Cattle Health and Welfare Group

Meeting on July 8, 2014

Henry Plumb Room, National Farmers Union

Stoneleigh Park

Stoneleigh

10h30 – 15h30

Notes of the Meeting

Present: T. Brigstocke (Chairman); E. Berry; E. Surman; J. Avezienius; H. Richardson; D. Murphy; C. McLaughlin; J. Statham; J. Brownlie; J. Gibbons; P. Johnston; O. Hodgkinson; G. Hateley; B. Dalby; C. Dodds; D. Armstrong; S. Roberts; B. Lindsay

Apologies: N. Gibbens; R. Keatinge; A. Brouwer; M. Vickers; C. Middlemiss; R. Davies,

1. Welcome and Chairman’s introduction

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. This was followed by a round table of introductions including a welcome to both Stuart Roberts of AHWB E and Derek Armstrong who has recently been appointed as Programme Manager – Endemic Diseases for DairyCo.

The Chairman provided a report of a recent meeting on the subject of the Farm Animal Welfare Codes of Practice. The Poultry Council had collaborated with Defra to rewrite the poultry codes and it is anticipated that the CHAWG will be requested to ‘take the lead’ in reviewing and drafting of the Cattle Codes. Based on BPC’s calculations this would cost in the region of £15000.00.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising not appearing on the agenda

Once a day feeding of calves: In seeking clarification from Defra regarding this issue and the previously released (ambiguous) guidance, RTA Dairy now understand (and have included in their revised standards) that two times per day feeding must take place until the calf has reached 28 days.

University of Warwick study (Identification of indicators of cattle and sheep welfare in abattoirs): It was agreed to make contact with the study team to ascertain the benefit of engaging with the CHAWG at their next meeting. It seemed that they had already contacted some members though it was felt that the CHAWG collectively is a resource they should engage with.

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Food Chain Information (FCI) data and letters to Abattoirs: Brian explained to the Group that unfortunately the AHWBE were not going to support the CHAWG and SHAWG regarding their letter to abattoirs to ascertain what data was actually being compiled and shared with their supplying farmers.

Stuart Roberts stated that the abattoir sector would welcome a letter from the CHAWG and SHAWG Groups though recommended a more holistic approach was considered, as most abattoirs are going beyond the direct FCI criteria. He felt (wearing his processor hat) that the current FCI data collection had limited value. Chris Dodds indicated that he is unaware of any markets receiving and forwarding FCI data back to farmers.

Apparently the FSA have already completed a study investigating the effectiveness of the FCI initiative with the aim of improving it.

It was agreed to take an additional step and write to the respective meat processors and appreciate the systems and associated data they have and how we could potentially play a role in standardising this at the collection point. It was also agreed to include the BMPA in this process to ensure transparency and maximum benefit.

Action: BL

Green Bedding: With the initial study now complete Defra have provided an ‘orange light’ for England in relation to the development of green bedded facilities. As there are many unanswered questions the two-year window is to be utilized by the industry in seeking answers to these issues. In Scotland the ‘issue’ is under review and in Wales green bedding facilities are not permitted.

DairyCo have developed a first draft Q and A. A second draft is nearing completion and will be circulated to members once available. They have also developed in readiness a consumer facing video should that be necessary.

It was reported that Dairy UK have considered the issue and will be writing to Defra to recommend that they do not allow any further developments utilizing this approach.

Funding has been identified from Wales for studies to address the unanswered questions and build an evidence base against which to make informed judgements and decisions. The science that will be commissioned will by complimentary to other studies already commissioned in the EU (Dutch studies are already underway).
Defra has indicated that it is up to the industry to take the ‘compliance’ lead though concern was expressed from the CHAWG regarding RTA or even Vets undertaking this role as it is not seen as appropriate.

It was agreed that the CHAWG role in this was to be supportive of the generation of the necessary science based evidence.

Action: Jenny Gibbons/DairyCo

4. Cattle Health and Welfare report

The Chairman reported that the 60 page document was published and launched at the Livestock Event and had been well received. He thanked all that had supported the development of the report and though it was a challenging task pulling it all together, the resulting product is exactly what the industry needs.

Recognition of the report (and the fact that we were working on a GB basis) was evident as all three CVO’s were more than happy to provide the requested ‘forwards’ for the document.

Members were asked to take a number of copies and share them with key influencers of the sector.

Action: All

4a. AHVLA Report - Gareth Hateley – Veterinary Lead in the Cattle Expert Group (Presentation attached)

Surveillance update

- Lab closures:
  - Preston, Truro, Luddington and Newcastle have closed as planned
  - Winchester closed unexpectedly early (due to staffing issues)
  - A carcase collection service is in place for these areas
- The tender for expert post-mortem services has now closed, and is in the review phase. Successful bids will be announced early August with a start date from 1 September (with an implementation phase)
- The Surveillance Intelligence Unit which co-ordinates national disease surveillance in AHVLA for the main farmed species, exotics and wildlife, is now set up and starting to develop its priorities. Kate Sharp, the head of this unit is to be invited to a future meeting

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Action: Gareth Hateley / BL

- I am the new Veterinary Lead of the Cattle Expert Group!
- New developments:
  - Online web portal for vets to submit samples, receive results.
  - Farm Postmortems Ltd-
    - PME based service at a fallen stock yard,
    - EBLEX subsidised project for 1 year
    - run by former VIO so should give good indication of gold standard for fallen stock based service
    - VIDA 'lite'- to explore how a simplified system based on the VIDA diagnostic code principle could be used for PVS based PMEs but with less rigour

Surveillance report

- Adverse weather: AHVLA asked for any reports of adverse weather events causing welfare issues. Some were received local to known events (e.g. prolonged flooding in the Somerset Levels) but not more widely.
- Psoroptic mange: first case in Scotland for > 20 years in an imported animal (from Eire). SAC have reported. Gareth repeated the concerns about difficulty of treatment especially in dairy cows, with evidence of recurrence in a dairy herd in Wales that had tried to eradicate it.
- Submission numbers have fallen mainly in W England and Scotland in both carcass and non-carcass submissions- the reasons are not clear and the Cattle Expert Group will monitor.
- Horizon scanning- GOH explained what it is, and how it is done: use of ProMed, papers, media, Defra fortnightly surveillance digest, local, national and international contacts.
- Schmallenberg- quick update-
  - No evidence of spread in Scotland (could be a number of reasons including differences in midge characteristics), there is ongoing small scale surveillance (bulk milk and abortions)
  - Some evidence of acute disease in the SW of England based on limited evidence of seroconversion
  - Take home message- not all animals in a herd are immune, not all herds in an endemic area are infected, there is a vaccine, so use it or lose it!
- **Cysticercus bovis** is the intermediate stage of the tapeworm *Taenia saginata* and can be present in cattle exposed to the eggs, will infect people and is looked for as part of the meat inspection process. An abattoir in the North of England reported significant numbers of infected cattle carcasses from a relatively small number of farms but affecting a high...
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A proportion of some batches of cattle, with devastating consequences for the farmers involved. Investigations indicated that feeding of waste potatoes was a common link; the source of the contamination was not proven but likely to have been contact with human waste. A second abattoir in the south of England also reported cases. AHVLA undertook to produce a briefing note for circulation by CHAWG members.

- BTV: Highlighted circulation of BTV-4 in Greece. This serotype has been seen in Europe frequently; there is a vaccine, but the scale of this incursion is quite large.

Action: Gareth

5. Review of the FHP Seminars

Jon Statham reported that once again the Seminars worked extremely well, much of which is the result of the efforts of Laura Randall of the BCVA who invested considerable time and energy into working with both sponsors and speakers to generate the programme.

There are still some issues to be sorted though it was felt that once again the seminars are a worthwhile investment of the CHAWG and BCVA time.

Recognising that the sessions rely heavily on sponsorship to succeed, the sponsors were thanked for their support.

6. Animal Health GB (presentation attached)

Jon Statham outlined the proposed approach for the Cattle Health GB (or England). The attached slides are quite self-explanatory. Some key points were:

- The industry is very good at developing strategy though very poor at implementing.
- A holistic approach needs to be taken to managing animal health.
- We need to look at the wider benefits of our actions and seek the opportunities through industry collaboration and not duplication
- There is no Government funding so whether we like it or not…there will be some cost to the sector.
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- It was noted that England was being left behind in this issue with both Scotland and Wales pushing ahead with developments that were collaborative between Government and industry.

- We need the courage as a sector to stand up and state that this is what we are going to do which also involves Government support be it legislative, financial or the willingness to explore where the public private partnership could be beneficial at different levels of delivery.

It was agreed what was now required now is the development of a business plan to enhance the understanding of this concept. The plan will be developed by a small group with a wide ranging skill set to ensure a robust business case can be developed. Stuart Roberts stated that he would do what he could through AHWBE in support of this approach.

**Action**: JS to form the business plan development group

7. **Leading the Way – British Dairy industry sustainable growth Strategy**

The Chairman informed the Group that there was a role for CHAWG in assisting the delivery of this aspirational document. Cattle Health and Welfare is a key component and there are two key ways that the CHAWG can support the desired outcomes.

- Publication of the Cattle Health and Welfare Report – Provides the progress reporting

- Continued review, publication and implementation of the Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy (DCWS). The review of this strategy is now possible with the publishing of the second CHAWG report which is the basis of the DCWS. A small group involving (DairyCo, DairyUK, RSPCA, BCVA, RABDF, NFU, NFUS, RTA, Holstein UK,) are to now pick up the review process that was started in 2013 and revise the Strategy with the aim of launching in January 2015.

**Action**: BL to coordinate

8. **AHWBE Update on future priorities and activities**

Stuart Roberts of AHWBE stated that the AHWBE had changed from the initial ‘high profile’, ‘influential’, ‘leading group to now being much more of an ‘advisory group’ for Ministers.

Though bTB has taken a considerable amount of the Boards time (and will continue to do so) they have also had three key areas of work:
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- The Veterinary delivery partnership project
- New contracts for regional delivery
- Better quality surveillance

Another area the Board have invested time in is ‘Exotic Disease Compensation’ with the aim of increasing the transparency and consistency across the different diseases and species. Regardless of what the outcome is, Stuart was confident that there would be a cost sharing component. The role of the AHWBE is to try and find ways of doing things differently. It is important to recognise that the AHWBE is a strategic board and not an operational body.

The recent review of the AHWBE has provided a permit to progress for another three years, though some of the (Board) posts will become available within the next few months. What will also be interesting is the potential changes related to the forthcoming election and the impact that will have on the Board’s work.

9. RDPE developments

The papers provided by Christine Middlemiss and Steve Dunkley were considered. These papers were supported by a verbal update from Cat McLaughlin who indicated that the Defra team seemed more positive in exploring potential routes forward than previous meetings which was encouraging.

Some key discussion points for inclusion in future iterations are:

- Need to emphasise more the national coordination ‘need’ – The inclusion of the Animal Health GB concept was in earlier drafts. This opportunity should not be lost.
- At the very beginning of the document there needs to be a clear aim and objective of the programme focusing on the industries desire for BVD eradication!
- Industry has expressed concern previously that too much funding did not find its way to the farmer. In reading this document and looking at the attached diagram, this could potentially be the case again if we are not careful.
- We need this RDPE to do something different to build on the good work already completed. The document as it is currently written has the potential to deliver more of the same. It is
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up to the CHAWG and their representatives working on this initiative to ensure this does not happen.

10. CHAWG Members a round table update - an opportunity to share cattle health & Welfare activities to help raise awareness within the group

• Donal Murphy provided an update on the AMR issue:

• The issue is a priority at both a UK and EU level but any legislation will be driven by the EU Commission who are currently reviewing two pieces of related but separate legislation (the Veterinary Medicines Directive and the Medicated Feed Directive), with the first drafts due by October 2014. – with the outcomes not anticipated to be implemented until late 2017 or early 2018

• In September 2013 the DOH and Defra launched a 5 year strategy on AMR. It is predominantly focused on human antibiotic use (which they see as the main cause), though there is some coverage of veterinary medicines – to ensure responsible use.

• Dry Cow therapy seems to be the biggest worry for dairy as if used for all animals at drying off as opposed to targeted use, it could be viewed by some as routine prophylactic use as opposed to targeted preventative use. Routine prophylactic use is not responsible use of antibiotics and is likely to be limited or banned in the future.

• It is anticipated that further records and data will need to be kept in future by vets and farmers with submission of more data to a central point for collation and analysis though it is unclear what will be required by whom at this point.

• The Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics (Soil Association and CIWF) see the Dutch approach (50%-70% reduction in antibiotic use by 2015) and want the same for the UK. The difference is the level of usage within different EU Member States, with the UK a ‘mid range’ user as opposed to where the Dutch were with their higher levels of use prior to the volume reduction targets being set.

• There may also be potential restrictions on what are known as ‘critically important anti-biotics’ in order to ‘preserve’ their effectiveness in human medicine.

• Cat McLaughlin reported her positive meeting with the BBC science reporter and was encouraged to hear that the BBC is keen to demonstrate the factual science and would like to do a feature on agricultural use of anti-biotics and also vaccines.

• It was agreed to ensure that the review of the DCWS had an appropriate section on AMR.
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• Emma Surman indicated that with the recent review of their livestock standards, the Dairy RTA will now require the vet review to consider the levels of anti-biotic use and the beef and lamb RTA now requiring a veterinary visit if at all using prescribed anti-biotics. These requirements will start in October 2014.

• Any other business
  
  - National Database Developments

Chris Dodds reported that though he was concerned about the progress of this initiative previously, a recent working group meeting had encouraged him about the potential delivery.

AHDB were currently seeking funding for this project with the aim of delivering in an earlier timeframe than the 5 years suggested by Defra representatives.

Chris said that the challenges are still there and they will not be solved overnight, though positive steps forward were evident at the recent meeting.

• Date of next meeting – 3 October 2014