

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State BEIS
Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State Defra
Rt Hon Alister Jack MP, Secretary of State for Scotland
Rt Hon Simon Hart MP, Secretary of State for Wales
Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

19 March 2020

Support for veterinary businesses

We welcome the scale of the Government's latest response announcing a package of measures to help businesses affected by Covid-19 and recognise that the measures represent a lifeline for many. However, we are extremely concerned that the veterinary profession has so far been overlooked.

Veterinary businesses across the UK provide an essential service protecting animal health and welfare and public health. We are aware that for many small and medium sized veterinary businesses, this is going to be a period of significant financial difficulty as they struggle to cope with staff shortages and reduced turnover, whilst also continuing to provide healthcare for animals. Failure to provide adequate financial support for these businesses will put their viability at risk, and as such have negative consequences for not only animal health and welfare but also public health.

Veterinary surgeons working with food producing animals play a vital role in protecting public health and ensuring food safety, but the work vets in other sectors are doing at this time is equally important. For many people who will be self-isolating over the coming weeks and months ahead, companion animals will provide crucial companionship and be imperative to maintaining their mental health and wellbeing. The impact on the wellbeing of people in the UK if our valued companion animals cannot access the healthcare they need during the coming weeks and months should not be underestimated. We also can't ignore the longer-term impact in the event that veterinary businesses are left with no option but to close for good.

In order to support veterinary practices during this very challenging time we are calling for:

- veterinary practices to be recognised as business critical and an assurance that they will not be instructed to close;
- the 100% business rate relief in England that has already been granted to the retail and hospitality industry to also be applied to veterinary businesses;
- the 75% rates relief announced in Scotland to include veterinary businesses;
- Wales and Northern Ireland to apply similar measures to ensure coordinated and consistent support for veterinary businesses across the UK.

Veterinary practices must be recognised as providing a critical service to many vulnerable people as further measures are considered and implemented over the coming weeks. We urge government to do whatever it takes to support the veterinary profession to continue to provide essential care to animals, and in doing so support public health and wellbeing across the UK.

Please contact me at president@bva.co.uk or publicaffairs@bva.co.uk.

Yours sincerely



Daniella Dos Santos
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