

## Policy

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Subject: Official controls on feed

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### 1 Background

1.1 In July 2015, SCOTSS presented a position paper, on the future provision of official feed controls in Scotland, which was in response to discussions with Food Standards Scotland around the development of a more effective and sustainable system to satisfy UK and EU requirements. SCOTSS accepted the FSS view that feed enforcement through 32 local authority teams was not effective, and the recent and impending financial pressures on Scottish councils would only diminish the service further.

1.2 SCOTSS proposed an aggregated regional delivery framework, through a smaller number of better resourced lead authorities, led by FSS as a single national body through a formal relationship. This model was accepted by FSS at their board meeting in September 2015, and by the relevant COSLA Executive Group on 3rd December 2015, although COSLA were clear that they would resist the removal of any funding from the local authority grant without the justification of a fully developed regional model. COSLA also believed that the outcome of an ongoing review into the wider delivery of trading standards services in Scotland, should be taken fully into account.

1.3 As a consequence of this, and from subsequent discussions where SCOTSS were asked to guarantee local authority resources, FSS reverted to their board in January 2016 to recommend the regional delivery proposal be abandoned in favour of centralising feed controls, to be delivered by FSS, and funding to be withdrawn from local authorities at source.

### 2 Implications:

Although agriculture is a small part of trading standards 'business', some 6% as shown by a recent resource allocation audit, there are a number of wider implications from FSS' decision:

- i. The withdrawal of any resource from local authority trading standards budgets carries significant risk, not only for feed controls, but also for

the other services that are delivered, at a time when services are under particular scrutiny due to financial restrictions.

- ii. Trading Standards services have always been a natural delivery agent for feed and other agricultural controls, which have become integrated within the overall Animal Health and Welfare framework. Not being seen as partners in the delivery of official feed controls, puts at risk the good working relationship between Scottish councils and FSS.
- iii. Trading standards services across the whole of the UK are under review at the moment, and particularly in Scotland, with the imminent report of a strategic review of how services should be delivered. The unilateral withdrawal of enforcement roles and resource will put at risk any new framework proposals, which might provide a much more sustainable and effective consumer protection service for Scotland's consumers and businesses in the future.

### 3 SCOTSS position:

3.1 SCOTSS position was made clear in our paper of July 2015, namely that the delivery of Official Controls for Feed should remain with local authority trading standards services. Many of our members have a peripheral interest in feed controls due to their geography or demography, but the aggregation of resources into a lead authority framework would not only provide a more sustainable and effective system, but also demonstrate that councils could work together, and with external agencies such as Food Standards Scotland.

3.2 We have not changed that view following the FSS board decision of 20 January 2016, and we are completely opposed to any centralisation of the role to Food Standards Scotland. That does not reflect the arrangements that have been put in place in other parts of the United Kingdom, and adds risk to the already fragile services that our members deliver through Scottish councils.

3.3 SCOTSS still believes that regional delivery of feed official controls by lead authorities is the most appropriate and viable option. This can be achieved within the existing resources, provided to Scottish councils by Food Standards Scotland, so long as steps are taken to ensure that funding reaches and resources delivery. We support COSLA and other Scottish councils, and regret the decision that the FSS board have taken.