

BCVA



President: N M Hopkins, BVSc MRCVS BSc (Hons.)
Hon Sec: P Elkins, BVM&S CertAVP (Cattle) MRCVS

27th March 2020

Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State Defra
Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State BEIS
Rt Hon Simon Hart MP, Secretary of State Wales
Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, Secretary of State Northern Ireland
Rt Hon Alister Jack MP, Secretary of State Scotland:

Re: URGENT request for farm veterinary practices to be considered Critical Businesses

The British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) is the UK representative body for cattle vets with over 1,400 members. We are writing to join the call of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) to urge ministers to designate farm veterinary practices as Critical Businesses *immediately*, and throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Our profession *must* be supported in providing our essential service to farmers and their stock to ensure a viable, secure food supply, whilst maintaining animal health and welfare.

As production animal vets, our role in ensuring the health and welfare of cattle should be in no doubt. It is undeniable that the supply chain and food production has never been more vital to the UK than it is now. Our advice and input on farms is key to ensuring the security and human safety of food production in the UK. Should travel restrictions further increase, then it is essential that we are still able to attend on farm emergencies to protect animal welfare, together with ensuring food production levels are maintained. Equally, we are well versed in the role of biosecurity in the control of infectious disease and as such, are ideally positioned to take measures to mitigate the risks associated with our visits. We also have a role to play in educating the farming population to ensure that they too are safeguarding their health, which is crucial to a functioning industry.

The intention is not to deliver a traditional day-to-day service to farms, and our profession has already taken steps to prioritise workload. To reduce the spread of COVID-19 we are attending only essential calls and remote prescribing where welfare of the animal requires it. This is having a huge, unprecedented impact on the financial aspects of the veterinary businesses and whilst we appreciate and welcome the measures introduced by the treasury to support businesses, allowing farm veterinary businesses to service clients may reduce this burden on the treasury. This will be to provide the following functions: Emergency treatment of cattle; Measures to ensure food production levels; Control of endemic, notifiable disease, namely bovine Tuberculosis, in line with APHA/Defra guidelines and the Official Veterinarian role of red meat welfare, hygiene and inspection in the abattoirs.

The profession is following guidance from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and at this time is only carrying out essential procedures alongside emergencies. Non-essential procedures have

ceased. Every effort is being made to ensure animal welfare is not compromised whilst also minimising risk to human health.

We urge you to place veterinary practices on the Critical Business list so that we can continue to provide emergency treatment to cattle, safeguard food production, control endemic notifiable disease in line with APHA/Defra guidelines (namely Bovine Tuberculosis) and continue our role as Official Veterinarians in the red meat sector.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our position and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,



Nikki Hopkins BVSc MRCVS BSc (Hons.)
BCVA President



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