

## **Veterinary Ireland Media Release (Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013)**



### **Agriculture Industry Could Gain €200 Million if Meat Plants Equipped for Veterinary Feedback *Calls for sustainable animal health initiatives, rabies regulation & equine welfare improvements***

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#### ***Calls for sustainable animal health initiatives, rabies regulation & equine welfare improvements***

There is a potential gain for the agriculture industry of a minimum of €200 million per annum in added value if slaughterhouses were equipped for post mortem health data recording and feedback from veterinary inspectors to farmers.

Speaking at the Veterinary Ireland AGM and Annual Conference in Mullingar, (Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2013) Finbarr Murphy, Chief Executive of Veterinary Ireland congratulated Slaney Meats, Bunclody, Co. Wexford, who, in conjunction with Temporary Veterinary Inspectors, are the first in Ireland to record and feedback post mortem disease information to farmers and primary producers. He encouraged all stakeholders, including Animal Health Ireland and Meat Industry Ireland to get behind this initiative with a view to its nationwide rollout.

“We believe that the clinical and pathological data that veterinary inspectors could record at slaughterhouses is very valuable information which should be provided back to farmers. This data would equip farmers and their own vets so that they are better informed about taking the most effective preventative and corrective actions for their herd and would form the basis of valuable herd health planning for the future,” said Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Murphy said that this type of initiative would lead to improved productivity, animal welfare and profitability on Irish farms, with a potential gain for the agriculture industry of a minimum of €200 million per annum in added value.

“The failure to have systems in place to record and feedback this information from slaughterhouses means that a substantial amount of valuable information is being lost,” said Mr. Murphy.

‘*Added Value to the Meat Inspection Service*’ was the focus of a submission by Veterinary Ireland to Minister Coveney in 2012, which included specific proposals to attach feedback information from Veterinary Inspectors to the animal I.D. which can be returned through both factory payslips or returns and the ICBF database. The submission was supported by examples of conditions such as Lung Lesions, Liver Fluke and Fertility which could give rise to significant savings to agriculture if appropriate information feedback structures were in place.

“This is another example where vets can play a critical partnership role with farmers in minimising animal disease risk and the consequent losses in output and production, said Mr. Murphy. “Maintaining and improving herd health contributes to improved farm efficiencies, improved animal welfare and supports high food quality standards in light of potential farm expansions.”

### **Sustainable Animal Health**

Improving farm efficiencies also forms part of a growing need to feed an ever-increasing world population in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable fashion. Mr. Murphy pointed to Veterinary Ireland’s Submission on *Sustainable Animal Health* as part of the Rural Development consultation process.

“The concept of Sustainable Animal Health involves veterinary practitioners and animal health organisations – for instance Animal Health Ireland - engaging with livestock farmers in a pro-active fashion to highlight animal disease and welfare issues, environmental issues, food-chain hazards and risk control measures,” explained Mr. Murphy. “Such a programme would involve veterinary practitioners engaging with their clients to facilitate technology transfer of relevant information in the areas of sub-clinical disease awareness, preventative medicine, environmental sustainability, animal data monitoring and recording (ICBF).”

Mr Murphy said that such programmes already exist and are successful in other EU member states, demonstrating how vets are in a very unique position to help to improve efficiencies for meat and dairy producers, by encouraging improvements in fertility, genetics, preventative medicine and disease management.

Simon Coveney T.D. Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine officially opened the annual Veterinary Ireland Annual Conference & AGM which took place in Mullingar Park Hotel. The event saw Vivienne Duggan, MVB DACVIM appointed President of Veterinary Ireland with a formal handover of the chain of office from Donal Lynch, MVB.

The new President of Veterinary Ireland, Vivienne Duggan, said that she looked forward to seeing the Animal Health and Welfare Act and the Veterinary Practice (Amendment) Act bedded in. “I also look forward to supporting the promotion of our profession and our policies, as we continue to engage with and drive important issues across all sectors in order to support the full spectrum of veterinary work in terms of animal health & welfare, improved farm efficiencies and protecting food safety in Ireland,” said Ms. Duggan.

Over one hundred veterinarians representing all aspects of the veterinary profession, including livestock, companion animal and equine vets, were involved in hearing and debating formal motions at the Veterinary Ireland AGM. Motions included:

- In the light of the recent case of rabies in the Netherlands arising from dogs legally imported from Bulgaria, Veterinary Ireland calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to ensure there is full enforcement of the regulations regarding both commercial and non-commercial pet movements between Ireland and other EU states to ensure that both the welfare of the animals concerned and Ireland's rabies free status are best protected, and also to review the penalties imposed upon persons that have imported animals in breach of the regulations.
- Veterinary Ireland calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Food & The Marine to review the mandatory dog microchipping scheme to link in with the proposed national dog licence database.

- In relation to animal health, disease control and surveillance, Veterinary Ireland
  - Calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Food & The Marine to carry out a risk assessment of Food Harvest 2020 in association with Veterinary Ireland and Animal Health Ireland, under the headings of disease control and sustainability.
  - Encourages all stakeholders in the industry to explore quality assurance and disease surveillance initiatives, such as the feedback of veterinary post mortem examination information being piloted in Slaney Meats.
  - Acknowledges the contribution of veterinary practitioners in supporting Animal Health Ireland's achievements in the areas of Animal Health Awareness and Disease Control; and Veterinary Ireland is supportive of further collaboration in the area of Agricultural Sustainability.

### **Equine Welfare**

- In relation to equine health and welfare, Veterinary Ireland calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Food & The Marine
  - To take action to alleviate the unwanted horse crisis in Ireland by actively implementing and enforcing the identification of all horses as required by European & Irish legislation.
  - To continue to prioritise the process of establishing a central database for equines in order to improve Irish horse welfare.
  - To include Veterinary Ireland in discussions on the formation of future welfare schemes to address the problem of unwanted and abandoned horses which must be prioritised.

Speaking at the Conference & AGM, veterinarian Joe Collins said that from a welfare perspective, horses that are no-longer wanted should be humanely destroyed as close to their current location as possible and not subject to the additional stress of transport, regrouping and slaughter in unfamiliar surroundings.

Mr. Collins also said that there is likely to be a mismatch between the large quantity of excellent fodder saved this year and its availability to no-longer wanted or properly cared for horses. "Fodder is a valuable resource but unfortunately not all horses are valuable or valued," said Mr. Collins.

Barbara Bent, ISPCA Chairperson and Acting CEO urged for the early reporting of cases of animal starvation or neglect. "Don't leave an animal until it is too late to make a difference," said Ms. Bent. The ISPCA Helpline is 1890515515.

### **ENDS**

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## **EDITORIAL FOOTNOTES:**

### **Biography: New President of Veterinary Ireland**

Dr Vivienne Duggan, MVB Dipl. ACVIM Dipl. ECEIM graduated from the Veterinary College of Ireland, University College Dublin in 1999. She pursued specialty training in equine internal medicine in the USA and became board certified with the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (Large Animal) in 2004 and with the European College of Equine Internal Medicine in 2007. She completed a PhD in veterinary biomedical sciences from Oklahoma State University in 2006. Interspersed with this training, she spent a year in general practice in Ireland and 3 seasons in private equine stud practice, shuttling between Ireland and New Zealand.

She joined the veterinary faculty at University College Dublin in January 2006 as a lecturer in equine internal medicine. She works as a clinician in the equine referral hospital at the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine and pursues various research interests, which include equine welfare, equine infectious diseases, equine internal medicine and equine reproduction.

She is currently the incoming President of Veterinary Ireland and represents Veterinary Ireland on the Department of Agriculture, Food & The Marine equine industry liaison group on infectious diseases and at the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations.

### **The Veterinary Ireland conference in Mullingar featured two scientific sessions:**

#### **Scientific Session 1 - Herd Health, Zoonotic Diseases and Antimicrobial Resistance**

##### ***Herd Health Investigation - A Case Study***

Conor Geraghty MVB

##### ***Antimicrobial Resistance, a time of change?***

Dr Joe Collins MVB PhD MRCVS

Sean O'Laoide MVB MRCVS MA MBA CertEnv

Frank O'Sullivan MVB MRCVS MSc (Food Science)

##### ***Zoonotic Diseases***

Dr Paul McKeown MB MPH DCH FFPHMI

Consultant in Public Health Medicine,

Health Protection Surveillance Centre

#### **Scientific Session 2 - Equine Welfare, Canine Welfare and Veterinary business**

##### ***Equine Welfare - The Challenges***

Barbara Bent, ISPCA

Dr Joe Collins MVB PhD MRCVS

##### ***Update on Pet Movement Regulations, Rabies, Echinococcus***

Alan Rossiter MVB

##### ***Motivating the Practice Team***

Seamus McManus MVB MRCVS

##### ***Veterinary Ireland Financial Services Update***

Mary Goodman Mehigan QFA

***VDS Update - Latest Developments***

David McKeown BVMS CertSHP ARAgS MRCVS

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