



General
Osteopathic
Council

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Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Minister for Animal Welfare and Biosecurity
VSA Reform Consultation
Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

25 March 2026

Consultation on reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966)

Dear Baroness Hayman

On behalf of the statutory regulator for the osteopathic profession, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

About the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC):

The General Osteopathic Council was established by the Osteopaths Act 1993 to be the regulator for osteopaths in the United Kingdom. By law, osteopaths must be registered with the GOsC to practise in the UK. The Osteopaths Act 1993, Section 1(2) says: 'It shall be the duty of the General Council to develop and regulate the profession of osteopathy'.

The overarching objective of the GOsC is the protection of the public. This involves the pursuit of the following objectives:

- a) protecting, promoting and maintaining the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- b) promoting and maintaining public confidence in the profession of osteopathy; and
- c) promoting and maintaining proper professional standards and conduct for members of that profession.

Our work includes:

- setting and maintaining standards of osteopathic practice and conduct
- maintaining a Register of qualified professionals
- assuring the quality of osteopathic education and training
- helping patients with complaints about an osteopath
- removing from the Register anyone who is unfit to practise



We also ensure protection of title which is covered within Section 32 of the Osteopaths Act. Where it is in the public interest, we will undertake private prosecutions against individuals using the osteopathic title when not registered. The provision of our Act states:

- (1) A person who (whether expressly or by implication) describes himself as an osteopath, osteopathic practitioner, osteopathic physician, osteopathist, osteotherapist, or any other kind of osteopath, is guilty of an offence unless he is a registered osteopath.

We reference our protection of title activity as this is relevant to reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Our enforcement policy can be found here: [Protection of title enforcement policy](#)

More information about the GOsC can be found here: www.osteopathy.org.uk

Consultation response

We welcome the proposals to reform the regulation of the veterinary sector. In the main, we agree with the findings that animal musculoskeletal care (which would include 'animal osteopath') is a growing profession, and as such we agree the reforms to be a timely and welcome opportunity to bring Allied Veterinary Professionals (AVPs) into regulation.

The GOsC position has always been to recognise that the regulation of animal practice (where use of techniques in relation to animals is subject to the requirements of the Veterinary Act) is separate from the regulation of human practice. In relation to title protection, we have always been clear, that under the current landscape, we cannot give a guarantee or immunity by saying that we will not prosecute anyone who uses a prefix with the protected title unless they are not a registered osteopath. In deciding whether to take action, we would consider a number of factors specific to the case in question, such as whether there is enough evidence for a reasonable chance of conviction and whether the case was in the public interest.

We would welcome further dialogue to understand how the new legislation might enable animal osteopath to be protected by the veterinary regulator in a way that continues to protect the reputation of and public confidence in human osteopathy.



We agree with the principle as set out in the consultation being the regulation of AVPs to provide assurance of safety and quality for animals, and which will see the introduction of protected titles and standards for AVPs. We also agree that it will be for the regulator to consult on, and recommend to government which AVPs should be regulated.

We expect animal osteopathy to be within this approach, underpinned by standards, fitness to practise processes, protection of title, and appropriate processes to support transition to the new arrangements. And in whatever future arrangement is determined, AVPs will need to be able to demonstrate the application of professional judgement, which of itself, is a defining characteristic of what makes a professional.

While we agree with the principle to regulate AVPs, we note that by this being addressed through secondary rather than primary legislation this may present a risk to animal safety through a delayed introduction. We believe this is something which would benefit from further reflection through the analysis of the consultation responses.

Additionally, as part of the move to regulate AVPs, attention will need to be given to the assurance of education standards and quality of education. Attention will need to be given to what current educational standards and quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and how these transit to the new register and how these are maintained during and post transition.

We recognise that regulation is distributed and shared and that the roles of other professional bodies can be critical in supporting high standards and we would encourage liaison with such bodies to support consistent assurance, and development of standards.

At the point that regulation is introduced, we anticipate that some who wish to practise both disciplines will require dual registration (as both human and animal practitioner). Our view is that providing the legislation considers this potential need, this need not be a problem; however, it is one that we wish to raise in our response to ensure the point receives appropriate consideration.



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In conclusion:

We support the reforms to Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and we welcome the consultation that has been issued. We believe that there is great potential for the reforms to have a positive impact on animal welfare, service users and professionals.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation and we look forward to further engagement with the future veterinary regulator.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Redford
Chief Executive and Registrar