BVA open letter

BVA, working with BVNA, has coordinated an open letter from veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and veterinary students on the principle of Article 13. The letter is signed by almost 1200 BVA and BVNA members and was published in the Daily Telegraph on Tuesday 28 November 2017.

Dear Editor

Promoting the relevance and implications of animal sentience is a key goal for the veterinary professions, of which we are members. Due to the advancement of animal welfare science, the fact that animals are sentient – that is, they can consciously experience feelings such as fear, hunger, pleasure and pain – is not in question.

What remains unclear is how and when this concept will be explicitly enshrined in UK legislation post-Brexit.

We support the principle of Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty, which not only recognises that animals are sentient, but – importantly – puts a duty on the state to have due regard for animal welfare in the development and implementation of policy. This is the crux of the debate. UK legislation sets out a duty on animal keepers, but we strongly believe that same duty should be also placed on our national governments.

We are therefore calling on this Government to bring forward an amendment at Report stage. And if it is not to be included in the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, the Government must explain how it will be enshrined in UK law before we leave the EU.

Kind regards

John Fishwick, British Veterinary Association
Gudrun Ravetz, British Veterinary Association
Simon Doherty, British Veterinary Association
Wendy Nevins, British Veterinary Nursing Association