

**Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons  
And  
Mr David Christopher Wilson**

**Findings**

Mr David Wilson comes before the Disciplinary Committee charged with disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, which is set out in the charge sheet.

Mr Wilson qualified from the Liverpool School of Veterinary Medicine in 1999. After experience in mixed practice, he took a *locum tenens* position with the Penmellyn Veterinary Group in Cornwall from March to May 2003.

The Committee finds the following facts to have been established. The standard of proof applied is that the Committee is sure.

Mr Blow and Miss Gay were the owners of Indi, a seven year old German short haired pointer. They also had two other pointers. Mr Blow was an experienced dog owner and had brought Indi up to competition standard in field trials. Over the years it had become apparent that Indi was a very strong and dominant dog and had become aggressive to other dogs to the extent that he had attacked a spaniel belonging to Mr Blow's employer.

Mr Blow and Miss Gay had come to the conclusion that they could no longer keep Indi. They had explored other options including confinement and re-homing and had concluded, sadly, that re-homing was not appropriate for Indi due to his temperament. They made an appointment at the Penmellyn Veterinary Group practice in St. Columb Major in order to have Indi put to sleep. Mr Wilson was the veterinary surgeon who undertook this consultation.

The Committee heard evidence from Mr Blow and Miss Gay, Mr Wilson and Miss Buscombe, a veterinary nurse, all of whom had all been involved in the consultation.

The clinical records for that consultation showed an entry for euthanasia and cremation and that the fees for these procedures had been paid. There was a euthanasia consent form signed by Mr Blow in the consultation room during the consultation and in the presence of Mr Wilson that confirmed his instructions. The Committee accepts Miss Buscombe's evidence to that effect.

The consultation overran the usual time and was fraught with emotion on the part of Indi's owners. Mr Wilson discussed alternatives to euthanasia with the owners, including re-homing, castration and muzzling. The owners were adamant that Indi should be euthanased and this is supported by Miss Buscombe's evidence.

Mr Wilson was the veterinary surgeon in charge of the case. When the owners left the consulting room they proceeded to the reception area and paid a fee for euthanasia and cremation of their dog, Indi.

Mr Wilson took Indi to the kennel area. The Committee heard the evidence of Miss Carpenter, a trainee veterinary nurse, who said that Mr Wilson was not happy about having to euthanase “such a young, healthy dog” and the suggestion from Mr Wilson along the lines of, “We should not have to put this dog to sleep; maybe if we castrate it we could re-home it.”

In the light of Miss Carpenter’s evidence, the Committee finds that Mr Wilson accepted Indi for euthanasia and agreed to carry out Mr Blow and Miss Gay’s instructions in that respect.

Mr Wilson did not carry out the agreed instruction. The dog was not put to sleep.

By chance a work experience student being shown around the practice by Miss Butler, the head veterinary nurse, became aware of the presence of Indi in the kennels. Miss Butler indicated that Indi had been brought into the practice by his owners to be put to sleep and it was hoped that a new owner could be found to prevent this from happening, as he seemed such a fit and healthy dog. Miss Butler also indicated to Mr Wilson that the euthanasia and cremation fees received from the owners could be used towards his upkeep pending re-homing. In the event Indi was re-homed with the family of the work experience student.

Mr Wilson confirmed that he had spoken to the new keepers of Indi and had satisfied himself that there were no dogs in close proximity but did not disclose any of Indi’s medical history or the fact that he had attacked another dog.

Mr Wilson stated that he decided not to inform the owners of the circumstances regarding Indi’s re-homing, as he believed the owners would not agree to this and would be further distressed.

Mr Wilson was aware that the owners had paid a fee to the practice for the purpose of euthanasia and cremation of Indi, and that this money was then retained and utilised to pay for the surgical procedures of castration, and later scrotal ablation, carried out by the practice on Indi when the owners had no knowledge of these procedures and had not agreed to them.

Written evidence from the work experience student’s father revealed that he had asked if there was any reason why Indi should be put down, for example had he been involved in an incident or whether he had bitten anyone. The answer he received, it is not clear from whom, was that as far as was known there was no history of this kind but he was reassured when it was confirmed that the dog was a customer of the practice.

The re-homing proved unsuccessful because of Indi’s bad behaviour and another keeper, a local blacksmith, agreed to take on Indi but this re-homing was also short lived for the same reason.

In 2005 Mr Blow had become aware that the details of a dog called Indi, whose description matched that of the dog he believed had been euthanased some two years earlier, had been posted on a dog rescue website in 2003 as having been re-homed. The evidence before the Committee demonstrates that Indi was re-homed at least twice and possibly up to six times in two years.

## **Disgraceful Conduct in a Professional Respect**

Any client who signs a consent form for euthanasia and cremation instructing a veterinary surgeon is entitled to have every expectation that this procedure will be carried out.

Had Mr Wilson held a moral objection to carrying out the euthanasia of Indi he was entitled to draw this to the owners' attention in accordance with Part 2 D of the Guide to Professional Conduct concerning euthanasia, and arrange to pass the case to another veterinary surgeon in a sympathetic manner. Further he ignored the guidance that the client is an important contributor to the decision, and that clients are capable of making informed and conscientious decisions concerning the future of their animals.

Mr Blow's concern that Indi could not successfully be re-homed because of his behaviour appears to have been justified. A succession of re-homings is unlikely to be conducive to a dog's well-being.

Members of the public are entitled to place absolute trust in members of the veterinary profession in every respect. Not only that treatment given to their animals is competent but that agreed procedures are carried out, and indeed that the client receives the service for which he has paid a fee. Anything less is a breach of that trust.

The Committee therefore finds that Mr Wilson has been guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

## **THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

**3<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2006**