

The Importance of Well Being for the Veterinary and Farming Sector

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ABSTRACT

It is an opinion article which deals in with the author's perception as a manager in a mental health crisis house in the Midlands and the main aim is on the relationship between humans and the effects of various disorders on them. Author's main concern is to provide some comfort and recovery, so that they may lead a normal and healthy life.

As a Manager in a mental health crisis house in the Midlands, my focus is on the interaction between humans and the effect that trauma, depression and anxiety disorder has on these people. I daily support people who are struggling with self-belief, complex triggers and suicidal ideation. My main concern is to offer some form of comfort, respite and recovery so that individuals can start to develop a new and positive journey so that the future is not just bearable, but it has hope and resilience.

Recently I have been made aware of the veterinary and farming sector and I do admit that personally I have made assumptions that working with animals offers a charmed life, for example, outdoor space and freedom comes to mind. However, as I learn more about these crucial industries, I can see that they are filled with their own stressors which have massive effect on the people who deliver this valuable work.

I realize that working with animals can be exciting and rewarding. However, caring for animals can be challenging, both mentally as well as physically. It has been recognized in several studies that levels of depression, stress and anxiety are disproportionately high among veterinary professionals.

Because of my growing personal interest in mental health and the fact that I have always owned domestic animals at home as well as a small farm holding, I am aware of personal attachment that can be developed. This has led me to research more into the demands of veterinary and farming life and I can see that I have definitely been thinking about being "on the other side of the counter", by this I mean a customer at the vets, receiving treatment for my pets and being guided through loss, etc.

I now appreciate more, the demands of the job itself, the long and often antisocial working hours, heavy workloads, poor work-life balance and difficult client relations. Vets in

particular are often faced with the trauma of the death of a beloved pet and the effect this has on the family involved.

Within my own practice I have worked with veterinary students who are suffering from anxiety and stress, which has led me to consider the personality types that are able to work in this practice. From my limited knowledge I would suggest that vets personalities tend to be a demanding combination of perfectionist, carer and doer, culminating in a professional who is very active and very involved in their work. People that are sensitive and really care. I am aware that there is a high demand academically to achieve which may attract high achievers that then find it very difficult to fail in any way which has an effect on their own perception of themselves which can lead to mental health issues such as stress and depression.

The need to regularly perform euthanasia is also an issue. Some research studies suggest that the requirement to repeatedly euthanize animals can lead to the development of a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Generally, people's insecurities and anxieties get entangled with extremely high expectations of the perfect self and their expertise; these factors are embedded within the culture of a high value profession. I feel that it is important to be able to offer support to the people who are delivering this work.

With regard to the farming industry specifically, the more I think about their situation, the more I realise the additional pressures that they may feel for example the following

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considerations need to be addressed - social isolation and the solitary nature of the work, long and unsocial hours, lack of time off work – particularly as home is often the workplace, record keeping and meeting regulatory requirements, the challenging weather, time and remoteness, financial worries, the outcome of Brexit and working conditions. I am sure there are many more areas that could be added.

I would also like to suggest that there may be a stigma around mental illness and particularly for men as there are many people who are still concerned about admitting that they may have an issue and need help.

Therefore to conclude, I hope that as mental health awareness grows, that the service continues to look at all areas of practice and addresses the valuable work that professionals in this area deliver every day and that we recognize the vulnerabilities that may be hidden.