

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE: IMPLICATIONS FOR TB CONTROLS, THE FIELD TRIAL AND THE TB RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Introduction

1. State Veterinary Service and other MAFF resources have been re-directed to deal with the outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the UK. This has had a significant knock-on effect on other MAFF business, and on our TB-related activities in particular. This note summarises the effect on these activities and the implications for the trial and the TB research programme.

Extent of the foot and mouth outbreak

2. As at 7 March, 96 outbreaks of FMD had been confirmed of which 29 were situated in counties involved in the trial - Devon (17 outbreaks), Hereford (5), Cornwall (2), Wiltshire (2), Derbyshire (1) and Staffordshire (2). Updated figures, and an indication of how many outbreaks are situated in trial areas, will be available at the ISG meeting. All farm animal movements in GB are currently prohibited, except movements direct to approved abattoirs carried out under special licence from MAFF.

TB testing

3. As most veterinary resources have been committed to the containment and control of FMD, routine testing for TB in cattle has been put on hold, as has follow-up testing for reactors. This is being kept under close review by the SVS.

TB 99

4. The backlog of TB 99 investigations that had accrued mainly as a result of the diversion of SVS resources to deal with Classical Swine Fever in the Autumn has been largely cleared. However, the suspension of TB testing will delay the collection of TB99 data for 2001.

The field trial

5. Field surveying in Herefordshire (Triplet D), Gloucestershire (I) and Devon (J) has been suspended. Wildlife Unit staff, including the National Trial Manager and his Veterinary Adviser, have been seconded to the SVS AHDO offices to deal with FMD outbreaks. ADAS and CSL have stood down their field surveyors. All three Triplets are scheduled to have their initial proactive culls in September-December. Provided that the FMD outbreak is contained and WLU resources restored early in the Summer, therefore, it should be possible to keep to the timetable for these trapping operations, assuming that resources can be found to complete surveying using contractors.

6. The prospects are less clear for the follow-up proactive operations planned for the period May-July in Gloucestershire/Hereford (Triplet A), Devon/Cornwall (F), Staffordshire (G) and Somerset/Devon (H). If operations are to begin in Triplets A and F at the end of the close season, as scheduled, both WLU units will need to be operational again by mid- April, in order to undertake repeat surveying and trap siting. This assumes that access to farms in the proactive areas is available, and that farmer co-operation remains as before.

7. Maintenance crew operations in North Wiltshire (E), Herefordshire (B) and East Cornwall (C) can be scheduled more flexibly and should be carried out within the culling season once access to trial areas is available. However, it is uncertain that all of the necessary reactive operations will be carried out, especially those planned for the early part of the 2001 trapping season. The comparative assessment of reactive surveying protocols (bait marking vs. "standard") has been abandoned for this close season.

The RTA survey

8. Redirection of SVS and WLU staff onto FMD duties has effectively halted the collection of badger carcasses for the RTA survey.

The research programme

9. Given the restrictions on the movement of livestock and the unavailability of SVS staff, the start of the investigation of in-contact animals as part of the cattle pathogenesis project SE3013, due on 1 April, has been postponed. The earliest feasible start date is now 1 June, although this will be reviewed once a clearer picture of the extent and duration of the FMD problem is available.

10. In line with its recommendation that access to livestock farms should be restricted to those on essential business, MAFF has halted all field work being undertaken as part of the TB research programme. Several research projects entail extensive field studies and for some (e.g. those involving bait marking procedures) Spring is an especially important time for field studies. The following projects are affected:

Project	Contractor	Title
SE 3002	WARWICK	Ecological Correlates of Tuberculosis Incidence in Cattle
SE 3009	OXFORD	The Risk to Cattle from <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> Infection in Wildlife Species Other than Badgers
SE 3010	CSL	The Risk to Cattle From Wildlife Species Other Than Badgers in Areas of High Herd Breakdown Risk
SE 3011	BRISTOL	Understanding the Route of TB Transmission from Badgers to Cattle
SE 3108	OXFORD	An Integrated Study of Perturbation, Population Estimation, Modelling and Risk

SE 3109	BRISTOL	Novel Methods of Estimating Badger Numbers in the Wider Countryside
ZF 0531	CSL	The Ecological Consequences of Badger Removal

Conclusion

11. The ISG is invited to :

- note the impact of the FMD outbreak on TB-related research; and
- discuss the potential significance of such knock-on effects.

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FMD Outbreaks and trial areas as at 13/03/01

Map shows the point locations of FMD outbreaks, in counties with trial areas. (42)

Summary of FMD outbreaks in trial areas

J3 10 Outbreaks
C2 1 Outbreak

