

BVA views to help shape the Trade and

trade policies

Who we are

- 1) The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With over 18,000 members, our primary aim is to represent, support and champion the interests of the United Kingdom's veterinary profession. We therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health, animal welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.
- 2) Veterinary surgeons deploy their expertise across domestic food production, from farm to fork, ensuring UK production meets high standards of animal health, animal welfare and food safety, and providing assurance to trading partners. The veterinary profession has a great deal of expertise that can contribute to the development of the UK's future trade policies and help secure opportunities for the UK economy.
- 3)



Britain' and has the potential to irreparably damage the UK agricultural sector. In all trade agreements it negotiates, the Government must secure the inclusion of equally high standards of animal health, animal welfare, public health, food safety and responsible medicines use.

- 15) We welcomed the early pronouncements from the UK Government that it would seek to establish the UK's "unique selling point" as one of high animal welfare and high food safety standards.² The current Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster noted in his previous role as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:

"[P]eople know that high animal welfare standards and high environmental standards reinforce the marketability of our produce. It would, therefore, be a mistake if in any free trade deal we

and New Zealand should include an ambitious and comprehensive animal welfare chapter, including detailed provisions on animal welfare cooperation.

- 26) The UK Government has demonstrated strong leadership at home and globally in tackling the issue of antimicrobial resistance, which presents a significant worldwide threat to both human and animal health. Thanks to these efforts, action has been taken at all levels, including at the United Nations, within the EU and domestically. This growing international concern represents a further opportunity for the UK to market high-quality produce where responsible medicine use can be demonstrated, particularly in aquaculture, where biological control of sea lice through cleaner fish is almost unique globally.
- 27) Encouraged by the publication of the O'Neill Review on Antimicrobial Resistance¹², the UK agricultural and food industry has taken steps to further the responsible use of antimicrobials. Alongside our specialist divisions, we are a member of the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance, which launched sector-specific reduction targets for antimicrobial use in late 2017, resulting in a reduction in overall sales, and sales of the most critically important antimicrobials.
- 28) Responding to the O'Neill review, industry made a commitment to reduce antibiotic use in livestock and farmed fish to 50 mg/kg by 2018. This target was achieved two years early. The release in October 2019 of the most recent Veterinary Antimicrobial Resistance and Sales Surveillance (VARSS) report shows continued progress:¹³

The UK is now the lowest user of antibiotics when compared to EU countries with significant livestock farming and the 5th lowest user overall.

For the third year running, the lowest level of sales of veterinary antibiotics in the UK (226 tonnes) was recorded since regular recording began in 1993.

Total sales of veterinary antibiotics, adjusted for animal populations, was 29.5 mg/kg in 2018.

This result signals an additional 9% reduction from 2017 and a 49% reduction since 2014.

Sales of the highest priority critically important antibiotics (HP-CIAs) have dropped 68% since 2014.

How could we advance global agri-food standards, and what can we learn from other countries?

- 29) Above, we note the opportunities offers through trade negotiations to advance animal health, animal welfare and public health standards. Bilateral trade deals present a number of opportunities to advance standards as well as open up new opportunities for the UK

- 31) UK has already begun to represent itself in the WTO since leaving the EU on 31 January 2020. At the end of the transition period, the UK will begin to operate under its own WTO schedules. The UK should use its newly restored position within the WTO system to champion animal health, public health and significantly animal welfare concerns, which the UK public see as a moral obligation.¹⁴
- 32) The WTO, since it was established in 1995, has incorporated and set up over 20 different agreements into its rules. The most relevant for animal welfare are the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT '47), the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), the Agreement on Applying Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). Through these rules, the WTO encourages the harmonisation of national measures with relevant international standards to facilitate safe trade.
- 33) The broad objective of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is to promote global improvements in animal health, animal welfare, and veterinary public health. To this end, the OIE sets intergovernmental standards and works to strengthen the capacities of Members to implement them. The OIE standards are recognised as WTO references with respect to animal health and zoonotic diseases, and a significant number of WTO disputes have addressed the relevance of these OIE standards to international trade measures. In addition to animal health standards, the OIE also sets standards for animal welfare, and has implemented regional and global strategies to encourage their adoption by Members. In comparison with measures to protect animal health or food safety, few WTO disputes have considered animal welfare related measures. A lack of WTO case law has contributed to uncertainty about the consistency of WTO animal welfare measures. The UK should seek to work closely with allies on this issue, including the EU, to push for a strengthening of animal welfare protections within the WTO.
- 34) A new role at the WTO offers the UK Government a new arena to demonstrate our strong leadership on the issue of antimicrobial resistance. Thanks to the UK Government's efforts, action has