# Written Evidence submitted by The British Veterinary Association (BNA)(CF0006)r207 0 Td (pos0 Td (a)Tj 6.11712.79801Td

### Who we are

- 1) The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With over 19,000 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 and welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.
- 2) We welcome the opportunity to respond to this EFRA Committee inquiry on DEFRA Common frameworks.

#### The need for common frameworks

- 3) As areas of EU competence have returned to the UK, the way in which this interacts with devolution needs careful consideration. According to analysis conducted by the UK government, there are a total of 142 distinct policy areas where EU law intersects with devolved powers in at least one of the three devolved nations.<sup>1</sup>
- 4) This is particularly pertinent across issues of veterinary interest, including animal health, animal welfare, agriculture, and food safety. Until now, cohesion has been achieved through EU Directives which have allowed limited scope for the four nations of the UK to diverge.
- 5) It is essential that there are efficient and effective mechanisms in place to ensure ongoing cooperation and collaboration across the UK in relation to the production of products of animal origin, the delivery of veterinary services, disease control, and animal welfare standards. This was recognised in our report 'Brexit and the veterinary profession' published in 2016:
  - "Trade and animal movements across the borders of the UK are likely to remain hugely important for the whole UK economy; diseases do not necessarily respect political borders meaning that shared surveillance will continue to be a priority; and it is imperative that animal welfare regulations do not simply export poor welfare to neighbouring countries. For all of these reasons, in a post-Brexit UK we believe that structures should be put in place to ensure ongoing cooperation and collaboration. Our overarching call is therefore for the four parts of the UK to continue to work together for the good of animal health and welfare, and public health."
- 6) Such mechanisms must ensure a degree of parity so as to avoid giving a competitive advantage to producers in one region over those in another yet allow sufficient flexibility to progress animal health and welfare, and food safety, and avoid stifling or slowing progress by a requirement to avoid divergence.
- 7) Maintaining cohesion in the UK internal market is important from a veterinary perspective for a range of reasons. Practically, it is 1147 0 Tic

Common Framework on agricultural support is of interest to the profession.

17) Veterinary surgeons are uniquely placed to advise and influence sustainable animal husbandry practices at whole-system levels, safeguarding animal health and welfare and influencing sustainable future livestock and food production. A new agricultural policy offers an opportunity to harness the power of this relationship and empower farmers and vets to collaborate to see positive outcomes on farm. Thus, the involvement of the veterinary profession within any system of agricultural support should be integral at every level including at the level of this Framework. BVA is well placed to support this framework as we have engaged in the development of new agricultural policies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **Veterinary involvement**

18) The effective operation

26) As the opportunity for divergence increases, the clear communication of government decisions to veterinary surgeons will become more important. Clear and speedy communications to the profession are vitally important particularly for disease control purposes. The common frameworks should ensure that effective communication of decisions is embedded in their work.

#### Confidence

- 27) BVA would stress the significance of the operation of these frameworks to UK exports. Safeguarding the UK's reputation for high animal health, animal welfare and the safety of food and feed produced in the UK and exported abroad must be at the heart of what the frameworks seek to achieve.
- 28) The governance structure that will be put in place and its functioning will be considered by foreign authorities when considering whether the UK should be listed for the export of food and feed as well as live animals and other products of animal origin such as germplasm.

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