



AHVLA News Release

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Unrestricted

Independent review to develop future veterinary surveillance model

A new independent advisory group to recommend a future delivery model for veterinary surveillance in England and Wales has been announced today by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA).

The Advisory Group will be chaired by Dirk Pfeiffer, Professor of Veterinary Epidemiology at the Royal Veterinary College. It will include representatives from government, the veterinary profession and the livestock farming and private laboratory industries and is being created so all those with an interest in veterinary surveillance can shape a future model and ensure that all issues are thoroughly considered.

Veterinary surveillance seeks to identify new or re-emerging threats to our livestock population and to public health. It involves a partnership approach between livestock keepers, private veterinary surgeons, the Scottish Agricultural College, industry bodies and AHVLA in order to effectively gather and assess intelligence.

AHVLA is seeking to identify ways to undertake veterinary surveillance both more effectively and at an affordable cost to the taxpayer. Work in this area has been on-going since 2010, and the merger of the former Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) has created opportunities to review how veterinary surveillance can best be delivered. The new model will aim to address capacity imbalances in the current service where provision sometimes outstrips demand. The independent advisory group are also expected to recommend how better and closer working methods across the partners can make the surveillance stronger as well as more cost effective.

Surveillance has historically been based on in-depth investigation of disease incidents with an emphasis on post mortem examinations carried out at AHVLA's regional laboratories. This system is a key element in the government's risk-based approach to the management of animal disease related threats.

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The current model, although successful in identifying diseases in the past, can be improved upon. A recent internal AHVLA report identified viable options for achieving better surveillance at the same or lower cost by, for example, exploring moving towards risk and intelligence based surveillance and improving the value added by working more closely in partnership with vets and their farmer clients and other sources of intelligence data.

In mid-January 2012, AHVLA will also be publishing, and publicising, an online survey aimed at individual veterinary practitioners and livestock keepers. The survey will seek individual opinions on the inputs, mechanisms, outputs and value of surveillance in England and Wales

Work is expected to run until spring 2012, following which recommendations on a way forward will be made.

Ends

Notes:

1. The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, working across Great Britain on behalf of Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government.
2. In recent years the programme of veterinary surveillance has been responsible for the early detection of pandemic H1N1 influenza in pigs, four notifiable avian disease outbreaks, bovine tuberculosis in non-bovine species, antimicrobial resistance in Salmonella and virulent psoroptic mange in cattle, as well as providing reassurance of the national animal health status that has supported trade and allowed substantial savings in TSE surveillance.
3. Economic case studies carried out in 2010 suggest the benefits derived from the programme greatly exceeded its costs over recent years, however there are areas in which the current approach can be improved.
4. Veterinary surveillance is currently undertaken from 16 regional laboratory sites across England and Wales and there are no plans to reduce the number of sites undertaking this work. The recently announced decision to cease laboratory testing at some regional laboratory sites does not indicate that some sites are earmarked for closure, but rather the fact that there is, with some exceptions, no need to collocate post mortem examinations and laboratory testing work.

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5. Professor Dirk Pfeiffer DrMedVet, MACVSc, PhD, DipECVPH, Professor of Veterinary Epidemiology and Head of the Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health Group in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London.
6. The members of the Advisory Group have been appointed following consultation with stakeholder organisations in both England and Wales. Details of membership are available at the AHVLA website: http://vla.defra.gov.uk/news/new_surv_model.htm

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