

Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

Note of the meeting on 20 and 21 October 2021

Attendees

Chaired by:

Michael Seals

Members:

Tim Morris

Daniel Parker

Ian Hewitt

Richard Irvine

Yvonne Ball

Gwyn Jones

Jonathan Statham

Gareth Baynham-Hughes

Stewart Houston

Christine Middlemiss

1. Meeting opens (Wednesday 20 October 2021)

1.1 The Chair opened the video meeting and welcomed everyone to the 59th AHWBE meeting.

2. Digital and other improvements to equine ID and traceability

2.1. An update was provided on digitisation of equine ID in response to the Efra committee report on “Moving animals across borders” published on the 30th September 2021. In particular, the suggestion of the creation of an easy to use, digital by design equine ID system.

2.2. This confirmed that the Department was planning to launch a public consultation, which would include proposals for further digitization, alongside other potential improvements to the equine ID and traceability regime in England, before the end of the year, and it was important, that all those with an interest in equines, be given the opportunity to respond and to help shape future policy.

2.3. The conversation was concluded by board members advising the policy team to focus on why the regime needed to change and the tangible benefits that could be achieved.

3. Animal Health and Welfare Pathway: Longer term vision/road map

3.1. The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway is due to launch from Spring 2022 with the on-farm Annual Health and Welfare Review Animal Health and Welfare Grants will also be launching later in 2022.

3.2. The Board discussed the importance of the veterinary profession in delivering high quality advice to support continued development in animal health and welfare. The trusted relationship between vet and farmer lies at the heart of the Pathway and it critical to the longer-term vision of delivering benefits for UK trade, food security, public health, animal health and welfare, farm productivity and the environment.

4. Lord Benyon address to the board

4.1. Lord Benyon thanked the board members for their hard work sinace the Board was established 10 years ago. He expressed his gratitude for their support and their willingness to use their expertise and knowledge have ensured Ministers receive a balanced and well thought through response to issues at hand

4.2. He commented that Michael had provided strong leadership to the Board, using his experience as a farmer and his excellent networks both to influence individuals and partner organisations. Lord Benyon said that partnership working has been a real strength of the Board and that it should continue going forward.

4.3. Lord Benyon added that the board had been key in building trust between industry and working with the Defra and because of that there was a strong bridge between the two. On behalf of the department, he thanked the board for their invaluable contribution over the years and wish them all the best in the future.

5. Update on the new AHWBE

5.1. The Chair designate Jonathan Statham discussed his aspirations for a continued strategic focus of the Board, with sustainability, animal welfare, preparedness, networks, education and food resilience as important themes.

6. Bovine Electronic Identification (EID) Policy

6.1. There is a keen industry desire in England to make further progress with bovine EID, moving away from the paper passport and towards a fully digital approach.

6.2. The challenge has been getting a new number through the existing RPA and APHA systems used for inspections and disease tracing. These systems have gone through remediation and will now take the new format number. The existing cattle

database, Cattle Tracing System (CTS), cannot process the new bEID number, therefore, there is a need for LIS needs to be operational before bEID is introduced

7. Vet led team – Kate Richards (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons)

7.1. Kate Richards President of the RCVS attended to present on veterinary workforce pressures and wider veterinary staff solutions. The RCVS see workforce solutions based around recruitment, retention, and returners to the profession.

7.2. On recruitment the RCVS sets the accreditation standards for veterinary schools and these are being reviewed. For those with non-UK qualifications that are not recognised there is the Statutory Exam for Membership. Post Brexit and the end of Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications, the RCVS still recognises qualifications from EAEVE accredited schools. For EU non-EAEVE accredited schools to route to MRCVS is now through the Statutory Exam for membership.

7.3. To support new graduates in their first-year post-graduation the RCVS launched the Vet Graduate Development Programme this year. This programme provides a trained mentor for each first-year graduate. To recruit a new graduate the practice must have a mentor who has gone through the RCVS training programme to support them clinically and pastorally. The RCVS also has a number of initiatives as part of Mind Matters.

7.4. For returners to veterinary practices, there is work taking place to support those who may wish to return. It was noted that once a vet has left the register then the RCVS could no longer communicate with them due to GDPR.

8. Progress on Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

8.1. The board received an update on the progress on the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. The effort by board members to support communication and discussion with industry was much appreciated. It was key to a change of culture and getting farmers involved in the work. Communication remains critical, the comms subgroup working with the team put together an excellent set of slides that have gone down well with recipients, and there are plans for various shows across autumn/winter to talk about the AHW Pathway.

8.2. The product team were out on practical vet visits at farms with farmers (19/20/21 October 2021), to see what vets normally do during farm visits. They are particularly looking at the data they capture/use and what farmers/vets would be most excited to use the extra time offered by a funded Review to do. This is mainly observation and will help inform final design decisions.

8.3. There was a discussion around the need to train more vets to help implement and carry out work on the Pathway and clarity on funding is key moving forward.

9. Strategic Welfare Update

9.1. The team have identified 2 or 3 key animal welfare priorities for each sector via co-design with industry and others. These will help shape the financial incentives, especially grants and payments by results, as well as broader Pathway offer.

9.2. Michael Seals said that over both days of the meeting the discussion on the effect of cheap imports on UK produce sales came up a number of times. He suggests the new board may wish to come together with retailers to discuss steps to take to help promote the production locally.

10. What is the supply chain / industry responsibility for Contingency planning? How do we approach this?

10.1. There was a discussion on the contingency plans and the need to get industry to take a more proactive role in their own sphere for contingency planning purposes rather than waiting to see what government tells them what to do. There is acknowledgment that this can be difficult, and the team came to the board to see if there was a role for the board to play help deliver this.

10.2. Some of the ways the board could help would be by supporting animal keepers to recognise their responsibilities around planning for the 'unexpected' in a real way. Finding longer term solutions to reduce welfare risks on farms and also by bringing the supply chain closer together so that there is a holistic solution for future emergencies.

11. COP26 sustainability

11.1. COP26 in Glasgow in partnership with Italy is due to take place from the 31st October to 12th November 2021. The Net Zero Strategy which was published on the 19 October 2021 will be presented at the event, [link to report](#).

12. Import controls and checks

12.1. APHA is operating a two-tier system for live animal checks at present. For third countries, we have 6 border control points (BCPs) in Great Britain coming into England and Scotland. For EU imports there are currently risk-based checks at destination.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 26th & 27th January 2022