

## **Veterinary Ireland Media Release 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017**



### **Veterinary Ireland warns of the potentially disastrous effects of Brexit on animal and public health**

The lack of a clear Brexit plan could potentially wreak havoc on the decades of progress made in the areas of animal and public health across the island of Ireland, according to the President of Veterinary Ireland.

Speaking at the 2017 Veterinary Ireland Conference in Kilkenny today, John V. O'Connor President of Veterinary Ireland warned: "After decades of working closely with the UK and the EU to establish an all-island approach to animal health, public health, animal welfare and environmental protection, Brexit has the potential to seriously undo all this good work and jeopardise the high levels of animal health, welfare and public health across Ireland and the EU.

"Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, the biggest challenge is establishing an animal health policy with no dilution of current standards, which suits all vets, farmers, animal owners and the Irish livestock industry," Mr O'Connor added.

Addressing the conference Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Andrew Doyle said: "Brexit poses potentially very significant challenges for all stakeholders across the entire Irish agri-food sector, including the veterinary profession. I am fully aware of these challenges, and my Department has been implementing targeted actions to deal with short-term impacts while also identifying, through comprehensive analysis and consultation, the areas that will need to be addressed as the negotiations evolve.

Minister Doyle added: "We are also actively feeding into the whole-of-Government approach. I appreciate that the veterinary profession plays a critical role in maintaining good farmed animal health and welfare, as well as ensuring the safe production of food and the protection of public health, and I will continue to work towards solutions which cause the minimal possible impact to the sector."

Delegates attending the conference today were also told how the veterinary profession plays an increasingly vital role in today's society with growing consumer concerns around food safety, antimicrobial resistance and environmental protection.

"Our role and remit is expanding all the time and encompasses much more than animal health and welfare. Ensuring animal health, public health, food safety and animal welfare requires a cross-border and a collaborative international approach to avoid potential adverse consequences for both animal and public health. Brexit negotiators must be mindful of the risks posed to these sectors as they navigate and establish new policies for a post Brexit-era," added Veterinary Ireland President John V. O'Connor.

Mr O'Connor also highlighted the impact that Brexit would have on licensing and use of veterinary medicines. "Currently, European legislation regulates the way veterinary medicines are authorised, marketed and used. Post-Brexit, the access for the UK and Ireland to veterinary medicines could potentially be restricted," he said.



"The UK needs to maintain a close working relationship with Ireland and the EU and, in particular the European Medicines Agency (EMA). We have progressed towards a regulatory and societal climate which leads, encourages and values innovation - allowing companies to develop new and improved medicines for animal health and welfare; ensuring safe, sustainable and productive global food systems. It is critical that these systems and practices remain in place," Mr O' Connor added.

The Veterinary Ireland conference follows a Brexit Co-ordination meeting held by Veterinary Ireland and its counterparts in the British Veterinary Association in Belfast in October 2017. The meeting highlighted how the veterinary profession across the island of Ireland and in Great Britain must continue to have access to medicines for the treatment of animals and to meet standards that ensure safety, quality and efficacy.

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