

Joint (Industry/Government) Working Group on Animal Disease Cost Sharing

Communications

1. Clarity of information and openness will be key requirements in helping to maximise livestock producer buy-in to secure objectives of improved animal health and welfare through a rebalancing of risks and responsibilities as well as revised financial arrangements. **ACTION:** In this context the Group is asked to consider the issues in this paper and express its preferences for communicating emerging issues/messages from its work with other livestock stakeholders and the wider farming industry.

2. In accordance with the need to be transparent and open all documents made available to the Group should be also, in principle, available to the public. Defra's internet site provides one vehicle for achieving such a goal. Subject to the view of the Group documents will also be made available by the Secretariat to the stakeholders principally through email. Group members may wish to consider as well the use of their organisation's communications channels to help disseminate information.

3. In keeping the listed stakeholders informed it will be important to ensure the principal players feel engaged and an integral part of the process. The meat processing sector has already made representations on this issue and as a result the Secretariat has agreed to hold debriefing meetings with the British Meat Processors Association as soon as possible after meetings of the Group. The Association of Independent Meat Suppliers will be invited to join these debriefs.

4. Presence by Defra and industry representatives at agricultural shows to explain the rationale for cost sharing will be necessary. For this purpose appropriate communications material will need to be developed. In addition the Department will use appropriate Ministerial and official engagements to

promote partnership working and a new approach to financing animal disease outbreaks. Members may wish to consider how similar initiatives can be taken by industry.

5. We will be engaging with the Department's Communications Directorate to take forward the planning of a strategy to help communicate the benefits of a new approach to improving animal health and welfare of which cost sharing is one element.

6. The Department has working level links with the Devolved Administrations on taking forward the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy and in particular the steps being taken on cost sharing. These links will continue to be developed and strengthened as the work of the Group progresses. In addition the regular high level meetings between Defra (CVO and Director General) and the Devolved Administrations provide opportunity to engage to provide strategic overview.

7. A proposed stakeholder conference in March 2006 (see JIGWG 08) will provide a platform for input from a wider audience.