

Joint BVA, BSAVA and BVZS response to the Defra consultation on primates as pets in England

5 February 2021

Who we are

- 1) The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With over 18,000 members, our primary aim is to represent, support and champion the interests of the United Kingdom's veterinary profession. We therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health and welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.
- 2) The British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) exists to promote excellence in small animal practice through education and science and is the largest specialist division of BVA representing nearly 10,000 members.
- 3) The British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS) is the specialist division of the British Veterinary Association (BVA), dealing with exotic pets, free-ranging wildlife and zoo animals, and has over 400 active members. The membership includes registered veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working with these species at all levels, from those in general practice providing a service for herpetologists, aviculturists, aquarists and the owners of exotic pets including primates, to those working in animal sanctuaries, wildlife parks, bird gardens, zoos and aquaria, and with free-living wild animals.
- 4) Summary of position
We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on proposals to prohibit primates kept as pets unless they are kept to zoo-level standards and are pleased to see that many of our comments as part of the Call for Evidence have been given consideration. Primates are long-lived, intelligent, and socially complex animals. It is almost impossible for private owners to meet the welfare needs of primates as set out in the Animal Welfare Act. We therefore support a ban on the keeping of primates as pets subject to the criteria outlined in the consultation document. We also support the proposed transitional registration scheme for existing primate keepers, subject to these keepers receiving annual inspections and continuing to meet the five welfare needs as set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the standards currently set out in the Defra statutory Code of Practice for the keeping of primates.
- 5) We recognise that there are a limited number of individuals in the UK who maintain small privately-owned collections of primates for conservation and/or breeding purposes as part of recognised breeding programmes. Although these are not currently subject to inspection under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 they are kept to at least equivalent standards, meeting the particular requirements of the species and with the provision of specialised veterinary care. We therefore support proposals to establish a licensing scheme for these individuals.
- 6) The veterinary profession and other zoo inspectors should be consulted on the comparable licensing conditions and the inspection process before they are implemented to ensure they are fit for purpose, and reflect the best available evidence to support the welfare of primates.
- 7) Under both the licensing and transitions registration scheme, it is paramount that primates, and the conditions in which they are kept, are robustly inspected and assessed by vets with appropriate knowledge and expertise in primate health and welfare. We would expect the effectiveness of the licensing and registration scheme to be reviewed two years after implementation, with ongoing reviews at three-yearly intervals thereafter.
- 8) To safeguard the welfare of primates and prevent loopholes across all settings and regulatory regimes, the Secretary of States Standards for Modern Zoo Practice, the Defra *Code of Practice for*

the welfare of privately kept non-human primates, and the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 should be consistent, and set out evidence-based, high standards for the welfare of primate species.

9) Definition of primates and scope of proposals

The consultation document sets out that these proposals relate to non-human primates and ‘any member of the biological order Primates; this includes all the species commonly referred to as lemurs, monkeys and apes.’

10) As these proposals are refined further and legislation is drafted, more detail should be included as to the taxa and family of primates that are in scope. In particular, we would suggest all members of the Order Primates, as per the [Handbook of the Mammals of the World Vol 3](#), is referred to. We would suggest that specifically mentioning ‘Order’ is essential and listing species is avoided as these can change on a frequent basis. In addition, we would suggest this element of the new regulations is reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to capture intended primates.

11) Effective enforcement

The proposed measures may have the unintended consequence of driving primate ownership ‘underground’, particularly amongst those owners who would not meet the proposed standards or pass the proposed inspections. This may result in a negative health and welfare impact for the primates concerned, with animals being kept in sub-optimal conditions long-term and keepers not seeking veterinary advice and care for fear of being reported. In addition, if inspections costs are high, it might result in increased levels of non-compliance by primate keepers or owners. It is therefore essential that local authorities have adequate resources to effectively enforce these proposals.

Q6. Do you agree that the Government should introduce a new prohibition on keeping primates privately in England, which also applies to breeding, acquiring, gifting, selling, or otherwise transferring primates, apart from to persons licensed to keep primates to zoo-level standards?

12) We support the proposed ban on keeping primates as pets, which would also apply to breeding, acquiring, gifting, selling, or otherwise transferring primates, apart from to persons licensed to keep primates to at least zoo-level standards eg individuals in the UK who maintain small privately-owned collections of primates for conservation and/or breeding purposes as part of recognised breeding programmes.

13) We have significant concerns as to whether the welfare needs of non-human primates can be met when they are kept privately as pets. These needs, as set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, are:

- its need for a suitable environment,
- its need for a suitable diet,
- its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
- any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
- its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

14) Primates are long-lived, intelligent, socially-complex animals¹ and we can think of no circumstances where a primate would benefit from being kept privately as a pet. They are unsuitable to be kept as companion animals. Primates are extraordinarily difficult to care for properly as pets, due to their complex social and dietary needs – very few can provide the necessary resources to meet their welfare needs (if at all possible).

15) With the exception of a few solitary primate species, most primates cannot be kept on their own, but require to be housed with at least one conspecific and often complex family groups to be able to

¹ Jennings M and Prescott MJ (2009) Refinements in husbandry, care and common procedures for non-human primates. *Laboratory Animals* 43: Supplement 1.

express natural behaviour; reflecting one of the needs set out in the five welfare needs.^{2,3} They require both an indoor and outdoor enclosure to ensure adequate exercise, exposure to UV light (which may require additional lighting) and each species of primate has specific dietary requirements. It should also be noted that primates carry zoonotic diseases to which pregnant people, elderly people and children would be particularly susceptible. Similarly, humans can transmit pathogens to primates. Primates therefore need to be housed in such a way that limits two-way disease transmission and protects animal welfare.

- 16)** The husbandry requirements for primate groups are complex, requiring robustly constructed enclosures large enough to prevent hierarchical stress⁴ and maintain safety and security. In addition, most primate species have such specialised UV-B, temperature, humidity, lighting, behavioural and dietary requirements that would be extremely difficult to fulfil their basic welfare needs if kept as pets. It is therefore almost impossible for the vast majority of private owners to meet the welfare needs of primates as set out in the Animal Welfare Act.
- 17)** In 2013, a BVZS membership survey, in which 100 members replied (c. 1/3 of the total membership at that time), indicated that the most common presenting problem amongst primate patients in their care were:
- 61% Nutritional/metabolic
 - 11% Reproductive
 - 8% Dental
 - 8% Trauma
 - 6% Infectious
 - 4% Behavioural
 - 2% Other

- 18)** Defra's own [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Privately Kept Non-Human Primates](#) recognises the above complex welfare needs, and highlights:

"Primates should not be considered as pets in the accepted sense of the word: they are not species that can be treated as part of the family in the way that a cat or dog might be. They are wild undomesticated animals that cannot be house-trained or fully tamed.

With the exception of a few solitary species, primates should not be kept singly. They should not generally be kept in domestic living spaces, and instead require specialised accommodation. Furthermore, primates exhibit a wide range of behaviours, in particular social interaction and foraging behaviour."

Q7. Do you agree that the Government should use zoo-level welfare standards as the basis for a new 'specialist private primate keeper' licensing scheme?

- 19)** We recognise that there are a limited number of individuals in the UK who maintain small privately-owned collections of primates for conservation and/or breeding purposes as part of recognised breeding programmes. Although these are not currently subject to inspection under the Zoo Licensing Act they are kept to at least equivalent standards, meeting the particular requirements of the species and with the provision of specialised veterinary care. We therefore support the proposed licensing scheme and agree that licensing conditions and inspection

² Novak MA, Meyer JS, Lutz C and Tiefenbacher S (2006) Deprived environments: Developmental insights from primatology. In: Mason G and Rushen J (eds.) Stereotypic Animal Behaviour: fundamentals and applications to welfare. Second edition. Pp 153-162

³ Lewis MH, Gluck JP, Petitto JM, Hensley LL and Ozer H (2000) Early social deprivation in nonhuman primates: long-term effects on survival and cell-mediated immunity. *Biological Psychiatry* 47:119-126.

⁴ Buchanan-Smith HM (2010) Environmental enrichment for primates in laboratories. *Adv. Sci. Res.* 5:41-56.

process should be at least comparable to the zoo licensing scheme which operates under the 1981 Zoo Licensing Act.

- 20) However, we are concerned that the terminology 'specialist private primate keeper' is potentially confusing. In most professions, including the veterinary profession, 'specialist' is a restricted term used to describe those with defined qualifications and experience. Therefore we would suggest the terminology used to describe the licensing is changed to 'Licensed private primate keeper.'
- 21) The license holder should be the person responsible for the animals, as opposed to the owner (who may be someone different eg. a zoo).
- 22) The veterinary profession and other zoo inspectors should be consulted on the comparable licensing conditions and inspection process before they are implemented to ensure they are fit for purpose, and reflect the best available evidence to support the welfare of primate species.
- 23) To safeguard welfare and prevent loopholes across regulatory regimes, when the Secretary of States Standards for Modern Zoo Practice, the Defra *Code of Practice for the welfare of privately kept non-human primates*, and the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 are updated, it is important that consideration is given to how they align with the licensing conditions developed for the private primate keepers licensing regime.

Q8. Do you agree that licence conditions relating to specific standards setting out how primates must be kept should include a requirement for primates to be microchipped as a means of permanent identification?

- 24) We support this proposal, microchipping is a safe, effective and permanent way to identify individual animals, ensuring the traceability of any primates kept under the new licensing scheme. However, microchipping would need to be carried out by a vet with adequate expertise in primate health and welfare to ensure appropriate handling, check for any existing microchip and ensuring satisfactory placement of the microchip at insertion. In many circumstances, depending on the size and species of primate, it is preferable to microchip the primate under general anaesthetic to reduce the stress of handling and restraint.
- 25) It will be necessary to support the public to find vets with appropriate expertise and experience in primate health and welfare and other exotic species. The RCVS maintains a publicly available register of vets with specialist qualifications in zoo and wildlife medicine, many of whom will have experience in working with primates. There will also be vets who are not recognised specialists but have considerable experience of working with these animals. BVZS is currently developing a 'Find a vet' function for their website that will identify such members of the society. Defra could signpost both the RCVS and BVZS lists to enable registered keepers to search for a vet with appropriate experience and competence in primate health and welfare. It is important to recognise however, that there may be a small number of vets who are neither registered specialists nor BVZS members but have appropriate experience and competence in primate health and welfare.
- 26) It is paramount that vets are not required to scan for microchips in primates at every presentation or visit, for the same reasons as we don't support compulsory scanning in dogs and cats. [Read the BVA, BSAVA and SPVS position on microchip scanning \(dogs\) and databases.](#)
- 27) Scanning microchips in primates at every presentation or visit may cause additional stress for primates by requiring unnecessary physical handling, and even sedation for x-ray to locate the microchip if it has moved. Where scanning is deemed appropriate, where possible site vet visits to facilitate scanning primates in their home environments should be encouraged to prevent the need for transportation to a practice, which may result in additional stressors and welfare issues for the primates. Stress can also be minimised through scanning through a catch-up box or using training to facilitate scanning, rather than manual catching and restraint.

- 28) It would be best practice for a vet to scan for a microchip during the primate's first vet visit, to make sure that the animal is correctly identified when checked against the national databases. However, as each case will be different, it is essential that vets are allowed to exercise their own professional judgement in these situations in order to safeguard animal welfare and public safety.
- 29) If the veterinary profession were required to play a role in enforcing primate keepers' compliance with microchipping requirements this may cause unintended negative consequences for animal welfare by compromising the vet-owner relationship. This crucial relationship is based on trust and confidentiality and if compromised could act as a disincentive to accessing veterinary advice and care, ultimately impeding the profession's primary responsibility to protect animal health and welfare. See Q14 for more information on the veterinary profession's primary responsibility to health and welfare.
- 30) Policy makers should also not oversimplify the impact of scanning microchips based purely on a raw estimate of 'time cost' for vets. It is important to consider that these are all times on top of normal consult times (which may not go to plan themselves), which then has a knock-on effect on the time vets have to provide services that are essential for animal welfare.
- 31) Paired with that is time taken away from clinical consulting if a vet becomes embroiled in an owner dispute or were to be required to scan and verify chips more frequently, as these aren't easily quantifiable or finite tasks. Given the number of databases there are to check (now 15 that are compliant with Defra requirements), administrative tangles to get to the bottom of, as well as the emotionally charged and time consuming situations that can occur with ownership disputes and resulting communications, these can be very time-intensive activities across a period of time, detracting away from vets' main duty to provide services for animal health and welfare.

Q9. Do you agree that a system of inspection should apply to 'specialist private primate keeper' licence holders?

- 32) We strongly support this proposal. As part of this regime, licence holders should be inspected by an independent veterinary surgeon with experience of primates. Any system of inspection should include an inspection before the licence is granted, and risk-based periodical inspections during the licence period to ensure compliance with licensing conditions and welfare standards.
- 33) Licence holders should be required to complete an annual return to the local authority where they must detail any changes to the conditions in which their primates are kept. This would enable the local authority to identify if an additional inspection is necessary to verify welfare standards are being maintained.
- 34) As part of this inspection regime, local authorities should be given access to the existing list of veterinary surgeons who conduct zoo inspections. This would make it easier for local authorities to identify and contact relevant vets with the appropriate knowledge and experience in primates to support their inspections. Controls would need to be put in place to avoid any conflicts of interest and ensure vets remain independent and do not inspect premises where they are providing general veterinary care.

Q10. Do you agree that Local Authorities should apply and enforce the system of licensing and inspection for 'specialist private primate keepers'?

- 35) We support this proposal, however it is important to recognise that adequate resources and funding will be required to ensure Local Authorities are able to effectively enforce the 'specialist private primate keepers' licence and the transitional registration scheme. We welcome the government's commitment to provide funding for any net additional costs.

Q11. Do you agree that Local Authorities should have discretion as to the length of a 'specialist private primate keeper' licence?

- 36) We support the proposal that Local Authorities would have discretion as to the length of a licence, with the maximum length of a licence limited to four years for those providing the highest welfare standards for their primates. A matrix risk assessment similar to that currently in place for other species covered by The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 should be used to determine the length of the licence within this four-year period. Our support of this element would be dependent on an annual inspection as outlined in the consultation document.

Q13. Do you agree that anyone subject to the new prohibition must register their primate with their Local Authority?

- 37) If appropriate rehoming capacity is not available (see Q16), we would support a transitional registration scheme enforced by local authorities, recognising that it may not be possible to safely rehome all those primates currently kept as pets who would be subject to the ban. Local Authorities should maintain a database of registered primate keepers along with any inspections carried out. Registration by primate keepers should be by means of a simple online process. If an owner has more than one primate, all primates must be individually registered, including some form of clear identification so that they can be uniquely identified.
- 38) Individuals participating in the transitional registration scheme should be required to regularly demonstrate that they are meeting the five welfare needs as set out in the Animal Welfare Act and the standards currently set out in the Defra statutory Code of Practice for the keeping of primates. We would therefore strongly recommend that registered primate keepers receive annual visits and assessments by the local authority to determine whether improvement notices are required. In line with consultation proposals these should be carried out by suitably qualified LA inspectors or by LA inspectors accompanied by an independent veterinary surgeon with experience of primates.
- 39) There should also be controls in place to monitor and prevent trading in primates, importing primates, and breeding for non-conservation purposes and outwith the scientific context.
- 40) Whether primate keepers are registered by the local authority or centrally, it is essential that owner/keeper addresses are not accessible by FOI request. If this were the case, it may attract unwanted attention putting keepers at risk and resulting in a barrier to compliance with the new proposals.

Q14. Do you agree that there should be a fixed time period to register all currently held primates which are subject to the new prohibition, beyond which a penalty would apply in relation to primates which are subject to the prohibition?

41. We support this proposal. However, consideration should be given to how local authorities intend to identify unregistered primates.
42. We recognise that, if the proposed prohibition is introduced, vets have a role to play in educating their clients that under the proposed prohibition they will be required to register their primate with their Local Authority and apply for the new 'specialist private primate keeper licence' if they meet the required zoo-level standards or participate in the transitional registration scheme. However, vets cannot be held responsible if a client chooses to be non-compliant.
43. However, we would strongly oppose any mandatory requirement on the veterinary profession to report any primates that have not been registered with the local authority in the fixed time period based on the reasons outlined in paragraphs 44 -45 below.
44. We would also strongly oppose any mandatory requirement on the veterinary profession to scan the microchips of primates at every presentation.

45. On admission to membership of the RCVS, and in exchange for the right to practise veterinary surgery in the UK, every veterinary surgeon makes a declaration:

*" I PROMISE AND SOLEMNLY DECLARE that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and that, ABOVE ALL, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care."*⁵

46. 'ABOVE ALL' is understood to convey that veterinary surgeons must put the welfare of animals committed to their care above a mandatory need to report.
47. If the veterinary profession were required to play a role in enforcing or policing the proposed legislation this will likely have unintended negative consequences for animal welfare by compromising the vet-owner relationship. This crucial relationship is based on trust and confidentiality and if compromised will likely act as a disincentive to accessing veterinary advice and care, ultimately impeding the profession's primary responsibility to protect animal health and welfare.

Q15. How long should this fixed time period be?

- 48) The fixed-time period should be no longer than 6 months, supported by a strong and targeted UK government and local authority communications campaign to ensure primate keepers are aware of their responsibilities under the new transitional registration scheme.

Q16. Do you agree that, following an initial visit and assessment by the Local Authority, primates not subject to the new 'specialist private primate keeper' licence (or to a zoo licence) may continue to live where they are if their basic welfare needs are being met, or will be met subject to an improvement notice?

- 49) We broadly agree with this proposal, primate keepers who are part of the transitional registration scheme should be required to demonstrate they are meeting the standards currently set out in the Defra statutory Code of Practice for the keeping of primates.
- 50) Rescue centres and zoos should be consulted as to their capacity to rehome those primates currently kept as pets who would be subject to the ban. However, zoos holding primates must be Balai registered and receive primates with similar registration unless there is dispensation granted by APHA which is not a given, not least to manage disease surveillance programmes and similar. In addition, it is important to emphasise that should rehoming capacity be available, we are concerned that placing these primates in large rescue enclosures already housing existing and established individual or groups of primates will unlikely be beneficial to the welfare of the primates in question or the primates that may already be housed in these enclosures given social complexities of mixing primates.
- 51) Primates that have been kept as pets in inappropriate conditions often have mental or behavioural issues that prevent them being kept in larger groups of the same species, meaning that rescue centres/zoos would have to keep these animals in smaller groups or pairs of the same species. Similarly, callitrichids (tamarins and marmosets) have a family structure so keeping them in larger groups would not be appropriate. Further, when groups of common squirrel monkeys and many other primate species are mixed this can result in aggression and fighting between animals, causing injury and fatalities.
- 52) In addition, it is paramount that there is continued monitoring of primate keepers who register with their local authority, to ensure that the welfare needs of their primates continue to be met. We would

⁵ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/>

therefore strongly recommend that registered primate keepers receive annual visits and assessments by the local authority to determine whether improvement notices are required. Initial and ongoing assessments should be carried out in conjunction with an independent veterinary surgeon with expertise in primates.

- 53)** As primates are mostly social animals, if a primate that is being kept in a pair dies, the registered keeper should be required to notify the local authority. This should then trigger an independent veterinary inspection of the keeper's facilities and the surviving primate, to determine whether it is appropriate to continue to keep the remaining primate as a solitary animal, and the potential impact on its welfare.
- 54)** However, we question the effectiveness of improvement notices in safeguarding welfare. To be effective, these notices would need to specify a tight timeframe in which improvements must be made and verified by local authorities. They must also allow for the removal of animals should these improvements not be made.
- 55)** It is also crucial that there is a mechanism in place to immediately remove animals should the inspector feel its environment cannot be sufficiently improved to meet its basic welfare needs.

Q17. Do you agree that the keepers of primates should have their primates micro-chipped as a means of permanent identification?

- 56)** We support this proposal.
- 57)** We support this proposal, microchipping is a safe, effective and permanent way to identify individual animals, ensuring the traceability of any primates kept under the new licensing scheme. However, microchipping would need to be carried out by a vet with adequate expertise in primate health and welfare to ensure appropriate handling, check for any existing microchip and ensuring satisfactory placement of the microchip at insertion. In some circumstances, depending on the size and species of primate, it may also be preferable to microchip the primate under general anaesthetic to reduce the stress of handling and restraint.
- 58)** It will be necessary to support the public to find vets with appropriate expertise and experience in primate health and welfare and other exotic species. The RCVS maintains a publicly available register of vets with specialist qualifications in zoo and wildlife medicine, many of whom will have experience in working with primates. There will also be vets who are not recognised specialists but have considerable experience of working with these animals. BVZS is currently developing a 'Find a vet' function for their website that will identify such members of the society. Defra could signpost both the RCVS and BVZS lists to enable registered keepers to search for a vet with appropriate experience and competence in primate health and welfare. It is important to recognise however, that there may be a small number of vets who are neither registered specialists nor BVZS members but have appropriate experience and competence in primate health and welfare.
- 59)** It is paramount that vets are not required to scan for microchips in primates at every presentation or visit, for the same reasons as we don't support compulsory scanning in dogs and cats. [Read the BVA, BSAVA and SPVS position on microchip scanning \(dogs\) and databases.](#)
- 60)** Scanning microchips in primates at every presentation or visit may cause additional stress for primates by requiring unnecessary physical handling, and even sedation for x-ray to locate the microchip if it has moved. Where scanning is deemed appropriate, where possible site vet visits to facilitate scanning primates in their home environments should be encouraged to prevent the need for transportation to a practice, which may result in additional stressors and welfare issues for the primates. Stress can also be minimised through scanning through a catch-up box or using training to facilitate scanning, rather than manual catching and restraint.
- 61)** It would be best practice for a vet to scan for a microchip during the primate's first vet visit, to make sure that the animal is correctly identified when checked against the national databases. However,

as each case will be different, it is essential that vets are allowed to exercise their own professional judgement in these situations in order to safeguard animal welfare and public safety.

- 62) If the veterinary profession were required to play a role in enforcing primate keepers' compliance with microchipping requirements this may cause unintended negative consequences for animal welfare by compromising the vet-owner relationship. This crucial relationship is based on trust and confidentiality and if compromised could act as a disincentive to accessing veterinary advice and care, ultimately impeding the profession's primary responsibility to protect animal health and welfare. See Q14 for more information on the veterinary profession's primary responsibility to health and welfare.
- 63) Policy makers should also not oversimplify the impact of scanning microchips based purely on a raw estimate of 'time cost' for vets. It is important to consider that these are all times on top of normal consult times (which may not go to plan themselves), which then has a knock-on effect on the time vets have to provide services that are essential for animal welfare.
- 64) Paired with that is time taken away from clinical consulting if a vet becomes embroiled an owner dispute or were to be required to scan and verify chips more frequently, as these aren't easily quantifiable or finite tasks. Given the number of databases there are to check (now 15 that are compliant with Defra requirements), administrative tangles to get to the bottom of, as well as the emotionally charged and time-consuming situations that can occur with ownership disputes and resulting communications, these can be very time-intensive activities across a period of time, detracting away from vets' main duty to provide services for animal health and welfare.

Q18. Do you agree that the keepers of primates not subject to the new 'specialist private primate keeper' licence (or to a zoo licence) should have their primates neutered?

- 65) We recognise the need to prevent breeding of primates in non-specialist environments. However, careful consideration must be given to the most appropriate method of neutering or contraception to avoid the disruption to social hierarchies and prevent the need to separate males and females, which could lead to solitary animals.
- 66) It is therefore crucial that any intervention to prevent breeding is determined on a case-by-case basis by the clinical judgement of a vet with appropriate primate experience, based on their assessment of the individual primate and their social structure.
- 67) Depending on the individual animal and social structure, several options are available:
- **Temporary contraceptive methods:** Contraceptive hormone implants eg. progestogen in females, or deslorelin in males or females. It is important to emphasise that these methods only last a finite amount of time (usually 6-12 months) before they need to be replaced, and frequent procedures for insertion and removal may have welfare implications. Consideration must also be given to the efficacy of these methods.
 - **Permanent methods:** surgical neutering (salpingectomies in females and vasectomy or castration in males) undertaken by a vet with relevant experience.
- 68) It will be necessary to support the public to find vets with appropriate expertise and experience in primate health and welfare and other exotic species. The RCVS maintains a publicly available register of vets with specialist qualifications in zoo and wildlife medicine, many of whom will have experience in working with primates. There will also be vets who are not recognised specialists but have considerable experience of working with these animals. BVZS is currently developing a 'Find a vet' function for their website that will identify such members of the society. Defra could signpost both the RCVS and BVZS lists to enable registered keepers to search for a vet with appropriate experience and competence in primate health and welfare. It is important to recognise however, that there may be a small number of vets who are neither registered specialists nor BVZS members

but have appropriate experience and competence in primate health and welfare.

Q19. Do you agree that the keepers of primates not subject to the new ‘specialist private primate keeper’ licence (or to a zoo licence) should be required to register their primate with a veterinary practice?

69) We support this proposal. It is essential that primates who are not subject to either a ‘specialist primate keepers’ licence or a zoo licence (for example those who are ‘transitional registered keepers’) should also be registered with a vet who has appropriate facilities, skills and experience, and is competent to care for their primate-specific needs.

Q20. Do you agree that the keepers of primates not subject to the new ‘specialist private primate keeper’ licence (or to a zoo licence) should be required to have their primates examined by a vet at least once a year, with confirmation of that examination and its findings provided to the Local Authority?

70) Transitional registered keepers should be required to receive an annual veterinary inspection and welfare assessment, as opposed to examination. Physical examination of primates may cause additional stress and have a negative welfare impact. In addition, assessing the primate in its enclosure will allow the vet to provide a more holistic assessment of the animal’s health and welfare *in situ* to the local authority.

71) Animals should have a written health plan developed with their nominated primate experienced vet.

Qs 22-25 Penalties and enforcement

72) In terms of the penalties and sanctions, we would suggest these should be appropriate and proportionate to the offence and should act as a clear deterrent for individuals who are non-compliant with the relevant legislation.

Q26. Do you think a new power of entry should be introduced to allow Local Authorities to enter a property, with a warrant, where they reasonably believe an unlicensed primate is being kept without having been registered with the Local Authority?

73) We support the introduction of powers to ensure that Local Authorities can effectively investigate suspicions that an unlicensed primate is being kept illegally, such powers are crucial in ensuring compliance with the proposed ban.

Q27. Should the requirement for a warrant to enter a property, where a Local Authority reasonably believes an unlicensed primate is being kept without having been registered, be limited to residential premises?

74) No, we consider any additional powers granted to Local Authorities should apply to all private premises.

Q30. Do you have any comments on any potential unintended consequences that could arise as a result of any of the measures proposed in this consultation?

75) The proposed measures may have the unintended consequence of driving primate ownership ‘underground’, particularly amongst those owners who would not meet the proposed standards or pass the proposed inspections. This may result in a negative health and welfare impact for the

primates concerned, with animals being kept in sub-optimal conditions long-term and keepers not seeking veterinary advice and care for fear of being reported. In addition, if inspections costs are high, it might result in increased levels of non-compliance by primate keepers or owners.

- 76) Whether primate keepers are registered by the local authority or centrally, it is essential that owner/keeper addresses are not accessible by FOI request. If this were the case, it may attract unwanted attention putting keepers at risk and resulting in a barrier to compliance with the new proposals.

Q31. Do you have any quantitative evidence on the number of primate keepers in England and the average number of primates held by primate keepers?

- 77) The RSPCA report: [The need for a ban on pet primates](#) estimates the number of primates kept as pets in Britain. However, the report outlines that due to private trade and a lack of regulation, the total number of primates kept as pets in the UK is unknown.

- 78) In 2013, a BVZS membership survey, in which 100 members replied (c. 1/3 of the total membership at that time) indicated that the most commonly kept species of primates seen in practice were:

- 40% Marmoset
- 18% Squirrel monkey
- 16% Capuchin
- 14% Tamarin
- 6% Lemur
- 4% Macaque
- 2% Other (eg Ukari)

- 79) In a scientific context, annual statistics relating to scientific procedures performed on living animals in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, including on non-human primates, [are available through the Office for National Statistics](#). It is important to note that the number of procedures is not necessarily equal to the number of animals since some animals are reused (under specific rules).