The Roslin Institute is part of a unique research partnership involving one of the world’s leading animal health companies. The collaboration is the first of its kind in animal health and aims to find better ways of preventing and managing disease and advancing sustainable animal agriculture and welfare.

THE CHALLENGE
All commercially valuable scientific advances are based on earlier, pre-commercial research but the uncertainty of returns to early stage research makes it a risky and often unattractive proposition for commercial investors. The competitive advantage to be gained from supporting novel promising areas of research is however an important prize for industry. Similarly, an increasingly competitive public funding environment means that securing industrial support for pre-commercial research is an important priority for academia.

THE IMPACT
The partnership is the first of its kind in the animal health sector. For Pfizer it represents a significant departure from its traditional approach to R&D, which would previously have been heavily reliant on internal research. Pfizer’s decision to pursue this approach was a strategic decision designed to provide the company with access to pre-commercial research that it would not traditionally undertake itself. It is intended that the new research framework will enable the company to identify commercial leads at an early stage and help it to stay ahead of its competitors.
THE SOLUTION

In 2010 a new strategic alliance was created between Pfizer Animal Health and the Easter Bush Research Consortium (EBRC) which comprises, The Roslin Institute, The Moredun Institute, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies and SRUC.

The strategic alliance is supported by £1.75 million funding from Pfizer and provides a framework within which researchers from the five partner organisations can collaboratively identify and work on areas of mutual scientific interest. The aims of the Partnership are to:

- advance educational activities and promote veterinarians and animal scientists in postgraduate study and research;
- support early stage research, technologies and capability platforms; and
- promote multi-disciplinary research teams, with contributions from different participating organisations.

The partnership will bring researchers from academia and industry together through a series of regular events designed to stimulate ideas for new projects. The first event was held in February 2011 and involved more than 60 researchers from the five partner organisations. Since then smaller, species-specific groups have also been established to facilitate regular interaction between researchers working on similar areas.

Pfizer looked at a number of research centres in Europe before reaching the decision to form a strategic alliance with the EBRC. The conclusion of these investigations was that the combination of research expertise, infrastructure and capabilities provided by each of the EBRC partners enabled the EBRC to offer a unique inter-disciplinary approach that is not easily available at such a high level and covering companion animals, livestock and poultry.