

BVA response to Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry on Environmental Land Management and the agricultural transition

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.

The veterinary profession is an integral part of the agricultural and food sectors. Veterinary surgeons provide preventive healthcare and treatment for livestock, as well as carry out surveillance, promote good biosecurity, promote high animal health and welfare and boost

The Agricultural Transition

- 8) England has now entered an agricultural transition period.⁴ Changes for farmers will be phased in over seven years, starting in 2021. Over this time, Direct Payments will be reduced gradually, with the intention to give farmers the time to adapt to the changes. The government intends for the savings from phasing out these area-based payments to be invested in the roll-out of schemes to support public goods and help farmers to boost their productivity. Specific schemes outlined by the Government include:

Environmental Land Management

Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

Grant support to help farmers maintain and improve productivity.

A new approach to farming regulation and enforcement

- 9) Of particular interest to the veterinary profession will be the establishment of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

- 10) The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway maps out how farmers, vets and government will work together to deliver sustained improvement in animal health and welfare over time. We welcome that health and welfare are considered together within the pathway as the health and welfare of animals are intrinsically linked. The role of vets is central to the success of this endeavour, which has been recognised within the structures of the Pathway. BVA has held a seat on the steering group that is designing the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway since it 594.96 849iA0.0000on aETQq0.00

and welfare needs on the farm and ensuring that livestock farmers are applying for items that will provide the expected benefits for health and welfare. The involvement of veterinary expertise is welcome here.

- 17) Careful consideration needs to be given to the role of the vet in practice. Measures to improve animal health and welfare on farm are strengthened when farmers and their private vets work together. Farmers see their private vet as a “reliable and trustworthy” source⁵. If vets are perceived by farmers to be policing the capital grants system this could undermine trust in the vet farmer relationship.

Payment-by-results

- 18) This is the element of the Pathway that is most lacking in detail at present. To clarify matters, Defra has commissioned a research project to determine how a payment-by-results approach would work. The researchers held their first round of stakeholder workshops at the end of 2020. The research aims to identify potential animal welfare enhancements and assess economic viability. Examples of enhancements that could be supported would be the provision of environmental enrichments or changes to confinement practices. This research will ultimately inform a proposed pilot in 2023.

Interconnected outcomes

- 19) 19) Animal health and welfare is interwoven with many social, economic and environmental

Environmental Land Management (ELM)

23) The Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme is described as “the cornerstone of the

