

Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

Note of the meeting on Thursday 12 July 2018

Attendees

Chaired by:

Michael Seals

Members:

John Bourne

Christine Middlemiss

Graeme Cooke

Chris Hadkiss

Yvonne Ball

Jonathan Statham

Stewart Houston

Tim Morris

Gwyn Jones

1. Meeting opens

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 46th AHWBE meeting. Apologies were received from Daniel Parker and Claire Horton.

2. Options and next steps for improving animal health

2.1 The board was given an overview of the work currently underway planning and developing a future approach to animal health. This was informed by feedback received from the Health and Harmony consultation.¹

¹ [Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit.](#)

2.2 Feedback highlighted a desire for greater partnership between government and industry to improve animal health. Discussion centred on the functions and forms that partnership could take.

2.3 The Board welcomed the update and stressed the importance of having a clear vision backed up with research and evidence.

3. Animal activity licensing regime

3.1 Defra had requested that the Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG) and the National Companion Animal Focus Group (NCAFG) design a risk based approach to support the new Animal Activity Licensing Regime (due to come into force in October 2018). Marisa Heath (CFSG) and Sharon Edwards (City of London Corporation) reported back on this work. The basis of this new approach was to:

- Allow local authorities (LAs) to inspect on a risk-based approach.
- Encourage and promote voluntary higher welfare standards over and above the minimum standards as laid down in the regulations.
- Enable, for the first-time, consumers to make an informed choice of service provider with an easily recognisable star rating scheme.
- Provide comprehensive guidance documents to ensure a consistent approach across LAs for all activities and general procedures, inspection forms and fee charging.

3.3 CFSG and the NCAFG agreed that this approach will drive higher standards that will enable businesses to make changes in a measured way with a timescale suitable to their resources. It will also respond to public demand which will ultimately need to support it. The approach should have the scope to improve health and welfare from birth to the point of sale benefitting the public, local authorities, pet industry and the animals.

3.4 The Board acknowledged the good work of CGSG and NCAFG. It also noted Dame Glenys Stacey's interim report on Farm inspection and regulation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-inspection-and-regulation-review>) (published on 12 July) which provides a high level summary of recommendations so far.

4. Review of standstill

4.1 Tim Morris led a discussion on the review of the animal movement standstill rules. He explained that government and industry both recognise the current complexity of the supply chain which makes change to standstill and quarantine rules challenging.

4.2 The review of this rule with industry continues.

5. Scanning surveillance update

5.1. The surveillance team confirmed the Animal Health Surveillance Governance Board will be replaced by the UK Surveillance Forum. It gave an update on the new Scanning Surveillance Development Programme for England and Wales (SSDP) Board meetings and highlighted key deliverables to date, which are:

- Programme definition
- Board approach and ways of working – clear demarcation between APHA’s SSDP for England and Wales and wider UK-level scanning surveillance strategy. Commissioning route for new work requests to APHA established.
- Project index and management processes agreed

5.2 The Board Provides synergy between APHA’s Scanning Surveillance Development Programme (SSDP) delivery and the UK-level strategic aims and outcomes, sharing best practice and direct link with the UK Surveillance Forum.

5.3 The Board praised the work of the team and offered its help, in particular with reminding industry about the system and to promote it at every opportunity.

6. EU Exit update for the Bio-security and Food Programme

6.1 The Board welcomed an update on the EU Exit bio-security and food programme, noting that much work has been put into drafting technical notices to be ready for a series of government-wide publications starting in August. The technical notices will provide advice to industry in the event that a deal is not agreed with the EU before exit.

7. Future import regime for animals and their products

7.1 The Board discussed current practice for biosecurity and public health controls on imports from Europe and opportunities to improve this in future, including the potential role of data and technology, and where and how controls are undertaken. The Board noted the importance of a level playing field between UK-produced and imported food, and that there may be lessons to learn from work on the Livestock Information Programme and food surveillance of imported food.

8. Update on proposals to develop an RDPE project to tackle Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS)

8.1 The Board, Defra and industry are working together to develop a programme aimed at tackling Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). This is an endemic virus which, if contracted, can have negative impacts on pig health, and potentially on national herd productivity. The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

Programme Board has agreed that work should proceed to the next stage, with the development of a project proposal and accompanying business case.

8.2 The Board welcomed the progress with the programme and asked the Defra to keep them updated with all related issues.

9. bTB update

9.1 The Board was updated on the following TB cattle policy changes that will come into effect from 1st November 2018:

- Paying 50% compensation for reactors that are so unclean they cannot be processed through a slaughterhouse.
- Reduced compensation (50%) for cattle brought in during a TB breakdown that become reactors whilst the herd is still under restrictions. This reduction will not apply to CHeCS accredited herds.
- To incentivise the take-up of the existing option of private slaughter of TB reactors, Defra will pay compensation if the carcass of a privately slaughtered reactor is condemned.

9.2 Default six monthly surveillance testing for cattle herds in the High Risk Area (HRA) will take effect from 2020. However, herds in the HRA that meet the following criteria will continue to be tested annually:

- (i) Have not had a TB breakdown in 6 years; and/or
- (ii) Are CHeCS accredited at level 1 or above

9.3 Point (i) above, is a change to the one set out in Defra's December announcement. The change has been made to simplify the original conditions, which involved checks on when a herd was first established, how long it has been TB free and the provenance of added animals. A simple six year herd freedom criterion will provide a better incentive for herd owners to improve their resilience to the disease.

9.4 The bTB Strategy Review is well underway. The call for evidence closed at the end of May. A number of stakeholder meetings have also been held, including with members of Bovine TB Eradication Advisory Group (TBEAG) in June which provided an opportunity for the group to feed in views. The report on the review of the TB Strategy is due to go to Ministers by the end of September.

10. Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) strategy update

10.1 The next AMR strategy will have a long term vision with key high level ambitious goals to achieve. This vision will be supported by shorter term UK National Action Plans. The strategy remains on target to publish by 2019.

10.2 Efforts are underway to look at ways to reduce the levels of AMR by taking a holistic approach. This will consider ways to tackle endemic diseases and on-going work to reduce antibiotic use.

10.3 Board members saw a close link to the AHWBE vision for future farming and offered to support the work where possible.

11. Exotic Disease Control: Contingency Plan Exercise Blackthorn

11.1. Exercise Blackthorn was designed to mimic and really test out Government contingency plans for a national outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and to establish the current state of readiness for such an outbreak. It took place over several days and was on a significant scale. It was intended to identify issues and improvements in policies, plans, instructions, structures and recovery procedures employed in managing an outbreak.

11.2 The scale and intensity of the exercise gave a realistic challenge. The team has reviewed historic lessons and outstanding gaps will be reviewed alongside those from this exercise.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3 October 2018