

British Veterinary Ethnicity & Diversity Society (BVEDS)

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The British Veterinary Ethnicity & Diversity Society (BVEDS) was set up in 2016, in the wake of increasing hate crimes and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Our primary role is as a peer-to-peer support network for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), non-British veterinary professionals and white allies.

Both I and my co-founder Navaratnam Partheeban have experienced problematic discriminatory behaviours by peers, colleagues and employers, and felt that there was no support for veterinary professionals experiencing these issues. These incidents can be very disturbing and speaking to people who have a similar lived experience and understanding, who can comprehend the impact of discrimination, is vital in a profession that is only 3% BAME.

The more individuals we have spoken to over the years the more we realised that they are experiencing the same types of issues again and again. It is clear that there is very little education within the profession about discrimination and how to deal with it in the workplace. Incidents that often start out as 'one bad apple' are often made worse by inappropriate action by management, who do not understand Equality law and have no written protocols for dealing with such issues.

Over the years our support remit has expanded to include students, nurses, support staff, and school pupils from widening participation backgrounds wanting to apply to veterinary medicine or nursing. We offer support and education to white allies who wish to learn more about anti-racism and who also need support in making changes within their own spheres of influence.

Recently we have broken some of the silence around racism in the profession, with an article in the *Vet Record*, 'It's time to call out racism in the profession' (<https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/184/3/81>). We frequently come across the

Mission statement

- To celebrate and appreciate diversity within our profession.
- To support individuals dealing with discrimination (emotional, practical & sign-posting to legal assistance).
- To provide education to vets, nurses, students in the veterinary profession regarding ethnicity and diversity.
- To create a collaborative network of individuals and organisations within the profession with a focus on Equality and Diversity and tackling discrimination.
- To promote the veterinary profession to people of diverse backgrounds.
- To provide educational and policy guidance to veterinary organisations and allied professions.

idea that our profession is a utopia of intelligent and empathetic people untouched by prejudice and bias. It is not. And this kind of denial works only to excuse the inactivity of the veterinary profession to tackle prejudice and lack of diversity. As a profession we are decades behind industries such as medicine and dentistry in the UK, and our counterparts in the US veterinary profession.

We understand that speaking about racism and other types of discrimination is difficult and uncomfortable for all, but we need to start having these hard conversations if we are to make any progress as a profession. We are pleased to support the BVA's latest discrimination survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BVAQuestionnaire>) The survey will be open until the 2nd March and calls for responses from people who have experienced or witnessed all types of discrimination within the profession. This includes discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, gender, sexuality and class, among others. We hope this survey will highlight the ex-



The author discussing dairy farming in Vietnam.

tent and breadth of the issues that we need to face together as a profession.

We often get asked to prove the 'business case' for diversity. Given the amount of evidence there is out there in other industries including the NHS, we rather think this is the wrong way to look at the issue. Our profession is not diverse, so this means we are already missing out on the best people, talent and ideas.

We hope our work will create a network of engaged people working on Equality and Diversity within the profession who seek not to tick boxes, but to bring about structural changes within key institutions. We are clear that all marginalised voices need to be brought to the table for effective change to occur in our profession.

We would encourage those who want to learn more about anti-racism and how to be a better ally to check out our website, www.bveds.com. We post educational resources on Twitter @bveds2016 and Facebook on a regular basis. We are open to individuals and organisations with an interest in Equality and Diversity within the profession; please get in touch and help us develop a network of like-minded individuals across the sector. We are volunteer run, not for profit, not affiliated to any other organisation. We work to provide a voice for our communities and encourage other institutions within the profession to develop more inclusive structures. [CA](#)