

Diary of a parliamentary intern

Hannah Jordan, parliamentary intern to Lord Trees, learns that, if it turned out the UK were no longer able to import food, she wouldn't starve in the short term, so long as she could cope without avocados.

It definitely felt like the early days of winter in Westminster today. I wandered along the river on my lunch break and found the happy, tinkly music of the Southbank Christmas market provided sharp relief to the chilly, monochrome mist that hung over the city all day. Despite the weather, there has been plenty going on both at Westminster and elsewhere in the veterinary world.

The Rural Economy Research Group met for its annual meeting on October 28 to discuss the competing demands for land use. The group aims to bring together academics, politicians and those in the relevant industries to discuss issues around rural economics and development. The relevance of this to the veterinary profession is our input into production animal management and public health, which is crucial. This year we heard from a farmer, a land use economist, a sustainability researcher and the Minister of State for Government Policy, Oliver Letwin MP. The minister was interesting, not least because he admitted land use was a

growing concern and he didn't have any immediate answers. He told us that, if we couldn't continuously import energy, we may be in real trouble. Conversely, if we couldn't import food we might run out of avocados, but we wouldn't starve – at least for a little while – so in the UK, food security is about strategy and not starvation. The primary conclusion drawn was that a cross-Government strategy for land use would greatly aid decision making and forward planning for stakeholders. You can read in more detail about the meeting on the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation's blog: <https://vprf.wordpress.com/2014/11/12/tuesday-28th-october/>

Cycling down to Westminster is not a pursuit for the faint hearted, but on November 17 it was particularly grim. The Victoria embankment had been shut and I had to divert via Trafalgar Square through scores of angry motorists to reach the Houses of Parliament. It transpired that an MP's new intern had left a box containing an iPad in an inappropriate place and inadvertently caused Portcullis House to be evacuated and placed in an exclusion zone for a few hours. When I eventually made it to my desk we were preparing to submit an amendment to the Deregulation Bill on November 18, which would prevent removal of a clause requiring prescriptive breeding records to be kept as part of the Breeding of Dogs



Act 1973. While our amendment was ultimately withdrawn, we managed to get the Government to agree to consult on the clause, and if enough evidence to support retention of prescriptive breeding records was received, it will not remove the clause.

Last week was the ever-engaging BVA Congress at the London Vet Show. There were a number of particularly brilliant sessions, but the Wooldridge lecture will change the way I look at the world. It was disappointing not to see more vets taking up the opportunity to ask questions of the CVOs. I hope that the profession begins to realise the potential for vets to get involved in and lead One Health initiatives that subsequently improve public health – the CVOs are well informed on such matters.

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