



# **Association of Government Veterinarians**

## **United Kingdom**

### **History**

1) The Association of Government Veterinarians agreed at its AGM in March 2004 to change its name from The Association of State Veterinary Officers, to reflect the diversity of Departments and Agencies in which government veterinarians work: this mirrors the reasoning behind the setting up of the Government Veterinary Services and Veterinary Head of Profession initiative.

2) AGV aims to:

- Represent the views of Government Veterinarians to BVA, EASVO and to Government.
- Promote professional relations between veterinarians in different branches of Government Service within the UK and in Europe.
- Support and develop CPD appropriate to Government Veterinarians.

3) The AGV statutes have been amended so that membership is now open to all veterinary surgeons permanently employed in any UK Government Department, or their Executive Agencies.

4) AGV as a Specialist Division of BVA:

- Is represented on BVA Council
- Briefs BVA and responds to consultation requests
- Produces Members Newsletters
- Is represented at EASVO/FVE
- Holds an annual AGM and Symposium

5) The presence of an AGV representative on both BVA Council and the UK delegation to FVE raises the profile of government veterinarians and fosters relations with BVA and RCVS.

6) The European Association of State Veterinary Officers (EASVO) is a Specialist Section of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe.

It co-operates with the Hygienists Section in supporting Official Veterinarians and the “Farm to Fork” approach: these fit with both the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy and the Animal Health aspects of the Food Hygiene package.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), which represents over 30 European countries, lobbies the European Commission on behalf of the veterinary profession, most recently on food hygiene, education and the maintenance of strong veterinary services.

## **Examples of One Health UK initiatives including Government Veterinarians**

### **1. Zoonoses work**

**1.1 Human and Animal threats and vulnerabilities Risk Surveillance groups - Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance (HAIRS) group - chaired by Public Health England and Veterinary Risk Group (VRG) – chaired by Animal and Plant Health Agency.**

#### **1.1.1 Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance (HAIRS) group**

The Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance (HAIRS) group was formed in 2004. It is a multi-agency and cross-disciplinary horizon-scanning group, chaired by the PHE Emerging Infections and Zoonoses section. This group demonstrates the benefit of effective collaboration and emphasises the wide role that vets, scientists and medics in Government roles play by having vision and using contacts and influence to bring involved groups together for a common purpose. Members include representatives from:

- Public Health England
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Animal and Plant Health Agency
- Department of Health
- Public Health Wales
- Welsh Government

- Health Protection Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Public Health Agency of Northern Ireland
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland
- Food Standards Agency

The group has met every month since February 2004 and acts as a forum to identify and discuss infections with potential for interspecies transfer (particularly zoonotic infections). The work of the HAIRS group is described in a series of reports.

A system of horizon scanning is used to identify emerging and potentially zoonotic infections which may pose a threat to UK public health. The multidisciplinary nature of the HAIRS group enables it to assess horizon scanning reports in an objective and scientific manner.

If infections are thought to be of potential significance, they are included in the “Infectious Disease Surveillance and Monitoring System for Animal and Human Health: [Summary of notable events/incidents of public health significance](#)”, which is produced on a monthly basis.

HAIRS feeds outputs to UKZADI (UK Zoonoses Animal Diseases and Infections), who make high level decisions and provide a strategic overview to ensure overall co-ordination of public health action at the UK, national and local level with regard to existing and emerging zoonotic infections and trends in antimicrobial resistance

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-zoonoses-animal-diseases-and-infections-group>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/human-animal-infections-and-risk-surveillance-group-hairs>

### **1.1.2 Veterinary Risk Group (VRG)**

The Veterinary Risk Group (VRG) was established in response to the Anderson Review (Lessons Learned from Foot and Mouth Disease 2007). The VRG ensures systematic and timely assessment of threats and vulnerabilities to Animal Health and Welfare by identifying, assessing, characterising, prioritising and escalating identified threats through a transparent and auditable technical process. Ultimately, the VRG aims to decrease the impact of animal related (animal health and welfare) threats to the United Kingdom (UK) by providing advice on options for risk management in order to mitigate their impact when and if they materialise.

To meet its remit, the VRG is a cross-directorate and cross-administration body that reports to the four UK Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) and is a key tool within the Risk Management Cycle for new and re-emerging animal health related threats. Threats that are already recognised and addressed by current policy are out of scope and a change in such threats should be considered by

those policy owners, although VRG may be asked to make contributory comment.

The VRG is a UK group, and the membership comprises of:

- Chair, Head of Epidemiology & Risk Policy Advice, Veterinary and Science Policy Advice (VSPA)
- Lead Veterinary Advisor, Epidemiology & Risk Policy Advice, VSPA
- Lead Scientist, Head of International Disease Monitoring and risk assessment
- Scientific Secretariat (Lead secretariat and scientific support, EpiRisk, VSPA)
- Defra policy customer
- Food Standards Agency representative
- Scottish Government representative
- DAERA Northern Ireland representative
- Welsh Government representative
- Veterinary Medicine Directorate representative
- CEFAS representative
- Risk Advisor, Epidemiology & Risk Policy Advice, VSPA (optional attendance)
- Defra economist (optional attendance)

There are two information types captured and discussed by the VRG:

1. Unexpected threats and vulnerabilities (T&Vs)
2. Points for information (PFI)

Members of the VRG meet monthly and are joined by additional members of the risk management teams (RMTs), if they have submitted a threat report or a point for information. The outputs of the VRG meeting consist of a summary of the key discussion points of the meeting and the proposed mitigating actions. The VRG Secretariat drafts a summary report for the Four CVOs' meeting summarising the recommendations made by the VRG for each threat and the RMT response, that is presented in person.

## **1.2 UK Zoonoses, Animal Diseases and Infections Group (UKZADI)**

The UK Zoonoses, Animal Diseases and Infections (UKZADI) Group is an independent committee made up of experts from across the agricultural and public health departments.

It provides advice, as appropriate, to the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Health (DH) in England, Welsh government, Scottish government (SG), Department for Agricultural and Rural Development Northern Ireland (DARDNI) and Food Standards Agency (FSA) on important trends and observations which impact on animal and public health, including where necessary preventative and remedial action.

It also provides a strategic overview to ensure overall co-ordination of public health action at the UK, national and local level with regard to existing and emerging zoonotic infections and trends in antimicrobial resistance.

Further information available <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-zoonoses-animal-diseases-and-infections-group>

### **1.3 Other Zoonoses work**

#### **1.3.1 UK input into the Global Network of expertise on animal influenza (OFFLU)**

OFFLU is the OIE-FAO global network of expertise on animal influenza, working to reduce the negative impacts of animal influenza viruses by promoting effective collaboration between animal health experts and the human health sector.

<http://www.offlu.net/>

#### **1.3.2 UK input into the UN system influenza coordination office (UNSIC)**

The UN's coordination team on Pandemic Influenza (UNSIC) has worked with Governments and other stakeholders as they have increased their emphasis on health risks that emerge at the Human-Animal Ecosystem interface as part of a longer-term strategy for preparedness. <http://www.un-influenza.org/?q=content/one-health>

## **2. Antimicrobial resistance work**

### **2.1 Joint Department of Health / Department for Environment, food and rural affairs (Defra) UK 5 year Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) strategy 2013-2018**

This Strategy has been developed collaboratively with the UK devolved administrations and the bodies that will be responsible for delivering the work. It takes account of the "Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer, 2011", published in March 2013, which identified many of the priorities to be addressed and included a call to action.

The strategy defines seven key areas for future action which cover:

- preventative medicine,
- prescription practices,
- education, training and public engagement,
- development of new drugs, treatments and diagnostics,
- surveillance data,
- research needs and
- international collaboration.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/244058/20130902\\_UK\\_5\\_year\\_AMR\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244058/20130902_UK_5_year_AMR_strategy.pdf)

In 2014 an implementation plan was published, followed by a second progress reports in 2016. The reports are produced jointly by the Department of Health, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Defra and the Devolved administrations.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/385733/UK\\_AMR\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/385733/UK_AMR_annual_report.pdf)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/553496/2nd\\_UK\\_AMR\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/553496/2nd_UK_AMR_annual_report.pdf)

## **2.2 UK One Health Report – Joint report on human and animal antibiotic use, sales and resistance, 2013**

This report is the first ever publication of a joint human/veterinary One Health report. It includes ten recommendations covering:

- Salmonella species speciation and testing referrals,
- Campylobacter surveillance,
- transition of clinical labs to EUCAST methods,
- antibiotic and bacterial combinations guidance,
- harmonised monitoring of AMR in human Salmonella and Campylobacter isolates,
- data on sales of antibiotics,
- carbapenem resistance monitoring,
- antibiotic consumption in pig/poultry and cattle sectors over 3 years,
- human and animal health professionals training and
- bi-annual surveillance reports on human and animal surveillance.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/447319/One\\_Health\\_Report\\_July2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447319/One_Health_Report_July2015.pdf)

## **2.3 The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)**

Set up in 1990, this non-statutory committee provides expert advice to Government on questions relating to microbiological issues and food. The Committee provides advice in response to requests from the Food Standards Agency, and also on matters that Committee members themselves identify as important. It consists of independent experts drawn from a wide range of interests and includes attendance from a Government Veterinarian. It has produced a number of comprehensive scientific reports, prepared by Working Groups and based on the most up-to-date information available. Agendas of meetings are published in advance on their website and Committee papers and minutes are placed on the website after each meeting. The three main meetings held each year are open to the public.

The Committee has considered a number of One Health related topics and currently has an AMR subgroup <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/>

## **2.4 Other AMR work**

**2.4.1 Review on Antimicrobial Resistance** - In July 2014, the then UK Prime Minister commissioned an Independent Review examining the economic issues associated with antimicrobial resistance, which was chaired by Lord O'Neill, and committed the government to take forward its recommendations. In May 2016, the Review Team published its final report which includes a number of recommendations for reducing unnecessary use of antibiotics in animals through infection prevention and control and alternative therapies, globally.

[https://amr-review.org/sites/default/files/160525\\_Final%20paper\\_with%20cover.pdf](https://amr-review.org/sites/default/files/160525_Final%20paper_with%20cover.pdf)

In September 2016, the Government published its key commitments in response to the Review.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/553471/Gov\\_response\\_AMR\\_Review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/553471/Gov_response_AMR_Review.pdf)

**2.4.2 Colistin use prohibition in poultry flocks:** BEIC Subscribers have recently confirmed that the use of colistin should be prohibited as an antibiotic treatment in the Lion Code of Practice (V7). The British Lion Code of Practice wrote to subscribers in June 2016 to inform them that they "... recognise the importance of colistin as an antibiotic of last resort for human medicine. From 2016, the BPC membership undertake not to use colistin in their flocks". As an alternative to colistin, flock keepers can consider administering vaccines to the follow on flock (There are, currently, 3 vaccinal approaches aimed at prevention of E.coli-related diseases: Poulvac E.Coli (Zoetis) Nobilis E.coli inactivated (MSD) or Autogenous vaccines).

**2.4.3 Colistin voluntary restrictions in the pig industry:** In December 2015, RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance) announced voluntary restrictions on colistin use in UK Livestock. The pig industry welcomed a 70% drop in colistin use between 2016 and 2017.

**2.4.4 Responsible Use of Medicine in Animals (RUMA) Sector Specific Targets task Force:** RUMA's Targets Task Force is an industry led group that has been working to identify meaningful objectives to reduce, refine or replace antibiotic use since the Government's commitment to agree long term sector-specific targets by the end of this year was announced. These will be developed so that future reductions are greatest where there is most scope, and will be underpinned by improvements which focus on encouraging best practice and responsible use of

antibiotics, while at the same time safeguarding animal health and welfare. The targets will be announced at this year's RUMA/VMD conference on 27th October 2017. <http://www.ruma.org.uk/ruma-task-force-confirms-targets-timetable/>

### **3 AGV and One Health**

AGV considers One Health as an important aspect of Veterinary Public Health. Both organisations support the concept and value the way it can contribute to strengthen collaboration and coordination, supporting non-clinical veterinary career paths and their benefit to wider society.

To date AGV and VPHA joint conferences have focused on One Health topics and included relevant sessions including the UN sustainable development goals <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

### **4 One Health activity in Government Departments**

- Defra regularly holds joint PHE / Defra / APHA training courses for staff likely to be involved in Outbreak Control Teams (OCTs). APHA Vets actively contribute with their expertise and skills on the control of infectious diseases.
- APHA vets are regularly invited by PHE to participate in OCTs at both local (i.e. point source outbreak) and national (i.e. disseminated outbreak though to have a zoonotic link) level when there is thought to be a possible zoonotic source.
- APHA have a formal Head of One Health (Steve Wyllie) in recognition of the importance of this area.
- The Animals In Science Regulation Unit (part of the Home Office) is also part of a One Health approach – The purpose from ASRU's business plan is that: '*We regulate the use of animals in scientific research for the benefit of people, animals and the environment*' through the provision of impartial licensing procedures and evidence-based advice, and by encouraging the development and use of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) both nationally and internationally

### **5 One Welfare – a platform for improving animal welfare and human wellbeing (a complement to One Health)**

The Animal Welfare team in Defra developed a paper throughout the summer of 2015 on the concept of 'One Welfare' following internal discussions. Defra arranged a stakeholder meeting in October 2015 to explore the concept of 'One Welfare' as a complement to 'One Health'. The outcome was very positive and a full submission was sent to Ministers, however the project was not considered a priority at the time.

The project was then taken forward by a number of stakeholder attendees in a private capacity. This group has submitted a discussion paper and presented a

poster at the UFAW conference in York (abstract available here <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/downloads/york-2016---programme-and-abstracts-23-june.pdf> ), the One Welfare Conference in Manitoba, Canada; the ECAWBM welfare conference in Cascais; the Human behaviour change for animal Welfare conference in Horsham, England and the OIE Animal Welfare Global conference in Mexico. The lead author has also published a paper in the OIE bulletin [http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Publications %26 Documentation/docs/pdf/bulletin/Bull\\_2017-1-ENG.pdf](http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Publications_%26_Documentation/docs/pdf/bulletin/Bull_2017-1-ENG.pdf) (page 3).

The lead author has since then created a website [www.onewelfareworld.org](http://www.onewelfareworld.org) where materials are freely available and has taken forward this project to define One Welfare and develop a conceptual framework. There is also a twitter and facebook page @OneWelfare. The group has been in contact with the Swedish/US One Health initiative, who developed the One Health umbrella and have proposed a similar model for welfare/wellbeing links.

This concept continues to gain considerable interest from a number of organisations which range from veterinary organisations, industry to NGOs from a number of different countries. A number of upcoming meetings and publications include presentations on this concept.

- FAWC publication: Opinion on the links between the health and wellbeing of farmers and farm animal welfare [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/593474/opinion-on-farmer-wellbeing\\_final\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/593474/opinion-on-farmer-wellbeing_final_2016.pdf)
- AGV members delivered the talk 'One World, One Health, One Welfare – the role of vets in society' at London Vet Show and the VPHA/AGV Autumn conference 2016.
- The Autumn VPHA/AGV conference included a talk on the theme 'One Health, One Welfare – the role of vets in society'
- A talk by the lead author will be delivered at the next AVESA meeting in Spain.

## **6 One Health Gaps**

- More self-recognition from some clinical vets (practitioners) that they also contribute to "One Health"
- Non-clinical vets provide tremendous benefits for society, people, animals and the ecosystem both nationally and internationally.
- There seems to be a growing number of separate 'One Health' initiatives and groups – it would be good to consider this, join efforts and build upon and strengthen existing groups rather than creating new ones.