



Welcome to Ruminant Health & Welfare

Welcome to the latest issue of the RH&W newsletter. With the change in the clocks and listening to the overwhelming number of messages from COP26, it has been a tough few weeks on-farm. The reality of climate change for too many communities was brought into sharp focus in Glasgow but so was the real challenge of climate change - ending our dependency on fossil fuels and ending the coal era.

The use of the picture of cattle with many news articles on the methane pledge makes difficult reading, however we must not shy away from this challenge and get on the front foot as an industry. Although a tough step in the climate change transition marathon, it is a feasible one and this was the message behind the media release RH&W sent out last week. I also had the pleasure of talking about this subject on last week's Farmers Weekly podcast.

Thank you for reading this update. Grass roots farmers and vets are at the heart of RH&W and what we do, so please do get in touch secretary@ruminanthw.org.uk with any feedback.

Nigel Miller
Chair
RH&W

UK livestock needs action on methane now to avoid 'soundbite' solutions

Dairy, beef and sheep sectors must deliver an effective farm-level response to the UK's pledge to slash 30% of methane emissions by 2030, or the 'soundbite' solution of reducing numbers and downsizing livestock production will take control.



Read the story [here](#) or listen to Nigel Miller on the [Farmers Weekly Podcast](#).

This was also featured in:

- [Farmers Weekly](#)
 - [The Scotsman](#)
 - [Farming UK](#)
 - [Farmers Guardian](#)
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RH&W activity update

During 2021, Ruminant Health & Welfare conducted a survey to determine which priority diseases our dairy, beef and sheep sectors really wanted to tackle. The survey was designed to capture the experience of those working on-farm, identifying health challenges and priorities that erode production and welfare.

The outcomes from the survey were used as the foundations of a workshop in mid-summer bringing together farmers, vets and others directly involved in ruminant production. The aim of the workshop was to map out disease management goals for the industry to grasp for the next decade to 2031, pushing back on disease challenges and resetting our sheep and cattle health status.

[The steering group](#) is now in the process of working through these disease goals in detail and determining what interventions will see real change and progress in each of these areas. In the first quarter of 2022, we will be publishing a matrix of priority diseases, the target goals

and the key milestones to reach them. In the meantime, please find the [Health & Welfare survey report](#), which has informed our priorities, and the [press release](#) from the summer workshop announcing some of the outline goals.

We have taken a similar approach to developing our welfare priorities and there will be more on this in a future newsletter. You can find more on the priority areas [here](#).



Response to castration and tail docking

We have submitted our views on castration and tail docking to the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC). In our response we recommended that time should be taken to review systems to identify if there are opportunities to reduce the use of tail docking and/or castration at a flock level or within targeted groups of lambs. However, we recognised that in many cases for both immediate risk management or market reasons these management practices would continue.

Read our full response [here](#).

Latest disease surveillance from APHA

For those not familiar with the Animal Health & Plant Agency's surveillance work, they produce quarterly ruminant disease surveillance and emerging threats reports.

- [Read the cattle report here.](#)
- [Read the sheep report here.](#)





RUMA Targets Task Force report released

The latest RUMA Targets Task Force 2 (TTF2) report has been released, revealing that despite an unprecedented year, UK livestock sectors are making good progress on antibiotic use targets.

Read the report [here](#).

Meet the steering group



Vanessa Swinson, BVSc MRCVS

Vanessa became the veterinary lead of the APHA Cattle Expert Group in January 2021, following a role as an APHA veterinary investigation officer, and many years in mixed practice. Her work primarily involves surveillance of UK cattle diseases and dissemination of surveillance information.

"The RH&W group, with our broad range of expertise, is well placed to assess current ruminant farming practices and disease information. We can use this information to prioritise the work that we do, in order to have a positive impact on UK ruminant health and welfare."



Aled Jones, NFU Cymru deputy president

Aled farms on the outskirts of Caernarfon keeping a herd of pedigree Holsteins and a small flock of pedigree Texels. He is presently the deputy president of NFU Cymru having previously chaired the NFU Cymru Dairy board for a number of years.

"I'm hugely ambitious for the role RH&W will play in both championing present animal health and welfare standards and making further advances by working collaboratively with industry. Harnessing on farm data with professional veterinary input should focus our attention on our strengths and weaknesses, channelling our efforts to drive down the economic and biological waste of sub-optimal health and welfare.

"We have a saying in Welsh, 'Nid da os gellir gwell' which means, 'it's not good if better is possible'; may that be our motto."

[See the rest of our steering group members here...](#)

Other news from the industry

General

- The new Red Tractor [standards](#) are now live.
- [Introducing the Animal Health and Welfare Review](#), with which we will be working closely over the coming months.
- Farmers and vets asked to work together to populate the [Medicine Hub](#).
- [New directors appointed](#) to the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England, including our vice chairman Gwyn Jones.

Sheep

- The [For Flock's Sake, Lets Stop Scab Together project](#) is gathering pace and welcomes farmers from the South West to participate.
- New [SCOPS quarantine resources are available](#) for sheep vets and advisers.

- The [Sheep Breeders Round Table \(SBRT\)](#) will take place from Monday 15 to Friday 19 November 2021.
- Tight deadline for [new scrapie status](#), says UFU.

Cattle

- APHA are running their annual bluetongue virus survey in the south of England until 31 December. These annual survey results help reassure us that GB remains free from bluetongue virus. [APHA has advice for how to spot and report it.](#)
- The [Online Dairy Research Conference](#) will share outcomes of research projects. 22 November to 26 November.



Read the full RH&W report

These results are some of the first which truly take into account those at the coalface of farming, who deal with these diseases and conditions on a daily basis.

This report will play an important role in setting strategic goals and activities for RH&W and the wider industry across the four nations over coming years. [Read the full report here.](#)

We are an independent, industry-based body tasked with helping farmers and stock managers tackle sheep and cattle disease, and build the health and welfare status, resilience and production efficiency of our national flock and herd.

Our Aims

- **Prevent, manage or eradicate** - those diseases with the greatest impact on health, welfare and productivity.
- **Identify opportunities** - for practical and effective farm-level interventions that support the four nations ambition of being among world leaders in animal welfare.
- **Address** - inherent challenges in current and future farming systems that could lead to health and welfare or reputational challenges.
- **Champion** - high health and welfare standards, and other priorities relating to domestic or overseas markets for the four nations.





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