BVA WELSH BRANCH RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE TUBERCULOSIS (WALES) ORDER 2010

1) The British Veterinary Association (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 Welsh Branch brings together representatives of the BVA’s territorial and specialist divisions, government, academic institutions and research organisations in Wales. The Branch advises BVA on the consensus view of the Welsh members on Welsh and United Kingdom issues.

3) In April 2014 we responded to the Welsh Government consultation on the introduction of a table valuation system for TB compensation. We expressed support for the principle of using a table valuation system which was objective and based on average market prices, but raised concerns that the proposals did not take into account farming practice, husbandry methods, or disease control practices on farm. We suggested that the Welsh Government should consider how it might incentivise farmers to engage with disease control through good biosecurity and risk based trading decisions. We also suggested that elements of “Cymorth TB” concepts and BCVA’s TB Plus could provide templates for this. As such we welcome these proposed new measures aimed at penalising those who undertake risky practices as well as offering increased incentives to keep disease out of herds.

4) We support the Welsh Government proposal that the amount of compensation paid per animal will be salvage value plus up to 100% of the difference between the salvage value and the market value, to a maximum of £15,000 per animal. We also support the proposals to reduce compensation in certain circumstances where the TB eradication programme has been jeopardised by risky practices. It is essential that those circumstances are well defined, clear, and consistent, and adequately communicated to farmers.

5) Veterinary Improvement Notices (VINs)
We support the principle of VINs being used more widely to improve standards of husbandry and biosecurity on farms in relation to TB, and the proposed introduction of the new ‘Biosecurity Improvement Notice’. The role of the vet is crucial in advising farmers and promoting best practice in biosecurity and as vets in Wales will be delivering the Cymorth TB programme from early November, of which biosecurity is an important component, we see an opportunity for Cymorth TB to act as a benchmark, cross linking with and complementing the Order. We fully support the suggestion that agreed guidance on biosecurity standards should be developed in close liaison with industry in order to achieve a set of standards that are realistic and achievable and therefore credible and supported by farmers.

6) Animals brought into a restricted herd
We support the proposal to reduce compensation for animals which are brought into a restricted herd under license, and subsequently slaughtered as a result of TB before the herd becomes officially TB free. We also support the proposal that cattle
should not be introduced prior to the first short interval test. We agree with the Welsh Government assertion that the proposals strike a balance between allowing restocking whilst minimising the risk of prolonging the breakdown and also sharing the financial risk of bringing healthy cattle into herds with a known TB problem.

7) **Delayed removal of an animal due for slaughter as a result of TB**
   We strongly support the proposal to reduce compensation where the owner has not co-operated with the valuation and/or removal of an animal. We agree that failure to co-operate creates an unacceptable disease risk which can result in further transmission. The application of this principle must be consistent across Wales and made clear to owners from the outset.

8) **Standards of evidence for reducing compensation**
   We support the proposed reduction in compensation in circumstances where a lower ‘balance of probabilities’ standard of evidence is met, providing it is clear to owners how that will be assessed, and is applied consistently across Wales. We agree that this will provide the necessary power to quickly and fairly reduce compensation, which is crucial to the credibility of the Order and also the integrity of the TB Eradication Programme.

9) **Recovering costs and compensation payments**
   We support the principle of recovering expenses where there has been a failure to co-operate with the valuer, or failure to present an animal for testing or removal as required. As each case will vary it is essential that clear guidelines are available detailing the circumstances which will result in cost recovery.

10) **Prohibitions**
   These proposals require some additional clarity, in particular the types of samples being referred and the species covered.

   **November 2015**