

# EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

## PUBLIC

**Title:** Provision of Official Veterinarian and Meat Inspector Services at Sand Bay Abattoir for 2019 'high' Season.

**Paper Number:** 158/18

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**Responsible Director:** Director of Natural Resources

**Report Author:** Veterinary Officer

**Portfolio Holder:** MLA Teslyn Barkman

**Reason for paper:** This paper is submitted to Executive Council:  
For policy decision (including budgetary policy)

**Publication:** Yes

**Previous papers:** 120/12

**List of Documents:** Annex I – number of some routine veterinary services carried out 2012-2017

---

### 1. Recommendations

Honourable Members are recommended to approve:

- (a) The employment of a temporary Official Veterinarian (OV) for the 2019 abattoir 'high' season in addition to the 3 full time vets currently in post
- (b) The addition to Veterinary Services budget of £17,000

### 2. Additional Budgetary Implications

	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>Annual Recurring</b>
Operating Budget	£17,000	£17,000

### 3. Executive Summary

- 3.1. Members are asked to approve the filling of the temporary official veterinarian (OV) post for the 2019 'high' season which will be in addition to the 3 full time veterinary officers in post. This is to ensure that the normal full time clinical and regulatory functions of the veterinary service, plus all increased regulatory functions are met during the forthcoming high season at Sand Bay Abattoir, where it is intended that production will be increased to 1000 animals per day.

### 4. Background and Links to Islands Plan and Directorate Business Plan/s

- 4.1. **Background:** An official veterinarian (OV) is legally required to be present when killing is taking place at the abattoir to ensure that slaughter and production is carried out in line with national and EU welfare and hygiene legislation. OVs are required to sign export certification for product leaving the Falklands, to guarantee to consumers and the authorities in the importing countries that those legislative and production requirements have been met and that the product is fit for human consumption. Prior to 2012, FIG employed 2 full time veterinary officers and each year between January and May employed a temporary meat hygiene inspector and official veterinarian to provide regulatory functions at Sand Bay Abattoir. Given NAAFI, oil rig and cruise vessel potential markets FIMCo requested official veterinary presence during the 'non-export' season also so all product was deemed suitable for 'export' i.e. produced under EU approved conditions (and thus acceptable to many more potential markets). In 2012 EXCO gave approval (paper 120/12) for a third full time Veterinary Officer post to be created due to increasing regulatory services required at Sand Bay Abattoir during the 'non-export' season (and increasing activity in the clinic and other areas). The 'export' and 'non-export' seasons were renamed the 'high' and 'low' seasons because all products, all year round, were produced under approved EU conditions. It was deemed appropriate to employ a third veterinarian who could provide meat inspection and OV services at the abattoir but who could also work as a clinician, inspect fishing vessels and carry out the many other tasks required by a FIG veterinary officer (as opposed to employing a meat hygiene inspector (MHI) who would have had to be recruited from overseas to work only 2 days a week). It was intended that the 3 full time vets would cover all OV duties required at Sand Bay Abattoir on a 3 week rota (Abattoir duties/clinical duties/admin tasks). They would carry out OV and meat inspection duties during the low season and an additional temporary MHI would be employed during the 'high' season when production at the abattoir was full time. Due to various staffing issues (sabbaticals, resignations etc.) dedicated OVs still had to be employed for several years and the 3 full time vets working on a 3 week rota did not provide regulatory services fully at the abattoir until the 2018 high season.

- 4.2 **2018 Season:** While OV services were provided satisfactorily during this 2018 season it meant that for 3.5 summer months the rest of the veterinary service was understaffed as effectively there were only 2 vets available in the clinic at any one time as one was always full time at the abattoir. Summer leads to an increase in clinical work including farm and equine work, the first *loligo* season of the year begins, other vessel activity is higher leading to an increase in the amount of ship sanitation inspections and the work load in the clinic is steadily increasing (see Annex I). OVs often worked 6.30am – 5pm

and it was not possible to carry out any current or ongoing administrative or follow up clinical tasks during ‘abattoir week’ as the OV duties were indeed full time. Abattoir duty weeks were followed by clinical and on call weeks and Veterinary Officers found it mentally and physically difficult to fulfil all the tasks required of them. FIMCo found having 3 different OVs with different opinions and ideas frustrating and requested that a more consistent approach be found this coming season.

**4.3 Current budget and charges to FIMCo:** Currently the 2018/19 veterinary budget allows for the full time employment of 3 veterinarians and a seasonal MHI. During the high season FIMCo are invoiced monthly for all costs relating to services provided by the FIG employed OV and MHI (salary etc but FIG bear the cost of recruitment and flights – as negotiated with FIMCo in 2016 – this can be subject to review in the future). During the low season FIMCo are charged a monthly fee of £1301 to cover OV presence at the abattoir (roughly 2 days a week). The 2012 approval of a third full time vet post was based, to some extent, on the fact that reimbursement from FIMCo covered 40% of this third vets salary in the low season and notionally 100% during the high season (originally it was 50:50). During the period that another temporary OV is employed for abattoir duties FIG will no longer be reimbursed the costs of the third full time established veterinary officer post, but the majority of the costs of the seasonal OV will be reimbursed from FIMCo as per normal.

#### **4.4 Working on the slaughter line:**

4.4.1 Currently, during the high season, one MHI works on the slaughter line and performs the following tasks:

- Inspects eviscerated carcasses and the red offal (heart, lungs and kidneys)
- Trims out any pathology (eg boils, pneumonia, cysts, bruising, arthritis etc)
- Tags the carcass for any relevant pathology seen
- Detains any carcasses with severe pathology or contamination
- Stamps the inspected carcasses
- Inspects the green offal (guts) in the gut chute behind the inspection post
- Records any relevant pathology in the guts (often ‘bladder cysts’ are found in the green offal and their incidence is very relevant currently with the continuing hydatids eradication campaign and PhD)
- Empties the gut chute

4.4.2 In past seasons one MHI has been sufficient and they can just about keep up with the maximum speed of the line of 100 sheep per hour but the speed dictates that occasional pathologies in carcasses and frequently pathologies in the green offal are missed. Given the longstanding hydatid eradication programme in the Falklands and the current PhD<sup>1</sup> study to try and eradicate this disease once and for all it is imperative that all *Echinococcus* and *Taenia* cysts are visualised, removed and recorded. Only 2 half hour breaks occur during the slaughter day and generally the OV relieves the MHI before his break time so they can get a decent rest as, because they are near the end of the line often the operatives at the start of the line are back from break before the MHI has finished inspecting the current lot of sheep. It doesn’t take 30 minutes for a newly killed sheep to travel down the line so without relief, the MHI would only get approximately 15 minutes break twice a day which is not adequate.

- 4.5 **2019 high season:** FIMCo intends to slaughter 1000 sheep a day in the coming season with an increased line speed of 125 sheep per hour. The MHI is the limiting factor in maximum line speed so as to not affect FIMCo efficiency and productivity, and to ensure all carcasses are inspected fully and properly, more than one person will be required on the slaughter line for the majority of the day. If the sheep are young, with little pathology, one MHI would cope for most of the day but as soon as they are killing mutton there will be trimming and pathology monitoring to do. Mutton make up the majority of animals killed at FIMCo during the high season and this season FIMCo intend to process cull sheep during the high season also, which have increased incidence of pathologies. It would seem most appropriate for the OV to assist the MHI on the slaughter line in between specific OV duties. OVs carry out a variety of regulatory tasks but can also perform meat inspection, whereas if 2 MHIs were employed they could not perform any further tasks in their ‘spare time’ and the full time FIG vets would have to provide OV cover which previously left the veterinary clinic understaffed. The resident veterinary officers would, of course, provide assistance to the OV and MHI if and when required.
- 4.6 The 2018-2022 **Island Plan** envisions “the sustainable economic, social and political development of the Falkland Islands for the benefit of all residents” and in particular the economic development in relation to agriculture includes the supporting and augmenting of economic development in camp, increasing the diversity of farm businesses and the profile of our high quality exports and to drive local and international market opportunities for agricultural products. Therefore the increased production of FIMCo (and thus the gains to farmers providing the animals to make the product) must be supported and regulated competently by the veterinary service. The Island Plan also ‘recognises the importance of good mental health’ and declares that ‘we will ensure that everyone within our community is supported to enjoy a healthy lifestyle’ therefore the provision of adequate staff during extremely busy times of year is paramount.

<sup>1</sup>FIG, in partnership with the University of Salford, have engaged Dominic West, a parasitology PhD student who has begun his PhD study into *Echinococcus granulosus* in a bid to discover how prevalent the worm still is in the Falklands, how it is spread and how well it survives on pasture and how we may achieve complete eradication of this zoonotic parasite.

## 5. Options and Reasons for Recommending Relevant Option

### 5.1. Option 1 - do nothing - Employ 1 x MHI from overseas and cover OV duties ‘in-house’

Advantages	Disadvantages
No change in previous seasonal costs to FIMCo (one OV one MHI)	Decrease in normal vet service provision in the face of increasing workload (see annex I for more information)
FIG only have to pay for flights for one officer (MHI)	Full time vets adversely affected physically and mentally. Risk of staff being off long term and abattoir product not being produced correctly.
No OV recruitment or accommodation	Increased pressure on support staff in vet

costs to FIG	service/Dept of Agriculture
	OV will have to spend <u>at least</u> 50% of time helping MHI on the slaughter line so general OV admin and regulatory tasks may be affected with no further staff to provide assistance
	Inconsistent guidance and focus from different vets was unpopular with FIMCo

### 5.2 Option 2 – employ 2 x MHIs from overseas and cover OV duties ‘in house’

Advantages	Disadvantages
OV will not have to work on the slaughter line therefore can focus entirely on OV tasks	Decrease in normal vet service provision in the face of increasing workload (see annex I for more information)
	Full time vets adversely affected physically and mentally. Risk of staff being off long term and abattoir product not being produced correctly.
	Increased pressure on support staff in vet service/Dept of Agriculture
	Potentially not enough work for 2 full time MHIs every day but cannot perform any other tasks in any spare time
	Inconsistent guidance and focus from different vets was unpopular with FIMCo
	FIG will need to accommodate 2 overseas recruits (but this is just like most years previously)
	Extra cost to FIMCo - 2 full time MHIs <u>plus</u> OV charges

### 5.3 Option 3 – employ 1 x MHI and 1 x OV from overseas – RECOMMENDED

Advantages	Disadvantages
Normal veterinary service provision as 3 full time vets present during the summer	OV will have to spend <u>at least</u> 50% of time helping MHI on the slaughter line so general OV admin and regulatory tasks may be affected (but assistance from full time vets can be provided)
More consistent guidance for FIMCo	FIG will need to accommodate 2 overseas recruits (but this is just like most years previously)
Normal charges to FIMCo, (one OV one MHI)	Extra budget required to pay for temporary position but majority of costs invoiced to

	FIMCo and the portion of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> resident vets salary normally invoiced to FIMCo will not be reclaimed
--	--

## 6. Resource Implications

### 6.1. Financial Implications

Detail	Budget Code	cost £
Salary for 3.5 months	0401 0310	12,000
Additional hours	0401 0310	3000
rent	0401 1414	1500
MST/RPC	0401 0332	500
Total extra vet budget needed		17,000

- FIMCo only trialled killing cull sheep at the end of April 2018 and do not start planning their forecasted kill for the next season until July. Therefore the increased production and the staff needed could not have been planned for in the 2018/19 budget process because it was too far in advance of the FIMCo 2019 season forecast and planning.
- This amount is a one off supplementation and if necessary can be budgeted for in the 2019/20 budget process

### 6.2. Human Resource Implications

Human Resources Department will have to assist the Department of Agriculture in the recruitment of 2 overseas posts which was routine for the 'high' season, although for 2018 it was MHI only. The employee who often comes to act as OV is likely to be able to return this coming year so there should not be the need for lengthy interview rounds.

### 6.3. Other Resource Implications

Housing department will need to provide 2 bedsits or flats for the 3.5 months of the season which was the previous requirement although that reduced to a single unit in 2018.

## 7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. An official veterinarian is legally required to be present when killing is taking place at the abattoir to ensure that slaughter and production is carried in line with national and EU welfare and hygiene legislation. If these legal requirements are not met it could significantly impact on the Falkland Islands export markets.

## 8. Environmental & Sustainability Implications

- 8.1. None

## **9. Significant Risks**

- 9.1. Failure to provide adequate staff to inspect all the carcasses fully risks sending inadequate product for human consumption which will affect consumer choices about our product. The increased production planned by FIMCo for the 2019 season absolutely necessitates more than one inspector working on the line as the speed of production will be too fast for just one to adequately inspect, trim and tag all carcasses and offal as needed. Using the 3 full time vets to provide regulatory services at the abattoir full time during the high season leaves the vet clinic understaffed which risks the level of service we can provide not only to the clinical work we undertake but to other public health services such as regulation of the fishing industry and the provision of ship sanitation inspections, many inspections of which occur on weekends. Failure to provide adequate staff not only risks the service we provide, it also increases the risk further to the service if any of the current full time staff are subsequently absent for any period of time (eg due to ill health, having to return overseas etc)

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1. Relevant stakeholders are really only FIMCo and the veterinary service, both of whom have been consulted, along with MLA Barkman.

## **11. Communication**

- 11.1. The outcome of this paper is largely for the Department of Natural Resources to implement, who can also liaise with the housing section and FIMCo as necessary.

**Annex I – number of some routine veterinary services carried out 2012-2017**

	2012 (2009-10 biennial report figures)	2017	Comments
Ship sanitation inspections	30	37	
Fishing vessel inspections	102	71	FV inspections dropped since 2012 as a new system of one large annual audit and 1-2 smaller inspections was introduced as opposed to visiting a vessel every time it was in port, however the number of inspections will increase again in 2018 as new EU legislation requires EU flagged vessels transshipping in the FI to be inspected also
Fish health certs issued	238 (19.8/month)	297	To date in 2018 we have already issued 327 fish export certificates as new EU legislation requires EU flagged vessels to have transshipping inspections and certificates raised in the Falkland Islands
Presence at Sand Bay abattoir	Pre-2012 only required during 'export' season	Full time during 3-4 summer months, 1-2 days a week during rest of year	Increasing effort to export more product, more types of product (eg offal which was previously discarded) and to more, new markets generates more work for veterinary service
Meat Export health certs issued	42	50	
Import permits issued	34	48	
Pet dogs registered	138	176	Population of camp working dogs has remained fairly constant and number of MPA dogs varies
Cat speys	(37)	45	Already to date in 2018 we have performed 49 routine cat speys
Cat vaccinations	(177)	226	To date in 2018 we have performed 253 routine cat vaccinations
Horses grazing on Stanley common	58	66	
Lab samples processed indicating	213 (2016 – 2012 figures not available)	394	

bloods taken etc			
BREXIT	N/A	N/A	Amount of work BREXIT may generate is unknown but potentially some legislation will have to be changed, new export health certificates and requirements needed for product and pet imports into UK and there will likely be some biosecurity amendments to make for products from UK.