

Brexit: the British Veterinary Association's principles for negotiating the UK's exit from the European Union

There are a number of areas of interest to the veterinary profession that may be affected by Brexit. These include veterinary workforce issues, animal health (including surveillance and border controls), animal welfare, food hygiene and safety, veterinary medicines and research and development (R&D).

Our overarching approach to Brexit is that existing animal health, animal welfare, public health, veterinary medicines, workforce, and environmental protection standards must at least be maintained at the same level, or a level equivalent to current EU standards, while seizing the opportunity to improve standards in accordance with evidence-based risk analysis of animal health, welfare and ethics.

Any public money to replace the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should be used to support and incentivise public goods. These should encompass at least animal health and welfare, disease surveillance, biodiversity and environmental stewardship.

In relation to the specific areas of interest the BVA has developed underlying principles for negotiation:

Workforce

1. Working rights for non-British EU vets and veterinary nurses currently working and studying in the UK, and for British vets and VNs working in the EU, must be guaranteed at the existing level with no time limit.
2. New systems for immigration must take account of workforce needs and the demand for veterinary surgeons and nurses in the wide range of roles they fulfil, including taking into account flexible working and career breaks, and

consideration of the inclusion of veterinary medicine on the Shortage Occupation List.

3. RCVS should have the power to determine the recognition of veterinary qualifications and language competency requirements.

Animal health

4. There must be no dilution of existing animal health protections and these should be reinforced wherever reasonable and proportionate.
5. Resources for existing disease control and eradication programmes and surveillance systems should at least be maintained, and the UK should seek opportunities to improve industry/government collaboration on jointly funded programmes.
6. Reciprocal surveillance data sharing with Europe and internationally must be maintained, and the UK must maintain effective and adequately resourced systems for detecting new and emerging diseases.
7. Existing standards (including welfare) in relation to imported live animals and animal products must be maintained.
8. Where animal health legislation is reviewed, the UK should seek opportunities to ensure the regulatory environment is properly based on risk and not overly prescriptive, in order to reduce unnecessary administrative burden.

Animal welfare

9. There must be no dilution of existing animal welfare standards and legislation and the UK should seek opportunities to improve animal welfare, for example in relation to the export/import of live animals, mandatory method of production labelling, and the labelling of non-stun slaughter.
10. The USP of “UK PLC” should be high animal welfare and food safety standards.
11. The maintenance of animal welfare standards should be integral to the negotiation of new trade agreements.

Food hygiene and safety

12. Food hygiene legislation and enforcement, including that for meat hygiene, must be maintained at the current standard or an internationally-recognised equivalent.
13. Veterinary involvement from farm to fork underpins animal health, welfare, public health and food safety. Therefore, veterinary certification and controls to facilitate international trade must be maintained to ensure high standards.
14. Where food safety (including meat hygiene) legislation is reviewed the UK should seek opportunities to ensure the regulatory environment is properly based on risk whilst maintaining current health and welfare standards.

Veterinary medicines

15. Access to veterinary medicines licensed in the EU must be guaranteed and the UK should seek to maintain the link with the current EU central approval system or equivalent.
16. The veterinary medicines cascade must be maintained and the UK should seek opportunities to simplify it.
17. Any new UK regulatory framework for veterinary medicines must be soundly based on safety, quality and efficacy.

Research and development (R&D)

18. There must be a regulatory and legislative framework to ensure the UK continues to be a globally attractive place for research and development (R&D) to include the involvement of the veterinary profession in the UK in the conduct of clinical trials.
19. The UK should seek to maintain access to EU partnership R&D, or similar pan-European, funding and develop new opportunities with global partners.