



## **Vets Now hopes vets will be added to the Home Office's Shortage Occupation List**

The UK's leading out-of-hours pet emergency service, Vets Now, has revealed its hopefulness about what they say "is becoming a worsening recruitment crisis, but with a chance of recovery if vets are added to the Home Office's Shortage Occupation List."

**Vets Now's, Head of Veterinary Standards, Dr Laura Playforth's** comments come following news (29<sup>th</sup> May 2019) that the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) has put recommendations to the Home Office that vets should be reinstated on the Shortage Occupation List, which will make it easier for veterinary employers like Vets Now to employ vets from overseas. Over half of vets employed at Vets Now are non-UK graduates.

If the Home Office adds vets to the Shortage Occupation List, the immigration requirements needed to live and work in the UK would be reduced for veterinary surgeons.

Dr Playforth added: "The Migration Advisory Committee's recommendation comes as very welcome news. It is vital that we maintain the diversity of membership which brings such strength to the profession.

"At Vets Now 55.5% of our vets are non-UK graduates and provide an invaluable contribution to our knowledge and practice through a variety of opinions and experiences. We recognise the importance of diversity and a mix of backgrounds, experience and knowledge in our teams – and to achieve that balance, we need to be able to recruit from the UK and abroad."

"By adding veterinary surgeons to the Shortage Occupation List, the Government will be helping us achieve our aim of giving people and their pets the care and support they deserve at the time they need it most, but also developing a flexible, skilled and robust veterinary workforce that is resilient for the unpredictable times ahead.

**Vets Now's People Director, Samantha Prentice added:** "The facts are clear - we have a shortage of vets in the UK. We welcome the recommendations being put to the Home Office this week to make it easier for employers like ourselves to recruit vets. Not only does it help us address current recruitment issues, but will help safeguard against a future crisis in workforce capacity across our profession.

"The deepening recruitment crisis means that more than half of all vet practices in the UK don't have a full complement of vets," continues Prentice. "At Vets Now, we also experience this issue across the UK with some regions more challenging than others. However, our niche proposition, economies of scale and inhouse training programme which brings 250 new vets into the emergency and critical care sector every year, means our own recruitment challenges at Vets Now have lessened."

Prentice goes onto say that Brexit is clearly impacting on uncertainty across the sector. "Although there's still so many unknowns with Brexit, I firmly believe the uncertainty, and indeed an exit from the EU, will continue to worsen the crisis we are facing in the veterinary industry. The RCVS has

shown nearly a third of vets and vet nurses whose nationality is non-UK European – a workforce we greatly depend on – are considering a move out of the UK. We've already messaged our support to our colleagues from the EU that they have our full support from an employment perspective and that we hope they stay with us post-Brexit."

Vets Now has been working collaboratively with the veterinary industry, including with the RCVS and the BVA, to help reach the recommendations put to the Home Office this week.

Vets Now partners with more than 1,200 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service, a service, Prentice says, which goes some way to helping provide a solution to the recruitment and retention strain across the profession. Results of a poll Vets Now sent to its 1,200 partner practices, which revealed that 84% of vets believed using an out of hours provider helped them recruit and retain vets and nurses in their practices.\*

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**Vets Now notes to editors:**

- Vets Now was established in 2001 and is the leading provider of emergency veterinary care for companion animals in the UK.
- With 24/7 Pet Emergency Hospitals in Glasgow, Manchester and Swindon, and 59 out-of-hours clinics nationwide, Vets Now is committed to delivering a responsive emergency and critical care service for cats, dogs and other small animals.
- Vets Now also partners with more than 1,400 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service.
- Vets Now employs over 1000 staff.
- Vets Now remains at the forefront of emergency veterinary care through its commitment to clinical excellence and training, employing many of the country's top Emergency & Critical Care Specialists.

*\*Based on 174 responses in a Typeform survey sent to 1200 daytime veterinary practices in June 2018.*