Introduction to the Association of Government Veterinarians (AGV)

As a council member of the Association of Government Veterinarians (AGV) I would like to give you an overview and insight into what AGV is and what it can offer to veterinarians, who work in government sponsored veterinary medicine (see website at Home (agv.org.uk)).

AGV is a specialist division of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) with an advisory, commentary and collaborative role on contemporary matters and activities, affecting government veterinarians and their wider involvement in One Health and One Welfare. AGV aims to foster and strengthen the concepts and values of coordination and joined-up efforts amongst vets from different government bodies such as DEFRA, the Scottish Government, APHA, FSA, FSS, VMD, etc., supporting non-clinical veterinary career paths and the benefits of state veterinary work to society, people, animals, and the ecosystem both nationally and internationally. By working with BVA and contributing to discussion both within the profession and on wider issues affecting the profession, AGV ensures that the voices of vets working for government are heard and can both inform and influence.

Some of the areas that AGV has engaged with recently are anti-microbial resistance (AMR) in livestock, classification of veterinary medicines, animal welfare during transport and slaughter, exports, call for evidence, CCTV in abattoirs in Scotland, enforcement, TSE Regulations, TB control policy, OV revalidation process, impact of Brexit on the UK's animal and plant biosecurity, amongst others. This work encapsulates the vision of cultivating the advancement of Veterinary Science and facilitating the discussion of scientific subjects relating to the theory and practice of State Veterinary Medicine, by promoting Veterinary Public Health (VPH) in society, as well as showing the bigger picture to support change for a better multi-agency and cross-disciplinary working.

Members' views and suggestions are channelled through the AGV council, which works directly with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), European Association of State Veterinary Officers/ Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (EASVO/FVE), and Government Veterinary Services (GVS), as well as via BVA (BVA and FVE/EASVO (agv.org.uk)). AGV works for the interest of Government Vets, a sector sometimes overlooked and obscured. At this point, I cannot stress enough how particularly important Government vets' role is in Public Health, Animal Health, Welfare and the "Farm to Fork" process.

AGV collaborates with other specialist BVA divisions to influence government policy and improve processes, where government vets work with other vets (OV support, notifiable diseases etc.), trying to link vets in different sectors (e.g OVs, clinical vets) more efficiently. Membership of AGV also provides an opportunity for mentoring and networking across all the different branches of Government Service within both the UK and in Europe. In doing so, it seeks to promote good will and understanding amongst its members and the wider veterinary profession. In normal times, AGV organises a conference/symposium twice yearly, usually held jointly with the Veterinary Public Health Association (VPHA) to discuss the recent topical and scientific updates. In 2020 a single conference was successfully held online with a range of interesting talks including a review of animal welfare cases seen at abattoirs, an overview of the trade in insects for protein and the role of European Official Vets, all providing valuable CPD (see details at Conferences (agv.org.uk)).

I would encourage you to take some time to read the information on the site including the recent history of the association (History and Constitution (agv.org.uk)), which shows that AGV membership provides a great opportunity to join the government veterinary 'family' and help raise the profile of the Government Veterinarian, connect, learn, and contribute towards the excellence of our profession through AGV's work.

Osiris Ointa DVM, MSc, MRCVS

Official Veterinarian at Food Standards Scotland (FSS)