

## 2013 WINNER: **ANNA BOWEN**



### **A FRESH assault hopes to stop the spread of tuberculosis in its tracks. DEFRA has announced new measures to tackle the disease in 'edge' areas of England, where the disease is spreading but is not yet endemic.**

The new rules come into force this October and are hoped to save farmers and livestock businesses £27 million over 10 years.

Vets have welcomed the news:

"Changing testing intervals will aid in the control of bovine tuberculosis, which has had a huge impact on British livestock farmers," said farm vet Helen Scott.

"Changing to yearly testing in Wales has improved our detection and management of the disease, allowing for quicker identification of affected animals."

Tuberculosis is endemic in South-West England and West Wales. In these areas badger cull and vaccination zones have been introduced in a bid to lessen the disease. Both methods have sparked heated debate, with animal rights activists condemning the cull and concerns being raised about vaccination costs, which look set to reach £600 per badger.

Vaccination projects are part of the new plans, with applications being invited for shares in a £250,000 fund to cover half the cost of the first year of vaccination. Concerns have been expressed about this use of money.

"The vaccination trials in West Wales are yet to be completed," said dairy farmer Robert Bowen "Without the results of these trials it's difficult to justify spending money on vaccination."

Other measures, including breaking cattle movement links between the edge areas and high risk areas, and badger population monitoring, have been more popular.

"Tightened control of cattle moving between high risk and edge areas is a good thing; at the moment farmers can move cattle between the two without notification if two holdings are linked," said Robert Bowen. "Monitoring badger populations is a step in the right direction, as the disease needs to be tackled in the wildlife reservoir as well as in the cattle herd."

Gamma interferon blood testing will be introduced in herds that have their TB free status withdrawn, while herds within 3km of an outbreak in Cheshire and Derbyshire will have to undertake two skin tests. The blood test is believed to be more sensitive than the often distrusted skin test.

With the average breakdown costing the taxpayer £20,000 and the farmer £10,000, measures which reduce the disease burden will be welcomed by both stockmen and the public sector.



## 2013 RUNNER-UP: **ANDREA BEDDOWS**



### **Red meat delegation opens door to growing Russian market**

**Defra has announced a major new trade deal for the export of beef and lamb to Russia. The culmination of two years of negotiations, it is reported to be worth up to £100 million over three years.**

The agreement was reached between Environment Secretary Owen Paterson and Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich during a visit to Moscow by a UK food and drink delegation.

"This deal is great news for farmers, exporters and the UK economy as a whole. The progress we have made is testament to the high standards of production and traceability for which British producers are famous," said Owen Paterson.

"With the inclusion of offal as part of the deal, the gates of opportunity are now well and truly open for our meat industry," he added.

Earlier this year, Eblex expressed strong concerns about restrictions that continued to limit UK red meat exports to Russia. It drew attention to the fact that no trade had taken place since the country's BSE-related embargo had been lifted in November.

It called on Defra to establish high-level talks with Russian officials to resolve a number of outstanding matters, including restrictions on UK offal exports and technical issues relating to the nation's veterinary system and processing plants.

These talks were successful and an important part of the deal that has been agreed. The first shipments of UK red meat to Russia are expected to get underway within three months and will increase as the number of approved processors grows.

Chief livestock adviser for the NFU Peter Garbutt responded positively to this boost for British livestock farmers.

"Continuing to open up new export markets is vital work and should be a key priority for government. Having a variety of markets for our produce reduces volatility and will help deliver a competitive and sustainable beef and lamb industry."

Russia is currently experiencing a deficit in beef and sheep meat, which makes it an obvious target for UK producers. Its domestic meat prices are some of the highest in the world.

In addition, the country's thriving economy continues to demand high quality Western produce. The so called 'fifth quarter' in beef, which includes liver, tongue and heart, is particularly sought after. Not a popular product with UK consumers, it clearly represents a new and potentially lucrative outlet for British farmers and processors.

