Diary of a parliamentary intern

Parliamentary intern to Lord Trees, Hannah Jordan, wants to avoid allowing her clinical skills to get rusty as she realises that the end of her internship is in sight.

My year began with the annual general meeting of the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation (VPRF), the not-for-profit company that supports my internship. While the gathering went well, it was not without a little sadness on my part, because it reminded me that the end of my two-year term is rapidly approaching. Nevertheless, I was once again humbled by the experience of sitting at a table of individuals with such accumulated wisdom and wonderfully collaborative spirit.

I returned to the PDSA this month after taking time off to complete some desk-based research for the Vet Futures project (www.vetfutures.org.uk). I’m always a little nervous about re-engaging my clinical brain, but the incredibly supportive team at Bow soon got me back into the swing of things. It has become clear to me that I need to stay involved with clinical work on some scale in the future.

Democracy Day took place on January 20 and, aside from being the 750th anniversary of the de Montfort Parliament, it was a busy day. Business began at 14:30 in the chamber and the third question on the order paper concerned milk production. We had anticipated this might be popular and many Peers wished to speak. The Lords is supposed to self-regulate, with Peers giving way in an orderly fashion to allow all the parties to contribute. After several shouts of 'this side' were heard, the chamber was admonished for its unruly behaviour, but then cries gave way to those for 'Trees'. Lord Trees duly stood and asked the Minister to clarify whether Groceries Code protection could be extended to farmers who don’t directly supply the supermarkets. The Minister responded that this would require a change to the primary legislation and that this was due for review in 2016. To the casual observer this seemed to lack a sense of urgency.

Later that day, the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) met to discuss 'Enforcement of animal welfare legislation'. The packed room listened to a Metropolitan Police dog unit officer, an RSPCA officer and a Local Authority environmental health officer, and they all shared alarmingly similar views. The question of who ‘owns’ the Animal Welfare Act remains unanswered and, until this is clarified, we will likely struggle on with the current patchwork cover.

Following APGAW, we hosted the National Office of Animal Health’s annual pet event, which this year concentrated on pets and the elderly. We finished the week with an entertaining seminar on how to better engage with legislation, which left us even more confused about groups of amendments than we were previously, and, finally, we spent an afternoon in Grand Committee raising issues regarding the draft microchipping regulations with Lord de Mauley. You can read more about what we do on the VPRF blog (https://VPRF.wordpress.com).

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