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PRESS RELEASE

Industry Bodies Call for Welsh RDP Scab Programme

A report based on a survey of members of Welsh Lamb & Beef Producers Ltd (WLBP) commissioned by the Welsh Government's Animal Health & Welfare Framework Group has identified several opportunities for improved scab management in Welsh sheep flocks.

The report, which was written by Professor Richard Wall and co-workers from the School of Veterinary Science at Bristol University, has confirmed widely held industry beliefs that problems such as incorrect dosing and misdiagnosis continue to contribute to scab outbreaks. The report, which highlights geographical variation in scab incidences, also examines the usefulness of a more targeted and regional approach to scab management.

Sheep scab is caused by infestation with the mite, *Psoroptes ovis*, and continues to persist in the UK following its re-introduction in the 1970's.

Following a review of Professor Wall's report, the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW), NFU Cymru, National Sheep Association (NSA) and WLBP have written to Peredur Hughes, chairman of the Framework Group jointly calling for the use of RDP monies to kick start and facilitate a Welsh sheep scab eradication programme. This proposed programme would aim to tackle the issues raised in Professor Wall's report. It would include provisions to raise awareness of the current problems, monies for scab diagnosis, flock herd health plans, veterinary advice (especially on correct preventative and treatment procedures) and the establishment of local groups to combat recurrent scab outbreaks.

The cost of sheep scab, in terms of losses and treatment, has been estimated to cost the Welsh sheep sector up to £8 million per annum. The four parties confirmed their willingness to work collaboratively with all organisations to try and eradicate this disease.

Sheep scab is a highly insidious disease which has significant welfare implications for infected sheep. Given the high economic and welfare implications, it is therefore essential that the industry is provided with enough support and resources to eradicate this disease.

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