

Report by the Review Body of the Implementation of the National Farmed Animal Health Strategy Actions in 2017

Introduction

The National Farmed Animal Health Strategy 2017-2022 ('the Strategy') was launched by Minister Michael Creed in July 2017. At the Strategy's heart is the ambition to shift the focus from response to and management of animal disease, to the promotion of animal health as a driver of optimised production, improved margins for producers and providing the best quality food for consumers. The Strategy recommends some 70 strategic actions.

The Strategy provided for the establishment of an independent Review Body to provide objective oversight and governance. Its members are Dr Noel Cawley (Chair), Dr Colm Gaynor and Mr James Lynch. The Review Body will monitor the progress and delivery of the Strategy and identify any modifications necessary to improve outcomes. It will report on its findings annually to the Minister. This is the first such report.

First Meeting of the Review Body

The Review Body held its first meeting on 15th February 2018 in Agriculture House. It reviewed progress on the Strategy achieved in 2017. The Chief Veterinary Officer, Martin Blake, thanked the Review Body members for their participation. He emphasised how important animal health is to the agri-industry and the wider economy, as well as to human health. He provided an overview of the values, vision and scope of the Strategy. Presentations on a number of areas were made to the Review Body by the Heads of Division concerned. The meeting focused on progress achieved on a number of specific areas. A list of the relevant actions can be found in the Appendix.

Conclusion of the Review Body of progress achieved in 2017

As outlined in the Report, the Review Body concurred with the emphasis on disease prevention in order to maintain a healthy animal population. The members reviewed all the recommendations and agreed to merge common areas of activity to ensure effective implementation. It was considered essential that the appropriate agency/institution was clearly identified and it accepted responsibility for implementing each relevant recommendation.

Following presentations by the Chief Veterinary Officer and Heads of Department, the Review Body noted with satisfaction that progress had already been made on a number of fronts as set out under separate headings. The members will continue to monitor and oversee activity in each area to ensure effective action is executed.

Appendix 1

Areas under focus at the first meeting of the Review Body

1. Actions 6, 7 and 16

No.	Action
6	Renew commitment by all stakeholders to Animal Health Ireland (AHI), ensuring a sustainable business model for the medium term – for the lifetime of Food Wise 2025.
Update: A review of AHI corporate governance structures commenced in late 2017.	

No.	Action
7	Initiate a consultation process with the wider stakeholder community with a view to clarifying the role of Government in financial supports for animal health and welfare programmes in respect of all notifiable diseases; to identify and agree on specific roles and responsibilities. Develop and publish a document setting out clearly the roles and responsibility of all stakeholders with regard to the health of farmed animals.
Update: A study of animal disease compensation arrangements commenced in late 2017.	

No.	Action
16	An evaluation of the availability of farmed animal veterinary services will be undertaken.
Update: A study on the availability of farmed or mixed animal veterinary practices in Ireland commenced in late 2017.	

2. Actions 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 38, 39 and 60

No.	Action
18	The National Disease Control Centre of DAFM (NDCC) will liaise, as necessary, with other DAFM divisions (involved in, for example, surveillance, diagnostics, epidemiology, risk analysis and disease modelling, procurement, communications, traceability) to ensure that exotic disease anticipation and response are taken into account.
Update: The NDCC liaises with a multitude of DAFM Divisions on a regular basis.	

No.	Action
19	Responsibility for all aspects of contingency preparedness and emergency response for all exotic animal health threats will be assigned to the NDCC.
Update: Completed.	

No.	Action
20	The NDCC will liaise and consult across all relevant stakeholders with a view to prioritisation of actions and to ensure the engagement of all stakeholders in the development of the national response effort.
Update: A stakeholder meeting on Avian Influenza was held in June 2017.	

No.	Action
21	The NDCC will update and develop further specific contingency plans in accordance with identified priorities.

Update: Plans currently exist for 8 of 15 transboundary diseases, and work is ongoing and/or planned for the remainder.

No.	Action
22	The NDCC will provide necessary training modules and contracts, as necessary, to ensure adequate response infrastructure is in place to enable an immediate response to any initial event/threat.
Update: There are contracts in place for an occupational health consultant (3 years) and whole-house gassing of poultry (3 years). In 2018, it is planned to agree a contract with private veterinary practitioners; and a discussion on a draft MoU on Farm Relief Services will also take place.	

No.	Action
23	The NDCC will ensure that arrangements are in place to ensure the health and safety of high-risk responders to zoonotic exotic diseases
Update: Annual staff health screening and vaccination, workshops, and risk assessments, are in place to ensure the health and safety of high-risk responders. Joint protocols are in place between the NDCC and the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).	

No.	Action
24	Recognising the commonality of interest on an all-island basis associated with exotic disease threats, the NDCC will continue close engagement with DAERA to ensure the optimal coordinated response to any disease, on an all-island basis.
Update: There is an all-island contract for whole-house gassing; an MoU for the loaning of 'killing teams'; and joint simulation exercises are carried out.	

No.	Action
38; 39	DAFM initiatives in the areas of contingency preparedness and emergency response will outline the anticipated role of veterinary practitioners; DAFM will evaluate and outline participatory roles for veterinary practitioners in animal health initiatives both endemic and exotic.
Update: Staff of the NDCC plan to meet with representatives of Veterinary Ireland in the first quarter of 2018.	

No.	Action
60	Evaluate the feasibility of generating standardised sectoral advisory animal health and bio-security brochures and resources to sheep, pig, poultry and equine sectors, as AHI has in place for the bovine sector.
Update: There have been several new and updated brochures (non-commercial pigs, importing livestock; Avian influenza and Bluetongue) published in 2017. New brochures on sheep and equines are planned for 2018.	

3. Actions 3, 4, 17 and 59

No.	Action
3	Establish a process for improved communication with all stakeholders.
Update: In 2017, SAT Division developed a communication strategy for animal health surveillance. The animal health surveillance website is the cornerstone of that strategy, where surveillance information from the various animal health divisions is published on that website. Information on a	

variety of diseases is published on the website, and the associated DAFM programmes where appropriate. In 2017, SAT met with stakeholders regarding the animal health surveillance strategy and will continue to meet them in 2018.

No.	Action
4	<p>All animal health initiatives will be supported by a strategy document setting out scientific and other rationales for intervention; and will be subject to a cost and benefit analysis.</p> <p>Ensure that, in the context of 'better regulation', and in line with the principle of 'working in partnership', any proposed changes to, or proposal to introduce new regulations in the animal health area are subject to a consultation process prior to final implementation.</p> <p>Ensure that after any significant changes in regulation, every effort is made to ensure that citizens potentially affected are made aware of the changes and likely impact on them.</p>
<p>Update: SAT Division are currently working on a document to improve the efficiency of the early warning system abattoir based surveillance and a position paper on the use of data analytics in veterinary divisions.</p>	

No.	Action
17	<p>A system of animal health surveillance, horizon scanning and risk analysis will be coordinated at a national level and data shared with stakeholders.</p>
<p>Update: A national, integrated Farmed Animal Health Surveillance Strategy was launched in July 2017 by Minister Creed. It sets out an approach to coordination of surveillance related activities. In Q4 2017 the first annual meeting of stakeholders was held. A steering committee on surveillance which oversees the work of SAT Division was also established. This committee comprises the CVO, DCVO, the Head of SAT, the Head of RVLs, the Director of CVERA, a DAERA representative, and SAT Division staff.</p>	

No.	Action
59	<p>Irish scientists will continue to develop international collaborations to add to the available pool of scientific expertise which can be called upon when necessary.</p>
<p>Update: DAFM staff continued to attend and contribute to several animal health and public health expert working groups in the European Commission. Irish scientists contribute to EFSA working groups. Irish scientists are involved in various pan-European research projects. They also attend international conferences and collaborate with overseas scientific colleagues in several countries. Collaborators include DAERA, AFBI (NI), DEFRA and APHA (UK), Wageningen University (NL) Iowa State University, UC Davis, Colorado State University (USA), Ontario Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island (Canada), Ausvet and Biosecurity Services (Australia).</p>	

4. Actions number 14, 15, 53, 54, 55, 56 and 57

No.	Action
14; 54	<p>A national coordinated anti-microbial resistance (AMR) action plan will be developed in conjunction with the human health sector and stakeholders and will be implemented. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and implementing an electronic system for collecting data on antibiotic usage. Continuing to work with all stakeholders under the auspices of the Inter-departmental

	<p>Consultative Committee, to ensure effective risk communication and identification of actions that need to be taken to ensure prudent use of antibiotics.</p> <p>Ensuring monitoring for antimicrobial resistance provides a clear picture of the situation in Ireland and the risks to public and animal health.</p> <p>Working with the Department of Health to ensure adherence to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Action Plan on AMR.</p>
<p>Update: In 2016, DAFM and the Department of Health began working together with the key stakeholders to develop a One Health national action plan for AMR. The three year plan, called <i>i</i>NAP, was approved by Government and was published in October 2017. <i>i</i>NAP contains more than 90 actions to be taken both within and across the three 'One Health' sectors in the years 2017 to 2020. The overall goal of the plan is to ensure responsible use of antibiotics and overall reduction in use. (Six Rs principle: right advice, right animal, right drug, right dose, right duration, right disposal). DAFM has now brought together all stakeholders involved in the agri-sector, to identify, agree and implement specific actions within the agri-sector over the next three years.</p>	

No.	Action
15; 56	Responsible use guidance in respect of animal medicines usage in animals will be developed for veterinarians and farmers
<p>Update: One of the priority actions for DAFM under <i>i</i>NAP for 2018 is to develop prudent use guidelines for antimicrobials for vets and farmers operating across the dairy, beef, lamb, pig and poultry sectors. This is being addressed through the process mentioned above.</p>	

No.	Action
53	Review, on an on-going basis, the situation with regard to veterinary medicine availability and take action to ensure availability as needed.
<p>Update: Availability issues are constantly under review. Based on experiences with several immunologicals over the last few years, a protocol has been drafted for licensing unauthorised products. This is being led by DAFM in consultation with the HPRA (Health Products Regulatory Authority). New potential risks that may arise as a consequence of the UK leaving the EU are being assessed currently.</p>	

No.	Action
55	Review the regulatory framework relating to animal medicines manufacture, distribution, prescription, supply and usage to ensure it clearly promotes prudent use.
<p>Update: S.I. 786 of 2007 - which is the main legislation governing authorisation, distribution and use of medicines in Ireland - was amended in 2017 to strengthen the rules in relation to prudent use by more clearly requiring that, to satisfy the 'under the care of a vet clause', the vet satisfy him or herself that they have sufficient knowledge of the animal and have visited the farm frequently enough. From a European standpoint, Ireland has actively been contributing to discussions in relation to the draft regulation being discussed at EU level which will form the basis for the European regulatory framework covering all aspects of manufacture, distribution and use of veterinary medicines.</p>	

No.	Action
57	Review the Official Control Programme to ensure it is aligned with ensuring the appropriate use of veterinary medicines (dissuading the inappropriate use).

Update: During 2017 an audit was carried out by the Veterinary Internal Audit Unit (VIAU) audit of the documented procedures for official controls in the six veterinary divisions of DAFM, including VIAMET Division. During 2018 an audit will take place to evaluate the controls in place on the distribution to and use of antibiotics on pig farms. Findings from these audits (identified good practices and areas for improvement) will be included in an internal VIAMET review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the specific medicines-related aspects of the Official Control Programme.

Appendix 2

Progress on other Strategy actions

In addition to the areas above that the first Review Body meeting focused on, in 2017 good progress has been made with other actions recommended by the Strategy:

No.	Action	Update
3	Establish a process for improved communication with all stakeholders.	<p>In November 2017, a comprehensive food safety and food authenticity strategy was finalised and will be publicly launched in 2018. This strategy will strengthen communications between more than 600 DAFM staff that are directly engaged, and the many more that are indirectly engaged in the controls and other activities underpinning the quality of food produced and consumed in Ireland. The communications strategy will also seek to engage, inform, educate and listen to stakeholders at all stages of the food chain.</p> <p>NDCC and AHWD developed an approach whereby a targeted communication plan was put in place and implemented in consultation with the Press Office on specific communication tasks. For example a project to increase awareness on poultry registration was planned for early 2018.</p>
4	All animal health initiatives will be supported by a strategy document setting out scientific and other rationales for intervention; and will be subject to a cost and benefit analysis.	A stakeholder initiative on reducing human illness due to campylobacter will commence in 2018, building on the comprehensive report of the campylobacter stakeholder group, published in 2017.
11	All educational and training programmes for farmers and animal owners will provide modules on animal health and herd health planning.	At the close of year one of the Knowledge Transfer Programme on 23rd August, 2017, over 16,000 farmer participants had completed the Animal Health Measures requirement under the Farm Improvement Plan component. This includes training on biosecurity with an approved private veterinary practitioner. This will encourage adoption by farmers of preventative measures to mitigate risk.
12	The series of inspections/controls along the supply chain will be reviewed to ensure that their focus is clearly on prevention and that they incorporate all known risks.	The 2017 report of the Campylobacter Stakeholders Group, on control of this significant zoonosis at all relevant points of the supply chain, was published.

25	DAFM to implement agreed recommendations of the Strategic Review of its laboratories.	An initial consultation with stakeholders was undertaken in early 2017; a laboratory services advisory board was established and a shared “vision” for the strategic development of the laboratories was agreed.
26	National and international reference laboratory functions to be appropriately resourced.	<p>DAFM continued to prioritise the filling of critical vacancies in the National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) that it hosts at Backweston.</p> <p>DAFM continued to support the OIE Reference Laboratories hosted by the Irish Equine Centre.</p>
27	Build closer collaboration and better communication between public and private service providers nationally and also internationally.	<p>In 2017 industry-led disease control initiatives promoted and co-ordinated by AHI provided a forum and a basis for closer collaboration between DAFM, Teagasc, the UCD Veterinary School and private commercial laboratories. DAFM hosted NRLs (both official and de facto) which form the hub of a network of laboratories engaged in provision of animal health-related diagnostic services. Each Irish NRL is part of a network of NRLs across EU member states including the EU Reference Laboratory</p>
28	All laboratory service providers should engage in initiatives to make better use of existing data in the context of the National Animal Health Surveillance strategy.	<p>All laboratories that provide testing for industry-led disease control programmes co-ordinated by AHI submit laboratory testing data to the ICBF database.</p> <p>DAFM encourages private commercial laboratories to enter into data-sharing agreements as a quid pro quo for providing NRL-type supports.</p>
29	Ensure that laboratories are effectively contributing to animal health related research - through identifying and communicating research needs and greater collaboration between regulatory and research scientists.	<p>DAFM NRL representatives engaged in research prioritisation exercises at national level and research co-ordination initiatives (such as SCAR, STAR-IDAZ and MedVetNet) at EU level. DAFM continued to fund a number of multi-institutional research projects on animal health related topics and gave priority to collaborative projects that get the research community to focus on specific regulatory challenges.</p>

30	Review the Statement of Strategy of CVERA to ensure that its scope is aligned with the Farmed Animal Health Strategy. Review the role and scope of activity of CVERA to ensure it is closely aligned with the objectives and requirements of national policies and objectives in the areas of farmed animal health and welfare.	DAFM officers engaged with senior management and other internal stakeholders to inform how best to ensure the scope of CVERA's work is aligned to DAFM policy and requirements. Two DAFM officers sit on CVERA's Management Board which is tasked with ensuring CVERA delivers on its Statement of Strategy.
31	Evaluate the current skills set within CVERA to ensure it is consistent with meeting the requirements of the Farmed Animal Health strategy.	
32	Given the inter-connectedness of many infrastructural components, CVERA will develop a clear working relationship with DAFM policy, operational and laboratory services and other agencies and organisations which lead on other related infrastructural components.	
33	Ensure that CVERA maintains its international status as a recognised academic Centre, reflecting the excellence and independence of its science and research.	
34	Determine the optimal mechanism to acquire expertise in statistical modelling in the animal health area in Ireland, which would be available for the 'public good'. Initiate a process to develop, use and grow such expertise, as necessary. Determine a mechanism by which such a resource can be funded.	DAFM undertook to contribute €26,000 p.a. for 4 years towards the cost of a PhD student who will be engaged on "an expert system modelling of cattle disease management in modern livestock populations in the context of an Irish IBR programme".
35	Determine the optimal model by which to develop, use and grow expertise in animal health economics in Ireland, which would be available for the 'public good'. Determine a mechanism by which such a resource will be acquired and funded.	An Administrative Officer was recruited and placed within Animal Health and Welfare Division. It is intended that this officer will be supported in developing an expertise in animal health economics and become a resource for the entire Department in that regard.
37	Within the context of the legislative framework of the Veterinary Practice Act, to work with the Veterinary Council of Ireland to provide legislative and procedural clarity in respect of a limited number of procedures that could be undertaken by persons other than a registered veterinary practitioner.	A draft statutory instrument was prepared in line with the Veterinary Practice Amendment Act 2012 and on foot of extensive stakeholder consultation. A new round of stakeholder consultation commenced in November 2017 and new amendments sought by the Veterinary Council are currently being examined by DAFM.

46	Carry out a 'horizon scanning' exercise in conjunction with the industry, to ensure awareness of new and emerging risks all along the entire animal feed supply chain and to take account of these risks in the risk analysis of the Feedingstuffs Annual Inspection Plan (FAIP)	Preparatory work commenced in Q4 2017 on an animal feed stakeholder consultation committee.
62	Ensure that the targeted farmed animal advisory service under the RDP is delivered in the time scale envisaged and is of a consistent high quality.	BVD training events were delivered by Animal Health Ireland in 2015, 2016 and 2017 with a total of 644 private veterinary practitioners (PVPs) trained to carry out herd investigations. To date, 2,410 investigations have been completed. 326 PVPs were trained in relation to Johne's Disease in 2016. In addition, AHI provided training to 22 Department Veterinary Inspectors in connection with the scheme.

Glossary

AFBI	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (NI)
AHI	Animal Health Ireland
AHWD	Animal Health and Welfare Division
AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
APHA	Animal and Plant Health Agency (UK)
BVD	Bovine viral diarrhoea
CVERA	Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI)
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DCVO	Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EU	European Union
FAIP	Feedingstuffs Annual Inspection Plan
HPRA	Health Products Regulatory Authority
HPSC	Health Protection Surveillance Centre
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICBF	Irish Cattle Breeding Federation
iNAP	Ireland's National Action Plan (on AMR)
MedVetNet	The Med-Vet-Net Association for Zoonoses Research
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFAHS	National Farmed Animal Health Strategy
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
OIE	Office International des Epizooties (World Organisation for Animal Health)
PVP	Private Veterinary Practitioner
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RVL	Regional Veterinary Laboratory
SAT	Surveillance of Animal by-products and TSE Division
SCAR	Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
STAR-IDAZ	Strategic Alliances for the Coordination of Research on the Major Infectious Diseases of Animals and Zoonoses
UCD	University College Dublin
VIAMET	Veterinary Internal Audit, Medicines, Ethics and Training Division
VIAU	Veterinary Internal Audit Unit
WHO	World Health Organisation