

BVA response to EFRA Committee Call for Evidence: post-Brexit international trade deals

25 July 2023

Introduction

- 1) The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With nearly 19,000 members, our primary aim is to represent, support and advance the 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 provide evidence on post-Brexit international trade deals. Leaving the European Union has meant that the UK has been able to take control of its trade policy, providing the opportunity to be more assertive in spreading animal welfare norms via trade agreements. We are now nearly

agri-food trade aligned with its

commitment to high standards for health (including plant and animal health), food safety, animal welfare and to regulate in these areas?

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the FTAs negotiated since the UK left the European Union. The UK has struck individual agreements with Japan, Australia and New Zealand. These all provide a clear indication of how far UK Government will go to uphold the high standards for health, food safety, animal welfare and environmental protection and the in these areas.

Animal health and welfare

20) The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was one of the first free trade deals signed by the UK post-Brexit with most of the detail carried over from the EU-Japan trade agreement. This because they were not a core component of the trade agreement. UK legislation provides for higher animal welfare standards than Japan in almost every area that was negotiated, especially regarding farm animal welfare.

21) The trade deal that the UK signed with Australia was the first FTA struck by the UK from scratch since leaving the EU. The FTA contains a standalone chapter on animal welfare and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) including a non-regression commitment on animal welfare standards. This is the first time Australia has incorporated such a chapter into any trade deal and should be celebrated. However, a commitment

welfare standards. These standards diverge significantly between the UK and Australia. There are concerns that practices utilised in Australia, would fail to meet the standards expected in the UK or across the EU. The aspiration of the chapter is further limited because the UK has already given away any leverage in the form of tariff-free market access for produce like beef, which is a large industry in Australia. It is notable that tariffs were not liberalised on most pig and poultry products due to concerns over animal welfare standards from these sectors in Australia. It does demonstrate that market access can be contingent upon animal welfare but in this exa0000880 G(0)-9(i)5(r)-3(at)-8(i)5(on)-7)-155(of)-164(the)4()-155(c)-5(ha

comes to food safety and biosecurity standards.

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agricultural and food exporters and importers, and how could that support be improved?

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support staff included in this number. In the Netherlands, there were plans, reported in 2018, for an additional 145 veterinarians for the Port of Rotterdam ahead of a previous potential no deal. Despite these plans, in August 2021 there was a four-day delay for British meat shipments to the port of Rotterdam due to a lack of OVs.

- 39) In January 2021, Defra provided £14 million in England to support recruitment and training of over 500 new staff, including OVs. These OVs will be employed by public health authorities (PHAs), either directly or indirectly, or by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). This signals positive intent, however once again these recruitment numbers are nowhere near the levels needed to meet the increasing demand.