

State

RESTRICTED

FOURTH CASE OF CJD IN A FARMER

Mr Eddy
Thank you. The Minister was
grateful for this note. As you can see he
is well aware of the significance of the
meeting mentioned in para 4. FJ 2/10/

From: T E D Eddy
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28 September 1995

To: W F G Strang PPS/Minister +1

CC PS/Minister of State
PS/ Parliamentary Secretary (Mrs Browning)
PS/Parliamentary Secretary (Mr Boswell)
PS/Lord Lucas
PS/Secretary
Mr Osborne
Mr Carden
Mr Meldrum
Mr Haddon
Mr Hollis
Dr Cawthorne
Mr Haslam
Dr Render
Mr Huws - WOAD
Dr Wight -DH

Minister

To note

Especially
Not
out of
para 4
meeting 28/9

1. The Minister will wish to be aware of reports of a fourth case of CJD in a farmer. The patient is still alive and so the disease cannot be confirmed, however, the clinical symptoms suggest CJD and the case is classified as "probable". Apparently, the farmer's local media (BBC Wales) are aware of the case and, we understand, will be running an item on it today. This could stimulate further media interest.

2. The patient is a 59 year old beef farmer from Gwynedd with a 70 strong suckler herd. There has been one case of BSE on his farm, in a 4 1/2-5 year old cow in September 1991. This cow was bought by the farmer when it was 2 1/2 years old. The animal was apparently not fed with concentrated feed on his farm and is likely to have been infected before the farmer bought it.

3. If confirmed, this will be the fourth case of CJD in a farmer. In all cases they have worked on farms which have had one or more cases of

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BSE. The previous three cases (the last one was 9 months ago) have, however, all been in dairy farmers and BSE is most prevalent in dairy herds.

4. When considering the second case of CJD in a dairy farmer in 1993 the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) was told by Professor Smith (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) that if four cases of CJD occurred in farmers over a five year period then "the possibility that the association was not due to chance had to be given very serious consideration". The Department of Health is, therefore, convening a special meeting of the SEAC early next week to advise on the response to this possible case of CJD. I will report the outcome of this meeting to the Minister urgently.

5. Coincidentally, a letter will be published in The Lancet on 30 September reporting on the incidence of CJD in various EU states. This includes the number of farmers elsewhere who have died in the past few years of CJD; these are, France 5; Germany 2; UK 3 and Italy 3. The paper concludes that "there is no differential increase in the risk of CJD to farmers in the UK through potential occupational contact with cases of BSE".

6. If in due course this case of CJD is confirmed DH will need to notify the Commission and it would be sensible if the German authorities were also notified then, as we have done with previous cases.

7. The Department of Health will, of course, take the lead in handling any media enquiries on this case. However, if pressed Ministers could take the following line:

- am aware of reports of a fourth farmer suspected as suffering from CJD. This is of course a matter for the Department of Health. I understand that the necessary investigations are underway and we cannot comment further at present.

T E D EDDY

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95/9.28/2.2

Box 173B

Pw Box 173 ~~Box 173~~

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RESTRICTED: POLICY

SUSPECTED FOURTH CASE OF CJD IN A FARMER

From: T E D Eddy

Date: 4 October 1995

Division: AH(DC)

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cc: PS/Minister of State
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PS/Parliamentary Secretary (Mr Boswell)
PS/Lord Lucas
PS/Permanent Secretary
Mr Osborne
Mr Carden
Mr Meldrum
Mr Haddon
Mr K Taylor
Mr Haslam
Mr Bradley - CVL
Dr Matthews
Dr Render ✓
Mr Lister - DH
Mr Huws - WOAD

Copy for information

*S. Towne
4/10/95*

Mrs Gurnell

Mr Rider.

1. The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) met on 4 October to consider the suspected fourth case of CJD in a cattle farmer. The CJD unit have downgraded the case from a "probable" to a "possible" which reflects some uncertainty about the diagnosis now that the symptoms have been examined in more detail by the experts but final confirmation will depend on further tests and ultimately the post mortem.

2. SEAC concluded that, if the fourth case were confirmed, it would be worrying, especially as all four farmers with CJD would have had BSE cases on their farms. It was difficult to calculate accurately the likelihood of this being due to a series of random events; but looking at all male farmers and farm workers in England and Wales the chance of four CJD cases occurring randomly since 1990 was around 5/100; the chances of four cases of CJD occurring randomly in farmers with BSE in their herds was very much lower, around 3/10,000. The Committee therefore concluded that it was difficult to explain the incidence as a chance phenomenon. This is a change in the Committee's position; it had said that the most likely

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explanation of the three previous cases of CJD in dairy farmers was that they were chance phenomena.

3. SEAC noted that whilst there appeared to be a statistically significant link between dairy farming and CJD, the absolute risk to dairy farmers was still very small, at around 2 cases per 1,000,000 dairy farmers per year. It also noted that the incidence of CJD among cattle farmers in several other European States with little or no BSE, was significantly higher than the level in the general population in those countries.

4. The Committee considered possible hypotheses by which the BSE agent could infect farmers to cause CJD. It concluded that no biologically plausible theory had been put forward to suggest a causal link between BSE and CJD, although this did not rule out a link. Further work was needed to refine the statistical analysis, particularly on comparisons across Europe and the Committee were mindful that the data, particularly from Europe, could suggest a link with cattle farming per se and not BSE. SEAC also repeated its recommendation that work should be done to determine the strain of CJD occurring in the farmers.

5. SEAC considered whether any further practical steps were needed. It decided not to recommend any changes to the measures currently in place to protect human and animal health, including that of farmers and others handling cattle and BSE suspects.

6. A statement by the Committee, making the points outlined above, is being drafted. It will not be issued immediately, but only if it becomes necessary to satisfy media pressure. The suspected fourth case of CJD in a farmer might be raised in the context of the publication of the CJD Surveillance Unit's report on 5 October; if so DH will maintain the line that this is a suspected case, and make no further comment. However, if media interest persists it is likely that DH will have to issue the SEAC statement sometime next week.



T E D EDDY

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95/9.28/2.4

Specified bovine offal:
SVS surveillance August/September 1995

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Animal Health and Welfare Veterinary
Group,
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Date: 6-Oct-95

To: Dr Cawthorne

cc: Mr K C Meldrum
Mr M Haddon
Mr K C Taylor
Mr K B Baker
Mr T E D Eddy
Mrs K J A Brown
Mr P Soul, MHS
Dr D Matthews
Mr P Lackenby

1. As promised, this is the first routine report on the outcome of SVS surveillance of SBO.

Results.

2. The results of SVS surveillance from 15 August 1995 are summarised in the attached table. The latter columns in the table outline the reasons why a premises inspection was found to be unsatisfactory. Note that more than one reason may be recorded for any single premises.

3. An important overriding comment is that errors are present in the column recording failure reason 6 (SBO not moving to an appropriate destination). The unexpectedly large number of failures in this column reflects the fact that no incinerators or renderers had been approved by the time this return was generated. This has led staff to record an inappropriate destination when all that is wrong is that the destination is not yet approved. Some premises are also moving SBO from collection centre to collection centre and this will again lead to an entry in column 6. These are temporary problems which will be overcome when the deadline for premises approvals passes and when we have resolved the collection centre to collection centre problem. (In terms of interpreting the data, no premises has recorded an error code 6 as the only fault, so the overall figures for % unsatisfactory are correct despite the error.)

Comments.

4. The results show a less than satisfactory outcome. I am particularly disappointed with the high failure rate at slaughterhouses, especially in view of the recent efforts made by the SVS. However, I should point out two factors in mitigation:

- First the recent SVS activity concentrated on separation and staining of SBO whereas this ongoing monitoring is looking at all aspects of SBO, including record keeping etc. In some cases therefore, the recorded failures are connected with aspects of the premises operation that have not been looked at in detail before or are new requirements under the SBO Order (e.g. record keeping). It would therefore be too sweeping a comment to suggest that the industry in general are reverting to bad practices- in many cases we are picking up further details of their operation that are not yet satisfactory. However, there is evidence that some premises are still failing in aspects that were looked at in the previous exercise and it is difficult to excuse this.

- Second, anecdotal evidence from the MHS suggests that our SVS field staff are being supremely strict in their interpretation of observations during visits. One instance that has been quoted is of a VO visiting a low throughput slaughterhouse which operates deferred inspection, seeing spleens left attached to the carcase and so marking separation of SBO as inadequate. In fact spleens are deliberately left attached to the carcase for inspection by the visiting meat inspector who then removes them into the SBO bin. I regard these sort of instances as teething problems which should be overcome by my programme of regional seminars for SVS staff.

5. I am less surprised at the high failure rate at knackers yards and hunt kennels. SVS staff have only just begun to put significant pressure on these premises and improvements should become apparent over the next few months.

The way forward.

6. I am satisfied that SVS staff are in the main following their Inset instructions correctly, although there have been instances where MHS Regional Staff have not been kept informed of events as instructed by the Inset. These instructions require them to make a standard assessment as to whether or not a premises is satisfactory and write to the relevant enforcement authority if, on any visit, they judge the premises to be unsatisfactory. In such circumstances, the Inset requires a re-visit by a VO to reassess the premises. If it is still unsatisfactory, a letter is again written to the enforcement authority, this time recommending that they consider a prosecution. These second letters are to be copied to us.

7. In view of the high failure rate uncovered by our staff, I would like to amend the Inset instructions, asking for copies of the first as well as the second letters to be sent to us. This will allow us to more closely monitor what is going on, ensuring that

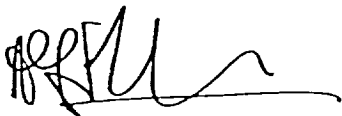
letters are written and that the SVS follow up failures in the way instructed in the Inset. If you agree with this proposal, I will prepare an Inset amendment to this effect.

8. I feel that there are also wider issues to be faced. We asked the SVS and MHS to make a special effort with slaughterhouses and it resulted in significant improvements in the industry. However, the latest results suggest that there is much that still needs to be done and in some cases that improvements could be short lived. I believe that a significant change of attitude needs to be shown by the industry if lasting improvements are to occur. I will leave it to others with better knowledge of the industry to decide how this can best be brought about.

9. Our findings in slaughterhouses also raise questions about the MHS. I do not believe that we should find ourselves in the position of detecting a 48% failure rate on random inspections when MHS enforcement staff are in these premises on a regular basis. The information gathered by the field would allow performance indicators to be set down as part of our MOU with the MHS. For instance, we could set an indicator of no more than 1% failure rate on SVS routine inspections. Eric Crutcher is currently preparing the MOU and will welcome your views.

10. The situation at knackers yards and hunt kennels is clearly unacceptable and I know that SVS staff are finding it hard going persuading operators to make the necessary improvements. If substantial progress is to be made with these premises, Local Authorities will probably need to get involved in a proactive way that supports the SVS and goes as far as taking prosecutions where necessary. I wonder if we need do anything to ensure that Local Authorities appreciate our concerns and will support our staff as necessary. I would welcome your views.

11. The situation at other premises more satisfactory and I am more confident that any outstanding problems will be resolved quickly. We will have the ultimate sanction of suspending approvals under the SBO Order at these other premises and this should be a help in keeping them up to standard.



A J Fleetwood