Policy Committee meeting 11 October 2017 at BVA Headquarters, 7 Mansfield Street, London W1G 9NQ

Attendees
Liz Mullineaux (Chair)
Danny Chambers
Sally Everitt
John Fishwick (BVA President)
Margaret Hosie
Fiona McFarland
Daniella dos Santos
Kate Sharpe
Huw Stacey

Apologies
Rob Kelly

BVA staff
Hayley Atkin
Sally Burnell
Amelia Findon
Michael McGilligan

Minutes of the last meeting
1) The minutes of the teleconference held 6 September 2017 were accepted as an accurate record.

Matters arising
2) Position on anthelmintics
   Following agreement at the last teleconference on some minor amendments to the draft position to give even greater focus to the importance of collaborative working, the amended position had been shared with Sheep Veterinary Society (SVS). SVS had subsequently expressed concern regarding the validity of the referenced study which indicated there was little evidence to link particular prescribing groups to increased resistance. Policy Committee agreed a number of further amendments to give greater prominence to the principles of responsible use, and the revised draft would be discussed further at a BVA Joint Officers meeting with SVS and Goat Veterinary Society (GVS) later that week.

   Action: Secretariat to include on BVA / SVS / GVS Joint Officers agenda, and share with British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA)

3) Position on abnormal or inappropriate behaviours
   Policy Committee considered a draft position on abnormal behaviours as a sign of stress and agreed that it should:
   - remain over-arching, focussing on the five animal welfare needs and the responsibilities of owners across all species
   - not refer to ‘stress’ as this was difficult to define and visually assess
   - use species examples already identified as part of the BVA Animal Welfare Strategy list of priority animal welfare problems

   Action: Secretariat to amend the draft for further consideration and for input from EWAP.

4) Position on responsible breeding
   Policy Committee considered a draft position on responsible breeding and agreed that it should be revised to focus on good practice and responsible breeding rather than the negative outcomes of irresponsible breeding.

   Action: Secretariat to amend the draft for further consideration and for input from EWAP.
Surveillance Working Group
5) Kate Sharpe, chair of the Surveillance Working Group, updated Policy Committee on activity and the development of a ‘themes’ document which would form the basis of the BVA position. The ‘Surveillance use, understanding and engagement across the veterinary profession’ survey had attracted almost 550 responses, across a wide range of sectors in England and Wales. Similar surveys had been launched in Scotland and Northern Ireland with the results helping to inform the draft position for consideration by Policy Committee. It was noted that Kate had been invited to present to the Animal Health Surveillance Governance Board in December.

Farm Assurance Working Group
6) Danny Chambers, chair of the Farm Assurance Working Group, updated Policy Committee on the meeting held 9 October. The group had finalised the position on farm assurance schemes, and had further considered how to communicate the value of farm assurance schemes in a way that complemented existing BVA positions (eg. on animal welfare, non-stun slaughter, responsible use of antimicrobials). Policy Committee supported the draft position on farm assurance schemes subject to some minor amendments.

Action: Secretariat to incorporate the amendments before consideration of the draft by EWAP

Action: Secretariat to circulate the draft graphic on farm assurance schemes still under development by the working group, for information

7) The Working Group had begun to develop some high-level principles to inform the development of a position on humane sustainable animal agriculture. The principles would be worked up for further development at the next meeting on 4 December. The group had also taken the opportunity to feed in to the BVA response to the EfraCom inquiry Brexit: trade in food, considering what a new domestic agriculture policy should look like and the role of farm animal welfare stewardship programmes.

Antimicrobial Resistance Working Group
8) Huw Stacey, chair of the AMR Working Group, reported that, following the development of a set of high level principles to inform the work of the RUMA Targets Task Force, the Working Group had moved on to exploring the barriers to responsible prescribing and strategies for disseminating best practice. A literature review was underway with a view to developing a work plan of practical steps which BVA and the species divisions could take to tackle the issues and promote best practice pan-professionally. A communications plan to support European Antimicrobial Awareness Day in November had been developed, including a blog series.

BVA policy priorities 2017-2018
9) The policy priorities 2017-2018 had been signed off by BVA Council on 21 September.

Brexit
10) Veterinary Capability and Capacity Project (VCCP)
Policy Committee were updated on progress with the Defra-led VCCP and associated workstreams. Gudrun Ravetz represented BVA on the VCCP Board.

11) Immigration policy post-Brexit
Policy Committee considered the draft response to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on the economic and social impacts of Brexit and what immigration policy should look like following the UK’s departure from the EU. It was noted that the consultation was specifically a call for evidence and that this was reflected in the format and approach taken in the draft response, and the examples cited. Policy Committee broadly supported the draft, agreeing that the value of the veterinary profession should be highlighted throughout. It was agreed that the draft would be recirculated for further comment once the economist input facilitated by Defra had been provided.
12) **EfraCom – Brexit: trade in food inquiry**  
Policy Committee considered the Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee inquiry on Brexit: Trade in Food, which focussed on the challenges and opportunities facing the UK food and farming sectors post-Brexit. Policy Committee agreed that:

- It was essential that animal health and welfare standards were maintained and were consistent for both the domestic and export markets
- A sufficient number of appropriately trained vets was vitally important to supporting the trade of animals and animal products, with immigration from non-UK EU countries essential to the smooth operation of agri-food trade.
- The quality of imports must be maintained and trade deals should protect against cheap products of poor welfare provenance flooding the market

**Action:** Secretariat to add Policy Committee members to the virtual group developing the response, and circulate the draft for further comment.

**Vet Futures**

13) The first meeting of the One Health Coordination Group, which included representatives from BVA, VPHA, BVNA, Royal College of Nursing, British Medical Association, and Wildlife Trusts, was noted. Policy Committee agreed that whilst the opportunities for joint working and cross promotion being identified had merit it would be important in all external communications to be clear that One Health was extremely broad, encompassing a wide range of local, national and international issues. It was recognised that the Coordination Group would need to work within the limits of available resourcing and would be championing existing projects rather than developing and leading new initiatives.

**Animal health and welfare**

14) **Welfare of pet animals**  
Progress on the development of guidelines on responsible use of pet animals in advertising, and the position on brachycephalic dogs was noted. Both documents would be discussed by the Ethics and Welfare Advisory Panel at their meeting on 8 November.

15) It was noted that the draft position on extreme conformation was being revised to become cross-species, with examples of extreme conformation, and options for reporting treatment to correct conformational disorders, from both the companion and production animal sectors. Liaison with the specialist divisions was on-going and Policy Committee would be kept updated.

16) **Welfare at slaughter**  
On-going discussions between FarmWel, FAI Farms and Shechita UK around potential solutions for method of slaughter labelling were noted. Policy Committee agreed that the draft proposals were likely to be confusing for consumers. A further update would be available following the meeting on 15 November.

17) Policy Committee were updated on discussions with the British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA) regarding the issue of high frequency stunning water-bath stunning under WATOK in England. A further update would be available following the meeting on 13 November.

**Vet-led team**

18) Policy Committee worked in small groups to suggest key principles, and further considerations, to inform the development of the BVA vision for the vet-led team. In discussion it was suggested:

- The vet-led team was already in existence to an extent, in general practice with RVNs, and in public health with meat inspectors
• The vet-led team must have clear lines of responsibility and accountability
• There were potential difficulties in large practices where there might be a standard business-wide approach which was at times incompatible with the professional judgement of the accountable vet, particularly where practices were owned by non-vets
• A vet-led team might not suit all practice models, and not all vets would want to lead a team of allied professionals
• There could be a need for a review of the definition of ‘under their care’ in the RCVS Code
• It was essential that the veterinary right to diagnose was not undermined
• The way in which allied professions were regulated would be crucial – regulation by RCVS, or by another suitable body with the appropriate structures in place, could be acceptable, providing the mechanism was robust
• Regulation must include appropriate training and sanctions
• The protection of titles was a consideration and must form part of any regulatory framework
• Comparable models in New Zealand, and within human health, could be considered

BVA governance review

19) It was reported that the responses of individual Policy Committee members to the survey looking at how well the new committee structure satisfied the original design criteria had been broadly positive. The areas identified for improvement included:

• Transparency and accountability to members and wider society
• Opportunities for members to engage with the policy-making process
• Provision of external/independent/lay challenge

20) In discussion Policy Committee agreed that the new structure appeared to have established well, with only minor teething problems relating to functionality of email loops. It was agreed that increased use of social media, including blogs, to reach grass roots members and share details of the work of the committees would be useful. Further discussion would take place at BVA Council on 13 December.

Horizon scanning

21) Policy Committee were reminded that the working document could be added to at any time, and would be kept under regular review.

Any other business

22) Pet passports
   
   The validity of current stocks of pet passports post-Brexit was queried.

   Action: Secretariat to check with Defra