

NFU Technically Speaking

e-news from the Science and Regulatory Affairs section of the NFU Policy Services Department

March 2013

In this month's edition:

[The facts about Schmallenberg](#)

[SBV Vaccine progress](#)

[Surveillance 2014](#)

[Confused about Flukicides and which are safe to use in dairy cows?](#)

[Vote to restrict Neonicotinoid uses postponed](#)

[Publication of UK National Action Plan on Pesticides](#)

[Asulam approved under 120 day authorisation](#)

[Outdoor restriction on Rodenticides authorisation](#)

[Farmers making good use of the plant science panel](#)

[Are you complying with EU law? Official controls under review](#)

[170 million hectares of GM crops grown last year](#)

[Farm-based research facility at Broom's Barn?](#)

[NADIS Parasite Forecast and Disease Alert now available](#)

[The Latest 'Skills Roundup' \(March\)](#)

The facts about Schmallenberg



The NFU, in collaboration with Defra, has drawn together the facts and latest knowledge on Schmallenberg Virus (SBV). The briefing, which can be downloaded [here](#), aims to dispel myths around the virus, highlighting:

- What is it?
- How does it spread?
- What you can expect if your livestock become infected?
- Is there anything you can do?

[\(back to top\)](#)

SBV Vaccine progress

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate has taken the unprecedented step of confirming that it is considering an application by MSD for its 'Bovilis SBV' vaccine. Providing details of the application progress, the VMD have confirmed that they understand the Industry's concerns and are progressing as quickly as possible to help release a safe and effective vaccine against the SBV virus. Further details can be found [here](#).

[\(back to top\)](#)



Surveillance 2014

The NFU have submitted a response to AHVLA's recent consultation which looked at future scanning surveillance for animal disease. The outcomes of this consultation are vitally important for the farming industry and the NFU have offered further discussion with AHVLA to ensure that the UK has a surveillance system which is sustainable and fit for purpose. View the response [here](#).

[\(back to top\)](#)

The voice of British farming

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Confused about Flukicides and which are safe to use in dairy cows?

The European Commission has recently published a decision which will lead to changes across the EU to the labelling of veterinary medicines containing certain flukicides. This has caused great concern and confusion, which is particularly unhelpful considering the high risk of fluke this year. Find out what can be used [here](#).

[\(back to top\)](#)



Vote to restrict Neonicotinoid uses postponed

European Commission proposal to ban the use of Neonicotinoids at a technical standing committee on February 25 2013, have now been postponed until mid-March. The proposals were to ban the use of three Neonicotinoids; clothianidin, thiamethoxam and imidacloprid, on spring sown cereals, oil seed rape and crops attractive to bees. If the vote had gone ahead the restrictions would have come into force this summer. A number of [member states voiced concerns at the haste](#) and the Commission will now look at alternatives to an outright ban. For more details [click here](#) and [Defra position statement](#).

[\(back to top\)](#)



Publication of UK National Action Plan on Pesticides

Defra published the UK [National Action Plan on pesticides](#) at the end of February. Generally, the plan identified the success of current approaches and looks to build on existing voluntary and regulatory measures.

[\(back to top\)](#)



Asulam approved under 120 day authorisation

Asulam has been approved under 120 day authorisation for the control of Bracken, the emergency authorisation runs from 20th May until the 16th September for more details [click here](#).

[\(back to top\)](#)



Outdoor restriction on Rodenticides authorisation

Restrictions on the use of all difenacoum and bromadiolone-based products were imposed arbitrarily by the Health and Safety Executive in early February, despite the fact that the HSE was in the middle of an ongoing review about their future. This decision will significantly restrict the available options for outdoor rodent control. The NFU has joined other stakeholders such as the National Gamekeepers Organisation in writing to ministers to call for the decision to be reversed pending completion of the review. For more details, [click here](#).

[\(back to top\)](#)



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Farmers making good use of the plant science panel

Farmers have been one of the groups of people getting into touch with Sense About Science's plant science panel since its launch in December 2012. Questions have spanned a range of issues including soil health, the influence of multinational companies on seed production and safety assessments for GM foods. Farmer, Paul Temple, nominated for the panel by the NFU has also been answering questions submitted to the panel. He has already responded to questions about organic farming without manure and crop yield. Follow the plant science panel's activities on Twitter using #plantsci and keep sending in your questions to Frances Downey: plantsci@senseaboutscience.org.

[\(back to top\)](#)

Are you complying with EU law? Official controls under review

A workshop with NFU members and staff, and officials from Defra, FERA and FSA was held last month to discuss the current review of a key EU regulatory package – the Official Feed and Food Controls regulation. This is very early stages of a lengthy process of simplification and consolidation of all the rules related to how the authorities in the UK verify compliance and gather information from food and feed businesses to that end. The UK government is currently deciding its position ready for negotiations to begin in Brussels in April/May, and it is essential officials have farming case studies to provide evidence of impact in those negotiations. The final legislation is unlikely to be implemented before 2018 but the potential for charging for controls makes this a key issue for NFU lobbying right now.



[\(back to top\)](#)



170 million hectares of GM crops grown last year

The ISAAA (International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications) has released its annual figures for global plantings of GM crops. In 2012, GM crops covered 170.3 million hectares in 28 countries, grown by 17.3 million farmers. So, in 17 years of commercial cultivation the area used to grow GM crops has increased 100-fold. For the first time, developing countries grew more GM crops than the developed world, and small resource-poor farmers still represent over 90% of those growing GM varieties. Commenting on the figures, NFU's Dr Helen Ferrier said:

"GM crops are a well-established part of the global agricultural supply chain. British farmers and growers operate their businesses within this global market and their competitiveness is affected by what producers do around the world. If we are to meet the challenges of sustainable intensification and become more resilient to the pressures of pests and diseases, volatile weather and declining resources we need access to the best tools and technologies. The current EU regulatory process for GMOs is broken and is denying UK farmers the choice to access this technology, which could deliver considerable benefits for them, their customers and the environment."

For all the figures see the ISAAA website: www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/44/executivesummary/default.asp

[\(back to top\)](#)

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Farm-based research facility at Broom's Barn?

The main funding council for agricultural research, the BBSRC, is considering the business case for a farm-scale research platform at Rothamsted's Broom's Barn site in Suffolk. At a workshop last month, BBSRC Director of Corporate Policy and Strategy Paul Burrows, talked about food security as one of the council's 3 grand challenges, saying that "big questions require big experiments". It would be a 'national capability' for hypothesis-driven research, along similar lines to the North Wyke farm platform in Devon. An impressive group of academics, government officials, farmers and wider industry representatives discussed what the platform might look like, how it would fit with existing research and knowledge exchange activities, and how it could deliver real scientific and economic impact for the sustainable intensification of agriculture.

[\(back to top\)](#)



NADIS Parasite Forecast and Disease Alert now available

This month's Parasite Forecast and Disease Alert has been published by NADIS (National Animal Disease Information Service).

This February's **Parasite Forecast** for your area can be found on NADIS' [website](#).



Disease Alert: Good maternal behaviour is important to ensure a good start to the lamb's life.

In addition, NADIS publishes a monthly **Disease Alert** which brings attention to a key disease for that time of year.

This March, keep a close eye on lamb mortality. Lamb deaths from birth to three day-old in the majority of UK flocks ranges from 10 to 25 per cent which represents 2 to 6 million dead lambs annually and is a great financial loss to farmers. The target perinatal lamb mortality figure should be less than 7 per cent; with 5 per cent achievable. [More...](#)

[\(back to top\)](#)



Parasite forecast: Bottle jaw can be one sign of fluke disease in cattle; however, simple weight loss is much more common.

The Latest 'Skills Roundup' (March)

Every month the NFU puts together a list of some of the main agricultural and agriculture-related training courses and events by Region. For more information, please click [here](#) and open the related article attached at the top.

[\(back to top\)](#)

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If you no longer wish to receive Technically Speaking or if your email details have changed please email [Amy Gray](mailto:Amy.Gray@nfu.org.uk)

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