

## **VETERINARY IRELAND PRESS RELEASES**

4 March 2002

### **VETS CONCERNED ABOUT LACK OF AGREEMENT ON BEEF AND DAIRY SCHEMES.**

Veterinary Ireland has expressed major concerns in relation to the proposed operation of the National Beef Assurance Scheme and the Dairy Hygiene Certification Scheme in 2002.

The organisation which represents the veterinary profession states that it is anxious to play its part in the development of such schemes which they see as adding value to the products involved – particularly through the provision of important consumer assurances. They also believe that it is vital that in order for such schemes to be credible and workable the operation of them must be agreed fully by the Department, farming organisations and Veterinary Ireland. “Regrettably, it has not been possible to reach this agreement at this stage” according to the President of Veterinary Ireland, Sean O’Laoide.

The farming organisations have been expressing concerns in relation to the increasing levels of bureaucracy with which they have to deal. For this reason the vets organisation proposed that the NBAS inspection which the Department intends to be carried out in conjunction with the round test would be integrated with the inspection element of the Dairy Hygiene Certification scheme. “We have set out fully in documentation submitted to the Department how this can be done. So far, this approach has not been accepted by the Department” according to Mr. O’Laoide.

Based on the legislation for NBAS, the Department is insisting that the burden of costs for certification must fall directly on the farmers. In recent weeks both the ICMSA and the IFA have stated publicly that these schemes must involve “no additional cost to farmers.” The veterinary profession is acutely aware of the strength of feeling amongst farmers on the imposition of additional financial burdens on them. Accordingly, in view of their previous experience with the operation of the DHC scheme, Veterinary Ireland feels that it is essential that this fundamental difference between the Department and the farming organisations be resolved before any attempts are made to proceed with the veterinary inspection elements of the schemes.

In summary, on behalf of Mr. O'Laoide said that as of now -

"We are supportive of, and see real value in having such schemes.

"Veterinary surgeons, through their bona-fide relationship with their farmer clients, are uniquely well-equipped for the inspection roles envisaged in the schemes.

"Despite our best efforts we have not been able to finalise agreement on the operational aspects of the schemes with the Department.

"The audit element still has to be finalised.

"There is a critical difference between the Department and the farming organisations on payment for the schemes.

"Agreement between the Department, the farming organisations and Veterinary Ireland is essential for the successful implementation of the schemes.

In view of these outstanding matters, and the urgency of achieving a resolution of them, Veterinary Ireland has called on the Department to get all the parties involved together with a view to ensuring that an approach can be developed which will be acceptable to all sides. They say that they have made this request on several occasions since the beginning of the year and in view of the imminence of the commencement of the Round Test for 2002 they believe it is now a matter of extreme urgency.

- ENDS -

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