



British Veterinary Association

Cangen Cymru Welsh Branch



## Our manifesto for Wales 2016–2021

A call to action for politicians and policymakers

A strong voice for vets





# Vets at the heart of a One Health government agenda 2016–2021

**As veterinary surgeons, we work at the heart of the communities in which we practise and at the cutting edge of scientific research into animal and public health. It is vets who are on the ground detecting and testing for disease, it is vets who provide preventive healthcare and emergency treatment to much-loved pets, and it is vets who monitor and protect the welfare of livestock from birth to slaughter. As such we are in a unique position from which to offer the next government in Wales evidence-based and informed advice and policy recommendations.**

This year we launched the landmark BVA animal welfare strategy, 'Vets speaking up for animal welfare', defining the veterinary profession's responsibility and unique opportunity to advocate animals' best interests at individual, community and national levels.

At national level in Wales, the veterinary profession is proud to be involved in the pivotal Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework (AHWF) Group, which facilitates crucial links between government, livestock keepers, other animal owners and industry. Our support for the six-day standstill exemption for visits to veterinary practices led to the development of a standard operating procedure for ensuring good biosecurity at veterinary practices, which was agreed by the Welsh Government.

The veterinary profession is well placed to help achieve goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, such as supporting a prosperous and resilient Wales by maintaining a healthy livestock sector and contributing towards a globally responsible Wales by improving antimicrobial stewardship. We therefore urge the next government to recognise the importance of the veterinary profession and consider how to best continue maximising the unique skills, knowledge and expertise of the veterinary resource.

The policy recommendations set out in this manifesto provide a clear pathway to improving animal health and welfare, and we look forward to working with the next government in Wales to develop and implement them.



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**BVA Welsh Branch President**



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**BVA President**

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the largest representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK and we speak up for vets on the issues that matter most. We promote evidence-led policy drawn from science and the expertise and experiences of our members working in all areas of the veterinary profession.

The BVA Welsh Branch represents all BVA members in Wales, bringing together representatives of BVA's specialist and territorial divisions, government, academic institutions and research organisations in Wales.



# Safeguarding animal health

**Safeguarding animal health is vital to the Welsh economy, to securing public health, and to ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare.**

Companion animals play a valuable role in the lives of their owners and contribute to improving human health and wellbeing, while neglecting the health of our herds and flocks would have an unacceptable impact on welfare and drive up the cost of Welsh agriculture. The tripartite relationship between government, farmer and vet, underpinned by veterinary-informed biosecurity measures, is paramount in protecting against, and controlling, livestock disease.

Veterinary surgeons play a frontline and strategic role in safeguarding and promoting the health of all animals, from ensuring pets are effectively protected from, and treated for, illness to ensuring that livestock receive appropriate care and treatment to reduce and eliminate disease and promote efficient production. In order to do that we need access to veterinary medicines, a strong surveillance network, and a legislative and regulatory framework that supports animal health.

## The next government should:

- Review its bovine TB eradication programme to include the targeted and humane culling of badgers, by means of cage trapping and shooting only, in areas where bovine TB is endemic and the wildlife reservoir is significant in the epidemiology. This comprehensive approach to tackling bovine TB should continue to include risk-based biosecurity, noting the recommendations made by the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales following the Biosecurity Survey; cattle controls; badger vaccination where appropriate and available; and investment in research into diagnostics and future vaccine delivery.
- Progress proposals to combat endemic livestock diseases through, for example, research into sheep scab and the Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication scheme for Wales, ensuring that biosecurity is a core element of all overarching strategies.
- Evidence the effectiveness of the new streamlined Surveillance 2014 structure for Wales – which encompasses the vital network of the new Wales Veterinary Science Centre (Aberystwyth), existing diagnostic facilities and laboratories, Official Veterinarians (OVs) and the carcass collection system – through transparent reporting of indicators such as the number of diagnostic submissions.
- Work with the UK government in the establishment of a central equine database and a single passport issuing authority – supported by compulsory microchipping of all horses – which are fundamental in supporting the Control of Horses (Wales) Act and promoting and sustaining responsible ownership of horses.
- Continue to support the One Health approach, as outlined in the UK Five Year Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy, to increase collaboration and integration of the veterinary and medical professions to promote the responsible use of antimicrobials.
- Lobby in Europe to protect the veterinary surgeon's right to prescribe and privilege to dispense veterinary medicines as a means of improving antimicrobial stewardship to safeguard future use in animals and humans.

# Promoting animal welfare

**This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Animal Welfare Act (England and Wales) 2006; a landmark piece of legislation that enshrined the five welfare needs of all animals and established a legal duty of care on owners to not only prevent suffering, but to actively provide for welfare.**

Veterinary surgeons work day and night to help clients understand the needs of their animals and to fulfil their responsibilities as animal keepers and owners. Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are often the first port of call for advice on animal welfare within the community, and the professions champion measures to improve the welfare of all species. BVA's recently launched animal welfare strategy, 'Vets speaking up for animal welfare', identified priority areas for the veterinary profession to contribute solutions for real-world animal welfare problems.

The UK enjoys some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and we should be proud of these achievements: Wales has led the way by banning the use of electronic shock collars on dogs and cats, and in producing a code of practice on the use of snares for fox control. We must ensure existing legislation is enforced effectively and keeps pace with societal change, such as the growth in use of the internet to advertise and sell pets. We must utilise regulation, advice and education to continue to improve and promote better animal welfare.

## The next government should:

- Protect the welfare of animals by requiring all animals to be stunned before slaughter to ensure they are insensible to pain. There is very little non-stun slaughter carried out in Wales but, while it is permitted under the EU derogation, the government should reduce the welfare harm of non-stun slaughter by labelling meat as stunned or non-stunned to allow consumers to make an informed choice, and better matching legitimate supply to demand.
- Introduce mandatory CCTV use in all approved slaughterhouses as a useful tool in helping to meet general animal welfare requirements in slaughterhouses.
- Strengthen border controls and checks to prevent the illegal import of dogs into and through Wales, not only because of the disease risk they may pose, however small, but also because of the serious welfare and behavioural problems that impact the dogs and owners.
- Ensure local authorities have adequate resources to robustly enforce the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations to remove irresponsible and indiscriminate dog breeding practices from Wales.
- Enact legislation and develop guidance on the sale and ownership of non-traditional companion animals/exotic species to ensure their health and welfare needs can be met.
- Bring forward legislation to ban the ownership of animals whose welfare needs cannot be met, such as the keeping of primates as pets and use of wild animals in travelling circuses.
- Review and revise the Welsh Government codes of practice for the welfare of livestock and companion animals in partnership with the veterinary profession.

# Recognising the vital role of veterinary surgeons

**Veterinary surgeons carry out their roles for the public good – from service delivery and education in the community, to disease surveillance and eradication, to pioneering research.**

Vets play a pivotal role in safeguarding public health through their involvement in food production and food safety from 'farm to fork'. Without vets there would be no trade in animals and animal products. Many private vets also carry out work on behalf of the government as Official Veterinarians (OVs), including testing for bovine TB and other diseases, inspecting animals for export or import, and providing pet passports. A positive relationship between government and veterinary surgeons, and a sustainable relationship between vets and their clients, as evidenced through the unique veterinary practice ownership structure of the Veterinary Delivery Partnership in Wales, is therefore vital in delivering government-led national initiatives and other effective animal health measures to industry and wider society.

In recent years BVA has raised concerns that measures to reduce government costs could undermine the UK's network of veterinary practices and the associated impact on animal health and welfare and disease preparedness. The closure of veterinary laboratories and future tendering for OV services could have the potential for unintended consequences, which ultimately risk compromising both animal and public health.

## The next government should:

- Ensure continued veterinary input and expertise into the work of the Animal Health and Welfare Framework (AHWF) Group, with partnership working developed as a crucial element of the delivery model.
- Maintain and promote veterinary expertise within agencies in Wales, recognising the value of veterinary input to both policy development and implementation.
- Monitor the provision of OV services under the tendering arrangements to ensure it continues to recognise and utilise the expertise and knowledge that local veterinary surgeons have within their communities and that there is no erosion of service provision in Wales.
- Allocate funding from the Rural Development Programme alongside engagement with farmer representative associations to raise their members' awareness of responsibilities and requirements in presenting cattle for TB testing in a safe and suitable manner for the safety of vets, farmers and other personnel.
- Embrace partnership working between government and the veterinary profession, recognising the unique skills, knowledge and expertise of the veterinary team across animal health and welfare and public health.





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