

JOINT COMMITTEE

23rd February 2012

Nuffield Scholarship Award For Joanne Nash, Animal Health Officer

Recommendation

That members note the report

Contribution to Priorities/ Recommendations

The work of what was formerly the County's Animal Health team is a key element of preventing notifiable animal diseases like foot and mouth from having the devastating impact they can have on Worcestershire's rural economy. This award recognises the level of excellence achieved by this team and its individual staff members, particularly Joanne Nash.

Introduction/Summary Background

Joanne Nash an Animal Health Technical Officer and authorised Inspector with Worcestershire Regulatory Services who was awarded a Nuffield Farming Scholarship on 18th January 2012. This is one of only 20 awarded in the UK and will require Joanne to apply her skills and professional knowledge outside of the UK to a range of animal health issues. Jo's chosen topic links into the Better Regulation agenda that the service is seeking to work to going forward.

Report

The Nuffield Scholarship awards study bursaries to allow enthusiastic individuals to explore topics of their own choice in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, aquaculture and associated industries. Scholars are able to travel anywhere in the world, visiting one or a series of countries to further their knowledge and understanding. Having completed the Scholarship, a 10,000 word paper must be produced by the scholar which is then presented at the Annual Nuffield Conference. Scholars join a worldwide network and enjoy a programme of regular study meetings and visits held in the UK and abroad, in addition to one-off specialist industry conferences. The scholarship comes with a bursary of £6,500.

	<p>The study paper that Jo is required to submit as part of the scholarship will be titled; “Earned Recognition through On-Farm Compliance. Is This the Way Forward? Are the Welfare Codes Integral to This?” Jo will address the level of intervention inspections that farmers currently receive asking if all of these visits completely necessary and looking at whether they could they be combined. Through her work she will seek to question what real benefits farmers get from such interventions, how much they protect the consumer and whether they are little more than tick box exercises.</p> <p>Earned recognition is seen by Government as a key part of the Better Regulation agenda for reducing the overall burdens on business. Currently, there is little evidence to suggest that inspections carried out under certain farm assurance schemes are substantial enough to satisfy not only consumer requirements but also statutory rules and regulations for disease control and welfare needs. Their main selling point from a farmers perspective seems to be a slight improvement in the price that can be obtained from the product. If earned recognition is to play a part in reducing the inspection burden on farm businesses it is important that assurance schemes can come up to standard in terms of the protections they will offer to farmers and the public as, without this, it will not be possible to reduce the level of local authority and other official interventions in line with Government requirements.</p> <p>Jo will initially embark on a trip to Amsterdam with the other selected scholars leaving on 22 February 2012. This is to be followed with a visit to Eastern Europe to look at general farming standards, custom, and practice and in particular compliance with European legislation. In addition, as many of the farm workers currently in the UK are from Poland, Romania and Lithuania, Jo will gain an understanding of the background of standards and practice they arrive with.</p> <p>Jo has also met and discussed her scholarship application with Mr David Bayel QSO (Director of MAF New Zealand) who is very interested in her proposed paper and has invited Jo to work with his inspectors there.</p>
Financial Implications	None
Sustainability	Knowledge gained from the study could contribute to the sustainability of farming, locally.
Contact Points	Andy Ferguson Joanne Nash
Background Papers	
