

# Tom Lonsdale and Associates

## Veterinary Surgeons

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Riverstone Veterinary Hospital  
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Australia

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24 January, 1995

Dr W D Tavernor  
Editor  
JSAP  
7 Mansfield Street  
LONDON W1M 0AT  
UK

Dear Dr Tavernor,


Your letter of 3 January, 1995 appears to compound a deteriorating situation.

As veterinary surgeons we must keep uppermost the need, at all times, to safeguard the interests of our clients and their animals. It is my belief that the enclosed Schedule of Events demonstrate a disregard, on the part of the BSAVA, for the interests of our patients. The unwillingness to publish timely and effective criticism of published work suggests a rigidity and resistance to change unworthy of a profession entrusted with its own regulation.

It is expected that a practising veterinary surgeon will not show callous indifference to a single animal under his care. Opinion leaders within the profession are expected to show an even greater level of responsibility. Actively suppressing information, in what I regard to be the cruel infliction of disease upon an entire population of domestic pets, I believe requires immediate and thorough investigation.

As a veterinary surgeon I must exercise my rights in the discharge of my obligations. It will be necessary to make formal complaint to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the Minister of Agriculture. These bodies will require the names of veterinary surgeons responsible for this perceived denial of the interests of the profession at large, the community they serve and the animals in their care. Unless you can convince me to the contrary, then I consider yourself, the Board and Mrs Hill must all share the responsibility.

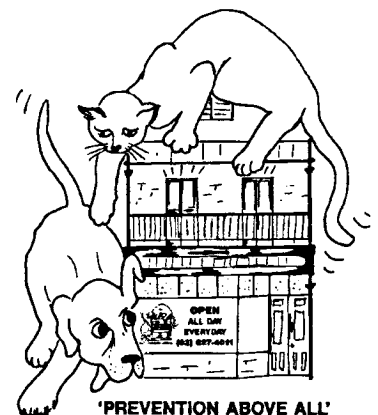
Yours sincerely,



Tom Lonsdale

enc

cc President of the BSAVA  
Board of Management of the BSAVA



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### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**December, 1991 to present** - Australian veterinary debate has highlighted the need for veterinary surgeons, researchers, referees and editors to take account of diet and periodontal disease when treating and researching or publishing information relating to the treatment of small domestic carnivores.

**March, 1993** - Australian Veterinary Association AGM voted to establish a committee to investigate and report on diet and disease in small domestic carnivores.

**February, 1994** - Diet and Disease Committee outline report was published in the Australian Veterinary Association News and a full account in the Australian Veterinary Journal, October, 1994.

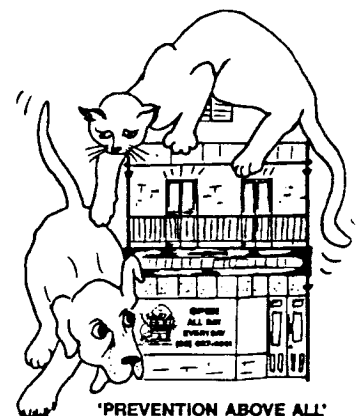
**Prior to June, 1994** - Drs Bellenger and Beck (Sydney University, Australia, veterinary researchers) submitted a paper on intussusception in cats. This paper ignored contemporary debate and contained no reference to diet or oral health of their patients.

**Prior to June, 1994** - BSAVA referees accepted the paper as being fit for publication.

**June, 1994** - You published the paper in Volume 35 of the Journal of Small Animal Practice. It must be presumed that you did not find errors of omission or commission nor that the paper had any tendency to mislead the reader.

**17 August, 1994** - My 1256 word letter was submitted for publication. This was a socio-political and scientific commentary supported by references to, amongst others, the Bellenger and Beck paper. This letter demonstrated that diet and disease is being seriously underestimated in contemporary veterinary work. This is all the more serious when Australian researchers, regularly exposed to the contemporary debate, choose to ignore the unmistakable message.

**31 August, 1994** - Your letter of rejection stated that *'a letter should be less than 500 words; a letter should be concise and to the point'*.



**15 September, 1994** - My 434 word letter concisely demonstrated the departure of other sciences from '*narrow, reductionist methodology*'. How this is not happening in the veterinary sphere. The Bellenger and Beck paper served as an example of the veterinary professions failure to take account of contemporary thought as is occurring in this and other sciences. The adherence to older and outdated methodology was shown to have serious consequences.

**15 September, 1994** - By way of background information a video of two well-known Australian TV programs was included in order that you should be better informed as to the contemporary situation in Australia.

**1 November, 1994**

**3 November, 1994** - Publishing conventions require that significant criticism or retraction must be published soon after publication of the paper giving rise to those criticisms. This had not happened and accordingly I placed two telephone calls to your office seeking advice as to your intentions.

**4 November, 1994** - Elizabeth Payne, your assistant, faxed that you had not at that time provided comment.

**8 November, 1994** - The diet and disease study commissioned by the Australian Veterinary Association and conducted by Associate Professor AD Watson was sent to your office as further supporting information.

**24 November, 1994** - Elizabeth Payne faxed my office, '*The editor has now accepted the above letter for publication - this should appear in our January, 1995 issue.*' Although suffering a lengthy delay this news was acceptable to me.

**21 December, 1994** - A letter of rejection from Elizabeth Payne was received by fax. '*Further to my fax of November 24, the question of your letter was referred to the Board of Management who, after discussion decided that it would not be in the interests of the Journal, or in compliance with its policy, to publish. As you must be aware the ultimate decision lies with the Board and I must comply with their wishes.*'

**26 December, 1994** - Having been denied an explanation or apology by the Board of Management, who I was informed were in control, I referred the matter to Mrs Hill, President of the BSAVA.

**29 December, 1994** - My letter to Elizabeth Payne outlined how, as a veterinary surgeon, I could not accept this abrupt about face by the JSAP.

**3 January, 1994** - Your letter contains worrying contradictions and misunderstandings. You will be aware that I have been told:

- a) that you, the editor, are solely responsible and also,
- b) that the ultimate decision lies with the Board of Management.

Given the seriousness of the situation it is entirely appropriate that I referred the matter to the President regardless of the time difference or holiday period.

Your assertion that my letter of 15 September, 1994 is basically a criticism of a paper by Bellenger and Beck is substantially untrue. You have been made extensively aware of the overall situation and know that the Bellenger and Beck paper provides a good illustration of the problems raised.

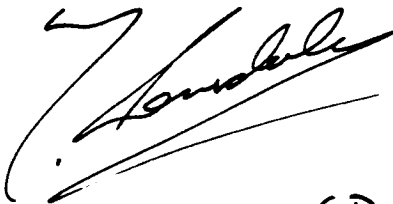
That the paper was passed by referees does not shift the responsibility. Most of the papers appearing in the JSAP do not admit artificial diets and chronic oral pathology as being pertinent factors for consideration.

As you say I am entitled (I would say 'honour bound' ) to criticise the current offerings. You would be aware that you constrain me to less than 500 words. Within that frame work I attempted to provide illustration of alternatives rather than be simply negative and critical.

Your advice on 24 November, 1994 to publish the letter was unconditional. Now you provide what seems to be contrived reasons as to why you should not publish.

Your statement, *'This decision is as much in your interest as of the Journal if you only think about it, especially in note of your standing in RCVS and BSAVA.'* has ambiguous and unsatisfactory connotations. I would be obliged if you would withdraw that statement.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Lonsdale', written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

T. LONSDALE.