

## **Veterinary Practice Ownership Bill**

The reason I brought forward this Amendment to legislation is because of growing concern among the public and veterinarians as to the impact of corporate ownership on veterinary practices going forward.

Over the last 4 years, corporations have started to buy veterinary practices in this country.

Prior to 2016, the Veterinary Council's view was that the ownership of a veterinary practice had to be by a vet.

They changed their interpretation of the legislation and allowed corporates to buy veterinary practices.

After some objections being raised, they decided they'd have a consultation process with stakeholders to re-examine the interpretation of the Bill.

They had appearances in front of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

There was serious unease whether their interpretation was correct and also regarding the impact this would have on veterinary practices and customers.

In other jurisdictions where corporate ownership has become the norm, the level of service to urban and rural customers decreased, while costs increased.

We've seen the first casualty to this form of ownership in Derry, the first 24 hour service that was heretofore available to farmers.

Over a long number of years, vets have provided a renowned and exemplary service in rural Ireland. Urban dwellers also have a very good service available at a reasonable cost.

In recent days, we've seen a number of articles regarding the difficulty in attracting vets into large animal practices.

Corporate ownership will make this more difficult as young vets will not be able to see a realistic path of career progression.

Indeed, this is proving to be a deciding factor among many vets not to enter private practice, which is having a significant impact on the availability of vets for large and small animal practices.

The purpose of this amendment to the legislation is to insist that the Veterinary Council implement, as they did heretofore, that only vets can own a veterinary practice.

I am fully convinced that this will be of significant benefit and attractiveness to veterinary practitioners and will ensure the delivery of a good service to their customers at a reasonable price.