



Veterinary Ireland Press Release 10th October 2014

Dairy Expansion & Sustainable Animal Health: Exciting Concepts in Irish Agriculture – CAVI Conference 2014

“The expected dairy expansion over the next five years is probably the greatest change to affect Irish agriculture since accession to the E.U. It is an exciting time! The challenges that we now face include sustainable expansion, resource efficiency and anti microbial resistance. Irish vets are continuing to upskill to support farmer clients and industry at this time but all stakeholders need to collaborate to realise our goals,” said Conor Geraghty MVB.

Mr. Geraghty, Chair of the Cattle Association of Veterinary Ireland was speaking at the annual CAVI conference in Cork. Taking place over three days from 10th-12th October, 2014, the conference is attended by some 200 livestock veterinarians and features a number of international expert speakers. Sustainability and the threat of anti microbial resistance was the subject of the keynote presentations on the conference opening day, also attended by Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine.

John Gilmore practices as a vet in Co. Roscommon with a particular interest in preventative medicine on cattle and sheep farms. Mr. Gilmore, who also holds an MSc in Risk Management, believes that vets in Ireland have an important role to play alongside farmers and policymakers, as part of the collaboration of effort to tackle constraints to sustainable growth.

“Vets are in a very unique position to support meat and dairy producers, by encouraging improvements in fertility, genetics, preventative medicine and disease management,” said Mr. Gilmore.

“Maintaining and improving animal health and minimising disease risk supports high quality food standards and will lead to increased marketability of Irish produce,” said Mr. Gilmore. “However it also contributes to improved overall profitability and efficiencies on Irish farms because it reduces the costs of treating diseases and reduces the losses in output and production.”

Speaking at the CAVI Conference about the Concept of Sustainable Animal Health, Mr. Gilmore said that Animal Health Ireland (AHI) has been a very positive initiative for the Irish livestock industry with no other comparable organisation existing worldwide.

“Vets are qualified and well positioned to facilitate technology transfer of relevant information in the areas of sub-clinical disease awareness, preventative medicine, environmental sustainability, animal data monitoring and recording,” said Mr. Gilmore. “We need to encourage collaboration between veterinary practitioners and animal health organisations – for instance Animal Health Ireland – to engage with livestock farmers in a pro-active fashion to promote sustainable animal health issues – ranging from animal disease and welfare, environmental, food-chain hazards and risk control measures,” said Mr. Gilmore.

Prevention and Control: Undoubtedly Better Than Cure

Prevention and control are undoubtedly better than cure in the context of animal disease when we consider the huge economic damage caused by notifiable production diseases, according to Martin Cormican, Professor of Bacteriology, NUI Galway. “However disease prevention also has a major bearing on sustainability, in terms of reducing the quantity and doses of antibiotics and medicines which we need to use to treat sick animals.”

From a consumer perspective, sick animals which are prescribed with antibiotics are withdrawn from the food chain for an extended period around treatment.

Continued.../

Professor Cormican highlighted that the issue of antimicrobial resistance is a shared challenge for veterinary and medical practice. “We all depend on the same limited number of classes of antimicrobial agents,” said Professor Cormican. “The inappropriate use of antimicrobial agents is supported by multiple factors including habit, diagnostic uncertainty, perceived and actual expectations of patients or farmers, commercial pressures and fears in relation to reputational damage, allegations of malpractice or litigation.”

Professor Cormican called for greater collaboration between stakeholders in both the medical and veterinary sectors to find practical ways to support and incentivise the prudent use of antimicrobial agents when they are necessary and to reduce the need for them by more effective action to prevent infection.

Veterinary Ireland has produced a Submission on *Sustainable Animal Health* as part of the Rural Development consultation process.

Some 200 livestock vets are attending the annual conference of the Cattle Association of Veterinary Ireland in Cork, where sessions include scientific and practical presentations on subjects ranging from mastitis, parasitology and infectious diseases; to poisons, nutrition, ultrasound and surgery. The conference also includes practical workshops with Irish organisations such as ICBF and AHI.

Further details about Veterinary Ireland available at www.veterinaryireland.ie

ENDS

Date: 10th October, 2014

Media enquiries to: Antonina Ni Dhuinn, Progress Communications, Tel: 01 – 2766117 / 087-2653683

Editorial footnote: Available abstracts and selection of photographs available to media on request.