

Animal health planning: Advice for Crofters and Crofting Groups



**Farm
Advisory
Service**

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Around 10,000 livestock crofters and farmers who are members of Quality Meat Scotland's cattle & sheep quality assurance scheme recently received this year's updated standards document which included a key change relating to animal health plans. This article looks at how crofting groups can adapt to these changes.

The key change relates to a previous recommendation that farms receive an annual veterinary visit and that the yearly review of the Animal Health Plan is signed off by a vet. This is now an official requirement, however the changes to the Health Plan will be phased in over a 12-month period. This means any member who receives an assessment in the next 12 months will be advised that on their next visit they must have this completed.

Suggestions for Crofting Groups

If you currently write your own health plan, you can continue to complete your health plans yourself or with an SQP, and the vet will review, sign and date to confirm they are in agreement with the content. QMS are working closely with BVA to ensure a consistent message is communicated to all vets in Scotland.

If your group are all in the same township, CAGS can support the cost of improvements, such as:

- weigh cells for more accurate treatments
- handling facilities to reduce stress on animals and people. For example, one Common Grazing recently obtained a mobile fank which will save hours in moving sheep.
- EID readers – and there is even software to keep health records and withdrawal dates.
- Create hill parks for gathers, or an isolation park to help with biosecurity measures for bought in stock.

Members can also email the completed health plan to the vet and the vet can review, sign and send back to them. A health plan template can be found at www.qmscotland.co.uk/cattle-sheep-standards

To help smaller producers and crofters, QMS will be running workshops in the Highlands and Islands over the next six months which will give attendees guidance on how to complete a health plan. Local vets from the area will also be invited to attend, and QMS will be encouraging crofters to take a collaborative approach on vet visits, for example, if there are five crofters within a group membership, a date can be organised with the vet when everyone is available.

Another benefit of collaborative health planning is that working with neighbours can reduce costs by reducing wastage of bought in treatments (as long as all crofters administering the treatments have a prescription from a vet).

Over the next couple of months QMS will launch a new web portal which is an online membership service, this will allow members to access relevant scheme information, check and update membership details and download templates.

If there are particular issues in your township, your health plan can focus on these issues. For example, sheep scab, where you might also need to work with neighbouring townships, or calf scour, where young calves are mixing with older calves.

Useful links

Stop the spread of sheep scab <https://youtu.be/JqFV5WR08Cc>

Calf scour prevention - www.fas.scot/publication/calf-scour-prevention-video/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which is co-funded by the EU and Scottish Government, providing information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of farms and crofts.

Grant support, a full programme of events, a subscription service for crofts and small farms, and a range of articles and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.



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If you need more advice on animal health planning or on any other topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £1,200. The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at www.fas.scot