

BVA response to the Department for Business and Trade Call for Input on Deepening the UK's Trade Relationships with Indonesia, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay

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Introduction

1. The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With more than 19,000 members, our primary aim is to represent, support and champion the interests of the United Kingdom's veterinary profession. We therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health and welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.

Overall view

2. Across all the four nations included in this call for input, there is scope for deepening trade of Products of Animal Origin (POAO) to varying degrees. In all these discussions it is essential that the UK safeguards its high reputation for animal health, animal welfare, and food safety. In all trade agreements it negotiates, the Government must only grant increased access to agricultural goods where there is full equivalence with core standards of animal health, animal welfare, public health and food safety and responsible antimicrobial use. Any increased imports from these countries must not undermine British farmers with respect to welfare and production practices.
3. It is our view that trade agreements should commit all parties to promote cooperation on welfare standards and be supportive of future research for continual improvement on animal welfare standards. Trading partners should also promote and maintain food safety standards to the level of the country with the higher standards, it should be an ongoing conversation between both countries on how they can better support animal welfare and food safety standards in food production and trade.
4. To ensure equivalence of standards we recommend the UK adopts the approach which the EU takes with external trade partners. That is having a team of veterinary specialists whose job it is to visit trade partners regularly and inspect and audit what is actually happening on the ground; supported by a fairly rigorous regime of post import testing statistically calibrated to give the requisite degree of confidence, rather than just reviewing inbound documentation and product quality at face value.

Specific Considerations

5. **Conclusion of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):** In May 2026 the GCC UK FTA concluded. Although it is yet to be ratified, it specifically created new animal welfare and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) commitments between the UK and the GCC members of which the UAE is one. The specific ask of the UK for the UAE considerations of this CPTPP accession consultation should be about ensuring discussions do not duplicate or dilute the SPS, animal welfare, and AMR provisions just negotiated in the GCC FTA. It should press for clarity on whether the UAE's opt-out from labour/environment commitments also touches animal welfare and AMR cooperation. The UK Government should use the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) scrutiny process of the FTA when it is published as the immediate, concrete engagement point.
6. **Export of British Halal meat:** Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority country with a significant Halal market. This presents a good opportunity for British exports of Halal produce to expand into these markets. Halal certified UK beef, lamb, poultry and dairy represent a genuine, currently unrealised export opportunity into a large and growing Muslim-majority market. AHDB's own trade analysis states plainly that while the UK already has Halal certification recognised for Indonesia, it currently has no market access in place to facilitate trade. We must stress here that any meat exported, Halal or otherwise, must be stunned prior to slaughter. Current UK legislation

offers a derogation which permits non-stun slaughtered meat for the Jewish and Islamic communities that live in the UK. Even within this, there are some in the Islamic community who permit stunned slaughter. We think the ongoing work by the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA) and key stakeholders, including BVA, on establishing a new UK Pre-Stun Halal Export Accreditation Scheme is important in this regard. This would create an industry-led framework opening up new markets to UK sheep meat exporters and this should form a blueprint for exporting Halal and more animal welfare conscious produce for this market.

7. The UAE is also a Muslim-majority nation but the UK has an existing export market to this country for Halal meat so, acknowledging this, we would encourage the Government to continue to promote international recognition of Halal certification systems that permit reversible pre-slaughter stunning, enabling UK producers to access overseas Halal markets while maintaining the UK's welfare at slaughter requirements.