BVA position on control and eradication of bTB

1. The continuing spread of bTB within cattle and wildlife has an unacceptable impact on animal health and welfare and has the potential to pose a risk to public health.

2. The control and eradication of bTB must be based on the application of sound scientific research coupled with the application of sound veterinary epidemiology.

3. Cost effective control and eradication of bTB from cattle and wildlife populations must be the ultimate aim. Further action must be taken immediately to reverse the increasing prevalence of TB in cattle.

4. Efforts to control the disease should apply established veterinary principles of disease control.

5. Control measures in cattle must be accompanied by simultaneous and coordinated measures in badgers and other wildlife and susceptible farmed species including deer and camelids for the success of any eradication programme.

6. Failure to tackle wildlife sources of infection has prolonged the presence of the disease in all affected species populations.

7. Targeted and managed badger culling is an option to be used in carefully selected areas where badgers are regarded as a significant contributor to the persistent presence of bTB.

8. The methods employed by this control must be humane.

9. A local risk-based approach to methods of control and eradication must be taken to reflect regional differences in the prevalence of the disease.

10. Risk based biosecurity, surveillance, and Farm Health Planning at national, regional and farm level is essential for the control, prevention of spread, and eventual eradication of bTB.

11. Veterinary surgeons must take a more active role in surveillance, diagnosis, control and eradication of bTB. Their advice to farmers and animal keepers is an essential element of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

12. Defra should continue to support the current research programme and ensure it is kept under review in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Research into the best use of current diagnostic techniques and the development of new diagnostic techniques is of the utmost importance as is the further development and deployment of vaccines for the control of bTB.

13. Defra should also support further research into the epidemiology of bTB, to highlight gaps in our understanding of the disease.

14. In the long term vaccination of both badgers and cattle can and should play an important role in any bTB eradication policy, alongside other disease control
measures. At the current time, vaccination of badgers can usefully be used at the edge of endemic TB areas to mitigate the spread of the disease into low risk areas.

15. It is important to understand the current limitations of vaccination, in particular its availability, practical application, true efficacy and legal status. In this context, there is a real need to manage the expectations of the general public as to the potential role of vaccination in bTB eradication.