

## Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

# Note of the meeting on 17 and 18 April 2019

### **Attendees**

#### **Chaired by:**

Michael Seals

#### **Members:**

Alex Thomas

John Bourne

Chris Hadkiss

Stewart Houston

Yvonne Ball

Daniel Parker

Tim Morris

Gwyn Jones

## **1. Meeting opens**

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 49<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board.

## **2. Progress on Future Animal Health and Welfare Pathway**

2.1 The future animal health team engaged with poultry, sheep, pigs and cattle sector health and welfare councils and the British Veterinary Association during the first quarter of 2019.

2.2 Following last year's Health and Harmony consultation by Defra, there was strong public support for using public money to support higher animal health and welfare. Products which meet enhanced welfare standards are already available in the market but represent only a small percentage of overall production. The future animal health policy team are considering the use of public money to address support for farmers in reducing endemic disease.

2.3 The Chairman of the Board has discussed the concept with the NFU and will continue to liaise with them moving forward. Also the idea of working bottom up as a better way of approaching the challenges of endemic disease control was thought to be different but a really interesting concept.

- 2.4 The Board supported the advancement of the work for the Pathway but acknowledge that implementation will be a challenge.

### 3. Welfare – future farming policy stakeholder welfare group

- 3.1 The welfare team are working on developing and launching a scheme to increase the level of animal welfare by supporting farmers. The scheme is currently in feasibility/ scoping stage and increasing stakeholder engagement.
- 3.2 The Board agreed that working with farmers, keeping health and welfare groups connected and having a joined up approach (with health, welfare and environment on the ground) is the key to success.

### 4. Companion animal update

- 4.1 The companion animal policy team provided an update on the following issues:.
- 4.2 **Third party sale of puppies and kittens in England ban:** following the call for evidence, Defra issued a consultation from 21 August to 19 September 2018. Defra has now published the Summary of responses and the way forward:  
([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/774416/third-party-pets-consult-sum-resp.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774416/third-party-pets-consult-sum-resp.pdf) ) This makes clear how government is taking the work on implementing the ban forward. They are also consulting further on the regulation of rehoming and rescue centres in England, with a focus on getting an understanding of the impacts on smaller rescue and rehoming centres. The regulations for the ban were laid in Parliament on the 13th May 2019. The ban is due to come into force in April 2020.
- 4.3 **Dog Meat:** Giles Watling MP put forward an amendment to the Agriculture Bill to stop the eating of cat and dog meat. Minister Rutley has met with MPs to discuss this further and whilst this is not thought to be a problem in the UK, campaign group and MPs want to send a signal to other countries where dog meat consumption does happen. Policy team are exploring possible next steps.
- 4.4 **Racing animals:** Minister Rutley is very interested in welfare standards in both horse and greyhound racing. He has met with British Horseracing Association (BHA) and is planning further meetings in the near future. The aim being to look for ways of reducing fatalities in animals used in sports and he is interested in welfare improvements – rehoming etc.
- 4.5 **Equine welfare more broadly.** Minister Rutley is particularly concerned about tethering. He met with British Horse Council (BHC) to gather more information, and will be meeting Luke Hall MP who brought the tethering debate to Parliament.
- 4.6 **Microchipping** – welfare policy teams are exploring the possibility of introducing mandatory cat microchipping. The post Implementation Review (PIR) on dog chipping is

due next year. The Board suggested that it would be good to have a working group led by Tim Morris and Claire Horton to look at the implementing of the Regulations.

## **5. Role of government in endemic disease outbreak – effective vaccination**

5.1 Tim Morris introduced the round table discussion by reminding the Board that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a public health emergency, and use of vaccines in disease control will be a key aspect in addressing this threat. The Board continues to focus on endemic disease and its control.

5.2 Larger companies currently make most of the vaccines due to economies of scale. With imperatives to reduce antibiotic use and the Board's emphasis on preventative medicine there is also an opportunity for smaller companies to also engage in this space, supporting UK agriculture, wider innovation, and potentially export opportunities.

## **6. MSD UK - animal health white paper**

6.1 There was a presentation by an external company (MSD) on future animal health. MSD have produced two white papers; the recent one focuses on productivity and sustainability & the challenge of feeding the world. The UN has predicted that the world population will be 9.8 billion by 2050. Increased demand means we need to be smarter in producing food. This white paper looks at meat, milk & eggs. MSD believe the UK is in strong position as the demand for protein is very high & the UK is known around the world for having good agriculture. Having healthy animals is the key to help with the demand for protein.

6.2 The presenter also pointed out that vaccines are important for trade, especially in the light of EU Exit. It is estimated that 20% of animal production worldwide is lost as a result of disease. Once countries e.g. Germany, realise the huge cost to industry, they work to eradicate disease. The presenter said it was common to underestimate less obvious areas of cost- i.e. slower growth rate etc.

6.3 The Board posed a question as to why uptake is not higher given the evidence around increased profitability resulting from vaccination is clear? The presenter said that many farmers are not prepared to pay the initial cost as their margins are already so low, and that the full economic impact as set out in the slides is not widely known. Daniel Parker said that many farmers will not consider it worth vaccinating an animal if the diseases are not causing problems in their immediate area. Research needs to be done and then promoted accordingly. Vaccine resistance is also problem e.g. in fish.

## **7. Discussion on animal cruelty sentencing reforms**

7.1 The Chair lead the discussion on sentencing in the case of animal cruelty and the need for reforms. He highlighted two welfare incidences recently that received high media

interests:- one court case resulted in the defendant being given a ban on keeping animals for seven years and the second case only received a five years ban with £3,000 fine. The Board expressed concerns about the low number of years ban for keeping animals.

7.2 Government is committed to try and increase the minimum sentence from six months to five years.

## **8. Equine disease and African Swine Fever update**

8.1 The Board was updated on latest disease situation for equine viral arteritis (EVA), equine influenza (EI) and African swine fever (ASF).

8.2 EVA is a notifiable viral disease that affects horses, mules and donkeys. It is notifiable in all stallions and in mares that have been mated or inseminated within 14 days. EVA is spread by mating, artificial insemination, contact with aborted foetuses, fomites (contaminated objects) and also on the breath of infected animals.

8.3 Following privately funded pre-breeding testing, 3 purebred Spanish warmblood stallions from a stud farm in Dorset tested positive by serology for EVA. This shows one of the benefits of private testing and proves the advantage of picking up diseases earlier.

8.4 On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the British Horseracing Association (BHA) decided to temporarily suspend race as a precautionary measure to avoid the risk of further spread of the virus. This suspension was lifted on the 13<sup>th</sup> February and racing resumed.

8.5 Tim Morris discussed the benefits of the central equine database and the recent changes in legislation to allow local authorities to apply fixed price penalties, if it is not kept up-to-date by owners, with no extra cost to the tax payer. Therefore local authorities have the opportunity to issue penalties where errors are found during the tracing activity. He requested that the CVO to help promote this.

8.6 African Swine Fever (ASF) is often fatal disease of domestic pigs and wild boar. There was an outbreak in Belgium during September 2018 and we continue to receive reports of new cases in wild boar from Belgium.

8.7 The UK priority is to keep the disease out, enhance biosecurity and early detection. Some of the UK's recent activities have been to proactive communications targeting various stakeholders, farmers, smallholders and pet pig keepers, vets, hauliers, transporters, EU workers based in the UK.

## **9. EU exit update, current situation and work to date**

9.1 Alex Thomas provided the latest update on EU exit and in particular the extension to the end of October 2019. The priorities for the coming months will be EU regulations on "smarter rules for safer food", animal welfare, the livestock information program (LIP),

future farming work and the animal health and welfare pathway and response to the Godfray report on bovine TB.

- 9.2 The Chair was happy with the level of interaction on no deal planning with industry which has been very positive. Both sides are engaged throughout the process.

## **10. Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS)**

- 10.1 There was an update on the ongoing work to develop a proposal for a project to tackle Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). A joint Defra and industry working group (which include representatives from AHDB, National Pig Association, AHWBE, Pig health and Welfare Council and Pig Veterinary Society) have met on five occasions, and now have an outline proposal for a project. The next steps are to take a business case to the RDPE Programme Board, and then to ministers for decisions.
- 10.2 **Sheep scab project proposal:** Defra has been working with NFU to produce a proposal for a project which would aim to improve the productivity of the sheep flock in England through the control of sheep scab in a number of priority hotspot areas.
- 10.3 The Chair thanked the team for their work and the interaction between the team and the Board has been very good and useful.

## **11. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**

- 11.1 The UK's Five Year National Action Plan and 20 Year Vision on AMR was released on 24th Jan 2019. Link here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/antimicrobial-resistance-amr-information-and-resources> and the UK One Health Report: Joint report on antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance, 2013–2017 was published on 31st Jan 2019, Link here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/775075/One\\_Health\\_Report\\_2019\\_v45.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775075/One_Health_Report_2019_v45.pdf)
- 11.2 The important work of the Targets task force and VMD was highlighted.

## **12. AOB**

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

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