



NEW COMPANY: Jonathan Statham, of Ripon, North Yorkshire, is a leading dairy vet

Helping farmers feed the world

by Mike Bridgen

A LEADING North Yorkshire veterinary practice has launched a company to tackle food challenges created by the world's fast-growing population.

By 2020, it is predicted that world demand for food will have increased by 40 per cent – a fact that is presenting governments around the world with a huge challenge.

Now Ripon-based Bishopton Veterinary Group has launched RAFT Solutions Ltd to help farmers meet those challenges on their farms.

It aims to provide a link between farmers, academia and industry – translating new ideas on sustainable production and food security so they can be adopted on farm.

Jonathan Statham, practice partner and a director of RAFT, said: "We believe the veterinary profession has a tremendous depth of technical and professional diversity that can play a major role in the way we shape and develop the future of food production in the UK.

"As we witness growing concern across the world about food security and sustainability of production, here in the UK, our food and farming industry faces huge challenges.

"But there are also big opportunities to create links between new developments in areas of animal health, technology and climate change that will be of immeasurable help to those who produce our food – the nation's farmers."

RAFT has developed partnerships with dairy industry consultants EBVC, and collaborative links with academic institutions including Innogen, the University of Glasgow, Nottingham University and the Royal Veterinary College.

Its directors also hold several

national steering committee appointments linked to sustainable development.

The company is working independently, or in partnership, on innovative research programmes, as well as conventional field trials, such as those covering bovine and porcine viral vaccines.

Bishopton Veterinary Group has been at the forefront of developments in advanced cattle breeding technology through its team of vets and bovine embryologists for more than a decade. Fully-licensed embryo and semen storage facilities are available at the practice.

Mr Statham, a leading dairy vet, said: "We have laboratory facilities on-site to undertake quantitative milk progesterone testing and semen evaluation, as well as the full gamut of technical services associated with modern cattle breeding.

"This is a very challenging time for the food and farming industry but we believe it presents an opportunity for farmers and all who are associated with food production to address critical issues concerning animal health and welfare, research and training to ensure we not only meet the food needs of the nation but that we do so to the highest possible standards and with the utmost attention to ethics and efficiency."

Sophie Throup is responsible for the day-to-day management of the new company which works with the XLVets' FarmSkills programme to train farmers in practical skills from DIY AI and foot-trimming to ewe and ram fertility, dry sow management and suckler cow nutrition.

NFU calls for monitoring of environment sanctions

THE National Farmers' Union has called for regular monitoring of Natural England's new enforcement sanctions.

The extra powers – called civil sanctions – will be used against those who cause harm to wildlife and the natural environment as an alternative to prosecution and criminal penalties.

The NFU is, in principle, supportive of the sanctions, but wants regular reviews to ensure their use is as effective, consistent and proportionate as possible.

Lee Osborne, NFU better reg-

ulation adviser, said: "The new sanctions should not replace existing informal methods, such as advice and guidance, to address minor non-compliance."

The NFU wants Natural England to:

- Demonstrate a "no surprises" approach when carrying out enforcement action;
- Give training and guidance to enforcement staff to ensure a consistent and proportionate approach;
- Hold regular reviews and be receptive to issues or concerns.

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