

## **An Overview of the Pet Health Council**

### **Before the Pet Health Council**

Towards the middle of the last century, the understanding of the spread of disease between animals and humans (zoonotic transfer) was still in its infancy. In response to the growing need for information about the prevention of zoonotic diseases, and in continuation of the theme generated through Responsible Pets in Society, the Pet Health Council (PHC) was formed in 1969.

### **Founding Members**

The PHC was founded by a group of veterinary associations; the pharma industry, a pet food manufacturer and the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association. Their goal: to provide valuable and balanced information on disease issues, such as toxocarasis and toxoplasmosis. Over the years, expert representatives of associated organisations (AO) - involved in both pet and human health - and a medico-veterinary panel have supported its work.

### **The Pet Health Council's Purpose**

At the PHC we promote and advise on the health and welfare of pets in the interest of both pets and people. Over the past 40 years, we have evolved to become a unique reactive and proactive forum for sharing expertise, science and policy. We also help to promote the health and welfare intentions of our AO's and act as an information source for members of the public, animal and human health professionals and the press/media. This is aided by our website, [www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk](http://www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk). The process of information exchange is two-way; the associated organisations and the observers on the Council both gather information for the benefit of the Council and disseminate the Council's views to their memberships.



### **Contributions and Support**

In order to act as a source of information for the public we require donations and input from various AO's. These contributions are fully functional and go towards funding our secretariat, administrative and office costs along with website maintenance, publicity, leafleting and strategic development. However, some supporting AO's find it hard to contribute fully financially and so offer their invaluable expertise, services and advice in kind.

## Associate Organisations and Observers

We are made up of the following ten dedicated pet and human health bodies:

1. Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC)
2. British Veterinary Association (BVA)
3. National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)
4. People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA)
5. Pet Care Trust (PCT)
6. Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA)
7. Pets As Therapy (PAT)
8. Royal College of Nursing (Complementary Therapies Forum)
9. Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB (RPSGB)
10. Society of Companion Animal Studies (SCAS).



## Benefits of Association

Our members benefit from:

- regular networking opportunities with other AO's who have common aims, interests and themes;
- being part of an independent, credible and unified voice in the media;
- access to reserve statements on zoonotic and other health issues;
- promotion of the benefits of pet ownership for both humans and animals;
- increasing public awareness of their organisation through having their information and logo on PHC marketing materials and the PHC website;
- media monitoring services;
- a wealth of knowledge resources;
- opportunities to be a PHC spokesperson for TV, radio, magazines and seminars;
- promotion through PHC's sister organisation National Pet Month.



## The Pet Health Council Secretariat

Our Secretariat is responsible for the co-ordination of the organisation. Responsibilities include: the development of annual programmes in line with the PHC's vision, mission and objectives for approval by AOs; the organisation of meetings; the monitoring and reconciliation of annual budgets; assistance with enquiries from the public, professionals, observers or AOs; the recruitment of new AO's; website maintenance and the production of statements, press releases and other information materials for members and the public.



## Changing Attitudes

Since the PHC was founded, we have developed from a solely reactive into a proactive and reactive organisation which:

1. promotes responsible pet ownership
2. helps to provide expert balance to negative pet-related stories in the media
3. provides 'real time' spokespeople for the media
4. produces targeted tri-annual newsletters for the media.

## Promotional Activity



In association with Mars Petcare we produced the Petsercise booklet, featuring a series of exercises and routines for the pet owner and their dog to do together. The aim was to help the two become fitter and healthier together as well as helping to increase their bonding. The step by step booklet takes the owner through exercises such as football, jogging, swimming and hiking. Each exercise is listed along with the calories burned per hour by the owner and the Paw O'meter (activity difficulty) for the dog. There are also useful tips and precautions included such as footpath codes and lifeguard recommendations. We have a dedicated area on our website where visitors can download the booklet, pet and owner diaries and other useful tips for getting healthy.

We have a wealth of information on our website, [www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk](http://www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk), and have created a unique range of information leaflets offering essential advice for both current and potential pet owners. The leaflets and fact sheets offer up-to-date advice and guidance on keeping pets and owners healthy, covering areas of human health, animal health, responsible pet ownership, nutrition, fitness and choosing a pet. Leaflets are regularly circulated to various media and distribution at health-related events to aid with raising the awareness of our Council.

We also have an area of the website dedicated to the latest research on pet and human health and how pets and people can lead long and happy lives together. Information includes pets and allergies, how pets can benefit both children and the elderly, pets' role in illness recovery and the overall benefits that pets can bring to human health.

In order to promote responsible pet ownership we have a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section on our website to help owners with their pets, covering such themes as training tips, travelling, insurance and various health topics

## Current Position



We, at the secretariat, receive many enquiries from the public, media and other stakeholders on various aspects of the pet and human health world. Using our AOs' advice, position papers and help leaflets we are able to respond with up-to-date and accurate information in a timely manner. We produce many position papers each year in response to media stories. With consequent effect, we have become a nationally recognised credible authority on pet health, and in particular, its interface with human health through the printed and broadcast media and online.

In 2008, the Council met with the Trustees of NPM to the effect that both organizations now collaborate with the latter mounting its very successful annual event based on a theme which the former then develops further and carries forward during the remainder of the year. This is proving to be a strategic success for both organizations.

## So, why join?

Five good reasons to be an active member of the PHC:

- we are a unique body within the human/pet health and welfare space;
- collaboration with National Pet Month – the flagship annual enterprise;
- access to expertise and highly motivated peer group 'forum', built on equality of input and gain;
- a mutually advantageous effect from association;
- the PHC provides an enjoyable and rewarding platform for idea sharing and creative collaboration.

