

Witness Name: Andrew Slade

Statement No: 1

Exhibits: 65

Dated: 09 May 2023

## UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

---

### WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANDREW SLADE

---

I, Andrew Slade, will say as follows: -

#### **Preface**

1. The Covid-19 pandemic was unprecedented for all of us, with impacts on lives, livelihoods, and our very way of living. On behalf of my team and myself, I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to all those who were affected, and particularly to those who lost loved ones or have suffered lasting health impacts.
2. Decisions taken during the pandemic by public authorities in order to safeguard the population had direct and immediate implications for businesses, communities and individuals. As members of the Welsh Government and the civil service, we were motivated by the wish to protect and support the people of Wales, and I would like to put on record my thanks to colleagues and all our partners for their commitment and dedication during this extraordinary period. In the context of this specific statement, I wish to offer particular thanks to the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales and her team, along with their partners across Wales, the UK and further afield, who worked together to deliver essential advice and services during the pandemic - including dealing with an extensive concurrent outbreak of avian influenza in bird populations across Europe.

## **Introduction**

3. I joined the Welsh Government in 2012, initially working on EU programmes, and then as Director, Agriculture, Food and Marine. Having subsequently held the positions of Lead Director for Environment and Rural Affairs and Welsh Government's Head of Policy Profession, in January 2018 I became Director General, Economy Skills and Natural Resources. I led the Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group until April 2022, when I became Director General, Economy, Treasury and Constitution, also within Welsh Government.
4. Before coming to Wales, I worked for the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), where I led the establishment of the new national rural development services.
5. Between 2006 and 2011, I worked in South West England in roles including Deputy Regional Director at the Government Office responsible for sustainable development, and later as Executive Director of Programmes and Partnerships at the SW Regional Development Agency. My earlier career was with the UK government in London (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and then Defra) where I held a number of posts, including Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State.
6. I give this statement on behalf of the Welsh Government to assist the work of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry and in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 16 December 2022, reference M1/CCRAD/01.
7. My statement is intended to provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales ("CVO") and the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer ("OCVO") within what is now the Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group of Welsh Government. OCVO was previously part of the Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group. My statement will consider the CVO's functions and the relevant organisation, structures, governance, key documents and decision-making processes adopted to build resilience and minimise the risk of introduction and transmission of infectious diseases in animals of potential concern to human health (i.e. zoonoses).

8. In view of the limited available time, the content of this statement is not based on a full examination of the many thousands of documents that are relevant to the work of the Government, and, in particular all the CVO's work between 11 June 2009 and 21 January 2020. Furthermore, the material that I have exhibited to this statement is not intended to provide a complete picture - rather this material is produced to illustrate key aspects of administration and the provision of advice and information to decision-makers.
9. In preparing this statement I have relied heavily on advice and information from Dr Gavin Watkins, BVetMed, PhD, MRCVS, Interim CVO Wales from November 2022 to March 2023, together with comment from Professor Christianne Glossop, BVetMed, PhD, FRCVS, CVO Wales from 2005 until October 2022.

#### **Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group**

10. Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group (CCRA), led by Director General, Tracey Burke, was established in April 2022.
11. CCRA supports the Climate Change and Rural Affairs ministers in Welsh Government in policy areas including climate change, infrastructure, rural affairs and housing and regeneration. The scope of CCRA's work is broad.
12. CCRA comprises the OCVO, led by the CVO, and six other directorates:
  - 12.1. Finance and Operations,
  - 12.2. Housing and Regeneration,
  - 12.3. Climate Change, Energy and Planning,
  - 12.4. Transport and Digital Connectivity,
  - 12.5. Rural Affairs,
  - 12.6. Environmental Sustainability.
13. The OCVO is responsible for monitoring, planning, preparing and building resilience to minimise the risk of introduction and transmission of infectious animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases, in Wales.

## The Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales

14. Professor Christianne Glossop was Wales' first CVO. She held the office between June 2005 and October 2022. Having specialised in food animal population medicine and livestock production management (particularly reproduction technologies) for 20 years, Professor Glossop joined the State Veterinary Service during the Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic of 2001, becoming the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales in June 2005 following the devolution of animal health and welfare powers to Wales.
15. In March 2023, Dr Richard Irvine, MRCVS, became the new CVO. Deputy CVO, Dr Gavin Watkins, acted as the interim CVO Wales from November 2022 to March 2023.

### *Role of the CVO*

16. From June 2009 to January 2020, the CVO's role remained broadly the same and, in essence, entailed the provision of professional advice and senior support direct to the Welsh Government Minister with responsibility for animal health and welfare.  
**Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/001 – INQ-000180696** is a table setting out the Welsh Government Ministers between June 2009 and February 2023 with responsibility for animal health and welfare to whom the CVO provided advice.
17. The following is a summary of the kinds of functions which were undertaken by the CVO before January 2020:
  - 17.1. designing and delivering credible evidence-based animal health protection and disease eradication programmes focussed on the key principles of infectious disease control, taking full account of associated welfare implications, contributing to the protection of public health,
  - 17.2. leading the Welsh Government's response to outbreaks of exotic animal disease,
  - 17.3. providing expert veterinary advice on the basis for Welsh Government intervention on animal disease and on action necessary to mitigate animal disease and/or eradicate disease,

- 17.4. working with colleagues (currently Marine and Fisheries Division), and delivery partner CEFAS (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) leading the Welsh Government's response to incidents of fish disease,
  - 17.5. in the context of Wales, providing leadership and direction to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) under which APHA, in relation to its services in Wales, is funded by the Welsh Government to ensure the delivery of Welsh Government's animal health and welfare policies and provide support especially during emergency response and disease risk mitigation,
  - 17.6. working in partnership with other governments across the UK, ensuring policies are as consistent and coherent as possible, whilst respecting devolution of animal health and welfare powers, with a shared understanding and representation of the evidence on which those policies are based,
  - 17.7. acting as Head of Profession for Welsh Government veterinary surgeons, building capability and capacity, and
  - 17.8. collaborating with colleagues in other UK administrations; promoting interests specific to Wales in the context of UK and EU positions; ensuring governance structures post-EU departure across the UK are effective; and upholding animal health (SPS) and animal welfare standards through the UK Animal Health and Welfare Common Framework.
18. The CVO was a Deputy Director role reporting between June 2009 and early autumn 2012 to the then Director of Rural Affairs, Rory O'Sullivan. In autumn 2012, the CVO's role was re-graded and it became a Director-level role. Between autumn 2012 and summer 2015, the CVO reported directly initially to the Director General of Sustainable Futures (Clive Bates, then Gareth Jones) and then to the Director General of Natural Resources (again Gareth Jones). Between summer 2015 and December 2017, the CVO reported to James Price as Director General of the Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Department (ESNR), and then to me as Director General of ESNR between January 2018 and March 2022. Since April 2022, the CVO reports to Tracey Burke as Director General of CCRA.

19. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/002 – INQ-000180697** is an organogram showing the structure of ESNR on 1 November 2019.

**The Office of the CVO (OCVO)**

20. OCVO is a small specialist directorate of 50 staff within the broader CCRA Group which supports the CVO in carrying out their responsibilities. OCVO's prime objectives are to support the CVO to protect and promote high standards of health and welfare for all animals kept in Wales and contribute to the protection of public health.
21. OCVO is currently divided into five branches and a Veterinary Team (VETS) led by the Deputy CVO. The five branches are
- 21.1. Bovine TB (TB)
  - 21.2. Animal Welfare and Farmed Animal Welfare (AW)
  - 21.3. Finance and Strategy (F&S)
  - 21.4. EU Transition and Trade Policy (EUTT)
  - 21.5. Animal Disease Policy (ADP).
22. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/003 – INQ-000180698, AS01M01CCRAD01/004 – INQ-000180699, AS01M01CCRAD01/005 – INQ-000180701, AS01M01CCRAD01/006 – INQ-000180700, AS01M01CCRAD01/007 – INQ-000180704, AS01M01CCRAD01/008 – INQ-000180702, AS01M01CCRAD01/009 – INQ-000180703, AS01M01CCRAD01/010 – INQ-000180705, AS01M01CCRAD01/011 – INQ-000180706, AS01M01CCRAD01/012 – INQ-000180708, AS01M01CCRAD01/013 – INQ-000180709, AS01M01CCRAD01/014 – INQ-000180707, AS01M01CCRAD01/015 – INQ-000180710, AS01M01CCRAD01/016 – INQ-000180711 and AS01M01CCRAD01/017 – INQ-000180712** are a selection of Establishment Packs and organograms dated between August 2018 and January 2020 setting out the evolution in the structure of OCVO during this period to include the establishment of a branch to oversee OCVO's work in relation to the exit of the UK from the EU.
23. In January 2020, OCVO was structured as follows [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/017 – INQ-000180712**]. Reporting to the CVO were two lead officials. The first, the Deputy

Version 2

CVO, led a single team (VETS) comprised of professionally qualified vets who provided a wide range of technical information and advice to policy directorates both within OCVO and on occasion on broader environmental and farming policy. Of the 4 veterinarian posts in the team, one was vacant.

24. The second led six officials (an additional seventh post was vacant), each responsible for one of the following branches: Bovine TB, Animal Welfare & Framework, Animal Disease Policy, Brexit, Finance and Strategy and the Wild Animals in Circus' Bill Management Team. This second official headed up a broad portfolio range of policy and delivery responsibilities including the Welsh Government's response to any outbreak of animal disease. For example, ADP team was, and is, responsible for the development and implementation of effective animal disease controls. This activity includes controls related to import and exports, animal movements generally, animal gatherings, as well as work on contingency planning and the provision of an effective response to diseases required to be notified to the Welsh Ministers.

### **The Legal Framework**

*Welsh Ministers' powers to control and prevent the transmission of animal disease and related duties*

25. The Welsh Ministers' principal powers to take action to control the spread of animal diseases, together with related duties, are to be found:
- 25.1. in the Animal Health Act 1981 ('the 1981 Act'),
  - 25.2. in secondary legislation either made under that Act or
  - 25.3. in secondary legislation made, prior to the departure of the UK from the EU, under the European Communities Act 1972 to implement specific provisions of EU law relating to the control and eradication of different animal diseases.
26. The 1981 Act makes provision for the control and eradication of diseases in animals, including those specifically associated with farm animals. Particular provision is made in relation to the establishment of preventative measures and contingency plans; the separation and treatment of diseased animals; the import and export of animals; the movement of diseased animals and the control of infected areas, slaughter and compensation, and enforcement. Specific provision is made in connection with

individual diseases including rabies, Foot and Mouth Disease and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, and for the eradication of brucellosis. Provision is also made in connection with the spreading of disease by animals of non-dangerous species, including farm animals.

27. The 1981 Act also includes powers for the Welsh Ministers to make secondary legislation to introduce more detailed rules about animal health, for example: section 7 (cleansing and disinfection); section 8 (movement generally); section 10 (importation); section 17 (powers as to infected places and areas); sections 29 and 30 (control of zoonoses); sections 32 and 34 (slaughter); section 35 (seizure and disposal of carcasses); section 72 (offences made and declared by and under this Act); section 87 (meaning of 'animals' and 'poultry') and section 88 (meaning of 'disease'). For example, on 24 February 2021, by Order made under the 1981 Act (S.I. 2021/192 (W.43), the Welsh Ministers added to the list of designated zoonotic organisms 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).
28. In addition to the powers given to the Welsh Ministers under the 1981 Act, Welsh Ministers also have other powers of significance which they can act upon to minimise the risk of introducing into Wales infectious animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases. For example, under the Trade in Animals and Related Products (Wales) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/2379 (W.252) the Welsh Ministers can prohibit the importation into Wales of any animal or certain product described in the Regulations in the event of a disease outbreak outside of Great Britain. The Regulations are enforced by the Welsh Ministers, port health authorities, local authorities and the United Kingdom Border Agency in the circumstances set out in the Regulations.

*Compliance with animal disease controls through terms and conditions of funding*

29. Farmers in receipt of grants and payments from the Welsh Ministers have generally been required through the terms and conditions of funding to comply with biosecurity measures. By way of example, payments made under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) represented the most significant of the EU's rural grants and payments to support the farming industry. To make a valid BPS claim, farmers had to demonstrate they were keeping their land in 'good agricultural and environmental condition' (GAECs) and were complying with a number of specific legal requirements known as 'statutory management requirements' (SMRs). These SMRs and

GAECs were outlined in Cross Compliance Verifiable Standards. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/018 – INQ-000180713** is a copy of the Compliance Verifiable Standards for 2019, by way of example. If farmers in receipt of BPS were found to be in breach of any of the verifiable standards they could face a BPS penalty. For example, SMR 4 on Food and Feed Law.

### **Wider operational governance arrangements for controlling animal disease**

30. Having explained, in broad terms, the scope of the CVO and OCVO's role, where they sit within Welsh Government's governance structure and the Welsh Ministers' powers, I now turn to the international and UK wide structures within which they operate, their interactions and relationships with those who operate those structures and the work they undertake in relation to Wales.

*The international context - Organisation International des Epizooties (OIE) (World Organisation for Animal Health) and the European Union*

31. The OIE is an intergovernmental organisation and the global authority on animal health. Founded in 1924 as the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), in May 2003 it adopted the common name World Organisation for Animal Health. Its focus is to transparently disseminate information on animal diseases, improving animal health globally and thus build a safer, healthier and more sustainable world. The delegate member of the OIE for the UK is the CVO (UK) acting on behalf of the UK Government.
32. On behalf of its Member Countries, the OIE produces the Terrestrial Animal Health Code ("The Code") which is formally adopted at the annual general assembly of all Delegates of OIE Members. The OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code sets out to assure the sanitary safety of international trade in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds and bees) and their products. The Code details the health measures to be used by the veterinary authorities of importing and exporting countries to avoid the transfer of pathogens to animals or humans, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers. The Code sets out, amongst other things, the detailed requirements to claim Country freedom from particular animal diseases.

33. In the event of a disease outbreak or incident and depending on the disease, the UK risks losing its OIE international 'disease free' status. This may result in some countries being unwilling to accept animals or their products from the UK. The Code is now an integral part of the regulatory system established by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for trade in animals and their products and veterinary authorities are encouraged to base their import health measures on the OIE standards.
34. As the representative of the UK, the Chief Veterinary Office for the UK (CVO UK) has the responsibility of notifying the OIE of an outbreak of particular listed diseases in any part of the UK. The CVO UK will do this in consultation with the CVO of the relevant devolved government, who supplies data, and other information as required and who will sign off the approach to be taken by the CVO UK. In addition, the OIE may ask member countries to inform it of cases of new and emerging diseases. This was the case with SARS-CoV-2 infection in animals in 2020.
35. Prior to the departure of the UK from the EU, as the representative of the Member State government, the CVO UK was also the key official to make representations to the EU Commission on matters of policy or of serious operational concern and did so on behalf of the CVOs of the devolved governments. The EU legislation about animal health with which animal health laws in Wales had to comply was aligned with the OIE Code.

#### *The UK Biological Security Strategy*

36. The UK Government leads on the Biological Security Strategy for the UK. The 2018 Biological Security Strategy brought together, for the first time, all the UK Government's work on biological security including naturally occurring, accidental and deliberate biological threats. In Wales, we work closely across sectors on biosecurity issues under the One Health approach that includes public health, veterinary and environmental specialists. The biological security landscape has shifted significantly since 2018 and Covid-19 has demonstrated that the interconnected world is increasingly vulnerable to pathogens with catastrophic impacts. The UK government is currently reviewing the UK's biological security strategy.

#### *Controlling the transmission of animal diseases*

37. The CVO and OCVO, on behalf of Welsh Government, work with a number of partners, groups and agencies to control the transmission of animal diseases with the aim of

eradication. This work involves seeking out, and considering, expert advice and making appropriate provision to ensure that processes for dealing with new outbreaks are well-rehearsed and effective.

#### *The Animal Disease Policy Group*

38. The animal disease policy group (ADPG) is the key strategic policy forum for UK-wide animal health and welfare policy and sanitary and phytosanitary trade issues. ADPG membership includes the 4 CVOs from across the UK and other representatives from the four governments, the Cabinet Office, and public health bodies who provide advice on zoonotic disease. Its role is broadly described in “The United Kingdom contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases of animals” (first published in 2012 and updated since).
39. It is an important forum for discussion and, where possible official-level agreement on Great Britain or, where appropriate, UK policies and disease control strategies. Originally an exotic disease policy control forum which, outside of outbreaks, met each quarter, the ADPG now meets in a business-as-usual capacity more frequently, as is expedient. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/019 – INQ-000180714** is a copy of the draft Terms of Reference for ADPG (agreed February 2018 and enclosed at Annex 4 of the Animal Health and Welfare Common Framework Provisional Framework Outline Agreement and Concordat (February 2022)), which outlines the scope of its activities as well as the frequency and configurations of its meetings to include its interactions with other groups.
40. Amongst the ADPG’s roles are the oversight of the Outbreak Readiness Board to include consideration of any operational issues that impact on policy and governance and strategic direction of the Veterinary Risk Group.

#### *The Outbreak Readiness Board (ORB)*

41. The ORB has strategic oversight of policy and operational preparedness for outbreaks of exotic notifiable diseases of animals in the UK. Its remit extends to assessing the current position, reviewing progress in developing readiness and resilience for responding to outbreaks of exotic notifiable animal disease in APHA, Food and farming Group (FFG) and other parts of Defra, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and in other delivery bodies such as IAH Pirbright and Local Authorities. ORB also ensures that intelligence gathered internationally on emerging risks and consideration of that

information was informing emergency preparedness. It also sets the strategic direction and priorities for further work to improve capabilities.

42. The ORB's work encompasses information sharing, horizon scanning, and identifying areas of mutual concern where action is required. Its terms of reference record that it will *'strategically review legislation, policy, instructions and arrangements for all exotic animal diseases and plans for the delivery of all the necessary structures, resources, arrangements and teams that are put in place to manage an outbreak. It will identify gaps and potential areas of work, as well as work completed, set the strategic direction and agree new projects and work streams, with milestones and delivery dates to ensure the work is carried out efficiently and in a timely manner. The delivery of such projects, work streams and mitigating measures will be through existing programmes.'*
43. The ORB is chaired by APHA, who are also represented on the ORB as are the UK CVOs together with senior members of their policy teams. The ORB will also invite other attendees according to topics for discussion or exploration. In practice, amongst other things, the ORB will review and monitor lessons learnt from exercises and outbreaks across the UK and the action being taken to incorporate lessons learnt into ongoing contingency planning.

#### *The Veterinary Risk Group (VRG)*

44. The VRG reports to the four UK Chief Veterinary Officers (at the monthly Four Administrations CVO Liaison meeting) and is key to the management by the Welsh Government of risk. In addition, annual highlight reports are provided to the CVO, and examples are **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/020 – INQ-000180385, AS01M01CCRAD01/021 – INQ-000180390, AS01M01CCRAD01/022 – INQ-000180429, AS01M01CCRAD01/023 – INQ-000180505, AS01M01CCRAD01/024 – INQ-000180573, AS01M01CCRAD01/025 – INQ-000180565, AS01M01CCRAD01/026 – INQ-000180614, and AS01M01CCRAD01/027 – INQ-000180613.**
45. The VRG was established in response to the Anderson Review (Lessons Learned from FMD 2007) [Exhibit **AS01M01CCRAD01/028 – INQ-000180715**]. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/029 – INQ-000180515** is a copy of the draft Terms of Reference for the VRG for 2019 (October 2019 v0.3). The Terms of Reference note that the

Anderson Review concluded that *“the identification and escalation of animal related threats and vulnerabilities could be an inconsistent and lengthy process”*.

46. The VRG was established, therefore, to provide a coordinated process designed to ensure systematic and timely assessment of animal health and welfare related threats and vulnerabilities. The VRG aims to *“decrease the probability of animal related threats occurring, and to enable prompt intervention to mitigate their impact when they do”*. ‘

#### *Horizon-scanning and forecasting*

47. As well as the VRG, the CVO and OCVO Veterinary Advisers are permanent members of HAIRS, UKZADI, and the United Kingdom Surveillance Forum. All of these groups provide a forum for the coordination and oversight of multi-agency cross-government horizon scanning, risk assessment and surveillance activities in each of the governments in the UK.

#### *Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance Group (HAIRS)*

48. HAIRS was established in 2004. It is a multi-agency cross-government horizon scanning and risk assessment group now chaired by the UK Health Security Agency. Its membership includes DEFRA, APHA, the UK Government Department of Health, Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government, Health Protection Scotland and the Scottish Government, Public Health Agency of Northern Ireland and DAERA (NI) and the Foods Standards Agency. The group meets monthly.
49. It identifies and risk assesses emerging and potentially zoonotic infections which may pose a threat to UK public health as set out in its Terms of Reference [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/030 – INQ-000180695 (February 2019)**]. Members of the HAIRS group identify potential hazards (either zoonotic agents, syndromes or emerging infections) and compile all information on the identified hazard in order to enable to HAIRS members to determine further actions. If infections are considered to be of significance, they are included in the “Infectious Disease Surveillance and Monitoring for Animal and Human Health: Summary” monthly reports of notable events/incidents of public health significance which are published and circulated widely.

50. In general, HAIRS members are responsible for reporting significant risks, incidents or issues to their organisation, although a simultaneous, collaborate communication may on occasions be appropriate. HAIRS as a group is also responsible for writing up recommendations of any expert qualitative risk assessment process and that information will be communicated to, amongst others, the UK Zoonoses and Animal Diseases and Infections Group, specifically only when there are implications for action.

*UK Zoonoses and Animal Disease (UKZADI)*

51. UKZADI is an independent committee made up of experts from across the agricultural and public health departments and agencies who advise the Chief Medical Officers of the UK and Chief Veterinary Officers of the UK, Defra and the Welsh Government, amongst others. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/031 – INQ-000180716** are the Terms of Reference (March 2013).
52. The UKZADI committee provides a strategic overview to ensure overall co-ordination of public health action at the UK, national and local level with regard to existing and emerging zoonotic infections and trends in antimicrobial resistance.

*The United Kingdom Surveillance Forum*

53. The United Kingdom Surveillance Forum is the key forum for the coordination and oversight of surveillance activities in each of the governments in the UK in regard to animal health. Membership of UKSF consists of the four UK CVOs, their deputies and their key surveillance and trade policy leads. External speakers or experts may be invited to participate as observers in UKSF meetings and can include delivery bodies, stakeholders and representatives from other government departments and agencies.
54. The principal objective is to develop a UK strategic approach in setting priorities for animal health surveillance and horizon scanning for new and emerging threats in the UK and worldwide. For the purposes of the UK Surveillance Forum, the following definition of 'surveillance' is used, adapted from the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code Glossary:

*“the systematic, continuous or repeated, measurement, collection, collation, analysis, interpretation and timely dissemination of animal health and welfare related data from defined populations. These data are then used to describe health hazard occurrence*

*and to contribute to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of risk mitigation actions (Adapted from OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code Glossary)".*

#### *Other groups*

55. The Welsh Government is represented on the Disaster Emergency Response Committee comprised of members of APHA, representatives from each of the governments of the UK, the Pirbright Institute, SAC, CEFAS and the UKHSA, which examines scientific capacity and capability to respond to an outbreak.
56. There are also several core groups that consist of industry representatives and government officials from all UK governments of which OCVO officials are members, such as the livestock core group, the avian core group and the equine core group. These core groups are principally focused on animal diseases and welfare and seek to ensure the exchange of knowledge as well as the discussion of practical issues regarding surveillance, biosecurity and disease preparedness.
57. OCVO officials routinely draw on expert resources in order to ensure they are accurately and comprehensively horizon scanning and forecasting for diseases of potential concerns. For example, they are observers of the Science Advisory Council exotic and emerging animal disease subgroup (SAC-ED), a subgroup of the Defra Science Advisory Council that reports to it. In the event of a significant animal exotic disease outbreak, it will review evidence and analysis supporting disease control and recovery phase policies and their implementation to identify any issues or gaps and advise how they might be addressed. During the absence of an animal disease outbreak it will convene an annual meeting to advise and challenge on preparedness to deploy evidence and analysis in support of exotic disease control. As observers OCVO officials can listen to SAC-ED discussions, ask questions and benefit from knowledge sharing.
58. Officials also have regular contact with the International Disease Monitoring Team in APHA and utilise their reports to guide OCVO policies. This is also true in respect of the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP). ACDP is an expert committee of the Department of Health and Social Care that provides independent scientific advice and risk assessment to a number of organisations, including the Welsh Government.

#### *Welsh Government and APHA*

59. APHA is an executive agency of the UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and also works on behalf of Welsh Government and the Scottish Government to deliver animal health and welfare services in Wales and Scotland respectively.
60. Launched on 1 October 2014, it brought together the former Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) with parts of the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) responsible for plant and bee health to create a single agency responsible for animal, plant and bee health.
61. APHA is one of the world's leading research centres in the field of animal and veterinary public health. It provides the following services:-
- 61.1. high containment laboratory and animal facilities;
  - 61.2. scientific expertise in a range of microbiological and analytical disciplines;
  - 61.3. research and test development functions to diagnose known disease;
  - 61.4. develop tests and reagents to detect new diseases; and
  - 61.5. support outbreak control measures.
62. APHA's responsibilities comprise:
- 62.1. identifying and controlling endemic and exotic diseases and pests in animals, plants and bees, and surveillance of new and emerging pests and diseases
  - 62.2. scientific research in areas such as bacterial, viral, prion and parasitic diseases and vaccines, and food safety; and act as an international reference laboratory for many farm animal diseases
  - 62.3. facilitating international trade in animals, products of animal origin, and plants
  - 62.4. protecting endangered wildlife through licensing and registration
  - 62.5. managing a programme of apiary (bee) inspections, diagnostics, research and development, and training and advice
  - 62.6. regulating the safe disposal of animal by-products to reduce the risk of potentially dangerous substances entering the food chain,
63. APHA has its headquarters in Weybridge, Surrey, and has a number of field offices in Wales. The respective roles of the Welsh Government and APHA in Wales, working together, are set out in a series of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in relation to which Welsh Government pays APHA for the services provided. These services, in broad

terms, cover areas such as the provision, operation, delivery and assurance/monitoring of services detailed in the APHA Corporate and Business Plan, as they apply in Wales.

64. So, while the ADP team in OCVO has overall responsibility for policy, regulation and assurance related to animal and plant health controls in Wales it works in partnership with APHA whose remit includes surveillance of endemic and new and emerging diseases in animals and plants, detection and control of exotic diseases and pests in animals, plants, and bees; risk assessment of detected threats to animal and plant health and animal-related threats to public health and scientific underpinning of all relevant work related to animal health.
65. Indeed, APHA undertakes surveillance in the field on the Welsh Government's behalf, horizon scans for new, re-emerging, endemic, exotic animal and plant diseases and pests and is a pivotal part of the network of groups which inform the Welsh Government of potential new outbreaks and threat from animal diseases, including zoonoses. By 'horizon scanning', I mean that APHA regularly and comprehensively reviews a range of information sources to report to the UK Government and the devolved governments the global pattern of the most important, or key, animal diseases.
66. The APHA International Disease Monitoring Team monitored (and continues to monitor) reports of incidents of specified animal diseases worldwide and provide preliminary outbreak assessments or full qualitative risk assessments to assist decision-making by those responsible for biosecurity, surveillance, disease preparedness and enforcement. The Team provides monthly reports on international disease monitoring to the UK Government and the devolved governments.

*Information sharing by CVO and OCVO - Wales Zoonoses Group*

67. Within Wales, OCVO for the decade prior to the pandemic, was a member of the All-Wales Zoonoses Liaison Group. There was a core group of members, which included the Welsh Government (represented by members of OCVO) and APHA, amongst others. Additional members, such as infectious diseases physicians or Defra's Veterinary Science Team, would be invited according to the specific agenda and local arrangements and agreements. Therefore, the list of those invited to the meetings of this group could be very broad and could include representatives of the Welsh Government, the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (later APHA), Public Health

Wales, Local Health Boards, Local Authority Environmental Health Officers, academics, water companies, the Food Standards Agency, the farming unions. Its meetings were suspended during the pandemic although Welsh Government representatives continued to meet for regular fortnightly meetings with APHA and Public Health Wales.

68. The All-Wales Zoonoses Liaison Group met for the first time in September 2010. It had no statutory or executive authority in the control of zoonoses, as such action would be effected through the relevant members - for example the Public Health Wales leads for zoonoses or environmental health officers employed by local authorities. The Wales Zoonoses Group's Terms of Reference are **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/032 – INQ-000180508**.
69. Prior to this, there had been two liaison groups, one in South Wales, the other in North Wales, each meeting every six months. These arrangements were replaced by the All Wales Zoonoses Liaison Group.
70. As a minimum the agenda would cover any current outbreak control team activities, a roundup of outbreak or incident investigations completed since the previous meeting and the sharing of any reports on zoonoses or zoonotic issues in the region from medical, veterinary, and environmental health perspective. The All Wales Zoonoses Liaison Group had a number of purposes, but its principal one was to build and reinforce local relationships and arrangements to address incidents of zoonotic diseases, which would require multi-agency working for their control.
71. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/033 – INQ-000180717** is a copy of the '*Guidelines for the Investigation of Zoonotic Disease (non foodborne) in England and Wales*' (v2, July 2016) which describes the roles and responsibilities of a range of organisations and agencies that can become involved in an outbreak of zoonotic disease and also the role of liaison groups. In addition to a summary of the reporting requirements in relation to zoonotic infections, this document also provides information on data sources and routine zoonotic surveillance systems in humans and animals.

*Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group ("WAHWF Group")*

72. The WAHWF Group was established in June 2014.

73. The WAHWF Group's aim is to support the implementation of the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework (see paragraphs 82 to 90 below). It strengthens the link between the Welsh Government, livestock keepers, other animal owners and industry representatives, covering the whole spectrum of animal health and welfare issues.
74. Prior to the establishment of the WAHWF Group, the then Minister for Natural Resources and Food had received advice from the Wales Animal Health & Welfare Strategy Steering Group. The steering group, which met for the last time in January 2014, had been chaired, since May 2012, by Mr Peredur Hughes, who became the first chair of the WAHWF Group.
75. The WAHWF Group was initially made up of the chair, Peredur Hughes, five other members appointed by the then Minister for Natural Resources and Food (David Davies, Joanna Price, Moss Jones, Ifan Lloyd, Huw Davies), as well as the CVO. From the outset, it has met, broadly, on a quarterly basis. Peredur Hughes was reappointed chair in April 2015 until May 2018. Four out of five members of the committee sought reappointment and were reappointed in 2016 to serve a further term from June 2017 until May 2020. Two further members, Abi Reader and Paula Boyden, were appointed to the WAHWF Group to also serve from June 2017 until May 2020 and the position of chair was taken by Stephen James. After Joanna Price stood down in September 2018, two further members were appointed from April 2019 to March 2022, Les Eckford and Sarah Carr. Through service by existing members of a second term and appointment of new members, the WAHWF Group is currently comprised of Stephen James (chair), Sarah Carr, Les Eckford, Gary Yeomans, Catherine Nakielny, Sara Pedersen, Philip Jones and Iestyn-Tudur Jones together with the CVO.
76. The key functions of the WAHWF Group are to:
- 76.1. Raise and consider new issues which could potentially impact on achieving the strategic outcomes within the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework (see paragraphs 82 to 86 below);
  - 76.2. Consider delivery of outcomes and priorities, especially important in current (and future) climate of pressurised resources;
  - 76.3. Challenge new and emerging policy;
  - 76.4. Liaise with industry and help gather information to better inform decisions;

- 76.5. Ensure continuous reviews of progress, identify, deliver and where required facilitate improvements and projects;
  - 76.6. Facilitate and streamline communication of key messages and flow of information as part of a broader communications strategy;
  - 76.7. Establish and maintain links to industry organisations and representative groups, the wider agricultural and rural economy as well as to areas such as human health, education, tackling poverty etc; and
  - 76.8. Perform a representative role – members can act as spokespeople on animal health and welfare issues.
77. The Group, which has an advisory and facilitative role, does not have the autonomy to make decisions on how funding will be allocated, sign off Service Level Agreements with delivery bodies, approve contingency plans or approve submissions and advice to Ministers.
78. In addition to the functions outlined above, the WAHW Group plays a pivotal role in the development of the annual Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Implementation plans (see paragraphs 87 to 90 below). Each plan focuses on key priorities for raising standards for animal health and welfare and covers:
- 78.1. farmed livestock;
  - 78.2. companion animals;
  - 78.3. working animals; and
  - 78.4. kept animals involved in sport and aquaculture, where relevant.
79. The WAHWF Group provides expert advice as well as guidance which informs and shapes each implementation plan and it also then supports the delivery of each implementation plan's objectives throughout the year.

#### *Health Protection Advisory Group*

80. Chaired by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, since May 2018, this pan-Wales group has met, broadly quarterly, to advise on the integration and effective implementation of health protection policies, to maintain an overview of the work of health protection and to drive forward the health protection agenda in Wales. The membership of this group reflects the all-hazards approach recommended by the WHO and include

representatives of Welsh Government as well as Local Health Boards, Local Authorities, the Health and Safety Executive, the Food Standards Agency, Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales. **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/034 – INQ-000180635** is a copy of its Terms of Reference (dated February 2018).

81. The CVO is a member of this Group and it presents OCVO with the opportunity to contribute the information it has gained on potential threats to public health from zoonoses during its own activities and from the intelligence it gathers from the groups it attends.

### **Welsh Government Animal Health and Welfare Strategies and Plans**

#### *Animal Health and Welfare Framework*

82. The Welsh Government had made an action commitment within its Programme for Government to develop a Wales Animal Health & Welfare Framework. To meet this commitment, the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework 'Achieving high standards together' [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/035 – INQ-000180408**] was launched in July 2014 with a lifespan of 10 years. The Framework replaced, in Wales, the Great Britain Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.
83. In her introduction to the Framework, the Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries noted the Welsh Government's aspirations for the Framework and recognised the connection between animal health and welfare and public health.
84. The Framework, which remains in place, sets out the Welsh Government's ten-year overarching plan:
  - 84.1. to make improvements in standards of animal health and welfare for kept animals;
  - 84.2. to protect public health; and
  - 84.3. to contribute to the economy and the environment.
85. The framework sets five strategic outcomes:
  - 85.1. healthy productive animals;
  - 85.2. animals with a good quality of life;

- 85.3. people trust and have confidence in the way we produce food and protect public health;
  - 85.4. a thriving rural economy; and
  - 85.5. a high quality environment.
86. The Framework makes provision about the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the provides for the publication annually of an implementation plan. Key to the implementation of the Framework is the work of the WAHWF Group (see paragraphs 72 to 79 above).

*Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Implementation Plans*

87. The first Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Implementation Plan ('WAHWFI Plan') was published on 17 July 2015 and it set out the key areas for action in 2015/2016. The Mid-Year Review of the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Implementation Plan 2015/16 was published on 28 January 2016 and it set out the progress made in this first six months. The scope of the review was broad and covered the actions taken by the WAHWF Group to raise awareness of biosecurity and antimicrobial resistance; developing effective channels for engagement with the welfare sector; and tackling diseases which have an economic impact such as bovine viral diarrhoea and sheep scab. The mid-year review also looked at the initiatives taken forward by the Welsh Government including implementation of the TB Eradication Programme, the Six Day Standstill project and progressing legislation on dog welfare, scrapie and BSE, our contingency planning arrangements in the event of a major disease outbreak, amongst other things.
88. That initial WAHWFI plan and mid-year review have been followed by a further four plans (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2019-2020 and 2022-2024) and a mid-year review in relation to the 2016-2017 plan. **Exhibited as AS01M01CCRAD01/036 – INQ-000180718, AS01M01CCRAD01/037 – INQ-000180387, AS01M01CCRAD01/038 – INQ-000180409 (proof copy), AS01M01CCRAD01/039 – INQ-000180461, AS01M01CCRAD01/040 – INQ-000180466, AS01M01CCRAD01/041 – INQ-000180694, and AS01M01CCRAD01/042 – INQ-000180719** are copies of the WAHWFI plans and mid-year reviews referred to in paragraph 87 and this paragraph.

89. The commitments set out in the WAHWFI plan for 2017-2018 were extended to cover 2018-19 and developed a number of key priorities. These included taking forward the next phase of the Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Eradication Programme as well as continuing to meet our statutory obligations to safeguard the food chain and public health. Extending the scope of the 2017-2018 plan in this way provided Welsh Government with a longer timeframe to identify sector priorities as a result of Brexit.
90. The 2019-2020 Implementation Plan carried forward some of the aims and objectives of the previous plan, against the backdrop of the UK's exit from the EU. However, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on all sections of society and the pressures on Welsh Government in dealing with it resulted in the plan being extended to 2021. The final WAHWFI plan runs from 2022-2024, covering the remainder of the current WAHW framework's period.

*WAHWFI plans, biosecurity and public health protection*

91. Biosecurity has been a consistent feature of each WAHWFI plan. In July 2015, Welsh Government, working with the WAHWF Group published the WAHWFI Plan for 2015/16. A key priority within the plan was to raise awareness of biosecurity. To better gauge the level of understanding of biosecurity amongst farmers, a survey was launched at the Royal Welsh Show in July 2015. The purpose of this survey was to assess:
- 91.1. Farmers' (then) current knowledge and understanding of biosecurity;
  - 91.2. What biosecurity practices were used on farms; and
  - 91.3. the preferred ways for seeking out and receiving information on biosecurity.
92. The survey's conclusions were published in March 2016 [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/043 – INQ-000180442**]. Recognising that work remained to be done both to persuade farmers of the value of biosecurity measures and provide them with information to enable them to put in place appropriate safeguards, biosecurity has featured prominently in each subsequent WAHWFI plan and practical steps have been taken to give effect to the commitments in the plan. For example, new Biosecurity Guidance aimed at livestock keepers was issued (16 November 2018) [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/044 – INQ-000180720**] supplementing the 'Biosecurity at Animal Gatherings: guidance' (1 July 2010) [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/045 – INQ-000180721**], 'Biosecurity on your farm' leaflet (19 October 2010) [**Exhibit**

**AS01M01CCRAD01/046 – INQ-000180438]** and the 'Biosecurity and preventing disease in captive birds' guidance (21 December 2014, last updated 31 October 2022) **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/047 – INQ-000180722]**.

93. Notably, in the 2022-2024 WAHWFI plan, the headline aspirations for this period are the related concepts of 'One Health', 'One Welfare' and 'Biosecurity' (see **Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/042 – INQ-000180719**, pages 16-17). The concept of 'One Health' centres on acknowledging human health and animal health are interdependent and reliant on the health of the environment within which they exist. The concept of 'One Welfare' emphasises the interdependency between animal welfare, human welfare and environmental sustainability, and is an extension of the One Health principle. Significant emphasis is also placed on biosecurity in the 2022-2024 WAHWFI plan making plain the connection between biosecurity measures and public health protection.
94. The 2022-2024 WAHWFI also records the proposal to commission a new survey to reassess the level of understanding of biosecurity and to compare the results with the 2015 survey to identify areas for improvement, advise on an action plan and oversee its delivery.

*Animal Health and Welfare Strategies and contingency plans*

95. The overarching Framework and the WAHWFI plans provide the strategic direction for the work undertaken by the Welsh Government to raise animal health and welfare standards and improve biosecurity.
96. Delivery of the outcomes contained in successive WAHWFI plans is driven by the plans and strategies which have been adopted by the Welsh Government to promote biosecurity and eradicate disease, whether in compliance with section 14A of the 1981 Act (National Contingency Plan), or of its own accord. Some of these plans and strategies have been adopted jointly with the UK Government (action in relation to England) and the Scottish Government on a Great Britain-wide basis, and others are Wales-only plans.
97. The following disease control strategies cover a broad range of exotic diseases, including those of most concern historically, and have each been developed on a GB-wide, or Wales and England, basis:

- 97.1. Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/048 – INQ-000180723]**;
  - 97.2. Foot and Mouth Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/049 – INQ-000180724]**;
  - 97.3. Rabies Disease Control Strategy for England and Wales **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/050 – INQ-000180337]**;
  - 97.4. The Great Britain Bluetongue Virus Control Strategy **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/051 – INQ-000180725]**;
  - 97.5. Disease Control Strategy for African and Classical Swine Fever for Great Britain **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/052 – INQ-000180726]**;
  - 97.6. African Horse Sickness Control Strategy for Great Britain **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/053 – INQ-000180727]**;
  - 97.7. Lumpy Skin Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/054 – INQ-000180728]**;
  - 97.8. Equine Infectious Anaemia Disease Control Strategy **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/055 – INQ-000180729]**;
  - 97.9. Guidelines for the Investigation of Zoonotic Disease (non-foodborne) in England and Wales **[Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/033 – INQ-000180717]**'.
98. These control strategies were developed with contributions from the relevant governments, operational partners and stakeholders factoring in the expertise and experience of all parties, to work together to prevent and eradicate disease outbreaks as quickly as possible. They map out not only the objectives of each strategy but the detail of the operational steps that will be taken, and the processes that will be followed, when an outbreak of disease is suspected.
99. For diseases with no published control strategy, legislation is in place to enable Welsh Ministers to deal with an outbreak, should control measures be considered expedient. Operational practice in such instances will be based on the well-rehearsed Great Britain-wide or UK-wide inter-governmental joint-working arrangements set out below.
100. In addition to the strategies outlined above, the Welsh Government has also published, and reviews annually, the “Welsh Government Contingency Plan – Exotic Diseases of Animals”.

*Welsh Government Contingency Plan – Exotic Diseases of Animals (The Welsh Government Contingency Plan)*

101. The Welsh Government Contingency Plan [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/056 – INQ-000180730**] provides the framework for the management and administrative structures that would be put into place in Wales in the event of a major outbreak of an infectious, notifiable, exotic animal disease. This plan addresses the requirement placed on the Welsh Ministers by section 14A of the 1981 Act (National Contingency Plan) to prepare a document (the national contingency plan) indicating the arrangements they intend to put in place for the purpose of dealing with any occurrence of Foot and Mouth Disease, Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza. However, the Welsh Government Contingency Plan shapes the approach taken by Welsh Government to deal with both suspected and confirmed outbreaks of exotic animal diseases generally.
102. The Welsh Government Contingency Plan traces its origins to the Welsh Foot and Mouth Disease Contingency Plan, published jointly by the Secretary of State and the then Welsh Assembly Government in 2003.
103. A key recommendation of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease official inquiry was the need for effective contingency planning for an outbreak of disease. The Welsh Foot and Mouth Disease Contingency Plan was published in 2003. Since, the plan has evolved into the generic Welsh Government Contingency Plan. The Welsh Government Contingency Plan explains how Welsh Government, led by the CVO and OCVO, and working with a range of partners including APHA, keeps apprised of the international disease situation and covers arrangements for surveillance and for dealing with outbreaks and incidents of exotic disease of animals. These diseases include Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza and Newcastle Disease. It also sets out the systems, procedures and lines of communication for those involved in an animal disease outbreak.
104. The Welsh Government Contingency Plan complements and is consistent with the United Kingdom Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals. The UK contingency plan [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/057 – INQ-000180731**] outlines how the four Home Nation governments of the UK work together to deploy a rapid and effective response to a suspected, or confirmed, case of exotic notifiable animal diseases. The UK contingency plan describes the roles, responsibilities, structures and communications used to co-ordinate the disease outbreak response. The UK

contingency plan 2021 has been produced by APHA on behalf of each government in the UK.

105. Both Plans also identify the structures that would be put in place to deal with an outbreak. These documents set out the structures for dealing with a disease outbreak at the National Disease Control Centre (NDCC), Local Disease Control Centres (LDCC), and Forward Operating Bases, and the daily “battle rhythm” for meetings of decision-making bodies and scientific expertise, including meetings of industry representatives.
106. The Welsh Government Contingency Plan is designed to be flexible and can be used to deal with an outbreak of any exotic notifiable animal disease in Wales (see paragraph 138 below for activation of the plan by the CVO and OCVO to deal with avian influenza). It is revised annually and is regularly tested in exercises. The revised Plan takes account of the lessons learned from recent disease outbreaks, government inquiries, policy developments and exercises (see paragraphs 133 to 141 below). For example, the Welsh Government Contingency Plan informed the Welsh Government's response to the incursion of highly pathogenic avian influenza into Wales and the UK in the winters of 2016/2017 (H5N8 strain, 13 infected premises in the UK) and 2020/2021 (multiple strains, 26 infected premises in the UK). As these outbreaks were relatively small and discrete, they did not trigger the full mobilisation of resource that the Welsh Government Contingency Plan enables. In dealing with outbreaks, the protection of public health was a priority.
107. Taken together, the UK contingency plan, the Welsh Government Contingency Plan (and its counterparts elsewhere in the UK) together with the disease control strategies adopted by governments across the UK, including Welsh Government, fulfil the UK's obligations to the OIE (Office International des Epizooties (the World Organisation for Animal Health)).

*Purpose and scope of the Welsh Government Contingency Plan*

108. The Wales Contingency plan [**Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/056 – INQ-000180730**] enables stakeholders to understand the Welsh Government response to a notifiable exotic disease outbreak and for operational partners to understand where their work fits in to the bigger picture. It is arranged in chronological order from preparedness to recovery. It should be noted that further, detailed operational instructions are maintained by each work area and are not included in the plan.

109. Border controls to monitor the disease status, and control the entry of, animals (both legal and illegal imports); surveillance in the UK and elsewhere in the world; farm health planning; biosecurity; livestock movement controls and keeper vigilance do much to decrease the risk of exotic diseases occurring and spreading in Wales.

110. Welsh Government's stated aim in the Welsh Government Contingency Plan is that, when disease does strike, working with operational partners, it will act swiftly and decisively to:

- 110.1. Eradicate the disease and regain disease free status;
- 110.2. Protect public health and safety;
- 110.3. Safeguard the health and safety of those directly involved in controlling the outbreak; and
- 110.4. Minimise the burden on the taxpayer and public as well as the economic impact of the outbreak on industry.

111. In addition, Welsh Government will endeavour to:

- 111.1. Keep to a minimum the number of animals that have to be humanely destroyed either for disease control purposes or to safeguard animal welfare; and
- 111.2. Minimise adverse impacts on animal welfare, the rural and wider economy, the public, rural communities and the environment.

### **Contingency Planning and Preparedness**

#### *Preparing to control and eradicate an outbreak of animal disease*

112. A significant proportion of the planning for animal disease outbreaks in Wales rests with the Chief Veterinary Officers of the UK working with the agencies, partners and stakeholders referred to already in this statement. This means that, in the majority of cases where there is a suspicion of disease, or indeed it is confirmed, the processes and procedures prescribed by legislation and underpinned by the contingency plans and operation manuals (see paragraphs 95 to 111), will be activated by the Chief Veterinary Officers across the UK and the lead will be taken by the CVO of the nation in which the incident has occurred.

113. The principal mechanism for multi-agency co-operation under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) is through Local Resilience Forums ("LRFs"). The National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies provides further details of the exotic notifiable animal disease outbreak risks which LRFs need to review and assess the local impacts. The risks assessed as being significant are included within each LRF's Community Risk Register. LRFs have a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Community Planning) Regulations 2005 to produce a Community Risk Register which highlights risks that have the highest likelihood and potential to have significant impact on local communities resulting in wide scale disruption.
114. Supporting the work of LRFs in Wales is the wider Wales Resilience Forum (WRF), which is chaired by the First Minister for Wales. The CVO is a permanent member of the WRF and leads on any animal health issues.
115. The CVO, supported by OCVO, has led the emergency response to outbreaks of exotic animal diseases many times. Generally, where the Emergency Coordination Centre (Wales) (ECC(W)) is stood up to deal with a civil emergency in Wales, it acts as a co-ordination centre for emergencies. However, during animal disease outbreaks it works more as a command centre. With the CVO playing a central leadership role alongside the Operations Director Wales, it becomes responsible for determining policy and co-ordinating advice on disease control affecting Wales, and for the management of the wider consequences of an outbreak. It may also host liaison officers from operational partners and stakeholders as required. Instead of Strategic Co-ordinating Groups being set up to co-ordinate the response locally there is a Central Disease Control Centre and Forward Operating Bases out in the field (see the Welsh Government Contingency Plan [Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/056 – INQ-000180730]).
116. Chief amongst the CVOs' operational partners in an outbreak is APHA who have a comprehensive set of operational instructions for use by staff involved in the response to an outbreak of exotic notifiable animal disease. They provide direction and guidance on the many tasks involved in the outbreak response, ensuring a consistent approach. Operational instructions are regularly reviewed and updated. They reflect current best practice for dealing with a disease investigation and outbreak response.

117. Veterinary staff from APHA, Defra, and the Welsh Government provide the initial emergency response capability. However, as part of the Veterinary Delivery Partnership contract, 100 experienced Official Veterinarians (OVs) are available to support any outbreak response. In the event of an outbreak, these OVs would be called upon immediately to undertake roles that would otherwise be undertaken by permanent APHA veterinary staff.
118. Non-government veterinary personnel may also be engaged on temporary contracts to work as APHA veterinary inspectors. This may include private veterinary practitioners and retired government veterinarians.
119. Overseas government veterinary and technical staff may need to be engaged. The International Animal Health Emergency Reserve agreement, re-signed in 2016, with the Republic of Ireland, United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand provides for the engagement of overseas veterinary and technical staff in the event of an outbreak of disease. Assistance is arranged by the CVO UK.
120. During an outbreak, the actions of the National Emergency Epidemiology Group (NEEG) are vitally important to ensure livestock, wildlife, and pets are protected from any escalating disease situations. Welsh Government Veterinary Advisers are part of that group as observers.
121. NEEG's work is necessary to manage the disease by limiting its spread through biosecurity actions and minimising the impacts on associated industries and the economy. One of the strengths of the NEEG is that it can also be mobilised before disease is confirmed if there is a strong suspicion of a notifiable disease. This significantly increases the speed of the disease investigation, especially the gathering of potential source and spread tracings, which are key to disease control.
122. The group's purpose is to provide the UK CVOs and both Defra and devolved governments' policy teams with expert epidemiological opinion relevant to government policies designed to protect the UK from disease threats.
123. During an outbreak, the NEEG leads epidemiological investigations on farms and smallholdings to establish the facts about the outbreak and analyse how the disease may have spread. The NEEG also delivers mathematical modelling to understand how an outbreak might develop and look at ways of controlling it. Disease surveillance and

tracing plans are prepared to investigate the possible source and spread of the disease which feed into the development of control strategies to prevent further spread.

124. The NEEG also leads on, and provides information and expertise that contributes to:

- 124.1. National veterinary risk assessments;
- 124.2. Final outbreak epidemiology reports (for example, high pathogenicity avian influenza H5N8 and H5N1 outbreaks in Great Britain);
- 124.3. Guidance for industry and the public; and
- 124.4. Feedback to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

#### *Contingency planning exercises*

125. APHA has a programme of coordinated animal disease exercises in order to refine plans and demonstrate their emergency preparedness to deal effectively with an exotic notifiable animal disease outbreak. Each field team takes part in at least one full-scale exercise per year (unless there has been an outbreak), which will include operational partners and stakeholders. The programme identifies the disease(s) to be exercised to ensure all capability can be assessed. The actual locations of exercises within Wales remain a decision for the APHA Head of Field Delivery in consultation with the Welsh Government, local operational partners and stakeholders.

126. Exercises are assessed and evaluation reports are produced, which are used to highlight and promote best practice, lessons identified and to review and update contingency plans as appropriate. APHA is also involved in supporting wider exercising of animal disease response plans with partner agencies at the LRF and on an individual organisation basis.

127. When the UK was subject to EU law, Council Directive 2003/85, required Member States to exercise their Foot and Mouth Disease contingency plans twice within a five-year period, there was a derogation allowing one of these real-time exercises to be for another “major epidemic disease affecting terrestrial animals”.

128. For example, Exercise Blackthorn (2018) covered Foot and Mouth Disease, it was the UK’s last live play exercise and involved the Welsh Government, Defra, the Scottish Government, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for Northern Ireland, APHA, operational partners and stakeholder organisations. **Exhibited at**

**AS01M01CCRAD01/058 – INQ-000180492** is a copy of the evaluation report on the exercise.

129. In addition, UK-wide table-top exercises (either stand alone or alongside live play exercises) rehearse the UK's plans, including those of the devolved governments and their partners. By table-top exercise, I mean a discussion-based exercise where relevant officials assemble (in person or virtually) to discuss and test their respective roles during an emergency in response to a particular emergency situation.
130. Particularly in relation to live exercises, but true also of table-top exercises, weeks and months of preparatory work by the CVO, officials in OCVO and partner agencies will go into any exercise held, with this work being an important feature of pre-preparedness for any outbreak of disease.
131. The following are examples of the kinds of exercises in which the CVO, OCVO or Welsh Government participated during the period from June 2009 to January 2020:
- 131.1. Exercise Silver Birch – held on 9 and 10 November 2010 to test the contingency plans for Foot and Mouth Disease; with Ministerial level participation, a real-time live exercise was held, preceded by two table-top exercises on 10 June and 5 October 2010 which fed into the live exercise **[Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/059 – INQ-000180345** is a copy of the lessons identified report '12 month update' dated (November 2011)];
- 131.2. Exercise Walnut – held on 12-13 June 2013, was a live play exercise for Classical Swine Fever, which comprised three table-top exercises, an on-farm exercise and a number of expert and strategic policy group meetings feeding into Exercise Walnut **[Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/060– INQ-000180393** is a draft Project Initiation Document dated 20 August 2012 (version 0.2) and **Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/061– INQ-000180732** is a copy of the Exercise Walnut 2013, Classical Swine Fever UK Exercise 'Evaluation and Lessons Identified Report' dated February 2014];
- 131.3. Exercise Tulpar – held on 9 July 2015, a table-top exercise for an incursion of African Horse Sickness in Great Britain **[Exhibited at AS01M01CCRAD01/062 – INQ-000180733** is a copy of the briefing for attendees circulated in anticipation of the exercise];

131.4. Exercise Rowan – planned for 4 and 5 November 2015 to test contingency plans for Foot and Mouth Disease was cancelled as most of the objectives of the Great Britain-wide Exercise were met by the Avian Influenza outbreaks in Yorkshire (Highly Pathogenic) in November/December 2014 and in Hampshire (Low Pathogenic) in February 2015.

132. The Welsh Government continues to play a full part in the Wales and England, Great Britain and UK exercise programme to ensure that it always has a high level of preparedness.

#### *Lessons Learnt – exercises and outbreaks*

133. Testing and refining of contingency plans and procedures is a regular and important feature of the CVO and OCVO's work and also that of the network of groups and agencies with which the Welsh Government works in partnership across the UK to contain and eradicate animal disease.

134. The CVO and OCVO have had to mobilise to deal with reports and incidents of new and emerging (both zoonotic and non-zoonotic) diseases.

135. For example, work has been undertaken to deal with incidents of anthrax (2006), contagious agalactia (2014), classical BSE (2015), including currently, collaborating with other UK governments to minimise the risk of transmission of infectious diseases in animals of potential concern to human health (ie zoonoses).

136. An example of OCVO's management of a new viral disease detected in Wales and elsewhere in Great Britain was the incursion of Schmallenberg virus in 2011, which re-emerged in 2016. Like the coronavirus that caused Covid-19, the Schmallenberg virus was genuinely new (rather than the emergence of a virus in Wales that was known to occur elsewhere). It was detected promptly by APHA's animal disease surveillance system. The new disease was risk-assessed thoroughly by the VRG and its implications for human health (which were then unknown) assessed by the HAIRS group. The detection of Schmallenberg virus put to the test the systems used by Welsh Government to manage the risks around a completely new virus, which is a relatively rare event. More common are changes in the genotype and phenotype of known viruses and pathogens.

137. The surveillance activities and findings of the APHA are reported to Welsh Government in a number of reports and analysed largely by the OCVO veterinary team. A key report is the six-monthly *Measures and Indicators of Scanning Surveillance Performance in England & Wales*. This report includes the threats detected, analysed by type, and example of which is below:

Table 1: Animal-related threats summary from APHA Scanning Surveillance and Species Expert Group activities Jan - Jun 2018

APHA SIU POTENTIAL NEW & RE-EMERGING THREATS SUMMARY: JANUARY - JUNE 2018 (Cattle, Sheep & Goats, Pigs, Avian, Wildlife & MEFS) <sup>1</sup> SS = scanning surveillance <sup>2</sup> NRT = new & re-emerging threat						
Type of Potential <sup>2</sup> NRT	Number of Potential <sup>2</sup> NRTs detected and described	Potential <sup>2</sup> NRTs present in GB	Potential <sup>2</sup> NRTs detected from <sup>1</sup> SS data analysis or non PME submissions	Potential <sup>2</sup> NRTs detected from <sup>1</sup> SS PME submissions	Potential <sup>2</sup> NRTs detected by horizon scanning, other data source or surveillance partner	Number raised to Veterinary Risk Group (VRG)
Notifiable disease-related	14	2	0	3	11	3
New disease or pathogen	16	9	0	3	13	8
New pathogen variant	2	2	0	2	0	1
New, rare or emerging AMR	1	1	0	0	1	1
Public health-related	4	1	0	1	3	2
Changes in endemic disease trends	21	19	7	9	5	2
Unusual diagnoses or presentations	16	14	1	11	4	0
Other	5	3	0	2	3	2
<b>TOTALS (Jan – Jun 2018)</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>19</b>

NRT = new or re-emerging threat

SS = scanning surveillance

PME = post mortem examination

AMR = antimicrobial resistance

138. Since January 2017, Welsh Government has been called upon on a number of occasions to activate the Welsh Government Contingency Plan to deal with a number of outbreaks of avian influenza, which is a viral disease of birds that has the potential to mutate to infect people, and so is a potential (rather than an actual) zoonosis. From November 2020 into Spring 2021 there were outbreaks of both high and low pathogenicity avian influenza with one infected premises in Wales. From October 2021 to the present day, there has been a major and unprecedented incursion of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza into the UK, including Wales, which is part of a global pandemic. A lessons learnt report was published in relation to the outbreak in January

2017 [Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/063 – INQ-000180735] and a formal lessons learnt report stage is underway in relation to the outbreak in November 2020 into 2021.

139. At the conclusion of each formal exercise undertaken by CVO and OCVO working with counterparts throughout the UK and with partners, a report is produced with lessons learnt recorded. For example, in relation to Exercise Blackthorn, a project board was established to oversee the lessons learnt (the Exercise Blackthorn Lessons Identified Project Board). A formal closure procedure was adopted to consider the actions taken in relation to each lesson before it could be recorded as 'closed' with the project board reviewing the progress made against lessons learnt globally from the exercise.
140. To ensure a culture of continuous improvement, the ORB, on which the Welsh Government is represented, also reviews the lessons learnt from both outbreaks and exercises as well as the work being undertaken to implement those lessons.
141. Over and above the work undertaken in connection with individual exercises or outbreaks, to evaluate and monitor progress in general against lessons learnt over a period of nearly fifteen years, Defra, conducted a review of historical lessons learnt across a number of animal health disease outbreaks and exercises, recording the lessons learnt and the action taken or outstanding action in relation to each lesson [Exhibit AS01M01CCRAD01/064 – INQ-000180734]. This review was fed into the Exercise Blackthorn Board with devolved governments invited to provide their comments in September 2019.
142. Contingency planning and preparedness is therefore woven into the fabric of the CVO and OCVO's responsibilities and activities and that of the groups to which it belongs across the UK as well as with its partner agencies.

### **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a

false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

**Personal Data**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_ 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 \_\_\_\_\_