

RSPCA Sheep Standards Technical Advisory Group meeting on Tuesday 28th August 2018

Meeting Summary Notes

Updating the sheep welfare standards

The last revision to the RSPCA's welfare standards for sheep was in January 2013. As part of the process of updating these standards, the Farm Animals Department has reconvened its Standards Technical Advisory Group (STAG) for sheep and this was the first meeting of this newly convened group. The Farm Animals Department put forward a number of key areas of the standards which it intends to review and potentially revise - including various aspects of the health section of the standards and procedures related to tail docking/castration and pain management - and these areas were discussed by the group. The group also discussed a range of wider issues related to the uptake and application of the RSPCA's sheep welfare standards. The information gathered from these discussions will be taken forwards for further consideration.

Introduction of welfare outcome assessments for sheep

The group were updated of the fact that welfare outcome assessments have been undertaken on RSPCA Assured audits and RSPCA monitoring visits of RSPCA Assured sheep farms since May 2017. The welfare outcome assessment protocol used was developed as part of the AssureWel Project, which was a collaborative project between RSPCA, Soil Association and University of Bristol, which set out to develop welfare outcome assessment protocols suitable for use during a farm assurance scheme audit for a range of species. The protocol collects information on key issues which contribute to the health and welfare state of sheep, such as lameness and lamb mortality. The group discussed how the protocol is implemented on farm and how the data is subsequently used, and this will be considered as part of the process of reviewing the data and the protocol moving forwards.

Industry issues

The group discussed a range of wider industry issues which impact or have the potential to impact on sheep health and welfare, including dog attacks on sheep and the outcomes of the Brexit negotiations.