

In brief

■ **SUPPORT PEACOCK:** A female traveller has been banned from taking a large "emotional support peacock" aboard a United Airlines flight. The owner had offered to buy the bird its own plane ticket, according to travel blog *Live and Let's Fly*. Airlines have allowed some passengers with emotional or psychiatric problems to take therapy animals aboard, but the fully grown, live peacock was rejected due to its weight and size. In 2014, a woman was escorted off a US Airways flight when her pig defecated and squealed before the plane took off.

■ **AMR HOPE:** Scientists in the US have said an amino acid produced naturally in humans, swine and other species shows promise as an alternative to antibiotics and growth promoters for piglets. Agricultural Research Service scientists in Lafayette, Indiana, found L-glutamine fed to piglets produced positive growth and health effects. It is hoped the natural supplement could reduce volume drug usage and help alleviate the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance.

■ **'CAPACITY CRISIS':** The BVA president has told guests at the association's annual dinner the far-reaching impact of Brexit on personal and professional lives, public policy and trade "is creating a perfect storm that could result in a veterinary capacity crisis for the UK". John Fishwick said Brexit has brought into sharp relief the country's reliance on EU veterinary professionals – a third of whom are considering leaving the UK.

■ **RUMINANT WELL-BEING:** Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health's 2018 Expert Forum on Farm Animal Well-being will take place in Sapporo, Japan, from 28 August to 1 September – coinciding with the World Buiatrics Congress. The company has announced two new €10,000 (£8,783) awards – the Ruminant Well-being Research Award and the Ruminant Well-being Achievement Award. Visit www.farmanimalwellbeing.com

■ **UNFAVoured FELINES:** Woodlands Animal Sanctuary has revealed it takes 80 per cent longer to rehome black, and black and white, cats, compared to other colours. While ginger, tabby and tortoiseshell cats win over visitors' hearts, these remain the unchosen ones. Staff at the sanctuary – based at Holmeswood, near Tarleton, Lancashire – have said it is time to end colour discrimination and give the cats a home of their own.

■ **RECRUITMENT:** Pet food manufacturer Burgess Pet Care has welcomed five recruits to its team. These are financial controller Amy Branche, quality assurance technician Simon Smith, digital marketing assistant Joshua Duggan, sales and marketing assistant Yasmin Atton and retail sales manager Jonathan Collin.

Willows replaces gifts stolen from dog charity

WILLOWS Veterinary Centre and Referral service came to the aid of rescue dogs after a sack of donated presents were stolen before they could be delivered.

Staff from the West Midlands-based practice had amassed a range of gifts to donate to Love UnderDogs – a charity in Waltham Abbey, Essex that rescues, treats, rehabilitates and rehomes dogs that have fallen on hard times.

The vehicle used to collect the gifts was stolen on the day they were due to be dropped off, and with the van yet to be recovered, supporters have rushed to replenish the load, donating more toys, food and money.

Love UnderDogs' Michelle Pearson said the generosity of staff at Willows was incredibly touching.

"They went out of their way to put together these beautiful gifts, wrapped with such care, and told a story of great professionals with big hearts wanting to spoil these dogs that have never had much in their lives," she said.

"We were just devastated for the dogs and Willows team. Crime spares no one – not even charities. However, we received lovely donations – such as toys and treats, as well as financial aid – when our supporters found out about the situation, so we are incredibly grateful to our community for their support."

Willows has supported Love UnderDogs for many years with medical expertise. Practice manager Rebecca Tomlinson said the team was devastated to hear the original collection of gifts hadn't reached the shelter.

"We are appalled someone would be so cruel as to steal from a charity at what is always a difficult time of year," she said.

"We will continue to support Love UnderDogs through our charity events and hope we can help bring a little happiness to the many dogs looking for a loving home."

Show, a chow chow cross-breed at Love UnderDogs.



Image: Love UnderDogs

Appeals to council election result dismissed by college

TWO separate challenges to the validity of the RCVS 2017 council election results, mounted by unsuccessful candidates standing in the leadership ballot, have both been dismissed by the college.

The two election protests are understood to be unprecedented in the 173-year history of the RCVS.

John Davies, a small animal vet from Oxford, was the first to lodge his challenge on the grounds he claimed the RCVS redacted 356 of the 497 words that made up his election candidate statement and biography, and declined to notify the electorate of those redactions.

Dr Davies claimed the final version of his statement "had the effect of removing the explanation for my motivation for standing as a candidate". He came last out of the 16 candidates who stood, polling 428 votes.

The words redacted related, in part, to Dr Davies' dissatis-

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faction at how he perceives the RCVS is being run.

The second election challenger was Tom Lonsdale, who has unsuccessfully stood as a candidate for RCVS council every year since 1997.

Dr Lonsdale came 15th out of the 16 RCVS council candidates, polling 496 votes to place him just ahead of Dr Davies in the ballot.

Of the six candidates who were subsequently elected, the candidate with the lowest number of votes polled 1,909 and the highest was 3,073 in a "record" RCVS turnout of 22.8 per cent of veterinary surgeons eligible to vote.

Dr Lonsdale graduated from the RVC in 1972, but lives and practises in New South

Wales, Australia. In his election manifesto he outlined a 26-year campaign against "junk" pet food produced by commercial companies, and promoted the theory of feeding cats and dogs healthy "raw meaty bones".

He claimed the veterinary profession is "in collusion" with the pet food industry in promoting commercial food-stuffs, which, he maintains, are impairing the global health of pets.

Grounds

Dr Lonsdale quoted clause 24(1) of the RCVS Council Election Scheme as grounds for his challenge.

The clause identifies grounds for challenge as being (a) "not in accordance with the provisions of the scheme", or (b) "...would have been a corrupt practice by way of bribery, treating or undue influence" under sections of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

As a result of the objections, the college instituted its election challenge procedure as set out in the RCVS Council Election Scheme. The written findings of that challenge panel – fully dismissing both appeals – have been communicated to each challenger.

In the case of Dr Davies, the RCVS panel stated: "...the committee has decided this challenge is misconceived, and must be dismissed."

Following the adjudication, Dr Davies said he believed the RCVS was "misusing" its power and that the redactions meant his criticisms of the college were not published.

He said the fight would go on and that he had already submitted his application to stand in the 2018 council election.

"I'm continuing because, as my statement says, I'm genuinely, gravely concerned about what's going on in the profession," he said.

He revealed the RCVS had

rejected eight different versions of his new, 2018 candidate statement and biography before accepting them.

"It doesn't say all I want to say, in the way I want to say it, but it's not a waste of time as it does convey some of what I want to say," Dr Davies said, referring to his election documents.

In the case of Dr Lonsdale, the panel rejected any suggestion the RCVS election process had exerted "undue influence" and stated: "The committee considers this challenge to the validity of the 2017 council election is totally devoid of merit, and must be dismissed."

Dr Lonsdale said he would also be standing for the 2018 RCVS council election – for the 22nd year running – on the same "meaty bones" platform.

The RCVS was invited to comment on the matter; however, it declined to do so prior to this issue of *Veterinary Times* going to press.

New well-being guide

THE RCVS' Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) has joined forces with The University of Manchester Alliance Manchester Business School to publish a guide to enhancing well-being in the university workplace.

Last month, the Vetlife Helpline revealed a record number of veterinary professionals contacted it in 2017. Some 1,737 telephone and email contacts were made, representing a 500 per cent increase during the past 5 years.

The RCVS document, "A guide to enhancing wellbeing and managing work stress in the veterinary workplace", was written in association with Elinor O'Connor, senior lecturer in occupational psychology at the Alliance Manchester Business School.

Dr O'Connor said: "Addressing stress in veterinary work not only has benefits for the health and well-being of each person in the veterinary team, but the business case for reducing work-related stress is clear – stress is associated with poorer performance, increased absenteeism and higher employee turnover.

"The well-being guide provides information about proven techniques for reducing stress at work, combined with suggestions for how they might be applied in veterinary workplaces."

Lizzie Lockett, RCVS chief executive and MMI director, said: "By making well-being a priority, practices can support individuals and help their team work better together – and, therefore, provide the best treatment for the animals under their care. This leaflet unpacks some of the root causes of work-related stress, and may be of particular interest to practice managers, line managers or health and safety officers."

A digital version of the document is available by visiting <http://bit.ly/2BJZHAo>

Specialist panel to feature at VetsNorth 2018



DELEGATES at this year's VetsNorth congress will be encouraged to ask for advice on difficult cases in a specialist panel session to be held during the two-day conference.

VetsNorth takes place from 20 to 21 June at the AJ Bell Stadium in Eccles, Manchester, offering CPD for vet professionals working in the north of the UK. It provides dedicated lecture streams for vets, nurses and practice managers, together with a series of small group, focused workshops.

An exhibition showcasing the latest veterinary products and services – featuring demonstrations and workshops from exhibitors – will run alongside the conference.

VetsNorth delegates also benefit from a free six-month subscription to Bitesize CPD, an online educational platform offering convenient 24/7 access to learners, launched in 2016 by veterinary CPD company Improve International.

Using the Bitesize free trial, vets will receive an additional 18 hours of free CPD, while VNs will receive 9 hours.

For more information, visit www.vetsnorth.com or telephone 01793 208065.