Diary of a parliamentary intern

Hannah Jordan, parliamentary intern to Lord Trees, is in thoughtful mood as she reflects on February’s events, both personal and professional.

My last diary was written en route to Wales for my first trail half marathon. Somehow I managed to complete it and the race was a stunningly scenic exercise in perseverance, which is not dissimilar to proceedings in Parliament.

At the end of January, Lord Trees spoke to a motion to consider the draft Microchipping of Dogs Regulations. He raised several points, including: the use of ‘veterinary nurse’ as a legally or professionally protected term, where ‘registered veterinary nurse’ would have been less ambiguous under the new RCVS Charter; omitting to refer to the ISO-standard for site of implantation; and the reasoning behind a requirement to notify the Secretary of State if a microchip was found to have migrated. The Government justified the last point as a measure to highlight poor implantation, but this seems unlikely to work – during my short time in practice I have found many migrated microchips and seen some ejected through the skin. The Minister wrote to us afterwards to clarify some points, but to my personal frustration the Regulations went ahead unchanged.

February brought a heavy heart, as I learnt that a dear friend from vet school, Kathryn Adams, lost her life in a car accident. Kat was a fantastic, quick-witted young vet, full of life and was nigh on unassailable when arguing for what she thought was right. Although irreplaceable, I will remember her this way and make the most of opportunities to make a difference, however small.

I attended a round table discussion at the Kennel Club on measures to reduce dog bites and strikes. It was great to see so many stakeholders gathered to discuss how best to tackle a multifactorial and, ultimately, societal issue. One key point that I took away was the current lack of a single, accredited body to which to refer behavioural cases.

The BVA held its London dinner recently and the President, John Blackwell, gave an engaging speech about the Association’s aims and achievements, not least securing over 100,000 signatures on the petition to ban non-stun slaughter in the UK, which was debated in Parliament on February 23. In the meantime, discussions abound on compulsory CCTV in slaughterhouses (including how frequently and by whom the material that is already recorded is examined). We continue to wait for the delayed EU report on labelling, and the Government maintains it needs more time to think about the potential Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (WATOK) Regulations, which were unceremoniously revoked before implementation last year.

This week I have spent more time at the PDSA decked out in the charity’s new pink and green uniform. As I write, I find I am wondering how the dog I saw on Friday is doing and whether we will get to the root of his particular problem. To get my head back in gear for the week ahead, I will settle down to watch ‘Inside the Commons’, which entertains and accurately represents ‘the other place’! You can read more about our work and the re-advertisement of the parliamentary veterinary internship at https://vprf.wordpress.com.

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