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# AGV Times

NEWSLETTER



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## President's section

Once again it is my privilege to welcome you to our Newsletter. Recent presidential messages have been very much influenced by the financial climate within which all public sector employees are working. Your Council is conscious that changes are ongoing within all our constituent organisations. We are committed to involvement in constructive debate where appropriate.

I am pleased to welcome our lead article from Catherine Brown, Chief Executive of the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), which employs the largest proportion of our membership and potential membership. Catherine has focussed on the role of vets in the delivery of AHVLA's remit in safeguarding society from animal related threats. Her acknowledgement that vets have a critical role is heartening. Given the new ways of working which she identifies (not least the new approach to surveillance), it must also be recognized as challenge to everyone to work together and develop skills. The development of stronger partnerships with vets in private practice will require a recognition of shared and differing values from each part of the profession if the mutual respect, understanding and trust required is to be achieved; likewise effective use of multidisciplinary teams.

AGV draws its members from areas of government as heterogeneous as AHVLA, DEFRA, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Home Office (HO), the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

Council are already familiar with the benefits of the diverse skills and experience its members bring to our association. We are equally aware of the importance of identifying our common aims and purpose. Working within council we have the basis for realising the benefits of cross-fertilisation and adoption of ways of working used in other organisations.

AGV members have the skills, experience and ability to contribute to the clear definition of veterinary roles and responsibilities which is a necessary prerequisite to working effectively in both veterinary and multidisciplinary teams. They are well placed to contribute to a debate on veterinary professional issues within AHVLA and are able to bring added value from input and experience from members in other organisations. As a division of BVA we are well placed to contribute to wider discussions within the profession.

Recently we have been reviewing the value we bring to our membership and as a result are developing our approach to networking and CPD. I believe that we now have support from AHVLA management to facilitate discussions on veterinary issues at meetings where members can air and develop their views in the coming months.

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## President's section—continued

We are engaged in preliminary dialogue with both senior veterinary management and BVA Officers, addressing topics include the AHVLA merger and the likely changes to the way we work. As a small part of a small profession I believe that we all have a valuable role to play and I hope you will consider contributing to the coming debate through this association. I also hope you will encourage colleagues to attend AGV meetings and consider the benefits of membership of our association, directing them to discussion with a council member if that would be helpful.

On your behalf, would like to thank all fellow officers and council members for their active participation throughout the year. I have been well supported. In our Spring Newsletter I reported in more detail on council's activities.

Much of the work is ongoing and I look forward to updating you at our AGM at Royal Holloway on 15<sup>th</sup> September, which will be held after our session on Evidence Based Veterinary medicine at the AHVLA Conference.

I hope to see you there.

*Cath*

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## AHVLA— Initial thoughts

In the last AGV newsletter Nigel Gibbens shared his perspective on the prospects and challenges for AHVLA when it came into existence, and I am delighted to have been invited to follow up now the new Agency has "gone live" and share some of my own initial thoughts. Nigel having ranged widely over and ably covered the contextual challenges facing government, the profession and the Agency, your editor has asked me to focus particularly on the role of veterinarians in AHVLA.

The purpose of the Agency is to support a healthy and sustainable food and farming industry and safeguard society from animal related threats by

- Providing evidence and trusted expert advice for decision making on issues of animal welfare and animal and human health and
- Ensuring the most effective, economic and timely response to disease and implementation of decisions about animal health and welfare.

Clearly, the veterinary profession has a critical contribution to make to the success of the Agency in achieving these objectives.

I am delighted that in Simon Hall and Rupert Hine I have two senior veterinarians on the Board of the new Agency, with broad experience in the field and in policy advice and implementation, who can ensure that the veterinary perspective is at the heart of all our strategic planning and decision making.

It is not only our employed vets of course who contribute to the achievement of these objectives – private veterinarians also have an important role to play, both as Official Veterinarians but also in their general practice, during the course of which they provide the industry and country's first line of defence against disease with all its welfare and economic impacts. One of the opportunities for AHVLA is to build a better, stronger and more consistent relationship with private vets which enables the profession to work across organisational boundaries to deliver shared objectives.

Surveillance is crucial to early detection of both known and novel threats and we intend to break down barriers between statutory and non-statutory 'scanning' surveillance because there should be considerable synergies between the two activities. That means interesting new work for vets in AHVLA but also scope to build stronger relationships with private vets who are serious about working with us for the benefit of the whole livestock industry and society.



Catherine Brown



We are under increasing scrutiny of the way in which we work. There are frequent audits and FVO missions, the devolution of animal health and welfare budgets has sharpened the interest of Scotland and Wales, and the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England is sure to challenge our ways of working.

So in summary as AHVLA enters the next stage in its history, building on the achievements of its predecessors, vets continue to play an essential role – working with others to help make sure that we make the biggest impact possible on animal health. Because so much is changing in the world in which we work, much will also need to change in our own organization, and as relatively senior and well respected team members, vets play an important role as leaders in helping the organization adapt and adjust.

Over the last few weeks I have met many of our vets – in laboratory, field office, and advisory roles – and been impressed by the willingness to embrace change, while remaining focused on helping us to ensure we continue to meet our objectives and remain as ready as possible to deal with outbreaks of exotic disease. I detect a good level of enthusiasm for bringing together our VIO and VO cadres and ensuring that expertise is effectively shared across the organization and more widely.

So thank you for your input to date and for the future. I look forward to working with our veterinary team as well as our scientists and others.

*Catherine*

If we are able to develop strong partnerships which recognise the needs of industry then there should be a shift in emphasis in surveillance away from providing a routine diagnostic and referral service towards exchanging information. We are working on ideas for an intelligence hub which could draw on information of all kinds including disease data, animal movements, industry trends and compliance with regulations. That is intended to give specialists within AHVLA insight into threats and opportunities in order to deliver excellent, timely advice to those who need it – policy makers, vets and animal keepers.

One of the themes that is developing in AHVLA as we think about how we can make the best impact possible in increasingly straitened times is that of working effectively in multi-disciplinary teams. One of the benefits of the merger is the opportunity to bring together vets, scientists, managers, information experts and others from inside and outside the organization to identify the most effective ways of tackling animal health related problems which are generally complex and multi-factorial. This requires us all, our veterinarians included, to seek out ways of working with colleagues and collaborators from other disciplines and perspectives. It will also require our vets to embrace changes to their roles and the ways they work with others inside and outside the organization.



## World Veterinary Year

 **Vet for health,**
 **Vet for food,**
 **Vet for the planet !**

<http://www.vet2011.org/>

### World veterinary year: Opportunity to invite your MP to support an early day motion recognizing the key role of vets

AGV Council are delighted to bring this motion to your attention and would like to suggest that as vets in public service committed to our key role across public health, animal health and welfare and food security members may wish to contact their MP encouraging them to sign this early day motion.

You can find the motion and details at <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-events/news/parliament-praises-veterinary-profession>

**Quiz answer:** Q1 1986: Q2 Protein; Q3 Changes in temperament; Coordination; Poor locomotion; weight loss; head pressing; excessive licking; salivation; tremors; recumbency; death; Q4 ONLY by histology, although other ELISA tests may be used to detect prions, Q5 No; Q6 Born after the Reinforced Ban in August 1996; Q7 10 years; Q8 Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease, Chronic Wasting Disease of Elk, Kuru, Transmissible Mink encephalopathy, Scrapie; Q9 Argentina, Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Uruguay and Vanuatu; Q10 1992- up to 850 cases per week.



Catherine McVicar

## Representatives report— European Association of State Veterinary

### Officers (EASVO)/ Federation of Veterinarians in Europe (FVE)

As you representative I attended the Spring meeting in Sicily. On your behalf I was pleased to acknowledge the understanding and generosity of EASVO delegates in other Member States who accepted their Board's recommendation that an AGV representative be invited to attend EASVO meetings as an observer this year. Full membership is based on a calculation related to Member State population. We had requested this unusual and temporary concession because this is difficult for us to sustain with current membership numbers and the effects of financial constraints which we are trying to address.

As a result of discussions with the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) there will be a One Health day at the conference in Copenhagen in November. Other issues on which EASVO are active within FVE include statutory bodies, puppy trade, a current survey on application of transport rules and the development of the new Animal health Law. The review of the FVE structure, looking at the relationship between the FVE and its sections and branches, was a topic of healthy debate within EASVO as some members believe that small changes in the discipline of communication may be more beneficial than changes in structure. In a joint meeting with its sister organization UEVH, EASVO also had a lively discussion on the modernization of meat inspection. A paper summarising veterinary value in this area will develop from this.

The FVE Assembly were addressed by the President of the World Veterinary Association, Dr Tjeerd Jorna; the President of the American Veterinary Medical Association Dr Larry Kornegay and by an OIE representative as well as being welcomed by video by commissioner (health and Consumer Protection) John Dalli. All emphasized the landmark year for the profession being 250 years since the set up of the veterinary school in Lyon as well as the benefits of collaboration.

An OIE presentation on veterinary statutory bodies emphasized the need to improve links between government and private vets to improve surveillance and rapid response to disease outbreaks as well as the importance of the OIE as a means of evaluating government services and of veterinary associations and autonomous statutory bodies, which should be democratically elected.

Recent FVE activities include the One Health Initiative, strengthening links with the medical profession; work on the Medicines and Medicated feed directives; Responsible use of Antimicrobials including participation in EU AMR day; work on animal welfare issues – transport of horses, pig castration and responsible animal ownership. A considerable amount of work has also been done within the statutory Bodies Working Group chaired by Stephen Ware.

With the installation of the new FVE board led by Christopher Buhot (France) as President, may I record AGV's congratulations to Robert Huey, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Northern Ireland (DARDNI) on his election as one of the four Vice Presidents. Ireland (DARDNI) on his election as one of the four Vice Presidents. Robert's success in leading the poll reflects the proactive direction of his skills and experience in supporting the work of UEVH and FVE. Other vice presidents are Karin Ostensson (Sweden); Rafael Laguens (Spain) and Hans Joachim Gotz (Germany).

Further details of EASVO and FVE activities can be obtained by contacting myself or other council members or via links available on the AGV website.

*Catherine*



## BVA legal services

Check out the BVA legal services attached with this Newsletter edition and make the most of your BVA membership..



Alan Eames

## Retirement — The promised land.

On the fourth issue we continue with the series of contributions from retired members of AGV. This time, Alan Eames tells us his thoughts and plans for retirement.

That first morning when you don't have to go to work!

'Do you miss it Alan?' everyone is asking and I reply ' Well.....' It's true: I did and do, but it's a pretty selective perspective. For a start, the absolute luxury of never having to be on call again is something to treasure. For all my working life, both in practice and in MAFF/DEFRA this was a responsibility that had its own very special down-sides.

In the early days it was the Aberdeen Angus heifer which had been put into calf by a newly imported, valuable Charolais bull belonging to the local millionaire who was of grumpy nature and stood very close while the necessary caesarean was performed. Or the dangerous racehorse with colic.



Later it was the suspect FMD at midnight on the darkest and windiest Welsh borders, or the BSE suspect at the weekend. Or the very nasty welfare case that you just KNEW would occupy you for days and days and end up in court. And we all know that you only have to expose paperwork on a farm outside to bring on hurricane force winds and torrential rain...

Anyway that was all part of the job. But there were upsides as well, particularly colleagues and friends. They are missed.

I have to say that I had the privilege of meeting some very eccentric people, both clients and workmates: and the more eccentric they were, of course, the more interesting the gossip could be. (Not that I was one for that, naturally). But really, you could write a book. Perhaps I will, I have plenty of material.

So, five years ago, I retired. What were my priorities? Of course a major one was to ensure that the wife continued to go to work; this is just common sense. Having quickly cleared that up, there was the problem, if you can call it that, of what to do with all my new spare time.

Oddly, there did not seem to be nearly as much of that as I had imagined. Did this mean that I was already doing more at home and in my spare time than I was actually doing at work previously? That was an interesting thought.

Cooking the evening meal was an easy starter. I developed grapefruit, pie and mash, sausage and mash, fry ups and those easy Indian meals that come in jars, and yogurt in pots. This was fine, but not enough. More mental stimulation was needed.

But first I needed to get my toes straightened. 'Interesting', said the consultant. 'And when did you break your foot?' This was news to me, but on looking back I did seem to remember cows continually treading on me during TB testing, 'I can soon sort this out' he said. Which he did, but it took six weeks before the plaster came off.

Now I could go walking once more which was important as I had decided to take up the study of geology again. Long ago, the idea that the continents were drifting around like leaves on a pond was just not taught. Since then of course we know that it's all on the move as we float around on a sea of magma. My mother did not like this idea at all and said it made her feel bad.

*"What were the priorities now for someone like me?"*

## Retirement — The promised land.

I studied with the Open University, a wonderful organisation and found myself eventually sitting for a 3 hour exam (yes I passed) for the first time since vet school.

But much more enjoyable are the explorations of geological sites, deep quarries, volcanoes both extinct and live, sea shores and mountains and inking dinosaur footprints. And again, meeting lots of eccentric people.



Rightly or wrongly we also invested in a buy to let and letting a seaside flat. This produced yet even more eccentrics and quite a lot of work. The seaside flat is very nice by the way, you would love it; it's a little smaller than a one-bedroom, but in a lovely position.

I have been told that in no way can I bring any more rocks home; they will be thrown out. Like marrows from the garden, they sit around for many weeks while you wonder what on earth to do with them, before finally hurling them out onto the compost heap.

Grandchildren take up time as well, and what a delight they are. Questions, questions, questions. Ronnie was not impressed with the church graveyard and told us he felt that those buried should be provided with a barbecue and sausages down below in case they became hungry.

What about volunteer driving? This is a pleasant diversion; we have a local group which organises this for those people unable to get themselves about cheaply. Again, many interesting folks to be met. It became very

clear to me doing this that women live for much longer than men. Once allocated a job, you turn up at the house and knock on the door.

Eventually, a little old lady comes to the door with a pusher on wheels and lots of bags. Only twice in 3 years has a little old man appeared. But all have

tales to tell, and believe me, they tell them.

I have also become involved for some years in helping to provide holidays in the UK for children in remission from cancer from Belarus – you will recall they took the brunt of the fallout from the Chernobyl disaster.

Well this is just an outline. Five years have gone by so quickly, and past memories and events fade into the distance. But it's true, retirement is fun and it's OK; it's just a word. Life goes on and is as interesting and entertaining as you can make it.

I do feel that my generation has had a good deal from life. So no excuse for boredom and misery!!

*Alan*

*“Retirement is fun and it's ok”*

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## Quiz Corner— Test your knowledge of BSE

Question #1— In which year was Mad Cow disease first confirmed in the UK

1976    1980    1986    1990

Question #2— The infective agent of BSE is called a prion. Prions are a type of:

Mycoplasma                  Protein                  Virus                  Bacteria

Question #3— Identify 10 clinical signs frequently associated with BSE?

Question #4— How is BSE diagnosed?