

9. The interconnections between human wellbeing, animal wellbeing and environmental wellbeing are more pronounced than ever.² addressing health threats in the animal, human and environment interface.³
10. The contribution of improved animal health is vast. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), over 20% of animal production losses are linked to animal diseases.⁴ The cost has already been recognised by DAERA:

*Substantial costs have been incurred attempting to eradicate the disease - annual public expenditure on the bTB Eradication Programme is currently around £40m. It is estimated that Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) costs industry here in the region of £24m each year.*⁵

11. The Scottish Government

ecological footprint of animal agriculture as a whole. As highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:

These include maintenance of water quality, nutrient cycling, soil formation and rehabilitation, erosion control, carbon sequestration, resilience, habitat provision for wild species, biological

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32. Actions to enhance biodiversity should consider the benefits of effective use of parasiticide products. These products are commonly used in veterinary medicine to prevent and treat for various parasites, including fleas, ticks and worms. As well as preventing animal health and welfare problems, human health risks from associated zoonotic threats have to be considered.
33. Recently, concerns have been raised that some of these medicines are contaminating the environment. Parasiticides could be reaching rivers through wastewater from premises where animals are kept, or from animals entering rivers. Parasiticides may also be excreted in urine and faeces and absorbed into soil. As parasiticides are harmful to a wide range of invertebrates, environmental contamination is highly detrimental to wildlife, ecosystems and biodiversity and there are concerns about how this in turn can impact public health. In the farm animal and equine sectors, there are concerns over high levels of resistance to parasiticide products as a result of misuse and overuse.
34. The use of anthelmintics must be judicious and incorporated within a farm-specific strategic anthelmintic plan based on sound scientific principles, recognising that every application will increase the risk of possible development of resistance to anthelmintics. Incentivising veterinary engagement on farm to develop and implement such plans alongside farmers would be a tangible way to improve biodiversity on farm while maintaining animal health, animal welfare and public health.

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University and Ulster University. This is an opportunity to capitalise upon this existing structure.

48. Opening a new vet school in Northern Ireland could present further opportunities to encourage young people from our local community to pursue a veterinary career as well as building on our strengths in veterinary research and knowledge transfer.
49. Equally as important as commissioning new research, is taking primary research and finding the application in the real world. Vets are well placed to provide this function, even when the primary research has been undertaken by non-vets. There is a need to have channels to disseminate research and new information to vets, farmers, and the public. Consideration should be given to what information is useful to farmers and there should be greater utilisation of behavioural approaches to encourage the application of research findings into practice.
50. Greater application of social science should form a central aspect of a knowledge transfer proposal. Social sciences provide an -making, the application of biosecurity measures on farm, and how decisions that promote disease control can be incentivised.
51. Investment in measures make achieving desirable outcomes and compliance with basic standards easier would be beneficial. For example, investment in a well-conceived programme of CPD for farmers has the potential to positively impact many areas of concern, including animal health and welfare, AMR, productivity and carbon usage.
52. Private veterinary surgeons are trusted advisors to farmers and uniquely positioned to offer advice and work closely with farmers and animal keepers to counsel and signpost to the appropriate course of action. Veterinary involvement ensures biosecurity measures are formulated and implemented appropriately and health and disease threats are monitored and acted upon. Both private veterinary surgeons and Government employed veterinary surgeons, are uniquely positioned to make every on-farm contact count by advising on overall herd health and welfare, wider determinants and, in turn, disease surveillance and prevention.
53. Vets can use their insight and judgement to take new information and apply it to the specific context of each sector, farm, and farmer. The skills necessary for this need to be developed over time. Vets understand that farms are complex systems with many people having a role in decision making.

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75. Collection of farm health data would also benefit national disease control efforts. Therefore, we support provision for farm-level health data to be shared and utilised nationally.
76. As a first step DAERA should engage directly with the veterinary profession and industry to establish what health data should be prioritised for collection as part of the baseline audit. BVA and our specialist divisions will be able to draw upon our experience co-designing the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway in England. BVA holds a seat on the Pathway steering group which is mapping out how farmers, vets and government will work together to deliver sustained improvement in animal health and welfare over time.
77. From Spring 2022 annual animal health and welfare reviews will take place in England. The Review is a fully funded vet visit, that farmers will receive on a yearly basis.

advice. The initial focus will be on improving disease prevention and controlling or eradicating an industry-agreed list of diseases in each species. The vet is primarily there to support the farmer, but the data collected will be shared centrally to give a better

flock.

78. The specific data sources are being agreed between government, industry, and the veterinary profession on a sector-specific basis. From our involvement in the Pathway since 2018, it is apparent that there is significant variation in where the sectors are starting, and which data will need to be prioritised. There is also significant variation within sectors. However, a consistent theme across all sectors is that vets will be critical to utilising data to unlock health and welfare improvements.