



European Society of Veterinary Clinical Ethology

To Merial US
corporate.communications@merial.com

November 18th 2009

Dear Sir/ Madam,

The board of the European Society for Veterinary Clinical Ethology (ESVCE) would like to bring an important matter to your attention, which we believe to have an impact on both the ethical image and the commercial activities of your company.

To our great satisfaction, we have observed that animal behavior and animal welfare have gained more importance in professional circles in recent years. Some pharmaceutical companies have even highlighted dog behavior in the promotion of drugs related to animal health. In this way, joint initiatives aimed at improving animal health and animal welfare have been beneficial to the veterinary profession and the pharmaceutical industry.

Unfortunately, there has been a recent occasion where a pharmaceutical product of your company has been advertised and promoted with behavioral messages that are opposed to evidence based medicine and training. The advertisement, promoting *Heartguard* (<http://heartgard.us.merial.com/home/>), appears to support (by accident or design) training methods that have been shown to rely on myths¹ and are known to induce aggressive responses in dogs².

Merial is associated with high standards of animal health and welfare. It is therefore of great surprise to us that Merial US has been part of this recent initiative. We would therefore urge Merial US to reconsider your advertisement strategy for *heartguard*.

Finally, we would very much like to take this opportunity to offer the services of ESVCE and our US Colleagues (AVSAB) in order to improve understanding of the field of animal behaviour and behavioural medicine.

Yours sincerely,
The ESVCE board

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¹ Bradshaw J, Blackwell E, Casey R (2009) Dominance in domestic dogs – useful construct or bad habit. Journal of veterinary Behavior (2009)4,135-14

² Herron M., Shofer F., Reisner I. (2009) Survey of the use and outcome of confrontational and non-confrontational training methods in client-owned dogs showing undesired behaviours. Applied Animal Behaviour Science 117 (2009)