1) BVA is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom and has over 16,000 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) BVA’s Scottish Branch brings together representatives of the BVA’s territorial and specialist divisions, government, academic institutions and research organisations in Scotland. The Branch advises BVA on the consensus view of Scottish members on Scottish and United Kingdom issues.

3) We welcome the opportunity to input into the development of the SRUC’s Strategy and are largely supportive of the principles outlined in this discussion document. We believe the areas of focus in SRUC’s mission provide an invaluable opportunity to create a new model that fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, research excellence and, above all, joined-up, whole system working across the veterinary profession and wider agriculture sectors in Scotland and the UK.

4) Integration

In terms of the proposed title ‘College of Agriculture and Rural Economy’, we would like to see the term ‘Scottish’ or ‘Scotland’ included in the title, for example ‘Scottish College of Agriculture and Rural Economy’.

We also welcome the integration of SRUC’s specialisms, however believe that success will lie in supporting excellence in a few targeted areas as opposed to many. SRUC could encourage better information sharing and collaborative working between its veterinary services and other institutes such as the veterinary universities and Moredun to encourage knowledge exchange and whole system working. We believe that such information sharing and collaboration should extend internationally and across the UK. Likewise, we believe that there is an opportunity to develop deeper links with the major livestock veterinary practices which are growing rapidly.

In addition, regarding effective collaboration, we welcome SRUC’s proposal to create more collaborative regional alliances. Recent plans to scale back the SRUC’s estate have come at the expense of some regional relationships, particularly in South West Scotland. Efforts to re-cultivate and maintain these relationships through the proposed regional alliances and collaborative working would be welcomed and we would like SRUC to outline in more detail how it plans to achieve
this.

5) Protecting Scotland from animal disease

As new diseases emerge, it is important for the SRUC to work with other centres to ensure joined up working, information sharing, targeted expertise and avoid the duplication of work across centres. We believe that there is an opportunity to harness and cultivate expertise in agricultural and veterinary research by creating a hub of universities and scientific institutes who work collaboratively, exchanging knowledge and developing new expertise and infrastructure to support innovation and research excellence.

Equally, there is a need to develop more defined integration and methods of collaborative working between the two Scottish veterinary schools, Moredun and major veterinary practices in terms of the acquisition, analysis and sharing of surveillance data, as well as the need for active surveillance activity. This collaborative working and data sharing should also seek to be cross border in nature, extending across UK and European surveillance systems.

From a veterinary perspective, it is also paramount that activities continue to ensure that BVD eradication is achieved, shown to be a success and the measures used to achieve this are thoroughly evaluated before exploring new opportunities for disease eradication.

Further, we believe that in order to comprehensively assess the SRUC’s education and training curriculum to meet current and future skill gaps there must be a transparent discussion with the main stakeholders in rural education, including the main funder – the Scottish Government- regarding how best to give value for money and address workforce needs across all of Scotland’s rural education institutes.

We believe that to provide a comprehensive consultation on SRUC’s new strategy, SRUC’s proposed stakeholder groups should be organised by both region and sector. In order to incentivise and facilitate stakeholder engagement, these engagement groups should promote engagement through a variety of channels, including face-to-face meetings, online forums and surveys.

As mentioned above, active collaboration between veterinary schools and scientific institutes would lead to the exchange of knowledge, harnessing of expertise and consequently encouragement of innovation in the field.

In addition, developing education and training courses with educational outcomes that encourage innovative thinking and running competitions to incentivise innovation could also be helpful.
6) **Industry-facing**

With regard to providing additional focus on specific regions or sectors, small holders and hobby farmers have a significant impact on rare breeds but can sometimes lack key knowledge on animal husbandry. This could be an area for additional focus and support from SRUC. We believe that rather than focussing solely on extending its focus, SRUC should also work to cultivate its current relationships with specific regions and sectors, as well as further developing and facilitating collaborative working across these.

We believe the creation of formal processes to facilitate knowledge exchange and information sharing between SRUC and industry would enhance engagement and add valuable support for industry.

The offer of good value for money by setting and maintaining high educational standards and opportunities would go some way to reconciling public and private interests. This starts by developing SRUC staff, encouraging them cultivate their skills and impart their full range of expertise.

7) **International**

We believe that there is an opportunity to harness and cultivate expertise in the land-based and food sectors by creating a hub of universities and scientific institutes who work collaboratively exchanging knowledge and developing new expertise and infrastructure to support innovation and research excellence. This would ensure that Scottish partners are regarded as a strong, unified network that is capable of being world renowned for its agricultural and veterinary research, innovation and practice.

8) **Inspiring**

In terms of engagement with the veterinary profession, the best way to create meaningful, long-term engagement is to start establishing relationships during the profession's formative years at university, perhaps building this into the structure of the aforementioned ‘hub’ of educational and science institutes, then cultivating these relationships with those who express committed interest throughout their career progression. BVA Scottish Branch would welcome further engagement with SRUC going forward and would be pleased to facilitate engagement with our Young Vet Network and Association of Veterinary Students groups and representatives.
9) **Additional feedback:**

**Governance**
We would like to see SRUC address the issue of Board accountability in the further development of its strategy. For purposes of transparency, we would welcome the recommendation that the SRUC Board should make an independent report to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee on an annual basis.

**Brexit**
In addition, BVA would like the SRUC strategy to address and consider the impact of Brexit on Scottish Agriculture. BVA has recently published its report ‘Brexit and the Veterinary Profession’, which considers seven areas key to the profession (workforce, animal health, animal welfare, food hygiene and safety, vet medicines, research and development and trade) and sets out 52 recommendations to the UK Government for the short, medium and long term. This report may prove useful in informing SRUC’s considerations regarding the impact of Brexit on agriculture in Scotland. BVA and BVA Scottish Branch would also welcome any opportunities to input into discussions around this issue and its inclusion in SRUC’s strategy.

11) **Overall we are supportive of the key principles SRUC outlines in this discussion document and believe that SRUC should use the development of its new strategy as an opportunity to foster collaboration and whole system working. We look forward to engaging further with the SRUC to help it arrive at a strategy that cultivates a strong, unified network of veterinary and agricultural expertise across Scotland, which is ultimately capable of being world renowned for its agricultural and veterinary research, innovation and practice.**