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**DEPARTMENT HOSTS ANIMAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE FORUM**  
**Launch of National Animal Health Surveillance Programme Website**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, today hosts the ‘Animal Health Surveillance Forum’ which is the first of its kind to be held in Ireland. The Forum is a unique opportunity to bring together experts in the field of surveillance, and a wide range of stakeholders involved in different aspects of surveillance.

Speaking about the conference the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Simon Coveney T.D. said, *“Our goal is simple; we want to be recognised as a world leader in animal health. Production systems which are based on strict animal health and welfare standards improve business confidence in agri-food investment by reducing disease risk whilst protecting the consumer and improving consumer confidence. In this regard, animal health surveillance is a key and critical component”.*

The Minister added *“With this in mind my Department is hosting this forum and has launched the National Animal Health Surveillance Programme Website(<http://nahsp.agriculture.gov.ie/>) which will provide clarity for interested parties regarding our animal health status and surveillance activities”*

The Conference, which was opened by Aidan O’Driscoll Secretary General of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, will see a host of Animal Health Surveillance experts, from both Ireland and abroad, deliver a series of presentations on the topic of disease surveillance and its importance to the Ireland’s Agri Food Business. The keynote address will be delivered by Dirk Pfeiffer, Professor of Veterinary Epidemiology at the Royal Veterinary College, London who is recognized as a world leader in this area. Professor Pfeiffer will present a paper on the international perspectives of animal health surveillance.

This will be followed by an interactive session in the afternoon, where the attendees will provide their feedback on Animal Health Surveillance in Ireland. The Forum aims to highlight the need for greater coordination and collaboration amongst the stakeholders in this area, which would allow the Department to build on the good work that is already being done.

To coincide with the conference the National Animal Health Surveillance Programme website will be launched on the same day. Jarlath O’Connor, a Superintending Veterinary Inspector with the Department, will give a presentation on the new website at the Forum.

The website will contain information on Ireland’s status in relation to listed animal diseases and on the active surveillance programmes currently being implemented in Ireland. The site will also contain useful information on animal health and animal disease legislation, along with convenient links to surveillance related publications and other relevant websites. The website will provide increased transparency and accessibility of information on animal health for stakeholders in Ireland and abroad.

**Note to editors**

Good animal health surveillance systems are key to maintaining Ireland’s animal health status. Since 2007, the EU in its Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013) aims to promote animal health by placing greater emphasis on preventive measures, and disease surveillance, in order to reduce the incidence of animal diseases and to minimise the impact of outbreaks when they do occur.

2016 marks the 150th Anniversary of the First Statute in Ireland, enacted in 1866, dealing with the control of “Contagious Diseases Amongst Cattle and other Animals in Ireland”. The 1866 Act also signified the establishment of the first organised veterinary response to epizootic disease with the establishment of the Veterinary Department of Ireland with Professor Hugh Ferguson as the first Director General.

**ENDS**