



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**

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.

This can be achieved though awareness raising and screening, however this programme can not fund vaccinations.

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

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

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.