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Sirs,

I write on behalf of BCVA to record our disappointment relating to the process surrounding the reduction in net price of Defra-held stocks of Merial BTV-8 vaccine.

Whilst appreciating the need for the government to mitigate the losses that may be incurred to the public purse by the vaccine passing its expiry date and thus becoming unsalable, we would like to ensure that Defra is aware of the friction this has generated between many veterinary practices and their clients.

Since the incursion of BTV-8 on our shores and the subsequent provision of vaccines, the profession has enthusiastically supported and encouraged compliance at farmer level to vaccinate their stock and prevent what is a devastating disease both on welfare and economic grounds. The industry wide JAB campaign has provided an excellent example of how stakeholder groups can engage and promote a positive investment in animal health.

The vaccination roll out was not without its problems with technical issues delaying availability of vaccine as the protection zone spread to the Welsh Borders and continued North. This combined with climatic conditions, and the absence of evidence of circulation within our indigenous population made it all the more difficult to get the message "Don't Hesitate Vaccinate" across to the farming community.

The publication of the purchase price of the vaccine delivered to the profession and the suggested retail price for the product dispensed to the end user was a novel concept and I believe the profession again rose to the challenge and ensured that the vaccine was priced attractively to maximise uptake.

As we entered the 2009 season, many practices suffered not insubstantial losses as product held in the practice pharmacy went out of date, having been ordered by clients who then decided to either not vaccinate, or required fewer doses. Some practices encouraged early vaccination of stock prior to turnout; some animals receiving a booster vaccination 3-4 months prior to the anniversary of their initial primary course. Whilst it made good sense to ensure maximum protection of stock prior

to the period of risk, there appeared to be an economic incentive to this as practices were given the "heads up" that vaccine costs would rise by approximately 20% once the current batches were exhausted and new stock delivered to the wholesalers.

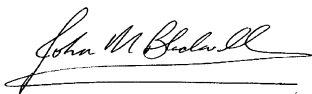
Discussions held within the Bluetongue Core Group concerning the release of stocks of Defra owned vaccine (Merial) occurred in late April. Due to the commercial sensitivity surrounding the issue all discussions were marked highly confidential and the three options available to Defra were not discussed outside of the members' immediate communication loop.

Thus the profession was alerted to a 50% reduction in the wholesale cost of the vaccine via its price publication on the Defra website on the 6/7th of May. Clients who had been encouraged to vaccinate, and in some situations purchased the vaccine only days before, felt understandably aggrieved about the cost-savings that they had not benefited from. Indeed, I believe some veterinary surgeons have been requested to provide reimbursement. There has been an erosion of trust between farmers and their veterinary surgeons as a direct result of the handling of this issue. I am sure that had the pharmaceutical company been in the same situation, the desired outcome would have been achieved quite differently, with prior communication directly to the profession.

The real paradox is that farmers, who had not bothered to vaccinate their stock, now have an opportunity to utilize the vaccine at a reduced cost. Although this is a good thing in terms of disease control, in the context of the current consultation surrounding Responsibility and Cost Sharing where proactive farming practices and investment in animal health is highlighted as the way forward, the process unfortunately presents a very mixed message to the farming community. Had foresight been exercised such stocks could have been released at a reduced price at the beginning of the year to everyone including the governments benefit.

It comes as no surprise that other Pharmaceutical companies with competitor products have realised the threat to their market share and instead of increasing costs by 20% as advised, have in fact reduced their vaccine price by an equivalent amount, which may limit the realisation of the Governments initial objective.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M Blackwell", written over a horizontal line.

John M Blackwell, BVSC MRCVS
President BCVA