



Veterinary Ireland Media Release – 27th November 2015

Mairead McGuinness MEP Opens Veterinary Ireland Conference & AGM

€12 million Economic Boost from Securing Global Veterinary Conferences for Ireland

Mairead McGuinness MEP & Vice President of the European Parliament officially opened the 2015 Veterinary Ireland Conference & AGM at the Mullingar Park Hotel, Co. Westmeath, Friday 27th November, 2015.

During her Opening Address, Ms. McGuinness said that animal health issues are high on the agenda of the European Parliament. “The Environment Committee is working to ensure better access, availability and safety of veterinary medicines while also achieving a single market for pharmaceutical products,” said Ms. McGuinness.

“The role of the veterinary practitioner in managing herd health and assisting farmers with disease prevention on their farms is more important than ever,” said Ms. McGuinness. “Vets and farmers are part of the food supply chain, which starts with healthy animals in a healthy environment. Consumers need to know that this vital link in the chain works in an effective way.”

Ms. McGuinness highlighted that anti-microbial resistance is also a concern with calls for antibiotic use in animals to be more tightly controlled.

“Approaches such as the ONE Health concept highlight the need for a global strategy for the prevention and management of risks at the human-animal-environment interface,” said Ms. McGuinness. “The mantra of prevention being better than cure is central to the new animal health strategy. This issue has never been more important in Europe.”

The day’s proceedings included the handover of the President’s Chain of Office by outgoing President John O’Rourke to incoming President Mairead Wallace-Pigott from Millstreet Veterinary Group in Cork, who said that as a profession, vets need to promote prudent use of antibiotics. “To this end, we need to be diligent in prescribing or supplying antibiotics only to our own bona fide clients, where we have full in-depth knowledge of the animals and their environment and an ongoing working relationship with the owners.”

Need to Sustain Rural Practice

The incoming President said that as a mixed practitioner, she would like to work towards finding ways to sustain rural practice and the veterinary infrastructure (both human and capital) necessary to serve our communities.

“The sustainability of these practices impact not only on the services we can provide for our farmer clients and pet owners in rural areas, but also on the provision of jobs for our new graduates so that we can retain the professions greatest asset, our young well educated vets. These young vets need support, mentoring, a good work /life balance and a realistic salary when starting out. To this end I would like to see co-operation between neighbouring practices and/or amalgamation of practices to provide a better working environment, economies of scale and life balance for all. I have personal experience of being part of a practice amalgamation in 2000 and it was one of the best things we ever did.”

“Veterinary Ireland represents vets involved in all aspects and areas of veterinary medicine as well as those involved in the various streams of clinical practice. As President, I would like to see better recognition of the vets’ role in food safety, animal welfare, public health, research, academia and business,” said Ms. Wallace-Pigott.

Future of the Veterinary Profession Lies in Our Own Hands

Professor Stuart Reid, BVMS PhD DVM DipECVPH FRSE MRCVS Principal, Royal Veterinary College, London spoke in a session on 'The Future of the Veterinary Profession' during the morning; and chaired a session on 'Animal Diseases Exotic to Ireland' during the afternoon.

"The veterinary profession's future lies in our own hands – as scientists, as clinicians, as educators, as advocates. Protecting the public, protecting animals and promoting what we can offer society, the profession is ideally placed to ensure that animal health and welfare is central to the developing agenda," said Professor Reid. During his presentation, Professor Reid said that the veterinary profession has seen unprecedented change in the last 30 years; from the composition of the workforce to the focus of clinical practice, in many ways it is unrecognisable from previous generations.

"Furthermore, the reality is that all the indicators of yet more radical evolution are writ large and we must be prepared to shape our futures. The cliché of being at a cross roads is wholly appropriate – is it time to consider limited licensure, is it time to look in depth at telemedicine or the role of genomics, is it time consider how we ensure that veterinary careers remain sustainable? Absolutely."

Professor Reid said that over the last 12 months the profession in the UK has been engaged in just such an exercise with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and British Veterinary Association leading a project that asks the question "what will the profession look like in 2030?" "In discussing the outcome of the VetFutures initiative, it is clear that the many issues require quite specific and tailored follow-up; a profession with one voice, providing both leadership and support is a profession that can at least begin to shape its own destiny," said Professor Reid.

Resilience: An Essential Skill for Vets & Farmers

Delegates in Mullingar heard that Veterinary medicine and farming are high pressure professions, with more stresses and demands than most other types of work. "You need to be in the right head space to make good decisions, maintain positive relationships with the people you live and work with and be fit and flexible when life, work or even the weather throws you a curve ball," said Peter O'Rourke also speaking at the session on the future of the profession.

"Healthy coping, managing stress and "bounce back" after set-backs: that's Resilience. We are not born with it but it is a skill that anyone can learn. Resilience is an essential skill for vets and farmers because the nature of the jobs means there will always be challenges and set-backs."

SAFEMED and LifeMatters help build and maintain resilience so that you can manage the ups and downs of practice. Developed by Dr. Margaret O'Rourke of UCC's Faculty of Medicine, it has been implemented by a diverse range of people in Academia, in the Medical Profession and in Industry. Dr. O'Rourke is a Consultant Clinical Forensic Psychologist. At the Veterinary Ireland AGM & Conference, the presentation was delivered on behalf of Dr. O'Rourke, by Peter O'Rourke who is a Management Development Trainer attached to the LifeMatters Academy.

€12 million Economic Boost from Securing Global Veterinary Conferences for Ireland

During the Veterinary Ireland AGM, which also took part during the day's proceedings, delegates were told that Ireland is to host two global veterinary conferences during 2016 which collectively are expected to boost the Irish economy by approximately €12 million.

Veterinary Ireland will host The World Buiatrics Congress (WBC) which focuses on cattle health in the Convention Centre, Dublin from 3-8th July, 2016. It is expected to attract 2,500 delegates (Details at www.wbc2016.com). The International Pig Veterinary Society (IPVS) Congress which takes place in Dublin from 7th - 10th June 2016 is also expected to attract 2,500 delegates (www.ipvs2016.com)

"Agriculture remains one of the foundations of Ireland's continued economic revival, and the dairy and beef industries are key pillars to this revival," said Finbarr Murphy, Chief Executive of Veterinary Ireland. "The sharing of knowledge between global delegates, and veterinary professionals attending the conference, will help ensure Irish agriculture remains at the forefront of the latest technological and industry advancements."

The afternoon session on ***Animal Diseases Exotic to Ireland*** featured an expert panel representing large animal, equine and companion animal vets. It included Michael Casey (Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine), Bill Cashman (Cashman & O'Driscoll, Cork); Danny Holmes (Holmes Veterinary/St. Anthony's Veterinary Hospital, Tralee), Pat Kirwan (Pat Kirwan & Associates, West Dublin) and Michael Sadlier (Troystown GreyAbbey Equine Veterinary, Kildare town).

ENDS

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