

British Veterinary Association Day Speech

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Incoming BVA President 2025/26

24 September 2026

Thank you very much.

It is an enormous privilege to stand here today as President of the British Veterinary Association. I am excited, slightly daunted, and very conscious of the responsibility that comes with representing such an extraordinary and diverse profession.

First, Danny, thank you for speaking to my nomination.

Danny Chambers and I have been friends for more than 20 years, since university – when, it is fair to say, neither of us presented particularly compelling evidence that one day he would be sitting in Parliament and I would be standing here as President of the BVA.

We have both come quite a long way since our rather less statesmanlike student days.

I am enormously proud of what Danny is doing now – not only as an MP, but as someone using that role to make a real difference for animal health and welfare and for the veterinary profession more broadly. It means a great deal to have you here today.

There are also some people without whom I simply couldn't do this.

To my children sat in the audience: thank you for giving up rather more of your mother than you might ideally have chosen to for the next year.

And to my husband: thank you for keeping the home fires burning, holding everything together in Aberystwyth, and somehow doing all of that while also maintaining a fairly high-flying career in medicine yourself. I realise there is a certain irony in me spending a year talking about resilience while stress-testing the resilience of my own life!

Living in Aberystwyth and working in London will add another dimension. By the end of this year I expect to have an unusually detailed knowledge of the rail delay compensation schemes. The less said about yesterday's journey the better.

I also want to thank the incredible BVA team, and the officers who have led BVA before me.

Liz Mullineaux, as you finish your time as Senior Vice President, thank you for everything you have given to BVA and for your support, wisdom and friendship.

Rob Williams, thank you for your leadership over the past year, doing it all with a cool head and a smile on your face, and particularly for the generosity with which you have helped me prepare to take this on.

And I am delighted to welcome Fieke Molenaar as our new Junior Vice President. Fieke, everyone told me that the JVP year would go unbelievably quickly. I didn't believe them. They were right. So enjoy it – I think you have about six minutes.

We have a significant year ahead.

BVA will be helping the profession navigate the implementation of the CMA reforms – making sure that changes work in practice for veterinary teams, clients and, above all, animal health and welfare.

We will continue the long campaign to reform the Veterinary Surgeons Act. We have made real progress, but we now need to convert that progress into legislation and secure the parliamentary time needed to bring veterinary regulation into the world in which we actually practise.

And we will have a major focus on disease resilience.

That is particularly close to my own heart.

My presidential theme is *A profession prepared and united behind national disease resilience*.

Veterinary medicine has become increasingly specialised, and there is enormous strength in that expertise. But specialisation can also leave us in silos: farm vets, small animal vets, equine vets, government vets, public health vets, researchers, academics and many more.

Some challenges simply don't respect those boundaries.

A major animal disease outbreak is one of them.

If the UK faces the next major notifiable disease emergency, I want us to ask whether we are genuinely ready – not just whether government is ready, or whether our farm veterinary colleagues are ready, but whether we, as a profession, are ready.

Do we understand the role we could play? Do we have the right skills and training? Can we mobilise people when they are needed? And can we bring the enormous breadth of expertise across this profession together quickly enough to make a difference?

That doesn't mean everybody needs to become an expert in foot-and-mouth disease or avian influenza.

It means recognising that we are part of something bigger than our own particular job, practice or species.

And that idea reaches beyond disease preparedness.

One of the things I most want to champion this year is the idea of one veterinary profession.

BVA represents vets working in extraordinary numbers of different ways – in clinical practice, government, academia, research, industry, public health, conservation and veterinary science. I want every one of our members, whatever they do and wherever they work, to feel that their voice has a place here.

I am also particularly proud to take on this role as a Welsh vet, living and working from Wales while representing colleagues across all four nations of the UK.

There is an old Welsh saying:

“A fo ben, bid bont.”

Literally: “If you would be a leader, be a bridge.”

I rather like that as a thought for the year ahead.

Because I don't think leadership is about having all the answers. It is about connecting people – connecting expertise, perspectives and sometimes very different parts of a profession – so that together we can achieve more than any of us could alone.

So that is what I hope to do over the coming year: to listen, to connect, to represent you, and occasionally, I suspect, to spend a very long time on a rail replacement bus service.

It is a tremendous honour.

In Wales we say, “Gorau chwarae, cyd chwarae” — the best play is team play. And that is perhaps the thought I want to carry into this year. We are a diverse profession, but we are stronger when we act together — greater than the sum of our parts.

I am proud to represent Wales, and proud to represent all of our members, whatever part of veterinary medicine or science they work in.

Diolch yn fawr iawn.