

+ The Iron Bridge, the first arch bridge in the world to be made of cast iron, crosses the River Severn in Ironbridge, seven miles south of the congress venue. It was built between 1775 and 1779 and is 200ft long.

+ Lord Rooker, who is opening this year's congress, was appointed chairman of the Food Standards Agency in July 2009. A former MP, he became a life peer with the title of Baron Rooker of Perry Barr in the County of the West Midlands, in 2001.

# Representation and learning



AS AN INCLUSIVE organisation, BCVA has two main aims – to represent the views of members in the wider livestock industry; and signposting lifelong learning for cattle practitioners.

Under the banner of representation are some important themes.

## Food security

In an expanding global population, the availability of safe and affordable food is of ever-increasing concern. Cattle vets have a central role at the hub of food production.

Herd health management places vets centrally in the farm team. An evidence-based approach to herd health is a central pillar for the future of food production.

Consumers in the developed world expect high standards of animal welfare in the production of farmed food. Increased production cannot occur at the expense of welfare standards or the market for domestically produced food will be damaged.

Similarly, food should be safe, and vets have a greater role to play in contributing to the supply of food from "farm to fork". Cattle vets are vital in managing the balance between the triangle of animal health and welfare, security of food production, and impact on the environment.

## Herd health and the environment

Maximising food production, but minimising the impact on the environment, will be a long-term challenge for the livestock industry. Vets have an under-recognised and potentially undervalued role. Herd health management is under the vet's direction and he or she has a priority role in reducing waste and losses in the livestock industry as a result of poor herd health and poor reproductive performance.

Better reproductive performance results in greater production when compared against a baseline of total herd impact on the environment, as fewer cows are in the less efficient stale lactation phase. Fewer

forced culls mean fewer followers are required per year. Better health leads to less waste. Improved mastitis control, for example, reduces environmental impact because less milk is lost for the same feed inputs or greenhouse gas outputs.

The prevention role is very important for cattle vets. Cross-industry partnerships are in place. The DairyCo mastitis plan is a joint industry approach to prevent mastitis and is a genuine win/win situation. Better prevention means less mastitis, less need for antibiotics, reduced culling and better welfare.

BCVA is actively involved with altering perceptions about what sustainable food production means and placing cattle vets at the heart of health, welfare and sustainability balance in the industry.

## 'One health'

The livestock industry is under increasing pressure to justify its use of antimicrobials in the context of resistance issues in human health.

Therefore, we have to be responsible about medicines use and this means:

- addressing the root cause of problems using herd health management and using a team approach; and
- maintaining appropriate tools (medicines) where required.

We need an evidence-based approach to the use of antimicrobials. Hysterical finger-pointing for the failures of human health management should not be directed at the animal health industry. However, we have to recognise that more appropriate use of medicines is our responsibility. There is an important balance to strike and we need to work with human health organisations to get this right.

## Signposting education for lifelong learning

The other main thrust of what we do at BCVA is in lifelong learning and education.

BCVA has a role in engaging with learning for cattle vets from a programme of undergraduate clinical

clubs and student reps at the veterinary schools right through to retirement.

An increasing range of CPD is available, but little is genuinely independent and available to all and not all is of an appropriate quality. BCVA offers inclusive education with a recognised quality mark, as well as signposts to some of the high quality that is on offer to a wider audience.

Lifelong learning is just that. BCVA is developing its modular CPD programme in 2013 to build on the success of the recent graduate modular programme to offer advanced practitioner CPD with its partners. Education is a great motivator and CPD offers support from colleagues under similar pressures to keep up to date with the rapid developments taking place. All vets have different needs for knowledge – BCVA is there to help navigate throughout a career of learning.

## Support for cattle vets in a changing world

Philip Lowe has described how there did not appear to be a shortage of undergraduates keen to enter cattle practice. However, the attrition rate after a few years is high as bright graduates move into companion animal or industry sectors for better pay, conditions and career fulfilment. This is not necessary. A fresh perspective on current veterinary business and career progression is needed to provide younger vets and older vets with a sustainable career in cattle practice.

BCVA has roles in:

- support for young vets to have fulfilling careers in cattle profession,

As this year's congress promotes the pivotal position of cattle vets in future food security, BCVA's incoming president Jonathan Statham discusses the role of BCVA and its priorities over the coming year.

whether government, university, practice, industry or research; ● support in times of challenge for traditional cattle practices. The economic climate is unfavourable and with the comprehensive spending review, there is less government money to support livestock practices; ● support for engaging in proactive and preventive health when industry is under pressure, such as milk prices and the declining population of dairy cows; and ● promotion of quality local, regional and national food production to public.

Education about food and its value in society should fall to livestock vets more than it currently does. We could be selling our expertise abroad much more effectively than we do at present – the appetite for food is growing globally and vets in cattle practice have opportunities to engage more completely than we do at the moment.

## Not only congress – behind the scenes activity

BCVA IS ACTIVE on behalf of members throughout the year and plays an important lobbying role with Government and industry groups.

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes and BCVA council is often asked to have input into consultations from various outside agencies.

This year has been no exception. Consultations have included the following:

- BVA and BCVA joint submission to the EFRACom inquiry on the rationalisation of AHVLA's laboratory services in England and the AHVLA's proposals for competitive tendering for official veterinarian (OV) services.
- Bovine viral diarrhoea: consultation on control measures.
- BVA, NIVA, AVSPNI and BCVA joint response to the DARD consultation on statutory biosecurity guidance for brucellosis.
- Bovine TB: a call for your views on new ways of working.
- Agri-Food Strategy Board Northern Ireland: call for evidence.
- Draft of Northern Ireland standstill consultation.
- Northern Ireland consultation on changes to standstill and registration of livestock dealers.
- Consultation on cloning for food production.

BCVA council members sit on many working groups, including various BVA groups, Red Tractor Board, CHeCs, NBA TB Group, CHAWG and RCVS Practice Standards.

The education group has been reviewing how BCVA delivers CPD and is working on producing a CPD programme for the coming year. Look out for the new-look CPD brochure due for release in January.

Bovine TB has been a major issue for council again this year, and officers have attended many meetings with stakeholders, replying to consultations and keeping members informed.

The medicines group has been busy working with other agencies on promoting the responsible use of antimicrobials. There will be another course on December 5 in Penrith on this subject.

The newsletter is sent out on a regular basis, keeping members up to date on many issues. These are well received and feedback from members is always appreciated.

The website is a useful source of information. There are

forums where BCVA members can share thoughts on various issues. The photo library is a useful resource for those looking for images for practice newsletters and presentations and so on – all BCVA asks is that you acknowledge BCVA and, hopefully, donate an image of your own to the site. The *Cattle Practice* search engine is available to all members with past papers downloadable as PDFs. The online shop offers BCVA merchandise as well as the facility to register for CPD and congress.

The biggest change to BCVA this year though for the office staff is not to do with politics and major issues, but with moving to new premises. After being in rented accommodation for the past 18 months BCVA was really pleased to be able to purchase its own office – still at Quedgeley, Gloucestershire with easy access from the motorway. The new address details are BCVA, 17 The Glenmore Centre, Waterwells Business Park, Quedgeley, Glos GL2 2AP. Telephone 01452 725735 and fax 01452 725780.

■ Finally, make a date now for BCVA Congress 2013 from October 17 to 19 in Harrogate. Future congress dates are October 16 to 18, 2014, October 15 to 17, 2015, and October 20 and 21, 2016.

The screenshot shows the BCVA website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Services, News, and Contact Us. Below this is a search bar and a list of categories: Cattle Practice, News, and Photo Library. The main content area features a section titled 'Photo Library' with a sub-heading 'Search for images'. It includes a search form with fields for 'Search for images' and 'Go'. Below the search form, there is a list of search results, including 'Cattle Practice' and 'News'. The page also contains a 'Terms and Conditions' section and a 'Privacy Policy' link.

## CONGRESS TIMES

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