

Fellowship of Animal Behaviour Clinicians



Response to RCVS Legislative Reform Public Consultation 14/02/2021

The Fellowship of Animal Behaviour Clinicians (www.fabclinicians.org) is a professional organisation representing independently accredited clinical animal behaviourists, alongside those who support our mission. We work to forge strong links between animal carers, behaviourists and veterinary professionals. At the time of writing, we had 148 members, including 27 vets and 13 RVNs – the remainder of the membership are working in behaviour in some capacity as paraprofessionals alongside the veterinary team. Our members include six of the nine RCVS Specialists in Veterinary Behavioural Medicine, as well as ambassadors of major animal charities, such as the RSPCA, Dogs Trust and International Cat Care.

FAB Clinicians very much welcome this public legislative reform consultation by the RCVS. We strongly support the recommendations of the LWP, particularly that of 'Part 1: embracing the vet-led team' and regulating paraprofessionals.

FAB Clinicians was formed with the primary aim of promoting the highest standards of evidence-based clinical animal behaviour practice, maintaining the unique responsibility of the veterinary surgeon at the heart of an animal's clinical care. Physical health is closely interlinked with behavioural health. To ensure the best standards of animal welfare, we believe that this means a clinical animal behaviourist should only work on veterinary referral and involve the veterinary team throughout the behaviour assessment and treatment process. The responsibility towards the animal's well-being cannot be completely delegated to another authority; accordingly, ongoing exchange of information about the patient is essential throughout the management of problem behaviour. Not only might the medical status of a patient change in a way that has pertinent effects on its behavioural management; but also the behavioural management of the patient, might impact on its physical health. To this end, we believe it is essential that the veterinary profession recognise their responsibility to maintain oversight of cases, and that the animal

remains under the veterinarian's care, with associated checks as required by the RCVS.

Therefore, in the best interests of the animals and caregivers we serve, we believe clinical animal behaviourists should be accredited by an independent assessment body. This accreditation should affirm the behaviourist as being sufficiently qualified and experienced in each species with which they wish to practise. In other words, the standards for clinical work should be set and assessed by a body that is external of and operates independently to any trade body representing practising behaviourists. Currently, the minimum standard for our independently accredited members is graduate Level 6 academic training or equivalent and a breadth of clinical skills in the requisite areas. To stay accredited, we believe practitioners should be required to demonstrate to the independent body on an annual basis that they work to the highest ethical standards, keep abreast of the latest scientific findings and evidence-based techniques, as well as maintain a sufficient caseload to keep their clinical skills up-to-date.

FAB Clinicians are passionate about ensuring the emotional well-being of animals by nurturing the human-animal bond and providing evidence-based behavioural support in an empathetic and compassionate manner. We strive to attain these aspirations partly through our community supporting the development of independently accredited clinicians and those working towards independent accreditation. In turn, this allows us to collaborate effectively with our veterinary colleagues to provide the best possible treatment for the animals under our care together.

Thank you for considering our points. We would be happy to provide further evidence as required and to answer any questions the RCVS may have.