NOAH COVID-19 Animal Health Industry **Best Practice Guideline**

Revised November 2020
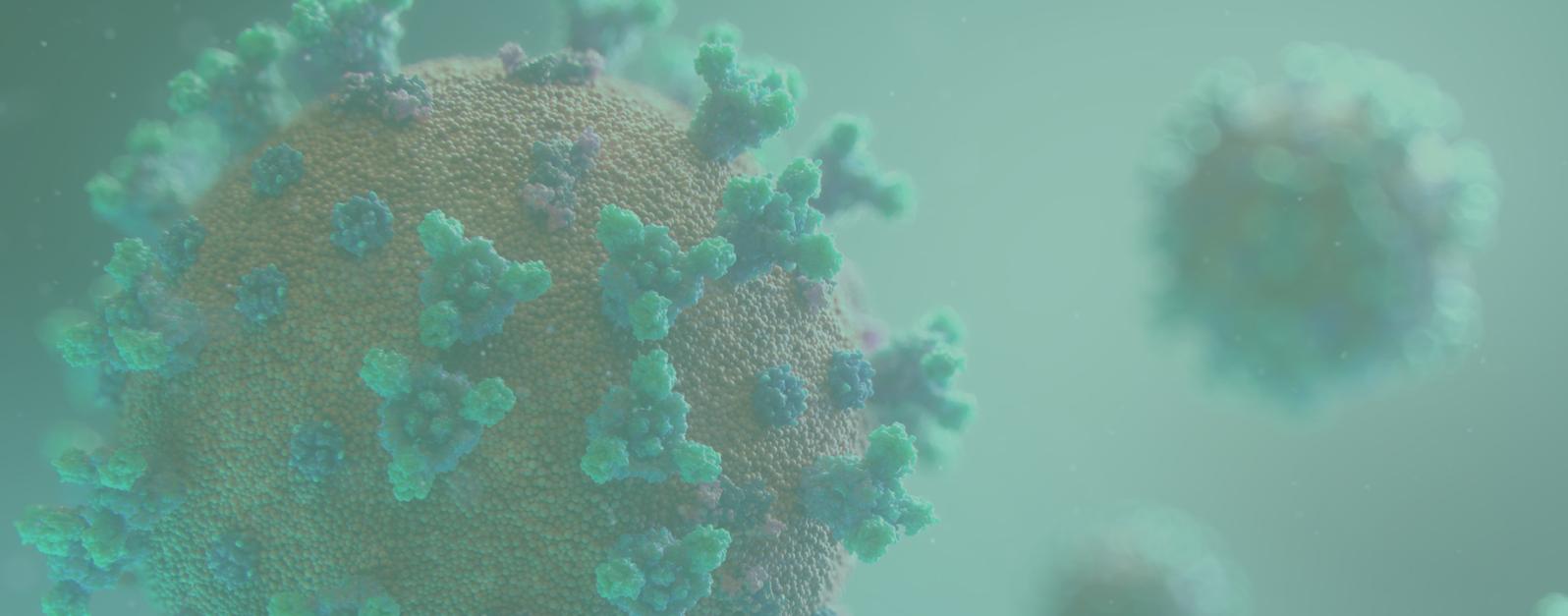
NOAH COVID-19 Animal Health Industry **Best Practice Guideline**

This guide is intended to support animal health companies and their staff as they plan and restructure working activities around ongoing and changing Government restrictions. This is not a legal document and use of these guidelines is on a voluntary basis. The guideline will be reviewed every three months.

Staff in customer facing roles, such as sales representatives and field-based technical advisors, will need to carefully consider how business objectives can practically be achieved. Whilst developing company specific bespoke plans, the following broad points should first be considered:

- Government guidance in the UK that applies to all aspects of work, including travel, is under constant review and subject to change[1]. It is the responsibility of every individual and business to keep up to date with the changing requirements. Links are provided at the end of this guide to help you easily find the relevant information.

- England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland publish specific guidance for each country[2,3,4]. This has practical consequences for those planning to work and travel over borders. You can expect guidance and restrictions/easements that differ in message or timeframe from one country to another. Localised restrictions, e.g. the three local alert level system in England and five-tier system in Scotland, with associated guidance may also apply.

- Working within Government guidelines, the RCVS[5] has updated (November 2020) its flowchart for veterinary practices to use as they consider how to best provide veterinary services under regional or national lockdown restrictions (such as the Welsh fire-break), under Tier restrictions and the second national lockdown in England. The BVA[6] has also produced updated guidance (October and November for England only) to help vet teams and practices to navigate the challenges of the pandemic and provide essential veterinary care.

- In the medium term, veterinary practices will not see a return to pre-COVID 'business as usual'. Each practice will need to continue to individually assess the risks for their staff and clients, determine how they can mitigate these risks and implement or modify plans[7]. As part of this process, meetings and activities with animal health sales and technical representatives are likely to be under review. You will need to work closely with vet practices, pet shops and SQP premises, to plan mutually acceptable new ways of working and to ensure that they wish to meet with representatives at this time.

- Making these changes to your normal ways of working such as adhering to social distancing guidance and using face coverings where recommended, helps control the spread of the virus and visibly demonstrates to staff and customers that risks are being mitigated.

- The first step is to carry out a risk assessment for company visits in line with HSE guidelines[8].
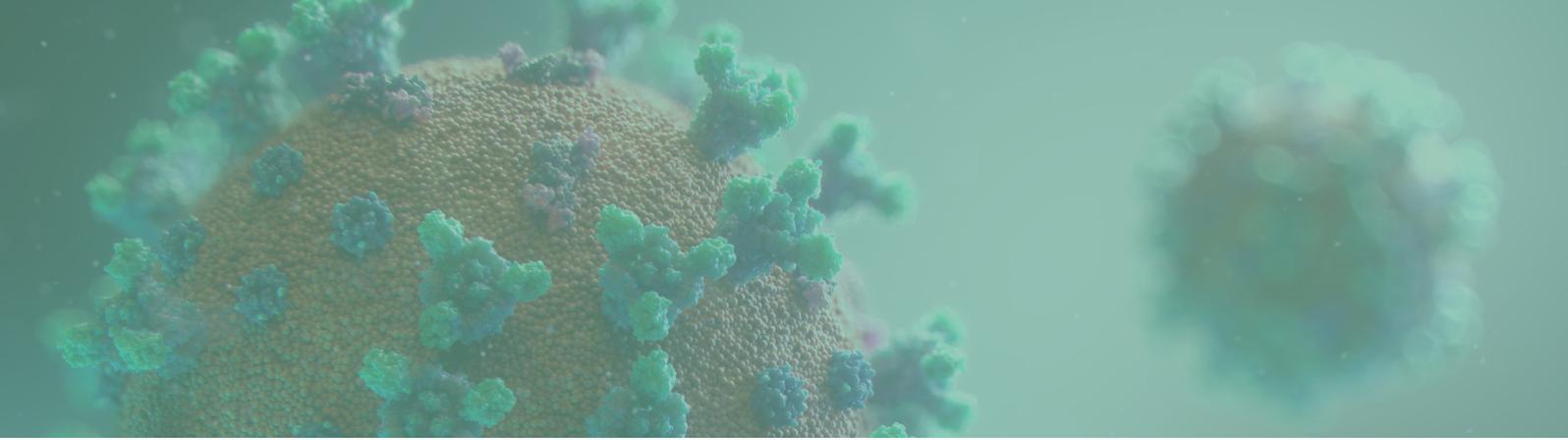
In assessing risk and developing company specific practices, the following should be considered and evaluated:

1 Social Distancing and other mitigations:

- Government required social distancing measures are in place to help control the spread of the virus. Other mitigations include the wearing of face coverings.

- Plan and discuss with veterinary practice staff what social distancing and other arrangements are in place and ensure that staff adhere to the practice's wishes.

- When appropriate and by appointment, meetings should respect the current social distancing measures in force.

- Where it is not currently possible or appropriate to meet in person, consider how you can most effectively hold meetings or other activities online. Over time, and in response to the evolving risk level, it may be appropriate to reintroduce some face-to-face meetings.

- In all cases, work closely with customers, and regularly review, a mutually acceptable solution.

2 Travel:

- How far are sales representatives and technical field staff permitted to travel?

- Have you considered local and country specific travel restrictions?

- What are appropriate modes of transportation – risks with private and public transport?

- Using company vehicle – comfort breaks and hand hygiene when refuelling at a pump?

- Passengers in company vehicle, number of staff travelling together?

- Avoidance of hot spots with higher risk?

- Use of Government/NHS Test and Trace Apps to understand risk/exposure?

- Travel frequency?

- Overnight stays?

3 Personal protective equipment (PPE)[9]:

- PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work
- Face coverings are not PPE
- What kind of PPE should company staff use?
- Disposal of PPE?
- Management of clothing, shoes, etc.?
- Hand hygiene supplies and protocols?

4 Biosecurity:

- Company representative contact with animals on field calls?
- How to ensure that biosecurity protocols are integrated into COVID-19 protocols?

5 Meetings & field visits:

- Monitoring health and actions in case of developing COVID-19 symptoms[10]?
- Ensuring vet practices, pet shops and SQP premises wish to meet with company representatives
- Limitations on meeting sizes?
- What is appropriate and legal in which phase of the pandemic?
- Meeting room size requirements?
- Providing food at meetings? Use of restaurants?
- Restrictions on number of visits per day?
- Protocol for infection prevention prior to entering premises?
- Number of company representative attending a single visit?
- Collection and delivery of samples?
- Sanitisation of equipment used on visit?
- What happens if a company representative is exposed to a COVID-19 case and when/how to get a COVID-19 test[11]?
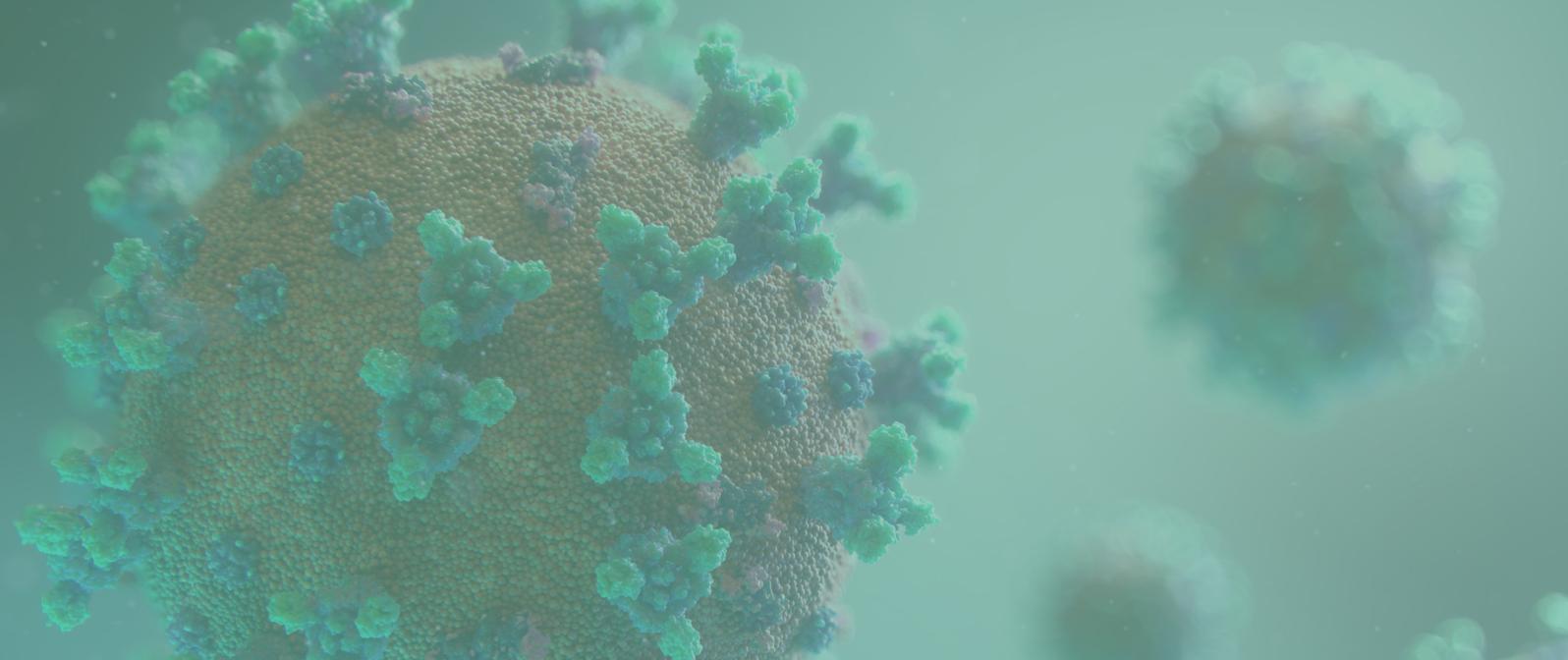
Further **Information:**

Please visit these information resources regularly as advice is subject, and likely, to change over time.

1. **UK:** www.gov.uk/coronavirus and www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19

2. **Scottish Government:** www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/ and www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-1-business-and-physical-distancing-guidance/

3. **Welsh Government:** https://gov.wales/coronavirus and https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-maintain-physical-distancing-workplace

4. **Northern Ireland:** www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19

5. **RCVS:** www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19/ and www.rcvs.org.uk/faqs/what-if-we-are-short-staffed-and-cannot-provide-our-normal/

6. **BVA:** www.bva.co.uk/coronavirus/, www.bva.co.uk/media/3770/bva-guidance-for-veterinary-practices-on-covid19-oct-2020.pdf and www.bva.co.uk/media/3789/guidance-for-england-national-lockdown-nov-2020.pdf?dm_i=3VUQ,17D4N,1ZAN12,4B0K8,1

7. **In Practice, June 2020:** Practical tips for managing change during the Covid-19 pandemic https://inpractice.bmj.com/content/42/5/297.full

8. **HSE:** www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=refferal&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_content=home-page-banner and www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm

9. **HSE - PPE in non-healthcare work during the coronavirus outbreak:** www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/non-healthcare/index.htm and www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/ppe.htm

10. **NHS guidance on what to do if you have symptoms:** www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/

11. **NHS COVID-19 testing:** www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test