

National Assembly for Wales All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW)**7th March 2006****In Attendance:**

- Chair, Lorraine Barrett AM (Lab, Cardiff South and Penarth)
- Claire Lawson, RSPCA Cymru Wales
- Chistine Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales
- Roy Peckham, Pit Pony Sanctuary
- Kathryn Jenkins, Environment Planning and Countryside Committee Clerk
- Angharad Penny-Evans, Welsh Assembly Government
- Steve Clark, Gwent Badger Group
- Huw Thomas, National Farmers Union Cymru
- Ifan Lloyd, British Veterinary Association
- Phillip Jones, International League for the Protection of Horses
- Sarah Marsh, Greyhound Rescue Wales
- Leslie Thomas, Greyhound Rescue Wales
- Michie Davenport, Badger Watch and Rescue, Dyfed
- Michael Sharratt, Badger Watch and Rescue, Dyfed
- Paul Pavia, Welsh Conservative Research Group
- Bob Menton, South Wales Police Force
- Mark Alexander, TB Project Manager, Wales Assembly Government
- Secretariat: Lucy Merredy and Rahel Jones , Morgan Allen Moore Cymru

Item 1: Chair's Welcome and Introduction

Claire Lawson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the speakers, Chistine Glossop and Mark Alexander.

Item 2: Topic for Discussion – Bovine TB

Chistine Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales made the following points during her presentation;

- Opened by stating that there is great difficulty in defining and determining the difference between animal health and animal welfare. She added that it is her responsibility to ensure that policy relating to animal health and welfare is 'fit for purpose' in Wales.
- Expressed her strong belief that if an animal is suffering from a disease their welfare is then compromised.
- Stated that she had attended an international conference the previous day at the Royal College of Veterinary Science on animal health and had spoken on matters relating to animal welfare codes. She noted that in contrast to the situation in Wales, many of the representatives at the conference were from countries which were facing human crises and the concept of the welfare of animals was foreign to them since they were facing issues such as human starvation. She added that in these terms, animal welfare was a 'luxury which only some countries enjoyed'.
- Before moving on to the issue of Bovine TB, Ms Glossop highlighted that the Animal Welfare Bill was going to have a huge impact in Wales. It is likely to create a lot of new work in relatively unfamiliar areas such as the welfare of circus animals, for example. In light of this, the Assembly Government will be looking to stakeholders such as APGAW members for their expertise and guidance.
- In terms of developments in her field of work she offered the example of sheep scab, which she described as a very contagious parasite that is rife in sheep in Wales. She explained that the use of cypermethin in sheep dip is very effective in treating the infection but due to environmental concerns, is now not available for use. She emphasised that as well as balancing animal health and welfare issues, demands to protect the environment also have to be considered.
- Focussing on the issue of Bovine TB, Ms Glossop explained to the group that she had seen calves as young as four weeks old suffering from clinical TB. Witnessing this had made it clear to her that animals suffering from Bovine TB were also suffering from other welfare issues. Inevitably, difficult decisions will have to be made, to tackle the disease. She added that incidences of clinical TB in cattle are very rare.
- In dealing with Bovine TB issues, economic concerns also have to be considered, whilst remembering that it is also a zoonosis concern as the disease can be transferred to humans.

Nevertheless, this was confirmed as a rare occurrence due to the controls already in place at abattoirs, and at other facilities which deal with cattle.

- A map was shown to APGAW members highlighting the levels of Bovine TB infection across Great Britain. Christiane Glossop explained that the disease situation was not mirrored in all parts of Great Britain and therefore there was a need for a regional approach as well as a GB strategy. She compared the spread of the disease with foot and mouth and emphasised the need to stop the disease from spreading any further. Ms Glossop also pointed out that the situation in North Wales was very different from that in South Wales and that they needed to examine what were the different factors affecting “clean” and “dirty” areas that may be responsible for spreading the disease.
- The presentation moved ahead to highlight the approach taken in Scotland to prevent the entry and spread of Bovine TB through the introduction of pre and post movement testing. Wales is in the process of adopting this approach with the aim of avoiding the spread of the disease to North Wales. She also suggested that preventing the movement of cattle into areas free of the disease was another approach, but in terms of maintaining trade the Scottish approach may be better.
- Ms Glossop described the GB Bovine TB strategy, which includes short term measures, pre-movement testing of cattle and a cattle compensation system, but also emphasised that these measures would not solve the problem in areas already affected as it was essentially a preventative strategy.
- Mark Alexander, TB Project Manager continued the presentation by explaining what his role involved. He started by telling the group that his work stemmed essentially from the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee’s Inquiry into Bovine TB. He explained that one of outcomes of this group has been the creation of a Wales TB Action Group which provides regular updates on new scientific evidence, represents a range of views, and is adopting an holistic approach. The Action Group has also worked closely with the Environment Minister, Carwyn Jones AM, and influenced the statement which the Minister made on Bovine TB on 15th December.
- He also confirmed that a structure had been established to monitor badger populations. The Welsh Assembly Government had commissioned the Central Science Laboratory to undertake a regional population study of badgers in Wales. He noted that the survey was based on land use specification and was due to be completed in June 2006. He also confirmed that a ‘Badger Found Dead Survey’ is also taking place which has not been undertaken since 1998. It aims to identify the presence of the disease but not the disease levels in different areas. He confirmed that information was coming in quickly from local authorities and that feedback had been positive – 131 carcasses had been collected by the end of February 2006. He stated that the data from the autopsies will be analysed and published as part of the evaluation report at the end of the study.
- In terms of communication, Mark Alexander emphasised that developing effective communications was a vital part of the Bovine TB project being undertaken to bring the disease under control and that several methods of communication had been adopted – from leaflets, to Ministerial announcements and publications from the Assembly’s Countryside department.
- Mr Alexander also outlined the next steps of the project, which will involve a GB and Wales holistic approach. He urged the group that it is key that they work together and were consistent in their approach.
- Michael Sharratt explained that badger groups in Wales were “riled” that they had been excluded from the consultative panel for Bovine TB they therefore had not been a part of the planning process and were generally viewed as ‘extremists’. He also said that badger groups were unimpressed by the focus on badgers in the Assembly Government’s work. He praised Mark Alexander for developing good relations with badger groups but maintained that they felt excluded. He then drew attention to the work of Professor Bourne who has said that cattle movement is the key factor in the spread of Bovine TB and that badger movement played a very small part, if any, in the spread of the disease. In light of this, he asked Ms Glossop to explain what they were planning to do to enforce cattle movement regulations in Wales.
- Steve Clark added his support to the comments made by Mr Sharratt in terms of exclusion from the consultative panel and reassured the Veterinary Officer for Wales that they were keen aid the work of the Assembly Government. He added that he and other interested groups were also keen to know the levels of TB in badgers.
- Sarah Marsh asked Ms Glossop to explain the definition of table based compensation.
- Christiane Glossop apologised that the consultative panel had been set up before her time in the position and therefore she had not been a part of the process of deciding who should sit on it. She explained that the work that Mark Alexander had completed was important and that they were definitely keen to hear the views of a variety of badger groups. Stated that the RSPCA, the

Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Link are part of the group and reassured members that all views were being considered.

- Lorraine Barrett AM added that the Badger Watch and Rescue Group had met with the Minister and confirmed that despite the fact they were not a part of the consultative panel their voice was being heard.
- Ms Glossop added that she did require the group's help and expertise to aid her work and agreed that cattle movement definitely had a role in the spread of TB. In terms of the apparent focus on the role of the badger in the spread of the disease, she explained that pre-movement testing and other issues relating to the restrictions on cattle had been put in place some time ago. She maintained that the first step in the control of bovine TB was the application of legislation already in place, and in particular the pre-movement testing of cattle. Noted that she attended a UK Bovine TB meeting yesterday where there was a lot of dispute over infection levels.
- Michael Sharratt stressed to the group that in his 25 years of working with badgers he had never seen a badger with bovine TB, and that in the survey carried out 8 years ago, only 44 animals out of 1000 tested were suffering from the disease – it was a small number who were infected. He urged Ms Glossop to look at areas without bovine TB as well as areas with TB to assess levels of infection and cause of infection.
- Ms Glossop informed him that she had seen a badger with bovine TB and that there was most certainly a welfare issue involved as the animal was clearly suffering, whilst noting that the last survey carried out was a relatively long time ago. She also confirmed that they were studying both clean and dirty areas. She told the group that the eventual aim was to find a way for cattle and badgers to live side by side, and it was not realistic or desirable to completely rid Wales of either one of the species. She added that the infected cattle are purchased and then slaughtered, the value of the animal and the amount it is purchased for is currently determined by a valuator which leads to massive overcompensation. The cattle compensation table aims to deliver payments more accurately – it takes account of market prices but is not popular with the farming industry. The table was introduced in England 1st February 2006.
- Huw Thomas noted as a point of information that figures regarding cattle movements were complex and misleading, and in fact the number of actual cattle movements in Wales in 2005 was around 2.7 million, and not the 14 million quoted by Defra. He explained that there were technical reasons for this relating to the on-loading and off-loading of cattle.
- Ifan Lloyd stated that pre-movement testing is a better indicator of the infection levels in herds as opposed to individual animals. He also explained that the cost of pre-movement testing of cattle is born by the farmer, and that in light of this, farmers in areas where testing had to be done annually as opposed to every four years were effectively being placed at a disadvantage.
- Christiane Glossop agreed with the comments made by Mr Lloyd and suggested that post-movement testing may be considered in Wales in the future, which would make the financial burdens of the testing of cattle more evenly spread. She also suggested that Gamma Interferon testing may also be considered in the future, but at present, pre-movement testing was an essential first step.
- Sarah Marsh asked for information on the effectiveness of dead badger reporting as she had seen reports in the press suggesting that local authorities were getting frustrated with having to deal with the issue.
- Mark Alexander replied that he had spent time building relationships with all local authorities in Wales and that they had all agreed to contribute to the survey. He confirmed that he would be consistently reengaging with all local authorities to ensure that this was a year long survey and that it did not lose momentum after a few months.
- Lorraine Barrett AM asked for confirmation as to whether most of the reported incidents of dead badgers were due to road traffic accidents – Mr Alexander confirmed that this was indeed true.
- Mr Sharratt expressed a belief that there was a mindset problem in engaging with the problem of bovine TB in that it is vital to have a good control on cattle movement, but unfortunately farmers were not engaging as they should in ensuring this. He stressed that he did have sympathy with farmers, and that he recognised that they were facing problems which were basically down to the fact that the price of food is too cheap. Nevertheless he explained that every other industry has to pay for sorting out problems within their industry and that they did not receive the level of support which farmers receive.
- Ms Glossop explained that as TB is a notifiable disease due to the fact that it can infect humans, and that is why the Government is so involved in tackling the issue. It is also a matter of protecting animal welfare.
- Mr Sharratt argued that the measures in place were already adequate to protect humans, subsequently it is very rare for people to contract the disease.

- Ms Glossop asked Mr Sharratt if he was suggesting that they should not be tackling bovine TB to which Mr Sharratt replied that this was not what he was suggesting, but that farmers needed to take more responsibility over the issue.
- Mr Lloyd added that he agreed with Ms Glossop that it was in everybody's interest to maintain a high health status in cattle and badgers.
- Huw Thomas, in response to the comments made in terms of the support farmers receive, said that despite there being insurance available to farmers affected by bovine TB, in practice, premiums were either too high or they were refused insurance – especially in areas with high levels of Bovine TB.
- Clare Lawson reminded the group that in comparison with England, interest groups were in a very good position in Wales. The Assembly Government and the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales were operating very openly and the line they have taken so far to control bovine TB has been supported by groups promoting a variety of interests. Mr Sharratt agreed with these comments.
- Ms Glossop added that not all the funding to tackle TB was being allocated to finding badgers – there is a need to protect both cattle and badgers. She noted that not everybody is going to agree on all issues but bio-security is very important.
- Steve Clark raised the issue of the cost for farmers to pre-movement test their cattle and noted the possible devaluation of their animals.
- Huw Thomas stated that it remains to be seen if a two tier market will be created once pre-movement testing is introduced.
- Ifan Lloyd asked the Veterinary Officer to comment on how Great Britain compares with other EU countries in terms of bovine TB and which countries are officially free of the disease.
- Ms Glossop replied that ironically, Great Britain is classified as being free of the disease. Nevertheless, she confirmed that Britain does not compare favourably and that there was pressure from other European countries for Britain to eradicate the disease.
- Phillip Jones asked the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales to specify whether she believed that animal health or animal welfare was the most important.
- Ms Glossop replied that if she had to choose, she would put welfare first, but essentially they are both too closely related to be separated. Clare Lawson added that in general a high standard of welfare ensures a high standard of health, but of course that this was not always the case.
- Lorraine Barrett closed the meeting by offering her thanks to the presenters for their time and invited them to return in the future to discuss the results of the survey and other related developments.
- Christiane Glossop agreed that she would be happy to return in the future. She added that with the Animal Welfare Bill coming into force they would need the help and expertise of groups such as APGAW.
- Lorraine Barrett AM confirmed that the next meeting would take place on 9th May 2006, and that the group would be considering issues relating to the Animal Welfare Bill. Clare Lawson added that Phillip Jones would present the group with an update on the report of the Equine Sub-group. She added that they were still finalising a date for their annual one day conference and were looking for speakers. Ms Lawson also encouraged the group to feed information to her to add to the APGAW website, such as forthcoming events, updates, links or fundraising activities.

- End of Meeting -