Exports Web page section:
February 2006 (KMH)

The timetable for exports is on track:

The timetable for the resumption of exports for live cattle, beef and beef products is on track with the intention to secure a positive decision in Brussels on the 8th March. If this occurs the lifting of the ban for all beef products and live cattle will occur in the second half of April. The lifting of the ban will really open up the marketing opportunities for the cattle sector and the negotiation of sales for both live cattle and beef will provide a more lucrative income for breeders in the long term.

The FVO visit last year resulted in a positive report for the UK stating all procedures were in place for the resumption of cattle born after August 1996 to enter the food chain. Secondly, a positive EFSIS opinion resulted in the reclassification of the UK's BSE status with incidence of BSE cases reported in the UK being lower than other countries in the EU. These positive decisions allowed the Commission to drive the debate for the UK to trade on the same footing as all EU countries.

Please remember it is *illegal* to present cattle born before August 1996 to food chain slaughterers, these cattle must either enter the voluntary Older Cattle Disposal Scheme (OCDS), the Fallen Stock Scheme or be kept on farm.

Commercial breeders should talk to their meat processors about potential export markets for beef and what specifications are required. There is considerable interest for UK branded beef and breeders should work with their processors to supply these markets.

The NBA has taken the lead on driving the discussions on exports via their export committee in a unique partnership with other industry organisations and government representatives. This committee represented the interests of both the pedigree and the commercial cattle sectors and pushed for an export package that included all live cattle exports as well as beef products to be taken to Brussels for approval and this has been achieved.

The focus this year is on live cattle (pedigree and commercial) exports in the first instance to the EU and accession/candidate countries. Export conditions for countries outside the EU will have to be negotiated on an individual basis. The NBA pedigree breeders committee (PBC) are in discussion with Defra on exactly what is needed to export live cattle to each country.

Each breed society has provided their priority export markets for live cattle to Defra and the PBC has developed a series of potential export scenarios, which they think, will be needed for live cattle exports. As a result, Defra have pulled together a package of information, which has been circulated by the NBA. The supporting documents are very detailed in outlining the requirements and show the need for the industry to be both prepared and organised. This partnership has helped Defra to address all the requirements needed by the industry.

The NBA in conjunction with BLG and Defra have developed ' a practical guide to live cattle exports' which will be updated when needed and can be viewed on the NBA website. www.nationalbeefassociation.com

Jean-Pierre Garnier, Exports Manager for the MLC, has developed an action plan for live cattle exports for 2006, which will be discussed at the next PBC meeting. This includes the UK presence, with pre-sold cattle (beef and dairy), at three key shows/exhibitions, Eurotier in Germany (14-17 November), Polagria in Poland (12-15 October) and Indagria in Romania (8-12 November) and the NBA encourages all in the cattle industry to support this plan to promote UK genetics. British Livestock Genetics will play an important part in this plan and they have also suggested attendance at the Wiederfestival in Bavaria and the National Ploughing Match in the Republic of Ireland, both are key export markets with huge potential for UK pedigree sales.

Already the NBA is aware of growing interest from countries within the EU and some non-EU countries to purchase UK cattle and these buyers have been present at recent pedigree sales. We would encourage breeders to consider these new export market opportunities.

Selling cattle to another country could seem taunting but once a breeder has sent the first wagonload, the process will become easier. The most important decision from the start is to work with a reputable Export Company and an experienced hauler as the UK will be under the spotlight during the first stages of the export process and any misdemeanours will have serious consequences. A list of approved export companies and livestock haulers for export will be provided soon.

For cattle moving into the EU, a generic export health certificate applies across all 24 countries, although each individual country will apply their own cattle health conditions. Breeders must decide which country they intend selling their cattle too and then check the health conditions for each country. The breeder then must notify their local AHDO of the intention to export. The AHDO will then apply for the official documentation after the 'route plan' has been established. All cattle destined for export must be isolated 30 days prior to departure and all health tests completed.

Animal health conditions will prove a barrier to exports especially in countries like Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the Bolzano province of Italy. Most countries within the EU will request negative test results for both TB and IBR and the NBA in collaboration with Caroline Hogan at Pfizer has put together a detailed information pack on IBR for UK breeders and this can be found on the NBA website. The NBA will also push hard for a national action plan for IBR.

IBR, which affects approximately 60-70 per cent of the UK cattle herd, could only be curbed through vaccination, and this is an example of how restrictions placed by a vaccination free export policy could bite.

The NBA will push Defra to seek a review of the policy towards the use of IBR marker vaccination to allow trade in all cattle that have been given an approved marker vaccine.

TB does not interfere with the export of carcase beef but live cattle must originate from a TB free holding/herd and the animal must be TB tested 30 days before the export date

For information about live cattle exports contact Kim-marie Haywood, NBA.