

BVA submission to Migration Advisory Committee: Review of Salary Requirements for the Skilled Workers Visa

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With around 19,000 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.

While we understand the need for updates to immigration regulations, we must stress the significant impact these changes will have on the veterinary profession on two fronts.

Workforce shortage of Government vets

Government vets provide vital services across the country from disease surveillance, supporting animal welfare, ensuring food quality, veterinary medicine regulation, and maintaining human security and public health. According to the [RCVS 2024 Workforce Modelling Report](#) the vacancy rate for Government vet services stands at over 25%. Examining ability to meet demand in the coming years the report found that supply was 79% of total demand in 2023, and although this will increase slightly to 2029, it will then fall so that in 2035 it is likely to be 78% of total demand.

The implementation of the £49,500 threshold will make it almost impossible to recruit veterinary surgeons from overseas unless they are either very experienced or under 26 years of age. This change will have far-reaching implications across the UK veterinary profession, particularly impacting areas such as public health, and remote and rural livestock practice, as raised in the recent [EFRA committee inquiry](#) into vet shortages. FSA highlighted the importance of this in their [written evidence](#) for the session, demonstrating how vets working across the meat sector also underpin the economy, providing value to the £9.1bn domestic meat industry and the £2.1bn meat export trade.

A significant proportion of UK Government vets are EU nationals (12%). The changes to the salary thresholds for the Skilled Worker Visa will either mean that many EU nationals will have to leave at the end of their visa or public sector workplaces will need to raise their salaries to accommodate said changes putting further pressure on already strained public finances.

Whilst we appreciate the purpose of this review is not to decrease the overall threshold, we would certainly argue the necessity of implementing discounts or a different threshold for those foreign nationals who perform critical work in the public veterinary sector.

Salary threshold cliff-edge

Data from the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons from 2025 indicates that UK veterinary surgeons typically do not reach the salary threshold for a skilled worker visa of £49,500 until they have 4 years experience (£51,418 median salary for 4 years experience). The majority of vets wishing to enter the UK from overseas are recently qualified vets with little or no clinical experience. According to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) the average age of overseas vets entering the UK to work is 28 meaning most would not be able to apply for the reduced salary allowance either.

Those veterinary surgeons that entered under the age of 26 on the reduced salary of £38,000 are likely to face a cliff-edge as they are unlikely to meet the qualifying salary threshold of £49,500 when their employer comes to renew their Skilled Worker Visa after 2-3 years of employment.

We propose that the salary threshold for Skilled Worker Visa's reflect real data on salaries paid to veterinary surgeons with the discount rate set at the median graduate salary and the standard rate set at the median salary for a vet with 3 years clinical experience as reported in the annual Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons Salary Survey. This would ensure two things (1) foreign veterinary surgeons working in the UK were paid at the level of UK nationals (thus not applying a downward pressure on salaries) and (2) would mean that veterinary employers could recruit overseas vets to meet current vacancies unable to be filled by UK veterinary surgeons.