May 2020

Thank you for contacting me about veterinary business support.

I am pleased that veterinary businesses are able to stay open where it is safe to do so. They can continue to perform operations, carry out check-ups and are able to continue to sell veterinary products, including medicine and food. It is worth noting, however, that guidance is clear that it is for individual vets to make decisions about what work can and should be done and how to do it in line with social distancing guidelines.

I understand that the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has now published updated safety advice and encouraged vets to adopt new social distancing measures. These include minimising home visits and asking for one client only to accompany a pet to appointments.

This advice is available online at:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

Likewise, the British Veterinary Association has published a FAQs document which answers many specialist questions.

As you may know, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak MP, announced several economic relief measures to help small businesses, including veterinary practices, in this challenging and unprecedented time. These include deferring VAT payments for 3 months, introducing the Small Business Grant Scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. More information on these schemes, including eligibility criteria, can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/>.

I do appreciate that many veterinary practices feel they should be included in the Government’s Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme. I also understand that some veterinary hospitals have called for greater flexibility in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to cater for emergency staff changes, should a member of staff become ill and a furloughed worker be required. I have raised these matters with Ministerial colleagues to ensure they are aware of the specific concerns of the sector.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**