

CATTLE HEALTH REPORT IS 'GREAT START POINT'

VETERINARY leaders have urged their colleagues in practice to read a new cross-industry report on cattle health.

In addition, BCVA's incoming president has called on farm vets to do more to help gather industry data.

The first annual report of the Cattle Health and Welfare Group (CHAWG) was released on September 4 and labelled by contributors as the first "state of the nation" report on cattle health and welfare in Great Britain.

Long-time coming

Speaking at the Livestock 2012 event, BVA president Carl Padgett said: "This is an excellent report – it's basically a GB-wide state of the nation for cattle health and welfare, which is what we've been after for a very long time."

CHAWG is a cross-industry initiative, with members including BCVA, the RVC, DEFRA,

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AHVL, the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England, the National Farmers' Union and the RSPCA.

Its first report uses data from DEFRA and the devolved governments, industry bodies such as EBLEX and DairyCo, and veterinary studies from the RVC and others, to give a picture of GB's on-farm challenges including mastitis, lameness, fertility, nutrition, parasites and infectious diseases.

CHAWG chairman Tim Brigstocke admitted "blood, sweat and tears" went into compiling the document.

The group has admitted the report revolves around the dearth of accurate farm data, but believes it represents a major step forward in benchmarking for the industry.

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In the report's foreword, chief veterinary officer (CVO) Nigel Gibbens states: "The group's approach of identifying the current position against a range of parameters much wider than disease is critical to recognising where action is needed, where it will bring benefit to farmers and their stock and how progress can be measured.

"The report identifies where there are gaps or less-than-perfect data, but this is a great starting point to build from."

Cooperation

Speaking to *Veterinary Times* at Livestock 2012, Yorkshire vet and BCVA vice-president Jonathan Statham recommended all vets read the report, adding it was a great example of industry cooperation.

However, Mr Statham also believes vets can do more to help. "There are already a number of groups, such as milk recording groups, that gather data and vets have an important role in working with these groups to contribute additional

data from farm level," he said. Voicing her support, CVO for Wales Christianne Glosop, said the membership of CHAWG read like a "who's who" of cattle welfare.

"If CHAWG publishes a report and identifies a list of disease issues and challenges we need to face then I would be taking that seriously," she said.

"To ensure the free movement of healthy cattle, it is important farmers and vets have the best information for risk assessment and planning. This goes some way to answering those planning questions, providing a framework with which to work."

She concluded: "If this is going to make any difference to the health and welfare of cattle in GB, it needs to be taken home and it needs to be used."

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