb this worrying trend. It is an unnecessary, painful mutilation with no welfare benefit. While illegal to crop in the UK, it is not illegal to sell ear-cropped dogs, import them, or take dogs abroad to be cropped. We want to close these loopholes and end the trend in ear-cropped dogs for good.*

1. ***Ban aversive training devices***

*Evidence shows that reward-based training is not only the most effective training method for dogs and cats, but also makes sure animals are protected from any pain or suffering as part of their training. We’re calling for a complete ban on the sale and use of electric shock collars for dogs and cats.*

1. ***Improve traceability in dog breeding***

*We’re calling for anyone using a dog for breeding to be required to register with their local authority to improve traceability for local authorities and transparency for prospective dog owners.*

1. ***Tighten the regulation of fireworks***

*Fireworks impact the health and welfare of animals, humans, and our environment. We’re calling for the recommendations of the Fireworks Review Group, including the introduction of no-firework zones, to be implemented as soon as possible.*

1. ***Put animal welfare on the national curriculum***

*The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act puts a duty of care on individuals to provide for the five welfare needs of animals. It is essential that children learn about the welfare needs and the concept of a duty of care to ensure animals have good health and welfare and a life worth living.*

Please do not hesitate to contact me or the BVA Public Affairs team at publicaffairs@bva.co.uk if you would like further information on any of BVA’s manifesto asks.

I hope I can count on your support.

Kind regards

*Include your name and contact details and/or your practice address if you are in practice within the constituency.*