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News Release

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VLA ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2005/06 PUBLISHED

The Chief Executive of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA), Professor Steven Edwards, today announced the publication of the Agency's 2005/2006 Annual Report and Accounts.

Professor Edwards said,

"VLA has had a very successful year by delivering its scientific services to the highest standards and also meeting the business objectives set by Ministers".

"During the year, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the merger between the Central Veterinary Laboratory and the Veterinary Investigation Service to form the Veterinary Laboratories Agency. Over the 10 years, we have restructured and invested to create an efficient organisation with a strong customer focus, a fully integrated network of laboratories across the country able to meet Government requirements for veterinary research and surveillance, as well as, the ability to respond to a range of disease emergencies. The successful control of an outbreak of Newcastle disease in Surrey highlighted the emergency response capability".

"As an OIE and FAO International Reference Laboratory, VLA has played a major role in the global challenge posed by avian influenza. The Agency has been in the forefront of international efforts to monitor disease patterns, advise on control, develop new technology and carry out the diagnostic testing for the UK wild bird survey."

Professor Edwards continued:

"Although avian influenza has taken the headlines, I would like to mention some of the other science activities VLA has been working on during the year. TSEs remain at the forefront of our research and surveillance, particularly with the emergence of atypical strains of scrapie. Tuberculosis remains a difficult disease to control and VLA has provided major inputs into the development and implementation of Defra policy. Food safety is still a major concern and we have introduced a veterinary public health strategy to deliver consultancy and advice to Government, agencies and other national and international bodies on microbiological and chemical food safety issues on farms and their environment. The unique network of Regional Laboratories within VLA continues to play a key role in veterinary surveillance within Defra's Animal Health and Welfare strategy."

“Collaborations with other scientific institutes have always been important to VLA and this year we have strengthened our relationships with the Health Protection Agency and the Institute of Animal Health. We have also signed an agreement with five other Public Sector Research Establishments, Interlab Forum, to work more closely to increase our effectiveness in the best interests of the public. We are also a full member of the InterAct partnership, which offers joint ventures or licensing of new technologies to the commercial sector.”

“On the business side we met all our targets and achieved full cost recovery as well as a range of efficiency targets. We also implemented a Safety Action Plan to ensure an excellent health and safety ethos across the Agency and successfully maintained all our current third party quality certifications. Capital investment in the redevelopment of the Weybridge site has resulted in the completion of two major laboratory facilities, one for high throughput diagnostic testing and research into bovine tuberculosis, the other, a new headquarters for our Animal Services Unit.”

Looking to the future Professor Edwards said,

“I am very confident that VLA’s success will continue over the next ten years and I am particularly looking forward to the closer relationship with IAH and our ever growing involvement in animal and public health on a global front.”

Notes to Editors:

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1. The **Veterinary Laboratories Agency** provides all sectors of the animal health industry with animal disease surveillance, diagnostic services and veterinary scientific research. It is based in Addlestone, Surrey with fifteen regional laboratories covering England, Scotland and Wales and employs just over 1,200 with an income of around £97m. It is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) obtaining around 85 - 90% of its funding from Defra. Its mission is to safeguard public and animal health through world-class veterinary research and surveillance of farmed livestock and wildlife.
2. Further information can be found on: www.vla.gov.uk

Press notices are available on our website
www.vla.gov.uk
VLA is an Executive Agency of the
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)

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