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25 August 2007

Sefi's Ear Discharge

Than and Nichola Wright, owners of Sefi the 6-year-old cat, have done us a great service. They are to be congratulated on their stoicism and forbearance in the face of counterfeit science and techno veterinary medicine.

In the June 2007 Post Graduate Foundation (PGF) [Control & Therapy 4803](#) they recount the sorry tale of how a discharge from Sefi's ear led them through an obstacle course of first opinions, expert opinions, bacteriological tests, radiographic tests, test therapies and radical surgery.¹ After spending several months, and doubtless hundreds of dollars, the Wrights say:

We were highly concerned and frustrated at the lack of progress we had made and the costs outlaid which had provided no answers as to why she had the condition or what was causing it. As a last resort, our vet told us about Dr Richard Malik at the PGF.

Dr Malik recommended that the owners discontinue feeding the prescription dry cat 'food' and provide a more natural diet which straightaway had the desired effect: 'After changing her diet, it didn't take long for us to see a rapid improvement in the condition of her ear and the happiness of our cat.'

In conclusion the Wrights state:

We have learnt that while our vet went through appropriate routine testing to find the cause of Sefi's ear problems, there isn't always an obvious diagnosis and factors such as diet and environment should be investigated in the first instance.

Let's face it, we all make mistakes from which we can hope to learn. The discharge from Sefi's ear contains lessons old and new.

At the 1993 Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) Annual General Meeting the members approved the then PGF Director, Dr Douglas Bryden's motion:

That in keeping with the AVA policy of providing forums for the membership, the AVA establish an independent committee to prepare a report on the interaction between diet and disease in companion animals.²

In the event the AVA Executive restricted the terms of reference to an investigation of existing literature on the diet and periodontal disease nexus. The committee was 'assisted' by a pet-food company employee. Notwithstanding, in February 1994 AVA *News* carried the front page article:

Diet and disease link — final report

In summary the committee found, 'there is sufficient evidence to incriminate an association between diets of predominantly soft consistency and periodontal disease' and that veterinarians 'need to be concerned about the relationship between diet and health'.

The reasons for restricting the terms of reference as compared to the very broad specification in the motion were as follows:

- The committee believed the concerns raised required urgent attention and comment. It was considered that within the time frame set by the AVA it was not possible to explore every aspect of dietary interaction with disease.
- Information which could be gathered on the broader issues would be unlikely to add more than is already well known.
- Concentration should be placed on periodontal disease and diet because this was the principal area of current concern to the Australian veterinary profession.
- It was felt that if periodontal disease could be prevented then any secondary complications from this problem would be reduced.

There is prima facie evidence to justify concern by veterinarians. Pet owners should consider the need to provide some 'chewy' material as well as the basic nutrient intake of their dog or cat.

Periodontal disease may be associated with the occurrence of other diseases but the available evidence is inconclusive. Periodontal disease is arguably the most common disease condition seen in small animal practice and its effects on the gums and teeth can significantly affect the health and well being of affected animals. This is sufficient in itself to give reason for concern. Proof of additional systemic effects is not necessary to justify further action.

Further research is required to better define the relationship between particular diet types and oral health in dogs and cats. Those investigating small animal health problems should also take diet and diet consistency into account when researching systemic diseases — possible confounding effects of diet and poor oral health must be considered in such studies.³

Clearly the AVA Diet and Disease Committee, in 1994, established an ethical and professional benchmark applicable to Australian clinicians, researchers and educators.

Previously in the June 1993 Post Graduate Committee *Veterinary Dentistry* Proceedings 212 a NSW lawyer's opinion was published indicating that processed pet-food related matters may become issues of relevance in the future:

1. Potential claims by pet owners under various pieces of consumer legislation throughout the States and Territories of Australia.
2. In the Federal sphere potential Trade Practices Act claims for false or misleading claims may be made either in relation to advertising or promotional material or labels.
3. The new Truth in Labelling activities instituted by the Federal Government.
4. Potential problems or claims under the recently introduced Product Liability provisions in Part V of the Trade Practices Act.
5. The, as yet, unknown effect of class actions which have been lawful in Australia since the 5th day of March 1992 which may tend to overcome the existing drawbacks to actions brought by individual pet owners, namely the high cost of litigation and claims which may amount to only several hundreds of dollars in relation to an individual pet.

The foregoing relates to potential claims against manufacturers, distributors and possibly even retailers of processed pet food. Query what may be the legal problems of veterinarians who fail to consider the issues in this paper or fail to address those issues in advising pet owners who make known to the veterinarian that they rely wholly and solely on processed pet food to supply their pets' diet. Is it too much to suggest that, as pet owners, in common with everyone else in the community become more litigious, veterinarians may some day share top billing on a Writ?⁴

It seems to me that we know, or at least should know, the biological, ethical and legal imperatives regarding the veterinary treatment of carnivores in our care. Sadly though, in respect to Sefi the cat and thousands like her, these things are more honoured in the breach than the observance. What's to be done and by whom? May I suggest that perhaps the Board of the Post Graduate Foundation* may have a role to play?

As a way forward, and in the first instance, I suggest that the Board could review:

- a.) The content of PGF courses and publications, as they relate to both wild and domestic carnivores, in light of biological imperatives.
- b.) The objectivity, affiliations and possible conflict of interest of PGF course teachers.
- c.) The diverse legal implications of the pet diet and disease issue as may apply to veterinary clinicians, researchers and educators.

Publication of the review findings would honour the good work started by Than and Nichola Wright and would help the veterinary profession to learn from history, keep faith with Sefi the cat and better secure our future.

*In August 2007, at the time of submission of this article for publication in the Control & Therapy Series, the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science of the University of Sydney was overseen by a Board of Directors. The name changed in August 2008 to Centre for Veterinary Education (CVE) overseen by an Advisory Council.

Notes

1. Wright, T and Wright, N (2007) [Waxy Ear Canal in a Cat](#), *Control & Therapy* No 4803, Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science, University of Sydney
2. *Australian Veterinary Association News* (1993) Pet food produces lively AGM, June, pp 1 and 9
3. *Australian Veterinary Association News* (1994) Diet and disease link — final report, February, pp 1 and 6
4. Lonsdale, T (1993) Preventative Dentistry, in *Veterinary Dentistry*, Proceedings of the Post Graduate Committee in Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, Sydney, 212, 235–244 Web: www.rawmeatybones.com/PrevDent.html

No Conscience: CVE ducks, weaves and rejects

Following first submission in August 2007 and final rejection in November 2008 the article above was accepted and re-accepted for publication several times

Below is some of the email correspondence from Dr Hugh White, Director of the CVE and some CVE Advisory Councillors. By virtue of its release under the Freedom of Information Act this correspondence is now in the public domain. You may forward, copy and communicate this information in any way you choose.

Date: Monday, 19 May 2008 1:12 PM
To: "Hugh White" <h.white@usyd.edu.au>
From: Tom Lonsdale <tom@rawmeatybones.com>
Subject: Junk pet food and the vet profession
CC: Richard Malik, Jie RMB

Dear Dr White,

Since 1992 Richard Malik and I have been discussing the junk pet-food issue. <http://www.rawmeatybones.com/tvVideo/Pandemic/pandemic.html>

I believe that we broadly share experiences and opinions on the veterinary dimensions of this matter. But recently we've hit an obstacle regarding my wish to publish the [above] draft C+T.

Richard suggested that I seek a meeting with you to discuss the draft and such matters arising.

You are likely familiar with some of the issues. However, I believe that the *Nexus* article provides a snapshot: http://www.rawmeatybones.com/articles/Nexus07_pub_articletext.pdf

Three previous Directors of the PGF have published articles in support: http://www.rawmeatybones.com/pgf/rmb_doc.htm

and <http://www.rawmeatybones.com/vetsay.php>

I appreciate that you are likely busy settling into your new position and hope that you can set aside some time to meet with me and my wife Jie Liu.

Thanks in advance.

Best wishes,

Tom Lonsdale

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From: "Hugh White" <h.white@usyd.edu.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 8 October 8:16 AM
To: Arthur Webster; David Day; David Snow; George Mack; Leo B
Jeffcott; bosindicus@hotmail.com; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Canfield; Paul
Gotis-Graham; Sarah Webb; Tony McGloin
Subject: FW: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Dear Councillors

I have sent you the email and submission for C&T [above] which I have been sitting on for some months. This arrived on my computer shortly after I became Director having been passed on by Richard Malik who was not prepared to publish in its present form without giving other bodies the right to respond.

I met with Tom Lonsdale and his partner in May or June and listened to his story. As many of you are no doubt aware he is a zealot who believes the pet food industry wields an inordinate amount of influence on the vet profession and Tom believes they should be resisted and all vets should be promoting the "raw meaty bones" concept — about which Tom has published at least two books and numerous articles.

Tom argues that Doug Bryden supported his arguments with the AVA and that the PGF/CVE should take a stand on the ethics of promoting the pet food industry in any way. He basically challenged me to make a decision on where I stood at the meeting with him. I side-stepped this but receive constant emails from him asking where I am up to and when the attached article will be published. Perhaps I have been waiting for divine inspiration, but nothing has arrived yet!

I spoke with Doug Bryden, who agreed he felt Tom has a strong case and suggested I could really put CVE on the map if I was prepared to bite the bullet and back his case! Mind you, this would have included not running Clinical Immunology in August as Tom believes our major speaker at this event, Prof Michael Day, is on the pet food industry wagon if not payroll and ignores the "scientific evidence" that Tom has produced showing that artificial pet foods induce immune disease/deficiency.

I think it is time to seek guidance from the Advisory Council on where to proceed from here as you can see Tom refers to the PGF Board in his article. I do not want to deny freedom of speech to one of our members when C&T was established as a forum

for ideas and free expression, but I do not want to appear to give Tom CVE endorsement and fuel his attacks on the AVA when we are trying to build a good working relationship with all the other professional bodies.

I would value your comments and opinions prior to the next Council meeting but am also happy for further discussion at that meeting.

Warm regards

Hugh
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From: Arthur Webster [mailto:arthurwebster@ozemail.com.au]
Sent: Wed/8/10/2008 9:09 AM
To: HughWhite; David Day; David Snow; George Mack; Leo B Jeffcott; bosindicus@hotmail.com; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Canfield; Paul Gotis-Graham; Sarah Webb; Tony McGloin
Subject: Re: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Dear Hugh,

This subject has now been recycled a few times, the earliest time it was raised was by Ian Billingham and/or Tom Lonsdale some years ago if I recall correctly.

The Pet Food Industry Vs Alternative (more natural) food protagonists is truly a David and Goliath story and will not go away. It is also probably right that is sufficient truth in the arguments and counter arguments by both sides to support the cases that they make.

It is not clear to me why PGF need to come out fighting for either camp and should you decide to publish then I think Richard Malik is correct that the other side would have a right of reply.

It is probably true that the pet food industry has great influence on vets, pet owners and regulators in the same way as McDonalds, Coca Cola, cigarette and alcohol companies influence their stakeholders. This does not necessarily mean pet food companies are without ethics or the right to promote their products to the pet industry generally or vets in particular.

Not sure that this is too helpful to you but such subjects will provide interesting discussions Council particularly when it comes to seeking sponsorship dollars.

Kind Regards,
Arthur

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From: Paul Canfield
To: Hugh White; Arthur Webster; David Day; David Snow; George Mack; Leo B Jeffcott; bosindicus@hotmail.com; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Canfield; Paul Gotis-Graham; Sarah Webb; Tony McGloin
Sent: Wednesday, 8 October 9:18 AM
Subject: Re: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Dear Hugh,

Thank you for passing this on. I am aware of Tom's strong views on the matter of commercial pet foods. There is no doubt that there is some sense in what he advocates in terms of a mixed diet for dogs (and cats). However, Tom persists in taking an adversarial approach in presenting his views to Industry and the profession, which leads to more thinking — and decision making — with the heart rather than the head.

CVE has a duty of care to the profession to ensure that, as far as possible, hypotheses are presented based on rigorous scientific evidence. If the hypothesis is based on past experience and impressions rather than rigorous testing, then CVE is required to inform its members of that fact. So far as the Board of the CVE committing to a view on a hypothesis, that is not part of our constitution or charter. I believe it is vital that we maintain impartiality and are willing to present opposing views on a difficult issue facing the profession.

Tom's letter is, as expected, adversarial. If it is published in C&T then it will require the Board of the CVE to publish a response explaining the role of CVE in providing scientific information to the profession.

Regards,

Paul C.

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MRCVS
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Faculty Website: <http://www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/>
VEIN: <http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/VEIN/uni/>

Humour and Laughter are Powerful Tools for Teaching and Learning
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From: Paul Canfield
Sent: Wed 8/10/2008 2:05 PM
To: Hugh White
Cc: Patricia Swift
Subject: Re: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Dear Hugh,
Patricia Swift mentioned this to me this morning also. We came up with an idea that might appeal: Publish the letter but have a response (joint for the Directors and Board of CVE) directly under it 1.) Emphasizing CVE's impartiality but commitment to providing information on important issues, and 2.) Highlighting that CVE will present a whole issue of C&T devoted to differing scientific views over the issue in the future.

What do you think? It will require some work, but Trish believes that the Pet food companies and practitioners (including specialists) will want to contribute to such a forum.

Regards,

Paul C.
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From: Hugh White
Sent: Wed 8/10/2008 1:18 PM
To: Paul Canfield
Subject: Re: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Thanks Paul, good points!

Hugh
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From: Anthony McGloin [mailto:amcgloin@apexlabs.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 8 October 8:16 AM

To: Hugh White; Arthur Webster; David Day; David Snow; George Mack; Leo B Jeffcott; bosindicus@hotmail.com; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Canfield; Paul Gotis-Graham; Sarah Webb; Tony McGloin
Subject: FW: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Fellow Councillors

After having read what Tom Lonsdale has written and Hugh comments [above], I feel that C&T is not the appropriate venue for this to be published in. I had a look at the C&T web page which states the following,

“These accounts by practitioners of what they do for the control and therapy of diseases and problems which they meet day by day in their practices. As these articles come from all over Australasia, and indeed from some other countries such as Papua New Guinea and South Africa, UK, Argentina and many other countries, they form a very vibrant forum for the exchange of in-practice ideas.”

I feel the Tom’s submission does not fulfil that criteria as described above, I also found it a little [hard] to read, and it is more a political statement better suited as letter to the editors of similar, so possible putting it in the director’s circular would be better.

Please remember that I am a non vet so don’t always understand the finer details of animal nutrition etc. I personally feel that this is something that should be discussed by professionals and I [am] sure is within many veterinary clinics, but feel C&T is not the right venue.

Regards

Anthony McGloin
Apex Laboratories Pty Ltd
amcgloin@apexlabs.com.au

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From: Sarah Webb [mailto:sarah.webb@gungahlinvet.com.au]
Sent: Wed 8/10/2008 11:28 PM
To: Paul Canfield; Hugh White; Arthur Webster; David Day; David Snow; George Mack; Leo B Jeffcott; bosindicus@hotmail.com; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Gotis-Graham; Tony McGloin
Cc: sarah
Subject: Re: Junk pet food and the vet profession

Dear Hugh

I really do not think that this article is appropriate in its current format for publishing in C&T. Certainly huge numbers in the veterinary profession are very well aware of Tom’s views but I don’t think that C&T is really the place for another ‘cat’ fight over this issue and certainly not in the language in which it is written. It does ask to drag in the CVE and then the CVE has to defend its stance with is not what we are about. He asks the board to perform tasks which are beyond its scope as well as being largely beyond the scope of most of the staff (expertise and time factors).

This is not to say that I disagree with all he has to say. I believe Tom has some valid points but this is a truly enormous issue.

Perhaps his article could be represented but in more diplomatic language. He can still make his case quite forcefully but without being seen to be endorsed by or seeking support from the CVE while not, at the same time, being judgemental about the AVA. If people wish to explore it further then they can review the references provided by Tom.

Kind regards
Sarah Webb

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From: G & S Mack [mailto:gm.mack@bigpond.com]
Sent: Thursday, 9 October 8:36 AM
To: Hugh White; Arthur Webster; David Day; David Snow; Leo B
Jeffcott; bosindicus@hotmail.com; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Canfield; Paul
Gotis-Graham; Sarah Webb; Tony McGloin
Subject: Re: Junk pet food and the vet profession

I know no more about the issue than my dog likes bones. However I think there are some issues here that we have to be careful of.

Firstly we are a continuing education body, not a political or industry lobby group. We are not the conscience of the industry. I can't recall anything in our constitution that covers this as being part of our charter.
Secondly, this type of issue should be handled by the industry representative body, not us.
Thirdly, I don't think the University would be impressed with the controversy it would create.

George M.

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Subject: Proposed article for C&T- Sefi's ear
Date: Tue, 25 Nov 2008 07:40:47 +1100
From: "Hugh White" <h.white@usyd.edu.au>
To: "Tom Lonsdale" <tom@rawmeatybones.com>
Cc: "Patricia Swift" <p.swift@usyd.edu.au>,
"Richard Malik" <R.Malik@vetc.usyd.edu.au>

Dear Tom

I must apologise for the delay in writing to you. I had to travel to Melbourne straight after the Council meeting and seem to have been busy ever since.

Your emails to me and the article about Sefi's Ear were discussed and the following recommendations were passed unanimously by Council:

CVE will not publish the article in its present format which is seen to be emotive and unnecessarily inflammatory.

Requests for CVE involvement such as you have proposed in the article are outside the charter and scope of CVE and its Advisory Council.

We understand your concern for the well being of animals and the years you have devoted to this cause, but the role of CVE is to provide continuing education, not act as the conscience of the veterinary profession.

Tom, if you wish to resubmit the article with modifications to reflect the above sentiments I would be happy to consider it for publication. I can understand your views but the University of Sydney would not condone CVE becoming embroiled in what could become a very divisive issue.

Yours sincerely

Hugh

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Date: Mon, 01 Dec 2008 08:58:51 +1100
To: "Hugh White" <h.white@usyd.edu.au>
From: Tom Lonsdale <tom@rawmeatybones.com>
Subject: Re: Proposed article for C&T- Sefi's ear
Cc: "Patricia Swift" <p.swift@usyd.edu.au>, "Richard Malik" <R.Malik@vetc.usyd.edu.au>

Dear Hugh,

Thank you for your message.

Following submission of the Sefi's Ear article on 29 August 2007, I believed and accepted Richard Malik's agreement to publish the article of 15 September 2007 and 16 January 2008.

I further believed and accepted your assurances of 8 October 2008.

Publication of the article might have demonstrated a willingness to acknowledge and possibly repair a dysfunctional organisation short on integrity.

The overturning of existing agreements leaves me little alternative but to publish the article myself.

Much more needs to be done before the global 'veterinary education' system will be worthy of the name. I shall be delighted if you wish to work with me on this project. If, however, you and the CVE wish to maintain your current stance then I shall understand. Please advise.

Best wishes,

Tom

Ps. Partly, I suspect, the CVE Council's response is born of ignorance (not that ignorance is any defence). How many have read and understand *Raw Meaty Bones*?

They might like to consider the words of Tom

Hungerford <http://www.rawmeatybones.com/hungerford.php> and Douglas

Bryden <http://www.rawmeatybones.com/bryden.php>

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From: Hugh White

Sent: Mon 1/12/2008 4:13 PM

To: Arthur Webster; David Day; David Snow; George Mack; Leo Jeffcott; Mark Schembri; Mike Cannon; Patricia Swift; Paul Canfield; Paul Gotis-Graham; Sarah Webb; Simon Morris; Tony McGloin

Subject: FW: Proposed article for C&T – Sefi's ear

Dear Councillors

I have had a predictable response from Tom Lonsdale. I send it on for your information rather than ongoing discussion!

Warm regards

Hugh