

# **Animal Health and Welfare in the Livestock Industry: Strategy 2016 to 2021**

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# **Animal Health and Welfare in the Livestock Industry: Strategy 2016 to 2021**

## **Ministerial Foreword**

Agriculture is vital to Scotland's economy. The livestock industry alone supports just under 35,000 jobs and contributes £1.6 billion worth of output. But that's not all, the quality of agricultural produce underpins Scotland's aspiration to be a Good Food Nation, and its stewardship of the land helps maintain Scotland's world famous landscape.

Delivering these benefits requires hard work and knowledge, and for livestock farmers the most crucial skills are those needed to care for their animals.

Scotland is justly renowned for its high standard of animal husbandry. The routine work needed to look after livestock is often unnoticed, but it is essential and is carried out with dedication by farmers the length and breadth of the country.

We can be proud of Scotland's record on animal health and welfare. But in an increasingly competitive market we need to use what has been achieved so far as a springboard to enhance the country's reputation for quality produce and proficient husbandry.

Delivering improvements in animal health and welfare is not a job for just one agency or group. Government, industry, enforcement agencies, retailers and each of us as consumers have a part to play.

That is why this strategy has been prepared in consultation with farming organisations, animal welfare organisations and scientists, and I am taking this opportunity to thank them for their contribution. Stakeholders will also have a central role in implementing the range of actions it sets out. Those actions include steps to improve the way animal health messages are communicated, to increase knowledge exchange and to strengthen information flow up and down the supply chain.

I am pleased to be able to present this strategy as the next stage on a journey toward a Scotland where the high standards of animal health and welfare in the livestock industry are one of the foundation stones of Scotland's reputation for high quality and ethical produce.

**RICHARD LOCHHEAD, MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment

# Animal Health and Welfare in the Livestock Industry: Strategy 2016 to 2021

## Introduction

1. An animal health and welfare strategy covering all of Great Britain has been in place since 2004. However, the devolution of animal health budgets in 2011 has given the Scottish Government more scope to set its own priorities. Scottish Ministers therefore want to have an animal health and welfare strategy that is tailored to Scotland's needs.
2. The livestock industry is an important part of Scottish agriculture, contributing £1.6 billion worth of output to the Scottish economy and employing just under 35,000 people. The industry's strengths underpin Scotland's international reputation for high quality livestock.
3. Maintaining and building on our existing high standards of animal health and welfare will enhance that reputation and will:
  - 3.1. Enable Scottish producers to continue to command a premium in the market;
  - 3.2. Contribute substantially to Scotland's ambition to be a Good Food Nation<sup>1</sup> by further improving the quality and taste of its produce;
  - 3.3. Contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions through increased biological efficiency; and
  - 3.4. Allow individual producers to reduce the direct and indirect costs associated with disease and to help improve their long term profitability.
4. Achieving these benefits in a world of increasing globalisation (including international trade in livestock and livestock products), population growth and climate change needs industry and government to continue to work together. It is that need for a collective vision for the future that has prompted the development of a new animal health and welfare strategy for livestock.

## A Strong Foundation

5. Scotland has a solid base on which to build. It already has:
  - 5.1. Close links and strong partnership working between government, industry and other stakeholders, including quarterly meetings of the General

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<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government's policies on food are set out in, *Recipe For Success - Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy*, which can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/06/25133322/0>. A discussion document on implementation of the phase of the policy can be found at: <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Becoming-a-Good-Food-Nation-dd6.aspx>.

Stakeholders Group as well as many other groups. That collaboration has led to a co-ordinated approach to animal health and welfare that links to other crucial parts of the rural economy, such as the food and drink sector, and a strong focus on animal welfare combined with effective enforcement of animal welfare legislation;

5.2. A growing reputation for good quality, high health status produce and stock, backed by established health schemes for both cattle and sheep and, as a result, a gradual opening up of new export markets following the recovery from the impact of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and of the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease;

5.3. Been declared as officially free of bovine tuberculosis, with industry and government working together to maintain that status through careful sourcing of stock, abattoir surveillance and a rigorous regime of pre- and post-movement checks. These measures support a risk-based system of routine herd testing;

5.4. A flexible and skilled workforce that has access to training through a network of land based colleges as well as to the degree and post-graduate education available from Scotland's Rural College<sup>2</sup> (SRUC) and others; and

5.5. A vibrant and long-established land-based science sector with a hard won and enviable reputation for the quality of its agricultural, veterinary and environmental research.

6. The Scottish Government is committed to building on this foundation. It has, for example:

6.1. Championed Scottish farming internationally, particularly in Europe;

6.2. Worked with industry to reduce the impact of bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) and sheep scab;

6.3. Enabled the long-standing Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme<sup>3</sup> (HIVSS) to continue supporting the provision of veterinary services to the remotest parts of Scotland by ensuring that it is compliant with State Aid and audit requirements;

6.4. Invested £8.9 million via the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP<sup>4</sup>) to support activities that promote animal health and welfare activities. For example, a previous measure under the Land Manager Options (LMO) scheme supported the preparation of an animal health and welfare management plan and other control measures such as biosecurity and isolation areas on farm. The Scottish government also funds, through the

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on SRUC see: <http://www.sruc.ac.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> For more background on the HIVSS see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/crofting-policy/support-for-crofting/HIVSS>

<sup>4</sup> For more information see: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP>

Veterinary and Advisory Services Programme<sup>5</sup>, scanning surveillance for new and re-emerging animal disease threats as well as workforce training<sup>6</sup> provided by LANTRA<sup>7</sup> and SRUC;

6.5. Provided £6 million to the ScotEID project to support the efficient and cost effective implementation of European sheep electronic identification legislation, electronic pig movement reporting and development of a BVD database<sup>8</sup>; The ScotEID data systems are unique, giving Scotland a significant advantage concerning policy implementation, industry development brand integrity, quality assurance, disease control, and underlying research.

6.6. Continued to fund a long-standing research programme in animal health and welfare science at Scottish research institutes and universities that underpins core research providers and includes research into new priorities, such as vectors and the impact of climate change<sup>9</sup>. This includes funding for EPIC (Epidemiology, Population Health and Infectious Disease Control), the Centre of Expertise in Animal Disease Outbreaks<sup>10</sup>.

6.7. Worked to achieve a sustainable and healthy population of honey bees for pollination and honey production in Scotland through strengthened partnership working with stakeholders with interests in honey bees<sup>11</sup>.

7. Much of Scotland's livestock production is both extensive and based in upland areas. Although the image of slow maturing suckler beef herds grazing the lower grassy slopes over summer while sheep forage higher up helps market Scottish produce, livestock production faces particular challenges. Around 85% of agricultural land is unlikely to be able to support anything more than low intensity farming, and as a result is classified as Less Favoured Area. Land used for livestock production in Scotland tends to have poorer quality soils and be where the climate is cold and wet, so grass grows slowly. Labour is also often difficult to find in these areas as people seek employment elsewhere. *Rural Scotland Key Facts*<sup>12</sup> shows that remote rural areas have a much lower proportion of the population in the ages 16-44 and a higher proportion of people 55 and older compared with rest of Scotland.

8. In addition, transport costs, for example, to bring in winter feed or to take sheep away for winter grazing on lowland grass, are often high. This is particularly so on islands where additional ferry costs may be incurred.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/business/veterinary>

<sup>6</sup> For more information on skills development see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/business/skills>

<sup>7</sup> The Sector Skills Council that supports skills and training for people and businesses in the land-based and environmental sector. For more information see: <http://www.lantra.co.uk/>

<sup>8</sup> For more information on ScotEID see: <http://www.scoteid.com/>

<sup>9</sup> Further information on the health and welfare research can be found at <http://www.knowledgescotland.org/userfiles/healthwelfaretheme6.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> For more background on EPIC see: <http://epicscotland.org/>

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the *Honey Bee Health Strategy* see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/06/23102211/0>

<sup>12</sup> For more information on recent publications of *Rural Scotland Key Facts* see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/PubRural>

9. These challenges are also opportunities. Concentrating on the benefits of extensive farming in a landscape as unspoiled as Scotland's can give a competitive edge in the market. To maintain that edge and improve profitability Scottish producers need to build on Scotland's reputation for high quality produce. That reputation depends in no small measure on the health and welfare of Scotland's livestock.

10. Many factors can negatively affect animal health and welfare, including inadequate biosecurity, the prevalence of endemic disease, inefficient systems on farm (including insufficient attention to genetics and poor nutrition), fluctuating market conditions and poor livestock handling. By contrast there are drivers that promote good animal health and welfare, such as high levels of skills, knowledge exchange, the spread of best practice and the increased profitability that comes with improvements in quality.

11. As a result, there are a number of organisations and groups that can influence animal health and welfare, including government, the veterinary profession, industry, academia and, through their purchasing decisions, retailers and consumers. It is important to recognise the rights and responsibilities of each interest, including the limits of their influence.

### **Aims of the Scottish Government**

12. The Scottish Government's overall purpose<sup>13</sup> is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. Within that aim there is a strategic objective specific to rural Scotland, which is to improve Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it<sup>14</sup>.

13. To achieve that strategic objective the Scottish Government has a vision of an agriculture industry that is dynamic, competitive and renowned for good quality, sustainable produce. It will strive to achieve that vision by promoting high welfare, healthy livestock produced by resilient systems with minimal environmental impact.

14. We recognise that Scottish livestock enterprises have to operate in a commercial world and that margins are tight. We understand the challenges they faced in the years ahead. That why Scottish government has produced an Agriculture vision - The Future of Scottish Agriculture A Discussion Document, which was published in June 2015, and is part of a dialogue about the future of the agriculture industry in Scotland. Moving forward from these discussions; Government and industry stakeholders will be working in partnerships to identify the initial actions required that will assist the livestock sector in realising elements of this vision.

15. The Scottish Government plays a pivotal role in agriculture through support payments, provision of advisory services, funding of research and control of statutory endemic and exotic disease. However, its ability to achieve its strategic goals has to

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<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/purpose>

<sup>14</sup> See: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/Strategic-Objectives/greener>

take into account financial constraints, European Union legislation and animal health and welfare law.

16. Policy on animal health and welfare is largely devolved, and the Scottish Government already:

16.1. Acts to minimise incursions of exotic animal disease, and to eradicate outbreaks efficiently as and when they occur;

16.2. Sets and enforces minimum standards of animal welfare;

16.3. Regulates ancillary industries, such as haulage, abattoirs, markets, renderers and fallen stock collectors;

16.4. Supports, through the rural development programme, advisory and knowledge exchange services to help improve business and farming practices across the sector;

16.5. Protects the interests of Scottish producers by seeking to influence the development of European Union legislation on animal health and welfare;

16.6. Works with other UK administrations to ensure that there is a co-ordinated and, where possible, consistent approach to developing legislation and policy;

16.7. Promotes and funds relevant strategic and applied research and facilitates collaboration between the various institutes and universities that carry out activities in support of animal health and welfare for the livestock sector; and

16.8. Implements joint industry and government initiatives, for example by introducing legislation or by supporting other measures to control non-statutory endemic diseases<sup>15</sup> and promote welfare.

#### Administrative Arrangements

17. The Scottish Government administers animal health and welfare policy through the Animal Health and Welfare Division, which is headed by the Chief Veterinary Officer for Scotland and which is part of the Directorate for Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities. Delivery of government animal health and welfare services is largely through the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

18. Many aspects of animal health and welfare law are enforced by local authorities or the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA)<sup>16</sup>. The Scottish Government and APHA maintain close links with those partners and APHA in particular is a party to a Memorandum of Understanding that has been prepared

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<sup>15</sup> Non-statutory diseases are diseases that are not covered by legislation.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the SSPCA see: <http://www.scottishspca.org/>

between the SSPCA and local authorities to avoid duplication of effort and disruption to the industry.

#### Links with Other Administrations

18. Legislation affecting animal health and welfare is largely set by the European Union in order to set minimum standards that ensure a fair market and free movement of goods across the European Union as well as to allow the European Union to trade with third countries (that is, countries outwith the European Union) as a single bloc.

19. Although responsibility for policy on animal health and welfare is largely devolved to the Scottish Government, the UK Government retains the lead in all negotiations with the European Union, and all other international bodies. However, the Scottish Government will continue to promote Scotland's interests in Europe through its office in Brussels by direct contact with appropriate officials and working to influence other Member States.

20. Of course, disease is no respecter of borders and disease could spread across Great Britain regardless of where it originated. As a result, Great Britain (Scotland, England and Wales) is considered to be a single epidemiological unit for the purposes of animal disease control.

21. The division of responsibilities between reserved and devolved, as well as the need to tackle disease co-operatively means that the Scottish Government works closely with, and will continue to work closely with, its counterparts in the Welsh Government and Defra. The current working arrangements include regular meetings between the Chief Veterinary Officers of each administration in the UK (that is Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland), UK wide exercises to rehearse the response to disease outbreaks and discussions on the UK's view on European Union initiatives.

22. The Scottish Government was also involved in 'Animal and Plant Health in the UK: building our science capability'<sup>17</sup>, a strategy to set the strategic direction and priorities for UK animal and plant health science, and to ensure the UK has the science capability, in the provision of research, evidence and laboratory services, to underpin best practice management over the next 10-15 years. As part of the UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health we are taking this work forward and the output from the project can be used to inform the Scottish position.

#### **Five Themes Underpinning the Strategy**

23. A stakeholder working group (see Annex A for a list of members) identified five themes that need to be addressed to deliver improvements in animal health and welfare, and these are: skills and knowledge, disease risk, welfare, regulatory and societal impact. The actions stemming from those themes are set out in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-and-plant-health-in-the-uk-building-our-science-capability>

## Skills and Knowledge

24. Improvements to farm processes such as system design and proactive health planning, including vaccine programmes and targeted biosecurity, are of increasing importance. Livestock managers will need to develop these while coping with the challenges posed by economic pressures and an ageing, and declining, farm workforce<sup>18</sup>. In addition, the structure of the industry is changing with an increasing number of smallholders and hobby farmers<sup>19</sup>.

25. Adjusting to these challenges will require:

25.1. Establishing closer links between delivery of health and welfare objectives and the funding available through the SRDP;

25.2. Looking for new ways to reach farmers, including hobby farmers and smallholders, with information and advice;

25.3. Assessing the extent of the relationships between health, welfare and profitability, and communicating that link to livestock keepers in a meaningful way to encourage the development of better systems on farm; and

25.4. Looking at the ways in which research priorities are set.

### *Scottish Rural Development Programme*

26. The current Scottish Rural Development Programme<sup>20</sup> was approved by the European Commission in May 2015, with a budget of over £1.3 billion to deliver on its priorities. It will help create vibrant rural communities, protect and enhance our environment, support rural businesses, and help the farming industry to grow and modernise.

27. It is one of the levers that the Scottish Government can use to encourage behaviour that will enhance animal health and welfare.

28. Improving the industry's skill base and encouraging new talent to flourish is central to the Scottish Government's objective of increasing sustainable economic growth. The SRDP programme that began in 2015 will include budgetary provision for a Scottish Farm Advisory Service that will:

28.1. Provide general advice on, for example, animal welfare, prevention of pollution and cross-compliance;

28.2. Advise and assist small farms and crofts;

28.3. Deliver specialised advice and mentoring for new entrant young farmers;

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<sup>18</sup> In the last 10 years the number of occupiers over 65 keeping livestock has increased by 400 to 5,400. In the same period the number of livestock keepers has fallen by 1,900 to 19,500.

<sup>19</sup> Since 2004 the number of smallholders keeping livestock (i.e. those farms with a Standard Labour Requirement of less than 0.5) has increased by over 1,500 to 15,500.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP>

28.4. Advise on improving business efficiency and effectiveness; and

28.5. Help producers to identify improvements that benefit the environment and combat climate change.

29. The SRDP also includes an opportunity for the industry to develop proposals and apply for contributory funding towards initiatives designed to promote innovation, skills development and knowledge transfer.

**Action 1:** The Scottish Government will ensure the new Farm Advisory Service promotes advice on all aspects of animal health, welfare and legislative requirements

### *Knowledge Exchange*

30. Extensive research has already been undertaken on the link between animal health and profitability<sup>21</sup>. Although producers are well aware of the commercial benefits of healthy animals, the challenge is to ensure the communication of new and cost effective knowledge to the widest audience possible. This will require identifying the best options for reaching different audiences and tailoring messages accordingly. The Scottish Agricultural and Rural Advisory Service SRUC through the Veterinary and Advisory Services Programme<sup>22</sup> and Quality Meat Scotland's<sup>23</sup> (QMS) knowledge transfer network (which includes the Monitor Farms Programme) are such vehicles for disseminating advice which both protects animals and enhances efficiency.

31. The Scottish Government and its partners already reach out to producers using a variety of media. However, it is important to build on that work to ensure that the benefits of improved animal health to producers and consumers is emphasised when appropriate.

32. The Scottish Government welcomes industry initiatives such as Livestock Health Scotland that strengthen communication and collaboration across the production chain to improve animal health and welfare.

**Action 2:** The Scottish Government with work with partners to review the effectiveness of communications on animal health and welfare and make recommendations as necessary.

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<sup>21</sup> For example, *Costs and Benefits of Preventing Animal Diseases: A review focusing on endemic diseases*, see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/01/20496/49533>, and also between animal welfare and profitability (e.g. *Profiting from Animal Welfare: an Animal-Based Perspective*, see: <http://www.ofc.org.uk/files/ofc/papers/lawrence-09.pdf> ].

<sup>22</sup> For more information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/business/veterinary>

<sup>23</sup> For more information on QMS see: <http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/>

## Research

26. A research programme linked to effective knowledge exchange, advice and training is also essential to the livestock sector. Government can support research that might not be funded by the private sector but which, nonetheless, could provide a long term public good. It is clearly important that such research relates to the day to day needs of the industry. To achieve this the Scottish Government's, Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS), consults livestock industry stakeholders during the commissioning of its research.

33. The Scottish Government has maintained long-term investment in Scotland's capability and capacity in land-based science and currently the Scottish Government invests around £57 million annually in research into rural affairs and the environment. This funding supports long-term, goal oriented programmes focussed on complex but solvable problems that link to knowledge exchange work and maintain and develop the skills and expertise that may be needed in a disease outbreak.

34. Of the total, over £10 million is spent on animal science, including research on livestock genetics, product quality, animal health and welfare , and sustainable livestock systems. The purpose of these programmes is to reduce the burden of disease, secure a safe supply of high quality food from the livestock industries in Scotland and to improve efficiency while managing environmental impacts and animal welfare<sup>24</sup>.

35. The Scottish Government was also involved in 'Animal and Plant Health in the UK: building our science capability'<sup>25</sup>. This initiative was aimed at setting the strategic direction and priorities for UK animal and plant health science and also to ensure the UK has the science capability (in the provision of research, evidence and laboratory services) to underpin best practice management over the next 10-15 years. As part of the UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health we are taking this work forward and the output from the project can be used to inform the Scottish position.

**Action 3:** The Scottish Government will ensure that the livestock and ancillary industries continue to have regular opportunities to contribute to both the setting of priorities for the research programme and the commissioning of relevant one off research projects.

## Disease Risk

36. The risk of incursion by a notifiable (or statutory) exotic animal disease is always present. To deal with that threat the Scottish Government has put in place a system for responding to suspect cases, identifying disease, and dealing with outbreaks if

<sup>24</sup> For more information on the animal health and welfare research programme see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/Agri-Fisheries-Rural/animalhealthandwelfare1>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-and-plant-health-in-the-uk-building-our-science-capability>

they occur. The pillars underpinning that system include a legal requirement to report suspicion of a notifiable disease, surveillance arrangements, a detailed agreement between the Scottish Government and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), a partnership approach to tackling disease and systems for monitoring wildlife and imports. Defra also provides international disease monitoring for the UK coupled with a system for alerting stakeholders to new and emerging threats.

37. In addition, regular exercises take place that involve stakeholders and other UK administrations to test and hone Scotland's response to disease. The most recent, Exercise Walnut, in 2013 tested the UK's ability to deal with an outbreak of classical swine fever.

### *Surveillance*

38. The Scottish Government provides annual funding, through its Veterinary and Advisory Services Programme, of around £5 million to SRUC and the Moredun Research Institute (MRI) to provide scanning disease surveillance services, such as post mortems. Surveillance is delivered by the network of disease surveillance centres operated by SRUC, with specialist support from the MRI. A Strategic Management Board with independent members from the livestock and veterinary industry as well as public health representatives has been set up to advise the Scottish Ministers on surveillance policy.

### *Animal and Plant Health Agency*

39. In Scotland, delivery of many elements of animal health and welfare policy, and in particular the response to a disease outbreak, is through the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)<sup>26</sup>, which is an Executive Agency of Defra that acts on behalf of Scottish Ministers in Scotland.

40. The Scottish Government's relationship with both Defra and APHA is governed by a concordat agreed at Ministerial level. A detailed Memorandum of Understanding, backed by an annual budget of over £12 million, underpins the concordat and ensures that APHA delivers a service tailored to Scotland's needs.

41. Discussions are underway with, amongst others, Defra and the Welsh Government to consider how best to deliver animal health and welfare policy in future. The Scottish Government's priority in those discussions will be to retain a system that can deliver services under normal conditions and respond quickly and effectively to a disease outbreak.

<p><b>Action 4:</b> The Scottish Government will review its governance of APHA's activities in Scotland so as to ensure that Scottish Government delivers an effective service to the people of Scotland.</p>
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<sup>26</sup> For more information on APHA see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency>

## *Borders and Wildlife*

42. Wild animals, including game species and feral populations of once domesticated, introduced or escaped animals, can be a reservoir for disease. There are arrangements for monitoring both large and small game as well as other wild birds and mammals. Where appropriate these systems utilise the skills of trained hunters and game dealers and are designed to pick up notifiable disease as soon as practicable. Contingency planning for notifiable disease takes into account the potential for wild animals to have a role of in disease transmission and considers possible arrangements for control in wildlife.

43. Imports of animals and animal products can also be a source of disease. The Scottish Government, APHA, Border Force (part of the Home Office<sup>27</sup>) and local authorities each have a part to play in implementing and enforcing strict international trade legislation to reduce the risk of animal disease from imports.

**Action 5:** The Scottish Government, in conjunction with partners, will review existing monitoring of wildlife and imports to ensure that they are effective.

44. Another important area that is a potential source of disease is the collection, treatment, use and disposal of animal by-products. This is a tightly regulated area with limited scope for change, however it is an area kept under review to identify possible improvements to the regulatory and enforcement regime as well as the livestock sector's contribution to waste management.

## *Endemic Disease*

45. Although exotic disease outbreaks can have serious consequences they only occur from time to time. The impact of non-statutory endemic diseases is less dramatic, but they can, nonetheless, reduce profitability by seriously diminishing animal health and welfare, reducing the quality and quantity of produce and requiring significant veterinary input.

46. The Scottish Government has already, in conjunction with stakeholders, begun to tackle endemic diseases that are particularly serious, and has:

46.1. Worked with the Scottish livestock industry to develop the on-going eradication scheme for Bovine Viral Diarrhoea, an insidious disease of cattle that reduces health, welfare and profitability. The Scottish eradication scheme has already resulted in a reduction in the proportion of beef herds exposed to BVD from 40% in 2009 to 12% in 2016. This reduction has been achieved by encouraging producers to remove BVD from their herds through testing (initially voluntary then compulsory), and bringing in legislation that controls cattle movements and requires declaration of the BVD status of an animal or herd at sale. Alongside these steps there has been considerable effort to promote knowledge exchange and to provide advice and training to veterinary

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<sup>27</sup> For more information on Border Force see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force>

practitioners and farmers<sup>28</sup>. Scotland's approach to tackling BVD will serve as a model for campaigns to deal with other diseases;

46.2. Achieved OTF status (that is, Scotland is officially free of bovine tuberculosis (bTB)) through maintaining surveillance, imposing a system of pre- and post-movement checks on cattle brought from high risk areas within the UK. Moreover, animals imported directly from other Member States, such as the Republic of Ireland, may be slaughtered at the owner's expense if they are found to be infected with bTB on arrival in Scotland; and

46.3. Addressed, at the request of industry, sheep scab by making it a notifiable disease. This has allowed the identification of areas where there are particular risks or where there may be no sheep scab. Consequently, industry now has the option of considering action to ensure that sheep scab is not allowed to spread to areas or islands that have been identified as free from the disease.

47. These are significant successes at a national level. However, tackling endemic diseases at farm level through common sense measures such as improved biosecurity, careful sourcing of stock and good animal husbandry can have spin-off benefits. These include improving the quality of produce, improving profitability and reducing the likelihood of an incursion by an exotic disease, or limit its impact if there is an outbreak. The Scottish Government is therefore keen to continue to work with industry to promote farm-level actions to reduce the incidence of endemic disease.

<p><b>Action 6:</b> The Scottish Government will use the best available evidence to initiate a discussion with stakeholders on the next stage of tackling disease in Scotland.</p>
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## Welfare

### *The Link between Health and Welfare*

48. Animal health and welfare are inextricably linked - anything that causes disease inevitably reduces an animal's welfare. In addition, chronic stress due to environmental factors can compromise the immune system leading to increased vulnerability to disease. Best practice in health can therefore often lead to improvements in welfare, and *vice versa*.

49. The link between health and welfare is one reason why the Scottish Government has previously supported the preparation of veterinary health and welfare plans through the SRDP land management option programme. The Scottish Government will continue to work with industry and researchers to tackle the causes of poor health, such as endemic disease. However setting priorities for future action needs to take into account the welfare of animals as well as other considerations, for example, low-grade lameness in sheep may not be of immediate commercial concern, but it has the potential to affect significant numbers of Scottish sheep.

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<sup>28</sup> For more information on BVD see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/Diseases/disease/bvd>

## *Reasons for Change*

50. There is a growing public interest in animal welfare and this is a powerful incentive to improve animal welfare. This has been recognised by the European Union, which in recent years has instigated changes to farm animal welfare legislation, for example the banning of sow crates and of barren cages for hens, and the introduction of new rules on the slaughter of animals. However the pace with which new measures are adopted can vary across Europe. In some areas, for example welfare during transport, while further improvements could potentially be made to the legislation, it has been recognised that improving the enforcement of existing legal standards has the greatest potential for improving animal welfare across the European Union.

51. Traditionally, livestock welfare has been assessed on key inputs, for example diet, accommodation and the provision of veterinary care. The European Union is increasingly encouraging the use of objective outcome-based measures, for example in quality assurance schemes and retailers' product specifications, to demonstrate that the consumer demand for ethical and quality produce has been met. This is an approach that could be further developed in the context of the Scottish livestock industry.

## *Welfare Working Group*

52. A way forward is required that maximises the quality of life for Scottish livestock by building on our excellent research base and utilising the dedication of Scottish farmers to livestock welfare. Improvements will ultimately only be delivered by the producers who directly look after livestock, but they can be supported by the Scottish Government, researchers, industry, enforcement agencies and animal welfare organisations working together to identify problems, develop and spread best practice and, where appropriate, update animal welfare legislation, codes and guidance.

53. To bring together producer organisations and other interests the Scottish Government has set up a working group that will:

53.1. Explore the relationship between farm animal welfare and health;

53.2. Consider the opportunities for promoting outcome based measures in different sectors; and

53.3. Assess the main welfare challenges facing the terrestrial livestock sector in Scotland and make recommendations on how those challenges could be addressed.

Terms of reference for the group are at Annex B.

**Action 7:** The Welfare Working Group will continue to make recommendations on how best to promote animal health and welfare, including suggestions for further research and voluntary initiatives.

## Regulatory Impact

54. Reducing unnecessary regulation of the agriculture industry is an important objective for Scottish Government. The *Doing Better Initiative to Reduce Red Tape in Agriculture* carried out by Brian Pack OBE<sup>29</sup> was a response to this objective. 61 recommendations resulted and the vast majority have been formally accepted by Government<sup>30</sup>. Implementation is being driven forward by The Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment (RAFE) Delivery Board which was set up in 2015. Scottish Ministers will also seek to reduce the burden of European livestock regulations by arguing Scotland's good animal health record and disease-free status should be recognised.

**Action 8:** The Scottish Government will seek to reduce Europe's regulatory burden in recognition of Scotland's good animal health record and disease-free status.

### *Enforcement*

55. Enforcing legislation is an important part of regulation. Farming organisations have argued that having a number of bodies overseeing animal health and welfare, including industry assurance bodies, local authorities, APHA and Scottish Government checks on cross-compliance is both unnecessary and burdensome.

56. The existing division of responsibilities can also make it difficult to assemble evidence where suspected infringements are particularly complex or cross several local authority boundaries.

57. However, the devolution of animal health budgets in 2011 has given the Scottish Government the opportunity to review the way in which livestock animal health and welfare regulations are delivered, with a view to streamlining and improving the existing system.

**Action 9:** The Scottish Government will work with APHA, local authorities and other partners to review the current approach to enforcing livestock animal health and welfare regulation, and will make proposals for improvements.

### *Traceability*

58. Good livestock traceability (ie identification, registration and movement recording) allows prompt identification of the locations where an animal affected by disease has been, how long it was there and so enables an assessment of the spread of infection.

59. The traceability requirements for cattle, sheep and pigs are set by the European Union. They are an important part of cross-compliance checks and provide consumer confidence and help maintain export markets by allowing tracing of animals through the production chain. Systems for traceability are moving, as far

<sup>29</sup> For more information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/4967>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/doingbetter>

as possible, toward real-time information, individual identities and use of self-refinement and data sharing.

60. Although the primary function of traceability is disease control and public health, the collection of data on locations of births, timing of subsequent moves and slaughter represents an opportunity for the industry and supply chain. Accurate information about an animal's history can help buyers make better informed decisions and may allow sellers to charge a premium for sales with a full background, including health and welfare status.

61. Similarly, particularly for high value produce, the more information that can be sent back up the supply chain the better able producers are to adjust their production systems. For example, if producers can be told about the quality of the meat post slaughter they may be able to make changes that enhance the quality of animals sent to the abattoir or address specific welfare concerns highlighted by the condition of the carcass. Retailers would also have a greater confidence in the traceability of meat, thus providing greater assurance to customers.

62. The free flow of data about animals depends on a number of factors including technology, legal constraints and industry and public buy-in. These constraints mean that devising an economical system that delivers relevant information to each part of the supply chain will be difficult, but doing so would bring significant benefits to producers, retailers and consumers. The recent legislation on bovine electronic identification (EID), together with the progress that has been made with the ScotEID<sup>31</sup> system for sheep and pig movement reporting and BVD control, is an opportunity to improve the information available to producers and others by adding additional data and analysis to the basic legislative requirements.

**Action 10:** The Scottish Government in conjunction with partners will review animal traceability with a view to strengthening and enhancing the current system of traceability to benefit health, welfare, meat quality and environmental gains along the entire supply chain.

## Societal Impact

63. Animal health and welfare are not topics that can be considered in isolation. Animals, and how they are reared and kept, can have broader impacts, for example on the production of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Similarly, as part of a food chain, the treatment of animals and animal diseases can have an impact on human health.

### *Antimicrobial Resistance*

64. Antimicrobial resistance is a growing concern in both human and animal health. Overuse of antibiotics when treating animals is currently thought to have limited impact on antimicrobial resistance in humans. Nonetheless, unnecessary use of antibiotics could lower the efficacy of veterinary medicines in the longer term, with a

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<sup>31</sup> ScotEID works with the Scottish livestock sector and Scottish Government to design, develop and deliver traceability systems. For more information see: <http://www.scoteid.com/>

possible reduction in animal health and welfare and an increased risk of disease. The Scottish Government is therefore a party to the UK's *5 Year Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy*<sup>32</sup> and has convened an overarching policy group that includes human and animal health experts. As a result the Scottish Government is working with the industry and partners such as QMS and the MRI to provide advice and guidance to both farmers and veterinary practitioners, on the use of antibiotics in order to ensure that they remain effective.

65. In addition, SRUC carries out surveillance for antimicrobial resistance in conjunction with similar work carried out in England and Wales. This provides information to both veterinary practitioners (who can use it to benefit the animals under their care) and to government and other stakeholders.

### *Climate change*

66. Animal health is also relevant to Scotland's ambitious climate change targets<sup>33</sup>. There is evidence that animal health status has a direct impact on greenhouse gas emissions from livestock<sup>34</sup>. Dealing effectively with disease and avoiding production losses can, therefore, improve the biological efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint associated with animal products. This has been demonstrated on Climate Change Focus Farms in Scotland<sup>35</sup>. Other examples include the analysis of slurry, farmyard manure and other waste products that is now being used in conjunction with the analysis of soils to better target appropriate fertilizer application. This has helped to minimise pollution caused through the run-off of excess nutrients from farms into water courses.

67. There is also a very real risk that altered climatic conditions could compromise animal health, welfare and productivity, for example through changes in prevalence of disease and parasites, thermal stress and the changes in land use away from the production of livestock feedstuffs. Research carried out so far suggests that the average temperature increases predicted for Scotland will not adversely affect the majority of grazing animals, such as cattle and sheep, directly. However, the effects of extreme events, such as heat-waves and severe storms are likely to have a greater impact<sup>36</sup>. Climate change has already had a demonstrable impact on the prevalence of a key livestock parasite. The increased number of liver fluke outbreaks in cattle and sheep in recent years has been attributed to climate change, with the parasites and their intermediate snail hosts thriving in warm, wet conditions<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> For more information see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-5-year-antimicrobial-resistance-strategy-2013-to-2018>

<sup>33</sup> For more information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange>

<sup>34</sup> For more information see: <http://www.knowledgescotland.org/briefings.php?id=378>

<sup>35</sup> For more information see: [http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120593/improving\\_farm\\_profitability/181/optimising\\_livestock\\_management](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120593/improving_farm_profitability/181/optimising_livestock_management)

<sup>36</sup> For more information see: <http://www.knowledgescotland.org/briefings.php?id=318>

<sup>37</sup> For more information see: [http://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/1213/liver\\_fluke\\_risk\\_in\\_a\\_changing\\_climate](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/1213/liver_fluke_risk_in_a_changing_climate)

## Biodiversity

68. Biodiversity is important to Scotland's ecosystems. Not only do Scottish rural industries rely on the natural environment in order to maintain their business competitiveness but Scotland depends on the quality of its natural environment in order to both produce and market high quality food. The *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*<sup>38</sup> published in 2013 encourages public organisations and businesses to review their responsibilities for, and action that affects, biodiversity, and recognise that by increasing their contribution to nature and landscapes can help meet their corporate priorities and maintain performance.

**Action 11:** The Scottish Government will continue to monitor the links between animal health and welfare, and wider societal and climatic concerns. Scottish Government will report regularly on developments.

### Implementation

67. This strategy outlines 12 actions aimed at further strengthening the Scottish livestock industry's reputation for quality produce and excellent standards of husbandry. The next stage is to ensure that those actions are implemented.

68. Annex C lists all of the actions, and proposes the next steps. The strategy was created in consultation with steering group of stakeholders, and it is important that stakeholders have a crucial part to play in monitoring, and achieving, its implementation.

**Action 12:** An implementation group with strong stakeholder representation will be created to advise on how the actions outlined in this strategy are carried out, and on any adjustments required to adapt to changes in circumstances.

### Conclusion

69. The five themes and twelve actions outlined in this strategy set out the Scottish Government's commitments to animal health and welfare in the livestock industry over the next five years. It is a comprehensive approach that addresses many facets of animal health and welfare and will enhance Scotland's already proud reputation for animal husbandry and quality produce.

70. Although this strategy contributes to the Scottish Government's objective of sustainable economic growth it also recognises that caring for animals humanely is a public good in its own right and an essential part of sustainability in its widest sense (that is, including economic, environmental and ethical considerations). It is this marriage of the ethical and the pragmatic that will benefit consumers as well as producers and the animals in their care.

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<sup>38</sup> For more information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/5538>

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## Stakeholder Group

National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS)  
British Veterinary Association (BVA)  
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)  
Scottish Land and Estates (SL&E)  
Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers in Scotland (IAAS)  
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)  
SAC Consulting  
Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID)  
Scottish Food Quality Certification (SFQC)  
Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)  
Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association (SFMTA)  
National Sheep Association (NSA)  
Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)  
South Lanarkshire Council  
Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW)  
Scottish Beef Association (SBA)  
Moredun Research Institute (MRI)  
Scottish Dairy Cattle Association (SDCA)  
University of Glasgow/EPIC  
Scottish Goatkeepers' Federation (SGF)  
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA)  
Road Haulage Association (RHA)  
British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA)  
The Organic Food Federation (OFF)  
Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association (BSBA)

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## Welfare Working Group

### Terms of Reference

1. Scottish Ministers have agreed the following terms of reference:-

“The Welfare Working Group will:

- Represent the views of industry, veterinary, scientific and animal welfare stakeholders;
- Explore the relationship between farm animal welfare and health, taking into account the recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC)<sup>39</sup>, which will continue to be the principle source of independent advice on farm animal welfare across Great Britain;
- Consider the opportunities for promoting outcome based measures in different sectors and their uptake by the industry in assurance schemes;
- Consider the main welfare challenges in each terrestrial livestock sector in Scotland.
- Make recommendations on how those challenges could be addressed, including suggestions for: further research and voluntary initiatives;
- Where appropriate, liaise with other organisations that have an interest in animal health and welfare;
- Report its conclusions to the Scottish Government as appropriate.”

### Membership

2. The core membership is drawn from the following organisations:

British Veterinary Association  
COSLA  
National Farmers' Union Scotland  
OneKind  
Quality Meat Scotland  
Scotland's Rural College  
Scottish Government  
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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<sup>39</sup> The FAWC report on animal welfare and health can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fawc-report-on-farm-animal-welfare-health-and-disease>

3. Membership is institutional rather than individual, and organisations will nominate representatives. The Group may co-opt individuals with specific skills, such as animal welfare scientists, or to represent particular sectors (such as pig and poultry interests, transport, processing, markets or local authorities) to help with discussions on particular topics.

#### *Administrative Arrangements*

4. The Scottish Government will provide the secretariat, but Ministers have agreed that Stuart Earley of the SSPCA should chair the Group.

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List of Actions and Next Steps

Action	Next Steps
<b>Action 1:</b> The Scottish Government will ensure the new Farm Advisory Service promotes advice on all aspects of animal health, welfare and legislative requirements	Scottish Government will commit to this as an action, and will monitor delivery
<b>Action 2:</b> The Scottish Government will work with partners to review the effectiveness of communications on animal health and welfare and make recommendations as necessary.	Scottish Government will commission research into effectiveness of existing channels in conveying animal health and welfare messages.
<b>Action 3</b> The Scottish Government will ensure that the livestock and ancillary industries continue to have an opportunity to contribute to setting priorities for the research programme on a regular basis as well as on the commissioning of relevant one off research projects.	Will consult with stakeholders over the coming months, including at General Stakeholder Meetings as appropriate.
<b>Action 4:</b> The Scottish Government will review its governance of APHA's activities in Scotland so as to ensure that Scottish Government delivers an effective service to the people of Scotland.	The Scottish Government will continue discussions with Defra and the Welsh Government.
<b>Action 5:</b> The Scottish Government, in conjunction with partners, will review existing monitoring of wildlife and imports to ensure that they are effective.	Scottish Government will convene meeting of appropriate organisations.
<b>Action 6:</b> The Scottish Government will use the best available evidence to initiate a discussion with stakeholders on the next stage of tackling endemic disease in Scotland.	Scottish Government will identify existing controls and report to the Implementation Group.
<b>Action 7:</b> The Welfare Working Group will continue to make recommendations on how best to promote animal health and welfare, including suggestions for further research and voluntary initiatives.	The Implementation Group will be asked to consider the Welfare Working Group's recommendations.
<b>Action 8:</b> The Scottish Government will seek to reduce Europe's regulatory burden in recognition of Scotland's good animal health record and disease-free status.	Scottish Government will use output from <i>Doing Better Initiative to Reduce Red Tape in Agriculture</i> as basis for discussion with European Commission.

Action	Next Steps
<p><b>Action 9:</b> The Scottish Government will work with APHA, local authorities and other partners to review the current approach to enforcing livestock health and welfare regulation, and will make proposals for improvements.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government will prepare proposals for improving the current enforcement regime.</p>
<p><b>Action 10:</b> The Scottish Government in conjunction with partners will review animal traceability with a view to strengthening and enhancing the current system of traceability to benefit health, welfare, meat quality and environmental gains along the entire supply chain.</p>	<p>Scottish Government will commit to this continuing engagement and system developments</p>
<p><b>Action 11:</b> The Scottish Government will continue to monitor the links between animal health and welfare, and wider societal and climatic concerns. Scottish Government will report regularly on developments.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government will report regularly to the Implementation Group.</p>
<p><b>Action 12:</b> An implementation group with strong stakeholder representation will be created to advise on how the actions outlined in this strategy are carried out, and on any adjustments required to adapt to changes in circumstances.</p>	<p>Stakeholders will be invited to join the Implementation Group.</p>

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March 2016



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