

# Facing up to moral and legal obligations with phantoms

THE life of the locum veterinarian is unsettled, usually thankless, and fraught with hazards ranging from razor-clawed felines to dubiously experimental cooking. It is, however, rarely dull – or so I struggle to convince myself, during my darker moments.

Accordingly, it was with a minimum of surprise that I stumbled upon the entrance to London's College of Psychic Studies whilst recently wandering the streets near my current clinic. Intrigued (or, perhaps, mysteriously guided), I soon found myself passing through the imposing marble pillars and doorway of this eminent Edwardian institution.

I discovered within a centre dedicated to investigation of the paranormal for well over a century – and by a medical practitioner no less! The College was opened by none other than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, most noted for his stories about Sherlock Holmes, a character apparently modelled on one of his medical school professors.

Although my Australian veterinary class did include an orphaned joey kangaroo and a colleague who secretly confessed to me that she was a witch, sadly none of our professors proved half as interesting. Intriguingly, Sir Arthur was a medical student when he first began writing and continued the habit as a newly graduated doctor, between consultations.

## Variety of courses

My interest was further piqued when I discovered that the college offers a variety of courses of interest to medical practitioners, many of which count toward required CPD hours for "Accredited Healers".

If our years of suffering in veterinary school, assorted degrees and post-graduate awards do not make us duly accredited, then I really don't know what would. And with most one-

**ANDREW KNIGHT continues his series on CPD the hard way with a visit to the College of Psychic Studies**

day courses priced around £70 (£50 for college members – which would also make you an MCPS), such courses are ideally-suited to the discerning practitioner who seeks an alternative to the usual array of exorbitantly-priced medical and surgical options, particularly given today's financial climate.

Additionally, with courses available nearly every weekend and in the evenings as well, even the busiest practitioners should be able to find a time-slot that suits them.

Of 141 lectures, workshops and courses offered during the first trimester of 2009, 50 were marked as "CPD accredited". A small number of these were "masterclasses", being more "interactive and experiential" than regular lectures. Common topics included psychic development, clairvoyance, working with unseen energies, and communication with angels and spirit guides.

## Medical intuition

Of particular interest to veterinarians are the courses on "Animal communication" and "Medical intuition". In the latter, which are CPD accredited, practitioners learn how to communicate with the organs of the body to discern disease aetiology and appropriate interventions.

Given the condition of the x-ray machines and rarity of ultrasounds in my client practices, I'm particularly interested in the section on "intuitive scanning techniques". Usefully, for those dealing with difficult clients, this particular instructor also specialises in defending against curses and other dark arts.

Oddly – particularly in light of our high rates of cursing, especially around exam time – I seem unable to recall such topics being covered in my own veterinary course. Possibly the Australian educational system lags behind that of the UK. Perhaps, however, a rather more fundamental scientific conspiracy is to blame.

Ever since my physics professor bounced an iron ring higher and higher in a magnetic field, until it disappeared through a dark hole in our lecture hall ceiling, never to return, I've been wary of underestimating unseen forces.

Although recalled with rather less clarity by my shocked classmates, another principle of considerably greater importance was described that

day, the name of which regrettably eludes me. It essentially asserted, however, that it is impossible for us to ever observe the true nature of anything, because the act of observing changes space and time, distorting any observations made. We cannot even measure the extent of distortion, because our measurements are themselves distorted ... and so *ad infinitum*.

If they do, in fact, exist, then spiritual things are, by definition, spiritual. When lacking material manifestation, they are not even theoretically observable by physical means. It has always seemed to me to be incredibly arrogant, as well as scientifically naive, to assume that because "we humans cannot see it, it must not be there". This seems somewhat akin to anthropocentric viewpoints such as "humans are the centre of creation", or "the planets revolve around the Earth".

The College library was filled with ancient and intriguing texts, with titles like *The Collected Fruits of Occult Teaching*, *Reiki for Animals*, *The Exploration of Animal Consciousness*, *Hands of Healing for Horses* and *The Healing Paw*.

## Amazing examples

Some contained amazing animal examples of the things that animals seem able to do, including a dog who apparently trailed criminals and pieced together evidence; a cat who appeared to understand the difference between standard and daylight saving time; others who appeared to prophesy human deaths; a group of beavers who blanketed a lost boy, thereby preventing him from freezing; bees who attended their keeper's funeral; bears who administer herbal remedies; and crabs 1,000 miles from the sea, who appear able to monitor ocean tides. There was even a tale of a phantom dog who protected a stranger from an assault!

Whilst some of these phenomena seem scientifically explainable, others are clearly not. Do such examples of animal behaviour suggest the existence of a spiritual world, that we, with our



The author in the college library.

increasing evolutionary reliance on verbal communication, have largely become deaf to?

If so, we are faced with a diverse set of moral and legal questions, raised by the actions of the phantom dog. Have we a moral obligation in such cases to safeguard the welfare of ghostly animals that have provided us with companionship, protection, or, in the case of certain ghost tours, income?

## Charge of neglect?

Are such phantom animals, or should they be, covered by the Animal Welfare Act and related legislation? Given the theoretical impossibility of definitively concluding the contrary, does the possibility of their existence render us vulnerable to a charge of neglect if we fail to take proactive steps to safeguard their welfare?

Some climbers leave offerings to the spirits on mountain tops. Should we be doing likewise in our clinics? What do phantom animals eat? Do they suffer from phantom parasites, and what is the optimal worming protocol in urban environments? How does one restrain, vaccinate or muzzle a phantom dog? Or rectally palpate a phantom cow?

Given that they are, presumably, already dead, would that fact excuse us from attending after-hours calls to render emergency assistance on their behalf? Would the RCVS or a civil court accept this as a defence against a claim of professional misconduct?

If, like me, you feel your formal education has left you woefully unprepared to deal with such scenarios, you might like to join me for a spot of continuing education at London's College of Psychic Studies. To sign up for courses, visit [www.CollegeofPsychicStudies.co.uk](http://www.CollegeofPsychicStudies.co.uk).

Andrew Knight, BVMS, MRCVS, qualified from Murdoch University in Perth, Australia, in 2002, and worked for US animal protection organisations in advocacy roles for the first couple of years after finishing. Now a London-based veterinary locum, he wishes to state clearly that in this report he intends no disrespect to any spiritual entity, living or – especially – dead.