



South West Healthy Livestock Initiative

Interim Report

June 2009



European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.

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INTRODUCTION



Acknowledgements

The original draft of this report was written and compiled by Gillian Collins (SWHLI Project Manager from October 2008 – April 2009).

The final version of this Interim Report was produced by Nick Cork and agreed by the South West Healthy Livestock Initiative Regional Advisory Panel on June 8th 2009.

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Special thanks are due to our colleagues, who played a crucial part in the work underlying this report, in particular:

- Dr Nick Bell, University of Bristol
- Mr Dick Sibley, West Ridge Veterinary Group
- Mr Brian Preece Veterinary Laboratories Agency
- Mr Martin Turner - Exeter University
- Mr Steven Van Winden - Gelli Aur College

Our thanks also to Timothy Dart, the SWHLI Case Officer at the South West Regional Development Agency.

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1 Background to this report

This interim report was commissioned by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) with the use of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

The terms of reference of the report were to consider the views of the industry, the practicalities of what can be achieved, making recommendations for future activity and acknowledging any issues raised by the industry during consultation.

2 Evidence base and methodology (see context section)

The evidence base for this report is based on the results of sector focus groups; structured in a consistent format and facilitated by Dr Nick Bell at the University of Bristol. Information has also been gathered from the cross-sectoral workshop held on 11th March 2009, attended by over one hundred participants, who broke out into small working groups to consider the three themes: Information, Assessment and Taking Action. The final pieces of work which add to this evidence base are the farmer and veterinary questionnaires conducted by ADAS and the sector specific workshops. The bulk of the information contained in this report stems from the March 11th consultation event. The notes from the sector specific workshops are included as Annex 2 and the ADAS market research report as Annex 3.

3 Information

There was little farmer support for a Knowledge Network at the March 11th event, the perception being that there is already plenty of information in the market place, for those who wish to access it.

There are numerous sources of data relating to health, welfare and productivity available for all major livestock sectors. The quality can be variable, however, with cross-sectoral data sources offering the most comprehensive assessments of livestock health, while the sector specific

data sources offer the best measures of productivity. There is scope for the SWHLI programme to add considerable value to what is already there through the development of a Knowledge Hub.

4 Assessment (See 2.6)

The Assessment theme requires the adoption of a holistic approach and the key is that it is an active process i.e. farm health planning. Existing farm systems such as the health charts developed by the Farm Health Planning cattle subgroup were highlighted as a good example, as were the 'my healthy herd' or 'how's my herd' initiatives. Promoting the uptake of existing testing services e.g. milk samples for BVD, IBR, Johnes, and Lepto through NML blood tests was supported.

A subsidy for veterinary consultancy to discuss herd/flock health status and risk assessment was thought to be a good idea and once again the key issue raised was supporting the farmer relationship with their vet.

It was felt that diseases which are the most economically significant for farmers should be targeted, and the project linked not only to health, but to improved returns.

Farm building audits were thought to be a good preventative approach, particularly if the farmers had previously been involved in an animal health audit. However, there was a difference in opinion as to whether this should be subsidised under the SWHLI project.

The concept of farm walks and farm level investigation is supported. In line with the demand-led principle, it was suggested that farmers should get a voucher to spend on the available service/tests/audits: A voucher system combined with the idea of collaborative groups, is similar to the service that the Rural Enterprise Gateway currently offers, and consideration could be given to that as a potential delivery model.

5 Taking Action

It is acknowledged that each sector may establish different approaches tackling its own disease priorities. However, supporting all livestock sectors through an integrated cross-sectoral Knowledge Hub, giving access to other elements, such as technical notes, disease surveillance and animal health audits etc. could ensure cost-sharing benefits. Better

and more consistent quality assurance, and the ability to implement an effective monitoring and evaluation programme. It should be noted, however, that support among farmers for such a Network was limited, it being viewed as potential duplication.

Although some training provision is already available, there was support for a more structured approach to animal health training linked to specific health issues, as well as the overall aim of improving profitability of the South West livestock sector.

Working through vet led farmer groups and varying timings to take account of the demands of the job were supported.

The inclusion of a vet/animal health professional in co-ordinating group activity has merit, although it would be important to ensure that training was competent, high quality and targeted. Training of a group could prove more cost effective, potentially giving several farmers access to specialist vets at a reduced price

Farmers themselves were supportive of capital grants for individual businesses.

'Beacon' farms, using existing farmers who demonstrate best practice in certain fields e.g. disease, building design etc. was supported.

Overall, the development and promotion of an animal health qualification was considered a low funding priority. However, simple vocational courses, or specific modules linked to a certificate of attendance and endorsed by a delivery body, would be welcomed.

6 SWHLI: Delivering change

An inclusive supportive approach to achieve improvements in animal health, rather than routes of enforcement, would be most effective.

Whilst the comments from farmers about their vets were wide-ranging, vets offer a very accessible route for reaching farmers and bringing about sustainable change. Where farmers have participated in group discussions and engaged with their vets in preventative proactive disease risk management programmes, the relationship has improved as a result.

farmer and vet awareness will be crucial to the success of the project, as is the importance of effective communication and knowledge transfer.

7 Sector Workshops

The individual sector specific workshops were generally well attended and provided a unique opportunity for farmers and veterinarians to consult with each sector lead and produce a list of priorities for each sector.

Discussions were lively, positive and inclusive and resulted in clear recommendations for each sector on the disease priorities for building projects around.

8 ADAS Farmer/Vet Survey

The quantitative survey of individual farmers, groups of farmers and large animal veterinarian practices in the region was undertaken by ADAS from May to June and provided supporting evidence for many of the priorities identified during previous consultation, including a strongly identified need for an overarching framework (Knowledge Hub) to add value to investments.

9 Recommendations

At their meeting on the 8th June 2009, the SWHLI RAP recommended that concept notes from each sector be drafted to take account of the priorities identified in the sector workshops.

The individual sector priorities should provide the focus for projects that would look to work with vets and groups of farmers to provide a strategically driven, sustainable, long term investment in tackling economically challenging animal health issues.

Further consideration should be given to developing a Knowledge Hub to oversee project development and collect and evaluate feedback and data from the various projects undertaken within the SWHLI programme.

The SWHLI RAP agreed to meet again in September to evaluate progress so far and discuss further options to help ensure the long term success of the programme.

1 Background to the Interim Report

This interim report was commissioned by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) with the use of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

In recognition of the importance of livestock to the region, the South West Regional Development Agency has committed £12.17m of funding from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to the overall South West Healthy Livestock Initiative (SWHLI) programme to be spent between now and 2013.

The South West Healthy Livestock Initiative (SWHLI) aims to 'achieve an uplift in the profitability of the South West livestock industry by improving health and welfare among farmed animals'.

The terms of reference of the project were:-

- For the South West Healthy Livestock Initiative Regional Advisory Panel to act as a cross-sectoral framework group; with members using their technical expertise and knowledge to provide an initial assessment of the priorities for an effective healthy livestock programme and how any budget on future SWHLI projects might provide best value.
- To consider the views of the industry, the practicalities of what can be achieved and make recommendations for future activity; acknowledging any issues raised by the industry during consultation.
- To support the development of sector specific projects and building in the success criteria over the five year programme and ensuring longer term sustainability for the industry.

The members of the Regional Advisory Panel are drawn for their individual and technical expertise; comprising thirteen representatives from a range of organisations. See **Annex A – Terms of Reference for**

the SWHLI RAP which includes the objectives, functions, principles, members and working practices.

The Chairman of the SWHLI Regional Advisory Panel is Richard Stanbury. Appointed on 1 December 2008, Richard runs a tenanted farm in Devon, has extensive experience in dairy production and now specialises in calf rearing and egg production.

The interim report has the following limitations:-

- No recommendations as to how the budget should be spent have been made; as until the strategic framework is finalised, this can not realistically be determined.
- The sector workshops were taking place at the same time as the report was being compiled, so notes from the meetings are included as Annex 2
- The market research which ADAS have been commissioned to conduct was completed at the beginning of June 2009 and therefore the report is included as Annex 3.

The SWHLI project also covers camelids, goats and deer; however the limited representation for these sectors has meant that specific workshops will not be held. Feedback will be gathered from representation at the cross-sectoral workshop held on 11th March 2009 and via the market research.

2 Methodology

A website was established (www.swhli.co.uk) in order keep stakeholders informed of the progress of the project.

A series of focus groups were held for each of the five main sectors, followed by a large cross-sectoral workshop in March.

Market research was commissioned to question farmers and vets more closely on specific aspects of the project framework.

Finally, each of the five sectors held their own workshops to help to identify the specific disease priorities within their sector.

3 Focus groups

Dr Nick Bell of the University of Bristol received funding from the private sector (Pfizer Animal Health) which enabled preliminary focus group meetings to take place.

Focus groups for beef, dairy, sheep, pigs and poultry were carried out in January and February 2009, each structured in the same format and designed to establish:-

- where farmers went for advice i.e. who was most influential and who came up with practical solutions?
- which advice represented best value for money
- which advice/information that they had received provided the most economic benefit
- where the money could best be spent in their sector

The focus groups provided valuable feedback on the above points and the main findings have been summarised in this interim report. They have also provided a foundation for constructing the market research questionnaire, for which the findings are due to be reported by ADAS in June 2009.

4 Market research

In order to gather evidence for the roll out of SWHLI projects, a farmer and veterinary surgeon consultation has been commissioned, aiming to identify what knowledge transfer mechanisms, training programmes and services farmers would find of value and the priorities for disease control programmes in the South West of England.

Following an open selection process, ADAS were appointed to carry out the research, which was undertaken in conjunction with the Hill Taylor Partnership who conducted the telephone survey with the aid of their CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. The veterinary questionnaires were posted out to vet practices using information from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons database (see C.5 below).

ADAS worked closely with Dr Nick Bell of the University of Bristol to ensure synergy between the focus group findings and the construction of

the questionnaire. Pre-testing was carried out by ADAS so that both the farmer and veterinary questionnaire were relevant, concise and could be completed in a reasonable timescale.

The questionnaire would also be considered by groups of South West Rural Enterprise Gateway farmers, so that the opinion of groups of farmers who had debated the issues and come to a consensus would also be recorded.

5 Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons database

A database of veterinary practices in the South West region was procured from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons for a one year period.

It shows 361 records, including the "Species Type" field which showed whether the practice has Large Animals, Small Animals, Equine or mixed. The breakdown was as follows:-

41 Equine; 24 Large Animal; 30 Small Animal; 259 Mixed; 07Not Given

Whilst there are some drawbacks to the data provided, it is the most comprehensive list available.

6 Cross-sectoral Workshop 11th March 2009 Event

A Cross-sectoral workshop held at Westpoint Arena on 11th March 2009 was attended by 108 people; 46 of which were farmers, 12 were vets and 50 were from related delivery organisations including levy bodies, Animal Health, training bodies, related project and supply chain representatives. Representation included beef, dairy, sheep, pigs, poultry and goats.

The morning agenda saw specialist speakers setting the scene regarding the current and future disease challenges and provided context to the aims of the SWHLI project, as well as presenting the constraints e.g. ineligibility to fund research projects and vaccinations.

The SWHLI RAP Chairman, Richard Stanbury outlined the main aims and objectives of the programme ('to achieve an uplift in the profitability of the SW livestock sector) and explained what the programme funding could

not be used for (rapid reaction fund for Notifiable diseases, capital grants scheme, lobbying, vaccination/drugs and marketing activities).

Dick Sibley, a respected vet and Member of the England Implementation Group (Defra's independent advisory group appointed by the Government to drive forward delivery in England of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain), presented the risks and realities of livestock diseases in the South West.

The challenges presented by current trends in animal diseases and what new diseases are emerging, was presented by Brian Preece, Regional Veterinary Manager of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Martin Turner of Exeter University gave an overview of the economic aspects of farm animal health and welfare. Finally, Steven Van Winden of Gelli Aur College presented the Welsh Regional Veterinary Centre as a concept and described the benefits to farmers and vets.

Some of the information from speakers is integrated in this paper and the presentation given by Martin Turner which provides important context to developing the economic angle of the project has been included separately as Appendix 2. It confirms the importance of integrating veterinary and business management; suggesting the integration of the different professionals involved in the farm business. Also, that vets should find ways of being involved in husbandry and management advice i.e. proactive management, rather than reactive 'fire-fighting' to problems.

It should be noted that there was strong representation from a number of farmers present regarding the impact on the livestock industry in the South West by the prevalence of Bovine TB (bTB) and there was concern that the damage wrought by the disease in the region should be addressed where possible.

The afternoon session was managed by an independent facilitator. Participants were split up into small groups of no more than five per table to enable constructive discussion. Participants were also mixed, so that a table would generally comprise at least one farmer and one vet; and delivery partners ranging from supply chain representatives to training bodies were blended in, to ensure wide representation.

A discussion paper was considered by each group: the document set out the proposed areas of focus for the SW Healthy Livestock Initiative over the next five years and followed three themes;

- **Information**
- **Assessment**
- **Taking Action – Whole Farm Disease Prevention Planning**

Delegates were asked to comment on each of these areas and their notes are available unedited on the SWHLI website (<http://www.swhli.co.uk/index.php?id=1817>) for viewing. A more detailed summary of the responses will be presented in Chapter 1: Information.

7 Data collation

The SWHLI Regional Advisory Panel concluded that there was an abundance of surveillance data already available and the University of Bristol were asked to conduct a three month data analysis project.

The aim of the fact finding exercise was to identify health, welfare and productivity (economic) data sources potentially accessible and useful to the South West Healthy Livestock Initiative (SWHLI). The objectives were to identify:-

1. Which parameters are recorded
2. How it is collected and presented
3. What information it provides (and its limitations)
4. The availability of the data, where (if at all) it is published and date or frequency of publication
5. Suitable contacts within the relevant organisations

A draft report (see **Annex B – Draft final report for SWHLI databases March 2009**) details the information gathered by the 31st of March 2009. The report includes comment on the reliability/robustness of the data provided. The highest level of robustness includes data sources where a scientifically valid sampling regime has been followed (e.g. randomised, stratified sampling) and least robust data sources include those where there is self-reporting on a voluntary basis. These characteristics are summarised in the final section of the report.

Data collection includes information from: MHS, Nadis, RADAR, Defra June Agricultural Survey, Fallen Stock Initiative, VLA, Defra Animal Health, Abattoirs, Milk Recording Companies, Defra TB, Blade, Eblex, Kingshay, Integrated broiler producers, Hook2Sisters, BPEX, Defra Animal inventory and DairyCo.

It concludes that there are numerous sources of data relating to health, welfare and productivity. The quality can be variable and therefore it is useful to summarise the features of data robustness. Data sources are available for all the major livestock sectors; most is available for the dairy sector and least is available for sheep. The cross-sectoral data sources offer the most comprehensive assessments of livestock health, while the sector specific data sources offer the best measures of productivity.

8 Perceptions of participants and stakeholders

The top of the workshop consultation paper highlighted the following:-

“The material below sets out the proposed areas of focus for the SW Healthy Livestock Initiative over the next 5 years. The Programme follows 3 themes; **Information, Assessment and Taking Action**, which are then broken down into a range of services. For discussion purposes, each component is numbered separately, but it is acknowledged that health planning would be largely ineffectual if components were used in isolation”.

“It should be noted that where information provision or services already exist, these will be only be supported if:-

the service is at risk due to no alternative funding being available e.g. Defra funding for the Farm Health Planning project, **and** there is still a need from the industry for that service to continue;

the collection of information adds to what is already in the public domain e.g. the information already produced by levy bodies, and helps to avoid duplication of information”.

Despite the above acknowledgements, the use of numbering was often misunderstood by participants, who commented that numbered sub-sections should be part of/linked to the main theme. There was concern among some participants that activity under the SWHLI programme could be duplication of work already being undertaken. The RAP are aware of this and have indicated that any activity under SWHLI should add value

to existing programmes where possible and that collaborative solutions are likely to be sought for the delivery of this programme.

Achieving engagement and buy-in to SWHLI cannot be under-estimated due to the complexity of the project and the many potential delivery partners that could be involved, hence the focus from the RAP on a demand led approach and the wide consultations with the industry as a whole and by individual sector.

The following chapters follow the format of the cross-sectoral event.

A Proposal was put forward at the cross-sectoral workshop for an **Animal Health Knowledge Network**; providing a central source for receiving and giving out information, signposting for all livestock sectors and potentially offering access to specialist veterinary advice, animal health professionals and leading academics.

The 'Network' would provide services including:-

- Library of Technical Notes
- Forecast and early warning system
- Disease surveillance activity

1.1 Knowledge Network

It was noted that a lot of this information is already available for the industry, so any role would be to pool together the vast amount of material on animal health, fill any gaps, allow access to peer/expert reviewed information and make information more accessible to farmers and animal health professionals.

By accessible, this means:-

- information is linked to or shared from existing sources e.g. Nadis online bulletins,
- information should be brought together i.e. "pooled and reviewed",
- information should be available in hard copy, for those farmers who are not online,
- materials should be weather-proofed e.g. laminated,
- the language and pitch should be right for the audience and a balance achieved between not 'dumbing-down', but being understood by the 'layman'.
- pictorial/photographic guidance would be useful.

1.2 The library of technical notes

The idea of a library of technical notes was supported, as long as it did not duplicate existing material available e.g. Eblex and their 'Better Returns Programme'. The SWHLI Regional Advisory Panel is keen that the overall project 'adds value', therefore it proposes that the key diseases, both current and emerging, should be collated and made available.

Appendix 3 shows an extract of the Sheep Diseases on the Nadis website, which is the type of information already available.

1.3 Forecast and early warning system

There was support for a forecast and early warning system, but again the overriding comment was that this was a signposting issue.

The British Poultry Council already provides bird flu notification via a text messaging service. Nadis (the National Animal Disease Information Service) provide information for cattle, sheep and pigs with access to regional pages (see **Appendix 4** for an extract of the Cattle Information on the Nadis website).

1.4 Disease surveillance activity

Disease surveillance is a complex area and one that the SWHLI Regional Advisory Panel concluded there to be an abundance of information about. A data collation project was carried out (see C.7) and confirmed this.

Pure surveillance data on its own is of little use without expert interpretation to convert it into useful knowledge for those making strategic decisions, either on a local or national level. It is essential to look at how the data collected will be analysed to inform a risk assessment and risk management function, when deciding what to collect.

The nature of the individual data needs to be looked at to see if there is any point in trying to merge it in any way rather than looking at the different datasets separately. The way in which the NADIS data is currently collected would not be immediately compatible with VIDA (Veterinary Investigation Diagnosis Analysis), used by the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, because the case definitions would not be compatible (in other words the evidence upon which the disease was diagnosed would be different), plus the fact that there is a lot of crossover as many of the NADIS incidents are diagnosed using VLA and appear in the VLA data as well. However, that does not stop the NADIS data being looked at alongside the VIDA and other anecdotal data to assess whether there is a real change in the incidence of any diseases. If all sources concur, then it is more likely to be accurate and the data can be trusted to base policy decisions on.

Both systems have their strengths and weaknesses. VLA surveillance is less useful for routine diseases such as lameness in dairy cows or reproductive efficiency which do not generate laboratory submissions. However, it is useful for providing early warning of diseases such as liver fluke, nematodiosis and incursions of new disease such as BVD-2 which needs post-mortem or laboratory diagnosis and may not be detected clinically by practitioners at an early stage.

The VLA is currently engaged on a plan to get diagnostic data from the poultry industry to supplement VIDA. This is possible because the diagnostic methods and case definitions are similar enough to combine the diagnostic data. This opportunity could be extended to the South West poultry sector.

It would be prudent to consider carefully what the surveillance data is to be used for and who will analyse it. It would need to:-

1. Provide data to inform strategic policy making by the Livestock Sector Groups. This might include decisions regarding control or eradication policies (e.g. BVD eradication, Johne's control) or dealing with the incursion of a new disease (e.g. BVD type 2, *Toxocara vitulorum* or psoroptic mange in cattle).
2. Providing a baseline figure as a performance indicator for the livestock sector (to provide evidence of whether the policies that have been implemented have led to an improvement in livestock performance). Data from fallen stock and BCMS would be useful in

this respect and is currently being considered by the England Cattle Health and Welfare Group; it would be useful to link up with that.

3. Provide background information of the prevalence and incidence of infectious disease to facilitate local herd based disease control. VLA currently provides data to practices to support herd health plans and ways to improve that process and improve local disease control could be a possible project.

1.5 Conclusion to Chapter 1: Information

The overriding comment regarding information is that much of it is already widely available through many sources but needs to be made more accessible.

Whilst there was some support for a livestock Knowledge Network in principle, the general view from farmers is that this is a low priority and should not attract huge amounts of funding. Any role should be one of co-ordination and signposting; pooling the vast amount of material on animal health together, filling any gaps and allowing access to peer/expert reviewed information. Additionally, the main aim of the network should be to aid knowledge transfer and simplify communication with the farmer, thus adding considerable value to what is already on offer.

There was great support for a better working relationship between farmers and their vet(s) and this will be considered later in this report.

There was widespread recognition that the quality of the data used would be key to the success of any Knowledge Network or Hub.

2.1 Animal health audits

This activity under 'Assessment' was originally entitled 'Animal Health Audits'. Workshop participants disliked the word 'audit', which was perceived to be an additional regulatory burden to the farmer. A more acceptable phrase could be Animal Health Assessment or Diagnosis.

A subsidy for veterinary consultancy to discuss health status and risk assessment of incoming animals/existing animals was thought to be a good idea and once again the key issue raised was supporting the farmer relationship with their vet.

The Assessment theme requires the adoption of a holistic approach and the key is that it is an active process i.e. farm health planning. Sometimes this can be confused with a farm health plan, which once drawn up often remains unrefereed to. 'Progressive' farmers who already carry out farm health planning with their vets are more likely to know the health status of their herds.

Targeting the most economically challenging areas for farmers (for example, lameness) was considered a priority; linked not only to health, but to profit.

Existing farm systems such as the health charts developed by the Farm Health Planning Cattle Subgroup were highlighted as a good example, as was the idea of creating an online spreadsheet like 'my healthy herd' or 'how's my herd'.

Other areas that might be available as part of the service could include; Locomotion scoring, Diagnostic testing, Blood testing, Forage analysis, Metabolic profiling.

Soil testing was one example given, but this was felt to be useful only if the results were linked with a veterinary blood test to identify mineral supplementation.

It was also suggested that soil structure and drainage, and waste management (bio-containment) could be linked through the South West Agricultural Resource Management fund.

2.2 Testing for disease status

In the South East of England the 4 major cattle diseases (BVD, IBR, Johnes and Lepto) are being tested for. Similarly, a strategic approach could be considered in the South West region.

It was felt important to raise awareness of existing premium health/welfare schemes, for example promoting the uptake of existing testing services e.g. milk samples for BVD, IBR, Johnes, and Lepto through NML blood tests.

The poultry industry are already testing for diseases, as are the dairy and pig sectors, some as part of bulk milk testing or in partnership with drug companies. It was suggested that whilst testing for bTB, other diseases within beef herds could also be tested for.

There was support for subsidising testing services.

2.3 Farm building audits

This was thought to be a good preventative approach, particularly if the farmers had previously been involved in an animal health audit and testing for disease status. The majority of workshop participants supported the activity, however there was a difference of opinion as to whether this should be subsidised under the SWHLI project.

A Farm building audit could include advice on ventilation, hygiene, disease control, stocking capacity and handling facilities linked to pneumonia or lameness. Stress in animals is also the source for many health problems.

2.4 Farm level investigations

The concept of farm walks is supported, particularly as each farm often has individual problems to learn from and a fresh perspective can be gained by farmers.

Vet students could be considered as part of any delivery model. This was demonstrated by Steven Van Winden of Gelli Aur College in Wales, whose Welsh Regional Veterinary Centre is based on the Wisconsin and Tulare models (see presentation on 11th March 2009). The WRVC partners include; the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Local veterinarians,

Farmers, Dairy Development Centre, the Welsh Assembly Government and Aberystwyth University. The vets refer the farmers to the services.

This could provide a subsidised service to farmers, as students could carry out analysis and write up the results for the vets/farmers. Students would benefit from practical experience and an active rather than passive learning environment, which could be carried out in their vacation period.

2.5 Information sharing between farmers and processors

The concept of information sharing between farmers and processors was considered by the Regional Advisory Panel (RAP) following comments at the focus groups. The RAP concluded that evidence from the South West Livestock Pilot (SWLP) report did not support taking this activity forward and it was not included in the consultation document for the 11th March workshop.

2.6 Conclusion to Chapter 2: Assessment

The Assessment theme requires the adoption of a holistic approach and the key is that it is an active process i.e. farm health planning. Existing farm systems such as the health charts developed by the Farm Health Planning cattle subgroup were highlighted as a good example, as were 'my healthy herd' or 'how's my herd' projects. Promoting the uptake of existing testing services e.g. milk samples for BVD, IBR, Johnes, and Lepto through NML blood tests was supported.

A subsidy for veterinary consultancy to discuss herd/flock health status and risk assessment was thought to be a good idea and once again the key issue raised was supporting the farmer relationship with their vet.

Diseases which are most economically significant for farmers should be targeted, and the project linked not only to health, but to added value.

Farm building audits were thought to be a good preventative approach, particularly if the farmers had previously been involved in an animal health audit. However, there was a difference in opinion as to whether this should be subsidised under the SWHLI project.

In line with the demand-led principle, it was suggested that farmers should get a voucher to spend on the available service/tests/audits. A voucher system combined with the idea of collaborative groups, is similar to the service that the Rural Enterprise Gateway currently offers, and consideration could be given to that as a potential delivery model.



3.1 Projects specific to the pig, poultry, sheep, beef and dairy sectors

The approaches taken in sector specific projects could well be disease or condition focussed; addressing eradication, prevention and control of livestock diseases in the South West rather than animal treatment. This will largely be achieved through awareness raising and screening, as the SWHLI project is unable to fund vaccinations.

Each of the five main sectors (beef, dairy, pig, sheep and poultry) is looking at how it can tackle disease issues specific to their sector through workshops being held during May. These workshops are being facilitated by Dr Nick Bell, based on provisional disease priorities gathered from previous workshops. The aim of the workshops is to consult with farmers and vets to identify a few key health issues for each sector – and to discuss possible avenues for dealing with these issues.

The SWHLI project also covers camelids, deer and goats (who are at the risk of bTB). However, the limited representation for these sectors has meant that specific workshops for these animals may not be held and feedback is being gathered from representation at the cross-sectoral workshop and via the market research.

It is acknowledged that each sector may establish different approaches to tackling its own disease priorities.

It is fair to assume that most diseases are present in the region, but there has been no detailed study to ascertain disease prevalence and the financial cost to the South West industry. If considering disease eradication pilots, the practicality of a control scheme may prove more effective if carried out in a smaller pilot area, either a county or cluster based model. A smaller pilot/pilot zone would have a much higher chance of success and could prove to have a motivating effect on other areas or groups.

3.2 Provision of vocational training activity for all sectors

Although some training provision is already available (Duchy College have successfully run Bluetongue awareness raising events) a more structured approach to animal health training is supported, specifically informed by disease surveillance and/or linked to specific health issues that are identified as priorities.

Training programmes would be most successful if designed to be flexible to address the needs of individuals and groups. It is a case of “one route does not fit all farmers” and a mix of alternatives such as small group/longer day, daytime/evening; face-to-face/online as in the Nadis initiative were expressed.

Co-ordination of training would ensure cost-sharing benefits, better and more consistent quality assurance, and the ability to implement an effective monitoring and evaluation programme. Training should also be linked to improved profitability of the South West livestock sector.

The inclusion of a vet/animal health professional in organising or co-ordinating it has merit, although it would be important to ensure that training was competent, high quality and targeted. It would also prove more cost effective to run the course, if this was combined with training/knowledge transfer of an entire group, potentially giving farmers access to specialist vets at a reduced price.

The current Vocational Training Scheme provides a training co-ordination model. This section is linked to 3.6 regarding development of an animal health qualification.

Other knowledge transfer on topics such as management which, whilst important, are not appealing in themselves could be discussed as part of a farmer discussion group.

3.3 Farmer discussion groups

The concept of farmers forming discussion groups is not new, and these groups are often useful for breaking down the isolation associated with farming and for sharing new ideas.

The idea of farmers discussing and working together on delivering health improvements was unanimously supported; as was the continuation of existing schemes (such as Eblex, Milk Academy) and groups, as well as establishing new groups.

The actual formation of groups themselves is often not easy. However, it is envisaged that engaging private vet practices, herd book societies, farm and animal health consultants and levy bodies etc. could provide the support mechanism to help attract and form new groups.

Furthermore, a contact list has already been purchased from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons detailing all large animal vet practices and

other organisations can be identified and targeted for assisting with delivery of SWHLI objectives and priorities.

Having several groups in one area (for example, sheep farmers in Devon), has the potential to add value, allowing control measures to be put in place and an element of monitoring (such as, via healthy herd/persistently infected animals etc) or benchmarking to be carried out.

The farmers who attended the Poultry focus group meeting were particularly keen on having an opportunity to share issues and would welcome discussion groups for this isolationist sector.

3.4 Demonstration farms

This type of knowledge transfer activity was considered to be of value to farmers. For the pig and poultry sectors where there are biosecurity issues, suitable facilities would be required. 'Virtual' demonstration farms could be considered as an alternative.

Components of an effective demonstration farm might include:-

- A whole farm approach to animal health;
- including effective biosecurity
- showcasing new technology and handling facilities
- farm walks
- linking with other demonstration activities e.g. SW Agricultural Resource Management (SWARM fund) and other funding agencies e.g. Natural England

It was thought that a limited amount of SWHLI funding, in addition to capital grants, should be spent in this area. Consideration could be given to sponsorship or other funding mechanisms. To avoid duplication, good links with organisations such as Kingshay (Dairy) and Blade Farming (Beef) could be developed. Building on existing models, such as the ADAS one in Wales was suggested.

'Beacon' farms, using existing farmers who demonstrate best practice in certain fields e.g. disease, buildings etc. was supported.

3.5 Small capital grant scheme (£1.2 million)

Any capital grant scheme would need to be strategically directed, evidence and assessment based (i.e. linked to the animal health/building audit) in order to best utilize funding and this was generally understood by stakeholders.

Farmers remain keen for the opportunity to access small capital grants for machinery etc within their business, as well as the possibility of group acquired capital grants. Equipment could be held by veterinary practices or groups of farmers, perhaps bookable by individual farmers at a modest charge.

Some suggestions for equipment that would be desired under a capital grants scheme are listed below:

- Faecal Egg Count Packs – SCOPS (on farm kits) to save on drench and resistance, readily available with some veterinary training;
- Blood testing for viral and bacterial diseases e.g. Johnes and BVD;
- Foot baths;
- Isolation facilities (upgrading of to improve biosecurity);
- Foot trimming attachments to cattle crushes;
- New innovative equipment e.g. infrared.
- Weighing crates;
- Mobile Handling Facilities (to facilitate handling grazed stock e.g. Bluetongue vaccination; TB testing and other health monitoring);
- Mobile sheep dipping facilities, for education to identify scab in wool samples;
- bTB testing;
- Supporting New Entrants in buying capital equipment.

3.6 Development and promotion of an animal health qualification

The Poultry and Pig sectors have both developed to some extent in this area. The Grower Academy run in the West Country by Hook 2 Sisters and Duchy College was started in 2004. To date more than 165 poultry farmers from the region have been through the Academy, which includes monthly classroom based sessions and field trips, to achieve a range of

qualifications.

For the pig sector, there are:-

Certificates of Competence - designed by the industry with the working stockman firmly in mind but fully accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. These certificates currently cover three levels - basic stockmanship and welfare, pig husbandry and pig unit supervision and operation.

Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR) - the pig industry's own continued professional development scheme. Open to all in the industry at six different levels - new entrant, skilled stockman, supervisor, manager/owner, adviser/associate and pig veterinary society.

Opinion and support for this by participants was divided; ranging from not required, some farmers questioning the additional regulation (including it being used to link in with the Single Farm Payment) that this would entail, others feeling that a certificate of attendance would be welcome, to those who actively seeking an additional qualification which was industry recognised by for example, NPTC (National Proficiency Tests Council).

Those in support of a qualification added that it could:-

- Demonstrate the professionalism of the industry
- Encourage people into the industry
- Improve the employer and employee relationship
- Be promoted to all retailers and accreditation bodies
- Be carried out on a modular basis i.e. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits

Overall, this was considered a low funding priority. However, simple vocational/specific courses or modules e.g. Duchy food step course or the Nadis lameness module could be a good compromise.

3.7 Conclusion Chapter 3: Taking Action Whole farm disease prevention planning

The concept of farmers forming discussion groups is not new, and these groups are often useful for breaking down the isolation associated with farming and for sharing new ideas. Training programmes would be most

successful if designed to be flexible addressing the needs of individuals and groups.

The inclusion of a vet/animal health professional in co-ordinating group activity has merit; although it would be important to ensure that training was competent, high quality and targeted. Training of a group could prove more cost effective, potentially giving several farmers access to specialist vets at a reduced price.

Many farmers would like to see capital grants available to individual businesses, possibly linked to need and risk.

'Beacon' farms, using existing farmers who demonstrate best practice in certain fields e.g. disease, building design etc. was supported; although there are biosecurity issues for the pig and poultry sectors.

Overall, the development and promotion of an animal health qualification was considered a low funding priority. However, simple vocational courses, or specific modules linked to a certificate of attendance and endorsed by a delivery body, would be welcome.

Chapter 4 – SWHLI: Delivering change



This chapter aims to explore an overarching strategy which would provide the linkages to the activities that have been described in the preceding chapters.

4.1 Routes for farmer owned implementation of animal health and welfare

An inclusive supportive approach to achieve improvements in animal health, rather than routes of enforcement, would be most effective. There is already a network of support services available, including farm advisors, vets, training organisations and service deliverers who can influence practices on farm. However, the ultimate responsibility for implementation of change should lie with farmers themselves.

The route to implementation of animal health improvements relies on achieving both:

- 1) Increased awareness of and a change in attitude towards the issues to be improved.
- 2) Achieving sustainable changes in behaviour so that new / desired practices are implemented.

The core approaches of education and skills development, especially when delivered using innovative and interactive techniques, are widely accepted as being effective in achieving changes in attitude. However, there is an extensive body of evidence to suggest that change in attitude alone is insufficient to prompt implementation of new behaviours.

Although enforcement approaches through government and farm assurance bodies have a role in orchestrating behaviour changes, it is felt that 'farmer-owned implementation' will form the foundations of a highly successful SWHLI programme.

The feelings of ownership, participation and control over interventions are more likely to succeed in achieving sustained behavioural changes. Using farmer owned interventions therefore provides a framework through which improvements in animal health and welfare can be implemented. These changes may be targeted towards areas of specific consumer or

policy led concerns such as tail biting in pigs or lameness across all species or may be responsive to targets determined by producers themselves.

There are a number of frameworks for implementing farmer led approaches, which are explored in the paper *Improving Animal Welfare: Practical Approaches for Achieving Change* by Whay & Main University of Bristol; these include the "Stable School" where a small group of farmers with a similar goal (e.g. reducing mastitis cases on their farms) collectively devise a set of actions suited for each individual farm; and the "Monitor Farm" approach, where the group regularly meets and visits the monitor farm, making suggestions for management changes and viewing the outcomes.

Another approach is "Social Marketing", which is currently being used by the University of Bristol "Healthy Feet Project" to encourage farmers to reduce risk factors leading to lameness on Dairy farms. This approach also has the potential to engage farmers who usually avoid group projects.



Healthy Feet Project
Working together to reduce cattle lameness

In order to bring about a change in behaviour to address an animal welfare problem there must be both a genuine awareness that a problem exists coupled with knowledge about possible solutions i.e. actions that can be taken or changes made to improve the situation. Unfortunately, awareness of a problem and knowledge of a solution does not necessarily lead to changes being made. It is the task of those who see their role as

facilitating change to create situations and present options for change in a format that will help people to take the step that leads to changes in routines, plans or working practices.

An important point to bear in mind is that not all people are susceptible to the same types of intervention.

The key principle of encouraging sustainable behaviour change is to transfer ownership of both the problem and the solution to the person, in this case the producer or farmer, responsible for implementing change.

4.2 Farmer and vet relationship

When collating the evidence for this interim report, many of the participants brought up the relationship with their vet. Whilst the comments were wide-ranging, vets offer a very accessible route for reaching farmers and bringing about sustainable change.

It was felt that vets do not always offer practical advice, can sometimes be a little out of touch and unaware of the day-to-day management issues of individual farms. Farmers often approach their local vet because they know the farm, but specialist vets in all sectors seem to be needed.

It was suggested that vets should be encouraged to share information between each other and a delivery model that incorporates this principle could prove useful for both farmer and vet.

The idea of utilising vets in group discussions is well supported and where farmers have engaged with their vets in preventative proactive disease risk management programmes like herd health work, the relationship has improved as a result.

This vet/farmer group model (potentially bringing in other animal health professionals) may lead to a better relationship between vets and their clients. This would be especially welcome in the sheep and beef sectors, which have typically become disengaged with veterinary practices except on an emergency response basis.

In the South West Livestock Pilot, the following benefits for vets were recorded:-

- Greater understanding of their clients' needs

- Improved ability to give cost effective advice
- Farmers were using veterinary medicines more effectively

4.3 Assessment and monitoring at farm level

The preceding chapters support the principle of farm/herd health planning, which is an ongoing process requiring management and consultation to ensure best practice and sustained profits. Farm/herd health planning is beneficial economically, for stock health and for the farmer/vet relationship.

The VLA aims to facilitate herd health planning by offering, via private veterinary surgeons, a service of testing and consultancy for a number of diseases (including BVD), along with other initiatives, including some farmer education. The service could provide ongoing assessment of disease status linked to advice geared towards controlling disease, with a view to maximising productivity.

At the Sheep Focus Group meeting there was unanimous support for farmers to have direct access to further consultancy services, for example, VLA. It is accepted protocol that lab results are fed back to the vets; however, using such an initiative with a recognised veterinary intermediary could provide a solution.

The commercial availability and success of herd health planning and disease management assessment models is a testament to what can be done with modern, collaborative web based tools. These systems would not be available to all farmers, however, due to the gaps in ICT skills and broadband availability in many of the region's rural areas.

4.4 Monitoring at strategic level

Evidence of improvement through, for example, benchmarking groups at a local level could provide a basis for increased motivation and a means of generating demand for group activity.

Furthermore, in order to ascertain whether this project has made a difference, it would be important to include 'measurable goals' and 'indicators for success' specific to groups/topics, linked to improvement in profitability through better health and welfare.

Information and feedback gained from groups (whether this is more formal like benchmarking results, or more informal such as case studies),

could be collated and analysed by a cross-sectoral Knowledge Network. The Network could therefore become more than a reactive central information source, signposting and accessing specialist veterinary advice; by reviewing results from groups, it could build a regional picture of progress against baseline information collected at the start of the project.

There is often a confidentiality issue surrounding data information from individual farms. However, if data were collated by farm group, this issue could be removed, giving greater confidence of data protection for farmers who wish to participate.

4.5 Communication and Promotion

Farmer and vet awareness will be crucial to the success of the project and information should be publicised via the farming press, regional meetings and veterinary practice newsletters. Animal health professionals and levy bodies will also have their role to play in raising awareness of the project.

Evidence of improvement from, for example, benchmarking groups at a local level could be written up in the form of case studies and farmer testimonials, to encourage farmer involvement. Co-ordinating communication and making it simpler for the farmer is key.

The EIG held a workshop with participants from the regions in December 2007 about how to communicate with stakeholders regarding the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. Some of their transferable messages are noted below:-

- Communication a priority
- Communication – better practice
- Communication – messages, standards, consistency needed
- Need to listen to what will work on the ground
- Encourage innovative communication
- People forget the importance of keeping in touch
- Communicate beyond the silo
- A small investment in communication can lead to a big exchange of knowledge
- All and others needs to see comms/engagement as part of the job
- Information important to start strategy
- Lack of communication leads to lost opportunities

- Know your audience
- Networks – who do farmers consider as info – hub? Vets? Trading Standards? Google?
- Communication failure causes stress when disease outbreaks known
- Animal health info needs co-ordinated communication – especially to vets and key contacts
- Building relationships between all partners – regulatory and supportive – key
- Communication to vets – risk assessment – national delivery, local delivery, SVS intranet wider use text messages
- Not all farmers use mobiles or the internet
- Farmers don't need to know about strategy – only the outcomes?
- How to reach the hard to reach
- Vets need to have information to disseminate to clients
- Ensure that the private vets have the skills, knowledge and networks

4.6 Conclusion to Chapter 4: SWHLI – Delivering change

An inclusive supportive approach to achieve improvements in animal health, rather than routes of enforcement, would be most effective. Linking with key organisations and service deliverers will help to ensure that duplication is minimised. Farmers will need to be encouraged to take ownership of the programme and supported in taking responsibility for the health of their livestock.

The core approaches of education and skills development, especially when delivered using innovative and interactive techniques, are widely accepted as being effective in achieving changes in attitude.

The importance and value of good communication throughout the programme cannot be overstated. An independent, strategic overview would be necessary to ensure that all the various strands of the programme knit together effectively, adding value to any investments undertaken and providing reassurance that funds are utilised in the most cost effective manner for the benefit of the industry as a whole.

Chapter 5 – Sector Workshops

5.1 Background

The opening cross-sectoral event held in Exeter on March 11th was followed up in May with a series of sector specific workshops, held in various locations around the region.

5.2 Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the workshops was to engage more closely with each sector in order to identify specific disease priorities that could provide a focus for future project activity.

5.3 Methodology

Preliminary consultation work was conducted by Dr Nick Bell and colleagues from Bristol University in January to produce a detailed list of potential disease priorities for each sector – beef, dairy, sheep, pigs and poultry.

Information was also gathered from representatives of other sectors, such as goats and deer but separate workshops were not held for these sectors.

The potential priorities identified in January were used as a starting point for debate and discussion by selected groups of farmers and vets. Each of the 5 main sectors held at least one of these consultation workshops, with a total of 8 being held across the region.

5.4 Workshop Structure

The workshops were all facilitated by Dr Nick Bell and followed the same format. There was a brief introduction from the SWHLI RAP Chairman, Richard Stanbury, who outlined the aims and objectives of the SWHLI Programme and provided clear guidance on what could not be funded under the rules of the RDPE Scheme.

The workshops were split into 3 sessions: the first consisted of each attendee listing their 'top three' disease priorities, which were then discussed with the group who came to a consensus of the group's top three; during the second session, the attendees were split into 3 groups to each discuss one of the three priorities with the remit of identifying potential projects to tackle each priority; in the final session, the group reconvened to discuss their ideas and agree recommendations to the sector leads.

5.5 Summary of Outputs

The eight sector specific workshops were attended by a total of 81 people, consisting of 46 farmers (13 from Cornwall), 11 vets and 24 others.

Workshops lasted a minimum of 3 hours and delegates were sent detailed papers to read prior to the meetings, listing relative disease costs on a sector by sector basis.

The workshops succeeded in producing a clear set of priorities for each sector. Detailed notes from each workshop are included as **Annex C – Sector Specific Workshop Notes**

5.6 Conclusion to Chapter 5: Sector Workshops

The workshops succeeded in consulting with a wide range of stakeholders to produce clear guidance on specific disease priorities for each sector.

The importance of taking a strategic, joined up approach to projects and in capturing and making use of the information collected through the projects was emphasised throughout the consultation process.

Chapter 6 – ADAS Farmer/Vet Survey



6.1 Background to the Survey

The quantitative survey of individual farmers, groups of farmers and large animal vet practices made up the final element of the market research carried out in this phase of the SWHLI programme.

Following a competitive tendering process, ADAS were selected to conduct the market research survey. Variations of the questionnaire were tested on both farmers and vets to ensure clarity and reduce the time taken to complete.

6.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this project was to build upon the initial work done by Dr Nick Bell and colleagues from the University of Bristol by quantifying farmer and vet opinion in the South West region.

The primary objectives were:

- To ascertain how much value farmers would place on novel training programmes or services and what would make them of high value
- To identify training programmes and services that farmers in the South West have valued highly
- To define the perceived skills or knowledge gaps, both current and anticipated, from farmer and farm advisor perspective
- To define what programmes are delivered by local veterinary practices and whether they would support novel training and consultancies
- To build a profile of what the service would entail, eg geographical location, how they would like to access the information, what facilities they would like to see available

6.3 Methodology

The three strands that made up the project were:

- A telephone survey that quantified responses among a total sample of 250 livestock keepers in the South West. This consisted of 50 producers from each of the five main farming sectors (sheep, beef, dairy, pigs and poultry). In addition, a dozen telephone interviews were completed with keepers of other livestock types
- A postal survey among a sample of 42 producer groups in the South West administered via livestock group leaders of the Rural Enterprise Gateway
- A postal survey of all 125 large animal veterinary practices (excluding branch practices) in the South West, providing a total of 24 responses for analysis

6.4 Key Findings

Farm visits (especially to a farm that has dealt with similar problems) were identified as the most effective mechanism for sharing information across all five of the main livestock sectors. Where farm visits are not practical, case studies in the farming press were highly valued.

There was an emphasis on advice from specialist veterinary services, in particular in the pig and poultry sectors – for example, specialist veterinary surgeons working alongside the local vet practice or veterinary laboratory services. Advice provided by local vets was also highly valued across all five sectors.

In terms of the perceived value associated with the provision of animal health and welfare services, the emphasis was on veterinary visits – this was especially significant in the dairy, beef and pig sectors, less so in the sheep sector and least pronounced in the poultry sector.

Whilst the farmer survey showed that veterinary information and advice was highly valued, the veterinarians reported a mixed uptake of their services among clients. For example, two thirds of dairy and pig clients utilised practices' on-farm health planning and reviews.

However, this figure fell to around half among poultry keepers and a quarter and less in the beef and sheep sectors.

In the ruminant sectors, respondents highlighted on-farm health planning and reviews together with disease monitoring and control as areas with the greatest potential to deliver most increases in profitability to clients through livestock health and welfare improvements.

Responses around gaps in information, advice and training highlighted the need for a diverse approach to the provision of such services. This reflected the importance of communicating consistent messages through various channels that can then be accessed according to producers' particular circumstances and specific requirements.

Other priorities that emerged were:

- More accessible information: in summary form and simple language to reduce the burden of paperwork; on marketing, costs of production and promotional activities; on disease risks; increased utilisation of the internet as a medium of communication
- More local/regional emphasis: discussion groups; local/regional press
- More meetings: open days – to encourage new entrants; specialist meetings targeting specific animal health and welfare issues

Bovine TB was highlighted as a particular risk to the livestock sector in the region. Other diseases that were mentioned included: BVD, Jöhne's, lameness, mastitis and fertility in the cattle sectors (with the attendant negative public perception associated with these diseases being regarded as a risk); the SCOPS programme in connection with the sheep sector; health and housing matters in the pig sector and the health and management of free-range hens in the poultry sector.

6.5 Conclusion to Chapter 6: ADAS Farmer/Vet Survey

Much of the evidence gathered during this survey supports feedback received from farmers and vets during both the cross-setoral and sector specific workshops.

The local veterinary practices were highly valued by respondents for the provision of animal health services and vets highlighted the importance of effective on-farm health planning for the profitability of the sector.

Accessing successful farms was viewed by both vets and farmers as a crucial mechanism for improving knowledge and increasing uptake of health planning and reviews.

The access to, and consolidated provision of, information, coupled with the importance of a range of different communication media, were highly rated by respondents and provides supporting evidence of need for a strategic, central Knowledge Hub to collate and disseminate information, monitor and evaluate data and join up activity and projects.

Chapter 7 – Recommendations

7.1 Sector Priorities

The SWHLI Regional Advisory Panel met on the 8th June at the NFU Offices in Taunton to consider the outcomes from the Sector Specific Workshops and agreed the following sector priorities:

Dairy

- Lameness
- BVD
- Jöhne's
- Mastitis

Beef

- BVD
- Jöhne's
- Pneumonia control

Sheep

- Anthelmintic Resistance
- Lameness
- Abortion
- Scab

Poultry

- CPD/Training
- Biosecurity
- Benchmarking/Data sharing

Pigs

Priorities will be considered that can be tackled through farm health planning.

The Panel recommended that concept notes are submitted from each sector to address the identified priorities.

For priorities that span sectors, a collaborative approach would be encouraged, wherever possible.

7.2 Overarching Framework

Whilst recognising the importance of avoiding duplication by working with existing programmes, SWHLI must seek to add considerable value to existing projects and establish sustainable initiatives that will have a lasting legacy.

The Panel agreed to meet again in September to monitor the progress of project concept proposals and to look at an overarching strategic framework for the development of future projects within the SHWLI programme.

A Knowledge Hub has been suggested as a means of gathering and sharing information collected under the programme and further investigation is needed to look at practical ways in which this could work, using established mechanisms wherever appropriate.

7.3 Bovine TB

A project to tackle the impact of Bovine TB in the region (working with the disease) is being scoped by the NFU and the panel recommended approval of the concept note and working up of the ideas into a full project.

7.4 Conclusion to Chapter 7: Recommendations

The SWHLI RAP has provided a clear steer on the individual sector priorities, which should form the focus of projects under the Programme.

Consideration will need to be given to an overarching framework to prevent duplication and fragmentation of projects and funding and add value to the data collected throughout the life of the programme and beyond.



APPENDIX 1 - Discussion document for SWHLI workshop, 11 March 09

The material below sets out the proposed areas of focus for the SW Healthy Livestock Initiative over the next 5 years. The Programme follows 3 themes; **Information, Assessment and Taking Action**, which are then broken down into a range of services. For discussion purposes, each component is numbered separately, but it is acknowledged that health planning would be largely ineffectual if components were used in isolation.

It should be noted that where information provision or services already exist, these will be only be supported if:-

- the service is at risk due to no alternative funding being available e.g. Defra funding for the Farm Health Planning project, **and** there is still a need from the industry for that service to continue;
- the collection of information adds to what is already in the public domain e.g. the information already produced by levy bodies, and helps to avoid duplication of information.

1. **INFORMATION – A central source for receiving and giving out information.**

Animal Health Knowledge Network

The 'Network' would provide information and signposting covering health issues for all livestock sectors, with access to specialist veterinary advice, animal health professionals and leading academics.

Information would be communicated to the industry in a number of ways:-

- via the Animal Health Knowledge Network through press releases, newsletters and the SHWLI website/events calendar;
- the farmer could access the 'Network' directly;
- or via referral to the 'network' from vets, consultants, or other advisors.

The 'Network' would provide services including:-

- 1.1 **Library of Technical Notes** – An A to Z library of technical notes for key diseases would be made available online and as hard copy documents, available through local vets or advisors. Farmed animal health and welfare topics covering cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, game birds, deer, camelids and goats would be included. *Information on animal diseases is often written in a scientific language. Having easy to read, picture illustrated technical notes can help farmers more easily understand the disease and take steps to prevent problems or recognise problems and diseases early.*
- 1.2 **Forecast and early warning system** - this can provide reasonably accurate predictions of parasite burdens from weather data. For example, this year, there remains a high risk of liver fluke disease, given the potential levels of rainfall and evaporation and estimated ground moisture.
- 1.3 **Disease surveillance activity** – this would build upon existing activity carried out by statutory organisations and work already funded by Defra. Activity would include analysis of existing data sources and identifying animal health conditions which create a significant economic impact; assisting in meeting the SWHLI objectives and measuring the success of the programme. *Disease surveillance and forecasting and an early warning system will help identify new disease threats.*

2. **ASSESSMENT – a systematic approach to assessing and managing disease risks on farm**

Farmers could access services directly, or via referral to the 'network'. Assessing and managing disease risks is mainly about preventative action, this activity may help by:-

- Identifying and reducing the risks from the introduction and spread of diseases/infections e.g. buy-in new stock;
- Recognising and identifying diseases present on farm;
- Determining the cost of disease on a farm;

The services would include:-

- 2.1 **Animal health audits** - Establishes the health status of the herd/flock by assessing the existing disease levels/disease challenges.

One element could be soil testing, which can be used to identify micro nutrient deficiency or excess (helping to choose the right feed mix), which if not addressed can impact on animal health issues and poor animal performance.

This will give farmers a guide to which priorities to tackle.

- 2.2 **Testing for disease status** - financial and practical support could be offered to farmers e.g. blood testing and support for sheep scab wool testing by the Veterinary Laboratories Agency or other provider. This information would be fed into disease surveillance activity (no. 1.4).

Establishes the health status of the flock or herds and helps to identify what disease/ challenges exist and prioritise which to tackle.

- 2.3 **Farm building audits** - technical advice on farm building design and modification e.g. issues around respiratory problems to be resolved by improved ventilation; issues associated with lameness such as cubicle size, cubicle design and floor surfaces etc.

This could be linked to a capital grant (see 3.5) and a pro forma checklist designed for vets, consultants, farmers etc..

Would help farmers to assess which farm infrastructure investments to prioritise.

- 2.4 **Farm level investigations** - Support for vets, advisors and farmers to refer questions or cases to a network of experts.

For example, in the case of anthelmintic resistance, a farmer could seek access to current and developing research.

Would provide an easily accessible route to specialist expertise.

3. **TAKING ACTION: Whole farm disease prevention planning**

This is aimed at supporting farmers in taking action on whole farm disease prevention planning to achieve economic benefit, improve stock health and help farmers work more closely with their vet or other adviser to;

- Put in place methods to reduce challenges that cause disease;
- Utilise "tools" e.g. cost/benefit calculators;
- Improve overall disease prevention and control;
- Maintain current knowledge of risk assessment and adopting best practice.

The services would include:-

- 3.1 **Projects specific to the Pig, Poultry, Sheep, Beef and Dairy sectors** - This can be achieved through awareness raising and screening, however this programme can not fund vaccinations.

The approaches taken in sector specific projects will probably be disease or condition focussed, addressing eradication, prevention and control of livestock diseases in the SW rather than animal treatment.

All livestock sectors will have access to all the elements proposed e.g. disease surveillance, animal health audit, but in addition each sector is looking at how it can tackle disease issues specific to their sector e.g. Mastitis for the Dairy Sector, Bovine Viral Diarrhoea for the Beef Sector and Foot rot for the Sheep Sector.

The Pig sector is already in the process of preparing a project to eradicate Porcine Reproductive Respiratory Syndrome which should be ready by early May.

3.2 **Provision of vocational training activity** for all sectors.

3.3 **Farmer discussion groups** - farmers discussing and working together on delivering health improvements.

"Take samples. New parlour helped. Discussion group - suggested that we wait 30-90 seconds for milk let down before starting milking. This cured the problem overnight"².

3.4 **Demonstration farms** – Innovative activities could be demonstrated and there would be a requirement to be following elements in the Information, Assessment and Taking Action process e.g. Boumatic step matrix or thermal imaging. *This could be supported by the capital grant element (3.5).*

Having new technology demonstrated to farmers in an on-farm situation is highly effective at getting farmers interested and speeds up the uptake of new ideas and technology.

3.5 **Small capital grant scheme** (£1.2 million)

To achieve the best value for money, capital grants would not be made available to the majority of individual farmers, but could be used to benefit groups of farmers, for example:- Faecal Egg Count Packs could be provided to veterinary surgeries, so that farmers have easier access FEC data; Calf rearing units and Exempt Finishing Units could be made eligible to house TB restricted cattle, allowing farmers to move such cattle off farm.

3.6 **Development and promotion of an Animal Health Qualification** - Could be awarded after attendance at an appropriate number of SWHLI organised events.

APPENDIX 2 – THE ECONOMICS OF DISEASE IN FARMED ANIMALS

Presentation by Martin Turner of Exeter University

What do we mean by 'economics'?

- The range of costs associated with farm animal disease
- The costs of disease if not managed
- The economic benefits of a healthy herd

Economic Approaches

- Financial – transactions which have a monetary value and show up in the farm accounts
- Economics – includes also the value of transactions for which there is no monetary exchange (e.g. the value of the unpaid labour)
- Economics can also provide insights on the value society places on 'public goods'.

Economic values not necessarily shown in monetary form...

- Society places value on a wide range of 'public goods'
- Animal health and welfare is part of the public goods expected of agriculture
- Farm animals 'use value' – they are 'resources' (a form of capital) used in food production
- But they also have a 'non-use value' – people feel a loss of value if farm livestock suffer (our moral responsibilities to sentient beings are not being fulfilled)

Estimated costs of animal disease

The University of Reading have carried out the most comprehensive comparative study (Bennett, et al, 1999), which is available on the web at: <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/livestockdisease/>

The costs associated with farm animal disease

- Disease effects
 - Liveweight loss
 - Mortality
 - Premature culling
 - Abortion/stillbirth
 - Fertility problems
 - Carcase condemnation
 - Fleece damage
 - Treatment costs
 - Control costs
 - Monitoring costs
 - Human health costs

Economic benefits of a healthy herd

- Higher value of output – quantity, quality, niche (high value) markets
- Lower costs in relation to output
- Less stress on the animals – so greater longevity, better performance
- Less human stress!

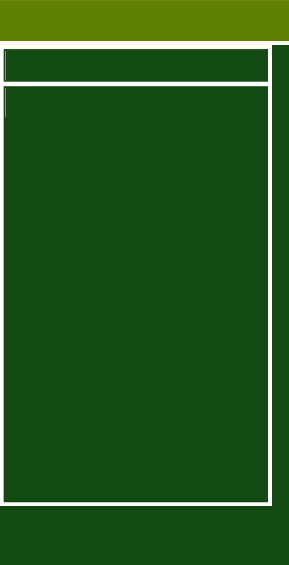
Integrating veterinary and business management

- Need to integrate the different professionals involved in the farm business
- Vets should find ways of being involved in husbandry and management advice (not just 'fire-fighting')
- E.g. in dairying, close attention to:
 - feeding – comprehensive impacts
 - production – yields, trends etc.
 - informal benchmarking (external references)
 - milk hygienic quality, corrective action
 - enterprise management
 - strategic thinking – policy, market etc.

APPENDIX 3 – Extract from Nadis website – Sheep diseases



National Animal Disease Information Service Sheep Diseases



Campylobacter Abortion *
Caseous lymphadenitis
CCN
Chewing Lice in Sheep *
Chlamydial abortion*
Chorioptic mange Sheep
Cobalt deficiency in Lambs*
Coccidiosis in Sheep
Copper poisoning in sheep
Dental Diseases in Sheep
Entropion in lambs
Enzootic Pneumonia
Feeding Lambs Rape
Fly Strike *
Foot&Mouth-similar signs
Hypocalcaemia in ewes
Hypothermia in Lambs*
Iodine Deficiency
Jaagsiekte
Johnes in sheep
Joint ill and navel ill
Lameness in Sheep(1)
Lameness in sheep(2)*
Laryngeal Chondritis
Listeriosis

These NADIS cattle health bulletins were written from 2000 - 2006. They are currently being updated. Those marked with an asterisk * have already been updated, either in full or in part.

*** Please Click Here for these**

Mating for Early Lambing
Metabolic Disease Prevention
Nematodirosis *
Orf
Ovine Digital Dermatitis
Pasteurellosis
Photosensitisation
Pink Eye in Sheep
Preparation for lambing *
Ram Management
Replacement Rams
Ringworm In Sheep
Salmonella abortion *
Scald and Footrot*
Sheep Scab
Subacute Liver Fluke*
Sudden Death in Store Lambs
Survival of Newborn Lambs*
Swayback prevention*
Toxoplasma Abortion*
Urolithiasis
Vaginal prolapse *
Watery Mouth *
Worming Ewes before Mating

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National Animal Disease Information Service South West England

South West England



Parasite Forecast. Coccidiosis is a significant risk in March, usually in intensively reared January and February born lambs, particularly in heavily stocked sheds and paddocks. Lambs show scour, dullness, dehydration, weight loss and abdominal pain. The earlier-born lambs pick up infection passed by the ewes and increase the environmental contamination, often without becoming ill... ..[More ▼](#)

[Please click for latest Parasite Forecast](#)



Coccidiosis in Pigs. Scouring in suckling piglets remains a major problem in many farms and can be caused by a wide range of infectious, environmental and managerial factors. Probably the most common cause of scour in piglets from 10-20 days old is Coccidiosis. With an accurate diagnosis, it is possible to introduce a wholly effective control programme.....[More ▼](#)

[Please click for Full Bulletin](#)

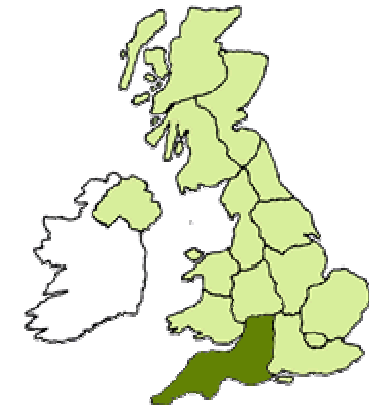


Recumbent Ewes. Ovine pregnancy toxæmia, hypocalcaemia and listeriosis are the most common causes of recumbency in adult sheep. Large litter size (quadruplets and more) and ruptured prepubic tendon are physical causes of recumbency. Acidosis may result from feeding errors. Middle ear infections and cerebrocortical necrosis (CCN) are sporadic causes of recumbency in pregnant ewes. [More ▼](#)

[Please click for Full Bulletin](#)



Lambing Problems. There has been a disturbing trend in the United Kingdom over the past 10 years towards less veterinary care for ovine obstetrical problems despite success rates exceeding 97 per cent for caesarean operations undertaken on the farm. Data collected by 31 veterinary practices throughout the UK reveal one veterinary visit for obstetrical problems per 2,500 sheep equivalent to one veterinary visit every five years to the average UK flock. [More ▼](#)



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Links

- AHDO** - Animal Health Divisional Office
AHO - Animal Health Office
AH Animal Health (formerly SVS)
BBSRC - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
BCMS - British Cattle Movement Service
BVA - British Veterinary Association
BTV Bluetongue Virus
BVD- Bovine Viral Diarrhoea
BZ - Benzimidazole
C&D Cleansing and Disinfection
CHS - Certified Herd scheme
CID - Cattle Identification Document
CII - Cattle Identification Inspection
CIS – Cattle Information Service
CTS - Cattle Tracing System
CVL - Central Veterinary Laboratory
CWD - Chronic Wasting Disease
CCIR Collection and Communication of Inspection Results
CCP Critical Control Point
CIR Cattle Identification Regulations
CTS Cattle Tracing System
CVED Common Veterinary Entry Document
CVO Chief Veterinary Officer
DEFRA - Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DH/DoH - Department of Health
DVO - Divisional Veterinary Officer
DVM Divisional Veterinary Manager (Defra employees)
EBL - Enzootic Bovine Leukosis
EID- Electronic Identification Device
FCI Food Chain Information
FHP Farm Health planning
FMD Foot and Mouth Disease
FSA - Food Standards Agency
FVO - Food and Veterinary Office
IAH - Institute for Animal Health
IBEA - Intervention Board Executive Agency
IBR Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis
IO Investigating Officer
IR Inconclusive Reactors
LVI - Local Veterinary Inspector
LV Lead Veterinarian
MHS - Meat Hygiene Service
MLC - Meat and Livestock Commission
MRC - Medical Research Council
MHI Meat Hygiene Inspector (either red or poultry meat)
MHS Meat Hygiene Service (enforcement role in GB licensed meat)
NFU - National Farmers Union
NI - Northern Ireland
NSP - National Scrapie Plan
NC Non-Compliance
NVL Non-Visible Lesions
OA Official Auxiliary
OV Official Veterinarian
PDNS porcine dermatitis nephropathy syndrome
PDV phocine distemper virus
PIA Plant Inspection Assistant
PMWS post-weaning multisystemic wasting syndrome
PrP - Prion Protein
PRRS porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome
Production diseases which are those disorders associated with the management and breeding of animals for intense agricultural production
QMMS – Quality Milk Management Services
RIA - Regulatory Impact Assessment
RL - Regional Laboratory
RSC - Regional Service Centre
RSCRAP - Reported Scrapie cases
RCVS Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
RPA Rural Payments Agency
SAF - Scrapie Associated Fibrils
SCOPS – Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep
SI - Statutory Instrument
SR - Statutory Regulate
SSC - Scientific Steering Committee
SVC - Standing Veterinary Committee
SVS - State Veterinary Service
TB - Tuberculosis
VIC - Veterinary Investigation centre
VLA - Veterinary Laboratories Agency
VHMA Veterinary Meat Hygiene Adviser
VLA Veterinary Laboratories Agency
VM Veterinary Manager
VO Veterinary Officer