

Environment Secretary sets out animal health and welfare support for livestock farmers

Farmers will be encouraged to keep healthier, higher welfare animals as part of the Government's flagship farming reforms, including fully-funded annual vet visits and grants to improve conditions for livestock.

During his speech at the National Farmers Union conference, the Environment Secretary George Eustice outlined his vision for internationally competitive livestock sectors. He set out plans for the [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) – a programme of financial support for farmers in the pig, cattle, sheep and poultry sectors, based around key animal health and welfare priorities.

These include measures such as reducing mastitis and lameness in dairy cattle, improving biosecurity to control pig diseases endemic to the UK and improving the feather cover of laying hens. To help farming sectors make these improvements, Animal Health and Welfare Grants will be launched within the next year to fund investments such as equipment and technology or larger projects like upgrading housing for dairy cattle to deliver improvements in lameness, cow comfort and calf mortality.

As part of the [Pathway](#), the Government will initially offer cattle, sheep and pig farmers who are eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme funding for an annual visit from a vet of their choice to carry out diagnostic testing, review biosecurity and responsible use of medicines, and provide advice relating to the health and welfare of their animals. These visits will launch later this year (2022) and the offer will be further extended over time to other types of livestock farmers.

The [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) will also include a disease eradication and control programme. This will allow farmers to apply for financial support to enable them to take measures to prevent and reduce endemic diseases affecting livestock such as veterinary advice, vaccination, or improvements to on-farm management.

We plan to trial a payment by results programme. This would mean rewarding farmers who can demonstrate high animal health and welfare outcomes, such as those such as those who provide their animals ample space and enrichment so they can better express their natural behaviours.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice said:

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway is for those farmers who are in pursuit of higher profitability through better health outcomes, and it starts with an annual vet visit.

Farmers will be able to have a vet of their choice, the family vet

that they trust, and the government will pay. That vet will be able to help the farmer put together a plan for improved animal health and improved profitability on their livestock holding.

Chief Vet, Christine Middlemiss said:

I hope to see wide-scale adoption of the Annual Health and Welfare Review as part of normal business practice, more farmers taking action to improve health and welfare, and improved outcomes when it comes to endemic diseases and conditions – which will improve animal health welfare and reduce waste, antibiotic use and financial losses.

Outside the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the Government is designing a new, fairer farming system that works in the best interests of farmers. The Pathway is a critical part of the farming reforms set out in the [Agricultural Transition Plan](#) to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals.

Farmers in England already achieve some of the highest welfare standards in the world and the new measures will support industry as they adapt to global health challenges like antimicrobial resistance, zoonotic disease outbreaks, the race to Net Zero, and biodiversity loss. The reforms will deliver benefits for animal health and welfare, farm productivity, food security, public health, UK trade and the environment.

Further information on how livestock farmers can apply for the first step of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, the Annual Health and Welfare Review, will be shared in the Spring. Farmers will have the opportunity to influence the items that are included within the Animal Health and Welfare grants equipment and technology list. Further information on how to take part will be disseminated through representative industry organisations.

Further information

The Pathway is about more than just financial assistance and consists of three mutually reinforcing strands which will:

- support livestock farmers financially by using public funds to pay for health and welfare enhancements that are valued by the public and not currently delivered sufficiently by the market or through existing regulatory standards.
- stimulate market demand for higher welfare products by making it easier for consumers to purchase food that aligns with their values, improving transparency, and providing the industry with a level playing field to promote such products. We are looking at potential market interventions – such as labelling (recent call for evidence) and mandatory public disclosure – that could improve the accessibility, availability, and affordability of higher welfare products for consumers, while driving positive procurement choices by retailers.

- strengthen the regulatory baseline over time, making sure we maintain our current high standards and continue to raise them where necessary, with details subject to consultation with all relevant sectors.

The Vet Visit

This will pay for 2-3 hours of farmer and vet time to: look at the health and welfare of their animals, including biosecurity and responsible use of medicines; receive a report from the vet, which will include some achievable actions the farmer can take to improve health and welfare – this will not be shared with the Government, and is between the farmer and vet; advice on action to take resulting from testing; and signposting to other support, including future grants and disease control schemes.

Each Review will be bespoke. The farmer and vet will decide how to prioritise their time. It will also involve testing:

- Cattle: BVD
- Sheep: Drench Test
- Pigs: PRRS

It will be a cash payment and farmers will be responsible for agreeing a rate with their vet – we do not expect to see their invoice from the vet or similar. The payments rates will be:

- pigs – £684
- sheep – £436
- beef cattle – £522
- dairy cattle – £372

Payment rates are fixed and have been refined in collaboration with industry, based upon priority testing required. Payments will go to the farmer, covering their commitment, vet time and diagnostic testing. Variation in payment rates between species is due to differences in priority disease testing costs.

Joint statement by Defence Ministers of the Joint Expeditionary Force

Today the ten Defence Ministers of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) met at Belvoir Castle in England: the UK, together with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

We reaffirm the importance of the JEF as a group of like-minded and proactive nations, with shared purpose and values, and a common focus on security and stability in the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea region. Ten

nations that are stronger when working together, the JEF gives us the ability to act collectively in an agile and responsive way to meet the variety of security challenges we face, however they arise, in that part of Europe we call home. The JEF is designed from first principles to be complementary to NATO's Deterrence and Defence posture.

Never has the JEF been more important and relevant than it is today. During the course of our meeting the Russian Federation has recognised Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions as independent states, breaching Minsk agreements and international law. All ten Defence Ministers are united in our condemnation of that unjustified act, the build-up of Russian forces on the border with Ukraine, and further incursion in the Donbas region.

We strongly support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and reiterate the right of all sovereign nations to choose their own path, their own security arrangements and their own alliances, free from external aggression and coercion, as a fundamental principle of the European security order. We call on Russia to de-escalate and encourage them to engage in transparent dialogue, including through the OSCE and the NATO-Russia Council, in order to reduce tensions. We also condemn the instrumentalization of migration flows and other hybrid activity towards Latvia, Lithuania and Poland by the Belarussian regime.

We have reviewed the progress we have made in the development of the JEF as an agile, capable, and ready force, and today agreed to undertake a series of integrated military activities across our part of northern Europe – at sea, on land and in the air. For example, we will shortly conduct an exercise demonstrating JEF nations' freedom of movement in the Baltic Sea. These and subsequent activities will remain preventative and proportionate. In acting together, we shall demonstrate the JEF's solidarity, capability, and resolve to stand together for security and stability in our region.

[Reinforced OSCE meeting on the situation in and around Ukraine: UK statement, 22 February 2022](#)

Thank you Mr Chairman for convening us at such a critical time.

Yesterday, Vladimir Putin recognised the so-called 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Luhansk People's Republic' as independent states. Overnight, he declared he would – again – send Russian troops into those areas – areas which are the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

This would be a violation of Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements. It violates the UN Charter. And repudiates core principles on which the OSCE

was founded, of sovereign equality; of the inviolability of frontiers; respect for territorial integrity; and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Mr Chairman, we condemn Russia's actions. Russia must withdraw all forces from Ukraine immediately. They have no grounds to be there.

The [Special Monitoring Mission \(SMM\)](#) reported no unusual military activity by Ukraine. Russia's claims of a Ukrainian threat to the Donbas region is a fabrication, an obvious pretext for their own aggressive action.

At every step, Ukraine has sought to reduce tension, whilst Russia's response to requests for transparency has been to boycott meetings, to accuse others of hysteria, and to spread disinformation. Every step of the way, Russia has lied, obfuscated and delayed.

Ukraine has pursued diplomacy through the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group. It has enabled the Special Monitoring Mission to carry out its work, unlike Russia's proxies who systematically attempt to restrict the Mission's movement. Ukraine has welcomed the Renewed European Security Dialogue. And Ukraine has used [the Vienna Document](#) for the purpose for which it was designed – to seek transparency and reduce tensions.

Russia, by contrast, has rejected the diplomatic efforts of Ukraine, of France, and of Germany in the Normandy Format over the last eight years, as well as the OSCE's Chair-in-Office and Special Monitoring Mission. Last time we met at this level in the OSCE, Russia said they would not engage in the proposed Renewed European Security Dialogue. They have boycotted every meeting that Ukraine has called under Chapter Three of the Vienna Document. How absurd that Russia should mount the biggest military manoeuvres since the end of the Cold War, and then claim that the Vienna Document does not apply.

We call again for Russia to abide by its commitments in this organisation, to engage seriously with the Renewed European Security Dialogue, and to respond to the offers of talks in the NATO-Russia Council and the US-Russia strategic stability talks.

This is not the first time Russia has invaded Donbas. Let no-one be fooled: it follows a military intervention in 2014, and eight years of barely disguised Russian control over these territories. It follows their invasion of Georgia in 2008, their illegal annexation of Crimea and agitation in the Donbas in 2014, their longstanding presence in Moldova, and their destabilising activities right across Europe. We must be absolutely resolute in our response.

Only by following up our words with real action can we ensure no other sovereign nation faces the situation that Ukraine faces today. That responsibility now sits on all of our shoulders.

That is why the UK, in close coordination with the European Union and United States, believes that Russia must pay a heavy price. The UK will be announcing later today tough new sanctions. These will be a first step, with more to follow if Russia does not pull back. I urge our partners around the

table to take similar steps.

And we must remain vigilant. Russia continues to station troops around Ukraine – the largest force assembled in Europe since the Cold War, from 150,000 to 200,000 troops, and we have seen it fabricate a series of events, which do not stand up to any level of scrutiny, to justify the use of force against a fellow participating State. We again call on Russia to reverse this build-up.

Mr Chairman, I want to finish by assuring Foreign Minister Kuleba that our support for Ukraine will not waver. We commend the restraint of the Ukrainians on the line of control in the face of Russia's provocations and aggression. We will continue to provide economic, defence and political support. And we will stand by the people of Ukraine. I call on other participating States to do likewise. And Mr Chairman I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day. Thank you.

UK hits Russian oligarchs and banks with targeted sanctions: Foreign Secretary statement

Oligarchs at the heart of Putin's inner circle and banks which have bankrolled the Russian occupation of Crimea have been targeted by the first wave of UK sanctions in response to Russia's further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement to the House of Commons, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is today (Tuesday 22 February) designating the initial tranche of sanctions on Russia. The sanctions package targets oligarchs and banks associated with the Kremlin.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

This first wave of sanctions will hit oligarchs and banks close to the Kremlin. It sends a clear message that the UK will use our economic heft to inflict pain on Russia and degrade their strategic interests.

And we are prepared to go much further if Russia does not pull back from the brink. We will curtail the ability of the Russian state and Russian companies to raise funds in our markets, prohibit a range of high tech exports, and further isolate Russian banks from the global economy.

These will be surgically targeted sanctions that will hit Russia hard.

Using new powers introduced on 10 February, the UK has frozen the assets and imposed travel bans on three leading members of the Russian elite of particular significance to the Kremlin: Gennady Timchenko, Russia's sixth richest oligarch, and Boris and Igor Rotenberg, two long-standing associates of the regime.

Assets of five Russian banks involved in bankrolling the Russian occupation have also been frozen with immediate effect. This includes Bank Rossiya, which is particularly close to the Kremlin, Black Sea Bank for Development and Reconstruction, IS Bank and Genbank. The assets of Promsvyazbank, the pivotal bank in propping up Russia's defence sector, have also been frozen.

The UK will also sanction those members of the Russian Duma and Federation Council who voted to recognise the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk in flagrant violation of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty.

In addition, over the coming weeks we will extend the territorial sanctions imposed on Crimea to non-Government controlled territory in the so-called breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. No UK individual or business will be able to deal with this territory until it is returned to Ukrainian control.

In the event of further aggressive acts by Russia against Ukraine, we have prepared an unprecedented package of further sanctions ready to go. These include a wide ranging set of measures targeting the Russian financial sector, and trade.

As part of this, should Russia not de-escalate the UK will shortly introduce legislation which will, amongst other steps, prevent Russia from issuing sovereign debt on UK markets. Working with partners we will effectively be isolating Russia from the global economy, and making it far more difficult for oligarchs and businesses to operate outside their own borders.

ENDS

Russia: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office summons Russian Ambassador Andrey Kelin

Press release

The UK has summoned the Russian Ambassador following its recognition of two so-called people's republics, and the movement of military forces into Ukraine.



The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has summoned the Russian Ambassador, Andrey Kelin, to register the UK's formal protest with the Russian Federation over Russia's continued undermining of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and flagrant disregard for the international obligations and commitments it has freely signed up to.

An FCDO Spokesperson said:

The UK has urged Russia to explain its recognition of the so-called 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Luhansk People's Republic' and the movement of military forces into Ukraine.

We have summoned the Ambassador today to stress that such actions are a violation of international law. The UK reiterates its unshakeable commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine, and insists that Russia immediately withdraw all of its military forces.

We made clear to the Russian Ambassador that Russia would pay the price for its actions through further sanctions if it did not withdraw its troops.

The Foreign Secretary instructed Sir Philip Barton, Permanent Under-Secretary for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to summon the Ambassador.

At the meeting, Sir Philip reaffirmed the UK's unwavering commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and for Ukraine to determine its own future and security arrangements. He informed the Ambassador that the UK will announce sanctions against Russia, and that further measures would follow unless Russia withdraws its troops, meets its obligations under the UN Charter, and fulfils the commitments it made under

the Helsinki Final Act, the Minsk Agreements, and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.

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