

Animal Health Surveillance Governance Board

Terms of Reference

The Animal Health Surveillance Governance Board (AHSGB) is constituted to advise Defra and the Welsh Government on the best use of the funding they make available to provide England and Wales with an effective animal health scanning surveillance system which retains the confidence of the animal-keeping sectors, and enables Government to meet its national and international obligations. It is a partnership board between Government and Industry, recognising that animal keepers and allied sectors, including the veterinary profession, are providers of data and intelligence to the system, and are beneficiaries of the reports and advice that are produced. Thus the benefits of scanning surveillance are jointly owned, reflecting the shared responsibility and risk ownership of changes in animal-related threat status and disease trends and profiles. It is intended that the structure, membership and actions of the AHSGB reflect this.

Key Responsibilities

To provide strategic advice to Defra and the Welsh Government and their advisory bodies, the Animal Health & Welfare Board for England and the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group.

The Board's primary responsibility and focus is "scanning surveillance" in England and Wales, but the Board will be mindful of the linkages and dependencies between "scanning surveillance" and other components of the overall surveillance system in Great Britain. The Board will provide strategic advice, and where appropriate recommendations, on animal disease surveillance approaches, taking into consideration interests and contributions of the veterinary profession, animal keepers, livestock industries, wider food chain and Government, that aim to ensure that the surveillance system meets the needs of all who benefit from them. This Board will draw on specific sectoral or technical expertise as required.

Accountable to Policy Directors responsible for animal-related new and re-emerging threats and for advice and guidance on the development of their animal disease surveillance strategy: whether the surveillance systems in place are fit for purpose; are assessed and updated in light of developing science; and are supported by the appropriate expertise and resource. The Board will provide strategic advice on the priorities for surveillance in light of available funding for scanning surveillance, and will advise on the impacts of changing budgets, risks and threats.

Advising the Chief Executive of the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) on whether the commission from Defra, to reflect the interests of Defra and the Welsh Government, is aligned with the scanning surveillance priorities recommended by the Board.

Advising Policy Directors (Director for Animal and Plant Health and CVO Wales) on whether the surveillance delivered provides effective threat identification and characterisation, and whether good data and intelligence analysis and communication is in place to enable response by both government and animal keeping sectors.

Providing leadership and communication to delivery bodies, animal keeping and allied sectors and the veterinary and pathology professions at a strategic level, and working jointly with SIU, to promote their engagement with the continuing development of scanning surveillance in England and Wales, including promotion of working in partnership so that the scanning surveillance system supports industry and societal needs.

Scope

The Board will be responsible for strategic advice and oversight of scanning surveillance in all animal species in the context of the complete animal health surveillance system, but will initially focus on the scanning surveillance of farmed livestock. This position will be subject to regular review. The Board has no statutory function.

Governance

The Board will be a subgroup of a combined college of the Animal Health & Welfare Board for England and the Welsh Government Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group, acting jointly and in equal measure. It will be accountable to Defra and the Welsh Government through this college. It will be established as a temporary advisory committee, for a period of three years, with its effectiveness and future to be reviewed by this college in consultation with Policy Directors after no more than two and a half years.

Chair

The Chair will be appointed by the Chairs of the Animal Health & Welfare Board for England and the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group following an open selection in accordance with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) principles.

Membership

The Board will comprise the Chair, four independent members, the UK Chief Veterinary Officer (ex officio) and the APHA Head of the Surveillance Intelligence Unit (ex officio).

Independent Members of the board will be appointed to provide leadership, combined with knowledge of veterinary surveillance, disease investigation science and the industries/populations protected by the surveillance system. They will

therefore be representative of the industries being served, but not representatives of any particular organisation. Selection will follow OCPA principles.

Review of Terms of Reference

The Board will review these terms of reference at its first meeting (May 2015), and annually thereafter.

Any changes will be agreed by the Policy Directors in England and Wales.

They will also be reviewed by Policy Directors in the light of any changes to the parent Boards, or in light of relevant changes to prioritisation of scanning surveillance activities, associated resource and/or other changes to the machinery of government in Defra and/or the Welsh Government.

Secretariat

The Secretariat will be provided by the Animal & Plant Health Agency.

Background: Government Structures for Scanning Surveillance

The Senior Responsible Owners for Scanning Surveillance in England and Wales are the Policy Directors:

- The Director for Animal and Plant Health.
- The Chief Veterinary Officer (Wales).

They are supported and advised by the Animal Health Surveillance Governance Board.

The Lead delivery agency for scanning surveillance in England and Wales is the Animal & Plant Health Agency, which focuses on the overall intelligence analysis, and data collection for farmed animal and wildlife species. This includes provision of the secretariat for the AHSGB.

The APHA Head of the Surveillance Intelligence Unit is responsible for leading the surveillance intelligence analysis and focusing the operational surveillance effort effectively.

The Species Expert Groups are responsible for collating and analysing data and information about risks in specific groups of animal species and escalating threats to the Veterinary Risk Group. They cover Great Britain, and include experts from outwith Government.

The Veterinary Risk Group is a cross government official group who assess the emerging threats and issues, the level of risk they pose, and the appropriate mitigation, escalating any uncontrolled, significant risk to the Chief Veterinary Officers and SROs across the United Kingdom.