

Date: Tue, 14 Sep 2010 22:14:21 +0100  
Subject: A thought  
From: David Cuffe <davidcuffe@gmail.com>  
To: [tom@rawmeatybones.com](mailto:tom@rawmeatybones.com)

Dear Tom

I have voted for you in every RCVS election for many years. I have bought, read, and loaned out *Raw Meaty Bones*, and after most of a career automatically warning against feeding bones I eventually saw sense and realised the degree of advertising propaganda which encouraged me to think, incorrectly, that dogs are 'omnivores' and that feeding cereal based commercial food was largely responsible for increased longevity in dogs and cats. So most UK (I am Irish, but London based) vets believe, unthinkingly; as I did. They are genuine in these beliefs if somewhat dense. But that is the effect of merchandising propaganda on a largely unquestioning profession.

Regardless of the presence or absence of conspiratorial elements in this whole debacle surely the aim should be to change the beliefs and practices of the majority? I think you have shown that there is limited support for your crusade when it concentrates on conspiracy and malevolence and not on logical argument per se. I am not naïve. When some years ago I mentioned to the Hill's rep that I saw nothing wrong with RMB she had within minutes a lunch arranged with their area Vet Rep for three weeks later. When we had the lunch the two of them spent the hour earnestly arguing that bones cause problems X,Y, & Z, and that 'completely balanced commercial food' is the nirvana of the nutritional effort. Anybody positively portraying RMB in the veterinary press is always countered by others who may or may not be influenced directly by the pet food lobby. The BVA 'position' on RMB is not only pure pet-food lobby but even gives the Association of Pet Food Manufacturers as a source of further information! So much for independent thought.

I think that although your yearly assault on the RCVS does generate some publicity, it is increasingly a close call between negative and positive. The journals now seem to enjoy pointing out your sequential unsuccessful attempts and pointing out that your support is dropping. I think you need to beat a slightly different drum. We have here regular articles by a David Coffee (not to be confused with me) on loosely ethical topics. Often the profession is accused of mutilation (spaying bitches) and massive culpability in almost every area in which we work. He may well be right, but he alienates even the well intentioned liberals in the profession by his unrelenting vituperative outbursts. Vets will always fail to pick up the message if the messenger attacks, irritates, berates them, or stretches their comfort zones.

There is a small movement in favour of Evidence Based Medicine in the veterinary profession. There is almost no evidence based medicine in the veterinary profession. It strikes me that if the merits of RMB vs Commercial were subjected to a rigorously designed clinical trial (and I know that this would take years and cost millions) that argument would surpass minority view opinion, however right that is in the first place. I have no magic wand, but there are altruistic institutions who might fund such a study. I do not underestimate the huge resources that the Pet Food Industry will mount but no battle worth fighting was a walk over.

However, it has to be said that in the battle you fight, massively one-sided against you as it is, you are not really gaining ground with UK vets and it is my contention that the accusatory tone is more than a little to blame. Many hold their misguided views with all the rectitude of certainty, genuinely believing themselves to be correct (as I did for so many of my years in practice), and are affronted. This automatically leads to reactionary entrenchment.

I write in a spirit of goodwill and I hope that you will see this as such. I feed my own dog on mainly RMB, though convenience Hill's does fill the occasional gap. I am known locally as perhaps the one vet to whom those already feeding their dogs RMB can admit to the practice, most vets haranguing anyone who even suggests it. Large numbers of clients feed their dogs RMB, while a great many more feed BARF, or the 101 versions which they build up to over a period (raw eggs seem to feature a lot). The vets though are always behind the curve, and by and large if we had open questioning minds before we started vet school we would perhaps not have started vet school.

Whatever, I wish you well.

Dave Cuffe

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