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Animal Disease Control and Trade Policy Branch  
Room 714  
Dundonald House  
Belfast  
BT4 3SB

### **The Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016**

Dear Barbara,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above. The Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) is the largest farming organisation in Northern Ireland representing over 11,500 farming families and as such, would like to make the following comments;

The UFU welcomes the reduction in the cost of optional testing and the examination of official control samples. However, we question the 7.2% increase in the cost of taking or supervising the taking of official control samples for the first ½ hour of each visit and the 10.5% increase per ½ hour or part thereof thereafter. To the committee's knowledge, the 2015 increase in the UK annual inflation rate was 0.1% and the AWE annual growth rate - total pay was 2.4% (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/key-figures/index.html>). With this in mind, the proposed increases of 7.2% and 10.5% for the taking or supervising the taking of official control samples appears to be excessive and vastly beyond both the rise in inflation and the average wage increase in the UK for the last year. Furthermore, given that fuel prices have fallen by almost 29% since 2012 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-weekly-statistics>) the committee would question the Department's continuation of paying 45p per mile.

Whilst the committee appreciate that a breakdown of the proposed 2016/17 cost calculation has been included, there is no breakdown for the 2015/2016 cost calculation to enable a comparison of where the increases have occurred. Furthermore, there is no breakdown of this calculation for each subsequent ½ hour or part thereof to a) justify the increase b) justify why any additional time should be valued at a higher price than the initial half hour c) compare it to the 2015/2016 cost calculation to decide whether or not the increases can be justified.

On behalf of the members of the UFU, I trust that these comments will be considered as part of this consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Geoff Thompson**

**Policy Officer**

**Animal Health, Pigs, Poultry**