Policy Committee meeting 13 June 2018 at BVA Headquarters, 7 Mansfield Street, London W1G 9NQ

Attendees
Liz Mullineaux (Chair)
Simon Doherty (BVA Junior Vice President)
John Fishwick (BVA President)
Margaret Hosie
Rob Kelly
Fiona McFarland
Daniella dos Santos
Kate Sharpe

BVA staff
Hayley Atkin
Sally Burnell
Amelia Findon
Megan Knowles-Bacon

Apologies were received from:
Danny Chambers
Huw Stacey
Sally Everitt

Minutes of the last meeting
1) The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2018 were accepted as an accurate record.

Matters arising
2) bTB strategy review: The President had recently attended a panel session, as part of the Godfray review of the Defra bTB 25-year strategy, to put forward BVA views on priorities for the next five years. The subsequent BVA written submission outlined the integral role of the veterinary profession in bTB control and eradication, the importance of risk-based trading, and called for further support for the development of new tools and technologies, including diagnostics, epidemiological investigation and analysis, and control practices. Policy Committee were thanked for their invaluable contributions to the development of the submission.

3) Badger culling: The government had recently announced that badger control in the Low Risk Area of England would be permitted in areas identified as hotspots by APHA. The BVA response expressed support for the principle of badger controls but was clear that the lack of detail on the evidence base meant that full support for the proposals as they currently stood could not be given.

BVA Working Groups
4) Education, Funding, and Widening Access Working Group (EFWAWG)
Policy Committee supported the proposed schedule of meetings for EFWAWG, which had been convened to review the BVA policy on new vet schools and develop a position on funding for veterinary school places. In discussion it was suggested that the needs of all veterinary employers, across different business models, should be considered as part of the group's work.

5) Antimicrobial Resistance Working Group (AMRWG)
Next steps for the working group included reviewing the overarching guidance on responsible use of antimicrobials in veterinary practice (a supplement to the 7-point plan poster), and refreshing the existing position on antibiotics in food producing animals.

6) Vet-Led Team Working Group (VLTWG)
Policy Committee were updated on the activity of the VLTWG, which had met three times to date, with two further meetings planned for the coming months. From the VLTWG discussions a number of themes had begun to emerge, which would ultimately form the basis of the BVA position. In discussion:
‘District’ RVNs
- There was a role for RVNs offering house calls, but this must be under the direction of a vet. It would be necessary for all parties, including owners, to understand areas of responsibility, and in particular the limitations of Schedule 3.
- There was some concern regarding wildlife centres where RVNs were sometimes unsupervised
- It was suggested that BVNA could consider developing guidance on roles and responsibilities.

Multiple regulators
- The principle of more than one regulator per allied profession was supported, providing there was an overarching minimum standard, on the basis that multiple regulators could create competition which could ultimately raise standards

Technology/innovation
- The advent of telemedicine raised questions over responsibility of care
- There was potentially a role for triage purposes, with parallels in human healthcare in British Columbia worth considering
- There were some concerns regarding the practicality of clinical records held across multiple practices as a result of ‘shopping around’ via telemedicine
- Telemedicine might be best used as a complement to services already provided to existing patients of the practice

Farm Assurance
7) Policy Committee broadly supported the draft position on sustainable animal agriculture, developed by the Farm Assurance Working Group. In discussion it was suggested that:
- The position should acknowledge the role of the veterinary profession more broadly as part of the One Health agenda, and reference the bigger environmental picture (ie natural resources, conservation, and biodiversity)
- There should be additional emphasis on the role of vets in the protection of public health, food hygiene, and protection against zoonotic disease incursion
- The position should link to the BVA position on surveillance

Action: Secretariat to incorporate the additional suggestions in liaison with FAWG, and recirculate to PC for further comments/approval.

Pet Travel
8) Policy Committee considered a draft position on pet travel, which had been developed in close liaison with BSAVA and with input from Dogs Trust. In discussion it was suggested that:
- A table summarising the BVA recommendations to strengthen entry requirements for pets re-entering the UK from the EU and listed third countries could be usefully incorporated to aid clarity
- The specific issue of pet movements between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland should be recognised, with a call for clear and consistent guidance for both pet owners and vets

Policy Committee agreed to support a call for a post-rabies vaccination waiting time of 12 weeks based on the available evidence. Subject to some minor amendments and clarifications the position would be recommended to BVA Council in July.

Action: Secretariat to finalise the position in liaison with BSAVA

Complementary and alternative medicine
9) Policy Committee strongly supported the draft position on CAM which had been developed by email loop following the meeting in March, and had taken into account Council advice to avoid singling out homeopathy, or any other discipline under the CAM banner. It was agreed that the position would be recommended to BVA Council in July.
Priority animal welfare problems

10) Position on extreme conformation – cross species
Policy Committee supported the draft overarching position on extreme conformation, which would ultimately be complemented by a series of species-specific positions on extreme conformation, and included examples incorporated in close liaison with the species divisions. In discussion it was suggested that:

- The species-specific examples should feature as an Annex to the position
- The role of vets in encouraging owners to neuter animals with poor conformation could be incorporated
- The role of show judges in all sectors in only placing animals with healthy conformation should be included
- Double-muscling in Beltex sheep should be considered, in addition to the Belgian Blue cattle example already included

Action: Secretariat to make final amendments to the draft prior to recommendation to BVA Council

11) Position on abnormal behaviour – cross species
Policy Committee fully supported the draft overarching position on abnormal behaviour as an indicator that one or more welfare needs were not being adequately met. The overarching position would be complemented by a series of species-specific positions on priority abnormal behaviour(s) as identified by the species divisions as part of the BVA Animal Welfare Strategy. It was suggested that species divisions could be invited to suggest further examples once the position had been approved. The position would be recommended to Council.

12) Position on goat kid disbudding and analgesia
Policy Committee strongly supported the draft position on goat kid disbudding and analgesia, which had been identified by Goat Veterinary Society (GVS) as one of the priority animal welfare problems in the sector. It was noted that the position had also been strongly supported by EWAP, who had commended GVS for highlighting the issues and taking action to promote best practice, particularly given the lack of licensed products for the sector. It was suggested that GVS might wish to consider taking the opportunity to promote the GVS DVD on disbudding. It was agreed that GVS should be notified of the emphatic endorsement for the draft, which would be recommended to Council.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with GVS

Workforce, retention and recruitment

13) Policy Committee received an update on the activity of the Defra led Veterinary Capability and Capacity Project (VCCP), and the interim results of the workforce survey being carried out as part of the BVA research project in partnership with Professor of Social and Organisational Psychology Michelle Ryan and colleagues. The complete results and analysis would be available in due course and showcased at BVA Congress.

14) It was reported that a roundtable was planned for 19 July, including representatives of the large veterinary employers, to update on the work BVA had been doing, individually, and in partnership with RCVS, Defra and others. There would also be a discussion in two main sections:

- Why the recruitment crisis was happening now and what the main drivers were (historic and current)
- What role each of the main players had in responding to the crisis (Government, BVA, RCVS, employers, vet schools, and others)

Policy Committee supported the proposal and looked forward to the resulting action plan.
Kitten checklist
15) Policy Committee agreed to support the proposed kitten checklist developed by Cats Protection. However, it was agreed that the document was extremely long, and could benefit from a summary page in the format of a checklist for prospective owners. It was also suggested that Q31 should be clear that insurance would not cover pre-existing conditions.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with BSAVA, and feed back to Cats Protection

Horizon scanning
16) Containment fences
Following on from the recent debate around shock collars and aversive training aids, Policy Committee agreed that the question of containment fences needed further consideration.

Action: Secretariat to develop some high-level principles for further consideration

Any other business
17) Committee vacancies
It was noted that Rob Kelly would unfortunately come to the end of his term on PC following the September meeting. Rob was thanked for his commitment to BVA and hard work supporting the activity of Policy Committee. The vacancy would be advertised to the membership, alongside the various vacancies across BVA's other committees, for 4 weeks from 23 July. Members were encouraged to help promote the vacancies through their own networks and encourage strong candidates to put themselves forward.

Action: All to promote and share details of the vacancies once available

18) BVA policy priorities 2018/2019
It was noted that there would be an exercise at BVA Council in July to help inform the development of BVA policy priorities for 2018/2019. There would also be an internal exercise with BVA staff and Officers. Policy Committee would be kept updated and invited to develop the suggestions at the September meeting, in preparation for approval at BVA Council in September.

19) The next meeting would be held by teleconference, **Wednesday 5 September 2-4pm**