



20 May 2021

Dear Good Morning Britain Producer,

I am writing in my capacity as President of the Veterinary Management Group to express our collective dismay at what we felt to be an unbalanced piece on 18 May and the impact it is having on already hard-pressed veterinary teams across the UK.

In your piece, you hosted a debate on 'a NHS' for pets between two celebrity pet owners, who were unhappy at the cost of veterinary care. While we are always keen to see veterinary issues discussed in the media, it was disappointing that you did not seek balance by inviting participation from one of the associations, including ours, which represent those working in the sector. The result was a piece that, in our view, did not tell the whole story and seemed to portray veterinary practices as seeking to profiteer from their clients.

This is simply untrue and deeply hurtful to the thousands of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, many of whom have trained for five years or longer and the majority of whom still earn a very modest salary. While our sector has changed considerably in recent years, in common with others, its primary purpose remains the same – the prevention of pain and suffering in animals.

When a patient is very sick or has serious injuries, it is true that the cost of veterinary care can be significant but veterinary practices are businesses like any other and they are not immune to the forces of a 21<sup>st</sup> century world. They must cover the cost of their highly trained staff, expensive equipment, their premises, and medicines. If they don't make a profit, they won't be sustainable and able to continue to serve their local communities, nor will they be able to invest in their premises, equipment, and staff to ensure they continue to offer the highest standard of care and new tests and treatments as they are developed. And while vets and vet nurses love animals and devote their working lives to caring for them, they still have mortgages to pay and lives to live.

There is a great deal of research highlighting the pressures of life in the veterinary profession. Working long hours and dealing routinely with people in a state of emotional distress causes depression and burnout in many. It's telling that studies show that vets are up to four times more likely to die by suicide than the general population.

The last 18 months have been as difficult for the veterinary profession as for many others. Practices have stayed open longer, adapting working practices to ensure they could provide life-saving treatment for pets whilst ensuring staff and owners were kept safe. While we understand that the



Veterinary Practice Management Association Ltd t/a Veterinary Management Group and VMG  
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Registered Office: Calyx House, South Road, Taunton TA1 3DU  
07000 782324 office@vetmg.com www.vetmg.com

cost of treatment is worthy of discussion, we do ask that shows like GMB try to present a balanced view. Overcoming difficult problems requires collaboration and mutual understanding. Simply attacking one side doesn't help.

We would welcome the opportunity to participate in a future show to give the profession's perspective and answer any questions you may wish to put to us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

Richard Casey

President