Further comment on the dilemma in the July/August issue: ‘Regulation breach on farm’

The dilemma in the July/August issue, discussed by Mike Steele, concerned a pregnant suckler cow with an infected, ulcerated growth on its third eyelid that was provisionally diagnosed as squamous cell carcinoma. The farmer client insisted on palliative treatment despite the vet recommending removal of the mass as the best course of action. In addition, several untagged dead calves and two dead sheep were observed in a ditch at the entrance to the farmer’s land (In Practice, July/August 2011, volume 33, page 362).

Simon Hall, veterinary director at the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), comments: The AHVLA has followed this discussion with interest and would like to provide the following additional guidance:

AHVLA and local authorities work with private vets to protect the health and welfare of farmed animals and carry out inspections on a risk basis following receipt of intelligence, in particular where there is a risk of unnecessary suffering or undue delay to dispose of animal by-products. Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the regulations. Breaches of animal welfare and animal by-product legislation can result in penalties to single farm payments and/or prosecution.

We have guidance available online for colleagues and members of the public. For information on animal by-products, visit http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/managing-disease/animalbyproducts/fallen-stock-faq.htm#. For information on welfare, see http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/keeping-animals/caring/index.htm

It is vital that owners follow the advice given by their veterinary surgeon relating to the health and welfare of their farmed livestock. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 [or the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006] all responsible owners and keepers have a duty of care to provide for the basic needs of animals (detailed in Section 9 of the Act) and are guilty of an offence under Section 4 of the Act if they cause, or permit to be caused, unnecessary suffering. Under the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations, and equivalent regulations in Scotland and Wales, it is a breach of animal welfare legislation to not care appropriately for animals that appear to be ill or injured or seek appropriate veterinary advice when required. It is equally a breach of the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations 2011 to not dispose of animal carcases appropriately as soon as possible.

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