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Training on Antimicrobial Usage to become mandatory for NIBL FQAS members

Members of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) will be expected to undertake mandatory training on the responsible use of antimicrobials from February 2020 following recent agreement to amend NIBL FQAS standards at the scheme's Standard Setting Committee

A pilot programme, facilitated by CAFRE, is currently underway with the training due to be implemented into the NIBL FQAS Standard and Rules upon its completion to encourage the responsible use of antimicrobials, specifically antibiotics, among beef and sheep farmers.

Commenting on the training, Industry Development Manager, Colin Smith said: "Industry has already made great strides in the overall reduction of antibiotic usage however there is no room for complacency.

"We hope that through this mandatory training, we can build the knowledge of our NIBL FQAS members and encourage them to enhance their herd health planning in relation to antibiotic use. We're doing this to ensure that the industry moves forward and to build resilience for the future sustainability of the sector.

"Antimicrobial drugs have played an important role in managing the health of humans, animals, marine life, plants and crops for over 60 years. Since Lord O'Neill published his report entitled, 'Tackling Drug- Resistant Infections Globally' in 2016, the UK agriculture industry has set targets to help tackle AMR. Locally, part of this response has been to set up mandatory training under NIBL FQAS.

"The new Standard received final sign off from the NIBL FQAS Standard Setting Committee in October 2019 and full details of this will be communicated to scheme members via the FQAS winter newsletter.

"It has been agreed that training on 'Responsible use of Antimicrobials on Beef and Sheep Farms' completed through CAFRE's Farm Family Key Skills programme will meet scheme requirements and the training will be free of charge. I would encourage all members to take the opportunity to avail of training while funding is available. Anyone who completes the

training prior to the introduction of the mandatory requirement coming into effect in February 2020 will still meet the standards of the scheme.”

Mr Smith claims that the introduction of mandatory training demonstrates just how seriously industry is treating the issue of AMR.

He added: “Maintaining good animal health and welfare remains a key pillar of NIBL FQAS and tackling AMR is critical to this. The training will serve as a very useful tool to ensure that local beef and lamb producers maintain their well-earned reputation as excellent stock keepers and stewards of responsible antimicrobial use on farms.”

To register for training, contact AI Services on: 028 9083 3123 or email: amr@ai-services.co.uk.

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