

Grazing Forum Notes

17 April 2008

Easton College

Attendees:

Chair: Caroline Cranbrook – CLA/Farmer
John Reeves – RSPB
Alex Butler – NFU
Barry Brooks – Farmer
Jim Swanson – GAP
Alison Smythe – National Trust
Mike Mack – NRBAS
Paul Wilkinson – Wildlife Trust
Mike Render – Forestry Commission
Katherine Trehane – Grazing, Land & Food
Victoria Perry – Grazing, Land & Food
Richard MacMullen – FWAG
Mike Richardson – EBLEX

Apologies

Jane Birch
Martin Collison
Nick Saltmarsh

Previous Minutes

Thanks to Alison for hosting the last meeting.
The group discussed development of EEDA concept paper

1. Animal Disease – Caroline Cranbrook

Caroline update the Forum on the Defra event, Caroline's paper from this circulated, electronic copies to be sent out with minutes.

Concern that people don't realise the severity of Bluetongue,
Article from Caroline to be published in the EADT (Saturday 19 April)
highlighting the effects of Blue tongue and why it is essential that people
vaccinate against it.

Caroline – Farmers are not aware of the effect on cattle fertility, calves born
dead, aborted/born with no brains (carried in bull semen/ cows inherit it)
DEFRA hasn't published these longer term effects; need RSPCA to reveal
who are inexperienced farmers. Need 80% vaccination cover.

Vaccine plan – possible to deliver vaccine end of April to beginning of May,
must register with vet only farmers can, farmers must register with a vet to
receive the vaccine, there is a 2-3 week window of opportunity to register or
there is a risk if the opportunity is missed the vaccine will be sent to another
region. Cattle need 2 vaccinations at 3 week intervals, cattle turned out will
not be fully protected until both are given.

The Forum felt that DEFRA has not done enough to alert the industry.

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It was considered that Vets should be actively encouraging farmers to sign up, and although some were, there are still some that are not.

AP Mike Richardson to urge vets to contact their clients and get them to order the vaccine.

NFU Campaign Strategy – Alex Butler-Zagni

-Alex gave update on what the NFU were doing through the JAB campaign (Joint Campaign Against Bluetongue). It is aimed at everyone who has livestock and Alex will be attending NFU branch level meetings in region, spreading the word and getting all to register with their vets for the vaccine.

- Leaflets being distributed across region and sent to all livestock farmers.

'Don't Hesitate, Vaccinate' slogan being promoted through local radio.

NFU have a list of all vets, Caroline urged them to get vets to contact all their customers directly.

Barry – stressed that not all farmers are taking this seriously enough.

MM - The industry needs to look at the long term effects and a longer term strategy to manage the disease.

Alex reported that Intervet production is going very well.

Looking at opening up protection zone. Don't want vaccine to be held up in East Anglia when it could be used elsewhere. They will therefore:

1. Give to infected premises first
2. The rest of East Anglia – deadline for registering for vaccine is not being made public, people may miss the chance so must register.
3. Untaken vaccine distributed countrywide.

The RSPB Ouse and Nene washes – 3000 head/24 owners – no cattle allowed on Washes who aren't vaccinated – possible regional/national policy deciding soon. Had phoned local graziers – all had already ordered vaccine. To keep group informed.

The Forum discussed the concern consumers have about consuming vaccinated meat – again impact on the producers.

The Forum discussed how the vaccine will be administered. Short term – immediate training for staff. As the vaccination is voluntary farmers to administer vaccine themselves.

Alex – Beneficial for farmers to go together as a group to get a batch of prescribed vaccine.

Paul – WLT to vaccinate own stock

Mike Mack – Vet Med courses held at Easton College – mostly pig producers, could promote these more for cattle/sheep producers. Could promote through Young Farmers Group.

AP - MM to look at the potential of putting together a program of training– use GF members to advertise these

Mike Render – Discussed the potential of deer carrying the disease.

Alex – still ok as long as 80% of domestic animals are covered – continue deer culling.

Barry – Believes that most people will vaccinate and that we should use local meetings to ensure that people understand the consequences if they decide not to. Concern that there may not be enough vaccine for everyone.

Discussion on what individual Forum members were doing/ would do.

Action points from that were as follows:

AP - Alison to take lead and contact property managers and graziers.

AP - Richard MacMullen – FWAG have not given any guidance as yet, link to Waitrose producers, most FWAG members use graziers not own stock. Richard to put this on the agenda

AP - Mike Mack to use Open Farm Sunday to educate the public.

AP - Paul Wilkinson continue ongoing communication with WLT graziers

AP - Victoria & Katherine to get Agri-Environment advisors to encourage livestock owners to vaccinate, also to speak to livestock disease person in Natural England.

Mike Richardson – asking vets to speak at local meetings. Regular updates at livestock meetings. Most farmers he spoke to have placed order through vet, and felt that many vets are being effective.

AP - Mike Richardson to spread word in local meetings, to producer groups, talk to BMPA/AVP

AP - Jim Swanson continue to send regular updates to members.

AP - All to take the message forward at individual events

AP - Alex to email JAB fliers to everyone

AP - ALL to keep members up to date with what is happening in their organisations/ groups/farms and to email Victoria with their **actions by 9th May**

2. Database

Katherine introduced idea of linking a regional grazing website/exchange to the Sheepkeep grazing exchange database.

The idea was well received by all, and encourage Katherine to get this up and running as soon as possible.

AP – All to email Katherine with ideas to incorporate into the site, so we are ready to go as soon as we hear about funding.

RSPB may be able contribute to the grazing exchange. (currently waiting for decision on NE funding - see Katherine's paper for full details of project and potential funding options)

AP - Katherine to email project details to GF members

AP - Jon to investigate possible funding for the grazing exchange.

3. The EEDA Bid

Victoria and Mike updated the Forum on the progress so far. After submitting the initial concept paper to EEDA, Victoria received an email from Chris Knock following the EEDA panel meeting, this covered the decisions that EEDA had made on how they have decided to focus RDPE funds in regard to the beef, dairy and sheep sectors.

All members were disappointed at the response and lack of consultation with the industry when making these decisions.

Mike M – Presentation – Developing the EEDA Bid

Described the process of developing EEDA concept paper and the decisions we now need to make in light of the feedback from Chris Knock. Concern was voiced that EEDA had made these decisions without consultation.

The Forum felt that it was time that it worked more effectively as a group and that it would continue to look at securing funding and to convince EEDA that they should be talking to livestock organisations/ groups and farmers, especially the Forum as they make these decisions.

The Reply From Chris Knock was discussed.

It was clear that EEDA have changed their minds completely on how they want to deliver the RDPE funding in this area. They are no longer looking at individual projects, although activities from the concept paper will be included, however, it will now be put out to tender.

EEDA described the Forum as being environmentally bias – this is definitely not the case, and it is considered the Forum has a very balanced membership which addresses the economic, environmental and social aspects of the livestock industry.

Mike R – EBLEX could help work up and strengthen economic/food chain aspects.

The Forum felt that EEDA had moved the goal posts and seem to have lost interest in the sustainability agenda.

EEDA developing skills and knowledge transfer framework, and training will now be put out to tender.

EBLEX have submitted concept paper, Mike R still to talk to Chris on how this has been received.

It would appear that EEDA will give all training money to LANTRA and are looking at high level training. Concern from members as it would appear that they have not been talking to colleges etc.

Other aspects of the Forum concept paper will potentially be developed through regional RDA's - it may be put out to tender in the region.

Caroline Cranbrook – we are ahead with developing proposals for tender if needed.

Demo farm work also being tendered out.

Concern the our livestock industry in East has specific issues/problems, can not be addressed on a cross regional/national basis.

AP - Mike Richardson to contact Chris Knock – need to look at the possibility of bringing together Grazing Forum and EBLEX concepts.

AP - Mike Mack to send round presentation

AP - Caroline Cranbrook to approach meat producer/chairman of producer group to ask if they would join the Grazing Forum

AP - All to suggest any gaps in the Grazing Forum membership.

AP - Mike Richardson to talk to Anglian Quality Meats. Mike to forward contact details to Victoria.

Mike Mack – research is needed and we need to promote what research is currently being commissioned. (eg low methane beef systems)

EBLEX is working with BGS and IGER – research on grass.

Alison – IOTA project was funded to pull together for livestock/grazing research that was undertaken but was never published. Needs to be completed.

AP – All to send any information they have on research to Caroline.

It was decided that a meeting should be set up with EEDA to discuss the response further and to ensure we have the opportunity to influence EEDA and ensure that the money is targeted where it is needed.

AP - Victoria to organise meeting.

AP - Mike Mack to draft response letter.

Fallen Stock Project

Alex gave update - Using unspent emergency crisis money to fund 8 week feasibility study – explore gaps in infrastructure for disposal of fallen stock

Suggest solutions and costings – larger RDPE project.

AP - All - In the future keep other each informed about projects like this which their organisations are involved with.

4. RSPB – John Reeves

Trying to set up fenland beef producers group – not RSPB initiative.

Engaging all NGO's

10 farmers on board – 800 animals from Ouse washes

Engaging with meat producers, did trial slaughter of 2 beasts – good product

Now need to do consumer questionnaire for boxed beef scheme, but no funding for it. Jon looking for questionnaire to use and any assistance with branding and marketing the Beef. It was suggested he talk to Gavin Lane who sells saltmarsh beef from the Wash.

Action Point: Jim and Mike Mack to investigate questionnaire and send further information on branding/marketing.

Date of Next Meeting.

TBA.

