

Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

Note of the meeting on Wednesday 03 October 2018

Attendees

Chaired by:

Michael Seals

Members:

Christine Middlemiss

Gwyn Jones

Alex Thomas

Stewart Houston

Chris Hadkiss

Tim Morris

Yvonne Ball

Claire Horton

Jonathan Statham

Gwyn Jones

1. Meeting opens

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 47th meeting of the Board.

2. bTB update (Godfray report)

2.1 The Board were given an overview of the main issues examined as part of the Godfray review of the government's 25 year Bovine TB Strategy. Ministers have indicated they wish to consider what additional actions might be necessary now to ensure other tools and interventions are ready to be deployed in later phases of the strategy to ensure the government maintains progress towards its target of becoming officially TB free by 2038.

2.3 The Board praised the work on the review and Tim Morris commented that good communications when the report is published will help keep owners of species such as goats, camelids and hunt kennels on board and engaged.

3. Farm Inspection, Regulation and Enforcement review

3.1 A high level summary was presented to the Board of the recommendations in Dame Glenys Stacey's interim report on farm inspection and regulation.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-inspection-and-regulation-review>).

3.2 The interim report was published in July 2018 and the final report is expected by late December 2018. The report will focus on four main areas: state of the nation farming today, how industry should be regulated in the future, an assessment of the regulations and finally, the accountability of farmers.

4. Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder Steering Group

4.1 Background to the formation of the Animal Health and Welfare stakeholder steering group was provided to the board, as well as a readout from the first two meetings. The group had been established following the publication of the Agriculture Bill to enable Defra to work with industry to develop proposals to address endemic disease and improve animal health. It includes some members of the Board, and representatives of the larger health and welfare sector groups, the British Veterinary Association and AHDB.

4.2 The first two meetings of the group had helped to clarify the objectives of this work. It was thought that the group will allow government and industry to come together, to examine where they are each able to influence higher animal health standards, and to propose the best mechanism for delivery of that. The steering group will offer challenge and help develop a proposal for a wider audience (which will include Board members) to consider through structured workshops.

4.3 The Board was reminded that [the Agricultural Bill](#) has been published. The Bill includes provisions for collecting and sharing information to help defend against diseases, and provisions for making payments to protect and improve animal health or welfare.

4.4 The Board agreed the development of measures to improve animal health and address endemic disease is an opportunity to transform the industry – and that industry is ready for the challenge. It will require a genuine team approach and the development of trust between industry and government.

5. FSA 2018 Animal Welfare Report

5.1. A senior representative from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) provided a summary of the findings included in the 2018 Animal Welfare Report. In particular, the progress made on their Animal Welfare Action Plan was discussed. Two key areas in the report were highlighted: the funding of animal welfare work by Defra and Welsh Government; and the number of welfare incidents recorded in transport/on farm.

5.2 The paper presented to the Board provided an update on FSA activities to drive improvement under the “Deter, Prevent, Detect and Enforce” animal welfare programme in

slaughterhouses in England and Wales. At the September 2018 FSA Board meeting members considered and approved current and proposed activities in England and Wales as part of the programme.

5.3 In February 2018 the FSA carried out an animal welfare survey on behalf of DEFRA and Welsh Government. The survey was carried out in all operating slaughterhouses in England and Wales and collected data on where animals are sourced from, what methods of slaughter are used and the destination of the meat. Defra and Welsh Government will use the data from the survey in a number of ways including preparing for EU Exit, formulating future policy and identifying areas where future welfare research maybe required.

5.4 In addition, for FSA purposes, they gathered data on third party assurance schemes which showed that 68% of poultry premises and 48% of red meat premises are members of at least one scheme. The most common schemes are red Tractor (32% of all slaughterhouses) and British Retail Consortium (20%).

5.5 As part of their transparency commitments, the FSA began publishing quarterly reports on welfare non-compliances from 1st April 2017. All published reports can be found at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/animal-welfare#reports-of-our-checks>

5.6 In May 2018, Defra introduced legislation to make CCTV cameras mandatory in slaughter houses in England, to safeguard animal welfare in slaughterhouses. The legislation related to England only as animal welfare policy is devolved. Business Operators must comply with this legislation by 5 November 2018.

5.7 The Board acknowledged the good work by the FSA and relayed the positive feedback from sectors for its collaboration with Defra. It also noted the downward trend in welfare incidents in abattoirs, which has been achieved through various measures under the FSA Welfare Action Plan, including working collaboratively with industry to improve welfare. It also requested the FSA to reproduce its report on an annual basis.

6. AMR Strategy

6.1 The AMR Strategy team provided an update to the board as follows:

- AMR strategy drafting progress. The strategy is in its final stages of drafting of the 5 year plan and 20 year vision.
- Veterinary Antimicrobial Resistance and Sales Surveillance (VARSS) - Final editing is underway ready for publication of the Annual Report on sales of antibiotics and AMR trends.
- European Antibiotic Awareness day / World Antibiotic Awareness Week activities are upcoming and celebrating its tenth anniversary (2008-2018).
- One Health report being drafted

6.2 VMD will be asking the Board to support the proposals in each of the publications and to disseminate the information to their respective groups.

7. Welfare update

7.1 The Defra Animal welfare team sought views from the Board for developing an approach to animal welfare within trade policy that mitigates the risks and seizes the opportunities from new trading relationships post EU Exit.

7.2 There is a commitment from government to make the UK world leading on animal welfare. The welfare team will be working closely with the trade team on the options for controlling welfare imports. It was explained that the spectrum of ways to manage trade range from bans to tariffs and includes two parallel tracks – broad international influence to raise standards, and discussions on a country-by-country basis.

7.3 The welfare team went on to discuss the ban on the use of electric shock collars for training cats and dogs. Though initially proposed as a criminal offence, following consultation the use of hand held devices will become a civil offence. However, government will not be introducing a new offence for the electric containment system.

7.4 Claire Horton said that the companion animal sector would prefer a ban on containment systems but accept that in some cases it works. The sector agrees banning shock collars is justifiable.

7.5 Separately, the team highlighted that guidance for the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 is only available on the Canine and Feline Sector Group website, not on GOV.UK

8. Import of Puppies

8.1 The animal import team was seeking advice from the Board to help define the key risks to UK biosecurity posed by the importation of rescue dogs for rehoming and the illegal importation of underage puppies for sale in the UK.

8.2 By way of background, the team explained how the importation of dogs (for sale or rehoming) in the UK from other EU Member States presents risks to the health and welfare of these imported animals, as well as to pets and people within the UK. As the trade in dogs increases year on year, the risk of non-endemic and vaccine-controlled diseases entering or becoming established within the UK also grows.

8.3 The draft strategy will be ready by early December, at which point it will be shared with the Board for input and discussion.

8.4 The first meeting of potential collaborators (including vets, NGOs and others) in a Public Communications Campaign to raise awareness of the potential animal health and welfare issues associated with rehoming an imported dog, and the links in some instances to criminal activity, will be arranged for late November. The team are aiming for the campaign to cover both the illegal puppy and the rescue dog trades.

8.5 Claire Horton, Tim Morris and Michael Seals agreed to meet with welfare team colleagues for further discussions once the Board has read the draft strategy document.

9. Challenge session on data in the Agricultural Bill

9.1 Defra has included powers in the newly introduced Agriculture Bill to collect and share data throughout the Agri-Food Supply Chain (from farm to fork). The clauses enable the Secretary of State to collect and share of data throughout the agri-food supply chain for various purposes including promoting greater transparency and in support of animal health. The government wants to empower primary producers to be able to make better-informed business decisions, from who they sell their products to and at what price, to how they manage on-farm risks, including disease risk. To be able to do this, we need a more complete picture of supply chain data, from farm to fork.

9.2 The Board were supportive of the power and made the following comments:

- The Livestock Information Programme could give industry the opportunity make informed risk based trading decisions.
- Data is key to unlocking many opportunities but unless it's analysed it's of little use. Analysis and authenticity through validation is key.

9.3 The Board recommended the surveillance team to look at the general principles paper coming out of the last meeting of the Traceability Design User Group (TDUG) to inform their work.

10. AOB

10.1 No items of AOB were raised. The Chair thanked all participants and closed the meeting.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 16 January (PM) & Thursday 17 January 2019 (AM)