

Outcome of Quarantine Unit review published

The Quarantine Unit (QU) scheme was introduced in September 2017, at the request of the Welsh farming industry. It replaced Isolation Facilities as the optional exemption to the six day standstill rule (6DSS) to allow maximum flexibility of movement whilst safeguarding the biosecurity of Welsh farms.

The six day standstill rule was established following the Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak in 2001, and is important in limiting the spread of the disease.

The Cabinet Secretary committed to conducting a review of the QU scheme to address some of the concerns raised by stakeholders and identify any areas for improvement.

The review has identified nine recommendations for improvement – two of which could be implemented before the end of the year, with the remaining seven to be consideration in the New Year.

Before the end of the year, the review recommends improved communications between the Welsh Government and stakeholders through future events and simplified guidance. In addition, it recommends QU guidance in relation to TB to be revisited and where appropriate clarified.

In the New Year, the review makes seven further recommendations for consideration:

- Explore the possibility of amending the 24 hour reporting rule, allowing farmers to report the activation of a QU within 24 hours, whilst the individual animal movements are completed within three days;
- Explore the possibility of developing a grant scheme for QU certification – this will help farmers meet the initial cost of certification;
- Explore group farm certification and renewal inspections by the certification body;
- Assess whether the certification body can combine QU visits with other visits to further reduce costs;
- Allow greater discretion for QU inspectors when considering compliance with requirements (e.g. the use of natural barriers around QU's);
- Ask the certification body to streamline the renewal inspection process for QU's; and
- Continue to collect animal movement data concerning animal movements from Welsh holdings to agricultural shows.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“We introduced the Quarantine Unit scheme, following consultation and close collaboration with the sector, to provide an alternative

for farmers to the six day standstill rule and enable multiple movements to agricultural shows.

“Over the last few months my officials have conducted a review to address some of the issues that have arisen in the first year of the scheme. This has resulted in nine recommendations which I have accepted.

“I hope they go some way to address concerns and I am confident they will help improve the QU system which plays such an important role in minimising the spread of disease. We will continue to review the scheme over the coming years.”

Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Christianne Glossop, said:

“Our priority remains keeping diseases out of Wales. Prior to the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001, standstill periods did not exist and multiple and long distance movements were responsible for the significant spread of disease.

“The six day standstill remains important in ensuring the biosecurity of this country but QUs provide farmers with flexibility whilst reducing the risk of disease spreading.”