BVA NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH AGM - WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2015 at 7pm
SEAGOE HOTEL, UPPER CHURCH LANE, PORTADOWN BT63 SJE

Attendees
Pat Hart
Simon Doherty
Jean Wales
Des Thompson
Jenny McCaughey
Hatti Dainton
John Hill
David Taylor
Stanley McDowell
E W Sullivan
Mark Little
Seamus O’Kane
Sandra Dunbar
David Broderick
Brian McAuley
Sean Wensley
Fiona McFarland
David Bryson
Mervyn Dunlop
Barry McInerney
Ron Martin

In attendance
Amelia Findon – BVA

Apologies
Alex Shirlow
Greg Koulianos
John McCaughey
David Torrens

Welcome
1) P Hart, President of the Branch, welcomed members to the meeting. A special note of thanks and welcome was given to the Junior Vice President of BVA.

Minutes of the AGM 2014
2) The minutes of the AGM 2014 were noted. It was reported that there were no outstanding actions. The minutes were proposed by R Martin, seconded by S Dunbar and approved by Branch.

Northern Ireland Branch Constitution
3) Members were reminded that the constitution, as approved by the BVA Board, was ratified and adopted at the AGM in 2014. Since then it had been suggested that the Branch constitution should be amended as follows:

- References to Vice President should be changed to Senior Vice President and Junior Vice President
- A place should be made available on the Council of Branch for the Senior Vice President

4) The amendments were proposed by S Doherty, seconded by H Dainton, and adopted by Branch. The Northern Ireland Branch constitution for 2015 was ratified and adopted by Branch.

Election of the NI Branch Officer team

5) Members were reminded that the constitution of the Northern Ireland Branch stated that there shall be a President and a Junior Vice President. A Member shall be elected to serve one year as Junior Vice President followed by one year as President. P Hart had served as President for one year and S Doherty had served as Junior Vice President for one year.

6) S Doherty was duly approved by Branch as President until 2016

7) P Hart congratulated S Doherty, presenting him with the Presidential medal. S Doherty thanked P Hart for ably steering Branch through its second year.

8) The new President of Branch reminded members that a Junior Vice President of Northern Ireland Branch must be elected to serve for one year, drawing attention to the nomination form for S O’Kane, circulated with the meeting papers. There had been no other expressions of interest made to the secretariat.

9) S O’Kane was duly approved by Branch as Junior Vice President until 2016. The President of Branch congratulated S O’Kane on his election.

10) Members were reminded that the constitution of the Northern Ireland Branch stated that there shall be an Honorary Secretary who shall normally be elected to serve for three years. J Wales had served as Honorary Secretary for two years and was standing down. M Little, incoming Honorary Secretary of NIVA, had been proposed as Honorary Secretary of Branch.

11) M Little was duly approved by Branch as Honorary Secretary

12) The President of Branch thanked J Wales for her support and commitment to Branch through its first two years and congratulated M Little on his new role.

Branch representative to BVA Council

13) The President of Branch explained that he had served as Branch representative to BVA Council for the past year and was standing down in order to focus on Branch and NIVA Presidential duties. It had been proposed that J Wales should take on the role.

14) J Wales was duly approved by Branch as representative to BVA Council.

15) The President of Branch thanked J Wales for her ongoing commitment and encouraged all members to help her fulfil her role by submitting their views in advance of each BVA Council meeting, ideally via the Northern Ireland forum on the BVA Community.

Northern Ireland Branch Council

16) The President of Branch reminded members that the constitution stated that Branch Council should be the Officers and one representative each of the following organisations, each of whom should be a member:
1.1. North of Ireland Veterinary Association (NIVA);
1.2. Association of Veterinary Surgeons Practising in Northern Ireland (AVSPNI)
1.3. a representative of the major specialist divisions (NOTE: All specialist divisions should be given the opportunity to attend);
1.4. the elected Regional Representative to BVA Council;
1.5. a recent graduate (the Young Vet Network)
1.6. the BVA Animal Welfare Foundation
1.7. BVNA(NI)
1.8. FSA(NI)
1.9. DARD Veterinary Service
1.10. Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Veterinary Sciences Division
1.11. the regional representative on BVA’s Members’ Services Group (MSG)
1.12. the Senior Vice President of Branch

17) It was noted that Melanie Spahn was the new AVSPNI representative on Branch Council. The composition of Branch Council was ratified for 2015.

Honorary Associates

18) Members were invited to note the current list of BVA Honorary Associates in Northern Ireland. Suggestions for parliamentarians with a strong interest in veterinary issues and animal health and welfare would be welcomed for recommendation to the BVA Nominations and Awards Group.

Branch activity update

19) The President of Branch reminded members of some of the key activities for Northern Ireland Branch during the past year, including a “Meet the members” event which had been well received and had included a presentation from Sean Wensley, BVA Junior Vice President, on vets as advocates for animal welfare.

20) It was noted that Branch had been closely involved in the Northern Ireland political dinner hosted by John McCallister MLA at Stormont. At the dinner, attended by parliamentarians, key representatives of animal health and welfare organisations and the agri-food industry, media, and senior members of the veterinary profession, the BVA President had used his speech to call for continued investment in Northern Ireland’s world-class veterinary research and development facilities. The CVO for Northern Ireland, Robert Huey, had delivered a speech on behalf of DARD Minister Michelle O’Neill who had been unable to attend.

21) Branch and BVA Officers had also attended meetings with the Ulster Farmers Union and the CVO for Northern Ireland to discuss a range of issues from BVA’s campaign on non-stun slaughter, the TVR approach to the control and eradication of bTB, and the work of Animal Health and Welfare NI on BVD and Johne’s.

22) It was also noted that Northern Ireland Branch had contributed to a range of consultations including DARD’s proposals to relax brucellosis pre-movement testing controls, and the TB Strategic Partnership Groups consultation on TB in Northern Ireland. Members were thanked for their invaluable input in developing the BVA and Northern Ireland Branch responses.

23) The President of Branch explained that in order to maximise BVA’s limited resources and make the biggest impact BVA needed to focus its policy, media and campaigning functions on a small number of key policy priorities. BVA’s
current agreed priority policy issues were: non-stun slaughter, bovine TB, veterinary surveillance, antimicrobial resistance, responsible dog ownership. The greed priority professional issues were: addressing negative perceptions of the profession, regulation and paraprofessionals, the increase in undergraduates/new veterinary schools, APHA tendering for veterinary services, and veterinary wellbeing. It was noted that devolution was a cross-cutting theme and featured in the thinking on all items, where relevant.

24) It was reported that there was a great deal of activity taking place around each of the priority areas, at a national and devolved level. Attendees were particularly supportive of BVA activity around the priority issue of welfare at slaughter, commenting that the recent expose following the secret filming by Animal Aid at the Bowood abattoir in Yorkshire had demonstrated the need for on-going efforts in this area. Members were encouraged to suggest additional steps that could be taken around each priority area, in the context of Northern Ireland, via the BVA Community. **Action: All**

25) The President of Branch closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and contributions. He looked forward to working with Branch over the coming year.