

# BRITISH EQUINE VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

*Patron: HRH The Princess Royal*



16<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Karen McCallum-Smith  
Public Health Division  
Directorate for Chief Medical Officer and Public Health  
Room 3.EN  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Dear Madam

The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) is an independent subdivision of the British Veterinary Association, which represents over 2000 vets who work with horses in the United Kingdom and abroad. BEVA is committed to welfare of the horse and a vibrant horse industry in Scotland. We welcome the opportunity to respond the questions numbered 8 - 10, as these relate to horses entering the human food-chain.

In the wake of the horsemeat crisis, which occurred as a result of determined criminality, the issue of horse identification has come into the spotlight. Traceability of all meat, even from equine animals, is the cornerstone of food security and it is on that basis that we would support a more rigorous equine passport system in Scotland, co-ordinated by the Scottish Government, but funded and organised by the industry. Sending horses for slaughter (for human consumption) to abattoirs in England is an important part of the equine industry in Scotland, because it allows there to be an outlet for animals of low value or who have reached the end of their useful working life. Unfortunately, the current equine passport system is fundamentally flawed and is open to fraudulent activity. Because the industry cannot trust the existing system, an unnecessary financial burden is being carried by the United Kingdom government, which has had to commit to testing all equine carcasses for the presence of phenylbutazone, a medicine used commonly in horses, which has unknown consequences for human health. A more robust system of equine identification should help to ensure food safety for consumers throughout the European Union who choose to consume horsemeat and an added consequence would be a strengthened horse industry which is above reproach.

We believe that all horses in Scotland should be compulsory microchipped (not just those which are currently required to be so) and that there should be a single Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) covering all equine animals born or living in Scotland. A Scottish National Equine Database (SNED) would support this and SNED could be accessed by horse-owners

# BRITISH EQUINE VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

*Patron: HRH The Princess Royal*



and vets to ensure that only horses that are signed out of the food chain are prescribed those medicines with known or unknown health risks to humans. An added advantage of this would be to the Scottish Government, which could trace equine animals in the wake of an outbreak of an exotic disease; provide a register of premises that keep horses and help to trace owners of abandoned horses.

Enforcement of the Scottish Passport System could come under the remit of the Food Standards Agency, which would have ultimate responsibility for the safety of horsemeat and the security of food produced in Scotland, from whatever source. Recognising the importance of traceability at all stages in the food chain, we would encourage the current reviews of food safety and food standards in Scotland to consider the provision of powers in forthcoming legislation for the new Food Standards Agency for Scotland and the Local Authority enforcement officers.

Yours faithfully

**Keith J Chandler BVMS CertEP MRCVS**  
**President**