

Wednesday 28 February 2024

British Veterinary Association Annual London Dinner 2024

President Anna Judson speech

AS DELIVERED

Good evening, it's my great pleasure to welcome you all to the British Veterinary Association's annual London Dinner. Thank you so much for joining us.

I'd like to start by welcoming the Right Honourable Steve Barclay MP, Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who joins us as our guest speaker this evening.

BVA works closely with Defra, representing the views of our members and the wider profession, on important issues with far reaching impacts on animal health and welfare, UK biosecurity and international trade. We are extremely grateful to have the Secretary of State with us tonight and we look forward to hearing from him shortly.

As we move through 2024, the veterinary profession continues to navigate many

On this last issue, BVA has consistently highlighted the serious threat to Northern Ireland's access to veterinary medicines as a result of leaving the European Union. The anticipated loss of over half of all veterinary medicines in December 2025 will have serious and far-reaching consequences for the veterinary profession, the farming and

currently endemic in the UK. We look forward to working with the Bill's sponsor, Selaine Saxby MP, who is here tonight.

Finally, while not part of the former Kept Animals Bill, we would welcome an assurance from Government that the ban on electric shock collars in England will be delivered as promised. Banning these aversive training devices would be a huge step forward in terms of animal welfare and has significant public support – recent polls revealed it had the support of more than 9 out of 10 UK adults and BVA's Voice statistics show that three quarters of vets are concerned about their use in training dogs. It is therefore extremely disappointing that progress has stalled.

In contrast, the speed with which the XL Bully ban has been enacted is causing significant concerns, not least the fact that it will not solve the serious and distressing issue of increasing dog bite incidents and dreadful fatalities.

Breed specific legislation as enshrined in the Dangerous Dogs Act is ineffective and hard to enforce. It must be

During this evening, we would like to hear your thoughts on how best we can support and work collaboratively with you to progress these important issues:

Access to veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland must remain high on the Government's priority list. We ask you to help ensure this is the case.

The animal welfare legislation currently going through Parliament will tackle a number of pressing concerns. We urge you to support these Bills to become law.

Banning individual dog breeds will not protect public safety in the long term. We urge all political parties to include reform of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 as a manifesto commitment.

Our discussions with MPs and peers have shown that reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act has cross-party support. To support the future of our profession, please press for this to be included in election manifestos.

And it's now my pleasure to hand over to the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Thank you.