

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

State of preparedness for the disease outbreak (paragraphs 7 to 15)

1. *Contingency plans for disease outbreaks must be rehearsed annually, in liaison with all relevant groups, including consumer opinion, and taking into account all manner and scale of scenarios.*
2. *Lessons learned from the FMD outbreak should be transferred to contingency plans for dealing with other diseases.*
3. *A trained State Veterinary Reserve should be established for rapid mobilisation in disease emergencies.*
4. *Communication should be improved between SVS Headquarters, the Divisional Offices, LVIs and Reserves.*
5. *An audit of slaughtermen and killing equipment immediately available to deal with a disease outbreak, as well as the ability of manufacturers to increase production, must form part of the annual review of contingency plans.*
6. *Realistic predictive models should be used for movement analysis and planning.*
7. *The effectiveness and enforcement of livestock movement recording legislation should be reviewed.*
8. *An effective identification system for sheep needs to be established to allow for traceability.*
9. *The motivations for widespread sheep movements should be addressed by the inquiries into the outbreak of FMD in 2001.*

Killing options and techniques (paragraphs 16 to 21)

10. *Detailed strategies for killing in the field of all species and ages should be available as part of contingency plans. These strategies should be based on sound scientific research.*
11. *Field slaughtermen should be issued with an Army style “Green Card” setting out the minimum standards required of them.*

Killing equipment (paragraphs 22 to 24)

12. *Research is needed to assess the effectiveness of captive bolt stunners as a killing method for sheep.*

13. *Government should consider the establishment of a scheme of recognised standards for slaughter/killing equipment.*

Field killing teams (paragraphs 25 to 27)

14. *Government should consider the establishment of a trained reserve of field slaughtermen for rapid deployment in disease emergencies.*

15. *There should be a specific licence for field killing and incentives for slaughtermen to be trained and take up this option. Slaughter teams should not be paid piece rates.*

16. *The organisational principles of large scale killing under field conditions need defining and setting out clearly to provide operational guidelines for those having to set up and implement procedures on farms having widely different facilities.*

Vaccination (paragraphs 28 to 32)

17. *In the event of a disease outbreak leading to the ring-fencing of a region by vaccination, there must be adequate regional capacity to provide for animal welfare and to cope with the number of livestock requiring slaughter or disposal.*

18. *In any outbreak of FMD, vaccination should be considered amongst the other methods of controlling the disease and measures decided upon dependent on the circumstances.*

19. *There is a need for greater public reassurance that animals that have been vaccinated may appropriately and safely enter the human food chain. This should be done at a time when there is no outbreak and therefore public trust is more likely.*

Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme (paragraphs 33 to 35)

20. *Welfare schemes should in future address all avenues available to enable producers to sustain the welfare of their animals, not just disposal. In particular, Government should consider a system of “welfare vouchers” to assist with the provision of fodder or other resources.*

21. *Government funding of fodder support schemes should be given greater priority.*

Movement restrictions (paragraphs 36 to 39)

22. *Management and veterinary advice should be made available to farmers whose animals are subject to lengthy movement restrictions.*

23. *Consideration of any proposed method of individual animal identification must include an assessment of the impact on animal welfare.*

Cleansing and disinfection (paragraph 40)

24. *Farm buildings and other facilities intended for keeping livestock should be designed and maintained, not only consistent with good animal welfare, but also in a manner enabling them to be cleaned and disinfected effectively.*

Biosecurity (paragraph 41)

25. *The effectiveness of import controls should be reviewed by Government and improved to minimise the risk of disease being introduced into Great Britain. Lessons should be learned from countries with long-standing FMD-free status and an appropriate strategic plan developed.*

Restocking (paragraphs 42 to 43)

26. *Veterinary advice should be available to farmers planning to restock their farms as part of the five free days of business consultancy available to farmers under the Rural Development Programme.*

Headage payments for sheep producers (paragraphs 44 to 45)

27. *The system of payments for sheep producers based upon predicted head count should be reviewed at EU level and revised.*

Farmers' access to information (paragraph 46)

28. *The provision of information to all parties during the FMD outbreak should be reviewed by Government to ensure the best possible advice and guidance can be provided during any future emergency.*

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE 2001 AND ANIMAL WELFARE: LESSONS LEARNED

Introduction

1. The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) is an independent advisory body established by Government in 1979. Its terms of reference are to keep under review the welfare of farm animals on agricultural land, at market, in transit and at the place of slaughter; and to advise Government of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary. Members are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and occupations, such as farming, veterinary surgery, academia, consumer affairs, local authorities and welfare organisations. Each member serves in a personal capacity, not as a representative of any organisation or interest group.

The Five Freedoms

2. The Five Freedoms are a well-established set of propositions that provide a core framework encompassing an animal's basic needs, whether on farm, in transit, at market or at the place of slaughter. They declare a series of 'freedoms' and implied husbandry requirements, which underlie good farm animal welfare.

FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST

by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.

FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT

by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.

FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY AND DISEASE

by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.

FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS

by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

3. The concept and content of the Five Freedoms have guided FAWC's philosophy of approach in all its studies. They provide widely accepted guidelines to all concerned with the keeping of livestock as to how they might fulfil their obligation to the animals they use.

4. Safeguarding animal welfare requires awareness of animal needs and both caring and careful efforts on the part of those involved. In the case of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in particular it requires: the recognition of animals as sentient beings; informed, skilled and conscientious stockmanship; caring, responsible planning and effective management; considerate handling at all times on farm and during slaughter.

Ethical considerations

5. FAWC does not consider the killing of animals *per se* to be a welfare problem provided it is carried out humanely. However, ethical questions do arise from the scale of mass slaughter carried out during this outbreak of FMD. We accept that on Infected Premises the most effective way of preventing the further spread of disease was to slaughter the herd/flock quickly. FAWC also accepts the argument that, in the absence of other effective measures, killing animals on dangerous contact premises was necessary to reduce the risk of disease spread. However, ethical questions have been raised about the extent of the slaughter policy which need to be further debated.

6. FAWC believes there are cogent reasons, related both to ethics and welfare, why the scale of slaughter should be kept to the minimum compatible with effective disease control. In considering this relationship between ethics and welfare, it is essential to separate the implications of the disease itself from those arising out of the conditions imposed to control the disease. Thus, in addition to concerns about possibly excessive biosecurity measures, we have concerns that uninfected animals may have suffered or been killed unnecessarily for want of feed or land availability.

State of preparedness for the disease outbreak

7. It is FAWC's view that the 2001 FMD outbreak was of such magnitude that DEFRA (then MAFF) was not fully prepared for it in practical terms. It was this lack of preparedness and the insufficiency of resources and measures to conduct a widespread slaughter policy efficiently that led to the negative effects on animal welfare in many instances. The timing of the outbreak and delay in halting all livestock movements increased the spread of infection because of seasonal livestock movements. Contingency plans must be rehearsed and reviewed annually in liaison with relevant groups, e.g. Armed Forces, livestock industry, slaughter industry, etc., and include all manner and scale of scenarios to ensure a state of preparedness for any conceivable outbreak. It is important that consumer opinion is incorporated into contingency planning.

8. Lessons learned from this outbreak should be transferred to contingency plans for dealing with major epidemics or notifiable disease in other farm animals including poultry. This could help reduce the welfare impact of future outbreaks.

9. The outbreak of FMD has highlighted problems with mass killing in the field. This was an area where animals were often subjected to severe welfare challenge, as dramatic images in the media often made clear. Handling and restraint requirements are very different from those in slaughter facilities. Different solutions are required and these should be available as part of the contingency plan, not learned as an outbreak progresses. New equipment and procedures should be incorporated and obsolete practices and equipment discarded at each annual review.

10. We believe that the size and centralisation of the State Veterinary Service (SVS) were limiting factors in dealing with the outbreak. Even at 1967/68 staffing levels the SVS could not have hoped to react to the scale of the outbreak without help. The response of vets from all over Great Britain and abroad in coming to assist with the outbreak must be applauded. However, bringing in outside assistance introduced delay. We recommend that a trained State Veterinary Reserve should be established. This would enable assistance for the SVS to be mobilised quickly. Communication between SVS Headquarters, the Divisional Offices, LVIs and Reserves should be improved.

11. Farmers have informed us of a lack of local advice, information and positive input on practical issues. The privatisation of ADAS may have contributed to farmers feeling unsure whom to approach for local advice. Perhaps contingency plans could provide for the establishment of a volunteer force of people with experience of agricultural production planning and with local knowledge, e.g. NFU, Breed Societies, etc. Any advice facilities need to be widely publicised.

12. Sufficient field killing teams and equipment need to be available from day one of an outbreak. Ammunition for captive bolt and free bullet guns also needs to be available in sufficient quantities. An audit of slaughtermen and killing equipment available immediately to deal with outbreaks, as well as the ability of manufacturers to increase production, must be part of the annual review of contingency plans.

13. A major driver for the spread of FMD was the extent of sheep movements within Great Britain in the early part of 2001. Officials should have been aware of the possibility of widespread infection through these movements and stopped them at the first signs of disease. Better use of predictive models could have been made for this purpose. Movement recording legislation already exists for all susceptible species. The

effectiveness and the enforcement of this legislation should be reviewed. An effective identification system for sheep needs to be established to allow for traceability. The motivations for sheep movements, particularly those driven by headage payments, should also be addressed in any review of the outbreak.

14. In 1967/68, the date of the last significant outbreak, a much larger knacker industry and many more municipal slaughterhouses were available to process animals. We believe that the reduction in these resources affected the Department's ability to deal with the numbers of animals that required killing.

15. We believe that the Army should have been involved from the outset to deal with the logistics of controlling the outbreak. The quicker the cull is organised and carried out the better for the animals involved. The eventual involvement of the Army, therefore, improved welfare.

Recommendations

Contingency plans for disease outbreaks must be rehearsed annually, in liaison with all relevant groups, including consumer opinion, and taking into account all manner and scale of scenarios.

Lessons learned from the FMD outbreak should be transferred to contingency plans for dealing with other diseases.

A trained State Veterinary Reserve should be established for rapid mobilisation in disease emergencies.

Communication should be improved between SVS Headquarters, the Divisional Offices, LVIs and Reserves.

An audit of slaughtermen and killing equipment immediately available to deal with a disease outbreak, as well as the ability of manufacturers to increase production, must form part of the annual review of contingency plans.

Realistic predictive models should be used for movement analysis and planning.

The effectiveness and enforcement of livestock movement recording legislation should be reviewed.

An effective identification system for sheep needs to be established to allow for traceability.

The motivations for widespread sheep movements should be addressed by the inquiries into the outbreak of FMD in 2001.

Killing options and techniques

16. Throughout the 2001 FMD outbreak, DEFRA, the Army and the farming and slaughter industries were faced with killing large numbers of animals, quickly, humanely and in field situations. Most of our concerns here stem from reduced killing options, inappropriate killing methods, and personnel (for handling and slaughter) not accustomed to working in disease control/field situations. A balance must be struck between disease control and welfare but welfare must not be set aside, even in an emergency.

17. We recognise that on-site killing reduces the killing methods available. Additionally, for reasons of avoiding disease transmission it is not recommended to bleed animals slaughtered on farm. Therefore a “stun and pith” or “killing” method is required rather than a “stun and bleed”. We note that MAFF did circulate guidance on best practice for animal handlers and those killing animals in the field. Whilst recognising that strategies for field killing had been developed as part of the contingency plan, there were gaps in those that were available, particularly for young and heavily pregnant animals. Furthermore, those strategies that had been developed appeared not to be rapidly disseminated in all cases to those working in the field. Adherence to these strategies should be monitored and any breach of slaughter legislation pursued. Slaughtermen should be issued with an Army style “Green Card” setting out the minimum standards required of them and anyone transgressing these rules should be liable to prosecution. The outbreak has demonstrated the complexity of some of the on-farm killing situations and brought to the fore a core of skilled individuals who could be called on in the future.

18. Particularly, there should have been clear guidance on killing methodology for heavily pregnant animals and young lambs given the time the outbreak struck. An intra-cardiac injection of pentobarbitone as the killing method appears to be good for small lambs but is difficult to perform humanely in larger lambs. We note that portable electrical stunning equipment was obtained at a late stage with the aim of helping to alleviate some of these problems. However, we are aware of problems with the insulating effect of sheep’s wool and the necessity of using saline solution to improve electrical contact in some sheep.

19. Even armed with detailed killing strategies, problems still need to be resolved on the ground through flexibility and resourcefulness. For example, a free bullet is the preferred method to kill large bulls. However, disease priorities might dictate that animals be killed indoors if already housed. This obviously raises health and safety issues when using a free bullet in an enclosed space.

20. One of the recommended methods for killing sheep and pigs is a captive bolt stun followed by pithing. In the field questions arose as to the need for pithing in sheep, particularly when using heavier cartridges, but no research has been done to assess whether the modern captive bolt stunners can produce an irreversible state which will lead to death (see also paragraph 23). In horned sheep the captive bolt would only stun because of the entry site. Pithing would be required to kill these animals. An accurate shot is more difficult to achieve in the field, highlighting the need for competent handling and effective penning.

21. In certain circumstances, and subject to veterinary decision, cattle could be given an injected medication to sedate them prior to handling and slaughter, particularly where handling facilities were limited or wilder breeds were encountered. Note should be taken of the differing cattle breed traits when approaching cattle, for example Limousin or Galloway cattle can become very agitated. Under current regulations, a sedative injection must be administered by a veterinarian or under veterinary supervision. Greater use should be made of operatives with injection experience such as some AI operators or veterinary nurses. Darting for sedation should also be available as an option for particularly difficult animals. Large animal sedation expertise is available at zoos and safari parks that could be called on in exceptional cases. The extent of veterinary supervision required should be made clear. However we believe it is important that the veterinarian should be present on site.

Recommendations

Detailed strategies for killing in the field of all species and ages should be available as part of contingency plans. These strategies should be based upon sound scientific research.

Field slaughtermen should be issued with an Army style “Green Card” setting out the minimum standards required of them.

Killing equipment

22. Killing teams were not correctly prepared or equipped at the early stages of the outbreak. Bolt guns break down more quickly due to overheating when used for mass killing in the field than they do in the slaughterhouse. Additional guns and ammunition were required as well as operators able to maintain guns on site. There was an assumption that slaughtermen would all bring killing equipment with them. This was unlikely where abattoirs directly employed them. Regular rehearsal of outbreak procedures, including large outbreaks, in liaison with all the relevant parties would have raised these issues.

23. There is a need for research into the effectiveness of captive bolt stunners as a killing method for sheep. Most research was carried out in the 1970s and 1980s and, therefore, does not take account of new equipment. In the opinion of some veterinarians certain stunners, such as the “Matador” with a high-powered charge, would produce a kill. Heavy-duty stunners with longer bolts and powerful charges could be destroying the brain stem in one movement but without research this could not be established with certainty. Most teams still pithed to be sure of a kill.

24. A scheme of recognised standards for equipment used in slaughter and killing would be beneficial. A yearly review of available killing equipment and suitability for field use, amongst other uses, would assess what was the best equipment for particular applications and what was obsolete. This should prove relatively easy to establish since testing data should be readily available for each item. The co-operation of the manufacturers should be encouraged since such a scheme would provide impetus to the development of newer and better equipment and discourage the marketing of poor equipment.

Recommendation

Research is needed to assess the effectiveness of captive bolt stunners as a killing method for sheep.

Government should consider the establishment of a scheme of recognised standards for slaughter/killing equipment.

Field killing teams

25. Well-designed handling facilities for slaughter can greatly improve the efficiency of the killing process. Far higher degrees of organisation are required in the field than in the slaughterhouse. Each holding will present different challenges. A pre-slaughter visit by the veterinarian involved to view the facilities available, to plan in advance for the handling and stunning

facilities required and to prepare the farmer for what is to come would be preferable, even with the strict deadlines for culls to take place. There are people, for example market employees, who are experienced in handling large numbers of livestock who may be drafted in to help.

26. We believe that properly trained field killing teams are required to handle the large numbers of animals that require killing in the field during a disease outbreak. There are plenty of slaughtermen who could be trained for this task and made available in the event of disease outbreak. By planning such provision with the slaughter industry, DEFRA could quickly source trained and experienced teams. A trained reserve from the slaughter industry should also be considered. We recommend that there should be a specific licence for killing in the field and that incentives be provided for slaughtermen to be trained and take up this option.

27. Personnel with experience of abattoir management are preferable for close supervision of slaughtermen. A chain of command from veterinarian to charge hand to slaughtermen and stockmen needs to be established. Slaughter teams should not be paid piece rates. This type of incentive is not consistent with welfare-friendly handling and accuracy. Accuracy of captive bolt stunning may suffer if slaughtermen become fatigued. Facilities should be available for slaughtermen to wash, eat, rest, etc. The preparedness, co-ordination and training of field slaughter teams, equipment and facilities should be included in the contingency plan.

Recommendations

Government should consider the establishment of a trained reserve of field slaughtermen for rapid deployment in disease emergencies.

There should be a specific licence for field killing and incentives for slaughtermen to be trained and take up this option. Slaughter teams should not be paid piece rates.

The organisational principles of large-scale killing under field conditions need defining and setting out clearly to provide operational guidelines for those having to set up and implement procedures on farms having widely different facilities.

Vaccination

28. Vaccination targeted at premises immediately surrounding infected premises and those with dangerous contact status was proposed relatively early in the outbreak. However, it was questionable whether this would be a suitable option for disease control because of the scale of the outbreak. FAWC's expertise is not in the control of infectious disease but in animal welfare. We recognised that any vaccination policy might have significant welfare benefits if it resulted in reduced numbers of animals suffering clinical disease. However we also recognised that there were wider socio-economic issues which needed to be addressed in relation to potential welfare problems.

29. Vaccinated animals needed to be equally acceptable to the consumer as non-vaccinated animals to guarantee their continued value and thus their welfare up to the point of slaughter. There is uncertainty whether retailers would indeed accept meat from vaccinated animals. Many suspect not, because of perception rather than any real risk to human health. FAWC therefore believes that there is a need for the public to become better informed that FMD is not a food safety issue. Meanwhile, vaccinated animals are in danger of becoming of diminished value and thus vulnerable to welfare problems.

30. Furthermore, even if vaccinated animals were allowed to enter the food chain, the proposal for a vaccination policy which included long-term restriction of live animals' movements in and out of a specified area (e.g. Cumbria, Devon or Powys) could have caused substantial difficulties for animals thus unable to leave the area alive. These animals would have become reliant on the success of an artificially created, ring-fenced agriculture industry with animals being born, reared and slaughtered within the specified area. Major constraints may be the availability of slaughter facilities and chilling capacity within the specified area, as well as availability of fodder. Abattoirs contracted to retailers would be unlikely to offer capacity to vaccinated stock and the capacity of those remaining may well be insufficient. In view of the current geographical imbalance between slaughter capacity and livestock production, there is a need for a minimum provision of available slaughter facilities within any specified area, unless authority is given for animals to leave the area alive to go for slaughter.

31. Living with FMD as an endemic disease accompanied by an effective vaccination policy is another option that has been suggested although this, we understand, would require EU approval. This would rely on the development of a fully effective vaccine or range of vaccines for all FMD strains in all species, preferably with an extended interval between sequential doses of vaccine. There would need to be a national policy of compulsory vaccination since anything significantly less than 100% vaccination coverage would risk

further outbreaks. Any infection remaining which passed to unprotected livestock might cause debilitating symptoms and, therefore, cause serious welfare problems. Vaccination of livestock in remote areas might prove difficult to achieve and the possibility of a reservoir of disease in hill sheep and wild populations, e.g. deer, should not be discounted. The industry would still be living with the disease itself and hence with the potential animal welfare challenges that this implies. We do not therefore believe that this is a desirable option.

32. In principle, a policy of vaccination in the face of an outbreak may have significant welfare benefits and should not be ruled out. There may be circumstances where the infection can effectively be ring-fenced by vaccination. The infected premises can then be slaughtered out and spread of disease limited. A policy of vaccination that was effective in preventing or slowing down the spread of disease and led to fewer animals being culled would be a significant welfare benefit. Vaccination should be an option to be addressed in each case and we welcome wider debate at an EU level on this subject. Likewise, an improved diagnostic test would be of great benefit, particularly if it were rapid and permitted differentiation between vaccinal and naturally acquired antibody.

Recommendations

In the event of a disease outbreak leading to the ring-fencing of a region by vaccination, there must be adequate regional capacity to provide for animal welfare and to cope with the number of livestock requiring slaughter or disposal.

In any outbreak of FMD, vaccination should be considered amongst the other methods of controlling the disease and measures decided upon dependent on the circumstances.

There is a need for greater public reassurance that animals that have been vaccinated may appropriately and safely enter the human food chain. This should be done at a time when there is no threat of disease and therefore public trust is more likely.

Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme.

33. The Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme was aimed at alleviating the worst animal welfare problems on farms caused by restrictions on animals' movements. However, this scheme was initially over-generous and encouraged over-subscription that may have affected the prioritisation of the worst welfare cases (a reduction in payments was subsequently announced and additional movements allowed). We believe that more could have been done on farm in

terms of provision of fodder or use of fresh land before invoking the disposal scheme. The destruction of healthy breeding stock and unfinished animals should be regarded as a last resort. A welfare scheme should have addressed all the possibilities for improving welfare, such as provision of “welfare vouchers” to fund the purchase of fodder or other resources, not just disposal.

34. The eligibility of animals under the scheme should be objectively assessed by the SVS rather than by a local veterinarian who might be faced with a conflict of interests.

35. Over winter the supply and distribution of fodder is crucial to animals’ welfare. Holdings still under restriction may face fodder shortages. We welcome the match funding of the Addington Fund by DEFRA and the extension of this fodder provision scheme. This acknowledges advice given by FAWC that it was better and often cheaper to feed an animal than it was to kill it. We would urge increased levels of Government funding for fodder support to obviate welfare problems.

Recommendations

Welfare schemes should in future address all avenues available to enable producers to sustain the welfare of their animals, not just disposal. In particular, Government should consider a system of “welfare vouchers” to assist with the provision of fodder or other resources.

Government funding of fodder support schemes should be given greater priority.

Movement restrictions

36. There was initially no flexibility in the biosecurity rules, perhaps necessarily so. Animals became at risk because of a lack of fodder when fresh pasture was “just over the road” but was unavailable because of movement restrictions. Welfare problems such as these should be assessed on a case by case basis. Farmers did not want to feel that they were letting their animals down by subjecting them to less than ideal conditions or by killing them to remove them from such situations. Relaxation of movement restrictions through the issue of progressively more liberal movement licences addressed this as confidence in FMD-free areas grew. This appears to have progressed more rapidly in Scotland than in England and Wales. Similarly, the blanket slaughter policy at contiguous premises became open to local review. Further relaxation of movement restrictions came with a system for autumn movements that allowed commercial movements in England, subject to conditions. There was more localised decision making in 1967/68.

37. The simplistic view of farms as ring-fenced units with all their animals self-contained is no longer true. Agriculture has changed since the 1967/68 FMD outbreak to become more diverse in animal management systems, with land holdings fragmented and grassland use more intensive. Groups of animals belonging to one keeper may move regularly to near and remote locations for grazing, calving, lambing, etc. The inability to gather these animals together and the difficulties of tending to disparate groups of animals were causes for concern during the outbreak.

38. FAWC continued to have concerns about livestock restricted to holdings towards the end of 2001. Many of these animals had been restricted for an extremely protracted period. The welfare implications of limited fodder and shelter remained as winter approached. Timely management and veterinary advice would have assisted such farmers.

39. It is not yet clear what livestock movement controls will remain in force when the FMD outbreak ends. However, it is clear that an essential element in the enforcement of any animal movement control is effective identification of individual animals, particularly sheep. The move towards a viable and practical method of electronic identification would seem the only way forward. Consideration of any proposed method of individual animal identification must include an assessment of the impact on animal welfare since all proposed means are either physically invasive (e.g. ear tags and boluses) or may involve restrictive handling systems (e.g. retinal identification).

Recommendations

Management and veterinary advice should be made available to farmers whose animals are subject to lengthy movement restrictions.

Consideration of any proposed method of individual animal identification must include an assessment of the impact on animal welfare.

Cleansing and disinfection

40. Cleansing and disinfection on some farms has proved difficult because of the design and poor levels of maintenance of farm buildings. Farm buildings and other facilities intended for keeping livestock should be designed and maintained, not only consistent with good animal welfare, but also in a manner enabling them to be cleaned and disinfected effectively.

Recommendation

Farm buildings and other facilities intended for keeping livestock should be designed and maintained, not only consistent with good animal welfare, but also in a manner enabling them to be cleaned and disinfected effectively.

Biosecurity

41. We believe that the greatest welfare issues arise from the presence of disease itself. We are therefore extremely concerned about the risk of transmission from imported livestock products. Every possible effort must be made to prevent the introduction of FMD and any other significant exotic disease into Great Britain. Government should look to countries with recognised FMD-free status, e.g. USA, Australia and New Zealand, and review the biosecurity arrangements they have in place, e.g. hygiene, control of imports, penalties and enforcement. We also consider it desirable that Customs and Excise establishments at ports and airports should be strengthened to increase the effectiveness of import controls.

Recommendation

The effectiveness of import controls should be reviewed by Government and improved to minimise the risk of disease being introduced into Great Britain. Lessons should be learned from countries with long standing FMD-free status and an appropriate strategic plan developed.

Restocking

42. The importance of farmers taking reasonable health and welfare precautions when restocking cannot be overstated. Great Britain has invested heavily in eradication schemes of diseases such as brucellosis, and other diseases such as tuberculosis and paratuberculosis are geographically confined but would be readily spread by ill-considered restocking practices. The cost of such disease spread in welfare terms, as well as national biosecurity, is incalculable. In addition, the absence of stock on much grazing land for an entire season offers unique opportunities to eliminate parasite problems with the accompanying welfare benefits.

43. It is vital that veterinary advice is provided at an early stage to farmers who are planning for restocking to ensure all these options are well considered. We believe that veterinary advice should be available under the Rural Development Programme as part of the five free days of business consultancy available to farmers.

Recommendation

Veterinary advice should be available to farmers planning to restock their farms as part of the five free days of business consultancy available to farmers under the Rural Development Programme.

Headage payments for sheep producers

44. The eligibility criteria for payments under the Sheep Annual Premium Scheme, based on the requirement to retain the number of eligible sheep claimed during the application period (December to February) until the end of the 100-day retention period (15 May), clearly contributed to the widespread movement of sheep that took place in February 2001 before the detection of FMD. This was exacerbated by the fact that there is clawback of quota from producers if less than 70 per cent of quota is utilised – essentially an incentive to move sheep solely for that reason.

45. The Council is concerned that this system, in spite of whatever efforts may be made to control movements, will again drive multiple sheep movements in February 2002. This is because producers will have a financial incentive to acquire stock to meet their headage requirements. Alternatively, they may be tempted to hold on to stock that in many instances they may well find extremely difficult to feed. Both scenarios have severe welfare implications directly related to the headage payment system. We consider that the introduction of an Outgoers scheme or some other appropriate mechanism by the Government to purchase quota would go a long way towards redressing the immediate problem. However, we also believe that a system of payment for sheep producers based upon predicted head count is fundamentally flawed and should, as soon as opportune, be reviewed at EU level and revised.

Recommendation

The system of payments for sheep producers based upon predicted head count should be reviewed at EU level and revised.

Farmers' access to information

46. The assumption that most farmers have the ability to access information over the Internet is an inappropriate one to make. It is difficult to assess the level of farmers' access to the DEFRA website but it is likely to be relatively low. Indeed, the more isolated the livestock farmers the less likely they are to have access. Conversely, these are the people most in need of information and support. Local networking cannot be relied upon, as neighbouring farmers would avoid contact. Postal services are also disrupted. Proactive

communication through all types of media, including television and radio, should be considered.

Recommendation

The provision of information to all parties during the FMD outbreak should be reviewed by Government to ensure the best possible advice and guidance can be provided during any future emergency.

FAWC Secretariat
December 2001

APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP OF THE FARM ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL, JANUARY 2002

Dr Judy MacArthur Clark (*Chairwoman*)

Mr Ian Baker

Mrs Rosemary Berry

Professor Stephen Clark

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Professor Peter English

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APPENDIX B

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