

Building a better future for England's kept animals

Report on progress delivering the Animal Health
and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain in England

November 2006



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The *Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain*¹, published in 2004, sets a clear direction for farmed animals². It has less to say on other animal groups, such as those kept for companionship or recreation, or in zoos and circuses. It does, however, establish principles that are applicable throughout; principles that we – the EIG – aim to interpret appropriately as we begin work with these sectors.

More than anything else, delivery of the Strategy requires a fundamental shift in attitude by the main protagonists, including the livestock industry, other animal keepers, the veterinary profession, Government and its agencies, and the public, in order to ensure that those with the ability to effect change do so. The EIG's essential role is to investigate, stimulate and monitor this shift³.

In our first year, we have been at times buoyed, at times frustrated, by our investigations and the reaction of stakeholders to our early attempts to stimulate change. Of course, we ourselves are only one agent of change among many who wish to create a better future for England's kept animals, and our main tool is to highlight both good and poor practice. Similarly, we are operating within a rapidly moving stream of activity influenced by drivers such as changes in farm support arrangements, regulatory changes at the European and UK level, and evolving public attitudes about society's responsibilities to kept animals.

This report provides an overview of the progress being made in England to take the Strategy forward. We have commented on some of the opportunities and challenges that face the people and organisations involved in enacting the Strategy, and identified some of the questions that need to be answered as it goes forward. We have also provided detailed examples of some of the initiatives being taken forward under the Strategy.

¹ "Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain", June 2004, available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/default.htm

² See Annex A for more about the aim, vision and themes of the Strategy.

³ See Annex B for more about the EIG.

Overview

One of our central initiatives has been to promote and support the creation of **sector councils**, which will develop species-specific strategies and plans for improving animal health and welfare. Long before our inception, the pig industry led the way in this regard, taking responsibility for the long-term development of the sector through initiatives such as the *Road to Recovery*⁴, an overarching plan that included important recommendations on animal health. It is always difficult to determine cause and effect, but the hard work of the industry in this regard has correlated with significant improvements in economic performance – albeit from a devastatingly low base.

Over the last few months, the cattle and sheep sectors have made encouraging progress establishing their own sector councils, and we hope that our full England Implementation Plan for the Strategy, to be published next year, will be able to include details of their sectoral strategies and plans. The poultry industry seems to have advanced less rapidly, however, even though theirs is a more naturally integrated sector. Although the industry has undoubtedly made considerable progress over the last decade, we believe that an open and strategic approach which clarifies the opportunities for further advancement would be of benefit to the businesses involved, both directly and through increasing public confidence in the commitment of the poultry industry to meeting high standards of health and welfare.

The economic future for many farmers is still uncertain, and farm incomes are perilously low in some sectors. Despite this, there are areas of opportunity, and a sense that the most forward thinking and entrepreneurial are connecting with the marketplace and reassessing their business performance – including in animal health and welfare terms – in a way that was not encouraged by production support. Increasing numbers of farmers recognise that improving animal wellbeing is both cost effective in its own right, and a potential market differentiator. It is still unclear how many consumers are, or will be, prepared to pay for improved welfare, but clear and honest labelling is vital – as indicated by the recent Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) report on this subject⁵ – to allow the market potential to be fully explored.

The **companion animal** sector is so diverse that it is difficult to make many general comments at this stage. We held a fascinating meeting⁶ with many key stakeholders present, and determined that it would be appropriate to assist with the development of a body which could help set priorities for action in the companion animal arena, and

⁴ See the latest version – “The Road to Recovery 2006-2009. A Strategy for Prosperity in the Pig Production and Processing Industry in England and Wales” available at: www.bpex.org/about/pdfs/RoadtoRecovery2006-09.pdf.

⁵ Farm Animal Welfare Council “Report on Welfare Labelling”, June 2006, available at: www.fawc.org.uk/reports/welfarelabel-0606.pdf.

⁶ Discussed at the “EIG6” meeting on 8 March 2006. Minutes of the meeting available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/minutes/080306.pdf.

indeed to initiate that action where appropriate. This initiative has been delayed by the resignation of our companion animal expert, but our review of stakeholder priorities has given us some useful steers, and we will be pursuing this with vigour from November 2006 onwards.

A more minor sector for us maybe, but one which has provided good evidence of engagement and proactive planning for health and welfare has been **Aquaculture**, notably the trout industry. Again a historically unsupported sector, over the last few years it has developed and implemented its strategy with, it seems, considerable benefits.

Defra's Animal Health and Welfare Directorate-General has been set challenging cost reduction targets as part of the **comprehensive spending review** (CSR). We have concerns over this on two counts. Firstly, and obviously, that the right decisions are made – decisions that will support and not compromise the Strategy's progress. Secondly, that the ground-breaking partnership initiative represented by JIGWG (the Joint (Industry/Government) Working Group) – co-chaired by an EIG member – which has recently reported on the principles of responsibility and cost sharing⁷, is not undermined by CSR pressures.

The **responsibility and cost sharing** agenda is inevitably controversial, but also provides some real opportunities for the farming industry to re-negotiate its relationship with Government. After decades of playing out the "parent-child" scenario, farming leaders can now decide to engage with Government on a more mature basis. Different terms of engagement may not make the required decisions any easier, but at least the outcomes may better reflect the interests of farming communities and the animals they care for.

Whether **Government** is really ready to fundamentally change its ways of working is a key question. We have been encouraged by a very different approach from that which was heavily criticized during foot and mouth, for instance, as contingency plans were developed for Avian Influenza. Key players have felt much more involved and in touch with developments and the rationale for decisions. Setting up the EIG was, itself, an innovative and potentially risky approach! However old habits are hard to break, and Defra will need to guard against an instinct to return to its default position of "command and control" and of withholding information that could, actually, be in the public domain. The Chief Veterinary Officer's support for our commitment to openness and transparency – meeting in public for all bar the super-sensitive or boring bits, publishing minutes on our website – has been clear from the outset, and welcome.

⁷ "Joint (Industry/Government) Working Group Report on Sharing Responsibilities and Costs of Exotic Animal Disease", July 2006, available at: www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/regulation/csharead/jigwg/report01/index.htm.

Overview

We have, however, like so much of the industry, been dismayed at the delays over decision making on **Bovine Tuberculosis** (bTB). We are content with the decisions that have been made, and in no way condone the oft-muttered “we won’t engage in the delivery of this strategy until we are allowed to kill some badgers” – but Government cannot continue to delay decision making on this issue for much longer. We understand how the science, such that we have, hugely complicates decision making. However, we have been encouraged by the way the industry has worked together recently to develop proposals for bTB control, and we would like to see this initiative encouraged and fully considered as discussions go forward.

We have heard a great deal from representatives of the **veterinary profession** this year and, indeed, we are well advised on these issues with four vets on our group. To some extent, the profession seems in a similar position to the livestock industry. It has clear difficulties in finding financially viable ways forward for some of its members, particularly practices in areas where farming incomes, and client density, are low. It is apparent that a better understanding between farmers and vets is essential; farmers should appreciate the contribution that their vets can make to their businesses, but at the same time vets must be able to deliver the services and value that farmers require. There may be a need to review undergraduate and in-service education, and support available during the early careers of those going into large animal practice. Again, we have seen evidence of exciting examples of business innovation and excellence, and also of a less agreeable, though understandable, desire for other agents to somehow magic an improved future for vets. Our concern is that, in order to secure animal health and welfare objectives, access to vet services must be available to all. We are keen to encourage and support the development of a coherent strategy for the veterinary profession, with this aim in mind, and look forward to exploring positive solutions that can be taken forward largely by the profession itself.

Finally, in this by no means exhaustive résumé of stakeholders’ attitudes and initiatives, it is important to bear in mind society’s growing interest in **animal welfare**. The Strategy has understandably been criticised for its lack of focus on welfare issues, and to address this Defra will soon be consulting on an Animal Welfare Delivery Strategy. This will need to signpost the actions required to maximise the potential of the market mechanism in leading welfare beyond the regulatory baseline. The role of the assurance schemes is important here, too, as the most obvious route to delivery of good practice on the ground. These schemes have generally made considerable progress in the last few years, though there is still inconsistency across sectors.

There are some tough challenges for the future. For example, the means of **delivering Government policy** is very complex and the linkages far from clear. The recent Eves report⁸ offers fifty-five recommendations to improve the “delivery landscape” – a picture complicated by the well received Madders report on livestock movements,⁹ the long awaited Hunter review of the Rural Payments Agency¹⁰ and the ongoing adaptation of the State Veterinary Service (SVS) to agency status. We will want to see the aims of the Strategy reflected in the Government’s response to these reports and initiatives.

At the regional level, we have seen some terrific examples of grass roots initiatives (see below), and tremendous enthusiasm to create coherent **regional health and welfare strategies**, but there seems to be a gap between aspiration and action. Local and regional organisations are looking for a lead and some overall co-ordination. Some have suggested this is a task for the SVS but, while it is true that the SVS has a facilitative role, it cannot create regional strategies. It is for all those involved to come together and consider key questions such as how priorities are set, how resources are brought to bear and how self-help bodies are fostered and supported.

Farm health planning offers a potential front-line tool for promoting “prevention is better than cure.” It has been used in some sectors, such as pigs, for several years, on the basis that it provides health and welfare benefits and economic benefits to the producer. However, take up in other sectors has been patchy, and we have concerns about the longer term when funding for farm health planning is no longer available. If it is to be sustainable, some hard evidence is needed to reinforce anecdotal reports that these programmes are providing real benefits, both for animals and for the farmers’ bottom line.

A constant challenge is to ensure that we do not lose sight of **the bigger picture**. The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy is part of the *Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy*¹¹ and we need to ensure consistency. We also have to be aware of Strategy delivery in other parts of Great Britain and also developments within the European Union (EU) as a whole. We liaise with our Scottish and Welsh counterparts¹² to ensure we are pulling in the same direction. The EU is in the process of developing an Animal Health Strategy¹³ which echoes many of the elements of the British Strategy and includes options for cost and responsibility sharing. We will be closely following these EU developments and advising on Government input where relevant.

In summary, the next year and beyond holds real challenges and the possibility of considerable change in the dynamic between Government, industry, animal keepers and

⁸ “Review of the Animal Health and Welfare Delivery Landscape. A report by David Eves CB”, June 2006, available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/deliver/ahw_review_report280606.pdf.

⁹ Bill Madders’ “Review of the Livestock Movement Controls. Presented to Ben Bradshaw (Parliamentary Under-Secretary Commons)”, July 2006, available at www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/movements/default.htm.

¹⁰ Terms of Reference of David Hunter’s review of the Rural Payments Agency available at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/ministers/statements/mb060316annex.htm.

¹¹ “Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy”, December 2002, available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/policy/sustain/index.htm>.

¹² Details of the “Scottish Animal Health and Welfare Advisory Group” available at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture/animal-welfare/AHWStrategy/AdvisoryGroup. Details of the “Wales Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Steering Committee” available at: www.countryside.wales.gov.uk/fe/master.asp?n1=1&n2=13&n3=886.

¹³ Details of the proposed “European Union Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013)” available at: www.ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/index_en.htm.

The future

the public. Whether we can collectively grasp these opportunities to the benefit of all, especially the wellbeing of England's animals, will depend on the development of genuine partnerships and a new assessment of roles, duties and responsibilities.

Examples: taking the Strategy forward and best practice

Developing suitable tools to provide an indication of progress

We have been working with Defra to develop a framework of indicative measures – strategy indicators – which give a general indication of the overall “state of the nation” of animal health and welfare in England. These indicators will help to show if progress is being made in delivering the Strategy.

A framework of indicators for livestock is presented for the first time in Annex C. Datasheets showing trends in each indicator, and explaining source material, are published on our website¹⁴ and will be updated as new data is collected. We developed this framework, in collaboration with Defra's statisticians and economists, following a January 2006 workshop involving EIG members and invited guests. Defra statisticians and economists also provide the data for the datasheets. This is only a starting point – we know the framework can be improved – and we would welcome ideas for other data which could be used to improve the picture that the indicators provide.

The livestock framework includes a proposed “index” of health and welfare, to give an overall measure for each major livestock group, based on hard evidence, e.g. from inspections across England. This will take time to develop and for now includes a few key measures that give some feel for current levels of animal wellbeing.

Every six months, we will review trends in these indicators and discuss what that implies about what is happening to animal health and welfare in England, recommending action if appropriate.

For the future, we would like to see a similar framework developed for companion animal health and welfare in England, in a way that, again, shows if we are on track to deliver the Strategy.

Making better use of industry health and welfare surveillance

Surveillance is key to tacking disease outbreaks before they get out of hand as well as providing feedback on endemic disease and welfare issues – “prevention is better than cure.” The UK Veterinary Surveillance Strategy¹⁵ has guided the introduction of a sound surveillance infrastructure to provide that early warning system to detect emerging disease threats and track disease spread.

In June 2006, we published recommendations¹⁶ on improving the implementation of the Veterinary Surveillance Strategy, having discussed this with many stakeholders. Our key underlying theme is getting more from the data and disease information currently held by industry and incorporating that into the national surveillance system. Our objective over the next year is to work with industry and Defra to take forward our recommendations.

¹⁴ The Strategy's livestock indicators for England are published on the EIG's webpages at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/indicators/index.htm.

¹⁵ “A strategy for enhancing veterinary surveillance in the UK”, October 2003, available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/veterinary/index.htm.

¹⁶ “England Implementation Group. Surveillance. A report to the EIG from the Surveillance Subgroup”, June 2006, available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/pdf/review-vetsurv.pdf.

Initiatives in the regions

Swaledale Sheep Scab Initiative

In November 2005¹⁷, we heard about a local, farmer-based initiative, in Yorkshire, working in partnership with veterinary practices. Farmers, in the region, looked for an area in the Strategy that could make a difference, locally, and eradicated sheep scab as a priority. They established an eradication strategy which required agreement, and co-ordinated action from all local sheep farmers. They worked together with local veterinary practices and successfully tackled the disease with a number of additional advantages, saving money, improving animal welfare, improving biosecurity and enhancing the image of the industry. There is now interest in other regions to learn from the experience of the Swaledale group and share the benefits.

West Midlands Green Futures programme

In September 2006¹⁸, we had a presentation from the Green Futures team, an initiative aimed at providing farmers – particularly ‘hard to reach’ farmers – with key information through workshops and easy-to-read guidance. The programme has been developed by a group drawn from organisations and agencies committed to helping the farming community adjust to the changes facing the industry. Those involved in the Green Futures team include the Herefordshire Rural Hub, CLA-Enterprise, the National Farmers’ Union, the Environment Agency, Holme Lacy College and Defra’s Rural Development Service. The team has organised workshops on topical issues, such as cross-compliance, waste regulations and cattle ID and traceability. The programme is estimated to have reached 2,500 farming businesses and is being used as a platform for other organisations – for example, the Rural Development Service, FWAG (Farming and Welfare Advisory Group) and recycling companies – to address the farming community. The collaborative approach provides cost effective delivery of information that responds to the needs of the local farming community.

Developing an implementation plan for the welfare element of the Strategy in England

The Strategy covered animal welfare only in broad terms, setting out where Government has a responsibility to act to improve animal welfare. Stakeholders asked Defra for greater detail on the goals for animal welfare. To that end, Defra is working with us and others on a delivery plan that will flesh out the welfare element of the Strategy. This will:

- clarify what is meant by improving animal welfare;
- set a direction of travel;
- have a means to set priorities;
- clarify roles and responsibilities;
- clarify the partnership issue;
- ensure effective enforcement;
- encourage other parts of Government and other organisations to consider ways of reaching the endpoint without looking to legislation; and
- to ensure the strategy is consistent with the EU Action Plan on Animal Welfare, and other international welfare initiatives.

Defra is preparing a first draft in consultation with a small advisory group, including EIG members, to provide expertise to help prepare the thinking for wider consultation. Defra intends to launch a public consultation later this year and we will help facilitate wider engagement in the consultation.

¹⁷ Discussed at the “EIG4” meeting on 18 November 2005. Minutes of the meeting available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/minutes/181105.pdf.

¹⁸ Discussed at the “EIG9” meeting on 26 September 2006. Minutes of the meeting available at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/minutes/260906.pdf.

Sheep sector council

This is one of the most recent sector councils to be established. The council, chaired by Peter Baber, includes farmers representing different parts of the industry and representatives from the veterinary profession, the National Farmers' Union, the National Sheep Association, the English Beef and Lamb Executive (EBLEX), the Animal Health Distributors Association, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Farm Animal Welfare Council, NOAH (National Office of Animal Health) and Defra. Its terms of reference are a good example of how sector councils will be taking forward the aims and objectives of the Strategy:

- To establish an industry led structure responsible for prioritising, planning and driving forward a programme of economically focussed improvements to sheep health and welfare in England.
- To be an active partner in the design of policy and implementation of regulation related to sheep health and welfare in England.
- To establish and maintain the health, disease and welfare status of the English sheep flock.
- To establish and maintain an inventory of all sheep health and welfare based activities and initiatives as commissioned by Government, Levy Boards and others. This would include present work and a comprehensive back catalogue.
- To act as the focal point for all such initiatives in the future so as to ensure efficiency, co-ordination and lack of duplication.
- To act as the point through which industry can identify gaps in knowledge or practise and to identify such gaps through its own knowledge.
- To recommend appropriate prioritisation and action on gaps as identified.
- To liaise closely with Levy Boards and RDAs to ensure consistent regional dissemination of national work to sheep farmers and a co-ordinated approach to regional work on sheep health and welfare.
- To liaise with Farm Assurance Schemes to ensure that an appropriate and relevant amount of sheep health and welfare elements exist within their schemes.
- To liaise with and inform colleges/universities and all others involved in the construction and delivery of on farm training, skills development and education relating to sheep health and welfare.
- To act as the lynchpin between EIG and the sheep industry (at all levels) on all sheep health and welfare matters. This would include an appropriate reporting function to industry and EIG.
- To promote the economic, environmental and social benefits of enhanced sheep health and welfare to all relevant parties within Government, other organisations and interests.

The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy

The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain provides the route map to secure a sustainable long-term future for the nation's kept animals. It provides a vision of a future of healthy and well-kept animals.

1. The Strategy's vision

This is a shared vision of what we want the world to be like by 2014:

- 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.

2. The Strategy's Aim

To deliver the vision, the 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."

3. The Strategy's five themes – or guiding principles

If the vision is the destination, the following five themes are the Strategy's guiding principles directing how we get there:

- Working in partnership.
- Promoting the benefits of animal health and welfare: prevention is better than cure.
- Ensuring a clearer understanding of the costs and benefits of animal health and welfare practices.
- Understanding and accepting roles and responsibilities.
- Delivering and enforcing animal health and welfare standards effectively.

What is the England Implementation Group?

We are a group appointed by Defra ministers (in an announcement of 6 June 2005) to advise Government on implementing the Strategy in England. We are thirteen individuals (see below) chosen for our individual expertise and experience rather than to represent particular sectors, though we do broadly represent the generic range of interests, if not the full range of species, in England.

Ultimately, we are accountable to Defra and its Ministers, and are very much a resource for them to draw on. However, Defra has given us a good degree of independence, not least the freedom to choose how we want to fulfil the broad role given to us by the Department.

Helen Browning (Chairman)

20 years' experience of the food and farming industries as a major organic producer and a former Chairman of the Soil Association. Currently the Association's Director of food and farming, a Commissioner of the Meat and Livestock Commission and Chairman of the Food Ethics Council. Helen's contributions to organic farming have been recognised by awards including an OBE and Fellowship of the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

Richard Bennett

An agricultural economist at Reading University with over 20 years' experience of research on the economics of animal health and welfare, undertaking numerous projects for both Government and commercial organisations. A trustee and council member of the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare and of the Humane Slaughter Association. He is also a member of the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC).

Tim Brigstocke

A founding director of a specialist knowledge transfer company for the land-based sector and former Chief Executive of Holstein UK. Takes an active role in a large number of organisations including as a director/trustee of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and chairman of the Institute of Biology Agricultural Sciences Committee. Chairman of the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers and executive director of Cattle Health Certification Standards.

Chris Brown

Agriculture technologist for Marks and Spencer before joining ASDA as Agriculture Development Manager with responsibility for developing its strategies and activities across all sectors of agriculture. Previously a dairy cattle specialist with the Ministry of

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Agriculture Fisheries and Food/ADAS. Beef Strategy Manager with the Meat and Livestock Commission since 1994, also Development Manager for Assured British Meat whole food chain assurance and Director of the Animal Data Centre. Sits on a number of boards including the Red Meat Industry Forum, Food Chain Centre and Agricultural Strategy Group, and is a Director of Genesis Faraday.

Neil Cutler

A partner in a family run dairy farming business who was an active member of the advisory group that helped develop the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. A former chair of the NFU Animal Health and Welfare Committee, board member of RUMA alliance and AMTRA, and member of the Veterinary Residues Committee.

Nigel Durnford

The Principal Animal Health and Welfare Inspector with Gloucestershire County Council Trading Standards, with over 25 years' experience in delivery and enforcement of animal health and welfare standards within local authorities. Member of the National Animal Health and Welfare Panel and lectures on animal health and welfare law and enforcement for the South West Regional Assembly.

Stewart Houston

A partner in a family owned sow pig unit and a director of a company producing pig systems. Chair of the National Pig Association, the British Pig Executive, the Pig Health and Welfare Council and a Meat and Livestock Commission Commissioner.

Peter Jinman

A senior partner in a veterinary practice in Herefordshire who was an active member of the advisory group that helped develop the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. A member of a number of committees including the Food Standards Agency Independent Advisory Group, the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) and previously President of the British Veterinary Association.

Diane McCrea

An independent consultant on food and consumer affairs and formerly head of Food and Health Research at the Consumers' Association (now Which?). Has represented Consumers International as the head of the delegation at Codex Alimentarius – the international food standards setting body. A member of a number of committees including the advisory committee on Animal Feedstuffs and SEAC.

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Martin Potter

An independent consultant on farm animal welfare and husbandry with a background in research in animal welfare science. Formerly Head of Farm Animals Department with RSPCA and a former member of FAWC.

Dick Sibley

Principal and director of a mixed veterinary practice for over 27 years. The founding member of the Board of the National Dairy Farm Assured Scheme who has chaired BCVA committees for Farm Assurance, Health Planning and bovine tuberculosis.

Sarah Wolfensohn

Head of Veterinary Services Department at Oxford University with a varied background in science, the pharmaceutical industry and education. Active on European committees and on the Joint Working Group on Refinement: To improve animal welfare.

Bill Swann (member to 17 May 2006)

Director of the Brooke Hospital for Animals implementing programmes of welfare and health improvements in three continents. Also over 21 years experience of veterinary practice. Extensive committee experience including World Society for the Protection of Animals, Companion Animal Welfare Council and Ethics and Law Veterinary Association.

A group that oversees delivery of the Strategy

Our overarching objective, as set out in our Terms of Reference (see box), is to oversee delivery of the Strategy in England and, in doing so, help bring about long-term improvements to the wellbeing of the nation's kept animals. We have agreed a Work Programme of ten objectives for 2006-07.¹⁹

EIG Terms of Reference

The England Implementation Group is an independent body established to drive forward delivery of the vision and strategic aims of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. In pursuit of that objective the Group will work with Government, the livestock and food industries, animal owners, the veterinary profession, consumers and other stakeholders to **foster wide ownership** of the Strategy and a shared commitment to its outcomes.

¹⁹ "England Implementation Group Work Programme 2006-07" available at www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/pdf/workprog2006-07.pdf.

Annex B: What is the England Implementation Group?

The Group will publish an **Implementation Plan** to monitor delivery of the Strategy by all stakeholders, and hold interested parties, including Government, to account under the Strategy. It will provide an overview of its achievements and of the future challenges and priorities of the Strategy through an **annual progress report** and annual updating of the Implementation Plan.

It will give **advice** to the Chief Veterinary Officer or to Ministers on matters within the scope of the Strategy including Government regulation of animal health and welfare. It will also give advice on any matters specifically remitted to it by the Chief Veterinary Officer or Ministers.

It may investigate any topic falling within the scope of the Strategy and publish such advice, **analysis and commentary** as it considers appropriate.

The Group will normally meet 6 times a year. Provision will be made for public attendance at meetings of the Group and full minutes of the meeting will be published on the Defra website.

The Group will liaise regularly with its counterparts in Scotland and Wales.

How to contact us

Details of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy and the EIG can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/index.htm>. If you have comments on this report you can email our Secretariat at eig@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Framework of Livestock Strategy Indicators

The following table introduces the framework of livestock indicators developed by the EIG and Defra. There are headline and core indicators for each “element” of the Strategy’s vision. Not all indicators are ready yet. For those that are, datasheets giving details of the measure and showing trends are published online at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/eig/indicators/index.htm (please contact the EIG Secretariat, on 020 7904 6452, for paper copies if you do not have internet access).

1 Animals in GB kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos are healthy and treated humanely

Headline indicators

H1. On-farm health and welfare index [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

This will be an index, for each species, which captures and reflects the impact on farm animal welfare of key factors, including disease incidence and conditions in which animals are kept and reared. This will, of course, need input from a wide range of data sources. The work of the Bristol Welfare Assurance Programme, at Bristol University, could provide a good foundation. The index will take some time to develop. In the meantime, proxy measures containing data from the State Veterinary Service (SVS) welfare inspections and data for welfare conditions, primarily mastitis, will be developed.

Core indicators

1.1. Farm Health Planning [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

- Percentage of livestock farms in England with an approved farm health plan

A process indicator which should be correlated with higher on-farm health and welfare.

1.2. Results of animal inspections

- Number of inspections achieving stated compliance levels as a percentage of all inspections

A measure of compliance through the whole production chain, including farm, transportation, market and slaughterhouse. This will contain results of inspections carried out by the SVS and local authority inspectors.

1.3. On farm mortality

- Percentage of animal deaths occurring on farm

On-farm mortality is included as an indicator to assess the level of non-planned deaths, initially within cattle. High mortality rates will be correlated with high levels of disease and poor welfare.

1.4. Expenditure on vet services [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

- Amount spent on veterinary services and medicines by sector per year

This indicator will focus on preventative expenditure rather than “fire fighting.” Data will be collected by Defra, for the first time, in 2006 and be made available in 2007.

1.5. Farmer qualifications/competence

- Percentage estimate of the number of managers with basic training, full agricultural training or practical experience only

A measure of the level of qualifications and competence of livestock keepers. This links a higher level of awareness to improved standards.

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

Headline indicators

H2. Animal health and welfare trade restrictions against Britain

- Estimated value of trade lost because of trade restrictions on animal health and welfare grounds

Where there are restrictions levied on the British market for livestock and livestock products, an assessment of the pre-restriction trade levels can be used to estimate the trade lost.

Core indicators

2.1. Incidence and prevalence of disease

- Passive and active surveillance results for bTB, Scrapie and BSE

This measure tracks the incidence of key diseases that contribute to Britain's disease status and influence our ability to trade, or are economically significant nationally. The OIE's trade restrictions lists could form the basis for other diseases. bTB pre-movement testing, BSE testing and salmonella could also be included.

2.2. Prevention of disease spread

- Percentage of farmers using biosecurity measures to prevent disease spread

A measure intended to highlight the type and application of biosecurity on farm. This farm-level process collectively may increase the disease status. It also acts as a barometer for stakeholder awareness of the need for such measures and may highlight differences across sectors. Can be expanded by type of biosecurity measure.

2.3. Trade in breeding animals

- Value and volume of breeding stock and genetic products exported from the UK

The trade in breeding animals from UK (trade data is only available at this level) will be influenced by international perceptions of the level of health in UK herds.

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

Headline indicators

H3. Measure the sharing of costs [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

- Breakdown of costs met by industry and Government – each presented as a percentage of total expenditure

This indicator will show trends in the split between Government and industry expenditure on animal health and welfare. It will cover a range of types of expenditure, including research and development, disease compensation, surveillance, animal tracing and identification and laboratory services.

Core indicators

3.1. Total costs of delivering the Strategy [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

- Costs of strategy implementation, broken down by industry, Government, and sector if possible

This measure will be required to inform the headline indicator H3.

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

Headline indicators

H4A. Risk assessment for types of disease [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

This will be a subjective assessment of the state of preparedness in England for disease emergencies, based on a range of statistical information conducted and reviewed with stakeholder involvement and including risk communication.

H4B. International comparison of effectiveness of contingency planning [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

This measure will compare the performance of our contingency planning against our competitors.

Core indicators

4.1. Components of the risk assessment [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

This indicator will provide information to inform the headline assessment made by the EIG and stakeholders. The measures are likely to cover a wide range of subjects, which in isolation do not allow assessment but together contribute to a wider understanding. Needs defining, however. Suggestions include: training of staff, vets, resource measures, testing facilities, movements of animals, tracing of animals, biosecurity, illegal imports and media communication.

5 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

Headline indicators

H5. Consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour

- Percentage of consumers stating their preferences for different types of food, compared to actual purchase behaviour

This measures the extent to which consumers claim to value animal health and welfare versus the food they actually purchase.

Core indicators

5.1. Consumer response to different products

- Proportion of market share held by free range, barn and caged-hen egg production

This measure is chosen to examine the purchasing preferences of the consumer, and will also show changes in the poultry industry. Can be expanded in time to contain other preferences for other products perceived to have high welfare status, for example, organic produce.

5.2. Farm assurance

- Proportion of livestock sector production covered by the 'Little Red Tractor' and RSPCA Freedom Food assurance schemes

This will measure both the industry's desire to adopt recognised standards and to market these to the consumer.

5.3. Veterinary medicines usages and residues

- Incidence of veterinary medicinal product residues exceeding the maximum residue limits (MRLs)

This measure will show the amount of medicine consumed/applied to animals, balanced by the percentage of samples which exceed the maximum residue limit for medicines. Data on medicine usage is not currently available, but this indicator will be expanded to include data on veterinary medicine sales.

5.4. Zoonotic disease in livestock

- Levels of key zoonotic diseases in the human population

Although there can be a weak link between symptoms seen in humans and in farm animals, the consumer frequently responds to outbreaks of zoonotic disease by changing purchasing habits or opinions, for example with egg consumption and salmonella or beef consumption and BSE.

5.5. Public attitudes

- Public attitudes towards the industry and Government response to disease outbreaks

A measure of the public attitudes towards the livestock industry, livestock products and the Government's response to animal disease outbreaks.

6 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

Headline indicators

H6. Profitability of UK farmers versus key competitors

- UK family farm income compared to the average EU-15 family farm income

This indicator is chosen to benchmark UK performance against EU competitors, in terms of profitability, by sector. We only have data for the UK and not England. Current figures are only available up to 2003 and so do not include the additional Member States from EU enlargement in 2004.

Core indicators

6.1. Changes in the pattern of trade

- Change to the percentage of livestock products purchased versus percentage imported

This will track key commodity production, consumption, import and export balance sheet.

This impacts on the wider vision set. Care will be needed to ensure that this does not become a self-sufficiency indicator. However, trading patterns of key commodities relate to the “meeting the needs of consumers at home and abroad” element of the vision.

6.2. Impact of animal health and welfare regulations [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

This will measure the impact of regulation (including, if possible, a comparison with EU member states), which is important to understanding whether the Strategy achieves its aims, particularly those not directly driven by legislation.

6.3. Food indicator

- Public attitudes to meat and dairy products

This will measure the perception of food safety, related to problems in the livestock sector. It will capture a range of measures, including the level of concern regarding livestock products and specific food concerns, and present them alongside non-livestock food sectors for comparability. There is overlap between this and the public attitudes indicator under 5, above.

Overarching indicators

H7. Partnership working [UNDER DEVELOPMENT – NOT READY YET]

This overarching indicator will measure the effectiveness of partnership working in animal health and welfare, a key theme of the Strategy. It is likely it will be measured through a subjective assessment rather than a statistical measure.

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