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Veterinary student opinion on genome-editing in livestock; progression towards a regulatory framework


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There is a lack of explicit regulation in the UK (EU) in relation to genome-editing of livestock. Uncertainty of regulatory acceptances makes it hard for research relying on commercial support to get off the ground, hindering development of potentially beneficial applications such as cure or prevention of congenial conditions and disease. The views of various potential stakeholders have been seen to influence policy and regulatory frameworks, for example when GMO crops failed to gain acceptance in Europe. Some (limited studies) have been carried out relating to the attitudes of the public to genome-editing, but not of veterinary students who belong to an important stakeholder group. 27 veterinary students at Edinburgh

University answered a questionnaire on issues related to genome-editing in livestock. The analysis of the data collected indicates the respondents are positively disposed to genome-editing in general. The support is strongest when it comes to disease control, and more ambiguous when the aim is to increase productivity. Combined with high levels of public trust in veterinaries, the implications are that they can be useful in progressing the regulatory process by engaging with the public and that the focus of the process should be on welfare rather than solely productivity gains.

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