

Outline of an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain

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Scottish Executive

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Foreword

Following our recent consultation “Preparing an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain”, Defra, the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government have developed an Outline of an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. This document provides an early indication of the scope, key principles and core messages that the strategy should contain when it is published in Spring 2004. We have drawn upon the comments we received in response to the first consultation document and many of the ideas raised in other engagement activities, like the regional workshops.

Now that we have gathered all these thoughts together we feel it is important to reflect these findings back to stakeholders for you to consider further. The outline strategy document gives you the opportunity to review where we are and to feed in your thoughts on the development of the strategy.

If you wish to make comments please send your thoughts to us by 31 October 2003.

Addresses to send your comments to can be found at pages 39-40.

Executive summary

Aim:

To improve the health and welfare of animals kept by man, and protect public health from animal disease.

This outline of an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain responds to calls for a comprehensive and more strategic approach to animal health and welfare, following the experience of BSE and foot and mouth disease. It has been drawn up following extensive public consultation, and reflects a wide consensus on where improvements and new ways of working are needed.

The outline strategy deals mostly with farmed livestock, where the problems are seen as most serious. It also covers horses and touches on pets and wildlife. Great Britain has no borders for animal disease; this will therefore be a shared strategy between the UK Government, the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government. A separate strategy is being developed for Northern Ireland.

Consultation has confirmed a widely shared vision of a better future (see Section 2). The outline proposes the following strategic outcomes, against which the final strategy should be judged:

- *a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities*
- *a new partnership approach*
- *promotion of animal health and welfare: prevention better than cure*
- *a clearer understanding of costs and benefits of animal health and welfare*
- *effective delivery and enforcement*

The **vision for the future** set out in Section 2 cannot be delivered by Government alone. We need this outline Strategy to evolve into a comprehensive strategy for animal keepers, connected industries and businesses, and consumers. Government will be a partner in the process.

Much of the discussion of animal health and welfare in recent years has focused on the role of Government. However Government should intervene only where there is a clear public interest in doing so. Four primary reasons for intervention – public health, impact on the wider economy and society, trade and animal welfare are discussed in Section 3 in the context of the **roles and responsibilities** of everyone involved in animal health and welfare. The section also establishes a set of principles for Government decision making.

All Government decisions on animal health and welfare should:

- be based on sound science and evidence
- lead to proportionate action through an assessment of costs and benefits
- be guided by the precautionary principle
- be based on risk assessment (which should include the use of veterinary advice)
- be made in partnership with key stakeholders
- be consistent with Government's reasons for intervention
- promote sustainable development, including a sustainable food and farming industry
- be consistent with EU and International obligations
- seek to promote British interests in the EU and internationally

Even with foot and mouth behind us and BSE substantially declining, the animal health and welfare picture in Great Britain leaves much to be desired. For example, bovine TB continues to increase and spread; levels of lameness in sheep and dairy cows are at worrying levels, new pig diseases are causing real losses. Section 4 looks at the **where are we now** question, giving a brief overview of the current picture and an indication of the current work initiatives in place.

In setting out a **new approach** in Section 5, the outline strategy discusses a number of areas of action for further development. It draws together many of the new initiatives proposed in this document to address the key issues raised in the consultation.

Having set out a vision for the future of animal health and welfare and identified the key areas for action we need to think about how we will be **measuring success**. Section 6 contains our early ideas on delivering and monitoring change.

The new initiatives

This outline strategy sets out a series of proposed actions to improve the health and welfare of animals kept by man, and to address public health protection from animal disease. These new initiatives are:

Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Why do we need a strategy?

Major outbreaks of animal disease, and the control policies which are used to contain them, have widespread adverse implications for many people beyond the obvious and direct effects on animal health, welfare and productivity. This was reflected in the response to our consultation. Similarly some animal infections pose a risk to human health and the environment. These can lead to food safety risks and scares, food shortages, adverse effects on the rural economy, and destabilisation of markets or trade restrictions.

This outline strategy deals most fully with farm livestock health and welfare, although it sets out the principles of partnership working and the reasons for Government intervention more widely. There are several reasons why we have started with farm livestock:

- a general belief in the country (following BSE and the recent foot and mouth disease outbreak) that the current situation is unacceptable;
- recommendations in the independent inquiry reports published since foot and mouth disease that a more strategic approach is needed to farm animal health policies;
- the importance given to animal health and welfare in the agricultural strategies produced by the three Administrations - Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (Defra), Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture, and the Future of Farming in Wales.

The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy to be published next Spring should deal more fully with horses (working, recreational, sporting), dogs and other small animals (as pets and in other contexts), minor livestock species, wildlife, birds and fish than this outline strategy does. We need to develop knowledge of the wider animal keeping world and to discuss further with stakeholders what more is needed in other sectors. Some are already subject to their own strategies, for example A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture, Defra's commitment to developing a strategy for the horse industry in its broadest definition and the Welsh Ewe Genotyping Programme.

This outline strategy is concerned largely with animals which are for one reason or another under people's control; and only in a strictly limited sense with interactions between these animals and wildlife. It does not address wider Government policies on biodiversity, genetic modification, or conservation. Nor does it address hunting with dogs or animals used in research, for each of which the Parliaments may set special regulatory regimes.

An Animal Health and Welfare Strategy cannot exist in isolation. For both Government and industry, it needs to fit with, and to take forward strategies to support a sustainable livestock sector. There are also links to public health, food safety, and sustainable development policies. The Strategy needs to be able to adapt to new circumstances, in particular those arising from reform of the Common Agriculture Policy, which will require compliance with new standards for animal health and welfare. Also on the near horizon are changes to the EU food hygiene legislation designed to extend food safety and hygiene controls back to primary producers. This too will set challenges for livestock producers.

Sustainable development is at the heart of Government. In simple terms this means 'a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come'. Achieving sustainability requires Government and industry to look at the economic, environmental and social impacts and risks, and to look for solutions which deliver long-term benefits in all three areas. For this strategy it means addressing animal health and welfare issues in this broader context: taking account of the impact of the economy, environment and community as a whole, rather than seeing it as a purely technical subject, of interest only to those who keep or have a direct interest in animals. The health and welfare of farmed animals makes a major contribution to the sustainability of the livestock sector, and therefore to wider farming and food, but also to the countryside, rural communities and the rural economy. Profitability is essential if the livestock sector is to be sustainable.

1.2 A Strategy for Great Britain

The UK Government, the Scottish Executive, and the Welsh Assembly Government have agreed to work together to set out an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain, reflecting the fact that disease does not respect artificial boundaries. The principles and policies for a sustainable animal health and welfare future set out in this strategy will be used by Government in policy development and implementation. A key principle of the strategy is working in partnership; this is shown by the way in which stakeholders will be closely involved in the management and delivery of the strategy and the commitment of the three Governments to work together.

Throughout this document "Government" refers to the UK Government and to the Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales.

There was strong support throughout the GB consultation for the idea that the animal health and welfare strategy must be:

- a strategy for the whole animal health and welfare community, not just for Government
- a strategy developed and carried forward through partnership between the wide range of interests involved
- a strategy to improve animal health and welfare

This outline strategy will be developed further in partnership with stakeholders over the coming months. Alongside this public consultation we will be working with stakeholders to develop the new initiatives set out in this document. One of our first tasks will be to set up an interim steering group to help put in place the governance arrangements for the strategy and to help develop implementation plans for this Autumn. We plan to publish the complete strategy in Spring 2004.

A separate but complementary strategy for animal health and welfare will be introduced in Northern Ireland, who retain important links with the Republic of Ireland for disease control purposes.

1.3 Consultation process

This outline strategy has been produced following a widespread consultation process across GB. On 8 January 2003 we produced a consultation document *Preparing an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain*. This was an open document, designed to capture ideas and to help us define what the Strategy should contain. We received 186 written responses from organisations and individuals. We also carried out national stakeholder meetings of the main sectors which would be affected by the strategy, - i.e. dairy, poultry, beef, wildlife, welfare, pets etc. - to discuss what they considered were the priorities which the strategy should address. In addition, 400 people attended 8 regional workshops throughout Great Britain to ensure we captured regional stakeholder views in an area which traditionally has seen policy developed and delivered on a national basis. Our stakeholders inside Government were also involved, across departments, throughout Defra, the Scottish Executive, and Welsh Assembly Government to ensure an innovative and joined-up approach to the strategy. A summary report of the outcome of consultation is at **Annex A** and a full report of the consultation will be published separately.

Section 2

Vision for the future

2.1 The vision

Sustainable development underpins our vision for the future of animal health and welfare. We believe that this is an important opportunity for stakeholders, Government and society to work together to make this future sustainable.

This is a vision of a desirable future for all animals and their keepers, related professions and industries, local businesses, communities and individuals. Some aspects of the vision are not new but current successes should not be taken for granted, and work will be needed to ensure that they are part of our future too. This vision inspires the strategy.

In our vision of the future, animals in Britain are healthy and protected from harm. Animal keepers, Government and the general public have a clear understanding of the importance of animal health and welfare. They use this knowledge when making everyday decisions and when responding to change – changes in risks, businesses and the physical environment. Consumers in particular value the confidence they have in the food they eat and the way it is produced. Food safety is the responsibility of producers' and quality assurance forms a vital safety net in protecting people from food-borne diseases, and other animal diseases harmful to human health. Consumers and retailers accept that higher standards of welfare or food safety are not cost free.

Individuals understand and accept the duty they have to provide an appropriate standard of health and welfare for the animals in their care. The reasons for Government intervention are clear, justified and informed by real public wants and needs.

Policies are risk-based and focus on prevention as a cost-effective approach to dealing with animal health and welfare. This includes horizon scanning for new threats, an active programme of veterinary surveillance to manage the risk of some animal diseases and programmes to prevent imported disease. Research, development and sound science play key roles that allow us to be proactive in ensuring our disease status is amongst the highest in the world, and we are free to trade our animals and animal products internationally. We use this reputation to shape and lead EU and other international agendas on animal health and welfare.

Activities and priorities are agreed and reviewed by stakeholders and Government in partnership. Based on this approach the costs of livestock health are appropriately balanced between the industry, the supplier, the taxpayer and the consumer. Livestock keeping is part of a competitive British farming industry which succeeds by meeting the needs of consumers

at home and abroad.

Good communications and strong relationships between Government and stakeholders mean that information and ideas are shared. This network means that all disease emergencies are dealt with swiftly and effectively using an agreed approach. Government also acts as a facilitator ensuring that activities and services are joined-up; strengthening the relationship between the State Veterinary Service, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, the Meat Hygiene Service, Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Food Standards Agency, Departments of Health, local authorities and private veterinary practices.

Helpful evidence based information and advice is available to both animal keepers and the public on animal health and welfare, with all animal keepers having the necessary skills to exercise good practice. Veterinary services and medicines are available and responsibly used by all animal keepers. All farmers and animal keepers develop animal health plans as a key part of their business; and livestock keepers can see the direct benefit from taking a proactive approach to health and welfare.

In our vision livestock keepers appreciate the wider impacts of animal health and husbandry methods on society, on natural resources, biodiversity, the wider rural economy and the environment. People are better educated about farming and livestock keeping, and everyone acts responsibly when on farmland, respecting disease prevention and control (biosecurity) practices. A more general responsibility for the British countryside and wildlife is also widely understood.

This vision of the future reflects the main themes raised at meetings and workshops with stakeholders, and the responses to the written consultation Preparing an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain. It is a shared picture for the future not just a vision for Government. These are the underlying principles of where we want to be in 10 years time.

2.2 Strategic outcomes

We have identified the following components of the strategy which will bring about our vision.

- *a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities*
- *a new partnership approach*
- *promotion of animal health and welfare: prevention better than cure*
- *a clearer understanding of costs and benefits of animal health and welfare*
- *effective delivery and enforcement*

Details of how we plan to measure progress are set out in **Section 6**.

Section 3

Roles and responsibilities

Strategic Outcome - A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities

3.1 The key players

A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities is essential if we are to achieve our vision for the future. The effective delivery and enforcement of the strategy will involve:

- all animal keepers
- veterinarians
- all those involved in livestock and foodchain businesses or services
- consumers
- rural, environmental and animal welfare interest groups
- research, education and skills providers
- all those who have access to farm land and the countryside
- Government

The attitudes and activities we expect to see are linked to the decisions individuals make. These choices can have an impact on the health and welfare of animals and people, as well as wider economic, environmental and social impacts.

3.2 Animal keepers

“Keeping animals is a privilege, not a right”.

Stakeholder comment during consultation meeting

All farmers, traders, dealers, pet, recreation, sport, and entertainment animal owners should understand and provide for the physical and welfare needs of the animals in their care. They should be able to recognise the signs of disease and should know which diseases are notifiable and have to be reported to Government. All animal keepers have a responsibility to be vigilant, report any suspicion of disease early on, and maintain good disease prevention and control (biosecurity) practices, including compliance with regulations such as livestock standstills and the safe disposal of animals when they are dead. These measures significantly reduce the spread of disease and help to maintain high standards of animal health, animal welfare and public health. In order to meet their responsibilities and legal obligations every animal keeper should employ private veterinarians as necessary. If they cannot fulfil their obligations in this way then people should not keep animals and sanctions need to be considered against those who abuse this position, possibly including permitting or licensing and withdrawal of permission to farm livestock.

3.3 Veterinarians

The veterinary profession has a core role in promoting animal health and welfare and advising animal keepers. Private veterinary practitioners help animal keepers to deal with disease and welfare problems, and may also undertake a range of duties for Government as official veterinarians. Veterinarians employed by Government provide advice to Ministers and help to implement policy. They undertake disease surveillance and enforcement through the State Veterinary Service and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency on the farm, and the Meat Hygiene Service at the slaughterhouse. All veterinarians need to be alert for signs of serious disease and to keep up-to-date with current knowledge. They must ensure that the veterinary medicines they administer are used and disposed of in a way that will not harm the environment.

3.4 Livestock and food chain related businesses or services

A large group of businesses and services covering auction markets, hauliers, abattoirs, feed manufacturers, processors, veterinary pharmaceutical companies and retailers all have a range of interests in animal health and welfare. Some temporarily keep or handle animals as part of their business, and have relevant obligations, for example for welfare during markets or transport, disease reporting and disease control and prevention. Some provide other services such as the provision of feed – the composition of which can have an impact on the health and welfare of animals and an impact on the environment. Others have contractual relations with those further up the food chain, and are in direct touch with consumer attitudes on animal health and welfare and the market. Similar responsibilities arise for those keeping horses and other animals in the leisure and recreation industries.

3.5 Consumers

In their capacity as consumers, people have fundamental expectations about the safety of the food that they eat. Consumers are also closely interested in quality, variety, availability, price and a range of other aspects of food production. These may all be affected by the way in which animal health and welfare policies are pursued; and by measures taken to control disease when it appears. Some consumers also take an active interest in the conditions under which food animals are reared, for example as regards welfare or the impact of various production systems on the environment, and reflect this in their purchasing behaviour. Consumers therefore should be aware of the choices they are making, and their implications, and should take account of the signals these give about their values.

3.6 Rural, environmental and animal welfare interest groups

Animal health and welfare policies need to strike the right balance between eradicating disease as quickly as possible and promoting the welfare of

animals and the costs to the wider rural economy. There are a number of organisations that take an active interest in standards of welfare for animals and other aspects of animal health. Such organisations play an important role in maintaining pressure in the community for the setting and observance of high standards of animal health and welfare. Some also take an active part in keeping and caring for diseased or distressed animals, and have the usual responsibilities for their care and for reporting disease. Rural and environmental groups play an important role in developing our understanding of the wider needs have land-based and rural businesses, and the needs of the local communities. Farming practices and disease control measures can have an impact, positive or negative on the environment. Consequently environmental regulation can have a serious impact on various production systems and farming activities. For example the disposal of farm wastes such as fallen stock, slurry and spent sheep dip are all regulated to control the emission of known pollutants to land, water and air. Gamekeepers and landowners play an important role in managing the land and can be an important resource in the surveillance of animal diseases in wildlife. As part of the commitment to sustainable development, it is important that rural and environmental interests play their part in developing policies in this area.

3.7 Research, education and skills providers

Academic institutions and Non Government Organisations play an important role in promoting animal health and welfare and providing the evidence base needed to make policy. Agricultural colleges for example provide potential and existing livestock keepers with the knowledge and the skills to understand the health and welfare needs of animals. Veterinary colleges are responsible for the training of veterinary practitioners and are responsible for ensuring that graduates meet the standards expected of the profession. Other institutions, such as universities, provide a vital role in animal health and welfare research, economics, and risk assessment, often on the behalf of Government. Non Government Organisations or interest groups also provide a vital evidence base, undertaking research into wildlife, animal welfare and other concerns. More general education plays an important part in helping children, and the wider public, understand the responsibilities associated with keeping animals.

3.8 Farmland and Countryside Users

Everyone who visits farmland and uses the countryside has a responsibility to respect disease prevention measures being used by the farmer, including those on public footpaths. They have a responsibility not to dispose of food or other rubbish in the countryside and in particular not to feed or disturb the animals they come into contact with.

3.9 Government

Government works with other groups to draw up the regulatory framework within which animal keepers operate. The most important of these regulations are those which seek to safeguard public health, including trade issues and points of entry. Government, both centrally and through local authorities, ensures delivery and enforcement of the regulatory framework.

Government is a major funder of livestock farming through CAP subsidies and of research and surveillance on animal diseases. It has a role in working with industry to set standards, and in encouraging best practice or facilitating advice and training. An example is the Welsh Farming Connect service, offering advice to farmers on animal health and welfare linked to sustainable agriculture initiatives.

Government negotiates international agreements which affect animals and their keepers and also has to find the right balance between the partners in animal health and welfare on how the costs should be met.

3.10 The reason for intervention

All animal keepers should be free to go about their commercial or personal business unless there are strong public interest reasons for Government to intervene on behalf of society. By the same token, diseases and other conditions of animals are primarily matters for the keeper (whether business or private individual) to deal with, except where Government has to intervene.

Broadly speaking Government intervenes in animal health and welfare for four reasons:

- i) To protect human health;
- ii) To protect the interests of the wider economy and society;
- ii) To secure opportunities for trade; and
- iv) To protect and promote the welfare of animals.

It should be noted that responsibility for ensuring the above does not lie solely with Government, but is shared with stakeholders.

(i) Human health

A number of animal diseases and conditions are transmissible to man. These are referred to as “zoonotic” diseases, or “zoonoses”, such as rabies. Depending on the disease these threats to public health can come from direct contact with an animal or from meat or other products derived from animals. A number of these conditions may not show signs of infection in the animal, for example salmonella and e-coli, and important tests are carried out after slaughter. Government interventions are intended to protect the health of the public, and of workers in the relevant industry.

(ii) Wider economy/society

Some animal diseases, while known to have negligible implications for human health, are highly infectious and can move extensively or rapidly through animal populations, with substantial damaging impact on populations and animal welfare. In livestock the implications of these diseases appearing on

individual premises run well beyond the commercial interests of that single person or business. The recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease showed the undesirable wider economic impacts of animal disease to rural businesses and communities. For example, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport estimated that almost £2.7bn was lost by the tourism industry as a result of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. As well as foot and mouth disease (affecting cattle, sheep and pigs), examples which have struck in the UK or Europe recently include classical swine fever (pigs) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (poultry). Governments and the EU therefore set mandatory reporting and control strategies to minimise the impact of animal diseases.

(iii) Trade

Animal diseases can act as a barrier to trade. In order to trade without restrictions countries must maintain disease free status for notifiable diseases, such as foot and mouth disease, bluetongue and classical swine fever. In the case of an outbreak of a notifiable disease Government puts in place measures designed to reduce the risk of exotic diseases entering the country by controlling the import of animals and products of animal origin. Government works with industry on the control and monitoring of certain other diseases, for example bovine and ovine brucellosis, enzootic bovine leucosis, Aujeszky's disease and contagious equine metritis. Government recognises that our ability to trade is important if British industry is to be in a position to compete in an EU and international market. The basis of this partnership is that stated freedom from these diseases allows animals and animal products to be exported to other countries.

(iv) Welfare

Society cares about the welfare of animals as living creatures. Most animal diseases and conditions compromise the animal's welfare. Government therefore sets high minimum standards on behalf of society for the welfare of animals. The Farm Animal Welfare Council advocates addressing welfare in terms of ideals which have become known as the **Five Freedoms**:

- i.** freedom from hunger and thirst
- ii.** freedom from discomfort
- iii.** freedom from pain, injury or disease
- iv.** freedom to express normal behaviour
- v.** freedom from fear and distress

Some individuals and organisations continue to argue on various principled grounds for yet higher standards of animal welfare. Government recognises and respects these positions but has to recognise that, in a global economy, high national standards can serve only to export the problem when the consumer is not willing to meet the extra costs. Government therefore aims to achieve increased welfare standards, where necessary, through negotiation at EU level and other international fora.

3.11 Pets and other companion animals

Many of the reasons given above for Government intervention in relation to farm animals apply equally to dogs, cats and other animals (including exotics) kept in close proximity to people, whether as pets or in various working or recreational contexts. Such animals tend to be kept for the real benefits of companionship or recreation rather than for commercial reasons. A number of conditions to which they are susceptible can carry risks for human health, notably rabies. The welfare of such animals is of wide social concern. There are potential risks of transmitting disease to or from wildlife, or to farmed livestock, for example from pet pigs. Though trade in pets may be relatively limited, the Pet Travel Scheme has demonstrated the considerable interest in people being able to go abroad, and return to the UK, with their pets; and the protective measures required to avoid the risk of importing exotic conditions, especially rabies. Most pet owners accept their responsibility for maintaining the health and welfare of their animals, and will for example consult small animal veterinary practices for diagnosis and treatment as necessary. But, as with other animal keepers, there are exceptions.

3.12 Horses

Horses, other equidae and camelids are encountered in a wide range of sporting, recreational and working settings, in almost all of which they are in close contact with people. In terms of health and welfare they share many of the characteristics of pets and other companion animals – frequently a close relationship with owners and keepers, relatively high financial or sentimental value, and good standards of veterinary attention and welfare; but there are exceptions. There are a number of horse diseases, most currently exotic to Great Britain, which carry risks to human health. Government's approach to horse health and welfare will need to be consistent with the vision and principles set out in this strategy, as well as other wider equine policies across Britain.

3.13 Wildlife

Government's position in respect of animals in the wild is rather different. Wildlife is not generally being controlled, managed or "kept" by people, and society does not normally concern itself with diseases of wild animals, except for scientific interest. Indeed some would argue that to do so would interfere with the balance of Nature. However Government needs to take an interest where:

- there is a risk of zoonotic diseases being transmitted to man, either direct or via vectors, for example rabies or rabies-like disease in foxes and bats and potentially West Nile disease in mosquitoes.
- wildlife populations may pass on, harbour or recycle diseases of farmed livestock, for example classical swine fever in wild boar and bovine TB in badgers.
- wildlife disease may threaten local biodiversity or the survival of species.

Government's interest in such circumstances may be restricted to scientific research and disease surveillance, and advice to relevant human populations; but control methods may also have to be considered based on risk to public and animal health in consultation with appropriate interest groups.

Climate change is an important consideration here as it could potentially affect wildlife and insect populations, which in turn would impact on the distribution of vectors. This could bring currently exotic conditions such as West Nile virus and bluetongue infection in sheep into Great Britain.

3.14 Balancing costs, benefits and risk

Though helpful in deciding whether there is a case for Government intervention, this rationale does little to determine how best and to what extent this might be done. There are always competing calls for the use of public resources, and a range of interests in society who will be affected, positively or negatively, by Government action. There is usually a balance to be struck between the costs and benefits of intervention. For example, setting rules to identify animals, and to report or restrict their movements, has beneficial effects in terms of disease control; but imposes costs on the livestock sector. Regulation is not the only way: sometimes Government's role might better be facilitation and communication, or contribution to research. The challenge for Government is, in consultation with those potentially affected and wider public interests, to seek proportionate interventions which strike the right balance on behalf of society.

We propose the following principles for Government decision making:

All Government decisions on animal health and welfare should:

- be based on sound science and evidence
- lead to proportionate action through an assessment of costs and benefits
- be guided by the precautionary principle
- be based on risk assessment (including the use of veterinary advice)
- be made in partnership with key stakeholders
- be consistent with Government's reason for intervention
- promote sustainable development, including a sustainable food and farming industry
- be consistent with EU and International obligations
- seek to promote British interests in the EU and internationally

3.15 Disease priorities

Government's approach to individual diseases and conditions has been developed over the years through the normal process of discussion with industry, response to emerging disease situations and to the wider

international agenda. However, the different programmes of work are rarely presented or developed with stakeholders in a strategic way as parts of a larger integrated system of controls and preventative measures.

The reasons why and when Government intervenes, and its chosen method of intervention, are not always clearly communicated or understood by those involved. For example, why one disease is notifiable or controlled and another not and why notifiable status brings different degrees of Government intervention (slaughter, area or premises based control, cleansing and disinfection). This lack of clarity also has an impact on delivery. Priorities are not always clearly decided upon or communicated. The major enforcement bodies - the State Veterinary Service, Meat Hygiene Service, Laboratories and Local Authorities - are placed under greater pressure with the consequence that their effectiveness is likely to be diminished.

This strategy is designed to address these weaknesses. It sets down principles (described in section 3.14) and a process (described below), which will be applied to animal diseases and conditions in a consistent, open and transparent way. This will provide a mechanism for monitoring the way that animal health problems are assessed and prioritised, the degree of intervention and for identifying where responsibility for action and cost lies.

New Initiative: To develop with animal keepers, rural and environmental groups, the Food Standards Agency, Departments of Health, and the veterinary profession, a profile for each of the main risks to animal health and welfare. Using the nine Principles for Government and building on the disease profiles framework set out in the draft surveillance strategy, this amongst other things, will:

- cover the main animal diseases, syndromes and welfare conditions
- provide a framework for assessing emerging diseases and other risks
- assess the impact or threat of each disease or condition
- set out the reason for public intervention
- identify the cost and benefits of public intervention
- set out current and possible methods of public intervention
- set out the scope of stakeholder responsibility, including cost sharing
- be used to review current disease control rationale
- be used to inform the Strategy Steering Board of priorities
- be used to make public spending decisions
- be used to make other decisions, such as the use of skilled state resources
- Identify gaps in knowledge about diseases, so helping to inform research priorities

The framework for the disease prioritisation and assessment will be developed on a partnership basis in readiness for the final strategy. It will be based on the profiles proposed in the consultation document on the Veterinary Surveillance Strategy. The diseases and conditions for which the first profiles will be prepared will be listed. The profiles will be completed in close

consultation with industry, veterinary scientists and other stakeholders. Once completed, the profiles will be assessed, published and recommendations made to the Strategy Steering Board on the priority to be afforded each disease and the interventions necessary by Government and industry.

New initiative: As disease profiles are completed, the Environment and Rural Affairs Departments will review:

- the reason behind public intervention for existing notifiable diseases (see **Annex F**), and
- potential threats to human health

To ensure that there is a consistent approach, concentrating initially on those diseases for which there is no EU control framework.

Section 4

Where are we now?

4.1 Defining a baseline

What does the current picture of the animal health and welfare world in GB look like? For a strategy to be meaningful we all need a clear understanding of what our vision looks like, and of course, the baseline from which we are starting. Establishing that baseline will be one of the highest priorities as we start to implement the strategy. Only then can we set meaningful targets and have the means of monitoring progress towards the vision.

The occurrence of notifiable disease in Great Britain like foot and mouth disease and BSE, and their impact on public health, the economy and the rural community is well documented. They form the basis for the wider public and international perception of the state of animal health in this country. However, some stakeholders have commented that our animal health and welfare record compares quite well with our contemporaries. Others point to the lack of a transparent means of making an accurate assessment.

There are thirty-eight notifiable diseases, half of which have never occurred in this country or at least not in living memory. There are many other diseases and welfare conditions that concern stakeholders and on which the partnership approach needs to focus, such as Post-weaning Multi-systemic Wasting Syndrome in pigs (PMWS), internal and external parasites in sheep, mastitis and infertility in cattle and coccidiosis in poultry. However, we lack a clear picture of the extent to which these and other conditions are present in GB. The baseline should be developed by the GB Veterinary Surveillance Strategy. This will “join-up” much of the surveillance work already being done and share the resulting information more widely, so that surveillance activities are better co-ordinated.

A new surveillance Information Technology (IT) system – RADAR (Rapid Analysis and Detection of Animal related Risk) is proposed. This system would aim to capture and collate accurate, current data from existing sources. Analysis of the data would provide the best possible information for planning control measures and guiding priorities for future surveillance and research.

Government and stakeholders need to translate the vision contained in this strategy into measurable targets. These should not only focus on the number of cases of disease but also measure whether the livestock industries are operating in a sustainable way. The following statistics are examples which may help to illustrate the current animal health landscape and the types of indicators that we might wish to develop.

- In 2002 nearly 23,000 animals were compulsory slaughtered in GB under TB controls.
- 92% of the sheep flocks in GB have a problem with lameness (between 6-11% of the national flock in total numbers).
- 80% of pig production in the UK is affected by Post-weaning Multi-systemic Wasting Syndrome (PMWS) (Source ADAS).
- In 2002, out of 4519 farm inspections carried out by the State Veterinary Service, 28% failed to comply with statutory welfare legislation (Note: the majority of these visits are made in response to complaints therefore this number does not represent the true picture).
- Lamb mortality from birth to sale is estimated to be around 15% (Source ADAS).

Government aggregates these statistics so therefore they do not provide a meaningful picture of the different animal health and welfare performances across GB. As part of the further development of the strategy we will be working to develop a more substantive baseline for GB and its constituent areas.

When establishing the baseline, we also need to measure whether Government resource is being invested in the right areas.

- Government has invested £11.5m since July 2001 in support of the National Scrapie Plan, with a further £10.5m over three years committed by Welsh Assembly Government to extend the plan in Wales.
- Up to £45m a year was spent covering all aspects of bovine TB controls between 1999 - 2001.
- Government supports a large multi-programme body of research on animal welfare, animal health and related public health issues. The funding allocated to this research in 2002/03 was £32.8 million and we anticipate about £36.8 million being spent in 2003/04.

The baseline could also identify and measure the structure of the livestock industry and the infrastructure that surrounds it.

- The average expenditure per livestock unit has declined by about 10% between 1996 and 2000/2001. (Source the Farm Business Survey).
- In Great Britain there are 2167 main veterinary practices of which 881 cover cows, sheep, goats or pigs (Source RCVS).
- Proportion of time spent by veterinary practice on small animals is 73.5% (compared to 66% in 1998) (Source RCVS).

4.2 Key challenges

Some of the key areas of work currently being taken forward by Government are set out below. More detailed information can be found on the websites of the GB Environment and Rural Affairs Departments.

Animal By Products	Implement EU Animal By Products Regulation
Animal Identification	Develop a coherent approach to livestock identification and databases, including proportionate measures for sheep and horses
Animal Welfare	Make legislative changes to enable more proactive animal welfare enforcement
BSE	Reduce UK's high risk status to moderate risk status: Review of the Over Thirty Months Scheme
Bovine TB	Review of TB strategy
Disease prevention and control (Biosecurity)	Promotion and dissemination of best practice
Contingency Plans	Develop full contingency plans for foot and mouth disease and other exotic diseases listed by the OIE and prioritised on the basis of veterinary risk assessment. Ensure transposition of EU Directives for notifiable disease
Food Hygiene Rules	Apply the EU Regulations and Directives on Food Hygiene rules to primary producers
Foot and Mouth Disease	Negotiate and implement new EU rules on the control of foot and mouth disease Implement recommendations of the foot and mouth disease inquiries as taken forward in Government responses
Illegal imports	Publish and implement a new and updated action plan
International Trade	Re-open markets for breeding animals, meat products, dairy products and genetics as soon as possible
Livestock movements	Complete long-term livestock movements regime
Rabies	Complete and publish a revised contingency plan for rabies
Scrapie	Strategic review of the National Scrapie Plans Public consultation on EU measures covering genotyping based controls and breeding programmes
Veterinary Medicines	Consideration and implementation of Government response to the Marsh report and the Competition Commission Report
Veterinary Surveillance	Finalise GB Strategy and develop pilots for the proposed new RADAR (Rapid Analysis and Detection of Animal Risks) system

Section 5

A new approach

Farming cannot afford another food scare or another crisis of public confidence in animal health or food safety. Nor can the leisure, recreation and tourist industries afford another period of prolonged disruption. Efficient and profitable production of livestock is dependent on healthy animals. Many animal keepers and vets operate best practice in animal health and welfare. But all sectors we spoke to, including those responsible for pets and horses, believe that there is a percentage of animal owners and keepers who need a new approach, who need reminding of their responsibilities and who, if they will not accept a significant change in behaviour, should not be allowed to continue to keep animals.

We have set out in Section 3 the case for intervention in animal health and welfare, together with the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved, from Government through the food chain, animal keepers and consumers. This will now govern the way in which Government behaves, and will be the way in which we expect others to shoulder their responsibilities.

As a stakeholder said, “Keeping animals is a privilege not a right”. Indeed, some have argued that livestock keepers should be licensed or required to show competence. Registration of farmers as food producers is likely under new EU rules on food hygiene. Whatever regulatory route may be considered appropriate, this Strategy sets out how we, together, believe keepers must meet their responsibilities. These are:

- to maintain healthy animals
- to maintain appropriate levels of animal welfare
- to prevent and control endemic diseases
- to recognise symptoms of and to report notifiable disease
- to prevent spread of any disease
- to ensure adequate levels of stockmanship
- to ensure skills and competence levels are appropriate

Illegal Imports/Contingency Planning/Risk assessment

Government also has real responsibilities, indeed uppermost in many stakeholders’ minds has been the need to prevent illegal imports. Government clearly has a responsibility for operating controls to prevent illegal imports and to reduce the risk of exotic disease. Significant progress has been made under the illegal imports action plan, including increasing powers of seizure for local authorities; increasing numbers of inspection staff and procedures at ports and airports; removing the 1 kg personal allowance for meat imports for travellers from countries outside the EU. The responsibility for detecting and

seizing smuggled meat was transferred to HM Customs and Excise in April 2003. A major risk assessment of the likelihood of a foot and mouth disease outbreak being caused by illegally imported meat was published in March 2003.

Government also has a responsibility for ensuring proper contingency plans for dealing with exotic disease outbreaks are in place, are based on risk assessment, and are regularly reviewed and updated. In particular, the Government is actively considering how to improve its capacity to draw on help from the private veterinary sector during emergencies. We must all draw on the experiences of recent years to ensure that we are ready to play our part should outbreaks of exotic disease occur again.

Surveillance plays an important part in horizon scanning for new diseases or threats. We also need to ensure we have a national strategy for exotic animal disease research, and that the right science is available for the appropriate modelling and risk analysis of disease control strategies.

5.1 Role of veterinary practice

“Veterinary surgeons must be kept on farms, despite economic and other trends against this”.

Comment from a private vet

Members of the veterinary profession are uniquely placed to bring about a significant change in the standards of animal health and welfare in Great Britain. During our consultation the profession and industry, both through their representative organizations and individuals, have made the case for greater use of private veterinarians by livestock keepers for preventative animal health measures, such as herd health planning. Too much of their work is intervening when things go wrong. We seek to encourage veterinarians and their clients to work in partnership to develop practices which prevent problems occurring.

There have also been concerns raised about the trends in the profession away from large animal practices, and rural practices, and whether assumptions that animal keepers will continue to have access to veterinarians are correct. The impact of recent inquiries into the profession and the relationship with veterinary medicines has also raised concerns over future viability of some veterinary practices.

Farmers feel that veterinary fees are high in relation to the market or perceived value of animals and animal keepers on low incomes may find the fees hard to afford. The Competition Commission has criticized the cross subsidization of veterinary fees by the sales of veterinary medicines. It is difficult to see how costs, such as veterinary fees and medicines, essential to operating a farm business, will fall. If animal keepers cannot afford to provide basic levels of care for their animals, such as expressed in the five freedoms, then they need to consider carefully whether they should remain responsible for keeping animals.

We would expect to see a further development of the trend whereby vets in large animal practice are less involved in emergency treatment but spend more time on health and welfare planning to improve management practices and hence disease prevention and control, health and welfare.

The future role and use of veterinarians is currently being considered by the Parliamentary EFRA Select Committee. Their report is due out at or around the time of publication of this outline strategy. Government and the profession will need to consider the report and their response to it. In addition, there is a need for an ongoing dialogue with the profession about the role and future of large animal practices.

New Initiative: Government will set up a working group with the veterinary profession to consider the report of the Parliamentary EFRA Committee and to look at the future roles and availability of large animal practices.

5.2 Partnership

Strategic Outcome – A new partnership approach

There is considerable evidence, both since the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease and from the consultation on the development of this strategy, of stakeholder readiness to engage with Government in the formation of policy, and the management of delivery, not only nationally, but also regionally.

How the Strategy will work

A structure has been designed to ensure that the Strategy develops through a partnership approach between Government and Stakeholders. The detailed arrangements, which are set out in Annex B, establish a procedure for setting out what the Strategy is trying to achieve and for reviewing implementation and results through an annual cycle of consultation, review, monitoring and report.

New initiative:

- A Strategy Steering Board containing members of Defra, the Devolved administrations and stakeholders. An interim Steering Board will be established immediately to oversee the introduction of the formal governance arrangements, and inform and steer development of the Implementation Plans.
- National and Regional Stakeholder Groups for Great Britain, England, Scotland and Wales to provide a broad based platform for discussion on matters related to the strategy.
- An annual GB animal health and welfare conference and an annual report on strategic priorities and the implementation of the Strategy.

Science

“Arguably, the greatest improvement in animal health and welfare have been and will continue to be the result of scientific research”.

Comment from Research Institute

A Science Group will advise the Strategy Steering Group as part of the annual cycle of ensuring the priorities of the Strategy are right. It will take an overview of existing research priorities in the animal health and welfare field and work to identify and set new priorities which will be informed by the Annual Conference. Government will then ensure that, subject to the funds that are available, appropriate research is put in place to meet these priorities.

Promotion of animal health

As well as working with stakeholders on policy development, better delivery and realistic implementation, there is a role for Government as facilitator, catalyst for change, or promoter of best practice. Government needs to take a lead in preparing industry for change to meet new regulatory needs, or to assess and address a new animal health or welfare problem, or to initiate change if industry is failing to meet disease or welfare challenges.

The importance of this role of leader and facilitator has been overlooked in some areas. Ad hoc working groups have been set up where either Government or industry has recognised the need for an issue to be looked at. But clearly a more consistent approach and recognition of what can be achieved through co-operation and collaboration is needed.

New initiative:

- Strategy stakeholder groups will assess the need both for specific initiatives to address current priorities, and for sub-strategies in their areas.
- Government will also discuss with stakeholders whether there are any changes on the horizon.

Veterinary surveillance

An important element of this Strategy is the new Strategy for Veterinary Surveillance currently being finalised. Whilst veterinary surveillance has been in place for some time, a draft strategy has been developed in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that better use is made of the data collected, and that surveillance is better targeted and information is better disseminated. A proposed strategy, “Partnership, Priorities and Professionalism”, was issued for consultation at the end of 2002.

The importance of veterinary surveillance cannot be underestimated in the detection of outbreaks of exotic disease, the identification of new disease which may have zoonotic potential, and for spotting changes in the incidence, prevalence or effects of known conditions. The need for relevant data to enable evaluation and monitoring of this strategy is explained in Section 6 (Measuring Success). In areas such as non-statutory disease and welfare

conditions we need to ensure that current baseline data is available to enable progress in reducing disease to be measured.

New Initiative: to finalise and publish the veterinary surveillance strategy and to involve stakeholders in ensuring that surveillance meets the needs of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

5.3 Best Practice at home and abroad

What is best practice and how can we together ensure keepers have access to it and understand the benefits? The Statutory Welfare Codes set out the principles which all livestock keepers should follow, but are of necessity not targeted towards individual circumstances. Demonstration farms will also provide a route to show how good or best practice works in reality. We need to recognise that keepers want practical information and guidance relevant to their circumstances – so that they can see and appreciate benefit.

Sound science should lie behind best practice. Research needs to be disseminated so that industry can make practical use of it. Government will promote more collaboration between industry, Government and research establishments. Industry must play a more prominent role in identifying research needs for a sustainable livestock sector, and be prepared to support that research, for example through vehicles such as the LINK Sustainable Livestock Production programme.

In many areas, basic research into endemic disease prevention and control methods has been completed. Government support for Regional Technology Transfer Centres, and for demonstration farms will help to ensure industry takes up new developments.

New Initiative: Government will review with stakeholders information available to private veterinary surgeons and livestock keepers to ensure they have up to date information on current research so that this can be incorporated into best practice for positive disease control and proactive animal welfare management practices.

There are instances of past and current health schemes targeted at disease eradication or control which have previously been quoted as examples of best practice. For the final strategy, we need to identify these, assess the benefits, and facilitate and promote future take-up.

New initiative:

- We recognise that to encourage animal keepers to adopt good practice we need to identify and assess the real benefits of improvements in animal health and welfare.
- Government will gather information with stakeholders on the cost of animal disease and welfare compared to the cost of disease promotion and if

necessary, act to fill the gaps in knowledge.

- We will be drawing together case studies and examples of best practice in action and promoting these widely.

Similarly, we need to learn from best practice abroad. Are there examples of different disease prevention policies or delivery mechanisms which we could learn from?

New Initiative: Work is being commissioned to look at several countries, both EU and further afield, to see what can be learnt. This will feed into the final strategy.

5.4 Farm Health and Welfare Planning

Strategic Outcome – Promotion of animal health and welfare: prevention is better than cure

“Animal health plans are the way forward”.

Stakeholder comment meeting

Herd and flock health planning has been widely quoted as one way in which proactive planning for animal health can bring real economic benefits for farmers as well as improved disease prevention and control. Disease prevention and control is far too often thought of as only about keeping out exotic diseases such as foot and mouth. Good livestock husbandry, including routine disease prevention measures on the farm, reduces the vulnerability of livestock to a wide range of endemic, as well as exotic, disease. All sectors can benefit from programmes which drive up competence and compliance levels.

Across the industry there is a broad acceptance that herd/flock health planning should be advanced. The Foot and Mouth Disease Inquiries made several recommendations in relation to disease avoidance, early diagnosis and prevention of disease spread (animal health management) and to farm health planning in general. The recommendations specifically raised:

- Access to training in farm health planning
- Development of joint codes of practice and exploration of effective methods of communication
- Colleges, Universities and training organisations to provide courses that equip those working with livestock with necessary skills
- Farm assurance schemes to take account of farm health planning

We have already stressed the responsibilities that livestock keepers have to prevent disease spread and maintain healthy animals. Farm health planning

can help fulfil these responsibilities and become an increasingly important and permanent feature of the new relationship.

What is Farm Health Planning?

Essentially, farm health planning is a process by which the circumstances and disease status of a herd or flock can be assessed, and measures identified to address each condition or disease in an integrated and practical way. Many farmers already prepare and implement farm health plans, some with expert advice from their veterinary surgeons. Some farm assurance schemes already include requirements for farm health plans; some use this as one vehicle to deliver higher welfare standards; or as a way of managing low input systems; or a means of recording medicine usage. Each scheme has understandably tackled farm health planning in its own way, and there is now a diversity of approaches, which some have claimed is confusing for farmers.

We need to take a joined up approach to preparing plans for protecting public health and animal health. A combined approach to farm health planning can therefore address the control of zoonoses and endemic animal diseases, as well as putting in place measures to prevent the introduction of exotic diseases, and meet requirements to maintain records of, for example, the use of medicines.

Farmers as food producers

The “Farm to Fork” approach promoted by the Food Standards Agency is being given a legal base in proposals for new EU food hygiene legislation. These new rules, which are nearing final agreement, will extend food hygiene legislation back past the farm gate to the primary producer. They will require livestock producers to be registered as food businesses, to control hazards that can enter the food chain on the farm, to operate hygienically and keep records relevant to food safety. To be accepted at a slaughterhouse animals will have to be traceable back to their farm of origin and be accompanied by information from the producer's records. As well as the EU Food Hygiene legislation a proposal for an EU Official Food and Feed Regulation will mean the preparation and auditing of hygiene plans by most primary producers will be required.

New Initiative: A cross industry working group will be set up to prepare industry for the necessary changes in the forthcoming food hygiene regulations

Development of guidance and training

There is a need to develop guidance and training in the preparation of farm health plans so that consistent advice and messages can be provided. In partnership with stakeholders, we will develop advice on good and best practice, identifying practices which are realistic, workable, affordable and effective.

Benefits of Herd/Flock Health Planning

In most cases farm health planning needs expert help from a vet. It also entails some financial input in order to implement the plan effectively. It is generally accepted that a healthy herd is likely to be more profitable than a herd with a high prevalence of endemic illnesses. It is important that the benefits of farm health planning in improving the overall herd or flock health status are identified, and communicated as widely as possible in order to encourage uptake of this approach.

Next steps

There are a number of tasks that need to be undertaken with the full input and assistance of stakeholders. Including:

- Identify and consolidate what is already being done
- Identify and agree what is *good* practice and what is *best* practice
- Identify inconsistencies in advice and ensure compatibility with measures to protect and improve standards in environmental quality, and health and safety
- Develop the most appropriate tools to inform and train livestock keepers and those who provide services to them
- Embark on a joint campaign with stakeholders to disseminate advice and encourage the uptake and use of training and advisory tools
- Open discussions with groups representing countryside users and conservation and landscape interest groups to raise awareness of disease prevention and control as a whole
- Identify and promote research that provides a strong science basis for effective disease prevention and control measures
- Identify and provide readily usable information on cost/benefits and business advantages of having healthy animals
- Develop Indicators of progress.

Government will work to facilitate the production of the required tools for encouraging farm health planning, but the key stakeholder groups, particularly the livestock sectors and farm assurance schemes need to champion this issue themselves and encourage a culture change in some farmer groups to adopt these beneficial practices. This is to be taken forward as part of the broader Government initiatives on developing a Whole Farm approach

In the context of its development of a horse industry strategy for England, Defra will explore with the industry the scope for extending a similar approach to professional keepers of horses.

New Initiative:

A plan of action for Positive Health including:

- Working with stakeholders to agree standards for animal health planning
- Working to promote the value of herd/flock planning and encourage the uptake of herd/flock health planning

- Promoting consistent messages through vehicles such as assurance schemes

5.5 Investing in the future – training, education, advice and skills

Livestock keepers/Veterinarians

A major theme throughout our consultation has centred around the skills which farmers and vets have, and the training they receive and whether this is appropriate to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Clearly, the action plan for positive farm health planning will need to encourage uptake of training which will need to be tailored to the different needs of the farming and veterinary community.

Animal Keepers

There are many challenges and opportunities that all animal keepers are faced with every day. Hygiene, health, health and safety, animal welfare, environmental protection and business planning are all issues to some degree or another in maintaining healthy animals. Government will work with Agricultural Colleges, vets and farmers to review existing syllabuses on training on disease control and prevention measures. Government will also work with stakeholders to ensure animal owners have access to the information they need to understand the responsibilities of animal ownership.

Consumers

“Children are the consumers of the future”

Stakeholder comment during regional workshop

Another common concern expressed through consultation is the lack of connection between consumers and the way their food is produced. Animal keepers feel there is a lack of understanding of agriculture and the role of farmers in the countryside from children onwards, and that those visiting the countryside need a greater awareness of disease control concerns. Others are concerned that the costs of higher production standards are not always reflected in the price of food. These are issues not just about animal health and welfare, but about agriculture and public understanding of the way food is produced. Initiatives are already being developed as part of Governments commitment to sustainable agriculture policies, such as demonstration farms, and inclusion in the core curriculum of an understanding of animal welfare and food and nutrition, which will act to bridge this gap.

New Initiative:

- Identification of the training and advice needs of farmers and vets and others who advise livestock keepers.
- Consolidation of existing training, knowledge and practices enabling generation of advice on best practice in animal health and welfare.

- Identification and development of the most appropriate information and training tools that best meet the needs of farmers, vets and others.
- Develop with stakeholders' incentives for training.
- We will establish an industry sub-group of stakeholders to look at the current Government guidance on Animal Health and Welfare issues to rationalise and ensure messages are consistent.
- We will work with stakeholders to ensure animal owners have access to the information they need to understand their responsibilities.

5.6 Responsible use of veterinary medicines

There are a number of issues over the supply and use of veterinary medicines which will affect the ability of livestock and companion animal keepers as well as those engaged in sport and recreation to deal with animal disease. Withdrawal of antibiotics used as growth promoters in 2006, and the need to monitor closely and limit the spread of antimicrobial resistance in pathogens will also increase the need for disease prevention measures such as farm health planning in both herds and flocks.

Supply issues include those highlighted by the Marsh and Competition Commission reports into the supply of medicines; and also industry concerns about dwindling supplies of pharmaceuticals because of a perceived lack of return on investment. Use issues include "off label" use for minor species or companion animals, the classification of the horse as a food-producing animal and the possible transfer of antimicrobial resistance from animals to humans.

It is right to expect that animal keepers will have access to the products that are needed to treat disease when it affects their animals. It is also right to expect the responsible use of these medicines in sustainable livestock systems.

New Initiative:

- To facilitate and promote the responsible and prudent use of veterinary medicines with farmers, vets and the pharmaceutical industry.
- To work with farmers, in particular, to prepare for the withdrawal of antibiotic growth promoters in 2006.
- To assess the current availability of medicines to treat and prevent disease and to discuss with the pharmaceutical industry how any concerns can be met.
- To support FSA/VMD work to ensure food safety by working to minimise residues of veterinary medicines and feed additives in food.
- To support research to develop novel vaccines and alternatives to chemotherapeutics.
- To work with the horse industry on its specific needs.

5.7 Sharing risks and costs

Strategic Outcome – A clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of animal health and welfare

“It is crucial for the livestock industry that an animal health and welfare strategy must provide tangible and demonstrable economic benefits”.

Comment from a farming organisation

Clearly, after the recent outbreaks of exotic disease, classical swine fever and foot and mouth disease, the costs of the risk of infectious disease outbreaks must feature high on the agendas both of livestock keepers and Government. Some endemic diseases, such as TB, also impose significant costs. At present, both farmers and taxpayers bear a share of the costs of diseases and their prevention or control. Some Government costs are immediately recognisable, for example the compensation paid to farmers for culled animals; others, such as the costs of surveillance, testing, R&D, regulation and controls, are less visible but no less important. In other areas, such as environmental protection, the industry concerned is required to pay some or all of these costs, e.g. where the polluter pays principle applies. It can be argued that a really sustainable industry would bear the costs associated with animal disease.

Government recognises that there are public good aspects in the prevention of animal disease and particularly highly infectious ones which have the potential to damage the wider economy. It is reasonable therefore that the taxpayer should continue to bear a share of the costs. However, that share should reflect where the balance of responsibility lies for managing the risks, and who benefits from their controls.

A number of factors and features of the livestock industry influence the ability to control and eliminate disease from livestock populations. The most important of these relate to unit size, density of livestock, movement regimes, and the need to control incoming stock on premises. There is a need for a greater awareness of the factors affecting disease spread and control, and for positive planning by keepers to manage the risks associated with their businesses.

It is important that livestock keepers individually and collectively take responsibility for managing the disease risk and with that bear a share of the financial risks.

All the recent inquiries and reports (Curry, Anderson, Follett) commented on the cost to the country of exotic disease outbreaks. The Anderson Inquiry into the foot and mouth disease outbreak stated that

“On narrow economic grounds, it is difficult to see why costs as substantial as those of the 2001 epidemic should be met by people not engaged in agriculture. In most industries, in which there is a possibility that a failure within the industry will impose substantial costs on people outside the

industry, there is an expectation that the costs of failures will mostly be met by the industry concerned”.

The Inquiry considered “ that it is neither possible nor acceptable that the farming industry should bear the full costs associated with that control. There are wider benefits in controlling FMD (foot and mouth disease), which accrue to the country as a whole. The implication of this is that the public should bear at least some of the costs of maintaining a healthy and extensive livestock industry. But, in return, the farming industry must recognise that it, along with others, has responsibilities for the rural economy and should contribute to its future development”.

These comments apply equally to all aspects of animal disease and its prevention. In the long run, Government would not expect to pay directly or subsidise indirectly the animal health costs and risks to farmers that affect only their own businesses. Government may have good reasons to intervene (as described in Section 3), but if that intervention is only or primarily in the interests of the farming community then it is right to expect that the costs should be borne by that community. For example, there are very good reasons why farmers should be compensated for culled animals, to encourage prompt notification, and the basic principle remains that there should be no motivation for a livestock keeper to conceal disease. However, there is no compelling argument for the costs of such compensation being borne wholly by the taxpayer.

In many cases, Government would help and facilitate mechanisms to help farmers share in the management of animal disease risks and the associated costs. For example, it may be that there are aspects of disease control such as research into zoonoses where Governments are more able than individual farmers to put resources into activity at a meaningful level or useful scale. There is a case that industry should also start to bear the costs of the damage it can do to the wider public good, as with other examples outside the farming sector. If any such scheme did exist it would need to reward good behaviour and any proposal would be the subject of wide consultation.

New Initiative: Government will carry out a review of all services it provides to livestock keepers, with a view to establishing whether the balance of the costs between industry and taxpayer is appropriate. In line with the fundamental principles outlined in Section 3, no new charges will be imposed without taking into account the economic state of the industry and the wider cumulative effect of policy changes.

Section 6

Measuring success

6.1 Delivery

Strategic Outcome – Effective delivery and enforcement

Stakeholders have commented that the delivery of Government services needs to be better, carried out more consistently and conducted in a more joined up way. The Strategy recognises that improvements are needed. The principal delivery agents on behalf of the Government are the State Veterinary Service, local authorities and the Meat Hygiene Service. A summary of the main responsibilities of these bodies is at **Annex C**. Throughout the scope of this strategy, Government must ensure that whatever interventions it makes, whether directly or through its agents such as Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVI), are consistently and effectively delivered and enforced throughout Great Britain.

Any policy initiative, however carefully constructed or scientifically sound, will not achieve the desired effect if it is not effectively translated into action. Where legislative obligations are created, Government must clearly explain why change is required, what people must do to comply, and, where appropriate, take the lead in preparing industry for change.

Stakeholders have stressed the need for Government help and encouragement to comply with legislation and that, where appropriate, effective enforcement action is taken against the minority who persistently or blatantly break the law.

Delivering the Strategy within a 10-year framework is a challenging objective and it is important that the aims and targets that we set ourselves are realistic and achievable. Resources available to Government are finite and this strategy sets the framework for deciding what those resources should deliver.

For the strategy to be effective, responsibility for delivery lies with all stakeholders in animal health and welfare. Everyone who owns or has responsibility for animals has a contribution to make and it is at the farm level, and other places where animals are kept, where the desired changes must take place.

New initiative:

- Government will explore with its delivery agents how they can improve their effectiveness through better communication and co-ordination with other enforcement agencies
- A number of initiatives are already being piloted to improve the consistency and transparency in the way that central and local government deliver services in the animal health and welfare arena. A review of the

way that LVI services are managed by the State Veterinary Service is considering a broad range of issues aimed at improving communication, effectiveness and consistency of service.

6.2 Implementation plans

Government will work with stakeholders to develop Strategy Implementation Plans for England, Scotland and Wales, for publication in November 2003. Initially, the implementation plans will focus on the New Initiatives identified by this outline strategy. By the spring of 2004, when the Strategy is published, the plans will be updated to include existing activities covered by the Strategy. Thereafter the Plans will be updated annually with the close involvement of stakeholders.

The Implementation Plans for each country will be based on a common framework to ensure a consistent approach. All New Initiatives will be identified against the one of the strategic outcomes identified in separate chapters. An example framework for the GB implementation plans can be found at **Annex E**.

6.3 What will success look like?

Strategic Outcome – A clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of animal health and welfare

Having set out key long term priorities for the future of animal health and welfare in Britain we need to identify how we will measure progress towards our vision. Some of the changes needed are complicated and some are not as well defined as others. Despite this we need to ensure that mechanisms are in place to monitor, report and review change. Government has a responsibility to ensure that any measures it enforces or services it provides are evaluated. Stakeholders in turn have a duty to feed back their comments and ideas to ensure those services meet their needs.

Our strategic priorities, from the vision, will be first taken forward by the new initiatives set out in the draft implementation plan. However this is only the first step and there are parts of the vision where we need to develop a clear understanding of the current situation before we can look to change. Our aim is to achieve a continuing improvement in the health and welfare of animals kept by man, and protect the public from animal disease, as measured against underlying trends.

New initiative How we define and measure health and welfare is essential to any strategy aimed at improving the health and welfare of animals kept by man.

- We have commissioned a study to develop a series of indicators that could be used to assess animal health and welfare standards.
- We will be looking how these can be applied and how accurate information can be collected.

Milestones

Whilst areas of the strategy still need to be developed we already have some understanding of the direction we need to take to achieve our vision for the future. At **Annex D** are some of the milestones that we have identified for the early stages of this journey. This reflects our current thinking and dates will be added and milestones will be amended as we continue to develop the strategy with stakeholders. Other milestones will also be set in the implementation plans to be published in Autumn 2003.

6.4 Measuring Change

In order to track our progress we need to develop indicators. Work has been commissioned by Government economists to identify indicators to measure animal health and welfare standards. This work will, in the first instance, concentrate on the health and welfare of animals kept for food. Once confident in these indicators, we will look at applying them more widely. A series of draft indicators is set out below based on our initial thoughts on desirable outcomes and how these might be measured.

	INDICATORS
<i>Economic sustainability</i>	
Reduced cost of animal disease to livestock keepers and other animal businesses	Animal keepers' spend on fallen stock and carcass disposal Proportion of animal keepers' income spent on treating or clearing up disease Impact of animal disease on the profitability of the business
Reduced burden on taxpayers and the rest of the economy	Government spend on clearing up incidences of disease and welfare cases Time taken to clear up major disease outbreaks
Cost-effective measures for improving the health and welfare of animals	Proportion of Government money spent on prevention compared to cure Take up of disease prevention and control measures, veterinary medicines and disinfectants
<i>Environmental sustainability</i>	
Controlled disposal of animal wastes, disinfectants and veterinary medicines	Diffuse water pollution – river water quality Soil nutrient status Disposal of fallen stock

Social sustainability

Reduced risk to public health	Incidence of zoonotic diseases in animals Carriage of food borne pathogens in food producing animals
Higher animal welfare standards	Cases of poor animal welfare Husbandry behaviour on farm

Partnership

Increased transparency and stakeholder involvement in decision making	Governance of the strategy Stakeholder buy-in and commitment Stakeholder engagement in setting priorities
A wide understanding of roles and responsibilities	Take up of farm health plans Take up of best and good practice
Greater use of veterinary advice and services	Number of routine veterinary visits Employment of private veterinarians by Government

Sharing and using knowledge

More cohesive animal health and welfare information and services	Comprehensive veterinary surveillance programme Take up of advisory services
Better use of science and research	Investment in relevant research Investment in horizon scanning Evidence based policy making Evidence based decision making and practice
Continual development of skills and knowledge	Take up of training packages by livestock keepers Take up of training packages by veterinarians Demonstration farms

The indicators set out above are only a first step at looking at how change can be measured. It will be the responsibility of the Strategy Steering Group and the wider Stakeholder Groups to develop a full set of indicators.

Alongside this work we will be building our understanding of the current animal health and welfare picture in Britain. This information will be used to establish a GB baseline against which change can be measured. We will also

be looking at international best practice to benchmark our success against global indicators.

A Steering Group will be responsible for overseeing and evaluating the implementation of the strategy. Full details of the Steering Group and its possible membership are set out in **Annex B**.

How to comment

If you wish to make comments please send them to the following address by **31 October 2003**.

For England

Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Team
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Room 103
1A Page Street
LONDON
SW1P 4PQ
Email submissions may be sent to: ah.ws@defra.gsi.gov.uk

For Scotland

Animal Health and Welfare Division
Room 345a
Pentland House
47 Robbs Loan
Edinburgh
EH14 1TY
Email submissions to be sent to: Joanna.Mcdonald@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

For Wales

Animal Health Division
Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff CF10 3NQ
Fax: 029 2082 3352
Email submissions to be sent to: animalhealth@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that at the end of this period copies of any comments received will be made publicly available. It will be assumed that your reply may be made available unless you indicate clearly that you wish all, or part, of it excluded from this arrangement.

For copies of the responses received please contact either:

In England

Defra Library
Room 320 Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
(Tel: 020 7904 6003)
(Tel: 0131 244 4552)

In Scotland

Scottish Executive Library
K-Spur
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh EH11 3XD
email: Alan.Gold@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

In Wales

Assembly Publication Centre
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff CF10 3NQ
(Tel: 02920 898 688)
email: assemblypublications@wales.gsi.gov.uk

If you wish personally to view the responses held in any of the libraries above, please telephone and make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance. Small administrative charges may be made to cover photocopying and / or postage.

Themes from the consultation exercise

Background

An open scoping document; ***Preparing an Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain***, designed to capture ideas and to help us scope what the Strategy should contain, was jointly launched by Defra, the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government, on 8 January 2003. The document was sent to around 1,000 stakeholders with a wide range of interests, covering: livestock keepers, private veterinary practices, wildlife groups, rural stakeholders, environmental interests, companion animal groups, livestock related industries and businesses, local authorities, consumers, academics and colleges. This consultation paper is also published on the three Departments' websites.

Consultees were asked to respond to the 10 questions listed overleaf, and were invited to offer any other general comments on the Strategy. (Question 10, concerning foot and mouth disease was to be answered only by England and Wales.)

The three Departments received 186 written responses to the consultation document. These responses have been analysed and pulled together to provide a detailed GB summary of responses to be published on the web along with a stand-alone publication of the analysis, in addition to this Annex. The key themes that have emerged will be considered in the development of the Strategy.

We also carried out national stakeholder meetings of the main sectors which would be affected by the strategy, dairy, poultry, beef, wildlife, welfare, etc. to discuss what they considered were the priorities which the strategy should address. In addition, approximately 400 stakeholders attended 8 regional workshops throughout Great Britain to ensure we captured regional stakeholder views in an area which traditionally has seen policy developed and delivered on a national basis. Our stakeholders inside Government were also involved, across departments, throughout Defra, Scottish Executive, and WAG to evolve a joined up approach to the strategy.

- 1. Do you agree that we need a more strategic approach to animal health and welfare in Great Britain? If so what do you think a strategy should cover? Do you have any other views on the reasons for a strategy?***
- 2. Is the draft vision set out above (para 16) a desirable future for animal health and welfare in Britain? What is your vision?***
- 3. What economic, social, environmental and welfare benefits are you looking for from the Strategy? What costs need to be taken into account? And how should these be balanced?***

4. ***Can you identify any potential conflicts or risks that might challenge the draft vision?***
5. ***How can we build the new contract and make partnerships with stakeholders work?***
6. ***What is your most important long-term animal health and welfare priority? Do you agree with the issues and themes from stakeholder meetings? (para 18) Do you have any to add?***
7. ***Your views are sought on the value of animal health plans: do you think this is something that should be expected from all animal keepers?***
8. ***Have we set out accurately the roles of Government, the livestock industry, and other stakeholders? Is the current balance of Government intervention right? What are your views as a taxpayer?***
9. ***Do you have views on the scope of the strategy and how far beyond farmed livestock and companion animals it should extend?***
10. ***For England and Wales, a commitment was made in the FMD Inquiry response to seek views on the regular reviewing and issuing of progress reports on the state of emergency preparedness : what do you think would be the most appropriate format for these? How often do you think Government should issue them?***

Main GB themes from the written consultation

The respondees showed overwhelming support for the idea of such a Strategy.

There was a strong feeling that a 10 year Strategy would give the depth, breadth and ability to co-ordinate the many diverse strands impacting on animal keepers, food producers, Government and the public across Great Britain.

The idea that these stakeholders, working in partnership, would be talking with one voice, bringing with it the advantages of less duplication and a stronger sense of their respective responsibilities and roles, was a strong theme throughout the consultation responses.

Below are some of the common themes that stakeholders see are needed to develop a sustainable Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for the future.

- **EDUCATION AND HEALTH & WELFARE**

- *Consumer and producer education seen as important through the whole food chain including supermarkets*
- *High level of support for Animal Health Plans and a proactive role for farm assurance. Concern that current assurance schemes are not delivering any value for the farmer*
- *Importance and difficulty of getting 'Buy in' of farmers and retailers.*
- *Application of the 5 Freedoms as a benchmark for welfare*
- *Formation of an overarching animal health board/agency*

- Explain to the public and producers that good welfare does not need to be costly
- Indicators of good health and welfare developed including baseline survey
- Licensing of farms favoured by a majority but only without extra cost burden
- Less slaughter during disease control – vaccinate instead
- Live exports, long distance transport and too few abattoirs contribute to poor animal welfare
- Farming systems are too intensive and more extensive farming practices should be encouraged
- Organic standards should set the baseline for animal health and welfare

- **COMMUNICATION**

- Need for audit and a SMART approach to targets.
- Regional panels and bodies reformed
- More web information and internet access for farmers
- More face to face contact, roadshows etc
- Outbreak strategy defined
- Key stakeholder groups formed
- Less Duplication of farm visits/inspections

- **DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

- Abattoir availability and a reduction in long distance transport.
- Animal ID and traceability
- Effective contingency planning.
- Problem of reduction in the size of the SVS and the availability of specialist vets
- Horse movements raised as a particular problem for disease control
- Illegal imports are of high importance
- Role of wildlife as a disease vector
- Enhanced disease surveillance

- **R & D**

- Need for better targeted and evidence based science and policy, essential for good health and welfare.
- Effective knowledge transfer
- Concern over the deregulation and the responsible use of veterinary medicines
- Review and application, where appropriate, of international examples of best practice
- Support for demonstration farms and their role in knowledge transfer

- **BARRIERS AND CONFLICTS**

- Concern for level playing field within and outside the EU
- WTO seen as a threat to the livestock industry; US too influential; concern over 'Gold Plating' of EU regulations in the UK
- The Government must commit itself to farming
- Farming must be profitable or there is no scope to re-invest in health and welfare
- The Strategy should not impose extra costs unless balanced by cuts in other areas

- Cheap imports undermine profitability and cut affect welfare
- Availability and cost of vets, too few large animal practices
- Herd Health plans will need free annual vet visits to set up and run
- Need to attain and keep 'disease free status'
- Lack of Departmental expertise in the pet sector
- Issue of lack of trust in Government/Defra
- Supermarkets overly influential
- Externalities should e factored into food chain costs

Sector and Interest Group meetings

A series of 10 sectoral and interest-based meetings were held in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff. The meetings were used to talk around some of the ideas raised in the draft vision in the written consultation paper and key priorities with the national representative stakeholder bodies. The aim of the meetings was:

- to develop a common view and understanding of the different sector priorities
- to identify key concerns for the next 10 years, and
- whether these were being addressed by current initiatives.

Meetings were held with:

<i>Beef sector</i>	<i>Sheep sector</i>	<i>Pig sector</i>	<i>Dairy sector</i>
<i>Poultry sector</i>	<i>Horse interests</i>	<i>Welfare interests</i>	<i>Wildlife interests</i>
<i>RUMA</i>	<i>Veterinary profession</i>	<i>Companion animal interests</i>	

Detailed notes on all the above meetings are available on the Defra website.

A brief summary of the common themes:

- *Lack of relevant surveillance information*
- *Animal movements are a disease threat, better ID and traceability needed.*
- *Need for better communication and producer and consumer education*
- *Increased veterinary availability and presence on farm*
- *Increasing threat of wildlife acting as a disease vector with climate change*
- *Scale of pet sector disease and public health threat not known, lack of expertise in Government and greater public awareness needed*
- *More targeted R&D needed to provide evidence based policy*
- *Herd health plans needed*
- *Farming needs to be profitable*
- *Promote positive economic message of good health and welfare*
- *Supermarkets have too much control over the food chain*
- *Use of vaccination in disease control*

English Regional workshops

Background

Defra held a series of regional workshops to support the development of a ten year strategy for animal health and welfare in March / April 2003. These were situated in Northallerton, Newmarket, Nottingham, Taunton and Preston, dividing England's animal health and welfare stakeholder community into five corresponding areas. Invitations were issued to a diverse range of concerned interest groups, and attendees included farmers; Union representatives; RSPCA officers; local trading standards officials; SVS and private vets; and others.

Those attending the workshops were invited to give comments on a non-attributable basis. The comments recorded in this record do not necessarily reflect the views of any organisation, including Defra.

The main themes and issues arising from this were:

- *Health & welfare risks surrounding live and illegal imports*
- *Biosecurity message is not getting across effectively enough*
- *Need for good science basis & more research, especially into financial benefits of good animal health & welfare practice*
- *Need legislation that allows stopping people from keeping livestock*
- *Herd health plans needed*
- *Farming needs to be profitable*
- *Promote positive economic message of good health and welfare*
- *Supermarkets have too much control over the food chain*
- *Use of vaccination in disease control*

Regional themes (England)

There were a number of clear themes arising from the feedback for the future of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy's regional application:

- That greater consultation and influence should be obtained from regional representatives;
- That regional implementation should reflect local characteristics, with a certain amount of regional autonomy. This was most relevant for dealing with region-specific endemic disease, for which it was thought that specific objectives must be set; and
- Above all, that the main concern of the attendees of the five workshops was with delivery. It was strongly felt that the Strategy would only be successful if it delivered its objectives.

Scottish Regional workshop

On 5 March 2003, The Scottish Executive's Animal Health & Welfare Division hosted a conference, which was attended by around 60 representatives of a broad range of organisations with an interest in animal health and welfare. There, 4 speakers gave presentations in the morning- David Barrett, of

Glasgow Vet School; Leslie Gardner, then CVO Scotland; Mike Flynn of the SSPCA and Nigel Miller of NFU Scotland, outlining their expectations of what the strategy should look like. In the afternoon attendees had the chance to discuss specific aspects of the Strategy as well as the issues raised by the morning's speakers in several breakout groups.

A brief summary of the common themes raised in these discussion groups:

- *Poor economic state of the agricultural industry*
- *Need more emphasis on endemic disease*
- *Role of veterinary profession- need more vets on more farms more often*
- *Need for education of both industry and consumers*
- *Markets- offer price transparency but problematic in terms of biosecurity and health status*
- *Health & welfare risks surrounding live and illegal imports*
- *Biosecurity message is not getting across effectively enough*
- *Need for good science basis & more research, especially into financial benefits of good animal health & welfare practice*
- *Need legislation that allows stopping people from keeping livestock*

More detailed notes of the topics discussed at this conference are available on the Scottish Executive website.

Welsh Regional workshops

The Welsh Assembly's Animal Health & Welfare Division held two regional conferences, on March 13th & 20th in Bridgend and Llandudno respectively, each attended by approximately 25 people from a wide range of organisations throughout the animal health & welfare industry. Following these meetings, a Sheep Sectoral Conference was held in Cardiff on the 31st of March with key stakeholders of the sector.

All of the meetings followed a similar course to those of the other Government agricultural departments, with introductions to, and an outlining of the Strategy given by Officials. Attendees were then given the opportunity to address the questions raised by the Strategy and make comments.

An outline of the main issues raised at these meetings were:

- Need for improved Communication/Education throughout the whole of the industry i.e. from farmer to consumer. Educate consumers on the costs of better welfare in order for them to make more informed decisions on the products they buy.
- Expansion of Veterinary role to be supported by appropriate funding from Government including possible use of incentives to encourage more, large animal vets into the countryside.
- Role and 'power' of large retailers need to be revised in order to achieve a better balance for the producers.
- Balance needs to be struck between the need for rural access and the needs of the farming community, to restrict the spread of disease.

- Suggestion of a “Farm Standards Agency”, to monitor and enforce schemes such as Farm Health Plans.
- Calls for tighter controls on illegal imports and audit trails in abattoirs in order to improve traceability.
- Food labelling should be more explicit, with Farm assurance schemes rationalised to a minimum of easily recognised marks.
- Welfare standards could be linked with future subsidies.
- Local abattoirs needed to be brought back and better supported.
- Better resources needed to tackle the threat of endemic diseases.
- Any Strategy needed to take into account the future of CAP & forthcoming pieces of EU legislation.
- Impact of science and environmental changes on the Strategy need consideration i.e. how will new innovations affect such a Strategy or climatic change leading to new crops but possibly new diseases too.

More detailed notes of the topics discussed at this conference are available on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

Management of the strategy

A structure has been designed to ensure that the Strategy develops through a partnership approach between Government and Stakeholders. The detailed arrangements establish a procedure for setting out what the Strategy is trying to achieve and for reviewing implementation and results. The key components are:

- **A Strategy Steering Board** containing members of Defra, the Devolved administrations and stakeholders.
- **National Stakeholder Groups** for Great Britain, England, Scotland and Wales to provide a broad based platform for discussion on matters related to the strategy.
- **Sectoral Stakeholder Groups** to meet on an annual basis to discuss issues across the sector, challenges and priorities.
- **An annual GB animal health and welfare conference** to review the priorities and delivery of the strategy.
- **A science group** to provide an annual overview on scientific issues to the Strategy Steering Board.

Strategy Steering Board

The Strategy will be directed by a Strategy Steering Board, which will meet at least twice a year, under the chairmanship of the Chief Veterinary Officer (UK).

The proposed terms of reference for the Strategy Steering Board are:

Strategic aims and objectives

- To keep under review the vision and aims of the Strategy and update where necessary
- To keep under review strategic priorities and agree long term targets
- To review submissions and advice submitted by
 - the Science Advisory Council – animal health and welfare sub group
 - stakeholders at the national, regional and sectoral level

Implementing the Strategy

- To review progress reports from Defra and devolved administrations on strategic plans and progress towards implementing the strategy.
- To review implementation plans, targets and trajectories
- To review GB strategic priorities, and associated funding and resources

Communicating the strategy

- To recommend themes or issues for debate at the annual animal health and welfare conference
- To issue an annual report
- To provide advice to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, as appropriate

The Board will contain members from Defra, the devolved administrations, stakeholder representatives and independent members along the following lines.

Chief Veterinary Officer (UK)	Livestock Industry representative (Eng.)
Chief Veterinary Officer (Scotland)	Livestock industry representative (Scotland)
Chief Veterinary Officer (Wales)	Livestock industry representative (Wales)
Chief Veterinary Officer (Northern Ireland)	Animal Welfare organisations representative (GB)
Animal Health Director (Defra)	Consumers organisations (GB)
TSE Director (Defra)	Food industry representative (GB)
Head of Animal Health (Scottish Executive)	Chairman of the AHW Scientific Advisory Group
Head of Animal Health (WAG)	Representative of the British Veterinary Association
Director, State Veterinary Service	
Food Standards Agency	
Department of Health	
Local authorities representative (LACORs)	

Other Defra and devolved administrations directorates and other relevant Government Departments will be kept in touch with the work of the Steering Board and may be invited to attend on an ad-hoc basis for certain discussions. Steering Board reports and working papers will be posted on the websites of the GB Environment/Rural Affairs Departments. The Strategy Steering Board will be supported by a secretariat provided by Defra, who will prepare or commission meeting papers and organise the meetings of the Steering Board.

Government will set up an interim Steering Board this autumn to:

- Confirm the Terms of Reference
- Confirm Steering Board membership
- Oversee delivery and implementation

National stakeholder groups

A national stakeholder group already operates in Scotland under the chairmanship of Scottish Executive. In England, the group which evolved after the foot and mouth outbreak in 2000 to consider the development of an animal movements regime will form the basis of a national stakeholder group. The Welsh Assembly will establish a national stakeholder group for Wales. An

amalgam of the three groups will form the GB animal health and welfare stakeholder group where matters of a GB nature need to be discussed.

The aim of the respective national stakeholders groups is to draw together the widest range of stakeholder interests in animal health and welfare and to provide a broad basis for general discussion. These groups will meet as and when required. Membership of the groups will be determined locally.

The proposed terms of reference for the national stakeholder groups are:

- to support the Strategy Steering Group in the execution of its responsibilities
- to assist in the final development of an animal health and welfare strategy
- to allow stakeholders to develop and promote their contribution to the management and delivery of the strategy
- to allow stakeholders to present their views on the Government's contribution to the management and delivery of the strategy
- to encourage communication between stakeholders

Regional stakeholder groups (England only)

Contacts with local animal health and welfare stakeholders are generally organised through Divisional Offices of the State Veterinary Service, although the Government Offices are responsible for broader rural development issues. Contacts between the SVS and local stakeholders tend to be organised around groups dealing with a single-issue agenda (i.e. animal welfare liaison, contingency planning or animal movements), or with separate stakeholders groups (i.e. NFU County Groups, LVI Practises, Auctioneers, and local authorities).

Building on the positive feedback received from those stakeholders who attended the Defra Regional Workshops held in March/April 2003, it is proposed that Regional Stakeholder Groups are formed. The geographic coverage and membership of the groups will need to build on existing structures, to be relevant to the area and be developed in consultation with local stakeholders over the autumn.

The proposed Terms of Reference for Regional Stakeholder Groups are:

- to support the Strategy Steering Group in the execution of its responsibilities
- to review delivery (by SVS, local authorities and others) of the strategy at a local level
- to contribute towards national consultation exercises on emerging policy issues
- to contribute to the testing of contingency plans
- to review regional priorities
- to encourage communication between stakeholders

Regional groups are not thought necessary across Scotland but local stakeholders will be kept in touch with the strategy through existing structures.

Sectoral stakeholder groups

Sectoral Groups meet to discuss immediate issues, but rarely discuss issues on a more strategic level. We propose that annual sectoral meetings are held with a membership including the species veterinary society, farmers and food industry representatives, to discuss issues across the sector and challenges and priorities facing them. This could then feed into the annual cycle of review and consideration.

Possible sectoral sub groups

Beef	Dairy
Sheep and Goats	Pigs
Poultry and Eggs	Horses
Veterinary medicines	Wildlife
Pets	

The proposed terms of reference for Sectoral Stakeholder Groups are:

- to support the Strategy Steering Group in the execution of its responsibilities
- to assist in the development of a sub strategy for [species]
- to help identify priorities within the sector
- to allow stakeholders to raise issues of concern
- to encourage communication between stakeholders
- to identify issues where Government facilitation/leadership needed to e.g. prepare for change or address a specific disease issue

Annual Animal Health and Welfare Conference

An annual GB Animal Health and Welfare Conference (presented jointly with stakeholders and Defra, Scottish Executive and WAG) will be held to provide the following:

- Report and consider progress towards delivering the Strategy
- Discussion on the main strategic themes
- Presentations on key research, scientific developments and surveillance
- To communicate to a wider stakeholder and public audience progress on implementing the Strategy
- Contribute to the process of updating and delivering the Strategy

Representatives of the key stakeholder organisations will be invited to attend. There will also be opportunities for members of the public to attend the Conference. Working papers, presentations and a note of the meeting will be placed on the websites of the GB Environment/Rural Affairs Departments.

Science group

The role of science is crucial in providing an evidence base for the animal health and welfare strategy. The Strategy Steering Board will require access to a group that can provide an overview of the wide range of science that operates in this field.

The aim of such a science group would be to meet once a year, after the annual animal health and welfare conference, to provide a strategic view, looking ahead to how Science can continue to contribute to the delivery of the Strategy. The group will focus on issues raised during the annual conference and consider how stakeholders can improve their performance in terms of getting highly relevant research undertaken and disseminated.

The Science Group membership is yet to be determined but could include the Chairs of Committees who already advise Government on specific animal health and welfare issues, (e.g. the Farm Animal Welfare Council, the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) and the Independent Scientific Group on Bovine TB).

Key delivery agents

The State Veterinary Service (SVS) is a GB wide organisation of around 1,250 veterinary, technical and administrative staff dealing with animal health, public health, animal welfare and international trade. Their responsibilities, mostly of a statutory nature, include:

- dealing with outbreaks of serious animal diseases and keeping contingency plans for exotic disease up to date;
- carrying out welfare visits to farms and markets;
- advising farmers on disease prevention and requirements for importing and exporting;
- taking and testing samples from animals to detect diseases or residues of veterinary medicines;
- approving bulls and boars for use in artificial insemination;
- operating the National Scrapie Plan;
- enforcing legislation in all these areas; and
- liaison with local and regional stakeholders and delivery partners.

Although part of Defra, the SVS work closely with, and are fully accountable to, the devolved administrations and have a close working relationship with the Veterinary Laboratories Agency. They also direct and monitor the activities of over 6,000 private veterinary surgeons who carry out official work as Local Veterinary Inspectors across a wide range of legislative and other duties.

The Meat Hygiene Agency (MHS) is an Executive Agency of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The principal functions of the MHS are:

On behalf of the FSA:

- enforcing hygiene legislation in licensed fresh meat premises;
- carrying out meat inspection and controls on health marking in licensed red meat, poultry meat and wild game meat premises;
- enforcing hygiene controls in meat products, minced meat and meat preparation plants, that are co-located with licensed slaughterhouses; and
- enforcing in licensed fresh meat premises, controls of Specified Risk Material (SRM) and other animal by-products, and controls prohibiting the sale of meat from cattle over 30 months of age.

On behalf of the GB Environment and Rural Affairs Departments:

- providing an overview of the transport of animals from farm or livestock centre to the place of slaughter (local authorities enforce the law);
- carrying out ante-mortem (AM) inspection in the lairage of all animals destined for slaughter;
- detecting notifiable animal diseases and zoonoses at AM inspection;
- reporting welfare concerns that would appear to originate from the farm to DVMS, for investigation by the SVS on the premises of origin; and

- enforcing the WASK Regulations in cases of animal/poultry welfare at slaughter.
- Carrying out and supervision of sampling procedures for residues and TSE testing.

Local authorities are responsible for the delivery of the majority of enforcement services under animal health and welfare legislation, usually through the Trading Standards Service. Each local authority has their own community priorities and pressures on funding and resources. Co-ordination of these services is provided by LACORS (Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services) to ensure the quality and consistency of regulatory services. Local authorities' principal duties include the following:

- The provision of advice and guidance
- Dealing with issues relating to livestock carcasses and animal by products disposal
- Working in partnership with the State Veterinary Service to ensure animal welfare
- The regulation of livestock movement
- Ensuring biosecurity, welfare, handling and transport at markets
- Ensuring compliance with transport welfare standards
- Working with the State Veterinary Service in the maintenance of disease control arrangements

Development of an Enforcement Strategy to underpin the animal health & welfare strategy will bring together a number of enforcement themes and protocols that exist in both central and local government.

Delivery milestones

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES	MILESTONES
A new partnership approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Strategy Steering Group with stakeholder membership • Creation of Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder Forums
A clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Disease Profile framework • Working Group to develop the Private Veterinary Role
Promotion of animal health and welfare: prevention better than cure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Practice Guides for livestock based on evidence from demo farms and local good practice • Illegal imports action plan • Creation of a Veterinary Medicines Stakeholder Group with VMD • Consultation on a Bovine TB Strategy • Continuing development of the National Scrapie Plan • Veterinary Surveillance Strategy • Working Group to look at Farm Health Planning • Creation of a central livestock register of livestock identification and tracing information
Effective delivery and enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group to review communication routes • Local veterinary inspector (LVI) review • Annual Conference to review the Strategy • Annual Report on the Strategy • Annual review of FMD Contingency Plans • Programme of regular exercises of FMD contingency plans
A clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of animal health and welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of current Disease and Welfare Baseline • Review and assessment of International Best Practice • Working Group with FSA and livestock industry on the EU Hygiene Regulations • Development of Animal Health and Welfare Indicators • Study of the Economic Benefits of Better Animal Health and Welfare • Development of Non-Livestock Strategies

Implementation plan framework

Example of the framework for GB implementation plans

Introduction			
Explanation of priorities			
<i>A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities</i>			
Activity (i)	Context (ii)	Milestones (iii)	Delivery (iv)
Catalogue of diseases	Need to clearly lay out which diseases Government intervenes in, and why.	This should be ready for inclusion in Final Strategy, to be published spring 2004.	
<i>A new partnership approach</i>			
Establish a national stakeholder forum	Need for stakeholder input into Strategy at national level. Government to facilitate.		
Establish Strategy Steering Group	Need for group to oversee long term implementation of Strategy.		
<i>Promotion of animal health and welfare: prevention better than cure</i>			
Best practice guidance	Need to improve general standards and improve access to advice		
<i>A clear understanding of costs and benefits of animal health and welfare</i>			
A study of potentially transferable international best practice.	Keepers need to see increased health and welfare standards as having a positive effect on their profitability.	This should be ready for inclusion in Final Strategy, to be published spring 2004.	
<i>Effective delivery and enforcement</i>			
Improved effectiveness and co-ordination of enforcement agencies			
Commentary on review mechanism			

(i) Activities – what is being done now / what is planned for the future?
This will include initiatives undertaken by the industry, as well as by Government.

(ii) Context - reasons for initiative, aim, who is involved (ownership), how does it relate to other work going on. Explanation of any particular problems.

(iii) How do we measure success?

(iv) How each activity will be delivered?

Notifiable diseases

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE	OIE CLASSIFICATION	SPECIES AFFECTED	DATE OF LAST OCCURENCE
African Horse sickness	A	Horses	Never
African swine Fever	A	Pigs	Never
Anthrax	B	Cattle and other mammals	2002
Aujeszky's Disease	B	Pigs and other mammals	1989
Avian Influenza (Fowl plague)	A	Poultry	1992
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy	B	Cattle	Present
Blue Tongue	A	Sheep and Goats	Never
Brucellosis (Brucella Abortus)	B	Cattle	2003
Brucellosis (Brucella Melitensis)	B	Sheep and Goats	1956
Classical Swine Fever	A	Pigs	2000
Contagious Agalactia	B	Sheep and Goats	Never
Contagious Bovine Pleuro-Pneumonia	A	Cattle	1898
Contagious Epididymitis (Brucella Ovis)	B	Sheep and Goats	Never
Contagious Equine Metritis	B	Horses	2003
Dourine	B	Horses	Never

Enzootic Bovine Leukosis	B	Cattle	1996
Epizootic Haemorrhagic Virus Disease	B	Deer	Never
Epizootic Lymphangitis	B	Horses	1906
Equine Viral Arteritis	B	Horses	1998
Equine Viral Encephalomyelitis	B	Horses	Never
Equine Infectious Anaemia	B	Horses	1976
Foot and Mouth Disease	A	Cattle, Sheep, Pigs and other cloven hoofed animals	2001
Glanders and Farcy	B	Horses	1928
Goat Pox	A	Goats	Never
Lumpy Skin Disease	A	Cattle	Never
Newcastle Disease	A	Poultry	1997
Paramyxovirus of Pigeons	-	Pigeons	Present
Pest Des Petits Ruminants	A	Sheep and Goats	Never
Rabies	B	Dogs and other mammals	1970
Rift Valley Fever	A	Cattle, Sheep and Goats	Never
Rinderpest (Cattle plague)	A	Cattle	1877
Scrapie	B	Sheep and Goats	Present
Sheep Pox	A	Sheep	1866
Swine Vesicular	A	Pigs	1982

Disease			
Teschen Disease (Porcine Enterovirus Encephalomyelitis)	B	Pigs	Never
Tuberculosis (Bovine TB)	B	Cattle and Deer	Present
Vesicular Stomatitis	A	Cattle, Pigs and Horses	Never
Warble Fly	C	Cattle, Deer and Horses	1990

* **Date of last occurrence** this refers to the last recorded date the disease occurred in GB.

OIE List A diseases

Transmissible diseases that have the potential for very serious and rapid spread, irrespective of national borders, that are of serious socio-economic or public health consequence and that are of major importance in the international trade of animals and animal products.

OIE List B diseases

Transmissible diseases that are considered to be of socio-economic and/or public health importance within countries and that are significant in the international trade of animals and animal products.

Further information on these diseases, including information on EU rules can be found on the Defra website.

Glossary

Abbreviations, Terms and Organisations

Animal health	Controlling and eradicating of diseases
Animal welfare	Protecting and improving livestock
Biosecurity	A series of measures and protocols designed to prevent potentially harmful biological agents from entering or leaving a property
Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)	A leading funding agency for academic research & training in the biosciences at universities & institutes throughout the UK
British Veterinary Association (BVA)	An independent national association representing the interests of UK veterinarians.
Communication	With directly interested parties, with consumers, and with the general public
Contingency planning and emergency preparedness	Against major exotic diseases
Control of imports	Measures to limit risks of disease incursion from legally presented animals & products of animal origin, and from illegal imports
Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO)	The Government's senior veterinary adviser located in Defra, and professional head of veterinary surgeons working within the Civil service
Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (Northern Ireland) (DARDNI)	Department within the devolved administration of Northern Ireland
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)	Created in 2001 from the former MAFF plus the environment and rural affairs policy areas from the former DETR
Disease eradication programmes	Tackling an exotic disease outbreak or measures against major endemic diseases

Department of Health	Government Department with the aim of improving the health and well-being of people in England
Economic sustainability	Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
EFRA	House of Commons, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee
Endemic disease	A disease present in an animal population in GB on a continuous basis
Environmental sustainability	Effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources
EU & international negotiation	Pursuit of UK interests in EU, OIE, WTO and other fora
Exotic disease	A contagious disease originating from countries external to GB
Facilitation & advice	Various forms of education, promulgation of “best practice”, discussion of disease with interested stakeholders
Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC)	To keep under review the welfare of farm animals on agricultural land, at market, in transit and at the place of slaughter
Financial compensation	For animals compulsorily slaughtered in disease prevention or control programmes
Food-borne pathogens	An agent that transmits/causes a disease by way of food
Food Standards Agency	Set up in 2001 as an independent agency to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food, and the interests of consumer in relation to food
Government	Refers to UK Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales

Horizon scanning	The systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely future developments, which are at the margins of current thinking and planning
Local authority	Have a wide range of statutory responsibilities in relation to reporting zoonoses and enforcing animal health and welfare legislation in England and Wales
Local Authorities Co-ordinating Office on Regulatory Services (LACORS)	Assists local authorities in the UK to improve the quality of trading standards and food
Livestock identification & tracing	Establishing and maintaining livestock ID and movement databases, for animal health and other (EU subsidy) purposes
Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVI)	Supports the work of the state veterinary service
Meat Hygiene Service	Executive agency of the FSA whose function is to safeguard public health and animal welfare
National Scrapie Plan (NSP)	A voluntary long-term plan which will initially consist of a breeding programme to increase the number of sheep that genetically are naturally resistant to Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) e.g Scrapie
Notifiable Disease	Those diseases that must by law be reported to Government
Office international des Epizooties (OIE)	Studies animal diseases and their prevention, inform member countries of the evolution of epizootic diseases and methods to combat them
Precautionary principle	An approach taken towards a disease that assumes a it may be more virulent or dangerous than it appears, until scientific evidence proves otherwise
Regulation	Establishing legal obligations (domestic, or derived from EU regulation) on livestock keepers, owners of market premises, importers, hauliers and others

Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA)	Established in 1997 to promote the highest standards of food safety, animal health & animal welfare in British livestock farming
Science Advisory Council (SAC)	Support for research programmes relating to disease, welfare (and husbandry)
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD)	Department within the devolved administration for Scotland
Social sustainability	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
State Veterinary Service (SVS)	A GB wide Government organisation operating a network of veterinary, technical and administrative staff
Sustainable Food & Farming Strategy (SFFS)	Government working in partnership with farming and the rest of the food chain as they seek to respond to the challenges of the future
Veterinary certification of exports	To facilitate exports from the UK
Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA)	Executive agency of Defra that provides all sectors of the animal health industry with animal disease surveillance, diagnostic services and veterinary scientific research.
Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)	Executive agency of Defra that promote animal welfare by ensuring the safety, quality & efficacy
Veterinary surveillance	Process of collecting information about all aspects of animal health and welfare so as to characterise diseases of animals and assess their level and distribution in order that action can be taken if necessary
Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)	The devolved administration for Wales
World Trade Organisation (WTO)	Administers WTO trade agreements provides a forum for trade negotiation, handles trade disputes and monitors national trade policies
Zoonotic disease	Diseases that can be spread between people and animals