

Dear General Practitioners,

I am increasingly concerned about the number of telephone calls I receive from people with pet fish who relate sad stories of veterinary surgeons either unable or unwilling to treat their fish. Owners appreciate that veterinary surgeons may not be competent in dealing with every species, but there are veterinarians with special interest in fish who can advise general practitioners whenever they are asked, so there is no excuse for not exercising commitment, expanding one's knowledge and treating a fish.

Fish keeping is a growing hobby at the moment and I would ask every veterinary practice not to ignore these fish. Some people care for their pet fish as much as they do for their dog or cat, and money spent on consultation fees and medicines often far exceeds the monetary worth of the fish.

It is a shame that veterinary students are taught so little about fish in their formative years, but there are people who are willing to take fish and give workshops to students so that they might learn the basics, should – or as is more likely, when – a species of fish is brought through the veterinary clinic.

Fish enthusiasts have to learn a great deal about the veterinary care of their fish, but they do not have the qualifications that veterinarians have aspired to. I would ask veterinarians to help and be prepared to use their skills – not necessarily for the sake of the owners, but for the welfare of the fish involved.

Adapted from **The Veterinary Record, April 2, 2005, Letters to the Editor, Treating pet poultry.**