

Presidential address – AGV AGM 23rd March 2019

Dear AGV council and members

This has been a busy year for us all, with much change and uncertainty in relation to the governmental environment we all work within.

Through the year AGV has continued to champion the role of vets in government, extending this to vets that are not directly employed by government. As part of this we have engaged in providing feedback and input, with BVA and other specialist divisions, into a number of consultations including:

- AMR in livestock,
- Classification of veterinary medicines,
- Animal welfare during transport and slaughter
- Live exports, call for evidence
- CCTV in abattoirs (Scotland)
- Animal welfare sentencing,
- TSE Regulations
- TB biosecure rearing units
- TB Use of lay testers
- TB badger control in low risk areas
- Revalidation process for OV's
- Graduate outcomes
- Impact of Brexit on UK's animal and plant biosecurity

Members of AGV Council are active on your behalf on a number of BVA Committees and working groups. Over the past year we have provided expertise and information to:

- BVA Policy Committee
- BVA Medicines Group
- Animal Welfare Foundation
- Veterinary Led Team Working Group (providing government vet specific case studies)
- Education, Funding and Widening Access Working Group
- One Health

By this we aim to ensure that the role of government veterinarians remains visible and recognised within the profession. It is important that BVA policy positions reflect the experience and input of Government vets.

Work with BVA continues and over the next few months we will be representing AGV on new working groups:

- Animal Health and Welfare Steering Group
- Welfare at Slaughter
- BTB
- Workplace

Political uncertainty as a result of EU-exit has reigned across the year and this has paid a toll on all of our workloads and working environments. Diversity issues within our sector have taken a broader stance, extending beyond the already acknowledged ethnic minorities to those with an EU, non-British, country of origin. We sent two letters to the Secretary of State Michael Gove noting that veterinarians working in Government, as an example, are fully qualified and trained veterinarians. The fact that they have chosen a particular career path as public health experts does not mean that they have any lesser level of qualification. It is their career choice and is vital to protecting human as well as animal health and welfare. This was in response to a statement he made that suggested this was not the case for EU non-UK vets.

A key theme through this year has focused on the wellbeing of government vets. We launched a survey in close collaboration with the government veterinary services and the UK CVO and published a report on the 14th February which included over thirty recommendations on actions that could help improve our wellbeing. We could have not achieved this without the 700+ vets that contributed to the survey and we are all very thankful to you all for sharing your views, comments and experiences as this was the key and strength of this report. So far your contributions have resulted to date in raised awareness of the challenges government veterinarians face at multiple angles that have to date remained below the surface. I see this as a positive step to ensure that this is no longer a 'taboo' area but something that is now on the table for everyone to understand, acknowledge and work on addressing and improving. Senior management within government has welcomed this work and we intend to follow it up over the coming year to maintain the momentum.

I would like to conclude by thanking the hard work of our secretary, all AGV council members through the year, who have tirelessly provided comments and input at pace and continue to do so, ensuring that the voice of government vets is been heard, clearly and loudly.

Rebeca Garcia