

Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA)

— Strategic Plan — 2024-2027



UCD School of Veterinary Medicine
University College Dublin







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Introduction

The Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA) is Ireland's resource centre for veterinary epidemiology, providing high-quality, independent and timely scientific information to support national policy decision-making on a broad range of animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues.

The Centre was first established in 1989, as the Tuberculosis Investigation Unit, but has substantially broadened its remit since 2004.

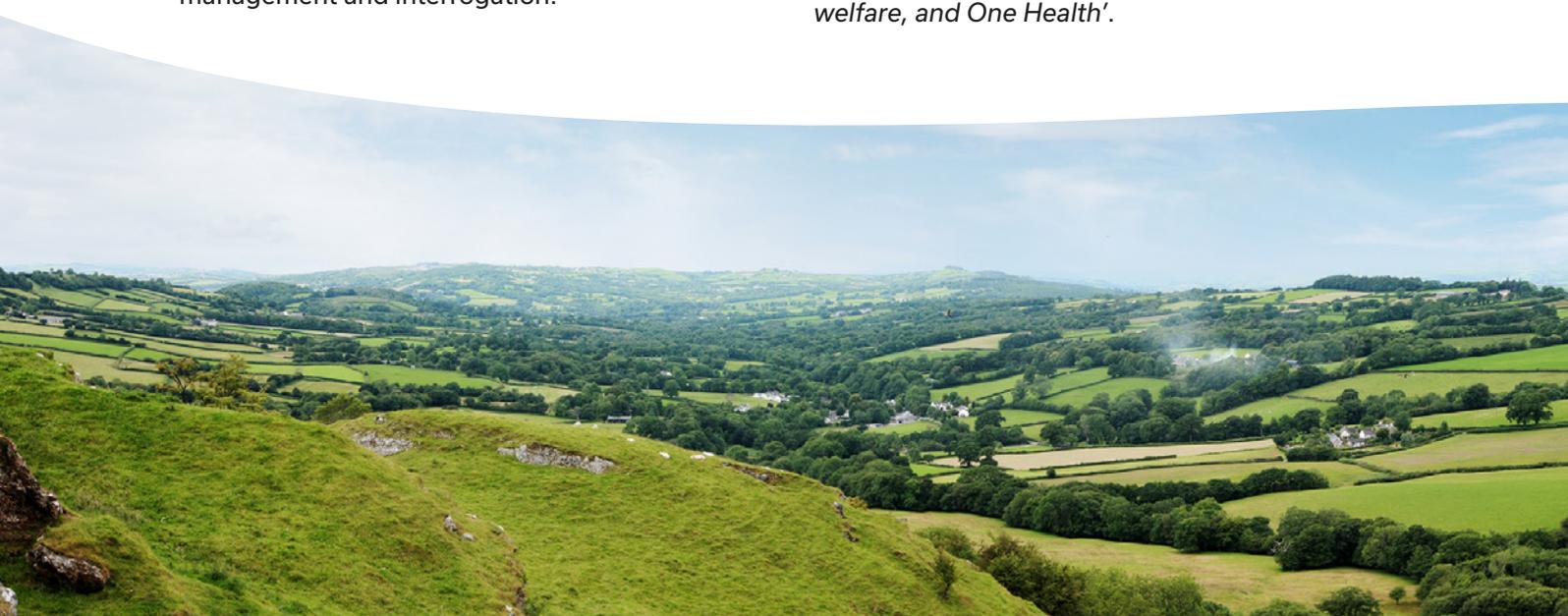
The Centre is fully funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Our work broadly falls into three categories: original research driven by a specific policy question, provision of evidence-based scientific perspectives derived from detailed and balanced critique of the current state of scientific knowledge, and the provision of highly specialised scientific support. The Centre is located within the School of Veterinary Medicine at University College Dublin (UCD) and has primarily worked to this point in support of DAFM, and Animal Health Ireland (AHI).

A range of disciplines are represented in the Centre, including veterinary medicine, epidemiology, geographic information systems, statistics, and database development, management and interrogation.

The challenges facing animal health, animal welfare, and One Health are increasingly complex. We face many global and local challenges, driven in large part by human impact and increasingly global interconnectedness, including climate change, biodiversity loss, antimicrobial resistance and environmental degradation, to name a few. These challenges will increasingly influence the complexity of national decision-making. Our work in CVERA is all the more important, as we seek to provide policy makers and other decision-makers with a clear, truthful, balanced, holistic and independent understanding of the current state of scientific knowledge on topics of concern.

This strategy, CVERA's second, describes our ambitions over the next five years, outlining what we will do during this period to achieve our vision of *'Trusted evidence for informed decision-making in animal health, animal welfare, and One Health'*.



During the development of this strategic plan, we have consulted with our stakeholders, with our independent Management Board and with our staff. We were also informed by progress, challenges and achievements from our earlier strategy. This plan is very timely, as we anticipate the challenges and seize the opportunities following our changed organisational arrangements within UCD, noting that CVERA became an integrated unit within the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine during 2023.

In this plan, we define four strategic themes, including:

- Strategic leadership and impact
- Scientific excellence
- Communications and engagement
- Organisational effectiveness

Building on our work over many years, our ongoing ambition is as a trusted, independent scientific voice, informing the national discussion on animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues. Our focus is strategic in nature, and we seek to positively influence policy. We value our role as a 'truth teller' and an advocate for the public good.

Scientific excellence forms the bedrock of our work, and this strategic plan outlines the steps that we will take to maintain ongoing respect, both nationally and internationally, for the quality, scope, independence and timely delivery of our scientific research.

To safeguard the quality of our work, we will continue our primary focus on publications in the international peer-reviewed scientific literature.

We will engage closely with our key stakeholders, both to identify research opportunities and to effectively communicate our research findings. In our communications, we aspire to move beyond awareness raising to actively engaging and empowering people to change behaviour. Further, we will work towards full integration of CVERA within the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine.

Finally, we will continue our focus on organisational effectiveness. We are privileged to have a talented, dedicated and professional staff within CVERA. We are committed to the UCD values of collegiality, creativity, diversity, engagement, excellence and integrity.

Building on the progress made since our first strategic plan (2017-20), we will continue to focus on organisational processes throughout the lifecycle of our research projects, with an emphasis on transparency, appropriate resourcing, and timely delivery of outputs.

I am very grateful for the assistance provided by our stakeholders, our independent Management Board and our staff during the development of this ambitious strategic plan.

*Professor Simon More | CVERA Director
December 2023*







CVERA's vision

Trusted evidence for informed decision-making in animal health, animal welfare, and One Health.



CVERA's mission

Conduct independent veterinary epidemiological research to inform decision-making in animal health, animal welfare, and One Health by government, industry and the wider community.



Our values are aligned with those of UCD:

- **Collegiality:** To work collaboratively and supportively with others demonstrating a commitment to teamwork and relationship building, where every contribution is valued.
- **Creativity:** To develop and turn new and imaginative ideas into reality and to look for opportunities to go beyond traditional ways of doing things and breaking new ground.
- **Diversity:** To show respect for, and be inclusive of, diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.
- **Engagement:** To participate proactively with people, activities, projects and initiatives which enhance the work of the University.
- **Excellence:** To confidently pursue the highest standard in what we are doing and continuously commit to look for better ways to deliver the work of the University.
- **Integrity:** To act in a way which is ethical, professional and is consistent with what we say and the values and expectations of the University.



Strategic Themes



1. Strategic leadership and impact



2. Scientific excellence



3. Communications and engagement



4. Organisational effectiveness



1. Strategic leadership and impact

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>1. Continue as a trusted source of independent, strategically important scientific evidence to inform national decision-making</p>	<p>We will provide positive influence and impact in the national discussion on animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues, informed by strategic thought, balanced arguments, and robust scientific evidence</p> <p>We will distil and clarify complexity and weigh multiple strands of evidence on animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues</p> <p>We will present clear, balanced and independent scientific messages at national and international forums</p> <p>The independent Management Board will continue to meet three times each year.</p> <p>The board composition will be broadened to include representation from all key stakeholders</p>	<p>CVERA is a trusted and influential national voice on animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues, both nationally and internationally</p> <p>National health programmes and policy decisions are informed by CVERA publications and outputs</p>	<p>We continue to be recognised internationally for our contribution to animal health, animal welfare, and One Health</p> <p>We will continue as a trusted, independent scientific voice to inform the national discussion on issues relating to animal health, animal welfare, and One Health</p> <p>We are recognised as a 'truth-teller' and an advocate for the public good</p> <p>We will influence policy by conducting strategically important scientific research and communicating clear scientific messages</p>



1. Strategic leadership and impact

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>2. Enable technical and scientific innovation to facilitate veterinary epidemiological research and support</p>	<p>We will appraise and adopt new and innovative scientific methodologies and technologies as appropriate to address relevant scientific questions</p> <p>We will anticipate and enable national capacity in critical methodologies and technologies</p> <p>We will contribute to improved government systems for data capture and interrogation</p> <p>Throughout every aspect of our work, we will ensure compliance with relevant national and EU data protection legislation</p>	<p>Research is conducted using new and innovative methods as appropriate</p> <p>There is continued collaboration with key stakeholders to improve processes of data collection and accessibility to meet project needs and the broader public good</p> <p>Near real-time access is established to relevant data in a standardised format</p>	<p>Robust, innovative and integrated systems, processes, databases and methods are in place within CVERA to facilitate scientific research and support</p> <p>Government systems are tailored to facilitate epidemiological research on prioritised animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues</p> <p>CVERA continues as a trusted steward of national data, in compliance with EU and national legislation</p>
<p>3. Collaborate nationally and internationally, including the potential for interdisciplinary collaborations relating to economics, environment, and society</p>	<p>We will collaborate with research and technical innovators to explore and extend international 'best practice' in all aspects of our work</p> <p>We will seek national and international collaborations to complement and extend CVERA's research focus</p>	<p>Formal and informal discussions lead to new collaborative opportunities</p> <p>Our collaborations positively impact the magnitude and breadth of our research outputs</p>	<p>CVERA will continue as a vibrant research centre with multiple collaborative linkages</p> <p>Interdisciplinary approaches, including those relating to economics, environment, and society, will enrich future CVERA research outputs, where relevant and appropriate</p>



2. Scientific excellence

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>1. Conduct robust epidemiological research relevant to animal health, animal welfare, and One Health</p>	<p>We will prioritise and align projects with CVERA, UCD and national strategic goals</p>	<p>The portfolio of CVERA projects is aligned to the strategic plans of CVERA, UCD, DAFM and AHI</p> <p>The scientific outputs from CVERA are informed by strategic priorities</p>	<p>Our project outputs help stakeholders to address strategic animal health, animal welfare, and One Health priorities</p>
<p>2. Conduct strategic research to the highest international standard of scientific methodology</p>	<p>We will continue to apply the highest standards in scientific methodology in research projects</p> <p>We will endeavour to provide researchers with the time and resources needed to investigate and develop innovative methodologies</p>	<p>CVERA outputs are underpinned by robust scientific methods</p>	<p>High scientific standards are maintained in all relevant disciplines to allow the continued delivery of scientific projects</p>





2. Scientific excellence

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>3. Translate research findings into open-access peer-reviewed scientific publications, with an emphasis on scientific excellence, transparency, independence and timely delivery</p>	<p>We will publish our research as open-access papers in the international peer-reviewed scientific literature</p> <p>Once policy decisions have been finalised, we will transform interim policy reports into peer-reviewed scientific publication(s)</p> <p>We will prioritise the timely delivery of our research outputs</p> <p>We will generate anonymised data to accompany all CVERA-led peer-reviewed scientific publications, subject to data protection regulations and where feasible and permitted</p> <p>Each CVERA team member will contribute, annually if feasible, to scientific panels, technical working groups, national discussions, conference engagement (organisation or participation) or similar</p>	<p>The 10-year rolling average annual output of peer-reviewed scientific publications from CVERA will be maintained</p> <p>Most CVERA projects directly lead to publication(s) in the peer-reviewed scientific literature</p> <p>Interim policy reports are transformed into peer-reviewed scientific publication(s) once policy decisions have been finalised</p> <p>All CVERA scientific staff publish annually in the peer-reviewed scientific literature</p> <p>All CVERA-led outputs will be freely accessible to the general public</p> <p>Where permitted, an anonymised data file accompanies each CVERA-led peer-reviewed scientific paper</p> <p>Project and publishing milestones and deadlines are met</p> <p>There is ongoing active contribution of CVERA staff members to national and international scientific conferences</p>	<p>CVERA will continue to be respected both nationally and internationally for the quality, scope, independence and timely delivery of its scientific research and contribution to knowledge</p>



2. Scientific excellence

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
4. Expand CVERA's offering to include additional areas of expertise as required	<p>In collaboration with stakeholders, we will explore emerging needs and opportunities</p> <p>We will continue to build capacity in mathematical modelling, bTB wildlife host ecology, and whole genome sequencing, and expand the CVERA research programme accordingly</p>	<p>The mix of expertise, both in-house and through collaboration, is appropriate to addressing strategic research needs</p>	<p>The scope and depth of CVERA's outputs will substantially assist policy-makers when tackling complex animal health, animal welfare, and One Health issues</p>





3. Communications and engagement

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>1. Effectively and regularly communicate our research findings to stakeholders</p>	<p>With expert input, we will create and implement a tailored CVERA engagement plan</p> <p>With stakeholders, we will actively seek opportunities to present and discuss research findings</p> <p>We will continue to distribute the CVERA e-zine three times annually</p> <p>We will prepare plain language summaries to accompany each CVERA output, for dissemination through appropriate channels</p>	<p>A CVERA communications plan is being actively implemented</p> <p>Each of CVERA's key research findings is effectively communicated to stakeholders</p> <p>The CVERA e-zine is produced three times annually, and distributed widely</p> <p>A readable plain language summary is produced to accompany each CVERA output</p>	<p>We will have improved animal health, animal welfare, and One Health outcomes by working effectively with and through Government, agencies and farm organisations</p> <p>We will be using innovative and accessible ways to deliver timely and targeted data and information to meet our stakeholders' needs</p> <p>Our communications will have moved beyond awareness raising to actively engaging and empowering people to change behaviour</p> <p>We will have proactively influenced policy and legislation by leveraging our expertise, evidence and research</p>
<p>2. Engage with key members of target audiences to identify potentially impactful research areas where CVERA could contribute</p>	<p>We will agree and set up a rhythm of annual meetings with UCD, DAFM and AHI, with the aim of exploring potentially impactful research areas where CVERA could contribute</p> <p>We will explore opportunities for capacity-building in epidemiology and allied disciplines with DAFM policy and field colleagues</p>	<p>There are regular communications with key personnel in UCD, DAFM and AHI, and regular meetings with other key stakeholders as required</p>	<p>We actively and regularly engage with key stakeholders about potential research opportunities</p>



3. Communications and engagement

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>3. Foster closer ties with the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine as part of the process of integration</p>	<p>We will continue to shape CVERA following its consolidation within the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine</p> <p>Each CVERA staff member will contribute, regularly where feasible, to key School/College/University meetings and events</p> <p>We will explore opportunities to contribute to teaching, postgraduate supervision and broader research support within the School/College/University</p> <p>We will re-apply, when appropriate, for UCD academic centre status</p> <p>We will send regular updates to the School's Communications Manager about key information for wider distribution</p>	<p>There is meaningful CVERA contribution within the School across a range of areas, including undergraduate teaching, postgraduate supervision, broader research support, and communications</p> <p>The UCD academic centre status is maintained</p>	<p>We are fully integrated into the innovative and creative research environment within UCD</p> <p>We have integrated into all relevant School structures</p>





4. Organisational effectiveness

Goals	Actions	Outputs (KPIs)	Outcomes
<p>1. Encourage a flexible, engaging, work environment that promotes and supports collegiality whilst enabling scientific autonomy</p>	<p>We will maintain and enhance our capacity, expertise and experience to ensure CVERA's resilience and to deliver our strategic outcomes</p> <p>We will continue to value a culture of leadership, performance and development that supports our staff and realises their full potential</p>	<p>Our values and behaviours will be at the core of how we work and interact</p> <p>A robust staff engagement process is in place to identify and support staff development</p>	<p>We live our values and behaviours in a supportive, inclusive and flexible workplace, to deliver public value and our vision</p> <p>We are committed to the UCD values of collegiality, creativity, diversity, engagement, excellence and integrity</p>
<p>2. Deliver research outputs to project stakeholders within agreed time-frames and providing transparency throughout the project lifecycle</p>	<p>We will continue to build on the transparency of our processes, progress, outputs, and outcomes</p> <p>We will identify and implement an appropriate management and reporting system for CVERA's portfolio of scientific research and support</p> <p>We will prioritise the CVERA work programme to ensure appropriate resourcing and timely delivery of project outputs</p> <p>We will clarify stakeholder needs and co-develop business cases for consideration and support</p> <p>The management board will engage with DAFM, at least annually, to review the delivery of projects within the SLA</p>	<p>The DAFM-CVERA service level agreement is finalised</p> <p>Project progress is presented at each meeting of the Management Board. Detailed information about each active, CVERA-led project is available annually</p> <p>All projects are delivered on time. Any exceptions are clearly communicated in a timely manner as early as possible in the project lifecycle</p>	<p>Resources and expertise are sufficient to enable the work programme projects to be completed within an agreed, realistic timeframe</p> <p>We engage with relevant parties from the outset/ beginning of partnerships and projects</p> <p>Realistically achievable goals, timelines, and expectations for each project are clearly identified and agreed between CVERA, stakeholders and relevant parties prior to commencement</p>



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