



- abattoirs and throughout the food chain, where veterinary certification is key to securing public health, food safety, animal welfare and assurance for consumers in domestic and foreign markets;
- veterinary schools and independent research laboratories, which advance our scientific understanding of veterinary medicine and animal production systems;
- industry

Month	Year		% change
	2020	2021	
January	303	37256	12296%
February	188	24546	13056%
March	315	27188	8631%
April	88		

Certifier Burden Running total 2021

certifier hours (@2h/cert)	427976
certifier days (8h)	53497
certifier years (262d)	204.2

Parliamentary Statement was released announcing a

### **Veterinary demands in farm animal practice**

**24)** BVA is aware of concerns regarding capacity within farm animal practice. There has been reporting of veterinary shortages in farm animal practice.<sup>12</sup> Erosion of the veterinary workforce, including in farm animal practice, has been an ongoing concern for BVA, RCVS and Government, which predates the decision of the UK to leave the EU. Considerof



## Education

37) The UK has taken steps in recent years to expand the number of veterinary undergraduate places.<sup>14</sup> This includes increases to the capacity in a number of existing veterinary schools and the establishment of new veterinary schools and partnerships.

- University of Surrey School of Veterinary Medicine (which produced its first graduates in 2019)
- Harper and Keele Veterinary School (first intake in 2020 with first graduates in 2025)
- University of Aberystwyth.79 13.89000034 | -77.9cyl School (fiCa6o/gy

under the direction of the Official Veterinarians responsible for signing export health certificates relating to POAO. The act of certification is still undertaken by a veterinary surgeon.

- 44) In England, we are aware that a number of practices have opted to employ and train Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) to support their TB testing commitments. BVA has previously welcomed the move to train ATTs, following a successful pilot study by the APHA. The fact that practices are now able to train up ATTs has been a relief for farm practices during a time when many areas have moved to 6 monthly testing and the ability to source new veterinary staff has been curtailed.
- 45) Further reform needs to be undertaken in a measured way that prioritises animal health, animal welfare and public health and does not undermine either the role of the veterinary surgeon in diagnosis or the integrity of the veterinary surgeon's signature. In 2019, BVA developed its own position on the vet-led team,<sup>17</sup> with a hub and spoke model at its core. In this model the veterinary surgeon acts as the hub for treatment, directing to the most appropriate allied professional (the spokes), who refer back to the vet for further direction whenever necessary. This model allows for a co-ordinated approach, with the appropriate and efficient use of skills and better animal health and welfare and public health outcomes.

### Impact of wider workforce shortages on animal health and welfare

- 46) Workforce shortages in the farming and food sectors, beyond the veterinary profession and allied professions, will have negative consequences for animal health and welfare. Farming is incredibly integrated. Therefore, while we focus on the impact on livestock agricultural sectors below, it is worth noting that labour shortages in arable farming will affect input in animal agriculture such as forage and the bedding.

#### Poultry

- 47) The UK poultry meat sector is heavily reliant on labour from foreign nationals at all stages in the supply chain (breeding farms, hatcheries, broiler chicken farms, catching poultry, transport of poultry and feed, and in the abattoir). As with many sectors, the poultry industry has been severely affected by the current labour shortage. The main challenges have been in abattoirs where labour shortages have severely reduced the number of birds that can be processed each day. These delays further along the supply chain are causing consequences on farm.
- 48) Modern chickens are capable of growing at up to 100g per day. Consequently, even a short delay of a few days on farm can lead to issues surrounding stocking density. Thus far stocking density, and therefore welfare, of broiler chickens have been maintained. To do this, the industry has had to remove parent flocks earlier than planned to reduce the supply of new broiler chickens to abattoirs, thus ensuring they can cope with the supply. The British Poultry Council has reported that their members have been forced to cut back weekly chicken production by 5-10%, all year-round turkey production by 10% and estimate Christmas turkey production to be cut down by around 20%.<sup>18</sup>

#### Pigs

- 49) Pig farming is a continuous process where pigs are produced for weekly sale with the same number ready to go to the abattoir each week and enough space on farm to produce these numbers on time. Much UK pig production is multi-site, with pigs are bred and raised to weaning on one site, grown from weaning to finishing on another. We (gov.uk) | 17.489025880 Td (a) | 11-42296398925 0 3040 gbook 22.6569341 00Td ( )Tj 4.154fin561j 44.07000732 0 Tc



- 50) There is limited spare capacity within the system, beyond that required under Red Tractor. This required contingency is designed to allow abattoirs to occasionally delay the purchase of pigs for a short period and allows the farms to process any excess pigs over the next few weeks. This is called “rolling back” or “rolling over.”
- 51) Rolling back in farrow-to-finish farms results in excess pigs at a heavier weight than would normally be sold. During this time farmers will have to bear the additional costs associated with accommodation and feed. These pigs are also worth less than they would have been at the usual slaughter weight as they will not meet the contracted weight and especially back fat requirements. This will impact the finances of the farm.
- 52) If a finishing yard can't be emptied then it can't be filled, this means the weaner yard can't be emptied so it can't be filled so there is pressure on the breeding site. The backlog here is worse as all the pigs will be the same age, so all pigs will be becoming too big

group of workers. Many of these workers don't qualify for the definition of "skilled worker" under the government's new points-based visa system. The result is that, when they go home, they can't come back to the UK. This is leaving a shortage of workers for manual-based work such as milking, calf feeding, tractor work and bedding up. Understaffing is having an effect on the welfare of the cattle. Difficulty recruiting leads to a lack of continuity, poor communication and a loss of husbandry skillsets which ultimately lead to a shortfall in the care provided to the livestock.

### Sheep

**58)** The Government's sheep welfare code states that farmers should remove the fleece from all mature sheep at least once a year. This is essential for health and welfare, reducing both the risk of heat stress and maggot infestation. Thankfully, concerns regarding lack of shearers during the early part of the COVID19 pandemic did not materialise. However, this was mainly due to a mobilisation of other farmers, farm workers and retired shearers returning to work to meet demand. It is uncertain whether there may be a shortfall of shearers in future years, with consequential health and welfare concerns.

### HGV drivers

**59)** There has been a well-publicised shortage in the haulage industry and, as demands on HGV drivers continue to grow, there is some concern that livestock hauliers may move from this sector to other industries. Delivery of animal feed may be negatively affected for the same reason. There is anecdotal evidence of problems in some areas finding drivers at short notice. A lack of livestock hauliers may have many negative consequences. One example is that this may impact the timely collection, from holdings in areas that are eligible, of carcasses for delivery to APHA Veterinary Investigation Centres, where post-mortem examination of livestock is undertaken for surveillance purposes.

### Conclusion

**60)** As can be seen from the evidence provided above there are serious concerns about the ability of the veterinary workforce to meet increasing demands. Furthermore, like many sectors emerging from the pandemic, the veterinary profession is already exhausted. We're facing a triple whammy of Brexit, Covid, and the boom in pet ownership, which have put unprecedented pressure on the sector.