

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

BLUETONGUE DISEASE MEETING

14:00, 7 January 2008, PENTLAND HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present

Name	Organisation		Name	Organisation
Neil Ritchie	SG and Chair		Ian Anderson	SAMW
Charles Milne	CVO Scotland		Alistair Donaldson	SAMW
Bev Williams	SG		Keith Redpath	SBCA
Debbie King	SG		John Bell	SBCA
Alastair Douglas	SG		Jim Kennedy	SBCA
Mike Lamont	SG Vet Division		Mungo Howat	COSLA
Roy Paterson	SG RPID		Helen O'Neill	COSLA
D Dunsmuir	Royal Highland Society		Kim Haywood	NBA
Rupert Hine	AH Agency		Hamish Waugh	NSA
Darrell Crothers	SEPA		Jim Thomson	NSA
Barti Syngé	SAC		Nigel Miller	NFUS
Brian Pack	ANM Group		Bob Carruth	NFUS
Mike Flynn	SSPCA			
Andy McGowan	QMS			
Andrew Wright	IAAS			

By phone: Charlie Moir (DVM Inverness); Graeme Cochrane (DVM Ayr); Cameron Stewart; Aileen Mc Fadzean(Scottish Blackface Assn); Alan Jess; Douglas Scott

Introduction

1. Neil Ritchie welcomed stakeholders to the meeting and explained that the purpose was to give an update on the recent findings of bluetongue positive imported animals in GB; movements within GB given the recently declared vector free period; and to discuss vaccination. He reported that other UK administrations were supportive of the idea of a UK level conference on bluetongue strategy, but that time and place had yet to be set.

EU Imports

2. CVO Scotland gave an update on imports. Three incidents involving imported BT positive animals had been identified (in Middlesbrough, Worcester and Kirkcudbright); all animals had been slaughtered with no compensation paid. There had been no evidence of disease circulating and therefore no confirmation and no zones needed to be declared. However, the concerns generated by the apparent problems with the movement regime meant that SG would be developing a testing regime and work plan to provide reassurance that no undisclosed cases of disease were present; the question remained as to who would pay for this.

3. At the European level, CVO (S) expected the next meeting of SCOFCAH on 9/10 January to tighten up the certification of movements. In reply to stakeholder questions, CVO(S) noted that this tightening would result in the export health certificate documenting the conditions that “out of zone” movements had complied with. He emphasised that it would continue to be safer for Scottish farmers to source stock only from low risk areas, and that the lack of compensation and possibility of being charged for subsequent sampling should be publicised. This position was supported by the meeting, with NFUS noting that their members were concerned and angry over the Kirkcudbright import. The meeting agreed that the safety of the import regime should be discussed at the UK conference.

4. NFUS raised the need for increased precautions towards the end of the vector free period (VFP), especially if there was an increase in the number of immature female midges. CVO(S) explained that, in tandem with developing confidence in testing, we could end VFP early as a safety factor.

5. Summing up, Neil Ritchie noted that there was widespread support for getting the import regime into better shape and communicating the risks of imports.

GB Disease Situation and Movements

6. CVO(S) explained that as a VFP had been declared on 20 December, the movement window had now opened for live animals, subject to satisfactory testing as required by the EC Regulation. Cost of tests were approx £15 for PCR and £3 for ELISA, and movements subsequent to these tests could start on 7 Jan and 21 Jan respectively.

7. Neil Ritchie reported that the slaughterhouse designation process was about to be finalised and movements to slaughter in Scotland from the Surveillance Zone will then be allowed. Industry representatives confirmed that there would be significant demand for both moves to slaughter and of live animals.

8. A general discussion followed on the main themes of: potential of a Scotland-only post movement testing system; potential for a zone strategy; horses movements as a method of spreading infected midges; warning of economic implications of concentrating on keeping Scotland disease free and ignoring the situation in England; importance of using time effectively and planning for almost certain disease in 2009.

9. Summing up, Neil Ritchie noted that this complex situation should be discussed at UK level and asked stakeholders to contribute issues of particular significance so we could get the best value from the conference. He noted that SG had commissioned EPIC to undertake research on the economic effects of the disease, and this would be reported at the end of March; again, stakeholder input on industry patterns would be valued. Stakeholder help in communicating the risks and costs of sourcing stock from high risk areas would also be appreciated.

Action point: Stakeholders to come forward with significant issues for UK discussion/industry movement data/communication of risks and potential costs

Vaccination

10. Neil Ritchie reminded the meeting that an EU-wide conference would be taking place in Brussels on 16 January.. CVO(S) and Dr Martyn Blissitt would be attending from Scotland. He circulated an updated version of the stakeholder statement on vaccination which included a point made by Brian Pack concerning use of prophylactic vaccination should disease become established. The updated Bluetongue (Scotland) Order 2008 was expected to be signed shortly, and to include provision for keepers to inform SG of animals received from the Bluetongue restricted zone, so that surveillance could be maintained.

11. The meeting agreed the statement subject to the addition of a point discouraging the movement of animals from high risk areas into Scotland to the stakeholder statement. (Statement in this form attached to these minutes).

Action point: SG to draft and circulate

12. A wide ranging discussion ensued, centred on the likelihood and desirability of keeping Scotland free of disease until vaccination was established as a credible control tool. SG members emphasised that we are under obligation to apply EC rules on movements so a ban on movements into Scotland is not an option, and that testing has resource implications, whoever pays for it. The livestock producers supported post movement testing given the risk to the long term survival of the sector, with other sections of the supply chain supporting testing but concerned over disruption to trade. Specific circumstances likely to affect the Royal Highland Show were also discussed.

12. Neil Ritchie agreed to take these consideration to Ministers with a view to working up a technically and financially effective post movement testing system.

Action point: SG to work up options for Scotland-only post movement testing

Next meeting: date not set but stakeholders will be kept informed of developments.

Scottish Government Rural Directorate
8 January 2008