

Minutes of the meeting 29th October 2002

Please note this was a shortened meeting due to the AGM.

1. Chair's welcome

The Chair opened the normal meeting after the close of the AGM and welcomed the speaker.

2. Speaker – Mr Colin Williams, Head of Animal Health Division, Agriculture & Rural Affairs Department, National Assembly for Wales.

The Department's work has so far been dominated by Animal Disease, rather than Animal Health and Welfare, due to issues like FMD. Today is an opportunity to explain a little more about the work of the department and its structures.

[Overheads]

ARAD itself does not contain any separate and independent veterinary advice. The professional advice the Assembly receives, comes from the GB veterinary service, including the Chief Vet. Tony Edwards. who are actually employees of DEFRA. This is a complex relationship, which is managed on a day to day basis in the Assembly.

There are five divisions in the Agriculture Group. The Policy Division deals with European agriculture and fisheries policy. The Food and Farming Development Division looks after the agriculture, food and development programmes of the Assembly e.g. Farming Connect. CAP Management Division is a field-based division which pays out the grants and support payments to farmers and the Rural Policy Division sits broadly within the Assembly and makes sure rural issues are reflected in all policies. These divisions are very different in size, rural policy has 7 members of staff whereas CAP management has in excess of 650 staff and a number of divisional offices. Animal Health has 19 or 20 members of staff, split between two branches. One is a TSE section, dealing with TSE issues, like BSE in farmed animals. It focuses exclusively on farmed animals. This section is also looking at the possible transfer of further powers to the Assembly from Westminster on Animal Health. The other section within animal health deals with issues like the Animal Health Strategy, International Trade, Bovine TB, FMD and illegal imports.

The Animal Health & Welfare Strategy has over 50 working groups within it, consisting of Assembly and DEFRA personnel. This Strategy is due to be published next spring.

3. There were a number of questions from associated members and a short discussion followed.

4. Dates of the next meetings. Due to the election in May, only two more meetings dates will be circulated, once the Officers agreed, for the Spring session.

5. Close of meeting.