

## **Veterinary Ireland Media Release 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018**

### ***IRISH VETERINARIANS PREPARE FOR CHANGE TO MANAGE ANIMAL WELFARE AND FOOD SECURITY POST BREXIT***

The challenges posed by Brexit to the veterinary profession and public were amongst the topics under the spotlight at the Veterinary Ireland Annual Conference & AGM on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2018 in Lyrath, Kilkenny. The Annual Conference & AGM was officially opened by Andrew Doyle T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine.

#### **VETERINARY INSPECTION – CERTIFYING WELFARE & FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS IN MEAT PLANTS**

David MacGuinness, incoming President of Veterinary Ireland, paid tribute to the role of Temporary Veterinary Inspectors who work in Irish meat plants all over the country, describing them as the cornerstone of the Irish meat export industry. 'The TVI inspection certified by veterinary surgeons provides important consumer assurances around animal welfare and food safety. This, together with the excellent herd health and disease control on Irish farms, gives Irish meat products an important edge over our competitors in the global market place,' said David.

The Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine stopped recruiting for TVI panels in 2012. At its Annual Conference & AGM in Kilkenny, Veterinary Ireland called on the Department to re-open TVI panels, based on ensuring that the correct operational procedures are in place across all meat plants; and based on offering new Temporary Veterinary Inspectors who join the panel, the same employment terms and conditions as all existing TVI's.

#### **RECRUITMENT STRUCTURE FOR POTENTIAL BREXIT BORDER CHECKS**

Veterinary Ireland President David MacGuinness also highlighted concerns that a blanket recruitment drive for veterinary surgeons to maintain potential 'Brexit' border checks could drain professionals from veterinary practices who provide important services to farmers, pet owners and sectors such as the equine industry.

'The future of Brexit is totally unpredictable at present,' said David MacGuinness. 'If Brexit does occur and border checks of any form are required for animal movement, we would encourage the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine to consider a structure such as the TVI workforce be mobilised, to help permanent Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine officials to carry out their duties.'

David MacGuinness explained that a TVI- type structure would alleviate the need for the Department to employ more permanent veterinary staff. 'This expert veterinary workforce could work in conjunction with private veterinary practice, reducing the potential drain of veterinary surgeons from important practice work throughout the regions to service the Brexit border checks for animal movement.'

#### **BREXIT: THE CHALLENGES FOR THE VETERINARY PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC**

Simon Doherty is President of The British Veterinary Association (BVA), which represents over 16,000 veterinary professionals throughout the UK. At the Veterinary Ireland Annual Conference, he described how the BVA has looked at the potential implications of Brexit for the veterinary profession and the agricultural and animal health industries.



The British Veterinary Association's approach to Brexit is that existing animal health, animal welfare, public health, veterinary medicines, workforce and environmental protection standards must at least be maintained at the same level, or a level equivalent to current EU standards.

The extensive BVA report on '**Brexit and the Veterinary Profession**' sets out some 52 recommendations. This includes the need for DAERA and Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine co-operation across the border to continually improve animal health and welfare with an all-island approach.

Simon Doherty described the representation that BVA has given in response to numerous Brexit-related consultations. The BVA recommendations deal with wide-ranging issues such as veterinary surveillance and disease notification, food hygiene standards, access to veterinary medicines, maximum residue limits, research standards, equine identification, the Pet Travel Scheme and recognition of veterinary qualifications.

More recently, the BVA has sought to respond in the event of a 'no deal Brexit', where there was a clear impact on the veterinary profession, animal health or animal welfare. The widespread potential issues range from the UK losing access to the EU disease surveillance system, restrictions to the movement of horses and the trade impact on animals and animal products moving from the UK to the single market – such as physical checks, Export Health Certificates and Border Inspection Posts.

## **VETERINARY ROLE IN PROTECTING CONSUMER HEALTH**

"The Food Safety Authority of Ireland's (FSAI) vision of safe and trustworthy food for everyone can only be achieved by working with everyone in the food chain. This includes working in partnership with the veterinarians who contribute every day to protecting consumer health through the work they do,' said Dr Pamela Byrne, Chief Executive, Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

Speaking at the Veterinary Ireland Annual Conference about Public Health and Food Safety in Ireland, Dr. Byrne said that veterinarians are required to be competent in a number of fields, including the identification of food hazards, risk assessment procedures, food safety controls, system audits, laboratory testing methods and legal issues. 'The FSAI looks forward to continuing to build on our partnerships with the veterinary profession and other stakeholders to achieve our vision and ensure that we all recognise the value of working in a One Health approach to protect consumers.'

## **THE ADDED VALUE OF A ONE HEALTH APPROACH**

Mixed veterinary practitioner Dr. Eithne Leahy debated 'One Health' drawing on her experiences of using clinical work to get insights into farming systems, herd health and production levels when researching zoonotic risk and food security.

'Interest in One Health has increased dramatically over the last decade. However, despite widespread interest in the concept of One Health, the majority of scientific approaches to health and disease remain entrenched in specialised disciplines with little collaboration across these traditional boundaries,' said Dr. Leahy. She encouraged fellow colleagues to embrace the concept and to see the added value of a One Health approach to daily veterinary life in practice.

## **INCOMING EU ANIMAL MEDICINES REGULATIONS**

Joe Collins EVERI (European Veterinarians in Education, Research and Industry) and Chief Veterinary Adviser at the Donkey Sanctuary highlighted changes to be brought about by a new EU Regulation on Veterinary Medicinal Products (VMPs), in comparison with the current EU Directive which has given rise to the Animal Remedies Regulations of 2007.



‘An EU Regulation is more prescriptive than a Directive and thus there will be less flexibility for Member States (MSs) to differ in their approach,’ said Joe Collins. ‘It also comes at a time when issues such as Antimicrobial Resistance are very much more to the fore politically and scientifically. We should expect some changes to the prescribing and dispensing regime for VMPs and particularly for anti-infective agents.’

Speaking at the Veterinary Ireland Annual Conference Joe Collins said that there has also been some urgency from an Irish perspective to have this Regulation completed due to the current uncertainties and potential difficulties which Brexit represents.

‘Regulatory divergence by the UK from the EU veterinary medicines licencing and supply systems carries profound implications for the small veterinary medicines market that is Ireland,’ said Joe Collins.

‘Continued membership by the UK of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) is not a foregone conclusion. This divergence may happen in the future but the finalizing of this Regulation before Brexit may protect availability of VMPs in Ireland at least in the short term. Once the EU Regulation is finalised each member state will need to develop and enact national legislation to give full effect to the regime it chooses to implement in its own territory.’

## **VetFutures – A VISION FOR THE VETERINARY PROFESSION AS A FORCE FOR ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE**

British Veterinary Association President Simon Doherty briefed delegates about a joint initiative between the BVA and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) called ‘VetFutures.’ It examined the changing face of the veterinary profession. In 2015 VetFutures published a vision looking ahead to 2030 which set out six ambitions, distilled into 34 broad recommendations.

The blueprint for the future of the veterinary profession, as a force for animal health and welfare valued for its wider roles in society, was supported by the publication of a five year Action Plan in July 2016.

Simon Doherty outlined the background to VetFutures and some recent activities, including relevant engagement with the British Veterinary Nursing Association & VN Council (VNFutures) and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE; VetFutures Europe).

## **PRACTICE EXPERTS & PRESIDENTS**

Also at the Veterinary Ireland Annual Conference, Danny Holmes from Kerry and representing the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) highlighted the launch of FECAVA AMR (Antimicrobial Resistance) and Hygiene Posters. Practice management presentations were covered by Declan Gahan (Veterinary Ireland Financial Services) and David McKeown (VDS).

The day saw tributes to outgoing Veterinary Ireland President Gerry Neary, who passed on the official Presidential Chain of Office to incoming President David McGuinness (Dundalk, Co. Louth).

## **ENDS**

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**EDITORIAL FOOTNOTES:**

BVA's '**No Deal Brexit and the Veterinary Profession**' briefing:

[https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News\\_campaigns\\_and\\_policies/Policies/Future\\_of\\_the\\_profession/No%20Deal%20Brexit%20and%20the%20Veterinary%20Profession%20final%2018102018.pdf](https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News_campaigns_and_policies/Policies/Future_of_the_profession/No%20Deal%20Brexit%20and%20the%20Veterinary%20Profession%20final%2018102018.pdf)

BVA Report '**Brexit and the Veterinary Profession**':

[https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News\\_campaigns\\_and\\_policies/Policies/Future\\_of\\_the\\_profession/brexit-and-veterinary-profession-v.1.0.pdf](https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News_campaigns_and_policies/Policies/Future_of_the_profession/brexit-and-veterinary-profession-v.1.0.pdf)

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