

## **BVA Scottish Branch Telecon, Wednesday 24 March 2021, 13.00-14.30**

Zoom

### **Attendees**

Kathleen Robertson – BVA Scottish Branch President  
Romain Pizzi – BVA Scottish Branch Junior Vice President and BVZS  
Emma Callaghan – BVA Scotland regional representative  
Melissa Donald – BVA Scottish Branch past president  
Daniella Dos Santos – BVA Senior Vice President  
Ronnie Soutar - FVS  
Gareth Hateley – BVA Scottish Branch  
Tricia Colville – BSAVA  
Katie Mellanby – BVA Scottish Branch  
Calum McIntrye – AVS Edinburgh  
Luke McBlain – AVS Glasgow  
Biana Tamimi – Recent graduate representative  
Liz Mullineaux – BVA Scottish Branch  
Hayley Atkin – Policy Officer  
Vivienne MacKinnon – APHA  
Lawrence Brown – BVA Scottish Branch  
Sue Murphy – R(D)SVS  
Sandy Duncan (VPHA)  
Sheila Voas – Scotland CVO  
David Logue - Ayrshire

### **Apologies**

Stephen Anderson – Moredun

### **Welcome and introductions**

- 1) K. Robertson welcomed members to the BVA Scottish Branch telecon. Members offered their congratulations to E. Callaghan on her re-election as BVA Scotland regional representative, and to M. Donald on her election as Junior Vice President of RCVS.

### **Minutes of previous teleconference held on 2 December 2020**

- 2) The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020 were accepted as an accurate record.

### **Update on BVA policy, media and lobbying**

#### **1) Covid-19**

Members were reminded of ongoing BVA support for the profession during the pandemic and invited to feedback any considerations as to how current Covid-19 restrictions are impacting the veterinary profession and/or animal health and welfare in Scotland. Key points to note:

- It was queried whether vets in practice were able to turn off the NHS Scotland Test and Protect app while working. K. Robertson clarified that if vets are able to do this but should remember to turn their app back on when not undertaking clinical work in practice. [More detailed Scottish Government guidance on this issue is available on the BVA Covid-19 FAQs.](#)
- A positive outcome of the pandemic was that APHA was currently working on 'Project Horizon' to explore options of more blended working and more flexible working patterns for government vets.
- Some employers had been experiencing rota issues as members had staff had received the Covid-19 vaccination and required time off due to feeling unwell.

- 2) A special note of thanks was made to V. MacKinnon and S. Voas for ongoing clear communication with BVA HQ and timely Scottish Government updates on the impact of continuing Covid restrictions on veterinary practices in Scotland.
- 3) Update on veterinary education and student experience during the Covid-19 pandemic  
Members received an update from Glasgow and Edinburgh AVS reps, L. McBlain and C. McIntyre. In discussion it was noted that:
  - Both Glasgow and Edinburgh were now offering lateral flow tests to students before they go on placement
  - The announcements of roadmaps out of lockdown meant that more practices were open to taking EMS students.
  - At the height of restrictions students had been extremely concerned that they would not be able to meet the required number of EMS weeks to graduate or would not be competent upon graduation. There were also concerns about how this was impacting student mental health and wellbeing.
  - With restrictions easing, student concerns had shifted towards whether they will be confident to practise at graduation.
  - Reduced EMS provision had brought into sharp focus the inequalities that students face when securing EMS. It was reported that students who had managed to secure placements had relied on their pre-existing contacts to secure these.
  - RCVS, BVA, AVS, VSC and SPVS were about to publish a guidance note for practices to encourage them to take EMS students provided they can do so safely.
  - BVA was going to host a Carpool Cases session with RCVS and VSC to provide reassurances to students and address concerns around competence and confidence.
  - BVA had written to the Minister responsible for vaccine rollout to set out the way in which vet and vet students were working during the pandemic. However, the JCVI had continued to prioritise vaccination roll out based on risk of mortality, as opposed to prioritising individual professions.
- 4) C. McIntyre made a special note of thanks to staff at the vet schools for the support and reassurance they had provided to vet students throughout the pandemic.
- 5) Impact of EU exit  
Members were invited to provide any feedback on how EU-exit has impacted them in their working lives or any resulting animal health and welfare issues that were causing concern. In discussion it was noted that:
  - There was confusion within the profession as rules regarding export certification keep changing
  - In terms of pet travel and AHCs, there was confusion and frustration at the new rules from both clinical staff and owners.
  - Due to restrictions on travel and additional pet travel requirements, small animal referral hospitals were having to manage some cases in Northern Ireland remotely.
- 6) Discussion around wider BVA policy and lobbying activity  
Members were invited to comment on current BVA policy and lobbying activity. In discussion it was noted that:
  - **Biosecurity campaign** - It was important that BVA's upcoming 'Spring Clean' campaign focused on biosecurity in the wider context of preventing a multitude of diseases rather than solely focusing on biosecurity in relation to bTB. S. Voas updated that Scottish Government were currently reviewing their guidance on biosecurity so it would be useful to join this up with the BVA Spring Clean campaign and future communications.

**Action: M. McGilligan to follow up with Scottish Government colleagues for update on review of biosecurity guidance**

- **RCVS LWP** - R. Soutar thanked A. Findon for her efforts in drafting the BVA response to the RCVS consultation on legislative reform. FVS had been particularly pleased to see the BVA response call for the definition of animals to be reviewed in the Veterinary Surgeons Act so that fish are included.
- **Good workplaces** – C. McIntyre noted that AVS had been exploring how to involve students more in BVA's activity to promote good veterinary workplaces.
- **Livestock worrying** – K. Robertson noted that Emma Harper MSP's Protection of Livestock Worrying Bill was going to receive its third reading in Scottish Parliament on 24 March. BVA Scottish Branch Officers had been liaising with Scottish Government to establish a simple protocol that would clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of private vets under the proposed legislation.

### Update on BVA Scottish Branch activity

#### BVA Scottish Branch AGM and Parliamentary Dinner

##### 7) R. Pizzi updated that:

- The Scottish Branch AGM 2021 was **taking place via Zoom, Wednesday 19 May 2021, 15.00-17.00.**
- Due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, the BVA Scottish Parliamentary dinner will take place in May 2022. In the meantime, the BVA public affairs team will be organising a virtual parliamentary briefing for the new intake of MSPs to introduce them to BVA Scottish Branch and our key policy issues. More information will be available in due course.

##### 8) Member engagement event

R. Pizzi noted that following last year's successful social and CPD evening, Scottish Branch Officers were now exploring an opportunity to deliver a virtual conference programme with the SSPCA at the end of 2021. It was hoped the programme will cover veterinary forensics, animal welfare issues and how the profession can further support animal cruelty cases. Branch Council would be provided with more detail in due course.

##### 9) Stakeholder Groups

Members received updates on the following stakeholder groups:

- **Scottish Government animal health and welfare stakeholder group** – K. Robertson updated that she continued to attend these meetings, which had now shifted their focus towards the impact of EU exit.
- **Scottish Veterinary Zoonoses Group** – V. MacKinnon updated that SARS-CoV-2 was now reportable in all mammals and should be reported to APHA. An [open access OV briefing](#) was available on the APHA Vet Gateway. Governments across GB were also looking to establish a register of ferrets as ferrets are highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2. Initially registration would be on a voluntary basis. In England there had been a few outbreaks of brucellosis in dogs imported from Eastern Europe, therefore brucellosis was going to become reportable in Scotland as of 21<sup>st</sup> April so the human health risk can be monitored and assessed. The Avian Influenza Housing Order was going to lift on 31<sup>st</sup> March. It was also noted that RCVS Knowledge was about to launch its [Farm Vet Champions project](#) to encourage antimicrobial stewardship in practice.
- **Cross Party Group on Animal Welfare** – T. Colville reported that BVA had offered to present on their #ChooseAssured campaign however the group now had no session scheduled until after the elections. It was felt that it was worthwhile having veterinary representation at these meetings to ensure that MSPs received a balanced and evidence-based consideration of the animal welfare issues raised.
- **VetTrust** – K. Robertson reported that the VetTrust conference has been postponed until 2022 due to Covid-19. In the meantime, VetTrust continued to operate as a charity and had just given several awards to provide subsidised CPD.

- **Livestock Health Scotland** – K. Robertson reported that projects were still ongoing around liver fluke and calf mortality.
- **Scottish Vet Delivery Landscape** – S. Voas updated that the steering group had been exploring how to widen access to the profession in Scotland, and encourage students to think more broadly about their career options once they qualify. Work was ongoing with the Scottish Funding Council to assess potential funding opportunities to take this work forward. Glasgow and Edinburgh were now offering rotations in remote and rural practice for students, which has been well-received by students.
- **National Rural Mental Health Forum** – M. Donald reported that she had attended a hustings event with MSP candidates organized by the forum, and raised the issue of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the veterinary profession. The forum continues to host webinar on different topics relating to mental health. Members were encouraged to contact M. Donald if they wanted more information on the forum's webinars, or if they were interested in being a BVA representative on the forum.
- **HIVSS** – S. Voas updated that F. Scott-Park had organised a successful series of online CPD with Patrick Pollock for the HIVSS practices. The Scottish Government HIVSS budget looked largely the same as 2020/21, and it was reported that Mull was now covered properly by the scheme.
- **SSPCA Tackling the puppy trade working group** – E. Callaghan updated that given the rise in demand for 'pandemic puppies' the price of puppies had increased and opened the door to more illegal activity. This year the working group is focusing on public education and behaviour change, BVA had joined the communications sub-group to ensure joined up campaigning activity.
- **SSPCA veterinary working group**- E. Callaghan updated that the next meeting of the group would look supporting vets with report writing in animal cruelty cases, as well as undergraduate and post-graduate training in veterinary forensics.
- **Scottish One Health Antimicrobial Use and Antimicrobial Resistance Report (SONAAR)** – K. Robertson updated that she had put Farm Vet Champions in contact with SONAAR and they have been asked to present at the next meeting.
- **Farmed Fish Health Framework group** – R. Soutar updated that the group was focusing on medicines use, the use of the cascade outwith marketing authorisations and imports as these carry long withdrawal periods. The group would be putting on pressure so that UK animal health regulations stay in line with incoming EU health regulations. R. Soutar noted that it would be useful to hear from other sectors that are making use of the cascade. It was suggested that views could be sought from BVA Medicines Group and Veterinary Deer Society

## **AOB**

### **10) IR35**

K. Robertson notified Branch that IR35 regulations were due to come into force on 6 April. BVA had issued an [IR35 FAQ document for members](#) drafted by Law Express. Members were reminded that they could seek legal advice on their individual circumstances in relation to IR35 through the BVA legal helpline.

### **11) Funding for EMS**

L. McBlain updated that he was developing a proposal to take to the University of Glasgow for additional EMS funding support for those students who had been part of the Reach widening participation programme. S. Voas noted that it would be useful to engage new Ministers in the conversation as they were keen to ensure capacity in the veterinary workforce so may be able to support.

### **12) Widening participation activity**

D. Dos Santos reported that BVA was looking at opportunities to work with STEM learning to develop a 'vet in a box' activity for members to promote veterinary medicine as a career option in schools. K. Mellanby highlighted that R(D)SVS had developed a similar resource focussing on

developing science-capital. All agreed it would be useful to link this into BVA's work to promote collaboration and avoid duplication.

**Action: H. Atkin to follow up with K. Mellanby for more information on R(D)SVS school pack activity**

**13) Movement of low value ponies**

S. Voas reported that low value ponies are being certified for movement between Scotland- NI, and re-certified and moved back from NI- to Scotland, to make a financial gain from the Movement Assistance Scheme. There are ongoing concerns about the impact of this repeated transportation on the welfare of the low-value ponies concerned. The issue was currently being considered at UK CVO-level.

**14) BVA Council telecon**

Members were notified that there would be a telecon for Branch Council to provide feedback on BVA Council papers on Wednesday 7 April 19.30-20.30. A Zoom link and BVA Council papers would be posted on Glasscubes in due course.

**15) BVNA representative**

K. Robertson asked members for thoughts on establishing a non-voting BVNA role on Scottish Branch Council. All agreed this was a sensible idea to gain input from the wider veterinary team. However, there would need to be care that the influence of BVNA as the professional association for vet nurses was not diluted or diminished.

**Action: H. Atkin to ask BVNA if they would like to nominate a non-voting representative to sit on Scottish Branch Council, to be ratified at the Scottish Branch AGM in May 2021.**

**16) Frequency and format of Branch Council meetings**

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to transition to 4 shorter Branch Council meetings a year, with more opportunity to discuss relevant issues, and combine with meetings to discuss BVA Council papers. It was proposed that meetings would occur for c.1 hour in March, May (AGM), September and December. It was also agreed that all Branch Council members who sit on stakeholder groups should provide updates for inclusion in the meeting papers in advance.

**Action: H. Atkin to request written updates from members who sit on stakeholder groups for inclusion in meeting papers**

**17) Dates of 2021 Branch telecons**

- **Branch AGM - Wednesday 19 May 15.00-17.00**
- **Branch telecon - Thursday 16 September 13.00-14.30**
- **Branch telecon - Wednesday 8 December 13.00-14.30**