

Subject: RMB Newsletter 8:3 Straight Questions: Crooked Answers, August 2008

Dear Reader,

How have you been? How's your family?

Norma Hiller in Pennsylvania first wrote to me in 2001 and has been a raw meaty bones enthusiast ever since. Norma recently sent an update on her 'family':

(quote)'Hi Tom.....hope this finds you well and enjoying the summer months.....my 8 furkids continue to thrive on the raw diet.....I brought all 4 cats in for the required rabies shots a few months ago and the vet checked them out one by one.....ears, teeth, skin, etc.....then he looked me straight in the eyes and said "Norma, you're going to put me out of business.....your cats are TOO healthy!!!!".....I love it! Thanks again for everything!'(end quote)

At least Norma's vet managed to joke about the health benefits of a raw diet. Most pet owners are not so lucky. Their smiling vet's demeanour changes to a hostile grimace the moment a raw diet is mentioned.

No vet relishes the thought of going out of business. But therein lies the vets' difficulty - they are under oath; they have an obligation to place the interests of their patients and their clients before their own. No other participants in the pet-food fraud have the same burden of responsibility. As far as truck drivers are concerned they are merely doing a job delivering goods. The supermarket shelf stacker doesn't consider the fatal consequences of his actions - fatal for the pets that is. The slick advertising executive doesn't care, and there are no sanctions, when he fabricates elaborate lies to be repeated over and over again on prime-time TV.

But all vets face this dilemma. Mostly they dissemble, cheat and ultimately lie -- to themselves and their clients. Of course it's more than their business that the vets are protecting. It's the corrupt nexus of junk pet-food companies, veterinary profession and fake animal welfare groups. As the authority figures, the arbiters of good medicine, good nutrition and good animal welfare, the vets' pronouncements provide a protective cordon around a massive scam costing the community \$billions.

But as easy as it is to blame the vets, it does not stop there. Whether in a Western Style democracy or in Communist China, vets are given privileges, rights and responsibilities by politicians who are elected or appointed to serve the community interest. When an industry is corrupt regulators or politicians are supposed to step in and take control.

Let's take a look at what's happening in the UK.

Best wishes,

Tom Lonsdale

STRAIGHT QUESTIONS, CROOKED ANSWERS AT EFRACOM HEARINGS

In the UK the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 provides the rules by which the veterinary profession is governed. The British Government, aware that the Act is out of date, is developing a new Act. Earlier this year, as part of that process, Members of Parliament on the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRACom) interviewed leaders of the UK veterinary profession and then submitted recommendations to the UK Government.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmenvfru/348/34802.htm>

Actually, it's all part of a big charade. The UK Government already has plenty of information on the veterinary profession's Faustian pact with junk pet-food manufacturers. There's no escaping the fact that a majority of the world's pets will experience sickness due to a diet of junk food, often recommended and sold by vets who take the oath: 'To pursue the work of my profession with uprightness of conduct and that my constant endeavour will be to ensure the welfare of the animals committed to my care.'

<http://www.rcvs.org.uk/Templates/PreviousNext.asp?NodeID=89718&int2ndParentNodeID=89717&int1stParentNodeID=89642>

Unfortunately, the UK Government and most MPs avoid tackling the issues. They don't want a showdown with the vets and their powerful pet-food industry backers. By tiptoeing around the issues the Government hopes for a miracle when they say there is a 'need for the veterinary profession to work together to establish a greater consensus on the way forward.'

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmenvfru/1011/101104.htm>

As you can see from EFRACom Member, Mr David Taylor's straight questions and the crooked answers of the vets, the prospect of consensus in the vet profession is a long way off.

EFRACom Examination of Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Witnesses
18 FEBRUARY 2008

Mr Bob Moore, President, Professor Sheila Crispin, Senior Vice-President
and Ms Jane Hern, Registrar.

Q87 David Taylor: I think I just heard Sheila Crispin talk about the concerns the RCVS has about the growth of non-veterinary practice, and she included the example of pet food manufacturers. Can you elaborate on that very quickly?

Professor Crispin: I think anyone who owns an animal is very aware that when they go into veterinary practice these days there is a lot of advertising of pet foods, and some practices are now set up within pet food companies; you can go and have an animal looked at in that type of situation, but it is something that is changing and yet the legislation is not there to deal with the change.

Q88 David Taylor: The Association of Veterinary Students of Great Britain and Ireland recently debated a motion that vets should advocate feeding a manufacture of pet food, did they not?

<http://seureshop.rawmeatybones.com/newsletter/view.epl?id=48>

Professor Crispin: Yes, I was there.

Q89 David Taylor: You were a guest at that debate, were you not?

Professor Crispin: Yes, I was.

Q90 David Taylor: You declined to vote on that.

Professor Crispin: I was there on an evening off; I was not there in any official capacity, so I spoke on behalf of my dogs because I thought that was the safest thing to do. But my views are quite well known: I think that we probably require a rather pragmatic approach to what we feed our animals, and that it may well in the case of my dogs include commercial and non-commercial food.

Q91 David Taylor: There are good numbers of vets, are there not, that believe—I can quote one to you: "As varied as my patients were in size, species, age, sex and breed, the one common uniting feature was their junk food diet." Do you recognise the author of that?

Professor Crispin: I think so, yes.

Q92 David Taylor: But he speaks on behalf of growing numbers of not just vets but companion-animal owners, does he not? There is a real growing concern about the junk that we push down our pets, is there not?

Professor Crispin: I am not sure that you should equate being vociferous with speaking on behalf of large numbers. It is worth remembering that the pet food manufacturers removed bovine products from pet food before we did for humans. It is not a black-and-white situation.

Q93 David Taylor: It never is, but the veterinary profession,

particularly the RCVS, has been very reluctant to be involved in this for a long period of years. That is true, is it not?

Professor Crispin: I do not think that is true. If I can now go back to my time as president, I spent a lot of time dealing very politely with the many letters that the president gets on this topic.

Q94 David Taylor: No-one denies the politeness.

Professor Crispin: No, but the line I took was to speak as president, as a scientist and as an owner of animals, and actually doing it like that, hopefully, you got a rather balanced view.

Q95 David Taylor: Do you see the thrust of the vets' professional standards being the treatment of or prevention of disease?

Professor Crispin: I think very much the prevention. Indeed, one of the aims of the new Veterinary Surgeons Act is to be proactive rather than reactive. I think that is crucial; and, yes, the debate has made me look very carefully at what I feed my dogs, and it has modified what I feed my dogs, but I have not gone so far as to go entirely for raw meaty bones.

Q96 David Taylor: It is not intended to be an approach on you; it also involves your colleagues as well. The concern that people have is that the curriculum of the veterinary colleges contains relatively little about the nutrition of companion animals. Is that a fair comment?

Professor Crispin: Actually, there is quite a lot on the nutrition of companion animals. The people like Tom Lonsdale, who you quoted, would say that it is very much weighted in terms of feeding commercial foods.

Q97 David Taylor: Is that partly because the mega pet food manufacturers have a very large slice and a captive market in every sense? They have ingratiated themselves with the profession and with the veterinary colleges, have they not? They sponsor various chairs of veterinary science, do they not? You are not going to bite the hand that feeds you!

Professor Crispin: Lectureships, I think. I do not think it is quite—

Q98 David Taylor: Professionally, you are not going to bite the hand that feeds you, are you? Mr Moore? It is not aimed at you.

Professor Crispin: No.

Ms Hern: It does not say a lot for the impartiality of the profession that they would be swayed by that sort of thing.

Q99 David Taylor: But it is something that has grown up over a long period of years with relatively few people that have questioned the given wisdom that somehow pet food manufacturers are there to promote the

health of the many millions of companion animals in this country and elsewhere. Do you accept that given wisdom—that it should not be examined and should not be criticised and that we should not instigate some research into the comparative diets, which, as Sheila Crispin said, at the debate which I mentioned—you would have liked to have seen some research. Why is the RCVS not banging the drum on this?

Ms Hern: Because it is not a scientific body in that sense: we are here to regulate the profession and maintain—

Q100 David Taylor: Against professional standards, against expectations, against whether or not you are trying to prevent ill health or merely treat it.

Ms Hern: But we do not prescribe how—

Q101 David Taylor: You should be part of it though, surely?

Ms Hern: We do not tell veterinary surgeons how they should exercise their professional judgment.

Q102 David Taylor: Ah, you say you are just packing up; you are just walking by on the other side?

Ms Hern: No, but they have to exercise their professional judgment in relation to the animal and the client in front of them, and we do not go down the road of being prescriptive in all of those contexts.

EFRACom Examination of British Veterinary Association Witnesses
3 MARCH 2008

Mr Nick Blayney, President, and Ms Nicky Paull, President-Elect.

Q158 David Taylor: Whilst no pet food manufacturers own any practices, what proportion of the income of some of your practices would you say is derived from the promotion or sale of pet food?

Mr Blayney: I cannot give you that statistic off the top of my head but I am sure we would be glad to research it and provide it to you at a later date.

Q159 David Taylor: Would it be a substantial amount in some practices?

Mr Blayney: I am not prepared to answer that without some data in front of me, other than to say that most veterinary practices do sell pet food. The reason they do it is because veterinary practices supply goods and services to their clients, goods and services that presumably they have judged to be useful to their clients. The goods we supply include a lot of medications and food. There is no doubt that the arrival of commercial pet foods has improved the quality of life and wellbeing of a lot of pets

because it provides well prepared, scientifically based, nutritionally acceptable diets.

Q160 David Taylor: What evidence do you have that it has improved the quality of life and indeed the longevity of companion animals?

Ms Paull: This is more of a clinical discussion. We could look at ready made meals at Marks and Spencer that people eat. They might be better for them than eating bags of crisps and biscuits because they do not have time to cook. It is trying to balance sensibly what clients are available to do for their animals. For instance, an owner could get together a nutritionally balanced diet or could opt for purchasing one but I think that is a decision that has to be made between the veterinary surgeon and the client. The pros and cons of each diet can be discussed. To insinuate that because we happen to have dog food available for sale in the practice means that we are going to force this down our clients' pets' throats is not the case. Nick is right. Some practices do sell pet food but equally many do not. It is a commercial decision as to whether that is something that we are going to supply to our clients just the same as we might offer pet collars or something like that.

Q161 David Taylor: Are you aware that out there amongst the millions of owners there are companion animal owners—dogs and cats in particular—and there is a fairly significant lobby that argues that vets are promoting the sale and sometimes selling the pet foods which create the illnesses which keep you in business?

Mr Blayney: This is complete nonsense.

Q162 David Taylor: You are aware of the lobby?

Mr Blayney: Very much so. It is quite a dangerous lobby because it is seriously misinformed and very good at lobbying. The reason that vets choose to use foods is because they have been scientifically convinced that these foods are of value.

Q163 David Taylor: By whom?

Mr Blayney: By the data that has been produced by the manufacturers in the same way—

Q164 David Taylor: Would these be the same manufacturers who sponsor good numbers of the chairs of veterinary science at universities in the UK?

Mr Blayney: They do contribute to education. If the government funding was higher then perhaps the universities would not have to look elsewhere for funding.

Ms Paull: You could argue the same with pharmaceutical companies as well that give CPD lectures to us and so on. At the end of the day, it is the

responsibility of the veterinary surgeon to make a clinical decision with the owner of the animal as to what is the best thing for that animal. To say that because a pharmaceutical company sponsors a course automatically we are going to supply lots of their product and sell it out to an owner where it is not required I would take offence at.

Mr Blayney: Vets are very good at seeing the woods for the trees in much the same way that I am sure, when MPs are entertained by various lobbying groups, you can see right through what their mission is. What we are exercised by is good science. The pet food manufacturers have invested a lot of money in this and it is up to veterinary surgeons, judging by their own levels of professional integrity, to decide whether this is appropriate for their animals in the respect that they do absolutely everything else for the good of the animals under their care.

AFTERWORD

What did you make of the vets' answers? Where you, like me, suitably outraged? After many years observing the vet establishment serve up red herrings in a smokescreen of misinformation, I'm still taken aback by their apparent disregard for the animals under their care.

If pets and pet owners are to be protected from an unbending veterinary profession, something needs to be done and this is where you can help.

If you live in the UK please contact your MP and let him or her know about the massive pet-food fraud in our midst and ask that the matter receive the highest priority. Tell your personal story and why action is long overdue.

For a list of MPs and their contact details see:

<http://www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/alms.cfm>

Please also contact EFRACom, at:

Clerk of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA
UK
Telephone: 020 7219 5774
E-mail: efracom@parliament.uk

Individually written letters sent to the postal address would be best and are more likely to receive a reply.

However, where ever you live, please send an email to:
efracom@parliament.uk

If EFRACom receive emails from residents of every continent and many countries they will get an idea of the seriousness of this global issue and consider holding an inquiry into the relationship between vets and pet-food manufacturers. No need to comment at length (unless you want to). Just a line telling EFRACom why you object to the vets' promotion and sale of junk food would be enough.

If you can enlist friends and relatives to help that would be terrific and contacting your local newspaper, TV or radio station would be worth a try. (Eventually the media will need to treat this matter seriously.)

Unless and until we speak up, those with the crooked answers will continue to hold sway. The junk pet-food fraud is now on the agenda in the UK Parliament. If we can make progress there, then that will create a basis for change in other countries too.

Good luck and best wishes,

Tom Lonsdale

P.S. Please send copies of any letters and responses received to tom@rawmeatybones.com I'll keep a record with a view to future publication.

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