1. Meeting opens (Wednesday 15 January 2020)

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 52nd AHWBE meeting.

2. Board Member Update

2.1 Gwyn Jones updated the Board on his work over the last year – including his roles on groups including RUMA, ADHB, this Board and others.

2.2 Gwyn has been heavily involved in the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway meetings - communicating with CHAWG the work taking place on developing the detail of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway and promoting it at industry meetings, where possible.

3. Exotic Disease Planning (Delivery of the Plan)

3.1 A presentation was delivered on the interaction with the Border Force Agency (BF) from an animal disease prevention prospective in terms of Products of Animal Origin (POAO) and the strategy and approach to preventing illegal imports and improving detection at the UK Border.
3.2 Their BF work to date has focused on passengers arriving in UK from high risk areas. Longer term, the intention is to look at raising awareness upstream and on the potential for a single high-level biosecurity message for the UK.

3.3 Operation Lillico (Joint op - Defra/Border Force) took place between 30 Sept to 5 October 2019 with the focus on preventing the incursion of African Swine Fever (ASF) through better communications, detection and seizure of POAO.

3.4 Michael Seals mentioned that enforcement is an important aspect of our work, and the presentation today is a good example of that.

3.5 Gareth Baynham-Hughes said that there is work taking place to look into improving border controls. It will also examine possible new animal import policies, with focus on a science-based approach.

4. The Future Farming - Enforcement and Regulation

4.1 Update delivered on future farming policy work on regulation and enforcement. The current regulatory system is largely shaped by our membership of the EU and the common agricultural policy. Leaving the EU provides an opportunity to reform our regulatory system for farming and land management to better meet the country’s needs.

4.2 The current delivery landscape of regulation can be fragmented, inefficient and complex. We want to take the opportunity that leaving the EU offers us to design a new regulatory system that is more joined up, transparent and consistent. We want this system to support a thriving agricultural sector and create enhanced and protected natural environment that helps meet the climate change challenge, with world-leading animal health and welfare standards.

4.3 The Agriculture Bill, currently passing through Parliament, is intended to provide powers that enable a safe transition away from the CAP. There are several significant areas of concern with cross compliance and intend to make simplifications and improvements, where possible, to the way regulation works, ensuring standards are maintained throughout the agricultural transition.

4.4 The team are committed to developing a future regulatory system, designed to deliver outcomes that matter through a proportionate and transparent system that represents a genuine partnership between government and England’s farmers and land managers.

4.5 Michael Seals reminded the Defra Regulation and Enforcement policy team that the Board members are here to help, and it is not necessary to wait for another Board meeting to approach members to discuss aspects of regulation and enforcement. Regulation and Enforcement intend to take up the board’s offer and work more closely with its members in future.
5. Livestock Information Programme (LIP) - Legislation and Abattoirs

5.1. A member of the livestock information programme policy team spoke about the current situation around legislation and enforcement in abattoirs in England. The team have workstreams running across various sectors with a key priority to establish bovine ID/electronic tagging.

5.2. The team are looking at what happens in the context of traceability, when sheep lose their ear tags and the higher disease risk when this happens. There is also work taking place looking at animals grazing on local land and whether this results in a higher risk of diseases being spread.

6. Areas for Future Research Funding

6.1. Following a meeting between Michael Seals and Prof Gideon Henderson, Defra’s Chief Scientist, on 7th November 2019 where they spoke on the importance of research on environmental matters, it was agreed that the matter would be raised with Board members to gather their views on topics that should be focused on.

6.2. A bid is being preparing for the multi-year spending review. Some of the policy research is proposed to take place in the following areas: bovine TB, exotic diseases and animal welfare. The Science and animal health and welfare bid will help to develop ability and an essential evidence base, directing research to address Defra’s policy needs and tackle complex challenges facing animal health & the environment, and to deliver outcomes for public wider economy.

6.3. Stewart Houston thought the real priority should be quicker disease testing and better stakeholder engagement to help achieve objectives.


7.1. Dawn Howard and Grace O’Gorman presented NOAH’s five-year vision from 2018 - 2023 which is aiming to be at the forefront of UK animal health and welfare.

7.2. NOAH represent the UK animal health industry. They promote the benefits of safe, effective, quality products and services for the health and welfare of all animals. There is a unique opportunity to improve animal health and welfare and NOAHs vision is to place animal health and welfare at the heart of future policy. There is a collective responsibility to help shape the future policy to positively benefit livestock, companion animals and society. All sectors need to work together to deliver better animal health and welfare.

7.3. Michael Seals thanked Dawn Howard for a very informative presentation. He also suggested that the work on the Animal Health & Welfare Pathway were in alignment with the messages in the presentation so could the AHW Pathway be mentioned in future
NOAH presentation. Dawn happily agreed that it would be possible as a way to support the Pathway work and to gain momentum within the industry.

Thursday 16 January 2020

8. Salmonella and Zoonoses

8.1 Since the introduction of the National Control Programme (NCP) for Salmonella in large flocks of chickens and turkeys (above 250 birds per holding for breeding flocks; 350 birds for laying hens), the risk of contracting the most significant human health salmonellas from poultry has reduced. By 2015/16 it appeared that Salmonella Enteritidis infection might have been eradicated from British egg production. Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) has revolutionised controls on salmonella as it allows tracing of outbreaks to the original source to be carried out faster and with more certainty and enables links to be made between animal and human cases. However, it carries a cost. APHA currently spends £500,000 annually on salmonella serotyping. Moving completely to WGS would cost double this (around £1m).

8.2 However 2019 saw an apparent rise in the incidence of Salmonella Enteritidis. The outbreak affected flocks covered by the Lion assurance scheme for eggs and BEIC has been Defra is working proactively with industry to address this. Good biosecurity such as effective rodent control is key.

8.3 Only poultry is covered by National Control Programmes, but there have been cases linked to other types of livestock. Defra is considering how to address these.

9. Animal Welfare and Trade

9.1 Discussions on trade tariffs are ongoing and Defra has been working across Whitehall to retain welfare measures in the discussion on tariffs. Helpful manifesto commitments were made to deliver high welfare standards and that has helped the message go home. The RCVS conducted a review of minor procedure regime and have made recommendations on how para professionals are regulated ensuring that the right regulations are in place particularly in places where there are grey areas.

9.2 The EU Mercosur trade agreement was also valuable in helping the UK use that as an example to look for continuous welfare standard improvements.

10. Future Farming and the Link to the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway and Environmental Land Management (ELM)

10.1 The Head of Programme Policy and Strategy for Future Farming and Countryside Programme team talked about progress made since the December election and the return of the new Government. There is enthusiasm from Ministers in making sure schemes are more joined up.
10.2 The Agriculture Bill was introduced today and includes a power to make financial assistance available to protect or improve the health or welfare of livestock. It also includes a Duty to publish a multi-annual assistance plan including how Defra intend to use their powers for financial assistance. If that plan is changed Defra will provide an update as soon as practical.

10.3 There is to be a reduction and then cessation of subsidy payments over 7 years starting in 2021. A pilot for ELM will be launched in 2021 with a full launch in 2024.

10.4 Michael Seals summed up by saying we need to get the message out to industry that change is coming and eventually the direct payment will not be provided. Industry need to be planning for that.


11.1 The co-design process was slowed by the pre-election period, but since then the pace of work and engagement have increased.

11.2 Stakeholders are keen for certainty. The Animal Welfare Steering Group will meet in late January 2020 with the intention of getting more agreement at broad sector level. It is planned to talk to industry about how we move forward together and to provide detail on the mechanics of the delivery process.

11.3 The welfare grant workshops will take place later in January/February 2020. Objectives will be to decide what will be included for funding by the welfare grants. The Chairman commented that it was good to see evidence of engagement and the attempt to join up discussion and work across Defra.

11.4 After the sector Chairs Council meeting National Food Strategy presentation there was agreement that the national food strategy team would need to engage more with the livestock sector to be better informed about their work.

12. Finance for Animal and Plant Health

12.1 In summer 2020, there will be a three-year spending review. The Budget in March 2020 will set out capital spending plans for the next multi-annual period. Internally, spending plans for 2020/21 are being finalised through business planning. Animal and plant health teams will receive additional funding ear-marked for bovine TB and AMR that was announced at the Budget. APHA would also receive a budget uplift to support recruitment.

12.2 Chris Hadkiss added that APHA had been managing resources carefully but with some difficulty given the demands on it and the recruitment position in the current financial year. Chris explained that the Government would be prioritising spending on science and evidence in the Budget which should provide opportunities for APHA.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 15 April (PM) and Thursday 16 April 2020 (AM)