

**British Veterinary Association Day Speech**  
**Dr. Elizabeth Mullineaux, Outgoing BVA President**  
**25 September 2025**

When I took on the presidential chain of office last September, I knew I was stepping into the role during a period of immense change and uncertainty for our profession. The Competition and Markets Authority investigation into veterinary services for household pets was well underway and BVA's campaign for reform of the outdated Veterinary Surgeons Act was gathering pace.

Representing our members and being a voice for the profession against this backdrop of unpredictability has certainly been challenging, but it's a challenge I've relished. It's afforded fantastic opportunities to drive an ambitious agenda to shape the future of a veterinary profession we can all be proud of. I can honestly say that I've enjoyed every moment of my busy presidential year, even the occasions when I've perhaps been taken out of my comfort zone, such as delivering speeches to politicians; being grilled on BBC's Today programme and sitting on Channel 4's big red couch at Crufts talking to Claire Balding.

---

As I'm sure you can imagine, my term has been dominated by the CMA's investigation. As an official 'main party' in the process, BVA has led from the front and we've a special spotlight session later today where I will talk about the work we've been doing on behalf of our members and the wider profession. The CMA's provisional decision is now expected in mid-October, so responding to it and supporting members as they navigate the inevitable changes ahead will undoubtedly be a big part of my senior vice presidential year.

Much of what BVA does is in the spotlight. The CMA investigation has had relentless media and public interest. BVA has worked hard to ensure that a high-profile, positive and nuanced portrayal of vets and the highly specialised work we do, is shared across the media and social media. We've particularly done this through our positive communications campaign - more on that later.

----

There's also a large amount of work going on behind the scenes, out of the public eye, that will have a big impact on the future of the profession – in particular working alongside Defra on reform of the current Veterinary Surgeons Act. In the past, getting reform of the Act over the line has failed, in part due to differences of opinion within the profession. This time around, getting support and broad consensus is going to be vital if we're going to get the reform that we so urgently needed. That's why, between January and July this year, twice a week, I joined colleagues from the RCVS, BVNA and Vet Schools Council in intensive task-finish meetings, referred to as 'sprints', organised by Defra to draft for consultation what reformed primary legislation could look like.

These sprints are just a one part of this marathon towards reformed legislation. You can expect to hear much more from us on this over the next few months as we share the draft consultation details with members. Reformed legislation will have far-reaching impacts for

vet teams in practice, so I'd urge all of you to sign up for our webinars and feed your views into the formal consultation which we hope will take place at the end of the year.

----

Through it all, I'm proud that my presidential theme of 'a profession that cares' has come shining through in all our work championing animal welfare, our colleagues and clients. Be it urging the CMA to consider animal welfare and owner choice in its remedies or lobbying for legal protection for the vet nurse title in a reformed Veterinary Surgeons Act.

Being a profession that cares for colleagues could not be better illustrated than through the enthusiasm shown towards the Great Workplaces by BVA accreditation scheme. We knew there was an appetite for such a programme to support the profession to help tackle recruitment and retention issues by focusing on workplace culture, but it has been a pleasant surprise to see just how popular it's proving to be. Congratulations to all the workplaces newly accredited over the last year, including our very first Gold accredited workplace, Swadlincote Veterinary Centre in Derbyshire!

-----

Alongside all this, it has also been business as usual with BVA campaigning for and driving policy change on issues around animal health and welfare. In April, we launched our updated Animal Welfare Strategy, following on from the work done during the presidential year of my friend and colleague Sean Wensley. This outlines BVA's achievements in improving animal welfare since 2016 and sets out six new areas for future action.

In April, we published a new policy position on farrowing crates for pigs, recommending a gradual phasing out and replacement by a system that would maximise the welfare of sows and piglets as well as ensure human safety.

We're also working with vet and MP Danny Chambers on his Puppy Smuggling Bill which is making good progress through the UK Parliament. If passed into legislation, the Bill will tackle illegal imports of dogs, cats and ferrets, reducing the risk of diseases like rabies, and closing the loophole that allows dogs with cropped ears to be brought into the country.

Two months ago, we published a policy position on the responsible use of parasiticides in grazing animals. The next step is to further collaborate with others working in this field to ensure a holistic and evidence-based approach to parasite control in these species.

Last but not least, after years of applying constant pressure, we're finally starting to see progress from the UK Government on a long-term solution to ensure access to veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland. Our policy position on the issue published earlier this year clearly influenced the new EU-UK Veterinary Agreement and we're keeping a close eye on the detail as it emerges.

-----

As my year as BVA president comes to a close, I'm hugely proud of what we've achieved and the incredible work the team at BVA has delivered. The work we do is driven by BVA members, without you and your support none of this can happen. We really are a profession that care about animals, clients and each other, and this year has only reinforced that and I couldn't be prouder to have been a part of it.

As I pass on the baton into the very capable hands of Rob Williams, I feel an immense sense of gratitude towards the profession for allowing me the opportunity to represent it, and to my fellow officer team and BVA staff for their support through this journey.

Thank you very much.