

# Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

Note of the meeting on 21 and 22 April 2021

## **Attendees**

### **Chaired by:**

Michael Seals

### **Members:**

- Tim Morris
- Chris Hadkiss (22 April Only)
- Yvonne Ball
- Jonathan Statham
- Stewart Houston
- Daniel Parker
- Claire Horton
- Gwyn Jones
- Gareth Baynham-Hughes

## **1. Meeting opens (Wednesday 21 April 2021)**

**1.1** The Chair opened the video meeting and welcomed everyone to the 57th AHWBE meeting.

## **2. Exotic Animal Disease Contingency Plan 2021 Vehicle Cleansing and Disinfection at Markets and Abattoirs Exotic Animal Disease contingency plan 2021**

**2.1.** The Animal Health Act requires that the Defra contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases of animals in England is reviewed annually.

If changes are needed, they should be consulted on and the revised plan laid before parliament and published. A review is currently underway. The previous review in March 2020 concluded that no significant changes were required.

**2.2.** Changes to the plan are now required following the end of EU Exit Transition and to reflect working practices arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

It will also ensure references to EU legislation are brought up to date. The fundamental disease response structure is unchanged.

### **Vehicle Cleansing and Disinfection (C and D) at Market and Abattoirs**

**2.3.** To reduce the risk of spread of disease (for example Foot and Mouth Disease), The Transport of Animals (Cleansing and Disinfection) (England) Order 2003 requires vehicles to be cleansed and disinfected as soon as practical after unloading animals.

They must also clean and disinfect before re-loading if the vehicle has subsequently been soiled.

**2.4.** If a vehicle leaves a gathering or abattoir without cleansing, the driver must complete a [Undertaking to Cleanse and Disinfect Vehicle- FMAW27](#) form stating where they will clean and disinfect the vehicle within 24 hours.

The market or abattoir operator sends these to the local authority (LA) on the same day. LA's are designated as the enforcement agency.

**2.5.** Food Standards Agency (FSA) approve abattoirs under Food Hygiene, rather than Animal Health regulations. Some checks on the use of facilities provides evidence on volume and quality of compliance.

Stewart Houston has established an industry working group to look at the issues around the cleaning and use of transporters at markets and abattoirs.

### **3. Scanning of dog and cat microchips before euthanasia -Tuk's Law**

**3.1.** Tuk's law is calling for mandatory scanning prior to euthanasia of healthy dogs. The Government is considering measures to provide greater assurance to dog owners and to the public that healthy and treatable dogs are only being euthanised.

When the owner has provided consent and that in these circumstances the vet has checked the dog's microchip database details for any other party that maintains an interest, such as a rescue centre.

This proposal was included in the recent Cat Microchipping consultation.

**3.2.** The board offered to facilitate a discussion with the Royal College of Veterinarians (RCVS) to assess how their guidance could be amended to better address the issues.

### **4. Dogs and Sheep worrying: Update on the work of the police group**

**4.1.** Tim Morris described the issue of dogs causing sheep distress, injuries and death. There had been instances where farmers reporting this to the police had been mistakenly told it was a civil rather than a criminal matter.

Following a social media campaign run by an organisation called 'Sheepwatch' highlighting how many issues have taken place, the issue was raised to parliamentary and national police level.

**4.2.** A report in the media was later picked up by the BBC who illustrated the scale of the issue by reporting that up to 15,000 livestock have been killed due to attacks by dogs.

Working with the police, an information campaign was created with a guide for farmers and landowners on the law and how to report to their local police and enforcement officers.

**4.3.** Tim Morris went on to mention how working with police, campaigners and Defra policy teams has been challenging at times, but all three groups came together to create good legislation.

The board asked that the good work done by Tim be acknowledged here.

## **5. Animal Health Import Standards and the UK unique selling point**

**5.1.** Tim Morris opened the discussion by reminding the board that now that the UK has left the EU, there is an opportunity to increase health and welfare standards beyond those of the EU. This could be developed into a unique selling point for the UK.

**5.2.** Gareth Baynham-Hughes mentioned that work and risk assessments are also taking place to ensure import standards are equal across the board.

The UK is not opposed to tightening these standards to help protect against exotic diseases.

**5.3.** Yvonne Ball further reminded the board that the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway was set up to help implement higher standards of health and welfare.

## **6. Poultry Passport**

**6.1.** A representative from Poultec Training Limited joined the meeting to present on developing an Industry Training Standard.

Poultec is a private training provider, established in 1996. They provide apprenticeships, traineeships, study programmes and short courses.

**6.2.** The poultry passport was established in 2009, initiated by Red Tractor. Poultec were approached by Red Tractor to help provide courses and training.

They were set the task of developing a common standard of training and recording training across sectors. A working group was established to work with industry and producers to help develop established approval mechanisms for courses.

**6.3.** Daniel Parker mentioned that the poultry sector and Red Tractor introduced this initiative to help create a career path for new entrants and make it more appealing.

He mentioned that this has been a welcome idea and the courses have been taken up by most that have chosen a career within the poultry sector.

**Thursday 22 April 2021**

## **7. Update on progress with the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway**

**7.1.** The board were updated on work on the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. The team has been focusing on the launch offer for April 2022 while continuing to work on four key components:

1. an annual animal health and welfare review
2. control and eradication of endemic diseases
3. conditions and incentives for improved welfare through payments by results
4. small and large grants

**7.2.** The team have also been working on engagement and held numerous meetings with interested stakeholders and wider industry. A communications manager has been appointed to expand engagement over the coming year.

## **8. Update on the Anti-microbial resistance (AMR) 5 year plan by Kitty Healey**

**8.1.** The [Veterinary Antibiotic Resistance and Sales Surveillance Report \(VARSS\)](#) report (PDF) was published in autumn of 2020 This was a full report and was delivered on time despite the COVID19 pandemic.

**8.2.** In 2018 the UK had the 5th lowest level of antibiotic sales for food producing animals (29.5 mg/kg) of the 31 European countries reporting this data.

The new set of targets were set by the [Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture \(RUMA\) Alliance targets task force report 2020](#) (PDF).

## **9. Update on Global Animal Health and One Health**

**9.1.** An update was provided on G7 Environment Track work that is being planned on Zoonoses, particularly on an “International Zoonoses Community of Experts” idea for the G7 and partner countries.

Which will be akin to the UK Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance group (HAIRS) group, acting as a forum for ad hoc discussion on horizon scanning and risk assessment.

## **10. Action Plan for Animal Welfare**

**10.1.** The Action Plan for Animal Welfare has been commissioned by N10 and is due to be published after the Queen's Speech on 11 May 2021.

## **11. Update on Disease Surveillance and Reporting**

**11.1.** The head of APHA Surveillance Intelligence Unit gave a presentation on disease surveillance and reporting. Key points since the last update in July 2019, include:

- expansion of externally contracted post-mortem services, adding universities of Liverpool, Nottingham and Cambridge
- launched a project around engagement with scanning surveillance stakeholders
- workstreams established for key veterinary audiences: vets in practice, recent graduates and students
- new approaches to sharing information for example, YouTube or podcasts
- producer newsletters via abattoirs
- APHA science blogs
- social media – APHA twitter and Facebook accounts
- new projects to look at data sharing from new sources (for example, private vet labs and FSA) – aligns to policy evidence requirements for Animal Health and may increase strength of surveillance system to detect disease threats

## **12. Update on Endemic Disease Situation**

**12.1.** A team member from Defra attended to present an update on endemic diseases. A key driver is to reduce antimicrobial resistance.

In recent years there has been a stronger appetite for government to help tackle endemic diseases due to public benefits for AMR, trade and market failures. The EU Animal Health Regulation has also helped to drive change.

**12.2.** Regarding salmonella, the team aims to have a well-established National Control Programme for poultry, but some trends of concern, particularly outbreaks in laying flocks linked to packing stations.

**12.3.** Under the EU Animal Health Regulation which came into application on 21 April 2021 and which the UK will have to comply with to trade with the EU, there are some additional endemic diseases which now need to be reported:

- Q Fever
- Psittacosis
- Additional Salmonellas (pullorum, gallinarum)
- Avian Mycoplasma
- Trichomonosis
- Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR)
- Infectious pustular vulvovaginitis
- Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)
- Johnes
- Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS)
- Bovine genital campylobacteriosis

**12.4.** The presentation concluded with an explanation of the new reporting requirements. Some will require just numbers of positive tests (for example, BVD and PRRS) whereas others will be linked to premises (for example, Q Fever).

### **13. Update on Livestock Information Programme (LIP)**

**13.1.** The Livestock Information company has been set up to design and implement a new multi-species traceability service which will replace those currently used for cattle, sheep and pigs.

**13.2.** The new digital service will be more robust and efficient than current systems though not without its challenges to develop.

**13.3.** Work is also underway to create a more digital, modern way to demonstrate traceability. Subject to consultation, businesses will no longer be able to report on paper which will help real time reporting.

### **14. Update on EU Exit Matters by Joanne Bradshaw**

**14.1.** Joanne is Defra's new Director for the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) programme.

**14.2.** The scope of the Borders and Boundaries programme, is delivering key systems, services, operations, capability and legislative changes required to enable the introduction of new controls for goods moving to and from the EU.

**14.3.** In relation to exports, there are changes to EU law from 21 April 2021 (the Animal Health Regulation (AHR)) that will affect traders who move certain live animals, germinal products and products of animal origin to Northern Ireland, or who export them to the EU.

All EU Export Health Certificates (EHCs) need to be updated to reflect the new rules, and this will be phased in between April and August 2021.

**14.4.** The team continue to engage with the European Commission and EU Member States, to ensure there is a common understanding of the EU's export rules and how they should apply and to resolve any issues that UK exporters may be experiencing.

**14.5.** To deliver the revised phased import check requirements, the team are laying several separate pieces of legislation, reflecting the complexity of the original phasing provisions across multiple EU Exit Statements of Intentions.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 14 and Thursday 15 July 2021**