



# **Our Vision** for UK Animal Health and Welfare

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**Agriculture Policy that's fit for the future**



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NOAH represents the UK animal health industry. We promote the benefits of safe, effective, quality products and services for the health and welfare of all animals. Our vision is to be at the forefront of UK animal health and welfare.

# Our Vision for UK Animal Health and Welfare

**In 2015 the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.**

This agenda includes actions to be carried out at national level to protect our planet, people and animals. From ending poverty and hunger, responding to climate change and sustaining our natural resources, food and agriculture lies at the heart of this.



The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) promotes the importance of livestock as a route to deliver the SDGs, identifying the need to prevent livestock diseases to ensure healthy lives, delivering a true One Health. As an example, in response to this, the UK livestock industry has been leading the way by taking action to reduce the use of antibiotics in farming to help minimise the risk of human antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Further development of integrated, preventative policies by national government is needed to ensure sustainable agriculture, One Health and food security – actions to meet our Sustainable Development Goals.

In the UK, new legislation, to be introduced through the Agriculture Bill, sets out to deliver a healthier environment, with incentives for farmers to deliver 'public goods' such as higher animal welfare standards.

This paper sets out our ambition for the development of a new chapter in UK agriculture policy. Providing the vision and framework, it identifies what needs to be done and how it can be delivered to improve the health and welfare of our livestock.

# An animal health approach that delivers key outcomes

## Animal health and welfare



**High animal health standards are the foundation on which good welfare outcomes can be built.**

Society expects high standards of animal welfare on our farms today and in the future. National goals and benchmarking should support and demonstrate improvements beyond the legal minimum. Leaving the EU Common Agricultural Policy provides an opportunity to move towards more effective incentives for farmers. A new outcome-related payment could reward the attainment of national targets and drive higher levels of resilience and sustainability.

## Productivity



**It's not just about how much we produce, but about how efficiently we do it.**

Improving the health and welfare of animals will improve productivity as healthy animals are naturally more productive. Key to achieving these improvements in productivity is proactive and preventative herd/flock health planning. Business performance is linked to levels of skills and education. Incentives that drive productivity, skills and therefore overall business performance will increase our competitiveness and at the same time address our environmental responsibilities.

## Sustainability



**Improving livestock health and producing food efficiently reduces the environmental impact of producing food from animals.**

Healthy livestock require less resource input (feed, water, energy) to produce meat, milk and eggs. Healthy animals generate less waste, including manure and carbon emissions. Healthy livestock are essential for land management in many marginal or upland areas.

## Resilience of farms



**Increasing farm resilience is key to ensuring the long-term future of the UK's agriculture sector.**

Resilience relies on high health, welfare and biosecurity standards. It is built by taking a preventative approach to health, buffering against the impacts of disease and resultant poor welfare, protecting farms against risks that reduce productivity. This is best managed and delivered in partnership with a vet-led animal health team (including other professionals such as Suitably Qualified Persons and feed advisors) that takes a holistic approach, making improvements in health and welfare alongside genetics, nutritional health, biosecurity, parasite control and effective use of vaccines.

# UK Animal Health & Welfare Pathway: Industry and Government Partnership

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Delivering excellence in farm animal health and welfare

## → Priority

Securing a long-term and sustainable future for farming and the rural economy is a crucial priority.

## → Challenge

Improving static productivity levels and addressing a lack of national co-ordination and forward momentum for endemic disease control and monitoring programmes continues to be a major challenge. This has limited progress and will continue to impact the future ability of UK farming businesses to prosper and compete on the international market.

## → Potential

There is a wealth of experience and expertise in farm animal health embedded in the UK. The development of a new national agriculture policy presents an unprecedented opportunity to tackle challenges and guide animal health and welfare towards an achievable vision. Stakeholders should co-design and help deliver, in partnership with Government, a policy to deliver practical solutions to achieve common national goals. A high-level partnership group, such as the proposed Animal Health & Welfare Pathway, could collectively and progressively represent UK farm health priorities and programmes with leadership through collaboration. This should be supported through ongoing data and information processing to help inform the partnership in order to shape and improve sustainable farming practices.

## → Prize

A 'UK Excellence in Animal Health and Welfare' brand could showcase progress and the range of initiatives in the UK with clear benefits for both export market promotion and UK consumers.

# Holistic approach to improve livestock health, welfare and farm businesses



## Animal health Endemic disease & productivity

- Incentivisation of endemic disease control programmes, support for vaccination
- Requirement for herd/flock health planning
- Animal medicines regulatory system that encourages development of new health solutions
- Investment in the veterinary profession



## Farm Infrastructure & equipment

- Financial support, capital investments
- Improve farm buildings, equipment, livestock productivity scheme, medicine use/storage/fridges



## Staff Farmer professional development

- Incentivisation of training for farmers
- National skills/training strategy, farm skills passport

### Case study

## Animal Medicines Best Practice (AMBP) Programme



**NOAH has worked with stakeholders across the food supply chain to develop training for farmers in the responsible use of antibiotics through its Animal Medicines Best Practice (AMBP) programme.**

The first step in the process was stakeholder engagement with farmers, vets, academics, Government and retailers. A training platform, with eLearning for farmers to work independently and resources for vets to deliver training to farmers was launched in partnership with Lantra in 2018. Training is recognised by Red Tractor assurance and meets recently updated recommendations for training on farm.

There is now an opportunity for Government to work with industry to maximise the potential of these resources and capture the benefits for food production, animal health and welfare and public health.

## Considerations

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**Endemic disease:** incentivising methods of farming that reduce animal disease and active monitoring of animal health and welfare outcomes is a progressive step towards improving animal health, animal welfare and sustainability. Diseases such as IBR (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis) and BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) continue to persist, in UK cattle, despite effective vaccinations being widely available. Future animal health programmes should, as a priority, incentivise the uptake of vaccines (and other non-antibiotic preventive products) that are currently available.

National goals and benchmarks should be established to encourage best practice within farming, and improved standards in animal health and welfare, productivity and farming resilience. Increasing the uptake of these measures and supporting their effective use in herd health plans can form the cornerstone of improvements in the health status of the national herd and contribute to continuing progress in the responsible use of antibiotics.

**Sustainability and the environmental benefits:** improvements in productivity and the reduction of endemic disease are important ways to reduce environmental impacts and lower the carbon footprint of food from animals. Veterinary medicines, including vaccines and other non-antibiotic preventive products, help to keep animals healthy, reducing losses through animal mortality and morbidity and saving natural resources. Reducing the use of antibiotics, whilst using them responsibly and only where necessary, to preserve the health and welfare of animals if/when they become sick, is also essential.

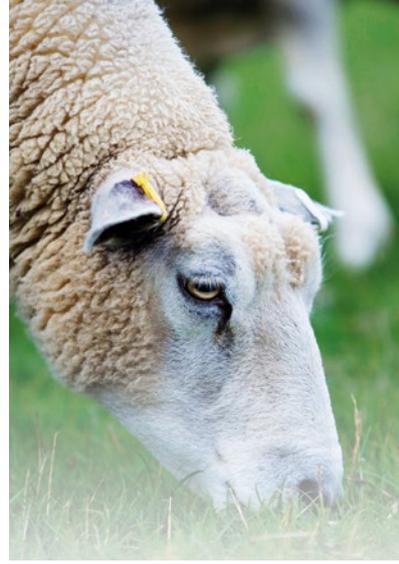
**Animal welfare:** by reducing the disease burden on farm, animals can benefit from improved welfare outcomes. The veterinary profession has a key role to play here in using the full range of tools available to protect animal health. Healthy animals, free from disease and pain, will be more productive and enjoy a higher standard of welfare.

**Rural economy and animal health services:** farming plays a vital part in sustaining the rural economy and maintaining the natural landscape. Sheep farmers are at the heart of many rural economies but are often difficult to reach with technical messages on improved disease control or best practice in the use of veterinary medicines. Vets often have limited contact with sheep farmers, so SQPs (Suitably Qualified Persons) and other professionals are a vital point of contact to advise on prevention and treatment and, for example, to help to avoid resistance to antiparasitic products developing. Flock Health Clubs are a practical and proven solution in the UK to allow sheep farmers to regularly access cost effective veterinary advice and strengthen the farmer-vet relationship.

**Public goods:** new agricultural policy will be underpinned by payment of public money for the provision of public goods and this should capture the vital public goods provided by high animal health and welfare. High standards of animal health and welfare are integral to animal welfare and healthy livestock are the starting point in providing the consumer with safe, high-quality food. Importantly, environmental benefits are public goods that can be delivered through more efficient and productive management of herd and flock health. Government can help farmers to deliver these important public goods by supporting measures that improve animal health and welfare on farms, including support to reach clear national goals and benchmarks.

**Skills:** embracing new technologies and investing in improving skills demonstrates ambition and a drive to progress and improve competitiveness. Skills development offers a clear demonstration of professionalism. Investment in skills will help to attract and retain the brightest and best into the agricultural profession and drive much needed improvements in productivity.

**Time to adapt:** an agricultural transition period is needed with support for pilot schemes and farm businesses to adapt during an unprecedented time of change.



## Call to action

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- The successful development and delivery of future UK animal health and welfare policy will require **industry and Government to rise to the challenge together**.
- **For industry**, this will mean joined-up thinking, avoiding fragmentation ‘silos’, co-ordination of efforts, effective communication, maximising the opportunities to share best practice, identifying key priorities, offering strong leadership and resource.
- **For Government**, this will mean a recognition and acknowledgement of the importance and opportunity facing the UK’s food and farming industry, prioritising the development and delivery of a vision and integrated plan for animal health and welfare, rewarding farmers for going beyond regulatory standards and co-operation with devolved administrations.
- National registration schemes and robust IT systems are needed as a starting point to engage and communicate effectively with the entire sector. Levers to participation in national animal health, welfare and productivity ambitions could be linked to rewards or penalties. **Practical solutions should reduce barriers to participation, place a value on, and reward public goods such as higher standards of animal health and welfare.**
- **We have set out an ambitious vision to raise our national animal health, animal welfare and productivity standards, which will require co-operative action from both Government and industry.** Key to this will be setting a clear UK strategy with measurable outcomes, supported by the tools and incentives needed to make it a reality. The opportunity is there for the UK to lead the way in a true One Health endeavour, delivering the sustainable agriculture we need now and into the future.

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