Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

Note of the meeting on 17 and 18 July 2019

Attendees

Chaired by:
Michael Seals

Members:
Christine Middlemiss  Stewart Houston
Tim Morris  Daniel Parker
Chris Hadkiss  Claire Horton
Yvonne Ball  Gwyn Jones
Jonathan Statham  Graeme Cooke
John Bourne

1. Meeting opens

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 50th AHWBE meeting and shared with Board members a letter from Lord Gardiner that thanked all Board members and recognised their contribution and achievements.

2. bTB – Response to Godfrey of bTB Strategy

2.1 Work is underway to progress the government’s response to the Godfrey report on the review of the Government bTB strategy and next steps to accelerate the eradication strategy.

2.2 Board members noted the importance of joined up approach to policy and that the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway could be a potential game-changer in terms of driving animal health outcomes in this context.
3. Disease Surveillance update

3.1 A presentation was delivered to the Board on the work undertaken on scanning surveillance for endemic diseases and new and re-emerging threats in England and Wales.

3.2 This work is primarily intended to detect new and re-emerging threats (NRTs) but also provides information on endemic diseases. It covers livestock and wildlife and has oversight by the Surveillance Intelligence Unit, including Species Expert Groups, the Surveillance, Epidemiology and Data Analysis (SEDA) team and an engagement/comms team.

3.3 Board members suggested that the surveillance team works more closely with the Board members going forward.

4. Future Veterinary Capability and Capacity Project

4.1 The Future Veterinary Capability and Capacity Project (FVCCP) is a profession wide project aimed at ensuring sufficient veterinary capacity in the long term and over the next 10 years. The project aims to help meet the demand for vets in the UK and to ensure that animal health and welfare as well as trade and disease control can be maintained.

4.2 The project was initiated by the previous Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), Nigel Gibbens, in July 2017. This is a collaborative endeavour involving the RCVS, BVA, APHA, FSA and the Devolved Administrations.

4.3 The project is managed by a project board compromising senior officials from the named stakeholder organisations, such as the president of the BVA, president of the RCVS and the CVO, Christine Middlemiss.

4.4 The two main aspects to the project is to reduce the number of vets and veterinary support staff leaving veterinary roles and the other aspect is to increase veterinary capacity to meet future demands.

4.5 The project aims to achieve the following objectives: to increase retention of vets; improve education; improve veterinary professional support to add capacity; increase recruitment of vets; and develop new legislative methods of improving capacity.

4.6 The Chair concluded by agreeing that this was an important project. He suggested utilising the expert knowledge and experience of the Board members to help inform the work going forward.
5. Companion Animal update

5.1 Since the British Veterinary Association (BVA) put out strong advice against the importing of stray dogs from abroad and their call for supporting legislation, many pet owners have written to Government to share their concerns.

5.2 Claire Horton advised that the welfare sector supports the BVA advice and suggests government and authorities recognise the key points made. Link to article: https://www.bva.co.uk/news-campaigns-and-policy/bva-community/bva-blog/what-is-the-disease-risk-from-imported-dogs-

5.3 Tim Morris raised that dealing with larger scale organised smuggling of pets in the UK is beyond the capability and role of the local authorities and is a role for the police and National Crime Agency. The local authorities would continue to work with the police force to support this work.

6. Trade Implication of the EU Animal Health Law

6.1 Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA) representative spoke on the EU Animal Health Regulation that would come into effect for member states after leaving the EU in October 2019 and more specifically the import controls for entry into the EU for animal origin products. This was currently a draft Implementing Regulation for which public consultation by the European Commission has taken place. The UK may implement aspects of this or at least take account of requirements for UK goods that will be exported to the EU.

6.2 Tim Morris mentioned that it was difficult to make sensible suggestions at this stage because of wider political climate and uncertainty of the deal with EU exit.

7. EU Exit Preparations no deal and other

7.1 An update was provided on EU exit preparations, including for a no-deal outcome, as the new Prime Minister is announced and a new government is formed.


8.1 Since the last meeting of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway group, there has been further work to reach out to different sectors to introduce the discussion on the Pathway and to gauge interest and views.

8.2 In early June 2019, the future farming Animal Health team took part in endemic disease workshops. This helped the team discuss their work with representatives from APHA and the Devolved Administrations (DAs).

9.1 The Livestock Information Programme (LIP) will put in place a multi-species livestock traceability service in England, with live services based on existing data, expected to be rolled out from late 2019. That service will interoperate with equivalent services across the UK, enabling Defra to continue to maintain the ‘UK view’ for international trade purposes.

9.2 The future service will be designed to deliver statutory and non-statutory benefits, with data sharing and integration at its heart. The Board again voiced their support for the work being done and offered support when required.

10. Progress on Dame Glenys Stacey Report on Farm Inspections and Regulations

10.1 Under recent direction from the Secretary of State, work in response to the review has started as a priority. Simultaneously the Future Farming programme have been developing the future regulatory model post EU Exit, for both the immediate and the longer term.

11. AHDB Dairy Research and Calf Forum update

11.1 Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) provided an update to the Board on dairy calves. There is a growing media interest in killing the euthanisation of bull calves. There is concerted effort from industry to reduce the number of unwanted bull calves by finding viable solutions to increase the number of dairy bull calves being reared to meet the demand for beef. Substantial progress has been made to reduce the number of dairy bull calves through improved breeding strategies to create more calves suitable for the beef supply chain.

11.2 While the aim of such schemes is to reduce wastage and improve welfare by making use of calves that might otherwise be euthanised at birth, there is recognition of the limited market for certain breeds of dairy bull calves (e.g. Channel Island) or for farms that are under TB restrictions. The marketing options for calves on TB-restricted dairy herds are limited.

11.3 The question of whether the Board had capacity to feed into 3rd parties to improve both the thinking around the benefits of keeping bull calves on and looking at better planning were discussed. The Board will consider this further.
12. AOB

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

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