

## **McTimoney Animal Association**

### **Statement on the regulation of the animal musculoskeletal therapy sector**

The McTimoney Animal Association welcomes regulation of practitioners in the animal musculoskeletal (MSK) sector to ensure that the professionals working within the industry are competent, educated to the appropriate level and adequately insured. The industry as a whole is working hard to foster a collaborative approach within the industry in order to ensure that animals and their owners get the highest standards of care available. Animal welfare is paramount.

#### **Legal Framework for Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners**

Animal musculoskeletal practitioners include animal chiropractic practitioners, animal hydrotherapists, animal/veterinary physiotherapists, animal osteopaths and animal massage therapists. The MSK industry is **not** currently independently regulated. For example, there is no legal requirement for anyone to hold any qualification in order to call themselves an animal/veterinary physiotherapist. This is the impetus behind the steps being taken by appropriately qualified, competent and insured practitioners to try to establish a regulatory framework in order to protect members of the public and their animals from incompetent and uninsured practitioners.

However, there is a legal requirement that all those who offer animal musculoskeletal treatment only treat an animal following a referral from a veterinary surgeon. In practice, members of the public are protected by competent practitioners who are qualified to an accepted academic and practical level. These practitioners are members of a credible professional association with an elected board (such as the MAA), robust code of conduct and disciplinary procedure and eligibility requirements which include a minimum standard of training, assessment of day one competencies, a defined scope of practice and stringent annual requirements for professional development.

#### **Background into recent developments in MSK industry regulation**

DEFRA led a project that was entitled the "Review of Minor Procedures Regime (RMPP)" which concluded in March 2015. Musculoskeletal treatment of animals formed part of the review and it was hoped that the project would result in DEFRA implementing a regulatory framework for the MSK industry. However DEFRA chose three "procedures" as pilot projects and MSK treatment was not one of these.

At present any MSK regulation will therefore be industry-led. An all-

inclusive register of competent MSK professionals to include both human and non-human trained practitioners may be the future. There is a hope that, in the future, such a register would be independently regulated by an appropriate authority.

Currently there are two key initiatives being led by industry that will be of interest and/or concern to MAA members:

- 1. The Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP)**
- 2. The Animals First Group**

### **1. Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP)**

RAMP has certainly been a proactive, and now public, initiative. MAA members are aware of the recent media coverage, and further public information about RAMP is available on the website [www.rampregister.org](http://www.rampregister.org).

RAMP was set up by three human-trained practitioners/associations (MCA, ACPAT and SOAP) in response to the DEFRA RMPR study, and as a way of differentiating MSK practitioners (chiropractors, physiotherapists and osteopaths) with a certain level or standard of qualification.

Although the MAA considers that RAMP is a move in the right direction, in its current form it does not represent the industry as a whole.

MAA members are able to apply to join RAMP and this is very much a personal, practitioner choice. Currently MAA members qualify for entry onto RAMP via grandfather application. Applications will be assessed by RAMP on an individual basis, but the MAA have been reassured our members will be accepted.

Due to its public profile, and any resulting confusion it may be creating for MAA members' clients, a list of FAQs has been provided below.

### **2. The Animals First Group**

The Animals First Group was initiated by the associations and professional bodies that represent MSK professionals who are non-human trained i.e. Animal First. This group was in response to the publicity generated by RAMP, as the initiating associations felt that RAMP excluded a large proportion of the MSK industry. Therefore, this group is devising an opposing Animal First register.

Animals First group is still under development by the relevant associations. It incorporates a wide variety of therapies, so has a number of sub-groups to ensure each therapeutic modality is appropriately

covered. Chiropractic is a sub-group that the MAA is involved with. Entry onto this register for MAA members is currently proposed to be automatic. However, the important difference from RAMP is that it will not be on an individual practitioner basis, but for the MAA's entire membership. Therefore, being an MAA member will automatically put you on the Animals First Register.

At present, there is no public information about the Animals First register. Therefore, MAA members are unlikely to receive questions from owners or the veterinary profession about it. The MAA will keep members informed as further progress is made over the coming months.

## **FAQs for RAMP**

In light of the press articles and media coverage of RAMP in a number of industry publications, you may find the following information useful for providing to the public and veterinary profession on the register and its membership.

### **If the animal musculoskeletal practitioner that currently treats my pet is not listed on RAMP does this automatically mean they are not appropriately qualified or insured?**

No, not at all. Firstly, RAMP is a voluntary register and there is no regulatory or legal requirement for any practitioner to join the register. Secondly, those practitioners who are appropriately qualified, for example having completed an MSc in McTimoney Animal Manipulation involving clinical practical tuition and competency-based assessment, were at inception unable to join the register. The three associations responsible for the implementation of RAMP have chosen to make it live only for clinicians with a human background. Therefore an animal practitioner could be appropriately qualified, competent, insured and yet have been unable to join the register as they undertook an 'animal first' qualification rather than first being human trained. *You should however always ask any practitioner for details of their qualifications and insurance cover.*

### **Why are non-human qualified practitioners not included on RAMP?**

RAMP has indicated it is now open to applications from non-human trained practitioners. Unfortunately it is not clear from the existing information in the public domain why the register has not been made inclusive of appropriately qualified, insured, non-human trained practitioners from its inception.

### **Is RAMP compulsory?**

No, the register is voluntary. There is no regulatory or legal requirement for a practitioner to be listed on the RAMP register.

### **Is RAMP a regulator of the animal musculoskeletal industry?**

No, RAMP has no regulatory powers.

### **Is RAMP an initiative led by DEFRA?**

No, RAMP is not an initiative that is led, or currently supported, by DEFRA.

**Is RAMP endorsed by the RCVS?**

No, RAMP is not currently endorsed by the RCVS

**Does this mean a veterinary surgeon can only refer an animal to someone listed on RAMP?**

No, a veterinary surgeon can refer an animal for treatment to any competent and insured practitioner irrespective of whether or not they are listed on RAMP. Indeed many veterinary surgeons have longstanding relationships with competent, qualified and insured practitioners who cannot be listed on RAMP and there is no reason why these relationships cannot continue.

**Will insurance companies pay for treatment carried out by a practitioner that is not listed on RAMP?**

Yes, as long as treatment is carried out pursuant to a veterinary referral and your policy provides cover for treatment.

**What's the future for the regulation of animal musculoskeletal practitioners?**

The MAA wish to see a competency-based approach to regulation to ensure that from day one, practitioners are sufficiently equipped to provide the absolute best and most effective treatment for the animals that they treat.

DEFRA led a project that was entitled the "Review of Minor Procedures Regime" which concluded in March 2015. Musculoskeletal treatment of animals formed part of the review and it was hoped by those working within the industry that the project would result in DEFRA implementing a regulatory framework for the industry. However DEFRA chose three "procedures" as pilot projects and musculoskeletal (MSK) treatment was not one of the procedures that was selected.

At present any regulation will therefore be industry-led. An all-inclusive register of competent MSK professionals to include both human and non-human trained practitioners may be the future and although RAMP is certainly a move in the right direction, in its current form it does not represent the industry as a whole. RAMP is likely to be just one of several initiatives implemented by those associations working within the industry over the coming months and years.