Policy Committee meeting 21 June 2017 at BVA Headquarters, 7 Mansfield Street, London W1G 9NQ

Attendees
Liz Mullineaux (chair)
Paula Boyden
Danny Chambers
John Fishwick (JVP)
Margaret Hosie
Rob Kelly
Fiona McFarland
Kate Sharpe
Huw Stacey

Apologies
Daniella dos Santos
Gudrun Ravetz

BVA staff
Sally Burnell
Hayley Atkin
Michael McGilligan

Minutes of the last meeting
1) The minutes of the meeting held 15 March 2017 were accepted as an accurate record. It was noted that ‘Dogs in public spaces’ policy position would be circulated to Council shortly for sign off. All other actions were noted as complete or addressed elsewhere in the papers.

Ethics and Welfare Advisory Panel
2) Policy Committee were updated on the recent meeting of the Ethics and Welfare Advisory Panel (EWAP) held 24 May 2017. Policy Committee were reassured that going forward the recently elected EWAP Chair, Daniella dos Santos, or an alternate, would attend Policy Committee meetings.

Brexit Working Group
3) Paula Boyden provided a list of references relating to rabies incubation periods to assist further work by BVA to develop an evidence-based position on pet travel post-Brexit.

Surveillance Working Group
4) Kate Sharpe, Chair of the Surveillance Working Group, updated Policy Committee on the group’s work and upcoming meetings. Following their first meeting in February, the group had developed a survey to gauge how the profession valued surveillance and current engagement with the system. The survey would be launched on 5 July in England and Wales and localised for Northern Ireland and Scotland in consultation with the branches later this year. The group would be meeting on 27 June to discuss livestock surveillance and would be hearing from APHA (Richard Irvine and Paul Roger) on ongoing development in the current surveillance network, Owen Denny on the Northern Ireland surveillance review (NI DAERA) and Ingrid den Uijl (University of Surrey) on the situation in the Netherlands. The group would also be meeting on 9 August to further unpack small animal, equine and wildlife surveillance with a panel of 6 experts, including Paul Duff from APHA.

5) In discussion, the following points were made to feed back to the SWG:
   - The University of Bristol was offering free post mortems to equine clients
   - Anecdotally, some vets were reporting that PMs were being requested in equine practice, as well as in small animal, to establish practitioner culpability.
   - There may be a perception that a PM is of lower value in individual medicine (ie companion animal) than in herd medicine (ie production animal)

6) ACTION: All PC members to support dissemination and promotion of the surveillance survey once launched
Farm Assurance Working Group

7) Danny Chambers, Chair of the Farm Assurance Working Group, presented the initial draft position produced by the WG. Policy Committee also considered comments from EWAP about the development of the position.

8) In discussion Policy Committee agreed that:
   - The profession had an ethical responsibility to be well informed with regard to welfare outcomes, and to be able to communicate those to the public
   - The draft position was a good start but for a public audience the position should be more directive
   - The position should define what farm assurance was, as it may not be familiar to the general public, and include reference to the veterinary role in assurance schemes
   - It was important to dispel myths and misconceptions with regard to production systems, for example the perception that intensive systems automatically meant poor welfare, and free range systems automatically meant good welfare. It was important to consider welfare outcomes wherever possible to avoid box ticking.
   - A simple grid explaining each scheme from a veterinary animal health and welfare perspective and outlining how the various schemes addressed various welfare outcomes could be a useful reference document for the profession and the public
   - The position should include a reminder of the relevant legislation and welfare codes to set the scene
   - The Working Group should consider whether or not a species-specific approach to the standards that different farm assurance schemes address would be useful
   - The position could assess existing schemes against BVA’s existing policies (for example on non-stun slaughter, transport to slaughter, etc). However, it was recognised that this may be a significant piece of additional work beyond BVA’s capacity

9) ACTION: D Chambers and Secretariat to feed PC’s comments back to the WG and reflect on the original scope of the Farm Assurance working group to propose an approach to the working group that is in line with Policy Committee and EWAP’s recommendations.

AMR

10) Huw Stacey explained that the AMR working group had developed its overarching set of principles on AMR and setting sector-specific targets for the reduction of antibacterial use (anthelmintics and heavy metals were agreed to be outside of the scope of the group). John Fishwick reported that the RUMA Target Task Force was hoping to announce a sector-specific target proposal for England at the end of October. At present each sector was formulating their target proposal to submit to the VMD and Defra at the end of the summer. J Fishwick also reported that whilst the RUMA TTF was looking at the agricultural sector, it was likely that targets would also need to be established for the companion animal sector.

BVA policy priorities (not covered by a working group)

11) Welfare at slaughter
    FSA, HSA and University of Bristol’s Best Practice Guidelines for Group Stunning
    Policy Committee gave their support for this document.

12) 20 second standstill rule for non-stun sheep
    Policy Committee supported taking the position that the 20 second standstill rule applied to non-stunned sheep should be removed when post-cut stunning was applied. However, this position should be framed as a pragmatic ask in the wider context of BVA’s aspirational position calling for an end to non-stun slaughter.

ACTION: Secretariat to update non-stun slaughter position
13) **Labelling**
Policy Committee felt that the proposed number system to identify slaughter method was ambiguous and difficult to interpret for the consumer. Policy Committee also raised concerns that by supporting this system, BVA would weaken its own aspirational position on food labelling. Policy Committee agreed that a possible approach would be for BVA to note the system whilst reiterating its own position and highlighting what parts of this numbering system align with BVA’s own policy.

**ACTION:** Comments to be fed back to FAI confidentially

14) **Welfare of pet animals**
**Responsible use of pets in advertising guidance:**

Paula Boyden provided the Dogs Trust ‘Guide to do’s and don'ts when taking photographs or videos of dogs’ to assist BVA in the development of its guidance. Policy Committee were happy with the direction of the draft document and made the following recommendations:

- Secretariat should develop an accompanying summary document for quick reference
- The document should forefront contacting BVA for advice or to discuss concerns towards the start of both documents
- The document should include a clear statement to outline that the guidelines covered all representations of animals that could influence owner behaviour, including the use of cartoon and CGI representations of animals in advertising
- The document should include reference to the use of wild or dangerous animals (for example hybrids such as wolf crosses)
- The ‘Extreme characteristics’ section should make reference to dogs with sloping backs and dogs with extreme skin folds that may cause restrictions in expression
- Scientific references could be included where appropriate, but the majority of the guidance is based on veterinary expert opinion

**15) ACTION:** Secretariat to implement these amends and circulate to the Policy Committee loop for further feedback

16) **Brachycephalic dogs and cats**

Secretariat reported the convening of the virtual working group to develop a position on brachycephalic dogs with Policy Committee and representatives from BSAVA. Policy Committee recognised the immediate need to address health and welfare problems in brachycephalics, however thought that the document would benefit from some overarching BVA principles regarding extreme conformation/characteristics that could be used across breed types and species (eg rabbits/cats). These overarching principles would also enable BVA to link back to previous positions in this area and provide a robust basis for similar BVA positions relating to extreme conformation in the future.

Policy Committee also recommended:

- Using images, schematic diagrams or videos to illustrate good, average and poor conformation in brachycephalics
- Being careful not to vilify certain breeds and thereby alienate owners/breeders
- Assessing if there is any evidence regarding mortality rates

**ACTION:** Secretariat to implement amends to position and re-circulate around the Brachys loop for further feedback

**ACTION:** Policy Committee to send any relevant images/video/diagram links illustrating good, average and poor conformation to Brachys loop

17) **Vet Futures**

S Burnell reported that Vet Futures would be celebrating its first anniversary in July and that there would be an update and various comms outputs detailing actions that arose
from Vet Futures and how they were being taken forward. A major piece of work on Graduate Outcomes, led by RCVS, had started and may have policy implications as it progressed. Policy Committee would be kept informed.

18) Animal Welfare Strategy
Animal welfare problems by sector – working document
Policy Committee raised several queries about the clarity of the language in the document for secretariat to review.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to review language in document

19) Anthelmintics
Policy Committee agreed that there was a lack of evidence linking different types of prescribers to resistance of anthelmintics. It was suggested that the BVA position should focus on collaborative working between vets and SQPs and the importance of health planning and appropriate use of anthelmintics. The position should recognise that all groups of anthelmintics could be prescribed, providing the decision to prescribe was evidence based and an audit trail available. Thought would need to be given to enforcement.

**ACTION:** R Kelly and Secretariat to make suggested amends to position and recirculate to the Policy Committee loop

20) Cattle Analgesia
Policy Committee felt that the title of the position should reflect that the procedures mentioned in the document related to specific procedures in calves as opposed to analgesia in cattle generally. If there was going to be a cattle focus, there should be some adult cattle examples incorporated into the position. In addition, Policy Committee agreed that if the position refers only to disbudding and castration the words ‘such as’ be removed. Policy Committee also supported clarifying that local anaesthetic and a NSAID should be used ‘in accordance with data sheet recommendations’

**ACTION:** Secretariat to make suggested amends and circulate to Policy Committee and BCVA

21) Formalin
Policy Committee supported the development of guidance on the appropriate use of Formalin with FVS, including consideration of VMD’s position, current legislation and health and safety issues. It was felt that FVS should be invited to start this document and discuss with Policy Committee.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to invite FVS to present on Formalin at next Policy Committee to help inform joint guidance

**Veterinary Surgeons Act**

22) In groups, Policy Committee were asked to outline the key issues to consider and be prepared for if the Veterinary Surgeons Act were to be reopened. These considerations would feed into BVA’s contribution to the RCVS Legislation Working Party.

23) Key areas raised for BVA to consider were:
   - Regulation of allied professionals
   - What constituted protected activity (eg diagnosis) and how the need for such activities to remain protected could be evidenced (eg level of training)?
   - Telemmedicine
   - Recognition/remit of veterinary nurses
   - Practice Standards – making compulsory and enforcement
   - Impact on non-veterinary practice owners
   - Post-graduate support (PDP) – linked to undergraduate training and EMS
   - Post-Brexit considerations – which vets would qualify to practise in the UK (eg EAEVE accredited only)?
• Omni-competence vs. specialisation pre-graduation
• Ongoing provision of 24-hour cover – if this was not provided by vets someone else would move in to fill the gap
• The need to articulate the value that vets could add and to provide a future vision for what the vet-led team might look like

24) The following risks and opportunities were also raised:
• Policy Committee expressed caution towards any potential unintended consequences of opening the Act
• Policy Committee also thought that consideration should be given as to how to maintain the right of vets as the main stakeholders in animal health and welfare and how to illustrate the value of veterinary surgeons as part of this
• It was felt that if the VSA was opened there would be opportunities to stipulate the regulation and education/training requirements of allied professionals
• It was also felt that opening the VSA would be an opportunity to promote a 'veterinary-led' multi-disciplinary team, however this would require an articulation of why vets are crucial in providing leadership in this area.

25) Policy Committee agreed that many of the above considerations could be addressed without opening the VSA. However, it was agreed that BVA needed to be ready for these discussions.

Horizon Scanning
26) Policy Committee were reminded that this was a working document that could be added to at any point by raising an area to note with the Policy Team.

27) Position on compulsory Practice Standards
It was felt that as RCVS move towards making Practice Standards compulsory BVA should take a view on this (virtual development of a position as opposed to a working group), especially in terms of the standardisation of reporting and inspections.

ACTION: Secretariat to draft some survey questions to include in Voice survey, as well as extending these questions to the divisions, to sense check the views of the membership on this topic. A view will then be reported back to Policy Committee and Council.

New BVA Working Groups
28) Exotics – suitability lists
Policy Committee felt that a working group for suitability lists should not be convened at this time. Policy Committee would reassess the need for a working group based on the impact of reviewed animal establishments licensing legislation and the impact of the roll out of new educational materials at point of sale.

29) Recognition of abnormal behaviour as an indicator of stress
Policy Committee supported convening a working group to explore recognition of abnormal behaviour as an indicator of stress across species. P Boyden agreed to be Chair of this working group. Policy Committee populated the scoping/remit document during the meeting.

ACTION: Secretariat to finish populating scoping document and circulate to Policy Committee for further comments

30) Responsible Breeding
Policy Committee supported convening a working group to explore responsible breeding covering all species, pedigrees and cross breeds. Policy Committee part-populated the scoping/remit document during the meeting.

ACTION: Secretariat to finish populating scoping document and circulate to Policy Committee for further comments and discussion to designate a Chair for this group
Strategic Plan
31) S Burnell briefly outlined the draft strategic aims that were being developed as part of the new strategic plan (2018-2020). Under the strategic aim on representing and championing the veterinary profession it is proposed that having successfully established BVA as a ‘go-to’ organisation on animal health and welfare, there be a shift towards promoting more profession focussed issues, such as workforce, work conditions, and wellbeing.

ACTION: Policy Committee to consider the proposed structure and input ideas for the strategic objectives on the email loop

Any other business
32) PDSA ‘Which Pet?’ resources
It was noted that PDSA had provided detailed responses to all of Policy Committee’s comments on the draft resources.

Action: Secretariat to recirculate documents on Policy Committee loop for feedback and/or agreement to support

33) BVA Congress Programme
S Burnell shared the BVA Congress 2017 Programme and encouraged Policy Committee to attend the debates on 16-17 November at London Vet Show.

34) Date of next meeting
   - 6 September 2017 - Afternoon telecon TBC
   - 11 October 2017 – 11am-3pm, BVA HQ