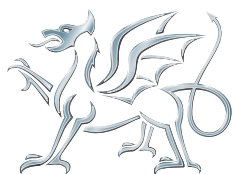


Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



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Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain

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Foreword



This Strategy has been developed for the island of Great Britain to recognise the land borders shared by England with Scotland and Wales and I am delighted that Ross and Carwyn are joining me in endorsing this work. We all have experiences to bring and to learn from in managing the challenges of animal health and welfare. The Implementation Plans for England, Scotland and Wales will allow us to demonstrate how we are taking forward the principles of the strategy, which we have developed together, in meeting the separate needs of each country.

This strategy sits alongside our Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming and provides a route map for regaining public and consumer confidence in the food we produce and the restoration of our international reputation for the highest standards of animal health and welfare. Clearly the message of the Policy Commission report that we need to reconnect consumers with food production is particularly relevant in animal health and welfare. The philosophy that disease 'prevention is better than cure' is fundamental to developing a sustainable food and farming industry. Too much of what we have done recently has been reactive and not proactive and there are real challenges ahead that we must be prepared to meet, in particular CAP reform and the new Food Hygiene regulations. Raising our game domestically can pay real dividends in minimising risk. In England there are real opportunities for the strategy to work through the network of regional interests and with local commitment.

When the Government accepted the recommendations from the Policy Commission and FMD inquiries for a more strategic approach to animal health planning, we recognised that the new approach had to be built from the bottom up. To be successful, all interested parties had to have an integral role in shaping the strategy and a sense that they had a real stake in the outcome. We have taken considerable care to build the strategy on this basis and I am particularly encouraged by the strong stakeholder consensus that has been maintained throughout this process.

We can only take the strategy forward on a partnership basis. All those with an interest in animal health and welfare have their role to play and responsibilities to fulfil. Collectively we need to take full account of the bigger picture when considering animal health and welfare issues. The way that animals are raised, their health and welfare, and the solutions that we introduce to manage disease and welfare risks can have serious implications for the rural economy, the environment and society as a whole. There are real benefits that can be achieved by improving the health and welfare of our animals; we need to work together to ensure that these benefits are achieved and that the associated costs are appropriately balanced.

Although Government has in the past focused on the health and welfare of farmed livestock, this strategy also puts the well-being of other animals and the linkages to wildlife firmly on the agenda. Our commitment is to work with all those with an interest in animal health and welfare to ensure that this strategy remains a vital and relevant driving force for change.

Margaret Beckett

Margaret Beckett



In June 2001 I launched the Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture. This recognised the significant contribution which the farming community makes to the Scottish environment, economy and society. The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy complements the Forward Strategy. It recognises the benefits which enhanced animal health and welfare can bring in supporting industry profitability, promoting Scotland's reputation for quality and for improving the welfare of animals themselves. This is a GB strategy, recognising that disease knows no boundaries and because there is much we can all learn from practice elsewhere across GB. There is much that Scotland can offer to this process. We have a well developed practice of working in partnership with stakeholders. We have a history

of innovation and we also offer a significant science base through the research being undertaken by institutes such as the Moredun and Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities. On this firm base we are well placed to take Scotland forward into an era of quality and sustainability in livestock production.

As far as disease is concerned, prevention is better than cure. Government has established tighter controls to stop illegal imports of animal products from entering the country. We have encouraged the wider use of proper standards of biosecurity. A UK Surveillance Strategy has been developed with the emphasis on partnership and dissemination of the information gathered. Where prevention is not enough, we have worked hard to make sure that the impact of disease can be minimised. Animal disease contingency plans have been developed, and exercises are now a regular event to improve readiness and help refine and improve these plans. We have promoted the need for good training and awareness of the signs of disease amongst animal keepers to identify problems at an early stage. A comprehensive review of welfare legislation is taking place, which should result in significant practical improvements in the way standards are enforced.

We have made a solid start and laid the foundations for achieving higher animal health and welfare. Through this Strategy, we hope continually to raise standards, which will yield numerous benefits for all. Initiatives such as animal health planning will help raise farm profitability, benefiting not only animals, but also the rural and wider economy. Health plans also provide an excellent opportunity to improve consumer confidence and support our reputation for quality produce. This can do nothing but help our efforts to re-establish Scottish beef in European markets when the export ban is lifted. Everybody stands to benefit from the successful delivery of the strategy, so government and all other stakeholders must take it forward in partnership. We will work to strengthen this partnership. There are many opportunities out there, so let us use the initiatives of the Strategy to seize them. The good work that is being undertaken is set out in the Scottish Implementation Plan, first published in December 2003. It sets out the broad range of work currently in place. It will be updated every year as a vehicle for raising standards and ensuring continued understanding of our objectives and discussion as to what has been achieved.



Ross Finnie



I welcome the launch of this Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. It is a welcome development. For the first time the Government is setting out its strategic aims and objectives for all animals over the next ten years. This Great Britain strategy is complementary to the Assembly Government's strategy on Farming for the Future, in particular its proposals for the introduction of farm health plans and developing a strategy for dealing with TB.

Partnerships are key to implementing the strategy which outlines respective roles and responsibilities. The development of working relationship between all partners will benefit all animals and their owners. It is important to remember the main reasons for putting this strategy in place. First, there has been concern to take action

to counter the significant impacts of animal disease which affects all parts of society. Secondly, high standards of animal health and welfare inevitably mean less risk to human health.

A great deal of time and effort has been devoted to development of this strategy and I am grateful to the efforts made by animal owners, animal welfare organisations, vets and others for their contribution to the debate. Within Wales we have had several successful conferences and meetings to discuss the development of the strategy. From these discussions it was evident that the improvement of the health and welfare of animals requires a financial investment and that there is a need to make clear the tangible benefits that will arise from these costs. In particular, expenditure on animal health and welfare will help make compliance with the new CAP and changes in the new European Unions Food and Hygiene Regulations easier.

The strategy will be delivered in Wales through the Animal Health and Welfare Implementation Plan, which will be overseen by a partnership group of stakeholders. The outline plan was published in December 2003. This is due to be updated to set out the broad range of work that is to be taken forward in Wales to improve the health and welfare of our animals. I look forward to working together in partnership to achieve the overall aims of the strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carwyn Jones', written in a cursive style.

Carwyn Jones

The potential benefits of enhanced animal health and welfare are great; for animals, their owners, society, public health and the wider rural economy. This strategy has been developed, after extensive consultation with stakeholders, to answer the call for a new approach to animal health and welfare. The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy sets out what we want to achieve over the next decade and provides a clear and strategic direction for how we will do this.

The **vision** in Chapter 2 is for a sustainable future for animal health and welfare and thus sets out where we want to be in the next 10 years. It is a strong challenge to maintain and improve animal health and welfare standards and the goals of the strategy are summarised under five strategic outcomes, which are discussed in Chapters 4 to 8.

Chapter 3 explains the **scope** of the Strategy. This strategy is concerned with animals that are for one reason or another under people's control. It encompasses the health and welfare of **farmed livestock, companion and other animals, aquaculture, and game animals**. The strategy is also concerned with **wildlife** where our actions affect their health or welfare, or where there is a risk of wildlife transmitting disease to other animals or humans.

The key theme of the Strategy, **working in partnership**, is addressed in Chapter 4. This is a strategy for all those with an interest in animal health and welfare. Government has a distinct role to play, but the effective implementation of the strategy can only be achieved if everybody works together and accepts their respective roles and responsibilities in delivering the vision.

Chapter 5 focuses on the principle that **prevention is better than cure**. Animals that are cared for appropriately and in accordance with acceptable welfare standards are more likely to be healthy, and less likely to contract or spread disease. Animal owners have a responsibility to understand and meet the health and welfare needs of their animals. In the livestock sector the prevention of disease not only improves the welfare of the animals, but can also provide economic benefits. Farm health planning is a key way in which livestock owners can improve the health and welfare of their animals and raise farm profitability. Veterinary surgeons are well placed to promote and provide farm health planning and other proactive services to improve animal health and welfare. Government is working with the veterinary profession, stakeholders and farmers to identify ways to maximise the contribution of the profession. Furthermore, well-trained stockmen are also essential to recognising the signs of disease or poor welfare at an early stage. A good foundation of knowledge already exists, and we need to work together to make sure that all animal owners have appropriate training and skills.

Chapter 6 recognises that all those with an interest in animal health and welfare must have a good **understanding and acceptance of roles and responsibilities**. Ultimately it is up to **animal owners** to make a real difference to the health and welfare of their animals. They need to consider whether they have the means, skills and knowledge to accept the responsibility that being an animal owner entails. **Veterinary surgeons** must take a more proactive role in the future. They are a vital conduit for ensuring that animal owners are adequately informed and are aware of best practice and the latest research. Many **food chain businesses** depend on the supply of live animals, and as such they have the same duty of care to those animals' health and welfare as any other animal owner. **Consumers** need to consider the implications of the choices they make in their food purchases, and retailers should facilitate this process. **Interest groups** have a role in raising awareness with policy makers and the public, but also have a responsibility to make sure the information they provide is fair and balanced. Finally, this chapter sets out the 4 reasons where it may be appropriate for government intervene: to protect public health, to protect and promote animal welfare, to protect society's interests, and to further international trade.

Ensuring a clearer understanding of costs and benefits is the focus of Chapter 7. It sets out the principles that government uses to make its decisions, and recognises that animal owners need to understand the costs and benefits of government intervention as well as their own actions to ensure effective delivery and inform their own decision making. Since everybody stands to benefit from the successful delivery of the strategy, it is not for Government alone to incur all the costs that achieving better standards of health and welfare entails. These costs should, over time, and where appropriate, be shared more fairly between those affected.

Chapter 8 discusses **delivering and enforcing standards effectively**. Government must ensure that the necessary incentives and sanctions are in place to maintain and improve animal health and welfare standards and they must be delivered appropriately. Intervention must be clearly prioritised and delivered effectively.

Chapter 9, **putting the strategy into practice**, explains how the strategy will be communicated, measured, and managed. Indicators are being developed with stakeholders and animal owners to measure the strategy's progress towards its objectives. A Steering Board, made up of Government and stakeholders and taking input from a science group, will provide strategic guidance on the priorities, communication and development of the strategy. A conference will be held to communicate progress and inform priorities. The delivery of the strategy will be shown in separate Implementation Plans for England, Scotland and Wales to reflect the circumstances of the different countries. These will be updated annually to show progress under the strategy.

Introduction

1.1 The challenge

The health and welfare of animals concerns not just animal livestock owners or Government but all of us. Disease outbreaks and the measures to control them can carry wide and costly consequences for public health, the economy and the environment. The way we treat animals is an important reflection of the values of our society. This means that we all have a stake in improving the national level of animal health and welfare. Collectively and individually there is much that we can do to secure that improvement.

The current animal health and welfare picture is in many ways neither adequate nor sustainable. We must work together to achieve standards which are not just acceptable today but which will also lay the foundation for meeting rising public demands in years to come. Over the next decade the challenges facing livestock owners and others will continue to grow. Common Agricultural Policy reform will impact on the way that animals are kept and managed. European Union legislation will extend food safety and hygiene controls to primary producers, requiring a step change in performance. The challenges, and the opportunities accompanying them, are great. This strategy, based on extensive consultation and dialogue with stakeholders, sets out the principles and good practice which can guide us as we seek to move forward together.

This strategy aims to:

Develop a new partnership in which we can make a lasting and continuous improvement in the health and welfare of kept animals while protecting society, the economy, and the environment from the effect of animal diseases.

There must be a marked change in the way that the livestock industry manages risks to the health and welfare of farmed animals and copes with the consequences of disease outbreaks. If the industry is to achieve a sustainable future it will need to alter its practices and culture. Taxpayers cannot be expected to foot the bill when the industry's own practices lay it open to disease threats. The challenge is nothing less than regaining full public confidence in the way animal owners¹, the veterinary profession and the Government manage animal health risks.

¹ Throughout this strategy we have for simplicity used the term "animal owner", but the principles and practices described also apply to those who care for or keep animals but do not own them.

Chapter 1

The following are examples of current animal health and welfare problems²

In 2003 there were 1,610 confirmed bovine TB incidents compared with 720 in 1998.

In 1999-2000, a survey of pigs before slaughter showed that about 23% were infected with Salmonella.³

In 2003, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency and the Scottish Agricultural College confirmed 744 cases of Fascioliasis (Liver Fluke) in cattle compared with 196 in 1998.

In 2003, out of 4,964 farm inspections carried out by the State Veterinary Service, 1,431 (28%) failed to comply with statutory welfare legislation⁴.

Protection of public health is the paramount issue underlying animal health policy, but society also has real concerns about the treatment of animals and the protection of the environment. With all these concerns in mind, this strategy challenges the culture and attitudes surrounding the care of all animals. It is concerned not just with farmed livestock but with the care of our growing and diverse companion animal population, with the use of animals in recreation and entertainment and with protection of our wildlife. The primary responsibility for the health and welfare of animals rest with their owners. This strategy calls for an enhanced level of skills and knowledge among all who have responsibilities for animals. There are some excellent examples of imaginative and pro-active best practice in animal care and disease prevention. All animal owners need to learn from those examples and contribute to a national advance in our animal health and welfare record.

“If the animal health and welfare strategy is not ambitious it will not be worth signing up to.”

EFRA Select Committee, Report on Vets and Veterinary Services, Session 2002-03

In the past, the roles and responsibilities of Government, industry and animal owners have been based on a set of assumptions which have not consistently enabled us to work well together. We have seen the sometimes devastating consequences of the breakdown of collaborative working. This strategy does not provide a magic wand to solve all the problems affecting the health and welfare of our animals. But it sets a framework and direction for a partnership between all of us who have the capacity or the responsibility to influence the health and welfare of animals. Such a partnership is crucial if we are to ensure that the continually evolving threats to animal health and welfare are effectively identified, assessed and acted upon. We hope that all who read this strategy will rise to the challenge with enthusiasm, dedication and shared commitment.

² For further examples please see the Evidence Base published alongside this strategy.

³ A joint Defra and Meat and Livestock Commission survey.

⁴ The majority of these are in response to complaints.

1.2 Strategy for Great Britain

The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Scottish Executive, and the Welsh Assembly Government have developed this strategy together. Throughout this document “Government” refers to the UK Government and to the Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales. A separate but complementary strategy for animal health and welfare will be introduced in Northern Ireland, which retains important links with the Republic of Ireland for disease control purposes.

Although implementation of Government responsibilities under the strategy is a matter for the respective Departments, Great Britain is a single epidemiological unit for many major diseases and close co-operation and the sharing of best practice is essential in disease control. The principles and policies for a sustainable future for animal health and welfare set out in this strategy will be used by Government in policy development and implementation. It is also essential that both Government and industry are at the forefront of negotiations with our European Union partners to ensure that Directives or Regulations are soundly based and represent a proportionate solution.

1.3 Sustainable development

This strategy does not exist in isolation. It complements and takes forward other strategies⁵ to support a sustainable agricultural sector and is crucial to the protection of public health and food safety. The health and welfare of farmed animals makes a major contribution to the sustainability of the livestock sector, to the wider farming and food industry, and more broadly to the countryside, rural communities and the rural economy. Achieving sustainability requires Government and industry to examine economic, environmental and social impacts and risks, and to look for solutions which deliver long-term benefits in an integrated way across all three areas. This strategy will play a major part in achieving a sustainable future for the British farming industry by defining roles and responsibilities, providing a more balanced framework for cost sharing, and developing a better understanding of the costs of animal health and welfare.

⁵ Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (Defra), Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture (Scottish Executive), Farming for the Future (Welsh Assembly Government).

Vision for the future

This vision inspires the strategy and represents where we want to be in ten years.

Animals in Great Britain kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos are healthy and treated humanely.

Our disease status is amongst the highest in the world, and we are able to trade our animals and animal products internationally.

The costs of livestock health and welfare are appropriately balanced between industry, and the taxpayer.

All disease emergencies are dealt with swiftly and effectively using an agreed approach.

Consumers value the confidence they have in food produced safely from healthy animals that are well cared for. Consumers and retailers accept that higher standards of animal health and welfare are not cost free.

Livestock keeping is part of a competitive British farming industry which succeeds by meeting the needs of consumers at home and abroad, producing food safely and to high standards of health and welfare.

We have identified the following strategic outcomes in the strategy which together will bring about our vision.

Working in partnership

Good communication and strong relationships between Government, its delivery agents, stakeholders and customers, mean that information and ideas are shared, activities and priorities are agreed and reviewed in partnership.

Government acts as a facilitator ensuring that activities and services are joined up, so that the relationship between all those responsible for the delivery of animal health and welfare is strengthened.

Promoting the benefits of animal health and welfare: prevention is better than cure

Animal owners can see the direct benefit of actively developing and using animal health and welfare plans.

Policies propose proportionate and balanced solutions based on risk and the implications for the environment, economy and society.

All animal owners have the necessary skills to exercise good practice, and veterinary services and medicines are available and responsibly used.

There is horizon scanning for new animal health and welfare threats, an active programme of veterinary surveillance and veterinary research and programmes to prevent imported disease.

Potential threats to animal welfare such as new biotechnology, novel husbandry systems and newly farmed species and genotypes are identified, assessed and effectively managed.

Ensuring a clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of animal health and welfare practices

The reasons for Government intervention are clear, justified, based on sound scientific evidence, and informed by real public wants and concerns.

Animal owners appreciate the wider impacts of animal husbandry methods on health and welfare, natural resources, biodiversity, the wider rural economy and the environment.

Understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities

Animal owners, Government and the general public have a clear understanding of the importance of animal health and welfare and where responsibilities lie.

Animal owners understand and accept personal responsibility for the standard of health and welfare of the animals in their care.

Individuals accept personal responsibility for their role in animal health and welfare and act accordingly when on farmland, respecting disease prevention and biosecurity practices and the British countryside and wildlife.

Delivering and enforcing animal health and welfare standards effectively

Practical, evidence-based information and advice is available to assist animal owners maintain high standards of animal health and welfare.

Up-to-date and tested contingency plans are in place and all emergencies are dealt with effectively using an agreed approach.

How these strategic outcomes will be delivered is shown in the Implementation Plans for England, Scotland and Wales, which reflect the different priorities and institutional structures in each country. The plans explain why Government intervenes in the way that it does in a particular area, what activities are being carried out, by when and who delivers them.

Scope

This strategy is concerned with animals which are, for one reason or another, under people's control. It does not address angling, shooting for sport, hunting or use of animals in research.

The vision for this strategy calls for individuals to understand and accept the duty they have to provide an acceptable standard of health and welfare for the animals in their care. There are different definitions of what is meant by animal health and welfare. For the purposes of this strategy we are concerned with:

Freedom from disease or abnormality, and the state of well being brought about by meeting the physical, environmental, nutritional, behavioural and social needs of the animal or groups of animals.

3.1 Animal welfare

The welfare of any animal is dependent on the overall combination of various factors which contribute to both its physical and mental state. The Farm Animal Welfare Council is Government's independent advisory body on animal welfare and advocates addressing welfare in terms of ideals, which it has called the Five Freedoms:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst;
- Freedom from discomfort;
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease;
- Freedom to express normal behaviour; and
- Freedom from fear and distress.

This strategy is not simply concerned with ensuring the absence of cruelty and disease. Quite often problems are caused by complacency, lack of skills or knowledge, or a failure to treat animals humanely and as sentient beings for which we have an ethical responsibility. Anyone who takes ownership of an animal, whether for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment or zoos, has a duty of care to meet acceptable animal health and welfare standards.

3.2 Farmed livestock

The strategy applies to all farmed livestock including beef and dairy cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry (including egg production), and all other animals reared for food, breeding or other animal products, such as fleece or hides. Society's concerns include the welfare of these animals, their interactions with human health through the food chain or direct contact, and the far-reaching economic and environmental consequences of animal disease.

But the strategy also extends beyond the traditional farming sector. Animals which were traditionally reared for food are increasingly being kept as companion animals. These animals are included within the scope of this strategy, not only in respect of their own health and welfare but also because of their potential role in the spread of disease direct to humans, farmed livestock and wildlife.

3.3 Companion and other animals

This strategy applies to dogs, cats, horses and other animals (including exotic species) kept by people, whether as companions or in zoos or various working or recreational contexts. As well as caring for the welfare of these animals we must also have regard to the risk they may pose as transmitters of diseases to humans and farmed livestock and the risk of disease transfers to and from wildlife.

These animals are often well cared for and enjoy good standards of veterinary attention and welfare. However, this is not always the case. Owners have a responsibility to consider whether they can maintain adequate standards of health and welfare and recognise that doing so will involve a financial cost that they must meet.

3.4 Aquaculture

About 70 million salmon and trout are farmed in the UK each year making farmed fish the second largest livestock sector after poultry. This strategy in relation to aquaculture covers the hatching and rearing of fish and shellfish not only for food but also for sale in the ornamental trade for eventual release into stocked fisheries. This sector raises important issues for the protection of public health, the protection of the wider aquatic environment and the promotion of fish health and welfare. Although fish diseases are not communicable to humans, shellfish, in particular, can carry bacteria and biotoxins which are potentially injurious and even fatal. Given the nature of the environment in which fish are farmed, aquaculture has the potential to adversely affect fish in the wild, not only by spreading disease but also by interfering with the genetic make-up of wild stocks. Also the controlled environments in which naturally wild fish species are farmed have major implications on their welfare.

3.5 Game

This strategy extends to the game sector which lies – in animal health and welfare terms – between farmed livestock and wildlife. Game animals are often bred for recreational purposes which are an important component of many rural economies. This sector includes birds which are initially reared in captivity and then released for sporting purposes, as well as, birds and animals such as deer which are not captive, but whose health and welfare may be influenced by land management practices. This strategy extends to game, in recognition both of the attention which land managers and gamekeepers need to apply to animal health and welfare and to reflect the game sector's connections with the food chain.

3.6 Wildlife

The part which the strategy plays in relation to animals in the wild is rather different from its role toward domesticated or farmed animals. Although wildlife is not generally “kept” by people, there is strong public concern about numbers and habitats. This concern encompasses wider issues including the impact of pollution on them, the availability of suitable food, pest control and scientific research. This broader stewardship of wildlife and the specific policy on conservation and biodiversity lies outside the scope of this strategy and is managed as part of Government’s broader remit for the environment. Nonetheless, these issues overlap with aspects of health and welfare where the strategy does have a legitimate role to play:

- where there is a risk of zoonotic diseases being transmitted to man, either directly or via vectors, for example, rabies from bats.
- where wildlife populations may pass on, harbour or recycle diseases of farmed livestock, for example classical swine fever in wild boar, bovine tuberculosis in badgers and avian influenza in migrating birds.
- where certain welfare issues arise involving protection from cruelty or the role of rehabilitation and rescue centres.
- where disease controls for farmed livestock and other animals affect wildlife.

The wide range of factors that can have an impact on wildlife and need to be considered include climate change, which could potentially affect wildlife and insect populations, in turn affecting the distribution of disease vectors. The inter-relationship between wildlife and other animals is an important risk factor for changes in disease distribution. The development of the Veterinary Surveillance Strategy, which will collect information from many animal populations, will improve our knowledge in these areas and help identify areas for further research.

Working in partnership

4.1 Co-operation and collaboration

It is fundamental to a successful collaboration that all those involved contribute to and benefit from the partnership. So much more can be achieved through collaboration and co-operation. For example, a positive approach to sharing information through the new Veterinary Surveillance Strategy will enable new and emerging trends to be identified, helping prioritise disease prevention measures. This is something no individual partner could achieve on its own. Such initiatives should identify who is best placed to influence change and what information, knowledge, skills or messages are needed to address the problem.

Veterinary Surveillance Strategy

Veterinary Surveillance is an example of how working in partnership can deliver substantive collective benefits. Surveillance partners from across industry, academia, Government and a disparate range of other interests are working together to deliver on the shared strategic goals outlined in the Veterinary Surveillance Strategy. A partnership framework will facilitate the collation of a wide variety of data and the sharing of quality-flagged information.

An information management system, RADAR (Rapid Analysis and Detection of Animal related Risk) will collate data from multiple sources. RADAR will facilitate better dissemination of surveillance information which will be an invaluable tool for animal owners and their veterinary advisors, as well as, Government. A prioritisation system based on disease and welfare profiles will allow Government, vets and animal owners to make better informed decisions about where best to assign resources to manage animal health and welfare risks.

Contingency Planning

Contingency planning for exotic disease depends on Government working in close partnership with all those who would be involved in controlling an outbreak, including local authorities, police forces, farmers and other members of the rural community. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of all operational partners and stakeholders contributes significantly to successful operations. To this end Contingency Plans for diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease and for Avian influenza and Newcastle Disease are reviewed with stakeholders annually and are always available on Departmental websites; detailed veterinary, technical and administrative instructions are also publicly available. The involvement of operational partners and other stakeholders in exercises is helping to ensure that all partners would be able to contribute fully to achieving common goals.

The principle of partnership is not limited to a working relationship with Government. Animal owners and veterinary surgeons must work together to identify common problems, priorities and solutions and to share best practice. Groups with a common interest such as farmers, vets and retailers need to work together to achieve shared goals of, for example, better produce from thriving stock.

Veterinary Medicines: RUMA

Animal owners need to have access to the medicines needed to treat disease in their animals. However, they also need to have the knowledge required to ensure the responsible use of these medicines in sustainable livestock systems. Vets and animal owners must ensure that medicines are used and disposed of in accordance with acceptable standards.

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) is an example of stakeholders working in partnership to improve standards of practice. It is open to all interested organisations and aims to promote the highest standards of food safety and animal health and welfare in British livestock farming. RUMA formulates comprehensive guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in livestock production giving advice on all aspects from administration and the responsibilities of the owner and vets to strategies for reduced usage.

Representative organisations and individuals have already made valuable contributions to developing this strategy. They will continue to have an even more important role in delivering it. When a new policy is being considered Government will engage with all those affected, including wider rural and environmental interests, to ensure that all views are heard and a balance between the interests of society, the environment and economy is achieved. By being fully involved people will have greater confidence that the most appropriate policy and delivery decisions are being taken and that the burden of cost on all parties is recognised and kept to a minimum.

The Genesis Faraday Partnership

The Genesis Faraday Partnership (GFP) is committed to improving the interaction between the research community, intermediate organisations and the animal health and breeding industries. Its purpose is to ensure the optimal use of the opportunities presented by the expansion in knowledge of animal genetics to enable a more sustainable livestock industry with improved animal health and welfare, efficient animal production and thriving livestock breeding and animal health companies.

To achieve this GFP promotes and co-ordinates research, assists with technology transfer and organises and promotes relevant training activities.

The GFP is supported by the Scottish Executive, Defra, DTI, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the EU. Its membership comprises over 70 academic, industrial (breeding and pharmaceutical) and intermediate organisations (levy boards and agricultural organisations).

National Equine Database

Government is working in partnership with the equine industry to establish a National Equine Database to help implement the requirements for horse passports, and for disease control and veterinary surveillance. It will also help to provide Government with a more accurate knowledge of the numbers of horses in the country. This can be used as part of an overall strategy for the horse, and their role in the rural economy. The database will be used by industry to record breeding and performance data to help improve the breeding of horses.

4.2 Recognition of responsibility

All those with an interest in animal health and welfare must accept personal responsibility for making this strategy work. Disease recognises no land boundaries and Government works with a range of partners and stakeholders to prevent and contain the spread of exotic diseases. Measures to counter illegal imports, contingency planning to control disease outbreaks, and surveillance are all vital links in this chain. But all animal owners must practise biosecurity standards and monitor the health of their animals to ensure that the spread of exotic diseases is contained as well as protecting against endemic disease. Countryside users must respect the disease prevention measures used by farmers. Companion animal owners need to monitor the health of their animals and ensure they do not harm or interfere with livestock. Furthermore, animal owners must ensure that they provide at least the minimum acceptable standards of care for all their animals, even though a case of poor welfare does not spread to other animals like an infection, the knowledge that it occurs is of concern to society.

Illegal Imports

Significant progress has been made through the Government's illegal imports action plan. The effectiveness of border controls has been strengthened by the transfer of responsibility for anti-smuggling activity to HM Customs and Excise. Government has commissioned assessments into the risks of exotic disease entering GB from illegal imports to help inform our activity. Government has worked to increase public awareness of the restrictions and the reasons for them, which apply to the importation of animal products for personal consumption. This will be developed further, in association with stakeholders, to communicate to all communities living in and travelling to the UK.

Zoonoses Action Plan

The Zoonoses Action Plan (ZAP) Salmonella Programme was launched by the British Pig Executive and the Meat and Livestock Commission in June 2002. The objective of the programme is to monitor trends in the levels of salmonella on pig farms so that action can be taken to reduce the prevalence of salmonella in pigs presented at abattoirs. The programme is being funded by the industry with support from the Food Standards Agency and Defra.

Pet Travel Scheme

UK quarantine requirements protect both humans and animals against the introduction of rabies and other exotic diseases into the UK. The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) allows exemption from quarantine requirements for cats and dogs visiting or from certain countries, subject to compliance with specified conditions. PETS provides protective measures for companion animals by requiring treatments to avoid the risk of importing rabies and other exotic diseases.

Promoting the benefits of animal health and welfare: prevention is better than cure

The strategic outcome “prevention is better than cure” speaks for itself; animals that are cared for appropriately and in accordance with existing welfare standards are more likely to be healthy, and less likely to contract or spread disease. It is therefore essential for all animal owners to have the necessary skills to care for their animals, exercising good practice and using veterinary services and medicines appropriately.

In the livestock industry minimising disease and welfare impacts through good husbandry should maximise profitability and help maintain rural sustainability. Each year, the industry culls large numbers of livestock animals due to poor health and loss of productivity. This should be unnecessary and unacceptable and is an unsustainable approach to rearing livestock. The control of notifiable disease often requires the compulsory slaughter of animals to eradicate or control the spread of disease. This is disruptive to the industry and costly both to the rural economy and the taxpayer.

Fit and healthy animals which are appropriately cared for are likely to be higher yielding or remain productive over a longer period of time. They can also be more profitable, particularly if they can be sold with certification to demonstrate freedom from certain diseases or compliance with certain welfare standards. High standards of animal health and welfare may also help reduce the need for medicines such as anti-microbials, reducing production costs. It is therefore in the interests of farmers and vets to improve livestock management practices.

5.1 Animal Health Planning and promotion of best practice

Livestock owners can improve the health and welfare of their animals through animal health planning. This involves:

- identification of risks of introduction and spread of disease and infections;
- early recognition of disease; and
- prioritising measures to control any existing problems and manage risks, including the responsible use of medicines.

Significant health and welfare benefits may be realised through simple and inexpensive modifications to housing and husbandry systems, including:

- preventing the introduction of endemic diseases or zoonoses and thus improving the productivity of the overall herd or flock; and
- slowing or minimising the spread of disease from one farm to another during an exotic disease outbreak.

Whilst some of the essential elements of farm health and welfare plans are laid down in the codes of recommendation for the welfare of livestock, Government is working with stakeholders to develop a common understanding of animal health planning and good practice in disease prevention. This is just one part of the Government’s role as facilitator to help identify best practice and encourage its use in partnership with industry.

HI Health Scheme

HI Health, managed by the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) on behalf of a farmer led board with input from practising veterinary surgeons, is a good example of a partnership approach towards Animal Health Planning. HI Health has two levels of participation. All members participate at Level One. HI Health Level One requires one veterinary visit per year to advise on herd health including biosecurity measures, such as a strategy for buying in stock, and preventative management to control diseases of importance to that particular farm. This standardised approach to health planning has additional advantages. Information is collected at the visit on the incidence of endemic diseases and is fed back to farmers so that they can benchmark their enterprises against others. It is planned to expand the activity in such a way as to produce disease surveillance information of national benefit.

HI Health Level Two gives the option of adding on health schemes to control, eradicate or confirm freedom from specific diseases such as Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD), Johne's diseases or Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR). Level Two is managed by SAC Veterinary Services in partnership with veterinary surgeons in practice and has been adapted to allow whole island eradication to be put in place as well as catering for individual herds.

Welsh Black Cattle Society's Herd Health Programme

The Welsh Black Cattle Society's Herd Health Programme has been developed with the aim of improving health standards within participating herds, leading to certification of freedom from certain diseases of international importance such as Johne's disease, BVD, Leptospira, and IBR.

5.2 Veterinary promotion of animal health and welfare

Vets are trusted by animal owners as a source of practical and reliable advice. This means vets are uniquely placed to help promote animal health and welfare and advise animal owners in disease prevention. Vets should be at the forefront of the development and delivery of specialised and proactive services such as animal health planning. There are encouraging developments with some practices and veterinary organisations taking the lead. However, if the large-animal part of the veterinary profession is to have a sustainable future, a broader culture change is needed. Government is exploring with the veterinary profession and livestock owners how this can best be achieved.

Working Group on vets and veterinary services

Government has set up a working group to assist in responding to the recommendations and conclusions of the House of Commons EFRA Committee report on vets and veterinary services. The group consists of representatives of the veterinary profession, animal welfare organisations, the farming industry, and Government officials. A consultation exercise on the EFRA report will also inform the Government's response.

This strategy has been able to benefit from the working group discussions which have considered the wider issues facing the veterinary profession. The impact of these issues on the longer-term future of the profession, particularly on the training needs for future vets and the market for their services, will feed in to the Implementation Plans flowing from this strategy.

5.3 Training and skills

Animal owners have a responsibility to understand and meet their animals' needs. There are already legal requirements in some cases for those who care for animals (for example livestock hauliers and market operators) to show that they are competent. The competence of animal owners will be considered in forthcoming legislation, for example, on animal welfare.

Animal Welfare Legislation

The new Animal Welfare Bill in England and Wales and Animal Health and Welfare Bill in Scotland will apply to all animals kept by man for whatever purpose, including companion animals. There will be a duty on all people keeping or responsible for animals not only to avoid cruelty but also to provide for the welfare needs of their animals. For the first time, companion animal owners will have a duty of care towards those animals. The responsibility will be firmly on the animal owner to make sure that they know about and understand their animals needs and to ensure that they are provided for. A casual or inadequate approach to animals will not be accepted, either under this strategy or the new legislation. The legislation is intended to provide enabling powers for secondary legislation which in due course can regulate such diverse activities as animal sanctuaries, livery yards, performing animals and greyhound racing. People who run commercial establishments housing or selling animals, may be required to obtain minimum qualifications.

Skills of trained stockmen are vital in maintaining health and welfare and in identifying and managing disease and welfare problems at an early stage. Many animal owners are already highly skilled and the importance of these skills should be recognised and valued. The knowledge and skills that already exist in the livestock industry is a valuable resource and opportunities to network and share experiences should be encouraged. Government will work with farmer groups and colleges to promote this approach to training.

Livestock owners need ready access to training and advice to develop their existing skills further to move towards providing higher standards of animal health and welfare. As we champion and promote animal health and welfare planning the demand for training and advice will increase. Training advisors must be prepared to meet that challenge.

Biosecurity Training Module

The Scottish Executive, Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) have developed a Biosecurity and Animal Health Planning Higher National qualification. This is a stand-alone module which can be delivered by higher and further education institutes/colleges and is a nationally recognised award accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The focus of the module is to make candidates aware of the importance of biosecurity in reducing the risk of disease occurring or spreading to other animals. The module highlights to candidates the effect that exotic and endemic diseases can have on business productivity. Pilot studies of the module are being run at each of the Scottish Agricultural College Campuses during the 2004/2005 academic period. These studies will take the form of on-farm practicals, allowing candidates to put theory into practice in the context of making practical recommendations for a biosecurity policy within a commercial farming environment.

As mentioned above, vets play a crucial role in providing advice and expertise to animal owners. They can train owners to identify health and welfare problems, prevent routine illnesses and deal with minor ailments. This in turn allows vets to concentrate more on the proactive and business support aspects of health and welfare planning thus helping owners raise their game. The veterinary profession needs to identify gaps and to develop new skills to meet this opportunity.

Dissemination of Research

A review is under way by Government with research establishments and stakeholders into the dissemination of research results. The aim is to ensure that vets and colleges have the most up-to-date information enabling effective knowledge transfer of good and best practice to livestock owners. If we are to encourage continuous improvement, high quality practical advice and guidance must be available in a form owners can readily use.

The Moredun Foundation

The Moredun Foundation (MF) is a charity committed to improving animal health and welfare through research and education. The MF supports research initiatives at the Moredun Research Institute that advance disease control methods and improves husbandry.

The MF communicates best practice and the latest scientific developments on disease control via a range of mechanisms, including a variety of technical animal health newsheets and industry magazines, and presentations by Moredun vets and scientists at a range of free meetings with farmers and vets (often in association with the National Sheep Association). The continuous contact with the farming community ensures that Moredun's research remains rooted in the practical aspects of disease control.

Moredun's work has had a national impact on livestock disease including identification of the cause of 18 diseases, characterisation of the pathogenesis of 23 diseases, development of 12 vaccines of which 8 are marketed, implementation strategies for 12 diseases and provision of surveillance for 36 diseases.

Understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities

6.1 Animal owners

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

Stakeholder comment during consultation meeting

All owners are responsible for the health and welfare of the animals in their care and need to understand and provide for their physical and welfare needs. They need to consider whether they have the means, skills and knowledge to accept the duty of care that being an animal owner entails. They should be able to recognise the signs of illness or disease and should know which diseases are notifiable and have to be reported to Government. All animal owners have a responsibility to be vigilant, report any suspicion of disease and maintain good disease prevention and control (biosecurity) practices, including compliance with regulations.

Animal owners have a responsibility to

- maintain healthy animals;
- maintain appropriate levels of animal welfare through compliance with welfare codes;
- prevent and control endemic diseases;
- recognise symptoms of any notifiable disease that affects their animal(s) and report the appearance of such symptoms;
- ensure their skills and competence levels are appropriate; and
- employ private veterinarians as necessary.

Most animal owners will recognise the above responsibilities and want to play their part in protecting their animals and their businesses. The challenge for them is to consider carefully with their veterinary advisers how this can best be done. If animal owners for any reason cannot provide basic levels of care for their animals, then they need to consider carefully whether they should remain responsible for keeping animals.

If animal owners operate businesses with little or no regard to their responsibilities, then they should not keep animals, and the Government will consider sanctions against those who abuse their privileged position. In the future this could possibly involve permits or licensing and the withdrawal of permission to keep animals.

The owners of livestock must accept their individual and collective responsibility to meet the cost of measures from which they directly benefit. They also have a financial responsibility for any harm inflicted on the wider public good as a consequence of their practices. However, whilst these principles apply it is also appropriate for the taxpayer to share in the costs of measures proportionate to the public benefit gained.

Owners should understand and provide for the health and welfare needs of the animals in their care, particularly if the animals have very specific needs, such as horses and exotic pets. Most companion animal owners accept their responsibility for maintaining the health and welfare of their animals, consulting veterinary practices for diagnosis and treatment as necessary. But, as with other animal owners this is not always the case. There is, for example, a trend towards keeping more exotic pets, with owners too frequently not appreciating the level of responsibility involved and failing to understand the animals' needs and the risks to animal and public health. Government has undertaken to communicate and enforce these responsibilities.

6.2 The role of vets

Veterinarians are trained to be alert for signs of disease and welfare problems. As we have said in Chapter 5, vets are uniquely placed to help animal owners adapt to their changing responsibilities and adopt new practices. The role of vets has traditionally focused on the treatment of diseases, and this is still a crucial aspect of their responsibilities. However, there needs to be a culture change in the way vets operate. There needs to be a shift in focus towards services which prevent disease, such as farm health planning, with greater provision of specialised advice as well as advising animal owners on how to meet the behavioural and other needs that underlie good animal welfare. Vets are vital in the education of animal owners by providing information on the latest research and best practice. Vets and vet practices need to ensure that they have the skills and competencies to offer these services and are up-to-date with the latest thinking and best practice.

They should also be prepared to support the veterinary surveillance strategy and other locally run initiatives to share information on current levels of disease and welfare problems. They must also ensure that the veterinary medicines they administer are authorised products and that they are used appropriately and so do not leave unacceptable residues in food. Government will strengthen its contacts with local veterinary practice beyond the already well-established links with Local Veterinary Inspectors to maximise the contribution of the profession at both national and local level.

Veterinarians employed by Government provide advice to Ministers and help develop and implement evidence-based policy. They develop scientific and epidemiological tools for preventing and controlling disease. They also undertake disease surveillance and enforcement through the State Veterinary Service and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency on the farm, and the Meat Hygiene Agency at the slaughterhouse. They work on the assessment of veterinary medicines prior to authorisation.

6.3 Food chain related businesses or services and consumers

A large group of businesses and services beyond the farm, covering auction markets, farm assurance schemes, hauliers, abattoirs, feed manufacturers, processors, veterinary pharmaceutical companies and retailers, have a range of interests in animal health and welfare. Some temporarily keep or handle live animals as part of their business, and must therefore meet health and welfare standards when the animals are in their care. Those that provide feed must ensure it is of suitable quality so that it will maintain the health and welfare of animals and not adversely affect the environment.

Consumers have fundamental expectations about acceptable levels of animal health, the safety of the food they eat, and that standards of animal welfare appropriate to a modern society have been met. Those further up the food chain who are in direct contact with the consumer have a role to play in ensuring safety and raising awareness of these standards. Retailers and their customers can specifically support and reward farmers who invest in standards of animal health and welfare that exceeds the acceptable norm. However, it remains to be seen to what extent some consumers are willing to pay for these higher levels of animal welfare and market developments over time will reveal this. The RSCPA's Farm Assurance and Food Labelling Scheme – Freedom Food – and the labelling and marketing of free-range eggs are specific examples where the consumer is being provided with an opportunity to choose to purchase products perceived to meet a higher alternative animal welfare specification. Defra's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food identifies the reconnection of all the elements of the food chain and in particular farmers with their markets as a key priority.

6.4 Welfare and other animal interest groups

Interest groups have an important role to play in developing animal health and welfare policies and ensuring the right balance of priorities. There are a number of organisations that take an active interest in standards of welfare for animals and other aspects of animal health. This includes organisations which represent animals, such as horses, used in recreation and leisure industries. These groups can raise awareness and actively influence public opinion and the setting and observance of animal health and welfare standards.

6.5 Countryside interest groups, users and managers

Rural and environmental groups help us develop our understanding of the wider needs of land-based and rural businesses, and the needs of local communities. Farming practices and disease control measures can have an impact, positive or negative, on the environment. Rural and environmental interest groups raise awareness of the impact of animal husbandry practices on the countryside and the environment at large and maintain pressure to bring about changes in behaviour when necessary.

Interest groups, however, should also accurately inform and influence the activities of their own members. Some animal owners, for example, feel agriculture and the role of farmers are not properly understood. Everyone who visits farmland and the countryside has a responsibility to respect disease prevention and animal husbandry measures being used by the farmer, and follow the Countryside Code or the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. They have a responsibility not to dispose of food or other rubbish in the countryside and in particular not to feed, handle or otherwise disturb the animals with which they come into contact.

Gamekeepers and landowners also have an important role in the surveillance of animal diseases in wildlife and have a responsibility for the welfare of the wild animals affected by their activities.

6.6 The role of Government: the reasons for intervention

Government intervenes in animal health and welfare for four reasons where the market on its own cannot deliver some or all of the objectives.

Understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities

(i) To protect human health

“Zoonotic” diseases are those which are transmissible between vertebrate animals and man. These zoonoses, such as Salmonellosis, can come from direct contact with an animal or from eating infected meat or other animal products. Government interventions are intended to protect the health of the public.

(ii) To protect and promote the welfare of animals

Society cares about the welfare of animals as sentient creatures. Individuals and organisations argue on various principled grounds for yet higher standards of animal welfare. It is the role of Government to establish levels of welfare on behalf of society and enforce those standards.

(iii) To protect the interests of the wider economy, environment and society

Some animal diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease are highly infectious and can move extensively or rapidly through animal populations. In livestock and aquaculture the implications of these diseases appearing on individual premises run well beyond the commercial interests of that single person or business. In these cases Government will work with animal owners to establish measures which prevent, control and eradicate disease.

(iv) International Trade

The presence of animal disease, either at the national or regional level, can reduce our ability to trade. The EU and OIE operate trade rule systems that help to reduce the risk of animals or animal products spreading disease. In order to trade without restrictions, countries must maintain disease free status for notifiable diseases. Government is best placed to represent interests internationally ensuring sustainable opportunities for trade.

Government will use these reasons as the starting point for any considerations as to whether intervention should take place. It is the role of Government to balance these interests and resolve them to the greatest advantage of all those affected.

Government has a range of measures available to it including direct intervention such as regulation and indirect intervention such economic incentives e.g. taxation, charging and subsidies. However, Government also seeks to encourage and persuade industry, stakeholders and individuals to change practices and aspire to adopt higher standards of animal health and welfare. This can be achieved by co-ordinating research into animal health and welfare, providing information and knowledge, influencing training and advice mechanisms and promoting the development of best practice within industry. Although Government can take a lead in these areas stakeholders, industry and customers should actively use the information and options provided and bring about necessary change.

Ensuring a clearer understanding of costs and benefits

Preventing animal diseases has obvious welfare benefits as well as being cost effective. All animal owners must play their part in preventing disease but to make sure this happens the costs and benefits involved need to be clearly understood.

7.1 Principles of Government decision making

The following principles for Government decision-making will be used when considering future policies.

All Government decisions on animal health and welfare will:

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

Science

Science is both a driver for policy responses and forms part of the evidence base for ensuring that policy options can be effectively determined. Assessing and providing the science capability is, however, quite complex because of the breadth, depth and sometimes speed with which it is required to deliver. Thus Government requires a science base that gives expertise that can be trusted, but which is flexible and responsive to the varying demands that may be placed upon it. This science base ensures that animal health and welfare policy is based on sound scientific evidence which will lead to improved public delivery of Government policies.

There are always competing calls for the use of public resources, and a wide range of interests in society who will be affected, positively or negatively, by Government action. It is the role of Government, in consultation with those potentially affected and wider public interests, to seek proportionate interventions which strike the right balance on behalf of society.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

A Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) was produced to cost the introduction of new EU proposals for the management of sheep and goats. The RIA indicated that if a manual system recording individual animal was introduced as proposed by the Commission additional costs to the UK sheep and goat industry would be in the region of £89 million. This estimate was effectively used by officials, industry and the European Parliament to lobby the Council to reconsider the Commission's original proposals. Significantly revised proposals that improve identification and tracing arrangements, but which place a far smaller burden on the sheep and goat industry, were adopted at the December 2003 Agriculture Council.

7.2 Understanding costs and benefits

Understanding the costs and benefits of any Government decision is essential for intervention to be implemented effectively. Government and all those affected need to understand clearly why the steps have been taken. A new regulation, for example, will be delivered most successfully if the reasons why it is needed and its requirements are known.

- Government has invested £11.5 million since July 2001 in support of the National Scrapie Plan, with a further £10.5 million over three years committed by the Welsh Assembly Government to extend the plan in Wales.
- Government spent £74 million in 2002/03 on the TB control programme.
- In 2001/2002 spend on animal disease compensation totalled £1,086 million.
- Mastitis results in a loss per year of between £137 and £244 million to the dairy industry (Reading University).

A clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of Government intervention is only one part of this strategic outcome. Animal owners also need to understand the cost and benefits of their own actions, particularly to inform their own decision making. So the costs and benefits of any health and welfare measures need to be established if best practice is to be understood, accepted and adopted. Government is often best placed to promote the development of best practice within industry, and co-ordinate research into animal health and welfare. Livestock owners are more likely to adopt higher standards if practical information relevant to their circumstances is provided that clearly explains the cost and benefits.

There are areas of research where Government is better able than others to invest at a meaningful level or useful scale and then disseminate the results. There is also a role for Government in sponsoring and promoting collaboration between industry, interest groups, itself and research establishments to identify priority areas. Industry must play a more prominent role in identifying research needs for a sustainable livestock sector, and be prepared to support that research.

Of a research budget of £150 million per annum around £40m will be spent on animal health and welfare research.

- £16 million is spent on TSEs.
- £7 million on TB research.
- £6 million on exotic diseases.
- £3.5 million is spent on welfare.
- Other programmes cover food borne zoonoses, research for the Veterinary Medicine Directorate, alternatives to chemotherapeutics, emerging diseases and the Veterinary Training and Research Initiative.

Government will work with stakeholders to commission studies to increase understanding of the costs of disease and the benefits from its prevention and control. It will develop practical and relevant case studies to demonstrate advantages of animal health planning for each livestock sector. Government will work to facilitate and encourage farm health and welfare 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 and the adoption of these beneficial practices.

7.3 Sharing the costs and benefits

Achieving the aims of this strategy will benefit all those with an interest in animal health and welfare. It is therefore not for the Government alone to incur all the costs that achieving the strategy entails. These costs should, over time, and where appropriate, be much more fully shared.

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."

Anderson Inquiry on Lessons Learned from Foot and Mouth Disease

Given this is practice in other industries, in farming where both animal owners and taxpayers bear some share of the costs of prevention and control of diseases, the present position is favourable to the farming industry and costly to the taxpayer. Granted that the farming industry is characterised by a large number of small businesses, it remains the case that in principle the taxpayer should really only be expected to pay for genuine public good. The distribution of costs should not only better reflect where the balance of responsibilities lie for managing the risks, but also take account of those who benefit from measures to manage them.

Animal owners should individually and collectively take responsibility for managing animal health and welfare risks. For example, the need for farmers to maintain good biosecurity is not, and never has been, optional. Taxpayers cannot be expected to pay for the animal health and welfare costs and risks to farmers which affect their own businesses. When Government intervention is only or primarily in the interests of the farming industry, then it is right to expect that the costs

Ensuring a clearer understanding of costs and benefits

should be borne by industry. This already happens in some European countries in the event of certain disease outbreaks. As part of the ongoing search for best practice under this strategy we will examine international practice to assess the relevance to circumstances in Great Britain.

Moving towards a more appropriate balance between the taxpayer and industry for the costs of animal health and welfare cannot happen overnight and will inevitably require full consultation. It will be necessary to establish and agree a number of guiding principles to ensure a consistent approach including how incentives, such as rewarding best practices, can be used in any schemes. Government will be considering the economic impact on industry of any cost sharing and cost recovery proposals in relation to any future decisions. Delivering and enforcing animal health and welfare standards, including incentives and sanctions are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

National Fallen Stock Scheme

The National Fallen Stock scheme is being set up by Government and the livestock industry to help farmers comply with Animal By-Products legislation. Government has offered around £20 million pump priming funding for the scheme's first three years of operation. After this period, the Scheme will be run and financed by the industry.

Delivering and enforcing standards effectively

8.1 Incentives and sanctions

If you are an owner or keeper of animals or if you have any stake in the health and welfare of animals, then delivery of the strategy is something that directly concerns and affects you. Delivery will take different forms including the way in which:

- animals are cared for on a day to day basis;
- livestock farmers and the wider industry manage the risks to their business;
- legislation is complied with; and
- the way Government delivers services to protect public health, animal health and welfare, the environment and the economy.

The benefits to animal owners of meeting their responsibilities include:

- Better economic return from healthier animals;
- Lower levels of inspection and control;
- Ensuring eligibility for CAP funds;
- Greater public confidence in the safety of food;
- Reaching society's expectations on the care of animals and of the environment; and
- Reduced risk of major outbreaks of animal disease.

The costs to animal owners of failing to meet their responsibilities include:

- Continued unacceptable levels of animal health and welfare;
- Poorer international reputation and disease status;
- Failure to meet public and taxpayer expectations;
- Reduced access to CAP funds;
- Tighter inspection and administrative sanction;
- Prosecution of offenders;
- Withdrawal of right to keep and care for animals; and
- Increased risk of further sanctions.

It is essential that effective incentives and sanctions are in place to ensure improved animal health and welfare standards. We have already outlined how practices to ensure animal health and welfare standards can provide benefits to society (public health and expectations over welfare), the environment (protection of the natural environment, biodiversity and wildlife) and the economy. These incentives need to be well understood and Government can play a role in making this happen.

There is a further incentive to comply with animal health and welfare legislation as risk based enforcement means that inspections are targeted towards those who are less likely to meet their responsibilities, or where failure to comply will have the greatest impact. However, a clear, firm and well-enforced system of sanctions must also be in place for those that are found not to be fully meeting their responsibilities or complying with legislation. For example, a failure to meet minimum animal health and welfare standards will affect EU subsidy payments under the arrangements for cross compliance. Animal health and welfare legislation provides essential protection for the economy, environment, animals and society as a whole, and must be properly observed.

8.2 Delivery of Government services

Government must ensure that whatever interventions it makes are consistently and effectively delivered and enforced. Any policy initiative, however, carefully constructed or scientifically sound, will not achieve the desired effect if it is not effectively translated into action. The reasons why and when Government intervenes in animal diseases and its chosen method of intervention need to be clearly communicated and understood, so that delivery priorities are clear.

Regulation is one of the main mechanisms used for Government intervention in animal health and welfare, either in the pursuit of national policies or to implement international obligations as a member of the European Union. Animal owners can expect that legislation will be implemented in the most appropriate way to minimise the regulatory burden, ensuring that benefits outweigh costs and that, whenever possible, alternative delivery mechanisms have been considered. The engagement of stakeholders and individuals in the decision-making and implementation process will increase their understanding and commitment to achieving the desired outcome. Animal owners must understand and accept their regulatory obligations.

The Whole Farm Approach

In England the development of a Whole Farm Approach based on a self-assessment appraisal will provide livestock owners with a more accessible integrated approach to dealing with the Department and its agencies. They will have ready access to:

- information concerning their business held within the Department's databases;
- details of regulatory requirements for the business; and
- indicators of best practice.

This approach will reduce the amount of paperwork and demands for information that owners/keepers have to contend with and allow them to look at some of the wider aspects of their farming activity.

Livestock register

A register of animal information will initially be developed to cover the main farmed livestock species in Great Britain (cattle, sheep & goats and pigs); other species may be included later on. The register will improve the quality of livestock data while efficiencies (e.g. arising from increased use of electronic reporting methods and better access to information) will reduce costs both to industry and to Government.

The relationship between Government and its delivery agents is crucial and requires a clear communication of priorities and risks. Arrangements will be in place with delivery agents which monitor performance against agreed outputs, report progress towards outcomes, and encompass review processes which look at overall performance as well as individual targets.

Framework Agreement

The Framework Agreement between Government and Local Authorities in England and Wales on the structured delivery of services in animal health and welfare sets clear responsibilities, policy outcomes and mechanisms for agreeing delivery priorities which also reflect local circumstances and risks.

A wide range of delivery agents have responsibilities for the delivery of animal health and welfare objectives. The Implementation Plans for England, Scotland and Wales provide more information on these delivery agents and the policies they deliver.

State Veterinary Service

The State Veterinary Service will, in principle, become an Executive Agency on 1 April 2005. This approach, which separates policy and delivery, will provide greater understanding of roles. It will enable the SVS to develop further its expertise and professionalism, improve its delivery and build closer links with other operational partners and stakeholders.

8.3 Prioritisation

Our approach to individual diseases and conditions has developed over the years through discussion with stakeholders, response to emerging disease situations at home and commitments to the wider international agenda. Neither Government nor industry have adopted a strategic approach, preventing development of an integrated system of controls and preventive measures.

For this strategy to work we all need to adopt a more structured and transparent framework for prioritisation. Disease profiles are being developed as part of this framework. They will contain comprehensive and validated information providing an evidence base which will be used as a tool by Government to inform priorities for surveillance and scientific research.

The livestock industry needs to use the disease profiles to ensure a common understanding of the health and welfare challenges they face, recognising future threats and the priorities for improvement. Appropriate strategies to manage the risk and improve and share knowledge on a partnership basis need to be put in place.

Sheep Scab Initiative

The incidence of sheep scab has increased following an end to compulsory dipping in July 1992. To address this National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS) brought together an all-industry group of stakeholders in Scotland (including National Sheep Association Scotland representatives, organic certification bodies, SAC and many others) to develop the Scottish Sheep Scab Initiative. The Initiative calls for sheep farmers to co-ordinate their action through treatment of their 'at risk' flocks. Its aim is to reduce the incidence of sheep scab in Scotland through: promoting and supporting best practice and biosecurity; minimising the impact of outbreaks; and maximising the effects of preventive action.

Farmers can receive a free information pack from an NFUS hotline which contains vital information on how to prevent or identify and treat the disease, and anonymously report an outbreak. In the case of an outbreak report, details will be handed on to SAC to co-ordinate a response with a network of 'spotter' veterinary practices, which have been developed to alert clients and provide coordination and technical support to control any outbreak.

Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS)

Recently the prevalence of sheep intestinal parasite worms with resistance to anthelmintic drugs anthelmintic resistance (AR) has risen sharply in the UK. SCOPS is an industry-led group which intends to slow the progress of AR by giving farmers clear and consistent advice on sustainable parasite control. This is a current example of how Government is working in partnership with the industry to take a proactive approach to an emerging problem. Government has facilitated and sponsored research and the production of a technical manual, and SCOPS is taking ownership of communicating the need for changing practices throughout the sheep sector.

The enforcement of animal welfare legislation is also subject to prioritisation. If an animal is suffering, or its welfare compromised, then putting the problem right is the top priority. In acute cases this will involve enforcement action from the State Veterinary Service, a Local Authority or the RSPCA/SSPCA. Where the problem lies with a system of animal keeping, rather than individual or acute suffering, then the system needs to be addressed through legislation and ideally at the European level. For example, Government is negotiating in Brussels to secure improved conditions for the transport of animals.

Enforcement is also focused on where the effort can do most good. Our top priority is thus to investigate complaints and follow up establishments known to be at high risk. A lower priority, though nevertheless important, is our work to understand the general level of animal welfare in the farm animal population and to identify and understand emerging conclusions.

Finally, in an area where feelings can often be stronger than knowledge and understanding, we give priority to professional and scientific understanding of animal welfare.

Putting the strategy into practice

Delivering this strategy is dependant on a strong partnership approach between everyone interested in animal health and welfare. Animal owners are primarily responsible for the health and welfare of their animals and best placed to deliver tangible and continual improvements in standards. Government also has a crucial role to play in delivering a wide range of activities. The Implementation Plans for England, Scotland and Wales will initially concentrate on how Government will play its part in putting the strategy into practice. We will, however, encourage other stakeholders to reflect their contributions in future versions of the Implementation Plans to reflect the partnership approach. The Implementation Plans include information on:

- The control of TB;
- Emergency preparedness;
- Farm Health Planning;
- Veterinary Surveillance Strategy;
- National Scrapie Plan; and
- Veterinary research.

This section sets out the framework for measuring the success of the strategy. The framework will provide indicators and specific goals and milestones for delivery. Progress will be measured, monitored and communicated over the lifetime of the strategy and we will carry out evaluation studies to measure the impact of the policies. There will be an annual reporting process that will ensure transparent communication of progress with the strategy.

9.1 Measuring success

Alongside this strategy, we are publishing the *Animal Health and Welfare – The Evidence Base*. This sets out the statistical evidence describing the current animal health and welfare landscape and contains details on the livestock industry, and companion animals, contrasting the situation today with the past. It will be regularly updated in consultation with stakeholders, to ensure that the strategy adapts to a continually changing environment.

To measure progress towards the strategy's vision there needs to be a clear and common understanding of the baseline from which we are starting and the outcomes and targets we are aiming for. The Evidence Base also provides details of the work currently in progress to develop a framework of indicators which will measure the strategy's progress towards its objectives. It describes the indicators identified so far and explains how these will be developed further. For indicator purposes the objectives of the strategy have been separated into four broad categories:

- To reduce the impact of endemic disease in animals;
- To improve animal welfare;
- To guard against and mitigate the effects of exotic diseases in animals; and
- To reduce incidence of zoonotic diseases in animals which might imperil human health.

The indicators will help to guide policy, inform priorities, target resources and focus discussion. They will be developed in consultation with stakeholders, and improved over time as better veterinary and other data becomes available, particularly in those areas where data has not previously been collected, such as for companion animals. We intend to present more developed proposals for these indicators to the first GB Animal Health and Welfare Conference this Autumn.

9.2 Managing the strategy

The strategy will be managed through a partnership between stakeholders and Government. The key components to be put in place include:

- **A Strategy Steering Board** of representatives from across the animal health and welfare sector, and Government officials tasked with providing strategic guidance and direction on the prioritisation, development and communication of the strategy.
- **A science group** to provide an annual overview on scientific issues to the Strategy Steering Board.

These groups will provide a transparent framework for discussions on the priorities, direction and progress of the strategy to take place.

National arrangements will differ to reflect specific policy priorities and delivery arrangements. For example, within England, where possible existing regional structures will be used to ensure input into the local and regional delivery of this strategy rather than creating new overlapping arrangements. This will need to reflect the wider role that animal health and welfare plays as a key component of the whole sustainable agriculture and rural agenda. In Scotland the Scottish Executive will continue to use its standing animal health and welfare stakeholder group to inform its on-going policy development and communications with the stakeholder community.

In some areas stakeholders may decide to draw up their own strategies to address the animal health and welfare priorities of their sectors. The formation of such groups is left to the discretion of the sectors concerned and need not be operated on a GB basis. Government will play its part in helping facilitate such initiatives where appropriate and ensuring their work is recognised as contributing to the strategy.

9.3 Communicating the strategy

The groups outlined above will formalise the partnership process for the whole strategy, though appropriate communication arrangements will also take place in development of individual policies. There will also be regular annual communications on the strategy's progress and priorities. This will include:

- **A GB animal health and welfare conference** at which progress on the strategy will be reported and the priorities and delivery of the strategy reviewed.
- **Annual publication of Implementation Plans** setting out detailed objectives of the strategy and providing a high level report on progress against milestones of the component strategy policies.

Chapter 9

Wider communication of policies and initiatives within the strategy will take many different forms; from the use of instant information technology to face-to-face explanation, depending on the message that is being delivered and the target audience. The communication of animal health and welfare must draw in anyone who can help get the message across including vets, interest groups and delivery agents.

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