

STATE VETERINARIANS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF RURAL EXPERTISE IN ENGLAND

Wyn Grant and Justin Greaves

Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

w.p.grant@warwick.ac.uk; j.greaves@warwick.ac.uk

Paper prepared for the European Society for Rural Sociology Congress, Vaasa, Finland, 17-20 August 2009

Working Group 4.1

We acknowledge financial support from the UK Research Councils as part of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU), www.relu.ac.uk

I would like to thank Professor Laura Green, Professor Graham Medley and Dr Abigail Woods for their comments on an earlier draft. They are not responsible for any of the statements made in this paper.

This paper seeks to address the second theme of the workshop, in particular the questions, how have rural professions changed over time and how have the actions of the state affected rural experts? It focuses on veterinarians (vets) employed by central government, in particular those engaged in policy-making. For the purposes of this paper, a vet is defined as a full trained veterinary surgeon and member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) with accompanying legal responsibilities. Broadly speaking, vets have been employed in three roles in Britain (the paper does not cover the devolved administrations): specialist policy advisers; vets 'in the field' implementing policy, initially through the State Veterinary Service (SVS) and then through the Animal Health Agency; vets in the Central Veterinary Laboratory and associated institutions, later reconstituted as the Veterinary Laboratories Agency. The latter were and are essentially researchers and would require a different treatment. The paper does not consider the specialist branch of the army that delivers veterinary services, the Royal Army Veterinary Corps.

The paper arises from an interdisciplinary project on the Governance of Livestock Diseases (GoLD) which is focused on six endemic diseases of cattle. (See http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/gld) As part of their project we are interested in how veterinary expertise affects farmer decision-making on disease management, although that is not the focus of that paper. We are also interested in how veterinary expertise is used by government which is what this paper is concerned with.

This paper uses a number of research sources. It makes substantial use of relevant papers in the National Archives, particularly in terms of an episode in the 1960s when it was proposed to establish a National Animal Health Service which provides a lens to examine changing relationships between the state and the veterinary profession. This broader lens helps to put in focus the more specific questions tackled in the paper. Semi-structured interviews with vets in government and in private practice are utilised (these are ongoing). A period of participant observation was undertaken in the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) within the Animal Welfare Team. Finally, the paper makes use of interviews with state vets in Australia as a comparator to the UK experience.

Specialists, Scientists and Vets

It is important to place our discussion within the context of an *undervalued* specialist civil service. Bevir and Rhodes (2003, 146-7), for example, spoke of the Tory ideal of a generalist who could offer advice in any field from accumulated wisdom. The Fulton Committee (1968), which examined the structure, recruitment and management of the civil service, found that it was dominated by the ‘generalist’ or ‘all rounder’, while ‘scientists, engineers and members of the other specialist classes were given neither full responsibilities nor the corresponding authority’. It recommended that specialists receive management training and opportunities, whilst generalists should specialise in economic or social administration (Fulton, 1968, 104). Such concerns date back further in time. During the Second World War, for example, Harold Wilson, then Director of Economics and Statistics at the Ministry of Fuel, and his fellow ex-academic Fulton, ‘used to grumble together about the amateurishness of the civil service and the need for an injection of professional skills’ (Ziegler, 1993, 37). The Fabian preference for an expert bureaucracy was expressed more explicitly

by Kellner and Crowther-Hunt (1980) who blamed generalists for not implementing Fulton's recommendations. Thatcher's former advisor Hoskyns (2000) and the academic Fry (1993) also wanted more specialists and outsiders to be recruited.

The continuing lowly positions of scientists within the civil service was demonstrated by the Hutton enquiry (hearings: 11 August 2003) into the death of Dr David Kelly, CMG, the government's expert on chemical and biological proliferation. The Ministry of Defence's personal director agreed that in terms of pay Kelly was a senior official, but 'it is just that he [was] not managed as a member of the Senior Civil Service, he [was] not part of its corporate programme'. In countries such as Australia, Denmark, France and Sweden, ministers receive advice from top specialists directly. According to Foster (2001, 741), Labour ministers in 1997 were disappointed to find that they did not have immediate access to a 'specialist civil servant who knew everything known on a particular topics'. The Prime Minister's Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU, 2000, 5-6) urged the recruitment of more specialists, to improve evidence-based policy-making. However, as Burnham and Pyper note (2008, 202), the government experienced great difficulty in recruiting them. In 2004 the group leading *Civil Service Reform* announced that the specialist/generalist dichotomy would be replaced by three 'career groupings': policy experts (evidence-based advice); operational delivery (expertise in customer service, large scale management); and corporate services (finance, resources, IT procurement).

In terms of specialists, there have been a number of reports (post 1945) relating specifically to the *scientific* civil service (SCS). These include the Barlow Report (1945), the Tennant Report (1965) and the Rothschild Report (1971). The latter led to a White Paper in 1972 and a government review in 1979. A further 'Review of the Scientific Civil Service' (the Holdgate Report) was published in 1980. As indicated

above, whilst it was not his primary focus, Fulton had some interesting reflections on the SCS. The same also applies to the Trend Report (1963). Archival evidence shows how disappointing the work of the Tennant Committee was perceived to have been within the civil service (MSS 224/316). It is noteworthy, also, how there was little of direct relevance to vets or the veterinary service in these various reports, reflecting their low profile.. Secondly, it is interesting (and the archives again help demonstrate this) how the term *scientific* civil service disappears, or at least is reduced in use from around the 1980s. Terms such as the ‘professional civil service’ are now used far in contemporary discourse.

One further issue is the extent to which ‘vets’ differ from ‘scientists’ – if indeed they are scientists at all. Wilkinson (2007) and Taig (2004) make some interesting observations on this - one theme being whether vets are more difficult to integrate in the policy-making process than scientists in general. This is explored elsewhere in our paper. We have also discussed the scientist/vet distinction with our natural scientist colleagues on the GoLD project. One argument put forward is that vets are trained as clinicians, as are medics. To function as a clinician requires a ‘certainty’. Scientists are trained to believe that everything is wrong, or at best an approximation. To paraphrase Einstein, if you believe that you know something then you cannot progress in science, since science progresses by proving what is thought to be true to be wrong. Popper’s (see 1959) insight was that you can only prove things wrong. Science moves forward by destroying itself; what is believed to be scientific ‘fact’ now is probably not the case.

In the case of bTB some vets have taken the view that badgers are a major source of the problem and that bTB cannot be solved without culling. Scientists, on the other hand, have dealt with the matter differently. The Krebs Report (1997), concluded that

more research was required, leading to the Randomised Badger Culling Trial (RBCT) undertaken by the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB, published in June 2007. Finally, we can distinguish between *applied* scientific research (eg: the diagnosis of disease) and *fundamental* scientific research carried out in universities where the object is to obtain knowledge for its own sake and where such knowledge may or may not have a place in more general field research. Although, as a discussion recorded in the archives about professional veterinary staff notes, whether such a division always holds up in practice is debatable (MAF 39/420).

The role of vets within government

State vets need to be situated within the context of a broader veterinary profession which has been experiencing a number of changes. These include a gender shift in the composition of a profession dominated by men to one in which women make up by far the greater part of the graduate intake. Men, however, still play a substantial role in running the profession's institutions. There has been a trend away from large animal (i.e. farmed livestock) work to small animal (i.e. domestic companion animals) work. There has also been a trend towards more multi-centre practices owned by companies with professional financial managers, although it is difficult to measure the extent of these trends.

The questions we are seeking to address in this paper are:

- How are vets viewed within government given the broader debate about the role of specialists in the British civil service? This question needs to be answered in the context of the broader relationship between the veterinary profession and the state, in particular through the examination of proposals for a nationalised veterinary service.

- What motivates someone to become a state vet rather than enter or continue in private practice?
- How does the construction of veterinary expertise within government affect its use and the policy-making process?

The nature of the relationship between government and the veterinary profession has changed substantially. In 1961 13.5 per cent (550) of all vets were employed in the field and laboratory functions of the SVS. (National Archives, 1963: 3) The Anderson report (2002, p. 26) estimates that ‘The number of vets employed by the State and its agencies in 2001 was roughly two thirds that in 1967.’ ‘[The] number of vets working in government ... is declining in both relative and absolute terms, down from 15% of the profession in 2000 to 10% in 2006.’ [Lowe, 1.5: 2-3]. Falling numbers have an adverse effect on promotion prospects.

Government has been an important customer for vets in private practice. Indeed, a perceived threat to that work in terms of the decline of testing for bovine TB led to calls in the early 1960s for a nationalised veterinary service. The resurgence of bovine TB has created a substantial amount of testing work for vets in private practice. A vet in a practice in Gloucestershire (where bovine TB is a significant problem) with 5.5 large animal vets commented, ‘TB produces big income [for the practice], 20 per cent of gross turnover on farm and some.’ However, [TB testing] makes us a less attractive practice to work in. {It} could be 50 per cent of time for assistant.’ (Interview, 12 February 2009).

Under former interventionist and productionist policies, ‘Vets derived their authority partly from their professional expertise and partly from their role as agents of the state. The proxy use of private vets enabled state power to be extended direct into the private world of UK farming’. [Lowe, 5.2: 77] ‘In the past government

acted as the sponsor for both the veterinary profession and its main customer.

Government was therefore able to take the lead in formulating future demand (both public and private for veterinary services'. [Lowe, 2.5, 22] Moreover, 'The old SVS had extensive and direct links with the private veterinary profession at various levels, ensuring coordination in operational matters, but these links have become fragmented since the SVS disappeared.' [Lowe, 5.13, 82]

Even before these changes, vets within government have had a rather difficult role. There are relatively few of them: as far as the civil service as a whole is concerned, it is not possible to devote a great deal of attention to them. Discussing their pay in 1969, a civil servant noted: 'I do not think that we can get help any help from pay research, in the sense that we cannot get a small departmental class such as this into the PRU's programme, and a "do it yourself" pay research exercise is, I imagine, ruled out. So we shall be proceeding once again by trial and error'. (National Archives, 1969a: 5). Vets in government tend to be relatively low profile, until there is a disease crisis when the limits to their expertise are thrown sharply into relief. Over time it is possible to discern at three distinct themes in the debate about vets within government:

- Their competence
- Which raises the question are whether they are adequately paid
- Whether they are really civil servants in the sense of accepting and working within its prevailing norms

Competence

The question of competence needs to place in context. Foot and mouth outbreaks in particular have created a sense of crisis about the roles of vets, but one must be careful about generalising from them. Vets were slow to turn to science, but this

does not mean that they were incompetent. After all, they did succeed in eliminating many contagious diseases.

Veterinary expertise was first brought into government in 1865 following an outbreak of rinderpest. The Government's initial response to expressions of concern by Queen Victoria and the Archbishop of Canterbury had been to seek divine intervention by using a form of prayer approved by Her Majesty in every (Established) church. When this had no effect, a temporary Veterinary Department was established and this then became The Cattle Plague Department. In 1868 this was officially established as the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office and in 1887 it was transferred to the Board of Agriculture. The official centenary history takes the view that 'By 1900, the Veterinary Department of the Board of Agriculture was functioning smoothly, backed by powerful and comprehensive legislation, the Diseases of Animals Act of 1894.' The view of the Chief Veterinary Officer of the time was that 'Veterinarians were ... the only people qualified to judge veterinary matters' (Pearce, Pugh and Ritchie (eds.), 1965: 72).

Unfortunately, the composition of that expertise reflected a characteristically English belief in the merits of a practical education. Consequently, 'Britain had a much weaker tradition of laboratory research than France and Germany. Ever since the mid 19th century, French veterinary students had received a rigorous scientific training that was very different from the practical education imparted by British schools.' (Woods, 2004: 73) During the foot and mouth outbreak in Cheshire in 1923-4, 'criticisms of vacillation, incompetence and ignorance were heaped upon the veterinary department'. (Woods, 2004: 42). The SVS was established in 1937 and the Diseases of Animals Branch was reconstituted as the Animal Health Division with an extensive network of county offices.

Concerns nevertheless persisted about the competence of state vets. In 1969 it was noted, 'MAFF state that the quality of recruits to the Research and Investigation Service is mediocre.' (National Archives, 1969b: 2). This raises the question of whether state vets were paid adequately compared to their private sector counterparts, an issue which reached crisis point in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A recurrent issue here was to whom they should be compared in the civil service with the vets insisting that the best comparator was medical doctors, an argument repeatedly rebuffed by the Treasury.

A more general question that has arisen recently is that of the relative roles of vets and epidemiologists (although, of course there are increasing numbers of veterinary epidemiologists). In the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak, 'many vets were angry that responsibility for FMD control policy had been transferred away from the [SVS] and the [Institute of Animal Health's] scientific experts, and handed to a group of epidemiologists who had no prior experience of the disease. Leading veterinarians were not alone in claiming that the epidemiologists had gained the ear of government as a result of undue political influence'. (Woods, 2004: 141). 'In the FMD outbreak, vets and epidemiologists clashed over their approaches to controlling the disease, with vets drawing on their local knowledge to challenge the legitimacy of the scientists' models.' (Wilkinson, 2007: 11). The epidemiologists represented vets 'as being too close to the problem, and too much a part of the culture of those affected by the disease, to the extent that it impaired their scientific judgment, whereas by implication, epidemiologists' cultural distance and consequent "outsider" status afforded them greater objectivity.' (Bickerstaff and Simmons, 2004: 405). As a government vet pointed out in interview diseases had been eradicated in the past without fully understanding epidemiological processes.

The question of pay

In discussions about veterinary pay, it is important to bear in mind that this is often as much about the status of vets within government as their level of remuneration. The debate within government may have sometimes framed it in terms of skills, particularly in comparison with medical doctors, but that is not a judgment on their competence as vets. It may, however, be the case that medical doctors form a more coherent grouping within the Department of Health, meeting together to come to a clear, common opinion which they then communicate to the non-medical civil service and ministers.

During the inter-war period, 'the Ministry encountered considerable difficulty in recruiting staff during a period when the functions of the Animal Health Division were still increasing'. The salaries of vets in the civil service were not as good as those paid by the better local authorities and there fewer prospects for promotion. Vets were receiving about 50-60 per cent of the salaries paid to doctors in the Ministry of Health (National Archives, 1953-8: 2). These difficulties in recruitment persisted during the Second World War. In 1950 MAFF asked the Treasury to review the salaries of veterinary staff 'on the grounds that recruitment difficulties had reduced the staff to a dangerously low level ... The scales eventually agreed gave a relative increase to Veterinary Officers as compared with other Civil Service classes.' (National Archives, 1953-8: 7). The Treasury was, however, resistant to any further claims for increases, arguing that the Vets' class were in a favourable position 'compared with other Civil Service classes' whilst admitting that the length of the Veterinary Officer scale meant that 'the career prospects for the best Vets are not as good as those for the best people in other classes'. (National Archives, 1954: 2).

The Treasury was also disparaging of ‘the old story that Vets’ academic training is similar in kind and duration to that of the medical practitioners’:

[There] is no similarity at all between Vets and the Medical Officers employed by Government Departments; the latter do not come in until they are 35 – i.e., 10 years later than the Vets – and they are meant to be gentlemen [sic] of considerably greater experience and with higher qualifications than those of the ordinary G.P., whereas the majority of vets in this country are employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, and they may therefore be said to be representative of the “average” Vet. (National Archives, 1954: 3).

The relatively poor position of vets continued to be the subject of discussion within the civil service with a recognition that there was a problem but that little could be done about it. In preparation for a meeting with staff side representatives in 1957 it was noted that:

We can expect comparisons to be made with the administrative class where there is every expectation of becoming Principal fairly early on in service and with the scientific class where the White Paper anticipated that scientific officers of “proved ability” should reach P.S.O. in “a reasonable period.”

Against these comparisons the veterinary officer is not very well off.

(National Archives, 1957: 1)

In 1968 the relevant trade union, the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (IPCS) claimed substantial improvements in the link with the Scientific Officer class. The case went to arbitration and the tribunal upheld the government offer of a two-point shortening of the VO II scale, but commented that they were unsure of the offer’s adequacy to improve recruitment. Recruitment problems worsened, rather than improving so that by 1969 ‘the Field Service was approximately 40 short of

present complement, [302] although if allowance was made for overseas aid liabilities and an increase in complement the shortage was nearer 70.’ (National Archives, 1969c: 1). What made the situation even worse was a top-heavy age structure. This led to a number of changes in grading structures which were criticised as ‘pathetically inadequate’ (Special Correspondent, 1973). The underlying problems were not resolved and industrial action was threatened at the end of 1972 and was only avoided by a combination of circumstances which included the first appearance of swine vesicular disease in Britain. What veterinary staff found particularly galling was ‘that a raw dental recruit to the Civil Service earns £400 more per annum than a veterinary officer at the top of his career grade. (VO I). Medical officers’ pay is in excess of dental salaries.’ (Special Correspondent, 1973).

A visit by a MAFF official to the south-west of England found that the staff was in a volatile and suspicious mood which could easily spark off industrial action. ‘Unpleasing though it is to write in this vein with the risk of appearing to over-dramatise the situation it would be a bad mistake to attempt to conceal or minimise the serious state of morale in the Veterinary Arm.’ (National Archives, 1973a: 2). This was echoed by a letter from a veterinary investigation officer in Devon who stated, ‘Over the last 6 years the gradual erosion of the status of Government employed Veterinary surgeons has resulted in staff who are completely disillusioned with their employers, disbelieve ministerial and CSD [Civil Service Department] platitudes re a happy and viable veterinary service and display a contemptuous cynicism when discussing future prospects.’ (National Archives, 1973b: 1). This correspondent complained that ‘To our detriment, we have never attempted to acquire the mystique with which the medical profession clothes itself’. (National Archives, 1973b: 2). The IPCS complained that whereas the Chief Medical Officer and Deputy

Chief Officer were graded at permanent and deputy secretary levels, the Chief Veterinary Officer was not even a deputy secretary. (National Archives, 1973c: 1).

Civil servants remained unsympathetic to comparisons between doctors and vets: [It] would seem the real reasons why the vets raise the comparison is not the oft-claimed similarity of need of knowledge, skills and training but more the generalised superficial similarity of “doctoring” for man and beast. But such similarity is truly superficial ... At the end of the day a majority of humanity puts its own life as “beyond valuation” whereas the loss of an animal life is only “painful”, “regrettable” or “costly”. The Doctor of men needs to be a psychiatrist as well as having a knowledge of human psychology because he is dealing with reasoning; the doctor of animals is not and does not need to proceed beyond animal psychology [physiology?] The responsibilities of the VO are in an altogether lower plane than those of the MO. (National Archives, 1973d: 4).

These arguments look less convincing looked at through a contemporary lens. In any case, vets have always had to deal with people as the owners of animals so as much psychology is needed as for doctors. There has been an increasing interest in the behavioural problems of companion animals and more generally a higher valuation of animals. ‘The recognition that animals are sentient is held to mean that we have direct moral obligations towards them, and not to their owners or those seeking to represent their interests.’ (Garner, 2008: 111). It is now more difficult to gain entry to a veterinary school than a medical school in terms of the school qualifications required.

The debate at the beginning of the 1970s also seems quite gender blind by today’s standards. It had been conventional to talk about the recruitment of ‘younger

recently-qualified chaps'. (National Archives, 1969e: 2). However, by this time around 10 per cent of practising veterinary surgeons in Britain were women. Hence it was suggested:

This may be one of the possible sources of new entrants that we ought to give more thought to. Are there deterrents to female recruitment, is there any traditional reluctance (as I believe may be the case) in the State Veterinary Service to admit the opposite sex? [sic] Are there positive steps that we could take, for example, by making special mention in advertisements that female recruits will be as welcome as male? (National Archives, 1973e).

These events led to a Working Party on Veterinary Career Development which urged quick action. The immediate crisis was overcome and today the policy side of Defra is able to attract highly qualified PhDs as veterinary advisers who are well paid. Field roles are increasingly being filled by vets from elsewhere in the EU with an increasing dependence on Spain and Eastern Europe. A new inspector grade has been instituted with the prospect of promotion to veterinary adviser when there is an emergency.

Their role within the civil service

There have been a number of often recurrent issues about the roles, relationships and responsibilities of state vets. What counted as a veterinary issue? Should vets just deliver policy or could they also help to make it? Were there conflicts of interest for Local Veterinary Inspectors acting both as private vets and agents of the state?

The creation of the SVS was not without its tensions as there was a perception of the veterinary side was that their status was being undermined. Up until then what became Animal Health Division had been under the sole control of the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), an appointment that carried considerable standing in the

wider veterinary profession who regarded the appointment as being of considerable importance. However, with the reduction of the role of local authorities, the policy significance of veterinary work for central government increased:

The setting up of the State Service increased the administrative work to such an extent that the Ministry appointed a Principal Assistant Secretary to take charge of this side of the work. This appointment was regarded with great suspicion by the Veterinary profession who feared that the Chief Veterinary Officer would no longer be in an independent position and in order to allay suspicions it was agreed that the salary of the Chief Veterinary Officer should be the same as that for the Principal Assistant Secretary. (National Archives, 1953-8: 5).

Reviewing the experience of coping with BSE, the former Permanent Secretary of the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) noted that the BSE Inquiry found 'that the CVO and the Director of the [Central Veterinary Laboratory] unjustifiably operated a policy of restricting information flows within the [SVS], to others in the veterinary profession, to other research groups and more widely for a period of some six months at the beginning of 1987.' He records his surprise 'that the CVO did not inform Ministers or the Permanent Secretary about the new disease ... All this shows that vets, perhaps like other professionals, do not think like civil servants and are reluctant to involve others in decisions they regard as falling within their remit even when formally those others stand higher in the hierarchy.' (Packer, 2006: 35). A somewhat similar view was taken by the head of the foot and mouth inquiry who told the House of Commons Defra Committee that "'the SVS is, and in many ways rightly, very proud, but rather an isolated organisation"' and that the silo culture he identified as a problem within the Government was also a problem within the then [MAFF].' (House of Commons, 2003: 27). The underlying concern here is

that state vets are part of a much larger profession, leading to a perception in some quarters that they may tend to be more concerned about their standing within the profession than adhering to the norms of the civil service. It may, however, be seen as primarily a question of allegiance: do they serve their profession first and the state second, or the other way round? At what point does their duty to the employer conflict with their legally underwritten professional responsibilities?

These problems are also echoed in the Taig report on the development and use of scientific advice in Defra. Taig (2004: 13) admits that ‘The interface between policy people and veterinary advisers is complex’, quoting a policy view as ‘Vets are our greatest asset and greatest liability’’. As far as the field service is concerned: ‘The SVS is very highly valued for its network of ears, eyes, hands and expertise. But it is also a large cadre of individually very highly qualified professionals who are used to doing their own diagnosis and prescription of solutions. They may in some cases undermine Defra policy by letting people know that their views are different’.

Taig was, however, writing at a time of transition. Defra was replacing the MAFF model of an independent science support function to one of having scientists located within policy divisions. Taig thought that there was ‘a particular concentration of lower satisfaction policy customers in the Animal Health & Welfare area.’ My observations of this team in a variety of settings were that relations between policy staff and veterinary advisers (as they are designated) were effective and harmonious. Given the technical character of most of the material being dealt with, policy staff relied on the expertise of veterinary advisers. Given the emphasis on evidence-based policy-making, they needed to utilise the knowledge that the advisers had of the research literature.

What should also be noted was that vets could be very useful politically. In meetings with stakeholders, they were able to call on their authority and expertise to question arguments put forward by external groups that did not appear to be well founded. They also often had credibility with particular stakeholder groups. Arguments that might not be accepted from policy civil servants could often be put across by vets who were thought by stakeholders to have a real understanding of the species concerned.

This is not to claim that no challenges remain which were reviewed in an exit discussion with the team leader and her deputy. Policy staff may consider themselves disadvantaged by vets who can do both policy and veterinary work whereas they are only equipped to do one of these. Some vets consider that they should get on with what they do best and policy development is not their area. Indeed, some vets are not interested in policy developments. Sometimes vets may be disappointed when their advice is not accepted because other considerations prevail in the policy process.

Motivations for becoming a state vet

The Working Party on Veterinary Career Development in 1973 sought to make a systematic comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of being a state vet compared with private practice (apart from pay). In the subsequent discussion, the final report of the working party is the principal source (National Archives, 1973f), although reference is made to an earlier version forming part of the minutes of the 5th meeting of the working party where interesting divergences emerge. (National Archives, 1973g).

The list of advantages is shorter than the list of disadvantages. ‘Opportunities for specialisation’ refers to the fact that ‘This is an attraction to veterinarians interested in

particular aspects of preventive medicine, veterinary research and veterinary aspects of public health.’ It has also been noted that ‘Traditionally security of employment has been a strong point in favour of the Civil Service.’ The earlier version noted ‘in the view of veterinarians this have been somewhat undermined by the Review and Reorganisation of Ministry Functions and the resultant redundancy in other areas of the Department.’ Opportunities for training were also seen as an incentive: ‘There is full provision for both in-service and post-graduate specialist training, including attendance at appropriate conferences.’ The earlier version also referred to the fact that no practice capital was required, although this would only apply if a vet wished to become a partner. It was also considered that ‘Improvements in outside practice have reduced the undoubted advantages of [longer] Civil Service holidays and [shorter working] hours.’

The list of disadvantages started with bureaucratic constraints: ‘Compared with the freedom of private veterinary practice there are in the Ministry’s service the constraints of working on a large hierarchical public organisation. There is also apprehension at what may be regarded as interference by laymen in veterinary matters and on the obligation to report to non-veterinary line management within a large and complex regional organisation.’ What was referred to as ‘Certain aspects of Field Duties’ really arose from the unbalanced nature of the age structure in the SVS at the time: ‘The physical nature of field duties bears heavily on the older men and currently due to the high age structure throws an undue strain on the younger particularly in outbreaks of notifiable disease.’ Another disadvantage was seen as long periods away from home and abnormally long hours during disease outbreaks: ‘The requirement to serve long and arduous hours of detached duty is no longer accepted as readily as in the past. The lack of domestic help and possibly earlier marriages make

it difficult for officers to accept absences from their families for any length of time'. 'Lack of Perquisites, particularly Accommodation and Cars' was 'undoubtedly a deterrent to young graduates hoping to marry and set up home on little or no capital.' Moreover, 'There is said to be widespread dissatisfaction among the Ministry's veterinarians with the lack of promotion prospects.' (National Archives, 1973f)

The earlier version contained a reference to 'Dissatisfaction with status of CVO. This refers to the CVOs position within the [Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, ADAS] organisation and its reflection in outside veterinary circles.' The SVS had been incorporated within ADAS from March 1971. This change had caused considerable resentment and was widely seen as an affront to the profession: 'This has resulted in a further undermining of professional status and much of the responsibility for professional activity has been placed in the hands of regional managers who, may be, but rarely are, veterinary surgeons.' (Special Correspondent, 1973). It might be argued that it was not unreasonable for vets working within the civil service to be subject to professional managers. However, 'Three-quarters or more of the veterinary duties are of an operational and statutory nature not directly related to general ADAS duties and this position cannot be expected to change for many years to come.' (National Archives, 1973h, 2). Apart from these operational problems, 'the Veterinary Arm differs radically from the rest of ADAS in that it operates with and through a large private veterinary sector.' (National Archives, 1973h, 3).

The CVO was seen as the representative of the SVS to the private sector and a guarantor of the standing of the state vets. Why, then, did the Working Party delete this point from their final report? They were lectured at some length by Sir Emrys Jones and Mr Perrin [sic]. Sir Emrys was director of ADAS and chief adviser to successive ministers of agriculture whose confidence he enjoyed. He insisted that

whilst concerned about any feelings of loss of status, 'management had emphasised the continuing status of the Veterinary Arm in various practical ways. For example, the CVO continues to have direct access to the Minister and Permanent Secretary as the Department's chief veterinary adviser and the title State Veterinary Service continues to be used where appropriate.' (National Archives, 1973f: 48).

The internal Lebrecht review conducted by a civil servant and implemented in 1995 was seen as a further set back to the status of vets within government and diminished the resources available to Animal Health Division. The CVO was blamed by some vets for failing to resist these changes. He was blamed for 'his part in the destruction of the [SVS]. In the mid 1990s he was the veterinary presence in the Lebrecht review which slashed the senior management of the SVS and merged divisions thereby reducing the number of managers.' (Windsor, 2002: 1).

These arrangements were changed again when ADAS was privatized in 1997. 'Field' vets became part of a separate agency in 2005 which was constituted as the Animal Health Agency in 2007. The compartmentalisation into different agencies does affect promotion prospects because formerly vets could move to some extent between field, policy and research posts. Vets also criticised the formation of Animal Health because it subsumed the SVS within a wider lay-controlled agency.

In an interview in May 2009, the vet within Defra responsible for recruitment argued that the process had changed from the old style of 'getting vets from somewhere' to broader talent management. It was an interesting time for the professions in government because of the greater emphasis on delivery within government. The emphasis on professional skills within government provided a clearer framework for vets. Being a vet within government was a challenging, interesting job with a clearer career structure than in the private sector.

An Australian comparison

In making a comparison with Australia, some key differences should be noted. First, Australia is a federal system in which many of the legal powers relating to animal health reside with the states whilst most of the funds are held by the federal government. One state CVO argued in interview that the professional cooperation of vets was essential to ensure effective cooperation between the Commonwealth and state governments. (Interview, Orange, NSW, 6 March 2009).

Second, the provision of farm veterinary services in remote rural areas has been a persistent problem and was the subject of a government report in 2003. This found that ‘rural veterinarians have to contend with rising costs, a reluctance of producers to utilise their services, long hours, limited social opportunities and schooling for their families. These factors all impact on the willingness of veterinarians to live in rural areas, create local shortages and could lead to a chronic shortage of production animal veterinarians.’ (Frawley, 2003: vii). In New South Wales, but not any other state, about 40 District Veterinarians in rural areas are employed by the Rural Land Protection Boards that are funded by a levy on farmers. However, even there it has proved difficult to fill posts in the remoter west of the state. As one respondent pointed out, vets were concentrated round the seaboard which was the most attractive place to live and where they were engaged in companion animal work.

In Australia as a whole in 2001, 591 vets were employed by government, 7.8 per cent of all veterinarians. (Frawley, 2003: 35). The number of vets in government service has fallen since the end of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Scheme (BTEC). As in Britain, the gender composition of the profession has been changing. ‘Of the average net increase [between 1981 and 2001] of 159 registered and practicing veterinarians a year, 100 (63% were female). Accordingly, the

percentage of females listed on the rolls increased from 15% to 39% between 1981 and 2001.’ (Frawley, 2003: 69)

Recruitment to the state veterinary service in Australia was for a long time influenced by the existence of a cadet scheme. Participants had their university education paid for and were then obliged to work for the government for the same period as that of their university education, five years. Having spent that length of time in government service, many stayed. However, in the 1970s free university education was introduced and the scheme fell into disuse. The last participants in it are now nearing retirement.

State vets who were interviewed argued that ‘Federal vets were always well paid because they had a separate pay scale from the 1960s.’ However, ‘A question always is, do you want to live in Canberra? It’s a politicians’ town in the middle of the bush, not a place you’d retire to.’ At state level, market forces can also intervene. Western Australia used to be one of the worst payers, but the ministers intervened to create a separate pay scale as a specialist calling offering 10 per cent more that placed vets between doctors and dentists and agricultural specialists. ‘It’s market forces that got specialist calling through – vets going to drive trucks in the mines. Two vets who became builders.’ (Interview, Perth WA, 16 February 2009). Victoria and South Australia used the FMD outbreak in Britain to lobby successfully for higher pay and Victoria now uses the same pay scale as the Commonwealth government. At federal level, it was argued that ‘[The] financial benefits of working in government have declined. Commonwealth and state superannuation funds very attractive, once worked for five years almost blackmailed to stay in, now super more widespread, portability. Salary levels have declined.’ (Interview, Canberra, 25 February 2009).

However, it was evident that non-monetary incentives were important in terms of choosing a government career. One respondent commented, 'I wanted to work with sheep, no such thing as a private practice that did sheep, Department of Agriculture only place I could go.' (Interview, Perth WA, 16 February 2009). Another respondent commented, 'Wanted to do something for farmers, sense of public good, strong culture of voluntary work, carried over from Second World War. A very satisfying career.' (Interview, Perth WA, 17 February 2009). A former cadet whose plan had been to get out into practice as soon as possible recalled, 'Through luck was put in a lab with a nice dynamic group of people, not what I expected in terms of working for government. A learning experience, I spent two years working in the Middle East doing all kinds of interesting work.' (Interview, Canberra, 24 February 2009). Another former cadet commented, 'Reason I've stayed, had a whole range of different jobs, travelled all over state, had some very interesting jobs.' (Interview, Brisbane, 3 March 2009). A Commonwealth respondent emphasised the contrast with private practice: 'You will always attract vets who don't want to work in practice, more regulated hours, lack of heavy field work.' (Interview, Canberra, 25 February 2009).

One respect in which working as a state vet as seen to have changed was that in the 1980s vets were encouraged to do field research and had the opportunity to do a PhD. 'Nowadays not core business, would only be allowed if fully funded.' (Interview, Perth WA, 17 February 2009). Another respondent saw the state service as being in competition with universities for recruits: 'As training increase, expectations increase. System [is] not able to provide intellectual stimulation and career prospects that people want. We've lost very good people to universities.'

Department can't promise academic stimulation to high flyers.' (Interview, Orange NSW, 5 March 2009).

The prestige of vets within government has been relatively high in Australia, reflecting the relative importance of agriculture in the economy, but that prestige is declining as the displacement of farming decreases in both economic and political terms. Within what was the agriculture department and is now the primary industries department, the CVO has been in a strong position, often serving as deputy secretary, although coordination between government structures was perceived as becoming more critical. There had been a 'lot of ill feeling about what was seen as a privileged track offered to vets, veterinary officer often in charge of local office.' However, vets had been downgraded since the end of the BTEC campaign. There had been a replacement of technocrats by bureaucrats. (Interview, Canberra, 25 February 2009).

One respondent said that state vet recruitment was now predominantly of women and the new recruits lacked awareness of how the industry operated. (Interview, Perth WA, 17 February 2009). A woman state vet noted, 'Females don't want to own a practice, they want to work for someone, often want to work part-time.' (Interview, Perth WA, 16 February 2009). UK evidence suggests that this is an age rather than a gender effect with younger vets of both sexes not wanting to be partners. An alternative view was that communication skills were now critical and bright women were often good communicators. (Interview, Brisbane, 3 March 2009).

Although the respondent who claimed that the outlook for the state veterinary service in Australia was 'grim' (Interview, Perth WA, 17 February 2009) may have been excessively gloomy, there was a sense that there were important challenges to be faced. Departments at state level were often in contraction mode and it was considered that the pursuit of long-term policy objectives could be derailed by short-

term contraction. (Interview, Orange NSW, 5 March 2009). One respondent argued that there needed to be more imagination about the role of vets: 'I have a vision of the veterinary profession as a focal point, relating to public health, zoonoses, food safety, wildlife health, biosecurity, environmental matters.' (Interview, Canberra, 24 February 2009). This is another way of expressing the knowledge exchange role for vets identified by Lowe. The move towards biosecurity agencies with a broader remit at both Commonwealth and state levels could open up new opportunities for state vets.

How does the construction of veterinary expertise within government affect its use and the policy-making process?

It should be noted that there may be an influence from the structure of government on how veterinary expertise is used. In Australia (unlike the UK where the implementation of the 2006 Animal Welfare Act is the responsibility of Defra's Animal Welfare Team) welfare legislation in three states is the responsibility of the Department of Local Government which is seen as having 'no stock experience or knowledge.' (Interview, Perth WA, 16 February 2009). It was alleged that the vet in this department in Western Australia was 'an animal welfare zealot, conducting police raids, a City person ... no understanding of industry.'

If veterinary expertise is integrated within policy-making teams, as is the current Defra model, as distinct from a 'scientific advice' model in which the expert or specialist is kept firmly in her place relative to the policy generalist, veterinary influence on policy-making is likely to be maximised. However, that cannot be guaranteed to survive and in any case a lot depends on the inclinations and personalities of individual actors. As clinicians, vets necessarily tend to be rather assertive individuals who have confidence in their expertise. Involvement in the

policy-making process requires a wider range of skills, including an awareness of what is politically possible. This was acknowledged by one of our Australian respondents who commented, 'If you want to stick with veterinary expertise there is a definite ceiling [in career terms]. (Interview, Canberra, 25 February 2009). Another respondent suggested that failures were often socio-political rather than biological because there had been a failure to appreciate the politics or sociology of the situation. (Interview, Orange NSW, 5 March 2009).

There are differences of perspective between government vets and their academic and private sector counterparts which can influence both the formulation and implementation of policy. A vet within the Defra bovine TB team took the view that there was a lot of tension between academic vets who emphasised cattle to cattle transmission and practising vets (who tend to emphasise the role of badgers). He added, 'That tension has made people take a position and there is hostile debate and lack of recognition of the other's position.' As far as private vets were concerned, 'Practising private vets have the ear of clients and very few of them are on message and talking veterinary rubbish a lot of the time, [they] have an intellectual arrogance.' (Interview, 14 May 2009).

'There is an atmosphere of mutual recrimination around the UK's patchy record in animal disease control.' (Lowe, 5.8: 7.9) This is exacerbated by disagreements within the veterinary profession and with other disciplines. However, as a vet in Defra pointed out, 'This shows how difficult it is to make policy when science points in slightly different directions and some of the science doesn't stack up with field experience, some of which is well grounded.' An alternative view would be that there is often insufficient scientific evidence and diseases are complex, perhaps leading to a lack of understanding of disease dynamics. Whatever the problems in

interpreting the available evidence, Defra has not sought to sideline veterinary expertise, but to integrate it more effectively with policy-making.

The debate about a nationalised veterinary service

The debate that took place within MAFF in 1961-3 on the creation of a nationalised veterinary service provides a useful lens to examine relations between the state and the veterinary profession. It never led to any specific action and the discussion was kept very much within government with even trusted external stakeholders such as the NFU and BVA being given limited information and even then on a strictly confidential basis. The Scottish NFU was lukewarm about the proposal stating that ‘they were not committed to the idea of a State-financed national veterinary service but they thought that some Government financial assistance should be given to encourage preventive methods, possibly through the Price Review. (National Archives, 1964a). When the issue first arose after it was raised by the president of the BVA in his presidential address, civil servants were somewhat unusually (given the strong tradition of consultation with outside interests in MAFF) ‘directed not to seek the views of organisations outside the Ministry’s service’. (National Archives, 1961a).

The debate was conducted within a set of assumptions about the role of the state in the economy that are very different from those that prevail in the 21st century, even though there was then a Conservative Government. In the meantime there has been a shift away from what is variously referred to as the ‘command state’ or the ‘Keynesian welfare state’ to a ‘regulatory state’ in which government’s role is the more indirect one of steering governance processes. (Moran, 2003) This was the era of the ‘mixed economy’ in which the state was seen to have a legitimate directive and even controlling role. It was assumed that government had a responsibility for the

productive efficiency of the economy. Hence, 'do it yourself' use of drugs by smaller farmers 'cannot be to the ultimate benefit of the agricultural economy.' (National Archives, 1963: 6). A nationalised service was seen as a means of controlling advice offered from pharmaceutical firms to farmers: 'We would expect ... that if there were a nationalised scheme they would be substantially curtailed and that farmers would tend to consult the nationalised service rather than the private firms.' (National Archives, 1963: 13). The scheme discussed involved the establishment of a hierarchical bureaucratic structure with a central board, regional board and local committees. Financial inducements might be offered to vets who were prepared to move to areas that were under supplied and the central board might 'refuse to sanction the opening of new practices in areas which already had a full quota of veterinary surgeons.' (National Archives, 1962a: 4) There might ultimately be a Ministry of Animal Health. Whilst vets would be allowed to undertake some private work on the National Health Service model, the general frame was a statist one with private practice seen as eventually withering away: [Private] practice will not disappear overnight. It will continue perhaps until other factors of a social, political or even economic nature render its separate existence unnecessary or even anachronistic.' (National Archives, 1963: 7).

While opinion within the SVS on the scheme was divided on the grounds of practicability, there was little opposition to the proposals on ideological grounds. One regional officer argued 'nationalisation would tend to interfere with incentive, free enterprise and competition, all essential conditions for a healthy profession.' (National Archives, 1962b: 1). Most respondents were more interested in whether the money could be instead to increase the size of Animal Health Division.

Another underlying assumption made by the president of the BVA was the supremacy of farm animal work:

[The] professions's prosperity is tied to that of agriculture. There will always be a small proportion of the profession that makes its entire living out of small animals and luxury horses. To the majority of those practising, however, such work is the cake of life while farm animal work is the bread and butter. (Jennings, 1962: 355).

The working party set up by MAFF did conclude that the nationalised service should be confined to livestock and working horses and dogs, but did concede that companion animals might eventually be included, perhaps on an insurance basis. Throughout the discussion, there were concerns about the political repercussions of the pets issue: 'Any move in the direction of a nationalised service which would expressly exclude "pet" or "luxury" animals would almost certainly invite some criticism from certain animal welfare societies.' (National Archives, 1963: 6). It was recognised that these bodies 'have powerful support from the public.' (National Archives, 1963: 12). There was concern that particularly in rural areas a nationalised service might reduce the resources available for small animal work. 'Inadequate provision and veterinary care for small animals and non-farm horses could give rise to quite serious political repercussions. Mr G. N. Gould, in his article on General Veterinary Practice said that "no government could run the political risk of denuding the country of the services of veterinary surgeons for household pets"'. (National Archives, 1963: 7).

The Ministry's working party found that:

Our own investigations lead us to believe that there is at the moment no formulated demand for a nationalised veterinary service within either the

veterinary profession or the agricultural livestock industry. Nevertheless, there are indications of a growing recognition amongst veterinary surgeons that some form of nationalised or centrally organised veterinary service may eventually be established. (National Archives, 1963: 4).

Why, then, did MAFF engage in extensive work on the subject? The topic was initiated by the presidential address at the BVA in 1961. The address 'precipitated the situation in that the kite which he flew has been spotted by other people in the Ministry.' (National Archives, 1961). In particular, 'The report has been seen by the Minister and it was decided that the problem should be considered within the Department.' (National Archives, 1962c: 1).

In his presidential address, Jennings argued that much of the autonomy of the veterinary surgeon was illusory. He related to this to broader trends in the economy, arguing that 'free enterprise is hampered in every walk of life.' As far as the veterinary surgeon was concerned, 'his free enterprise is sanctioned only by policy which is outside his control. Much of his work is meted out to him by the present policy of the Ministry of Agriculture and such policy can be changed virtually overnight.' (Jennings, 1962: 356). Within a nationalised service, vets would be in the position of the medical profession who 'no longer have to think in terms of what their patient can afford.' (Jennings, 1962: 357).

A particular concern of vets at the time was the loss of income from the apparent eradication of bovine TB. 'I estimate that in recent years as much as one-third of the income of many practices has been from [the scheme for the eradication of bovine tuberculosis].' (Wright, 1961: 244). It was thought unlikely that future disease control schemes would generate as much income. A contemporary radio discussion featured a vet who commented 'for a considerable time now many veterinary

practices have been subsidising themselves wrongly on fees received for tuberculin testing ... many of them are getting into such a state that unless economic stability is reached in the near future, many of them are going to be very shaky almost on the verge of bankruptcy.' (BBC, 1962). More generally, 'The greatest weakness of the present system is that it is the farmers who decide when professional assistance is required.' (Wright, 1961: 245). A nationalised service would provide a more stable income and one in which vets would have greater scope to exercise and develop their clinical skills.

Large animal vets might therefore gain some advantages from a nationalised service. MAFF was concerned 'that there would be a lack of co-operation from the more conservative members of the profession although time might effect a cure in this respect.' (National Archives, 1962a: 2). Given that MAFF also favoured the development of more group practices, 'One set-back in this respect might be the hostility which, at present, exists between some neighbouring practices.' (National Archives, 1962a: 3). For its part the National Farmers' Union was lukewarm about a nationalised veterinary service, but saw the debate as a possible way of attracting more government subsidies: 'The N.F.U. [Scotland] said they were not committed to the idea of a State-financed veterinary service but they thought that some Government financial assistance should be given to encourage preventive methods, possibly through the Price Review.' (National Archives, 1964).

What led the Ministry's Working Party to decide that the arguments in favour of nationalisation outweighed those against? They recognised that 'The problem of a nationalised veterinary service is a thorny one, beset with political, economic and social facets which, by their very nature, are not always examined objectively.' In part they considered that the demand for wider services reflected the success of the

SVS: 'The considerable intervention of the [SVS] in matters not associated with notifiable diseases and the L.V.I. [Local Veterinary Inspector] system have no doubt been partly responsible, albeit in a passive sense, for prompting this line of thought.' (National Archives, 1963: 19).

An important consideration in MAFF's thinking from the beginning that there was an imbalance in the advice available to farmers and if that if a more systematic centrally directed advice was available on preventive medicine, this would boost the productivity of the livestock sector:

It is well known that farmers are reluctant to pay for advice per se, but if this were part of a service to which they were entitled I believe they would be far more willing to accept and act on such advice. Since 1947 most farmers have been accustomed to free advice on technical matters. They do not get this in the veterinary field. There is little doubt that the veterinary profession could make a much greater contribution to the economic efficiency of our livestock production if a greater proportion of its effort was directed to preventive medicine and this is unlikely to be done unless there is some central directive. (National Archives, 1961b)

It was recognised from the beginning of the Working Party's discussions that the greatest problem was that of finance. There was a concern that the advantages in terms of more efficient veterinary services delivering a more prosperous livestock industry with reduced wastage due to diseases 'might only be obtained at a cost which could be prohibitive when compared with the advantages gained.' (National Archives, 1962a: 1). It was envisaged that greater use might be made of technical staff to undertake some tasks. (National Archives, 1962a: 2). Anticipating British membership of the common market and changes in the method of agricultural

support, it was thought that some of the existing annual subsidy could be diverted to the new service. Whilst a completely free service would be cheaper to administer, it 'could raise objections from taxpayers, particularly some sections of the urban population who even now find it very difficult to approve the payment of producer subsidies to the farming industry.' (National Archives, 1963a: 14). It was therefore proposed to fund the system in part from a levy based on the number of livestock, an early form of cost sharing.

The idea of 'farm animals on the national health' was seen as a contingency plan and no immediate action was taken following the report of the working party:

When we set up the Working Party to consider a nationalised veterinary service in November, 1961 there was a fair chance that we might need to make use of the findings of the Working Party pretty soon. This might have been particularly so if the Common Market negotiations had gone differently This is a most useful document to have on the files of the Division for it will enable us to deal at short notice with any future demands that might arrive in this connection.

(National Archives, 1963b).

With the election of the Labour Government in 1964, it was noted within MAFF that 'The new administration is likely to welcome a new approach to this problem of animal disease'. However, 'We do not think the time is ripe for such a health service even if we thought it was feasible – which we doubt.' (National Archives, 1964b).

Conclusions

How has the role of state vets changed over time in England and how has their changing role affected their influence on the policy process? First, the role of the state itself has changed considerably. It no longer sees itself as having a legitimate interventionist role in reducing the economic costs of production diseases: this is a

matter for the industry itself. It still has a role in relation to exotic disease outbreaks and the most prevalent and politically contentious endemic cattle disease, bovine TB. In the early 1960s, the state could seriously consider the creation of a nationalised veterinary service. In the 21st century this would be seen as an undesirable intervention in the workings of the market and an unacceptable extension of state power.

For a long time state vets were a largely neglected branch of the civil service who were not offered career prospects comparable to those of other specialist classes. This led to a crisis of recruitment in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The field service in particular is now reliant on recruitment from outside the UK, but Defra has taken a more sophisticated approach to recruitment. Veterinary policy advisers have become part of integrated teams working with policy specialists. However, the survival of this model is by no means assured. There is a view among older vets that veterinary status within government has fallen: for example retired CVOs were customarily knighted up until the 1960s. There have been challenges to the expertise of vets in disease outbreaks from epidemiologists. There was also a widely held perception that vets in academia were excluded by state vets during the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak.

In terms of the construction of veterinary expertise and its influence in the policy-making process, it should be noted that vets do not necessarily agree with each other. Observations in the civil service suggest that vets are often able to structure their work in such a way that they create their own operating space that reflects their particular interests. This process is not without limits and ultimately much depends on the influence that the CVO, still regarded as a key figure by the wider profession, exerts on ministers. At an operational level, however, vets often occupy influential

positions within particular teams, partly as a result of their position in the hierarchy, but more so as a result of their own efforts in making themselves indispensable to policy makers

Vets were placed in a more difficult position in a more contested area such as bovine TB where some of the scientific evidence was contradictory and there was perceived to be a tension between scientific evidence and field experience. There is, of course, an underlying difference in these skills. One is from experiential learning and one is from evidential. Experiential evidence does not lead to an understanding of the origins of herd breakdowns. It was evident that the vets in the team placed some value on field experience which argued that in some areas badgers were responsible for 80 per cent of the bovine TB problem. They were less likely to emphasise cattle-to-cattle transmission and environmental persistence than vets working in universities. This shows that there are different constructions of veterinary expertise. There was a perception that the ability of state vets to influence outcomes had declined: ‘In the bad old days or the good old days it was the imposition of a disease control policy under veterinary control and if you had so many brucellosis cases and the local veterinary manager said your herd had to go it went. “Good old days” of veterinary dictatorship.’ (Interview, 14 May 2009).

Vets in private practice are seen to be close to farmers on issues such as the causes of bovine TB. State vets operate in a different context and this may lead them to resort to constructions such as those of the ‘rogue badger’ to cope with policy challenges. (Grant, 2009). For some livestock farmers, the vet is a key source of expertise: ‘Everything I know about health management in this field has come from [farm’s vet] really ... it’s amazing what he has passed on to us, we’re very lucky to have him and pass on his knowledge.’ (Farm interview, 12 February 2009).

Ministers and senior civil servants may not refer to state vets in such glowing terms, indeed there have sometimes been reservations about when and how they have offered advice in a way that suggests that they are sometimes ‘off message’. However, faced with an exotic disease outbreak or a chronic endemic disease, the first resort of a minister will be to in house veterinary expertise. How that expertise is provided and how it is constructed remains an important issue.

References

- Anderson, I. (2001) *Foot and Mouth Disease 2001: Lessons to be Learned Inquiry Report*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Barlow, J.A. (1945) *The Scientific Civil Service* Cmd. 6679. London: HMSO.
- BBC (1962) Midland Home Service, transcript of ‘Living on the Land’ broadcast, 13 December 1962.
- Bevir, M. and Rhodes, R.A.W. (2003) *Interpreting British Governance*. London: Routledge.
- Bickerstaff, K. and P. Simmons (2004) ‘The right tool for the job? Modelling, spatial relationships and styles of scientific practice in the UK foot and mouth crisis’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22:393-412.
- Bourne, J., Donnelly, C.A., Cox, D.R., Gettinby, G., McInerney, J.P., Morrison, W.I. and Woodroffe, R. (2007) *Bovine TB: the scientific evidence*. London: Defra.
- Burnham, J. And Pyper, R. (2008) *Britain’s Modernised Civil Service*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foster, C.D. (2001) 'The Civil Service Under Stress: The Fall in Civil Service Power and Authority', *Public Administration*, 79, 3: 725-49.

Frawley, P.T. (2003) *Review of Rural Veterinary Services: Report*. Canberra: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia.

Fry, G.K. (1993) *Reforming the Civil Service*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Fulton, Lord (1968) *The Civil Service: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Civil Service 1966-68*, Cmnd 3638. London: HMSO.

Garner, R. (2008) 'The Politics of Animal Rights', *British Politics*, 3:1, 110-19.

House of Commons (2003), Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, 16th Report of Session 2002-2003, *Vets and Veterinary Services*. London: the Stationery Office.

Grant, W. (2009) 'Intractable Policy Failure: the Case of Bovine TB', unpublished paper.

Holdgate, M.W. (1980) *Review of the Scientific Civil Service*. London. HMSO.

Hoskyns, J. (2000) *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution*. London: Aurum Press.

Jennings, S. (1962) 'The Future of the Veterinary Profession in Britain. General Practice', *British Veterinary Journal*, 118: 9: 355-58.

Kellner, P. and Lord Crowther-Hunt (1980) *The Civil Servants: An Inquiry into Britain's Ruling Class*. London: Macdonald.

Krebs, J.R., Anderson, T., Clutton-Brock W.T., *et al.* (1997). *Bovine tuberculosis in cattle and badgers: an independent scientific review*. London: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Moran, M. (2003) *The British Regulatory State*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

National Archives (1940-1948): MAF 39/420, A Note on Professional Staff at Weybridge and Lasswade by D. Cabot.

National Archives (1953-8) T217/67 *Veterinary Officers: History of the Class*, 'Notes on Salary Movements and Organisation of Veterinary Staff'.

National Archives (1954) 'Vets: 1953 Salary Revision', memorandum from J.M. Forsyth to Mrs Williams, 9th August.

National Archives (1957) MAF 224.247 'Notes for meeting of 6th December with Staff Side – Re-organisation of Veterinary Services.'

National Archives (1961a): MAF 287/101, J N Ritchie, 21 November 1961.

National Archives (1961b): MAF 287/101, A G Benyon to Mr Reid, 12 September 1961.

National Archives (1962a): MAF 287/101, 'JEF'.

National Archives (1962b): MAF 287/101, 'Nationalised Veterinary Service', letter to J C Wallace, 7 June 1962.

National Archives (1962c): MAF 287/101, 'Working Party to Consider a Nationalised Veterinary Service.' Note on meeting held at Tolworth on Friday 26th January, 1962.

National Archives (1963a) MAF 287/101 'Revised Draft (2): Report of the Working Party Set Up To Consider a Nationalised Veterinary Service'.

National Archives (1963b) MAF 287/1-2, Note from J.G. Carnochan, 28 June 1963.

National Archives (1964a) 'Note of Meeting on 27th May 1964 between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Scotland, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland and the British Veterinary Association (Scottish Section)'.

National Archives (1964b): Memorandum from J G Carnochan to J Hensley and others, 16 November.

National Archives (1965a): MAF 224/316, Letter from Coli to W Boss

National Archives (1965b): MAF 224/318, Letter from H Hardman to Sir P Allen, 23rd July.

National Archives (1969a) CSC/5/1746 Letter from A C Wanstall, 27 October.

National Archives (1969b) CSC/5/1746 Letter from Miss J A M Oliver to Mr Burrett, 4 December.

National Archives (1969c) CSC 5/1746, Notes of a Meeting held at Steel House, Tothill Street, on Thursday 23 October.

National Archives (1969d), CSC 5/1746, 'Veterinary Service – Recruitment and Pay', letter from W G Boss to Miss J A M Oliver, 17 September.

National Archives (1973a), MAF 184/331, 'Report from G Wilde on visit to South-West'.

National Archives (1973b), MAF 184/332, 'Working Party on the State Veterinary Service', letter from P Thomas to G Wilde, 15 February.

National Archives (1973c), MAF 184/330, letter from the Institution of Professional Servants to J. Kelsey, 20 March 1973.

National Archives (1973d), MAF 184/330, 'Comparative Grading of Professional Staff'.

National Archives (1973e) MAF 184/332, 'Veterinary Recruitment', memorandum from G L Wilde to Mr S L Palmer, 18 July.

National Archives (1973f) MAF 184/332 'Working Party on Veterinary Career Development – Report'.

National Archives (1973g) MAF 184/330, 'Advantages of Ministry Employment. Appendix A to Minutes of 5th Meeting of WPCD (Vets)'.

National Archives (1973h) MAF 184/330, 'Veterinary Buildings', letter from A C L Brown (Tolworth) to Mr J G Kelsey (Whitehall Palace West).

- Packer, R. (2006) *The Politics of BSE* Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Pearce, J.W.R., Pugh, L.H. and Ritchie, Sir J. (1965) (eds) *Animal Health: a Centenary, 1865-1965*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- PIU (Performance and Innovation Unit) (2000) *Adding it Up: Improving Analysis and Modelling in Central Government*. London: Cabinet Office.
- Popper, P. (1959) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchinson.
- Special Correspondent (1973) 'Twelve years' erosion in the State service', *Veterinary Drug*, March.
- Rothschild, Lord (1971) *A Framework for Government Research and Development*. Cmnd. 4814. London: HMSO.
- Taig, T. (2004) *The Development and Use of Scientific Advice in Defra*. London: TTAC Limited.
- Tennant, M. (1965) *Report of the Committee of Review into the Organisation of the Scientific Civil Service*. London: HMSO.
- Trend, B. (1963) *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Organisation of the Civil Service*. Cmnd. 2171. London: HMSO.
- Wilkinson, K. (2007) 'Evidence Based Policy and the Politics of Expertise: A Case Study of Bovine Tuberculosis', Centre for Rural Economy Discussion Paper Series No.12, University of Newcastle.
- Windsor, R. (2002) 'What has happened to our institutions?', talk to the Central Veterinary Society.
- Woods, A. (2004) *A Manufactured Plague: The History of Foot and Mouth Disease in Britain*. London: Earthscan.
- Wright, J.G. (1961) 'The Veterinary Profession, Past, Present and Future. 3 – The Future', *The Veterinary Record*, 73:10, 245-7.

Ziegler, P. (1993) *Wilson*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.