Scottish Branch meeting (teleconference) 18 February 2015 at BVA headquarters

Attendance
Ronnie Soutar (Branch President)
Grace Webster (Branch Junior Vice President)
Robert Anderson (Honorary Secretary)
Paul Honeyman (APHA)
David Logue (Ayrshire)
Kathleen Robertson (regional representative)
Robin Hargreaves (BVA Senior Vice President)
Liz Ormerod (AWF)
Freda Scott-Park (HIVSS)
Jenny Helm (Glasgow)
Paul Burr (BCVA)
Sheila Voas (CVO)

Apologies
Keith Chandler (BEVA)
Brian Hosie (SRUC)
Heather Stevenson (SVS)
Sandra McLaughlin (Edinburgh)

1) The Branch President welcomed members to the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting 13 February 2014
2) It was noted that all actions had been completed or were discussed elsewhere in the papers. Regarding paragraph 2 which referred to possible concerns surrounding biosecurity protocols for veterinary surgeries operating on the same premises as pet shops, it was noted that Libby Anderson, secretariat of the Cross Party Group on Animal Welfare had been unable to provide any further information. It was agreed that no further action needed to be taken.

The Branch President expressed thanks to the veterinary school representatives for providing statistics on undergraduates originating in the US, and for gathering comments on why BVA membership was less relevant to academics. The information on membership was being used to inform BVA’s member recruitment campaign. In relation to education, it was noted that BVA activity was focused on the practical steps to mitigate risk, rather than limiting numbers. MSG would be discussing the action plan developed by the MSG education subgroup at their next meeting and comments were invited via the community. It was agreed that R Anderson would report back at the next meeting.  

3) In relation to Scottish Veterinary Futures, it was noted that the deans of the veterinary schools were looking at this, but that there were no developments to report at this stage. An update was given on the progress of the BVA-RCVS Vet Futures initiative and members were encouraged to provide input to the initiative. The Secretariat agreed to circulate links to the Vet Futures website and the Voice of the Profession survey panel.

Animal Health and Welfare Stakeholder Group
3) Members noted the summary of the most recent meeting, which had been attended by D Logue on behalf of Branch. One of the main issues discussed had
been rabbit welfare, and the President had followed up with Diane Bain from the charity Rabbits Require Rights. She raised concerns that rabbits were not being presented to vets and that a large number of vets appeared to lack knowledge of rabbit problems. Members noted plans to promote Rabbit Awareness Week jointly with the SSPCA and in close liaison with BSAVA and AWF. They agreed that it was important to raise awareness within the profession and draw attention to the relevant CPD provided by BSAVA; a joint initiative would gain more support. It was suggested that this should be discussed with BSAVA.

**Action: Secretariat**

4) Branch was informed that there would be a meeting to discuss the Sheep Disease Eradication Proposal later in February. It was agreed that if possible it would be useful for a representative of the Sheep Veterinary Society to attend. D Logue agreed to liaise with J Wilson to see if he was able to attend, keeping the Secretariat in copy.

**Action: D Logue**

**Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Advisory Group**

5) The Animal Welfare Working Group had met again at the beginning of February to look at the recommendations from FAWC, which were largely supported. There had been a discussion about enforcement, recognising the fact that local authorities, APHA and the police were struggling with budgets. It was noted that the possibility of APHA undertaking more enforcement activities/providing assistance to local authorities was being looked into.

**Cross Party Group on Animal Welfare**

6) There was no further update at this time. The secretariat for this group had passed back to Christine Grahame’s office after Libby Anderson had stood down at the AGM and as yet no date had been fixed for the next meeting.

**Consultations**

7) There were no further updates on the next steps for tail docking or wild animals in circuses. It was expected that compulsory microchipping would be introduced in Scotland and an announcement would be forthcoming. Information would be circulated to Branch when available.

**Action: Secretariat**

**BVA activity updates**

8) It was reported that the issue of non-stun slaughter would be discussed at a Parliamentary debate the following week. In advance of this debate, BVA had circulated template letters to members for them to send on to their MPs. It was hoped that the debate would provide the opportunity to air the issue, although it was recognised that categorical statements would not be expected this close to an election.

**OV training and revalidation/HIVSS**

9) Members welcomed the fact that, following intervention by BVA and Branch, the Scottish Government had agreed to provide assistance to OVs in Scotland in relation to training and revalidation costs. In particular, Scottish Branch thanked S Voas for her efforts. It was noted that some of the criteria for assistance had not yet been decided, but that there would be a further meeting in April to discuss.

It was noted that a further issue had come to light – that the practical requirements for training for new OVs (testing 250 cows across 3 farms under OV observation) would be unattainable for some practices in Scotland. BVA had raised this issue with Improve International and APHA and had been informed that there was some flexibility on the requirements to be decided on a case-by-case basis. This decision would be taken by a Regional Veterinary Lead - in this case Peter Melens. It was agreed that any further concerns should be communicated to the Secretariat.

**Action: All**
BVA Governance review

10) Members discussed the BVA Governance review and highlighted the following issues as priorities for consideration by the Governance Review steering group:

- Devolution - members welcomed the inclusion of devolution on the steering group agenda.
- The role of BVA committees and communicating those roles to members
- Relationships with BVA divisions – members noted the challenges of balancing CPD across all divisions and the possibility of extended group membership to allow access to all CPD and potentially representation. It was agreed that the profession needed to speak with one voice.
- The role of BVA – was it to increase membership or to be truly representative of the entire profession?
- BVA visibility – there was a need for BVA to be visible and relevant. It was noted that progress had been made in relation to visibility with the BVA media team working hard to improve media coverage using tools like the BVA voice of the profession survey panel to generate positive stories.

Members were encouraged to input into the Governance review as it progressed.

Action: All

SSPC A – opportunities for cooperation and collaboration

11) It was reported that Branch had met with SSPCA on 5 February. The meeting had discussed compulsory microchipping, which BVA supported but SSPCA did not, the SSPCA education programme, BVA Scottish Branch concerns about Scottish capacity for cull sow slaughter, and SSPCA proposals relating to 24 hour cover and helplines. The minutes would be circulated when available.

Action: Secretariat

12) The SSPCA education programme had reached 47% of Scottish school children in 2014 and there was an opportunity for joint education initiatives in the future. There was an open invitation for BVA and Branch Officers to accompany SSPCA officers on a school visit.

13) It was noted that 90% of Scottish cull sows were transported to Essex for slaughter and this was cause for concern. Although there had been discussion with closer abattoirs regarding their capacity to slaughter these animals, and there were plans for the development of additional capacity in Scotland, it was appreciated this could not happen overnight. It was suggested that BVA and SSPCA could write to the Scottish Government expressing support for the creation of a new abattoir to slaughter cull sows. It was agreed that a form of words would be agreed with SSPCA in consultation with Branch and Scottish Pig Producers.

Action: Secretariat

14) The SSPCA had also discussed a number of proposals involving veterinary practices.

24-hour SSPCA Helpline SSPCA were keen to provide 24-hour cover, but whilst they could operate a helpline cost effectively, could not provide officers across the country given the low volume of calls. Taking this into consideration, SSPCA had asked whether vets would be prepared to provide night and weekend cover for SSPCA call outs. It was clarified the SSPCA would collect the animal the next day. Although it was clear that BVA could not mandate practices to join such a scheme, it was agreed that BVA might be able to send a letter to members asking if they wished to participate.

It was noted that there had been concerns in England surrounding the Initial
Emergency Treatment procedures put in place by the RSPCA. It was agreed that care should be taken to avoid this situation reoccurring in Scotland.

15) Stray Dogs There was also the suggestion that practices might be able to assist by taking in stray dogs. There was concern that SSPCA would be increasingly required to deal with stray dogs as police and local authority budgets were cut. Following discussion it had been agreed that this would not be practical, and that bringing stray dogs into practices might cause health and welfare problems.

16) Neutering Scheme SSPCA proposed a scheme whereby to encourage neutering, they would fund 33% of the costs, with vet practices absorbing 33% of the cost and the customer funding the remaining 33%. It was not proposed to means test recipients. Again it was noted that BVA would only be able to recommend such a scheme to practices and could not require them to join.

Following discussion, Branch agreed that there could be merit in this proposal but only if was a closely targeted scheme. There were concerns that the scheme could reduce practice income and drive standards of neutering down.

17) Branch agreed that further information should be sought from SSPCA on the 24-hour cover and neutering scheme proposals so that BVA could consider whether letters of support would be appropriate. Action: Secretariat

bTB – Scottish implications of bTB in England
18) It was noted that there would be discussion at BVA Council in April on the Association’s position on the badger cull in the pilot areas in England. It was agreed that in advance of the discussion, BVA Scottish Branch should consider its views and the impact that any policy could have on bTB in Scotland. It was noted that the BVA’s Ethics and Welfare Group and Veterinary Policy Group had met jointly in January to discuss the data from the second year of culling in the pilot areas and were developing their recommendations to Council within their committees.

19) The view of Branch was that Scotland would expect England to control TB by whatever means possible. It was agreed that a post would be made on the Scottish Forum to encourage members to input their views. Action: P Burr

Any other business
20) Male dairy calves Attendees discussed the killing of male dairy calves at birth and it was noted that SSPCA were also discussing this issue with the QMS welfare committee. Although Branch accepted that death in itself was not a welfare issue, it was important that animals should be well nourished and well managed until the point of slaughter. It was agreed that this issue should be raised as a concern with BCVA. Action: P Burr

21) Use of cow pacifiers Attendees discussed the use of these electric immobilising devices. It was noted that these were not legal and that the Government was trying to stamp out use. There were no plans to make cow pacifiers legal in the future.

22) Livestock Health Scotland An update was given on the industry-led group, facilitated by NFUS. The group was established to create and maintain a link between livestock producers, the wider industry and veterinary, research and epidemiological professionals. It aimed to deliver a high health status for Scottish livestock and to support disease eradication. At the last meeting, the group had received a presentation on disease prioritisation. It was suggested that there were some links with the Sheep Disease Eradication Proposal (see above) and that the representatives on each group should liaise to discuss a way forward. Action: D Logue and F Stephen
It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate the minutes of the last Livestock Health Scotland meeting to Branch for information. **Action: Secretariat**

23) **Review of exotic pet trade in Scotland** It was noted that the Scottish Government would, in future, be announcing a review of the exotic pet trade and that BVA views would be welcome.

24) The President of Branch thanked Branch Council for a useful and productive teleconference. The next meeting would be the Branch AGM on Wednesday 13 May 2015 in Edinburgh. Further details would be circulated by the Secretariat. **Action: Secretariat**