

Specialist skills aid country vets



With figures from the University of Newcastle showing that the amount of time vets in private practices spent treating animals within the food industry halved between 1998 and 2006, the Agriculture Minister has said that more country vets are required to prevent outbreaks of diseases such as bird and swine flu and to maintain food safety.

"The countryside needs vets with the

right skills to help maintain a reliable supply of food," he said. "Farmers rely on vets to keep their animals and businesses healthy – that's why we need the whole food chain from farmers to supermarkets to make sure their needs are clearly understood by the veterinary industry."

One of the issues contributing to this shortage is the fact that vets now tend to specialise earlier and more frequently, which can lead to them choosing to treat pets in an urban environment or to focus on particular diseases and treatments. However, specialist

skills have their advantages in the countryside. As farmers become able to carry out more treatments themselves, vets can consider the overall farm and advise on how it can be run more efficiently and how diseases can be prevented.

"The role of the vet in the future is changing and is becoming more specialist," said BVA President, Harvey Locke. "The veterinary profession needs to get across to the farming industry about what vets can do to make their farms more profitable and healthy; it is not just about treating sick animals."



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