**Draft Brief for Contractor Feedback**

DEFRA is looking for a research partner for a project to explore the extent and type of data collected about on farm activities by a range of vets and also a number of farmers. The research should cover data collection by farmers and by vets practicing on farms dealing with six in-scope species (see below).

This brief is for the purpose of enabling an initial discussion with potential contractors for this work to discuss the work further prior to the issue of formal ITT through the usual bidding processes. The whole process will be governed by our standard processes for dealing with contractors so that the process is open and fair to all possible contractors who may wish to bid. Full details of the process, requirements, timings etc will be included in the formal ITT when issued.

The project will focus on the following 2 areas:

* PART 1: FARMER DATA RESEARCH
* PART 2: VET DATA RESEARCH

**PART 1: FARMER DATA RESEARCH**

**Background**

* 1. The Authority is looking for a Research Partner to conduct research to explore the extent and type of data collected about on farm activities by a range of farmers. The research should cover data collection by farmers in six in-scope species (see below).
  2. DEFRA published ‘The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024’ in November 2020 and the plan period commenced on 1st January 2021. As part of this transition the Government is developing publicly-funded schemes that will make ongoing payments for demonstrable animal health and welfare improvements. These will include: an animal health and welfare pathway to address treatment of endemic diseases; a capital grants scheme for investments that are known to raise levels of health and welfare; and a payment by results scheme. The objectives in this ITT should help to address evidence gaps in this area and inform the commissioning of further research, tests, trials and pilots.
  3. An annual review (including a veterinary visit) to review the health and welfare of the herd or flock has been identified as a key component of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) currently being developed. The specific focus of the veterinary visit will vary between species and between farms that are members of the Red Tractor and other Assurance schemes and those that are not. However, for all species the visit will focus on herd/flock health and welfare, biosecurity, antimicrobial use and endemic disease control.

**Project Specification**

* 1. To support the ongoing development of these schemes we want to better understand how health and welfare improvements can be assessed and delivered by gaining a fuller knowledge of *the data that farmers already collect* for various purposes (see below).
  2. We also want to understand the impact on farmer costs of collecting these different types of data to provide an overall assessment of the burden under which farmers currently operate with regard to data collection. It should be noted that this research is for indicative purposes only; it is not expected to provide a complete picture of the data burden on farmers that is generalisable to the whole population. So whilst we expect the work to cover each of the following sub-sectors we would expect a minimum number of interviews for each sector to be completed. The research should cover:
* Pigs
* Meat Chickens
* Laying Hens
* Dairy Cattle
* Beef Cattle
* Sheep
  1. As part of the initial launch of the project the researchers will be required to meet with key members of staff from DEFRA and relevant agencies (online) to build up a picture of data currently collected. The project should build on this information.
  2. The initial set of proposed areas we would want to cover in the interviews is as follows:
* data required to comply with statutory or legislative requirements;
* data required to demonstrate compliance with assurance/supply chain schemes;
* data collected for the effective and efficient operation of the farm itself; and
* data collected for any other purposes e.g. applications for grants or other schemes, or research purposes (including identification of what these are).
  1. Researchers should combine the results of these interviews with other sources of information to draw together a comprehensive overview of the types, quality and formats of data gathered by farmers across all the sub-sectors outlined above. Information gathered should also include the methods by which the data are collected e.g. paper forms, phoned into a supplier or agency, collected on a mobile app, or submitted on-line via a computer. The findings on the data should be set out in a straightforward format.

**Outputs and liaison**

* 1. The supplier shall attend an inception meeting at the start of the project to agree initial steps, discuss potential data sources and frequency/format of progress updates.
  2. A provisional list of animal health and welfare data already collected shall be prepared by collating the existing evidence from a variety of sources. The Authority is keen to understand how these data types can be/are reliably and feasibly measured on farm to report on/assess health and welfare outcomes.The provisional list of data types shall cover all species in scope (pigs, meat chickens, laying hens, dairy cattle, beef cattle and sheep) for all farm types (breeding and rearing) and all systems of production where possible. Bidders may also indicate how different farm typologies might be applied/covered in their methodological approach to ensure a good range of farm types are covered.
  3. Sources for developing the provisional list of data collected for each species might include:
* Farm surveys such as the Farm Practices and/or Farm Business Surveys.
* Examples of data collected via existing assurance schemes both in the UK and abroad where appropriate.
* Data provided via assurance or supplier schemes as promoted by supermarkets, restaurant or catering suppliers.
* Peer-reviewed literature.
* Existing cost information for data collection.
  1. The supplier shall provide:
* A data sources report (following inception and an initial meeting with DEFRA colleagues) highlighting potential data sources and contacts for this along with an outline list of data collected that we already know about;
* Brief, written progress reports provided every two weeks during the project to update the Authority’s Project Manager;
* A final report setting out the results, main data sources, categories, purposes and farmer incurred costs in written format;
* The supplier shall also present the information gathered for the project as a database/spreadsheet of animal health and welfare data based on the purpose for which this is collected and identifying any overlaps and or gaps; and
* A final presentation including PowerPoint slides setting out the main findings to be presented following the final report submission.
* The supplier shall provide two contacts who represent the Project Manager and a Deputy Project Manager who are responsible to the Authority for fulfilment of the contract and for liaison with the Authority’s contact person
* The supplier shall submit any survey designed for the project to the Authority’s Project Manager to be cleared past the Authority’s Survey Control Unit.
* The supplier shall recruit farmers for the research by appropriate channels with due consideration for data protection issues that may arise and in full compliance with GDPR regulations.
* The supplier shall respond to at least two sets of DEFRA comments when requested by the Authority and make appropriate amendments to the final report before sign-off.
* The supplier shall supply a plan to describe their quality assurance and quality control procedures as part of the contract. Suppliers will be required to provide documentary evidence of their compliance with their own QA/QC procedures.
* The supplier shall clearly describe their data management facilities and procedures in proposals related to this work as part of their tender submission and all project outputs should be shared by secure methods.

**Project Milestones and Outputs**

* 1. The table below provides a detailed description of the project milestones and their outputs. The milestones for the project have associated actions and outputs to be completed.
  2. Payments will be made based on project milestones delivered and these payment points will be agreed on inception.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Description of Project Milestones and Outputs** | | |
| **No.** | **Milestone** | **Milestone Outputs** |
| **Milestone 1** | Meeting with DEFRA/Agency staff to discuss data sources and review of potential data sources | Initial note on potential data sources |
| **Milestone 2** | Preparation of survey questionnaire for use with farmers (versions varying by species/mixed farms) | Draft survey questionnaire |
| **Milestone 3** | Agreement on final questionnaires for farmers and approval by survey control | Final versions of questionnaires |
| **Milestone 4** | Piloting of questionnaires with 5 farmers and any revisions where necessary | Revised final questionnaires |
| **Milestone 5** | **Draft Final Report**  A draft final report in Word format based on the outputs of the project collated together, but including the format to be agreed with the Authority | Final Report in Word format |
| **Milestone 6** | **Final Report**  A final report in Word format based on the outputs of the project collated together, but including the format to be agreed with the Authority | Final Report in Word format |
| **Milestone 7** | **Database** containing details of all data collected by farmers and associated costs | Excel database |
| **Milestone 8** | **PowerPoint presentation** and on-line or in-person presentation of project outputs | PowerPoint presentation and on-line or in-person presentation |

**PART 2: VET DATA RESEARCH**

**Background**

* 1. The Authority is looking for a Research Partner to conduct research to improve our understanding of the extent and type of data collected about on farm activities by vets undertaking on farm work.
  2. The research should cover data collection by vets working with the following six in-scope species:
* Pigs
* Meat Chickens
* Laying Hens
* Dairy Cattle
* Beef Cattle
* Sheep
  1. DEFRA published ‘The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024’ in November 2020. And the plan period commenced on 1st January 2021. As part of this transition the Government is developing publicly-funded schemes that will make ongoing payments for demonstrable animal health and welfare improvements. These will include: an animal health and welfare pathway to address treatment of endemic diseases; a capital grants scheme for investments that are known to raise levels of health and welfare; and a payment by results scheme. The objectives in this brief are to address evidence gaps in this area and fulfil the research requirement as well as informing the commissioning of further research, tests, trials and pilots.
  2. An annual review (including a veterinary visit) to review the health and welfare of the herd or flock has been identified as a key component of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) currently being developed. The specific focus of the veterinary visit will vary between species and between farms that are members of the Red Tractor and other Assurance schemes and those that are not. However, for all species the visit will focus on herd/flock health and welfare, biosecurity, antimicrobial use and endemic disease control
  3. There are wide variations in what is included in current veterinary visits which undertake a regular review of herd or flock health and welfare. These variations exist between species but also in herd/flock size, farm type, whether the farm is a member of an assurance scheme or not and between individual farms. There is also a wide spectrum of different types of veterinary practices and veterinary surgeons undertaking these visits. In some species veterinary surgeons are highly specialised, for example, in pigs the majority of the veterinary work is undertaken by specialist pig practices. Conversely, for some livestock sectors, commonly beef and sheep, and in some regions, a greater proportion of the veterinary work is undertaken by mixed species practitioners.
  4. Veterinary practices are run as independent businesses that may be individual or part of a wider buying group, or corporately owned businesses and therefore there are no standard costing structures for services, procedures and content for veterinary visits and no harmonisation in record keeping. For example, the ways in which practices capture and store clinical information are diverse, ranging from mobile apps that can communicate with a practice management system, to practice management systems which may store data in a database format or as individual documents to paper-based systems. There are also differences in the degree to which vet practices undertake data management for their client farms, as well as differences in the ways in which veterinary practices charge for veterinary surgeon time (from hourly rates to contracts based on productivity metrics such as pence per litre), travel for visits and there are regional variations in costs.
  5. These factors constitute a major knowledge gap in the ways in which veterinary practices are structured, veterinary surgeons’ work and how veterinary visits are approached. All these factors will directly affect the costs of veterinary services and the practical delivery of the veterinary visit component of the AHWP. To accurately model the economics of the veterinary visit it is essential that these data gaps are filled. To answer the questions outlined below the AHWP is commissioning research to interview practising veterinary surgeons to better define the spectrum of approaches to undertaking veterinary visits, identify the diversity in different specialisms amongst veterinary surgeons, describe different practice structures and to outline costs for veterinary services.

**Project Specification**

* 1. To support the ongoing development of these schemes, we want to better understand how health and welfare improvements can be assessed and delivered by understanding *the data that vets already collect* for various purposes, (see below).
  2. We also want to understand the impact on vet costs of collecting these different types of data to provide an overall assessment of the burden under which farmers and vets currently operate with regard to data collection. It should be noted that this research is for indicative purposes only; it is not expected to provide a complete picture of the data burden on farmers and vets that is generalisable to the whole population. So whilst we expect the work to cover vets working with each of the species mentioned we would expect a methodology which can achieve this, using for example, interviews and or questionnaires.
  3. As part of the initial launch of the project the researchers will be required to meet with key members of staff from DEFRA and relevant agencies to build up a picture of data currently collected. The project should build on this information.
  4. The initial suggested set of proposed questions we would want to cover in the project is set out below, though we would expect the contractor to add to and/or refine these further.
  5. **For all species**, we need to understand the following from vets:
* How much do you usually charge for on-farm vet visits and how is the cost determined? Does this include travel? Does this include vet time for off-farm work?
* How much do you charge for flock/herd health planning visits?
* Do you have a fixed fee for farm assurance health & welfare visits? e.g. annual visit for Red Tractor Beef & Lamb? If not, how do you charge for these visits?
* How long is the average travel time to farms?
* What proportion of your clients share business data with you?
* With what proportion of your clients do you actively manage data?
* How many hours per week do vets work on average?
* How many of these hours are spent doing on-farm vet work compared to other tasks such as paperwork or travelling?
* What qualifications do the vets in your practice have? E.g. Johne’s advisor, ROMs accreditation, BVDFree advisor, other OV qualifciations.
* How would a veterinary visit be approached for a mixed farm whereby the farmer may be registering and wanting a veterinary visit for more than one species covered by the Pathway?
  1. In addition, we need to understand the following **for sheep specifically**:
* How long would a biosecurity assessment (potentially involving a scoring procedure) take?
* To what extent would this vary by farm size?
* How long would a full flock lameness assessment take for a small (x sheep), medium (y sheep), large (z sheep) flock?
* How long would it take to determine the prevalence and cause(s) of lameness in a small/medium/large flock? N.B. This may involve verification of the lameness prevalence provided by the farmer and may involve examination of a representative proportion of the flock, not examination of every animal.
* What proportion of sheep keepers registered with the practice have had no vet visits within the last 12 months?
* What proportion of sheep keepers registered with the practice have routine (at least annual) vet visits for flock health planning purposes?
* What proportion of sheep farms registered with the practice are members of assurance schemes (e.g. Red Tractor, Soil Association, etc)?
  1. In addition, we need to understand the following **for cattle specifically**:
  + How long would a biosecurity assessment (according to CHeCs standards) take?
  + To what extent would this vary by farm size?
  + How long would a full herd lameness assessment take for a small (x cows), medium (y cows), large (z cows) herd?
  + How much would this cost to be done by a ROMs accredited scorer?
  + What proportion of cattle farms registered with the practice have routine (at least annual) vet visits to assess the health and welfare of the herd?
  + Please explain any distinction between beef and dairy herd.
  + What proportion of cattle farms registered with the practice are members of assurance schemes (e.g. Red Tractor, Soil Association, etc)?
  + Again, is there a distinction between beef and dairy herds please explain.
  + How many vets in your practice have undertaken mobility scoring training (Healthy Feet or similar)?
  1. In addition, we need to understand the following **for pigs specifically**
  + How long would a biosecurity assessment and score (e.g. UGent) take?
  + To what extent would this vary by farm size or farm type?
  + How long would a serology test for the presence or absence of Porcine Respiratory and Reproduction Disease virus (PRRS) take on a per pig basis?
  + How much would you charge for this service?
  + How many vets are there that routinely undertake Red Tractor assurance farm visits?
  + How many specialist pig practices and specialist pig vets are there that cover herds in England?
  + What proportion of pig farms registered with the practice have routine (at least annual) vet visits to assess the health and welfare of the drove?
  + Similarly, what proportion of pig farms registered with the practice are members of assurance schemes (e.g. Red Tractor, Soil Association, etc)?

**Outputs and liaison**

* 1. The supplier shall attend an inception meeting at the start of the project to agree the detailed work programme, discuss potential data sources and format of progress updates.
  2. The supplier shall define a provisional list of potential data collected under each of the species sub-sector headings provided in this brief and any associated metrics.
  3. A provisional list of animal health and welfare data already collected shall be prepared by collating the existing evidence from a variety of sources. The Authority is keen to understand how these data can be/are reliably and feasibly measured on farm to report on/assess health and welfare outcomes.
  4. The provisional list of data shall cover all species in scope (pigs, meat chickens, laying hens, dairy cattle, beef cattle and sheep) for all farm types (breeding and rearing) and all systems of production where possible. Bidders may also indicate how different farm typologies might be applied/covered in their methodological approach to ensure a good range of farm types is covered.
  5. Sources for developing the provisional list of data collected for each species might include:
* Farm surveys such as the Farm Practices and/or Farm Business Surveys.
* Examples of data collected via existing assurance schemes both in the UK and abroad where appropriate.
* Data provided via assurance or supplier schemes as promoted by supermarkets, restaurant or catering suppliers.
* Peer-reviewed literature.
* Existing cost information for data collection.
  1. The supplier shall also develop a database/spreadsheet of animal health and welfare data based on the purpose for which this is collected and identifying any overlaps and or gaps.
  2. As part of the final report the Researcher should set out a qualitative analysis and summary of the answers to the questions set out in the previous section, including consideration of variation between veterinary practices and reasons for this.
  3. The supplier shall provide:
* An inception report (following inception and an initial meeting with DEFRA staff) highlighting agreed approach and potential data sources and contacts for this along with an outline list of data collected that we already know about;
* Brief, written progress reports every two weeks during the project to update the Authority’s Project Manager;
* A final report setting out the results, main data sources, categories, purposes and costs in written format; and
* A final presentation including PowerPoint slides setting out the main findings to be presented following the final report submission.
  1. The supplier shall also:
* provide two contacts to act as Project Manager and Deputy Project Manager who are responsible to the Authority for fulfilment of the contract and for liaison with the Authority’s contact person.
* submit any survey designed for the project to the Authority’s Project Manager to be cleared past the Authority’s Survey Control Unit.
* recruit vets for the research by appropriate channels with due consideration for data protection issues that may arise and in full compliance with GDPR regulations.
* respond to at least two sets of DEFRA comments when requested by the Authority and make appropriate amendments to the final report before sign-off.
* supply a plan to describe their quality assurance and quality control procedures as part of the contract. Suppliers will be required to provide documentary evidence of their compliance with their own QA/QC procedures.
* clearly describe their data management facilities and procedures in proposals related to this work as part of their tender submission and all project outputs should be shared by secure methods.

**Project Milestones and Outputs**

* 1. The table below provides a detailed description of the project milestones and their outputs.

The milestones for the project have associated actions and outputs to be completed. Payments will be made based on project milestones delivered and these payment points will be agreed on inception.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Description of Project Milestones and Outputs** | | |
| **No.** | **Milestone** | **Milestone Outputs** |
| **Milestone 1** | Meeting with DEFRA/Agency staff to discuss approach and data/contact sources. | Brief inception report (5 pages max). |
| **Milestone 2** | Preparation of survey questionnaire for use with vets. | Draft survey questionnaire. |
| **Milestone 3** | Agreement on final questionnaires for vets and approval by survey control. | Final versions of questionnaire. |
| **Milestone 4** | Piloting of questionnaires with 5-10 vets and any revisions where necessary. | Revised final questionnaires. |
| **Milestone 5** | **Draft Final Report**  A draft final report in Word format based on the outputs of the project collated together, but including the format to be agreed with the Authority. | Final Report in Word format. |
| **Milestone 6** | **Final Report**  A final report in Word format based on the outputs of the project collated together, but including the format to be agreed with the Authority. | Final Report in Word format. |
| **Milestone 7** | **Database** containing details of all data collected and associated costs. | Excel database. |
| **Milestone 8** | **Power Point presentation** and on-line or in-person presentation of project outputs. | Power Point presentation and on-line or in-person presentation. |