

Joint (Industry/Government) Working Group on Sharing Responsibility and Costs of Animal Disease

Terms of Reference

1. Government and industry working together to secure improvements in animal health and welfare is one of the ways of helping safeguard and enhance the sustainability of the livestock industry. The Joint (Industry/Government) Working Group on Sharing Responsibility and Costs of Animal Disease will work in partnership to make recommendations that will help inform debate on how responsibilities and costs of animal disease outbreaks should be shared between Government and the industry.

2. The Group will consider the balance of risks and responsibilities associated with keeping farm animals in the context of the importance and role of both on-farm and external biosecurity controls. As a result of its considerations the Group will provide strategic advice to Ministers and industry on the balance of risks and responsibilities of keeping farm animals. In this context the Group will also provide direction on the introduction of structure and financing mechanisms designed to meet the costs arising from animal disease outbreaks.

3. Specifically the Group will develop recommendations to provide industry and Ministers with practical arrangements for the introduction of a partnership to reduce animal disease risks and finance animal disease costs. In the development of its recommendations the Group will take account of:-

(i) the importance, role and value of disease prevention including border control;

(ii) the importance, role and value of disease surveillance; and

(iii) the importance and value of exotic disease eradication and reducing spread of exotic disease.

The arrangements will be consistent with the view of the Group on the balance of risks and responsibilities.

4. The Group will consider and assess the issues involved in introducing a scheme in England between Government and livestock producers (whilst keeping in touch with developments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) to share the costs of tackling animal disease. In particular, this consideration will be in the context of the published strategies for Sustainable Farming and Food¹, Animal Health and Welfare (AHWS)² and Partners for Success – A farm regulation and charging strategy³.

5. In formulating recommendations the Group will assess and consider:

- a. the implications of cost sharing across livestock and meat supply chains;
- b. the issues of consistency with the approach adopted elsewhere in the UK and by other EC and non-EC countries; and
- c. the evolving discussions of the services of the European Commission and its consultants on the development of Community animal health policy (including financial instruments) for the period 2007 – 2013.

6. The Group will liaise and engage with representatives of the keepers of other animals kept commercially, as well as livestock and food chain representatives interests to secure wide ownership of its eventual recommendations. In particular, it will liaise with the AHWS England Implementation Group on its emerging thinking.

¹ Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food published 2002

² Animal Health and Welfare Strategy published June 2004

³ Partners for Success – A Farm Regulation and Charging Strategy published in November 2005

7. The Group may co-opt specialists or relevant representatives from interest groups or other Government Departments or establish sub-groups for the purpose of taking forward the detailed arrangements in these Terms of Reference.

8. The Group will prepare a report of its recommendations for industry and Ministers that takes account of:

- a) strategies and policies relating to animal health and welfare;
- b) the consultation the Group has undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders;
- c) the need to fit with European Community Animal Health Policy;
and
- d) arrangements operating in other countries.

9. The Group will provide its report to Defra Ministers by end May 2006.