

## Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

# Note of the meeting on 16 and 17 January 2019

### **Attendees**

#### **Chaired by:**

Michael Seals

#### **Members:**

Christine Middlemiss

John Bourne

Alex Thomas

Stewart Houston

Chris Hadkiss

Daniel Parker

Yvonne Ball

Claire Horton

Jonathan Statham

Gwyn Jones

## **1. Meeting opens**

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board.

## **2. EU Exit Overview**

2.1 The Board reflected on the result of the latest Parliamentary votes. The focus of the Animal, Plant Health and Welfare (APHW) team would remain on preparing for “no deal” alongside core business issues in order to continue to effectively manage UK animal health/disease control issues going forward. The department as a whole had been looking at resources to reprioritise to focus on “no deal” preparations which may have some implications for non-EU exit work. “

## **3. Livestock Information Programme (LIP) Development**

3.1 It was reported that the LIP was making good progress. Key areas included were:

- Defra have received a healthy number of tenders from suppliers providing proposals to provide the core IT that will underpin the future multi-species traceability service. We have started the evaluation process and can update more

once we have concluded this commercially sensitive exercise. This contract will heavily inform the overall delivery plan for the LIP.

- The programme has let a digital services contract that allows specific expertise to be brought in very quickly – a real strength for the way that it can drive delivery.
- Small contracts to support the development of a new animal ID allocation system have been arranged and development work has started.

3.2 The Board praised the work on the project over the last two and a half years and in particular how they handled challenging circumstances over a long period of time. The Board offered their expertise and support to the team.

## **4. Companion Animals: Animal Activities Licensing regulations and the lessons learnt**

4.1 The Board were updated on the implementation of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals)(England) Regs 2018, which came into force on 1 October 2018. A lessons learnt exercise was being carried out to look at the guidance that was given throughout the process of getting the regulations in force.

4.2 Local authorities (LA) are progressing well with their programme of relicensing existing dog breeders, pet sellers, riding schools, animal boarders and people with performing animals, and issuing new licences.

4.3 There are approximately 10,000 licensing premises in England. Consultation with stakeholders has taken place with a policy statement being produced in 2017. Regulations were introduced in late 2017 and came into force early 2018.

## **5. Welfare update including welfare aspects of future farming**

5.1. Future farming welfare reform discussions found that there was agreement on the need to raise the standards where possible but that there was an imbalance between consumers wish for good welfare standards by producers and the willingness of consumers to pay a premium price. Good labelling should assist but could not guarantee the higher price would be realised.

5.2 Making payments for assurance schemes or organics to improve the market is being considered. This might be similar to the organic approach

## **6. Welsh Government: Quarantine Units in Wales Strategy**

6.1 The Head of Animal Disease Policy, from the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer, Welsh Government provided an introduction to the Quarantine Units (QU) scheme in Wales. He gave a brief precis of the scheme, which was introduced in September 2017,

along with details of the certification process, costs, animal movement/reporting requirements, and the benefits of the scheme to farmers. He outlined the outcome of a recent rapid review, including details of nine recommendations for improvements to increase uptake, which were:

- Improved communications between the Welsh Government and stakeholders through future events and simplified guidance.
- QU guidance in relation to TB to be revisited and where appropriate clarified
- Explore the possibility of amending the 24 hour reporting rule, allowing farmers to report the activation of a QU within 24 hours, whilst the individual animal movements are completed within three days;
- Explore the possibility of developing a grant scheme for QU certification – this will help farmers meet the initial cost of certification;
- Explore group farm certification and renewal inspections by the certification body;
- Assess whether the certification body can combine QU visits with other visits to further reduce costs;
- Allow greater discretion for QU inspectors when considering compliance with requirements (e.g. the use of natural barriers around QU's);
- Ask the certification body to streamline the renewal inspection process for QU's; and
- Continue to collect animal movement data concerning animal movements from Welsh holdings to agricultural shows.

## **7. Exotic diseases: Communicating disease risks associated with imported animals.**

7.1 The policy team for exotic diseases outlined the recent cases of Bluetongue positive cattle and sheep identified following post import tests during September, October and December 2018. Most of the animals who were part of this incident were pedigree animals brought in for stock breeding purposes. One incident though, involved 60 cross bred animals brought in for fattening and slaughter.

7.2 Pre-import testing would rectify the current issue the UK faces with importers mistakenly thinking they are buying stock fully protected against Bluetongue when this is not necessarily the case as without pre-import testing, the efficacy of vaccination cannot be assessed. Farmers appear to not be taking professional advice on the stock they are importing or checking the animals have been vaccinated before purchase.

## **8. Brexit: challenges and opportunities – which model offers the best chance of sorting illegal trade in dogs and cats in the UK?**

8.1 An RSPCA representative gave a presentation on Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) and the trade in puppies cross the Irish border. The RSPCA latest report and their ongoing

work with APHA and; the challenges being faced with hundreds of animals still crossing the border unchecked.

8.2 The report said, that each year, thousands of horses and dogs cross the UK/Ireland border. The vast majority of the trade in live equines between the UK and Ireland consists of horse movements for competition, but there are also cross-border movements of dogs for sport and the pet trade.

8.3 The trade in puppies is a devolved issue. Defra action to stop the sale of dogs under six months old in England unless being purchased from the breeders' premises will, if properly enforced, halt the trade in puppies from Ireland into the UK. The governments in Scotland and Wales are also looking at this option. However it is still legal to transport dogs over 15 weeks old under the commercial and non-commercial rules.

8.4 Conclusion from the Board were that APHA are aware of these issues which have been raised by the presenter and are striving to make changes to improve the situation. There is concern that the 6 month's minimum age limit for third party sales does not match with the 15 week quarantine rule and if a 6 month minimum age was imposed on puppy imports it would reduce the market as there is no demand for older dogs and a stay of that length would mean the dogs were losing their puppy appeal.

## **9. Next steps on the bTB strategy refresh**

9.1 Defra published the [report of the independent review of the Bovine TB Eradication Strategy for England](#), on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018, led by Professor Sir Charles Godfray FRS. The report presents a range of options for consideration rather than firm recommendations, acknowledging the need for further more detailed cost-benefit analysis and modelling in many cases.

9.2 It explores a wide range of interventions that the review team believe should be considered in attempts to control bovine TB in England. Key themes are around governance; surveillance and diagnostics; vaccination and genetic resistance in cattle; risk based trading; disease in wildlife; the disease in non-bovines; biosecurity; British farming post CAP and research.

9.3 There was unanimous agreement around the table that there needs to be a greater focus on risky practices to help industry to help themselves and not see bTB as a government problem.

## **10. Update on science: future funding and more international engagement**

10.1 Over the last decade, the government shifted the funding for R & D from government departments and channelled it to a gateway which has now become the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI). The research councils are still responsible for distributing funds.

10.2 Defra's priorities were recently addressed by agreement to fund projects in five areas including clean air, greenhouse gas removal, UK marine resources, circular economy and food systems

## **11. Dame Glenys Stacey Farm Inspection & Regulation Review**

11.1 Dame Glenys Stacey's Farm Inspection and Regulation Review was published on 13 December 2018 and makes 13 key recommendations for the future landscape of regulation and enforcement. It considers the diverse nature of farming in England today, and discusses the way that farming is currently regulated.

11.2 One of the main recommendations to come from the report was that the government can regulate better by having an independent regulator to work with farmers, including providing advice to influence the right outcomes. Another key recommendation from the report is for government to create a new relationship with farmers which is less about setting rules for farmers and instead working in partnership with them.

11.3 The Board mentioned the report gives us a clear focus going forward and asked for the Board to be involved as we develop future policy in the coming months. However the timelines for all the work is dependent on the outcomes from EU exit reprioritisation.

## **12. EU Exit overview**

12.1 If the UK leaves the EU in a no deal scenario then it will be treated as a third country. In order to be prepared for all possible outcomes, the UK has submitted its application for listing as a third country to continue exporting live animals and animal products to the EU after EU Exit. The Commission's published Contingency Action Plan states that: 'On the basis of the EU veterinary legislation, the Commission will – if justified – swiftly 'list' the United Kingdom, if all applicable conditions are fulfilled, so as to allow the entry of live animals and animal products from the United Kingdom into the European Union'.

12.2 Following the UK's application there has been a technical discussion between the UK and the EU Commission on becoming an approved third country for the export of live animals and animal products. We hope that the Commission will quickly process our application, however we cannot be certain of the EU response or its timings.

12.3 The French are making preparations for day 1 with new buildings at Dover and Eurotunnel customs to handle imports and SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary) checks on exports. A key question for both sides was how consignments and vehicles turning up with non-compliant paperwork would be dealt with without causing disruption at the ports. So good and effective communications was a key focus.

## **13. Progress on future animal health (endemic disease) policy work**

13.1 An update was provided on the development of Animal Health policy in the Future Farming Programme. There was discussion of working closely with industry on animal health and welfare as part of the approach to farming once the UK leaves the EU.

13.2 There was a workshop in December with the Animal Health & Welfare Partnership Steering Group to look at:

- What a partnership could achieve and do
- How it could be funded
- The legal implications of this

13.3 It was agreed that progress is being made.

## **14. AOB**

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

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 17 April (PM) & Thursday 18 April 2019 (AM)**