

Ahead of the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru elections, the British Veterinary Association is calling on all parties to sign up to key pledges to enhance animal health and welfare, support the veterinary profession, and protect public health in Wales.



Protect the welfare of animals at slaughter and during transport

Slaughter without pre-stunning compromises the welfare of millions of animals. We're calling for clear labelling of meat and meat products from animals that have not been stunned before slaughter, to improve consumer choice. We're also calling for mandatory CCTV in all Welsh abattoirs and new evidence-based regulations on welfare during transport.



Direct agriculture funding towards improving animal health and welfare

Public money to replace the Common Agricultural Policy should be used to incentivise and support good animal health and welfare outcomes within the planned Sustainable Land Management framework. We also want to see strong veterinary involvement in developing and implementing the new funding policy.



Commit to evidence-based disease control

Poor animal health leads to welfare problems. It can also result in economic costs for Welsh agriculture and can contribute to climate change as low productivity is not sustainable. Endemic diseases such as Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) and sheep scab can only be eradicated through partnership working between farmers, vets and government. We are calling for legislation to follow the end of the voluntary Gwaredu BVD scheme.



Apply behavioural science to tackle bovine TB

Behavioural science is core to our approach to tackling bTB. We'd like to see enhanced data sharing between government vets and private vets; and farmers rewarded for good biosecurity practices, including safe sourcing, through earned recognition. Research funding must be directed to the areas which would have the greatest impact, such as the development of a cattle vaccine and improved tests, and a better understanding of the effects of badger vaccination. The new Centre of Excellence for Bovine Tuberculosis for Wales at Aberystwyth University offers an exciting opportunity to support this research agenda.



Champion the responsible use of antimicrobials

Ongoing work by vets, farmers, and industry has already led to significant reductions in sales of antibiotics for use in food-producing animals, and government support for the successful Arwain Vet Cymru programme must be continued. A One Health approach to responsible antimicrobial use, encompassing environmental concerns, must be included in agricultural and trade policies.



Enshrine animal sentience in law

Animal sentience must be enshrined in law as a priority, covering all animals including decapod crustaceans and cephalopods. This principle recognises that animals are sentient and importantly puts a duty on the state to have due regard for animal welfare in the development and implementation of policy.



Boost the veterinary workforce

Vets play a vital role in protecting animal health and welfare, public health and food safety, and facilitating trade. We need enough vets to meet the additional demands for export and import certification associated with leaving the EU; to provide 24/7 clinical services; and to assure high standards of vital animal health and welfare activities, such as disease surveillance. We're calling for an immigration system that supports the needs of the veterinary workforce.



Strengthen legislation against illegal puppy imports

There has been a steep rise in demand for 'pandemic puppies'. We're concerned that people may be turning to illegal breeding activity or imports. We're calling for strengthened pet travel legislation to clamp down on illegal puppy smuggling by raising the age at which puppies can enter the country.



Ban the import of dogs with cropped ears

A recent spike in cases of illegal ear cropping points to the need for urgent action to curb this worrying trend. It's an unnecessary, painful mutilation with no welfare benefit. While illegal to crop across the UK, it's not illegal to sell ear-cropped dogs, import them, or take dogs abroad to be cropped. We want to close these loopholes and end the trend in ear-cropped dogs for good.



Improve traceability in dog breeding

The Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 should be updated to improve the health and welfare of puppies bred in Wales. Anyone using a dog for breeding should be required to register with their local authority in order to improve traceability for local authorities and transparency for prospective dog owners. We are also calling for a single database for microchip registration.



Ban primates as pets

Primates are long-lived, intelligent, and socially complex animals. It is almost impossible for private owners to meet the requirements for care that primates need as defined under animal welfare legislation. We are calling for the keeping of primates as pets to be banned.



Put animal welfare on the national curriculum

The Animal Welfare Act puts a duty of care on individuals to provide for the five welfare needs of animals. It's essential that children learn about the welfare needs and the concept of a duty of care to ensure animals have good health and welfare and a life worth living.