



We are disappointed with the tone and context of the piece on BBC's Countryfile (Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March). We actively engaged with the show as much as we could, to ensure that it positively reflected the scheme and the high animal welfare standards that our farmers adhere to.

However it became clear that the piece was becoming increasingly negative and unbalanced and providing an on camera spokesperson in addition to the comprehensive briefing, phone calls and statements, would likely to be edited significantly to an unrepresentative soundbite- something which was demonstrated with Professor David Main's interview which was cut to a mere few seconds, even though he was with them for hours.

The core of the feature was questioning the independence and, therefore, the value of the quarterly vet visits to Red Tractor Assured pig farms.

Their concerns were raised following evidence provided by livestock vet Alice Brough, who is currently a consultant for Viva! Whilst noting that Alice was now working for a vegan charity, they didn't meaningfully interrogate her assertions in anyway, and instead used them as evidence to question the trustworthiness of Red Tractor.

We have always regarded the involvement of vets and regular visits to be fundamental to British farming and our scheme. Our requirement for quarterly vet visits ensures that, over and above their annual Red Tractor audit, pig farms are regularly checked for compliance with our standards. All vets are held by a Code of Professional Conduct, so in all cases they must put the welfare of animals first. This was omitted from the piece, even though one of the key allegations was that because farmers pay veterinary practices, veterinary visits could not be independent on animal welfare issues. Veterinarians have a professional responsibility to ensure the integrity of veterinary certification. They must certify facts and opinions honestly and with due care, otherwise they risk being struck off by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. It is upon this foundation that veterinary certification of Red Tractor quarterly vet visit reports is built.

Red Tractor operate a strict zero-tolerance of bullying, no-one should feel under duress while performing their duties, or under any obligation to sign a certificate which would misrepresent the true situation. Alice never reported any incidences she described to Red Tractor, either formally or otherwise.

We are proud that Red Tractor inspects more pig farms, more often, than any other assurance scheme or government organisation in the UK. Without our scheme, there would be nowhere near as many vet visits to assess the wellbeing of animals on pig farms.

In the last two years, Red Tractor has twice been independently benchmarked against other global farm assurance schemes and each time it has found to be a world-leader.

The breadth of Red Tractor standards, its traceability systems and the robustness of its independent auditing, are just some of the reasons why British farming can confidently claim that the UK has some of the highest food and farming standards in the world.

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020