

Ahead of the Northern Ireland Assembly elections, the British Veterinary Association is calling on all parties to sign up to key pledges to enhance animal health and welfare, support the veterinary profession, and protect public health in Northern Ireland.

## Boost the veterinary workforce



### Support a new vet school for Northern Ireland

There should be engagement with the veterinary profession on plans for a new vet school in Northern Ireland. A new vet school presents opportunities to encourage young people from the local community to pursue a veterinary career as well as building on NI strengths in veterinary research into animal health and welfare and public health. Additional funding for each veterinary school place should be agreed to maintain the quality of veterinary education.



### Ensure sufficient government veterinary services

Government veterinary services have been stretched by additional demands of Brexit and pressures from the recent Avian Influenza epidemic. We're calling for an action plan for a resilient government veterinary workforce with the capacity to safeguard animal health, animal welfare, and biosecurity in Northern Ireland.

## Northern Ireland Protocol



### Collaborate to preserve veterinary medicines access

Since leaving the EU, vets in Northern Ireland have been concerned about the availability of veterinary medicines. We're asking the Northern Ireland Executive to work with the UK Government and EU Commission to resolve this issue and ensure continued access to these medicines which are vital for safeguarding animal health and welfare.



### Cooperate to simplify post-Brexit pet travel

Post Brexit, pet owners moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland are required to follow new pet travel rules. However, routine checks have been delayed including requirements for certification, rabies vaccination, and tapeworm treatment. The Northern Ireland Executive should work with the UK Government and EU Commission to ensure processes are as simple as possible and communicate these to the vets who will need to advise confused pet owners.

## Better health and welfare for more sustainable and productive farming



### Direct agriculture funding towards improving animal health and welfare

Public money to replace the Common Agricultural Policy should be used to incentivise and support good animal health and welfare outcomes, based on veterinary expertise. Improving animal health will support environmental goals as healthy livestock are more productive, need fewer resources, and produce less greenhouse gas emissions. Vets must be involved in shaping the new agricultural policy for Northern Ireland, to ensure that animal health and welfare, sustainability, and responsible antimicrobial use are front and centre.



### Commit to partnership working to control disease

Poor animal health leads to welfare problems, results in economic costs for agriculture, and can contribute to climate change as low productivity is not sustainable. Dealing effectively with endemic livestock diseases represents an opportunity to reduce emissions from the livestock sector. The success of Animal Health and Welfare Northern Ireland shows that endemic diseases such as Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) and Johne's Disease can only be eradicated through partnership working between farmers, vets, and government.



### Apply behavioural science to tackle bovine TB

Behavioural science must be core to the approach to tackling bovine TB. We're calling for enhanced data sharing between government vets and private vets. There should be a system of earned recognition where farmers are rewarded for good biosecurity practices, including safe sourcing.



### Protect the welfare of animals at slaughter

Slaughter without pre-stunning compromises the welfare of millions of animals. While there's currently no non-stun slaughter in Northern Ireland, we're calling for clear labelling of meat and meat products from animals that have not been stunned before slaughter, to improve consumer choice. We're also calling for mandatory CCTV in all abattoirs.

## Legislate for animal welfare



### Crack down on illegal puppy breeding and commercial movements

During the pandemic we saw a steep rise in demand for pets, driving up illegal breeding activity and commercial movements. DAERA must remain vigilant to illegal breeding and clamp down on unregulated fertility clinics with no veterinary oversight, which are offering procedures that should only be performed by qualified vets. We're also calling for strengthened legislation and enforcement to clamp down on the smuggling of puppies into Great Britain via Northern Ireland.



### Ban the import of dogs with cropped ears

A recent spike in cases of illegal ear cropping points to the need for urgent action to curb this worrying trend. It's an unnecessary, painful mutilation with no welfare benefit. While illegal to crop in the UK, it's not illegal to sell ear-cropped dogs, import them, or take dogs abroad to be cropped. We want to close these loopholes and put a stop to ear-cropped dogs for good.



### Regulate farriers

Farriers are important members of vet-led teams. However, there is no legal or regulatory requirement for farriers to be registered in Northern Ireland, unlike the rest of the UK and Ireland. Appropriate regulation is important to maintain professional standards and uphold animal health and welfare so we're calling for appropriate regulation of allied professionals, including farriers.

**Election  
2022**