



## SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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03 November 2003

Dear Consultee

### **CONSULTATION PAPER NATIONAL SCRAPIE PLAN - PROPOSALS FOR A VOLUNTARY FRAMEWORK FOR FLOCK REGISTRATION**

I am writing to seek your comments on proposals outlined in the attached consultation paper on proposals for a voluntary UK framework for recognising the TSE resistant status of certain sheep flocks to be introduced under the National Scrapie Plan for Great Britain.

Please send your comments on this paper to Alastair Douglas, no later than 19 December 2003, at the address above. This 8 week consultation ( rather than 12 weeks which is the standard minimum period for a consultation exercise under the Government Code of Practice on Consultation) is necessary in order to reach decisions on the shape of the framework by the start of 2004, as required by the EU. If you have any difficulties meeting this deadline then please let us know. Parallel consultations are being conducted by the Rural Affairs Departments in both England & Wales.

In line with the Governments policy on openness, SEERAD intends to make available at the end of the consultation period, copies of the comments received. The main Scottish Executive library at K spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD (Tel: 0131 244 8455) will on request supply copies to personal callers or telephone enquiries. It will be assumed therefore that your reply can be made publicly available in this context, unless you clearly state that you wish all, or part of it, excluded from this arrangement.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Copies of this consultation package will be published on the Scottish Executive website at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/views/views.asp>

Yours faithfully



Stuart Baxter  
Animal Health and Welfare 3  
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department

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NATIONAL SCRAPIE PLAN FOR GREAT  
BRITAIN – CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS  
FOR A VOLUNTARY FRAMEWORK FOR  
FLOCK REGISTRATION



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## **NATIONAL SCRAPIE PLAN FOR GREAT BRITAIN – CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR A VOLUNTARY FRAMEWORK FOR FLOCK REGISTRATION**

### **Introduction**

1. This document seeks your views on proposals for implementing an EU requirement for the establishment of a *voluntary* UK wide framework to recognise the TSE resistant status of certain sheep flocks under the National Scrapie Plan.

### **Background**

2. Rural Affairs Departments in England, Scotland and Wales launched the National Scrapie Plan (NSP) in July 2001. There are currently a number of schemes running within the NSP, including a ram genotyping scheme for owners of pure bred sheep from the registered and non registered sectors. These schemes are aimed at increasing the genetic resistance to scrapie and thereby reducing the incidence of disease due to TSEs and the theoretical risk of BSE in the national flock. Under the scheme rules, genotypes are grouped into 5 types for NSP purposes. These range from Type I for ARR/ARR genotypes – which are the most resistant to scrapie, to Type IV and V for VRQ genotypes – the most susceptible to scrapie.
3. Legislation, introduced by the European Commission earlier this year (Commission Decision 2003/100/EC), lays out the requirement for the establishment of a voluntary framework to recognise the TSE resistant status of flocks of sheep, and introduces a set of minimum criteria that the framework must follow (see Annex 1). This voluntary framework must be in place by 1 January 2004. Following the outcomes of this public consultation, we intend to undertake an ‘Expressions of interest’ (EoIs) exercise early next year with a view to officially launching the framework in July 2004 in time for the tugging season.

### **Our proposals**

4. The EU legislation requires the establishment of two levels of recognition as a minimum: (i) level I flocks shall be flocks composed entirely of sheep of the ARR/ARR genotype; (ii) level II flocks shall be flocks whose progeny have been sired exclusively by rams of the ARR/ARR genotype. However the legislation also allows Member States to grant recognition on further levels to suit national requirements.
5. GB Rural Affairs Departments consider that a two tier system of recognition which complies solely with the EU minimum requirements would not sufficiently represent our stratified sheep industry. In addition, it would take little account of the significant variations in the levels of resistant genotype frequencies by breed or

from the framework. Additionally the EU minimum requirements are largely public health driven in that they aim to identify flocks producing lamb which carry at least one copy of the TSE resistant ARR allele (i.e. they are at least semi-resistant to TSEs), but they do not provide any way of differentiating between flocks with different levels of resistance to scrapie. A framework which went further in this direction would enable farmers to make better informed decisions about the health status of flocks from which they were considering buying breeding stock and help to reinforce messages about buying animals from flocks with higher levels of resistance.

6. We therefore consider that a more expansive framework is needed. Our proposed framework is contained at Annex 2. As a means of explanation, the majority of scrapie cases are found in sheep containing the VRQ PrP allele. There are also a number of known strains or types of natural scrapie associated with sheep containing the ARQ PrP allele (but not the VRQ PrP allele). Therefore each progression step up the proposed framework can be associated with increasing levels of resistance in the flock to scrapie, and, as a consequence, a decreasing risk of the flock contracting scrapie if exposed. This is achieved by encouraging the progressive reduction and removal of the most susceptible alleles (VRQ and ARQ) in the ram population as the flock moves up the table, which in turn will have an impact on the genetic profile of the entire flock. In addition, such a framework will facilitate the application of risk reduction strategies by those who are reliant on the purchase of breeding stock by putting them in a better position to purchase sheep from flocks with greater levels of resistance to TSEs.
7. You will note that the proposed levels apply only to rams, other than the mandatory EU requirement for Level I (described in Annex 2 as Level A for the purpose of our proposed national framework) which provides for the classification of both rams and ewes. This reflects current NSP initiatives which primarily provide for the genotyping, electronic identification and associated certification of rams, although we acknowledge that a number of ewes have been tested as part of a Ram Genotyping Scheme visit and separately under WEGS II in Wales.
8. You will note for the sake of consistency, that each category is directly linked to existing NSP ram types i.e. Types I - III.
9. In terms of the eligibility criteria (it is a requirement that the framework is open to *all* pure and *all* cross bred flocks within and outwith the NSP), the legislation provides some scope for Member States to apply additional criteria and rules. We are therefore proposing that eligibility should be restricted to those flocks, both within and outwith the NSP, that possess qualifying rams (and in the case of Level A, qualifying ewes), which have been genotyped and issued with an appropriate NSP certificate. In other words, under this framework\scheme there is no facility to recognise the genotype of animals privately genotyped. To be eligible, flocks would either have to have had their rams, and in the case of Level A ewes, genotype tested, electronically identified and certificated through the NSP's Ram

Genotyping Scheme (RGS) (and or WEGS II in Wales) or to have purchased rams (or in the case of Level A, ewes) which meet this criteria.

10. We are proposing that membership of the flock register will be dependant on the outcomes of annual flock inspections around tuppung time. Having applied for membership (or continued membership), it will be the farmers responsibility to arrange an inspection which must be undertaken by the applicant's own private veterinarian or someone nominated by that veterinary practice. The farmer would be responsible for the costs of this inspection visit. The 'inspector' will be required to confirm that the applicant is using the breeding groups as reported. This report must be signed and submitted to the National Scrapie Plan Administration Centre in Worcester where appropriate validation checks will be undertaken prior to approval. Successful applicants will be issued with a "NSP Flock Registration" certificate appropriate to the 'level' for which they have qualified, which will be valid for a period of 12 months.
11. The EU legislation also requires that Member States must undertake regular random genotype sampling of sheep from flocks participating in the registration framework. Additionally, it also provides for random sampling for TSEs from animals over 18 months of age at the slaughterhouse from those flocks which have achieved Level A status (i.e. flocks composed entirely of sheep of the ARR/ARR genotype). We would welcome your views on whether the genotype sampling requirements should be based on an overall fixed percentage regardless of individual flock size, or a representative percentage based on flock size. With regard to the TSE sampling requirement in Level A flocks, we would propose that this should be undertaken on the basis of a representative sample designed to detect a certain prevalence of disease within acceptable confidence limits. This will vary from flock to flock depending on overall flock size and the overall numbers of cull animals over 18 months of age sent direct for slaughter on an annual basis. We are proposing that the cost of these random samples will initially be met by Government but this will be subject to review in the light of uptake.
12. We would also propose that such checks should examine some of the progeny in Level A flocks (since these should all be ARR/ARR) and possibly in Level B flocks (since these should all be ARR/XXX) but would welcome views on whether such extra sampling would be seen as beneficial.
13. There is also the question of what penalties to apply if checks reveal that adult sheep or progeny are not of the genotype expected of that level. We would propose, in the first instance, to exclude the farmer from the register for the remainder of that year, but to allow him to re-apply subsequently. However, we would welcome views on whether this would be viewed as sufficient or whether further penalties (such as exclusion from the register for a longer period) would be preferable.
14. Details of participating flocks and the level at which they are registered will be

## Comments

15. We would welcome your views on our proposals. In particular we would welcome your views on (i) the additional registration levels proposed over and above the mandatory level I and II (see points 5 and 6 above), (ii) the proposal to restrict registration to rams (apart from Level I) in the first instance, (see point 7 above), (iii) the proposal on the treatment of flocks outwith the breeding programme (point 9 above) (iv) the application process (see point 10 above) and (v) the proposals for random sampling (see points 11 and 12 ) and penalties (see point 13).
16. In addition we would welcome your comments on the current presentation of the levels. In the table in Annex 2, they are presented as levels A-C3. However, these could be amended to suit the needs of the industry, and prevent confusion or duplication if the levels are already used within a different context by certain sectors of the industry. Some alternative options are presented in Annex 3.
17. If you have any comments on the proposals, please send them by Friday 19 December to:

Alastair Douglas  
Animal Health and Welfare, branch 3  
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department  
47 Robb's Loan  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1TY  
Tel: 0131 244 6129  
e-mail [alastair.douglas@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:alastair.douglas@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

**ANNEX 1**  
EXTRACT FROM COMMISSION DECISION 2003/100/EC

**Article 4**

Framework to recognise the TSE-resistant status of certain sheep flocks

1. By 1 January 2004, each Member State shall establish a framework for the recognition of the TSE-resistant status of certain sheep flocks.

This framework shall follow the criteria set out in Annex II.

2. The recognition of the TSE resistant status of a flock under the framework provided for in paragraph 1 shall not be considered a necessary criterion to exclude the presence of a TSE in that flock.

**Annex II of Commission Decision 2003/100/EC**

The framework for the recognition of the TSE resistant status of flocks of sheep

1. the framework shall recognise the TSE-resistant status of flocks of sheep that, whether as a result of participation in the breeding programme as provided for in Article 2 or otherwise, satisfy certain criteria.

This recognition shall be granted on at least two levels:

- (a) level I flocks shall be flocks composed entirely of sheep of the ARR/ARR genotype;
- (b) level II flocks shall be flocks whose progeny have been sired exclusively by rams of the ARR/ARR genotype.

Member States may decide to grant recognition on further levels to suit national requirements.

2. regular random sampling of sheep from TSE resistant flocks shall be carried out:

- (a) either on the farm or at the slaughterhouse to verify their genotype;
- (b) in the case of level I flocks, in animals over 18 months of age at the slaughterhouse, for TSE testing in accordance with Annex III to Regulation (EC) no 999/2001.

**ANNEX 2**

**PROPOSED CATEGORIES\ LEVELS FOR FLOCK REGISTRATION  
FRAMEWORK**

	Rams	Ewes
A*	Type I	Type I
B*	Type I	Unknown
C1	Type I and Type II (but no ARQ)	Unknown
C2	Type I and Type II	Unknown
C3	Type I, II and III	Unknown

**Type I** ARR/ARR

**Type II** ARR/AHQ  
ARR/ARH  
ARR/ARQ

**Type III** AHQ/AHQ  
AHQ/ARH  
AHQ/ARQ  
ARH/ARH  
ARH/ARQ  
ARQ/ARQ

\* EU minimum levels

**ANNEX 3**  
**SUGGESTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE PRESENTATION OF CATEGORIES**

Proposed Categories	Possible alternatives for presentation			
A	Level I	Level I	Gold	A
B	Level II	Level II	Silver	B
C1	Level IIIa	Level III	Bronze a	C
C2	Level IIIb	Level IV	Bronze b	D
C3	Level IIIc	Level V	Bronze c	E

1.1 List of Consultees

Copies of this consultation document are available on request from: Alastair Douglas, Animal Health & Welfare Branch 3, SEERAD, ☎: 0131 244 6129, fax: 0131 244 4755.

It will also be published on the Internet on the following sites:

[www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/current.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/current.htm)

[www.scotland.gov.uk/views/views.asp](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/views/views.asp)

[www.wales.gov.uk/keypubconsultation/index.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubconsultation/index.htm)

[www.ukonline.gov.uk/CitizenSpace/CSConsultationList](http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/CitizenSpace/CSConsultationList)

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<b>Organisations</b>
All Chief Executives
All DVMs
All Scottish Faith Groups
All Scottish Political Parties
British Veterinary Association (Scottish Branch)
Centre for Tropical Veterinary Medicine
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Crofters Commission
Food Standards Agency Scotland
Health & Safety Executive Scotland
Highlands & Islands Sheep Strategy
Highlands and Islands Sheep Health Association
Institute for Animal Health Neuropathogenesis Unit
Moredun Research Institute
National CJD Surveillance Unit, The
National Farmer's Union of Scotland
National Sheep Association Scotland
Quality Meat Scotland
Rowett Research Institute, The
Royal Dick Veterinary College
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, The
Royal Society of Edinburgh, The
SAC Veterinary Science Division
Scottish Agricultural Colleges
Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers

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CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – NATIONAL SCRAPIE PLAN – PROPOSALS FOR A VOLUNTARY  
FRAMEWORK FOR FLOCK REGISTRATION

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Scottish Association Of Sheep Health
Scottish Association of Young Farmers
Scottish Borders Enterprise
Scottish Branch BVA
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Crofting Foundation
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association
Scottish Landowners Federation
Scrapie and Related Diseases Advisory Service
Sheep Veterinary Association
Sheep Veterinary Society
Shetland Agricultural Association
Shetland Animal Health Trust
Shetland Islands Council
University of Glasgow Veterinary School
Women's Farming Union