BVA Northern Ireland Branch response to DARD consultation on The Scrapie (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

1) The BVA is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom and has over 15,000 members. Our primary aim is to represent, support and champion the interests of the veterinary profession in this country, and we therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health and welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.

2) The BVA's Northern Ireland Branch brings together representatives of local veterinary associations, BVA's specialist divisions, government, and research organisations in Northern Ireland. The Branch advises BVA on the consensus view of the Northern Ireland members on local and United Kingdom issues. We have also consulted directly with specialist division the Sheep Veterinary Society.

3) We understand that current membership fees for the Northern Ireland Scrapie Monitored Flocks Scheme (SMFS) were set in 2013, these have been reviewed in light of increased staff costs and it is now necessary, in accordance with government policy, to introduce a new fees schedule to enable DARD to achieve full cost recovery for services provided. We support the proposal to increase fees to full cost recovery as the services listed relate to requirements that allow for commercial enterprise activities. However, if the industry is to pay the full cost for services, they should rightly expect to pay for an efficient high value service, priced accordingly. It is therefore essential that there is full transparency of fee setting to include overheads and an audit of efficient process. This will ensure the value of the service and cost-effective delivery and will engender buy-in. For effective disease control, and good Government/vet/farmer relations the income must be retained for the benefit of the Scheme.

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