

The Contribution Animal Health Makes to Sustainability

NOAH (National Office of Animal Health) is the trade association representing the UK animal health industry and is committed to supporting animal welfare and promoting a unified approach to the health of people, animals, and the environment, which are deeply interdependent and interconnected.

Healthy animals contribute to achieving at least 10 out of 17 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Veterinary medicines and solutions do this by helping achieve sustainable farming, assuring food supply and security, by protecting the UK from new and emerging diseases and overall helping to protect One Health.

Maintaining healthy livestock in the UK contributes to sustainability by:

Assuring food security and affordability

By 2050, it is estimated that the world will require 70% more animal protein, as the human population is projected to increase from 8 billion to 9.7 billion. However, estimates suggest that globally, 20% of livestock production is lost due to disease each year. Disease in livestock impacts the food supply for this growing population and reduces animal welfare and productivity. This heightens the cost of food production, negatively impacting affordability for consumers, and risks the sustainability of UK farming.

Delivering sustainable farming for a healthier environment

UK livestock rely on natural resources for their feed and shelter. The agriculture sector is the largest consumer of water in the UK, with one dairy-producing cow needing up to 155 litres of water per day. When animals are unhealthy, they take longer to grow and produce less, increasing the pressure on natural resources and creating negative consequences for the environment. Keeping livestock healthy is therefore critical to supporting animal health, maximising efficiency and the use of natural resources.



Preventing disease through veterinary solutions

In the face of new agriculture policies, evolving disease challenges, unstable food supplies, new trading arrangements and the urgent need to meet environmental sustainability goals in response to climate change, preventing and controlling disease in UK livestock has never been more important. A preventative health approach for UK livestock, through the use of vaccination, is an integral part of overcoming these challenges. Emerging technologies and scientific advancements like artificial intelligence and new generation vaccines provide greater opportunities to predict, diagnose, prevent, and treat animal illness more quickly, accurately, and safely.

Supporting biodiversity

Livestock can maintain and encourage biodiversity, often in areas where crops other than grass cannot be grown. Livestock manure helps to build healthy soil and grazing livestock in the right conditions can support carbon capture. Livestock are therefore important to maintaining a healthy ecosystem and their by-products benefit a circular economy.

Recommendations

By maintaining animal health, the industry helps the UK economy and helps to protect the environment. To help the industry to continue this positive record, NOAH recommends:

- A robust and future-proofed UK regulatory framework for veterinary medicines, to ensure the availability and accessibility of safe and effective medicines for all animals.
- Providing ongoing training to farmers on disease prevention and responsible use.
- Ensuring funding for research and development of new medicines and solutions remains a priority to protect the UK from future disease outbreaks.
- Improving collaboration and partnership between human, animal, and environmental sectors to promote finding One Health solutions to One Health challenges.