



Our manifesto for Scotland 2016–2021

A call to action for politicians and policymakers



Vets at the heart of a One Health government agenda 2016–2021

Veterinary surgeons work at the heart of communities across Scotland, from the remotest Scottish Highlands and Islands to the centre of urban sprawls. Many more are involved in teaching the vets of the future in Scotland's two vet schools; and others are expanding the boundaries of research in the Moredun Research and Roslin Institutes, and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC).

Vets are at the forefront of disease detection; it is vets who look after the health and wellbeing of much-loved pets, it is vets who contribute to Scotland's thriving aquaculture industry, and it is vets who monitor and protect the welfare of livestock from birth to slaughter. As such we are in a unique position from which to offer evidence-based and informed advice and policy recommendations to the next government in Scotland.

Partnership working has achieved much in Scotland in the ongoing efforts to control animal disease, through continued working with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and an effective network of farmers and vets. Scotland is unique in the British Isles as the only Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) nation; the Scottish eradication scheme for bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) has already resulted in a reduction in the proportion of beef herds exposed to BVD from 40% in 2009 to 12% in 2016; the test for sheep scab, developed in Scotland, is being used UK-wide; and Scotland has implemented notifiable disease status for sheep scab as well as for porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED).

Veterinary surgeons have a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to advocate animals' best interests at individual, community and national levels and BVA is proud to have launched our landmark animal welfare strategy, 'Vets speaking up for animal welfare', that identifies priority areas for future action.

BVA looks forward to working as part of the Welfare Working Group, drawn up under the Scottish Government's Animal Health and Welfare in the Livestock Industry Strategy 2016-2021, to implement the clear actions laid out in the strategy to achieve the best health and welfare outcomes for Scotland's livestock.

Where animal health and welfare are concerned we urge the next government to recognise the importance of the veterinary profession and consider how best to maximise the unique skills, knowledge and expertise of our veterinary resource.

The policy recommendations set out in this manifesto provide a clear pathway towards improving animal health and welfare and we look forward to working with the next government in Scotland to develop and implement them.



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The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the largest representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK and we speak up for vets on the issues that matter most. We promote evidence-led policy drawn from science and the expertise and experiences of our members working in all areas of the veterinary profession.

The BVA Scottish Branch represents all BVA members in Scotland, bringing together representatives of BVA's specialist and territorial divisions, government, academic institutions and research organisations in Scotland.

Safeguarding animal health

Safeguarding animal health is vital to the Scottish economy, to securing public health, and to ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare.

A robust disease surveillance system and practical access to an effective diagnostic system are fundamental to identifying and responding to emerging and exotic disease threats in Scotland. In recent years the detection of Schmallenberg virus, the identification of bleeding calf syndrome and the discovery of psoroptic mange in cattle for the first time in 30 years, are stark reminders that we reduce our surveillance capacity at our peril. Neglecting the health of our herds and flocks has an unacceptable impact on welfare and drives up the cost of British agriculture.

The increasing importance of aquaculture to the agri-industry in Scotland cannot be underestimated, contributing over £1.8 billion to the economy; and, by extension, Scotland plays a significant role in European and international aquaculture.

Companion animals also play a valuable role in the lives of Scotland's pet owners and contribute to improving human health and wellbeing. And it is veterinary surgeons who play a frontline and strategic role in protecting and promoting the health of *all* animals, from ensuring pets are effectively protected from, and treated for, illness to ensuring that livestock receive appropriate care and treatment to reduce and eliminate disease and promote efficient production. In order to do that we need access to veterinary medicines, a strong surveillance network, and a legislative and regulatory framework that supports animal health.

The next government should:

- Ensure Scotland has an effective disease surveillance structure that is physically robust, by preventing the closure of disease surveillance centres, and offers a coordinated support network for veterinary surgeons and farmers, particularly those working in remote areas, to maintain good access to diagnostic services and feasible carcass collection.
- Support vets and farmers to combat endemic livestock diseases by developing control measures for Johne's disease following on from the findings of the Paraban projects; by working with professional associations to encourage farmers and local vets to keep testing statuses for bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) up to date under phase 4 of the eradication programme; and to maintain vigilance for porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED), now a notifiable disease.
- Maintain a comprehensive approach to tackling bovine TB including risk-based biosecurity and the regime of TB controls to ensure that Scotland remains disease free and retains its Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status.
- Continue to support the One Health approach, as outlined in the UK Five Year Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy, to increase collaboration and integration of the veterinary and medical professions to promote the responsible use of antimicrobials.
- Lobby in Europe to protect the veterinary surgeon's right to prescribe and privilege to dispense veterinary medicines as a means of improving antimicrobial stewardship to safeguard their future use in animals and humans, and to increase the availability of authorised veterinary medicinal products for aquaculture.

Promoting animal welfare

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, which places a duty of care on pet owners and others responsible for animals to ensure that the welfare needs of their animals are met.

Veterinary surgeons work day and night to help clients understand the needs of their animals and to fulfil their duties as owners. Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are often the first port of call for advice on animal welfare within the community, and the whole profession champions measures to improve the welfare of all species. BVA's animal welfare strategy, 'Vets speaking up for animal welfare', identifies priority areas for the veterinary profession to contribute solutions for real-world animal welfare problems.

The UK enjoys some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world, and we should be proud of that achievement. BVA acknowledges the considerable effort by the Scottish Government to investigate the use of wild animals in circuses and supports its review of the trade and importation of exotic animals for the pet trade in Scotland. But we must ensure existing legislation is enforced effectively and keeps pace with changes in society, for example the growth in the use of the internet to advertise and sell pets. We must utilise regulation, advice and education to continue to improve and promote better animal welfare.

The next government should:

- Protect the welfare of animals by requiring all animals to be stunned before slaughter to ensure they are insensible to pain – there is very little non-stun slaughter carried out in Scotland but, while non-stun slaughter is permitted under the EU derogation, the next government should introduce measures to label meat as stunned or non-stunned to allow consumers to make an informed choice, and to better match legitimate supply to demand.
- Introduce mandatory CCTV use in all approved slaughterhouses as a useful tool in helping to meet general animal welfare requirements in slaughterhouses.
- Strengthen border controls and checks to prevent the illegal import of puppies into Scotland, not only because of the disease risk they may pose, but also because of serious welfare and behavioural problems.
- Implement legislation to ban the sale and use of electric shock collars on dogs, and introduce regulations for the sale and manufacturer's instructions to accompany other aversive training aids to ensure the potential adverse effects of use are clearly highlighted to animal owners.
- Retain the ban on tail docking of all dogs in Scotland, including working dogs.
- Bring forward legislation and develop guidance on the sale and ownership of non-traditional companion animals/exotic species to ensure their health and welfare needs can be met.
- Enact legislation to ban the ownership of animals whose welfare needs cannot be met, such as the keeping of primates as pets and use of wild animals in travelling circuses.
- Review the effectiveness of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to ensure that the legislation is still effective in protecting the welfare of all animals in Scotland.

Recognising the vital role of veterinary surgeons

Veterinary surgeons carry out their roles for the public good – from disease surveillance and eradication, to service delivery and education in the community, to frontline research.

Veterinary surgeons in aquaculture support what is now the biggest livestock sector in Scotland, and veterinary surgeons can also offer expertise on animal health and welfare issues such as re-wilding and the re-introduction of previously native species.

In urban and rural communities, the veterinary profession plays an essential role in guiding animal keepers and owners towards good animal welfare decisions, helping to maintain the important human-animal bond, with its well-documented human health and wellbeing benefits.

Without vets there would be no trade in animals and animal products, and many private vets carry out work on behalf of the government as Official Veterinarians (OVs), inspecting animals for export or import and providing pet passports. A positive relationship between vets and government is therefore vital.

Scotland's geography means that vets work in some of the UK's remotest areas, namely the Highlands and Islands, and those vets are vital links in the chain of guardianship and gatekeeping that safeguards animal health and protects animal welfare.

Scotland has a reputation as a world leader in animal health and welfare research and this hub of veterinary scientific expertise should be rightfully part of the worldwide network to improve production animal health and provide safe, secure and sustainable food across the globe.

The next government should:

- Increase the budget for the Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme to support the provision of vital veterinary services in hard to reach areas.
- Allocate budget spend for the training of private veterinary practitioners in post-mortems and pathology, and the retention, retraining and redeployment of existing expertise.
- Ensure that the importance of Scottish veterinary expertise to global food security is recognised by supporting the re-establishment of a Centre for Tropical Veterinary Medicine at the University of Edinburgh.
- Utilise veterinary resource in implementing the Animal Health and Welfare in the Livestock Industry Strategy 2016-2021.
- Embrace partnership working between government and the veterinary profession, recognising the unique skills, knowledge and expertise of the veterinary team across animal health and welfare and public health.



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