

JOINT (INDUSTRY/GOVERNMENT) WORKING GROUP ON SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES AND COSTS OF ANIMAL DISEASE.

Cost sharing: sharing responsibilities

The Joint Industry Government Working Group has already considered cost sharing arrangements, including arrangements in place in other EU and non-EU countries, and a working papers on consideration of the potential introduction of harmonisation of cost sharing arrangements at EU level.

This paper considers the scope for further sharing between the Government and industry of responsibility for animal health.

Responsibilities for animal health

Some responsibilities for animal health currently fall to Government, and some to livestock keepers, although Government may seek to influence behaviour in areas where it does not have direct responsibility. The Government's responsibilities currently include:

Disease prevention

- Active and passive surveillance,
- Risk assessment,
- Import controls, including legal and illegal imports,
- Policy in relation to livestock identification and movements, including recording, licence conditions and standstill periods,
- Registration of livestock holdings, including separation of livestock holdings (single occupancy etc.)
- Conditions for the operation of animal gatherings (markets, shows etc.),
- Incentives for and advice on improvement of on-farm biosecurity.

Disease control in the event of an outbreak of disease

- Slaughter of animals suspected of being affected by notifiable disease and direct contacts, haulage and disposal,
- Valuation and compensation,
- Diagnosis and testing,
- Movement restrictions (infected areas),

- Cleansing and disinfection,
- Vaccination policy,
- Advice and communications,
- Welfare disposal.

Other responsibilities

- Research (including horizon scanning) and assessment of the evidence base,
- Test development,
- Economic assessment of animal health measures,
- Better regulation,
- Relationship with delivery and enforcement agents,
- Relationship with the wider stakeholder community,
- Trade (export) facilitation,
- International negotiations.

Many areas of activity, notably those relating to disease prevention and control of notifiable animal diseases, are constrained by international obligations. However, even where international agreements are in place, there is generally scope for discretion on the means of implementation of international standards.

Accountabilities

If sharing of responsibility in the animal health field is to be taken forward in a meaningful way, the responsibility sharing arrangement will need to be accountable to the participating parties.

On the industry side, there will need to be some consideration of how the industry can provide representation, and what arrangements will be needed to ensure that industry representatives are accountable to the industry at large for decisions taken under responsibility sharing arrangements. Should the industry representatives not be truly representative, it will be difficult to envisage how responsibility sharing can be put into practice.

On the Government side, although there is recognition that sharing of responsibility for animal health offers significant advantages, certain accountabilities will need to be taken into account in the formulation of responsibility sharing arrangements. At present, Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the decisions they make. In so far as there remains some element of Government funding under the cost sharing arrangements, Ministers will have to remain accountable to Parliament. The Permanent Secretary of Defra is also, as Accounting Officer, accountable for Defra expenditure. In addition, the Chief Veterinary Officer is answerable to EU and the International Animal Health

Organisations for the implementation of international agreements on animal health in the UK.

Possible arrangements

Sharing of responsibility for animal health between industry and Government implies that arrangements must go beyond the general duty to consult interested parties which currently exists. Consideration of how this might be arranged will be a key element of the final report from JIGWG. Some form of joint Industry/Government Group which can take shared responsibility for animal health issues seems to be the most likely workable approach, but the Terms of Reference and membership of such a group will inevitably influence the extent to which it can actually share responsibility, rather than just act as another advisory group on animal health issues.

JIGWG has already considered some of these questions in relation to cost sharing arrangements. JIGWG 18 set out three possible models:

- A centralised representative industry body
- An NDPB administering a statutory disease levy
- A not-for-profit company limited by guarantee

The conclusion of a Group discussion (JIGWG 32) was that sharing of risks and responsibilities

“would best be achieved through a legally recognised joint Government/industry over-arching body that worked within a strategic framework agreed by the parties”.

The Group also agreed that

“the overall goal of the body should be to minimise the risk of a disease outbreak (and spread)”.