

# Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

## Note of meeting on 10 January 2012

### **Present**

**Chairman:** Michael Seals  
**Members:** Catherine Brown  
Colin Church  
Nigel Gibbens  
Brian Harding  
Sarah Hendry  
Stewart Houston  
Tim Morris  
Stuart Roberts  
Alick Simmons  
Mark Tufnell

### 1. Meeting opens

#### Chair introduction

The Chair welcomed Board members to the meeting and introduced the new Head of the AHWBE Secretariat, Claire Wilding. No apologies had been received and all Board members were present.

#### Declaration of Interests

Interests were taken as listed. Stuart Roberts noted his potential conflict of interest in respect of his Directorship of Assured Food Standards and matters discussed under Item 5.

#### Secretariat update

The Secretariat updated the Board on the progress with action points from the last meeting and other matters arising. It noted that the Board's Code of Practice, the Protocol for Engagement with Defra Agencies and the draft Forward Work Plan were published on the AHWBE website. Interviews for potential co-opted members of the Board would be held on 13 January 2012. The Secretariat had been working with the Defra Knowledge and Information Team to improve electronic communications with non-executive Board members. Non-executive Board members welcomed the progress on electronic communications and it was agreed that Defra needed to develop its methods of sharing data outside the Department. The Secretariat informed the Board about key developments on animal health and welfare policy and delivery and about recent media communications. One member reported on matters discussed by the Core Group on livestock movements and the Chair advised that the Board would consider livestock movements at its meeting in February 2012. Board

members also commented on the complexity of the stakeholder landscape and the need for a clearer understanding of the work of Defra's Core Groups. The Chair informed the Board of his meeting with the Minister of State on 13 December 2011 and noted the Minister's comments on the role of the Board in his speech to the Oxford Farming Conference on 4 January 2012.

## 2. Strategy Sub-Group – work plan and update

Stuart Roberts updated the Board on the first meeting of the Strategy Sub-Group on 6 January 2012. The first part of the meeting had considered the 2004 Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain and the accompanying documents. The second part of the meeting had considered developing an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for England. It was proposed that the new Strategy would be a short document setting out the principles and purpose of animal health and welfare policy and delivery in England. The objective was for the new Strategy to be jointly owned by government and animal keepers. The Board had arranged a stakeholder workshop on 7 February 2012 to begin development of the new Strategy. The draft programme included an introduction to the work of the Board followed by group discussions facilitated by Board members. Members agreed that the new Strategy required a clearly defined purpose and intended results and that it should contain details of actions being delivered by the sectors. The new Strategy should serve to reinforce the existing sector strategies and not require new ones. One member highlighted the need for the Board to have access to expertise in influencing change in working practices. It was noted that Defra has internal resources in this area. Members endorsed the work of the Strategy Sub-Group to date.

**Action:        Secretariat to invite an expert in influencing change in working practices to a future Board meeting.**

## 3. Finance Sub-Group – work plan and update

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Finance Sub-Group would be held on 20 January 2012. The Finance Sub-Group would continue to consider issues relating to possible charges and responsibility transfers for AHVLA activity and options for addressing budgetary pressures in relation to bovine tuberculosis (bTB).

The Chair sought views on establishing a possible fund for pump-priming new projects. One member noted that Defra has a ring-fenced budget for research and other evidence from which there may be an opportunity to secure resources for new projects.

#### 4. TB Eradication Group (TBEG)

Brian Harding informed the Board of the remit and membership of TBEG and noted that it was due for an internal review by the end of the financial year. Members sought clarification of the relationship between the Board, TBEG and the independent panel tasked with overseeing the badger control pilots. The Board agreed that it should be kept aware of any developments with implications for changes in strategic policy on bTB.

#### 5. Better Regulation and the Farming Regulation Task Force

The Board received a presentation on how Defra is implementing the Government's approach to reducing the burden of regulation. The Board noted that in terms of animal health and welfare regulation, most of the costs are associated with implementing EU legislation. The Board also noted that there was scope for further consideration of non-regulatory approaches in animal health and welfare policy.

The Board received a presentation on implementing the recommendations of the Farming Regulation Taskforce. The Board noted that the Government would be responding to the recommendations early in 2012. It asked for details of the twenty livestock-related recommendations and how Defra proposed to respond to them. Board members highlighted the need for robust assurance schemes and noted the links between the Taskforce recommendations and the proposed Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for England. A member asked what discussions were taking place to address the recommendations directed at industry. The Board noted that Defra was convening an Implementation Group involving farmers and other stakeholders to oversee the progress in addressing the Taskforce recommendations.

**Action: Farming Regulation Task Force Implementation Team to circulate details of the livestock-related recommendations to the Board.**

#### 6. EU Animal Health Law

The Board noted that Defra had set up a Core Group of industry representatives to consider the proposed EU Animal Health Law. The Board agreed that it should see any information considered by the Core Group. The Board agreed a proposal for equine expertise in the Core Group. The Board noted that the EU Animal Health Law was still at the development stage and that there were lengthy timelines. It welcomed Defra's early engagement with the European Commission in this project and looked forward to further updates.

**Action: Strategic Animal Health Policy Programme to share any information considered by the EU Animal Health Law Core Group with the Board.**

## 7. Risk Management for AHWBE

The Board discussed its role in relation to assisting the Defra Supervisory Board in its handling of strategic-level risk and managing the risks to its own objectives. Members recognised the important risks that exist in relation to the Board discharging its duties effectively. Members also recognised that Defra and AHVLA had risk registers in relation to animal health and welfare issues and that the Board needed to avoid duplication and to build on what was already in place and ensure that there was no governance gap. The Board also considered that there needed to be clarity on where risk should be escalated and the potential role of the Board in the process. The Board noted that its Terms of Reference give it responsibilities which are distinct from those of Defra Directors and the AHVLA Chief Executive Officer. The Board agreed that Tim Morris would work with the Secretariat to develop a draft AHWBE risk register for the Board's consideration. The Board also agreed that a consolidation of strategic risks in animal health and welfare policy and delivery, and their escalation routes, should be prepared for the Board's consideration. The Board felt it would be appropriate to review this consolidation periodically.

**Action: Tim Morris to work with Secretariat to develop a draft AHWBE risk register for the Board's consideration.**

**Defra Directors and the AHVLA Chief Executive Officer to work with the Secretariat to consolidate the strategic risks in animal health and welfare policy and delivery and their escalation routes, for the Board to review periodically.**

## 8. Surveillance – possible options for the future

The Board considered the review of the Veterinary Surveillance Strategy. It noted that AHVLA had established an Advisory Group chaired by Professor Dirk Pfeiffer to consider the future options for efficient and effective veterinary surveillance, that the Group had first met on 6 January 2012, and that it was scheduled to provide recommendations to the AHVLA Chief Executive Officer in early March 2012. The Board agreed that a review of veterinary surveillance was appropriate and that any new approach should deliver benefits for both government and industry. The Board acknowledged its role in explaining the rationale for any changes proposed. The Board looked forward to considering the recommendations of the Advisory Group at a future meeting.

## 9. Board Member Report

Tim Morris and Mark Tufnell updated the Board on their recent stakeholder engagement. Members agreed that the stakeholder workshop in February 2012 would be useful in explaining the role of the Board.

## 10. Communications

The Board discussed its relationship with the Sector Councils. It agreed that Stewart Houston would draft proposals for engaging with the Sector Councils and the Core Groups for discussion at its meeting in February 2012. Thereafter the Board would convene a meeting with the Sector Councils.

**Action: Stewart Houston to work with Secretariat to develop proposals for engaging with the Sector Councils and the Core Groups.**

One member updated the Board on new viral disease which emerged in North-West Germany last year causing birth deformities in cattle, sheep and goats.

## 11. Closing remarks

The Chair noted that the next Board meeting will be on 7 February 2012 in London.

AHWBE Secretariat  
11 January 2012