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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Firstly, may we take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy New Year.

We are delighted to announce that OLA has been awarded the contract to administrate and promote our parent company - HI Health Ltd. This commenced on 01 February 2005 – exactly four years from OLA's official launch. OLA remains a separate company, so its future is not financially dependant HI Health Ltd.

While tendering for this contract OLA had three main objectives:-

1. We did not want OLA to lose out financially or to miss out on the opportunity to develop;
2. We wanted HI Health to remain viable.

SAC previously carried out a percentage of the administration as well as the laboratory testing for HI Health. As they did not tender to retain either of these jobs, the administration was awarded to OLA and all testing pertaining to the scheme was awarded to BioBest Laboratories of Edinburgh.

We look forward to our new partnership with BioBest and strengthening our contact with all existing members as well as recruiting as many new members as possible.

LETTER FROM BARTI SYNGE, SAC

We did not want to go public with this exciting news until OLA had met with BioBest to clarify all procedures under the new regime, but unfortunately Barti Syngé of SAC chose to send out a letter dated 14 January 2005 to all HI Health members stating that they would all be transferred to PCHS (Highlands and Islands).

PCHS stands for "Premium Cattle Health Scheme" and is run by the SAC.

HI Health members can not and will not be transferred to this scheme unless they choose to do so themselves – it is in no way automatic.

LETTER FROM MICHAEL CURSITER

HI Health Chairman, Michael Cursiter, was compelled to write to all members following the letter they had received from Barti Syngé, as it caused a great amount of confusion.

Hopefully he managed to clarify the situation, but if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact OLA or Michael himself.

Michael and the rest of the HI Health Board of Directors were put under intense pressure by SAC not to go to tender. After being exposed to some of the politics, we should all be indebted to them for retaining a clear focus throughout and insuring that HI Health remained predominantly farmer led.

BIOBEST LABORATORIES

BioBest Laboratories Ltd was awarded the contract for all testing of samples pertaining to the HI Health scheme.

The company was established in 1995 by Dr David Snodgrass who had previously led the microbiological research division of the Moredun Research Institute.

The business is located in a modern well-equipped and flexible laboratory facility at the Pentlands Science Park near Penicuik in Midlothian.

Their current staff of 26 includes three veterinary surgeons with PhDs and 15 graduate scientists.

Helen Mills BSc is the Contract Manager. She is a Senior Virologist and has worked at BioBest for 5 years, and has in-depth experience of all our testing requirements.

Helen is the daughter of an Orkney farmer, which is also a very useful attribute!

They aim to give results as quickly as possible. It is hoped that in most cases you should receive screen test results within seven working days.

BioBest will be contacting all participating vet practices with proposed arrangements if they have not already done so.

THURSO LAB

As SAC did not tender to continue testing our samples, they may have further jeopardised the future of the SAC Veterinary Science Laboratory in Thurso.

All BVD screen and herd tests from Orkney and Shetland were sent to Dr Sandy Clark in Thurso where they were registered but ultimately ended up at their Edinburgh laboratory for testing which is in close proximity to BioBest.

CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

There will be changes to your annual membership as until now, OLA members have only had to pay Level 1 membership which is the £20, £30 or £50 (depending on the number of breeding cows) as OIC paid the Level 2 membership which is the fee for taking part in disease eradication and accreditation.

From the 01 February 2005, all OLA and HI Health members will pay their annual Level 1 membership plus an additional Level 2 membership if they wish to take part in disease testing for BVD, Johnes, IBR and Leptospirosis.

The Level 2 fee is £77.50, but this includes the lab fees of one annual BVD screen test of 10 animals. The motive behind including the lab fees in this membership is that we are almost certain that under the new Land Management Contracts (LMC's) you will be able to claim back 75% of membership and sampling costs of recognised health schemes. Lab fees will not be eligible, hence their inclusion in the Level 2 membership fee.

We have calculated that if you are a farmer with over 50 breeding cows you will be able to pay your membership fees, have an annual BVD screen and Level 1 visit for accreditation purposes for around £50 per year after claiming back the percentage of these costs.

As Michael Cursiter stated in his recent letter, this offer will be open for a five year period, so everyone will be able to claim five times each after the scheme begins.

If you wish to be a member of HI Health Level 1 but do not want to carry out any disease testing, you will not need to pay the Level 2 membership.

MEMBERSHIP RATES FOR CROFTERS

If you live on a **registered croft** with **under 20 breeding cows**, you are eligible to join as a "Township".

Townships may consist of up to 20 members or up to 200 breeding cows – whichever limit is reached first. Each Township must also nominate one person as a point of contact, as newsletters, screen reminders, accreditation etc will be sent to this nominee who will then distribute them to the rest of that group.

For example, 5 crofts that have 15 suckler cows each can join as one membership. As they have a combined total of 75 cows, they would pay Level One membership of £50 (£10 per farm). They would also share the cost of the Level Two membership, but this would not include lab fees for a BVD screen of ten, as many crofts do not have ten young animals to test.

If you eligible for this offer, you could get together with other crofters to reduce your costs.

You may then contact the HI Health/OLA office to make arrangements.

We hope this goes some way in addressing the needs of small holdings.

HI HEALTH/OLA/BIOBEST LAUNCH

Representatives from HI Health/OLA and BioBest will be present at the second February Perth Bull Sales, and our official launch of the new partnership will take place there on Monday 21 February 2005.

If you are in Perth for these sales please call past the stand. We hope to have our new revised Health Plan on demonstration.



We hope that this will also be an opportunity to sign up new members.

HI HEALTH/OLA PROMOTION

HI Health Ltd is the largest livestock health scheme in the United Kingdom. It is now available to all farmers throughout Scotland.

This should increase the market for health scheme stock, as the more farms that are participating, the more farmers there will be looking for health status replacements.

We now have an increased opportunity to use what farmers in the north of Scotland have achieved as a role model example for the rest of the country.

Thanks mainly to reporter Claire Powell, OLA has featured in just about every farming publication, and latest developments will hopefully require follow-up articles.

The main benefits of being a HI Health member are:-

- HI Health Ltd is a farmer led organisation – farmers working for farmers.
- We can offer the complete package – health planning, disease control and eradication and promotion of accredited livestock.
- We are very competitively priced.

PLANNING TO BUY A BULL?

If you are travelling to Perth shortly, or you are planning to buy a bull this spring it is worth considering the risks involved.

It is very important to isolate all new stock brought on to your holding for a period of at least 21 days, as any “bugs” they are carrying should wear off in this time, as well as adhering to the rules of the scheme. This is especially important if your calving has started or is about to start. You should also consider testing for other diseases as well as BVD such as TB, Johnes, Leptospirosis and IBR.

BVD

If you have bought a bull from south that has not been vaccinated against BVD infection, we strongly recommend that he is isolated and tested – even if he was advertised as being clear.

Bulls that test clear at home could easily come into contact with the virus at market or during transportation. This is why it is important to vaccinate the bull **before** it goes to market.

We have had many cases of bulls that have been bought because they were clear “white” (antibody negative), only to test “green” (antibody positive) after it has arrived home. When a white bull comes into contact with the virus he will turn red for a short while before going green, but his semen may remain infected for up to 20 weeks.

Ideally you should look to purchase a bull that has tested white (antibody negative) and has been vaccinated prior to sale.

The “Selling and Buying Bulls” leaflet we sent to all OLA members last October will now also be sent to all other HI Health members and vets.

If you require another copy of this leaflet, please contact the OLA office.

JOHNES

It is also advisable to test your bull for Johnes when or after he reaches 24 months of age. BioBest have developed a test for Johnes that is quicker though as sensitive as the culture test we recommended before.

Their Johnes PCR test may be performed on a sample of dung and results are reached after 24 hours, as opposed to the culture test that took up to four months.

Positive results on these are conclusive, whereas a negative result may mean that the disease has not advanced to the stage where it may be detected.

WEB-SITE ADVERTISING

If you would like to advertise stock on our web-site, please contact the HI Health/OLA office.

Charges for this service are dependant on the size and content of your advertisement.

CONTACT US

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