

BACKGROUND AND LINE TO TAKE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A FOREIGN NATIONAL TO SEAC, FOR USE IN CONNECTION WITH APPOINTMENT OF DR HUESTON.

**BACKGROUND**

1. Following the resignation from the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) of Professor Barlow, due to business commitments Dr Tyrrell, the Chairman of the Committee, advised the secretariat that the vacancy should be filled, if possible, by an epidemiologist of high calibre specialising in the field of spongiform encephalopathies (SE). This is important because so many of the issues upon which we consult the Committee relate to the transmission of the disease and require the exertise of an epidemiologist. The only other SE epidemiologist with a comparable reputation to Dr Hueston is John Wilesmith who is ineligible to serve on the Committee as he already works for MAFF at the Central Veterinary Laboratory. Those involved know of no one else of the same calibre in this specialised field of epidemiology.

2. The costs involved in bringing Dr Hueston from the USA to attend Committee meetings, (approximately £6,000 per annum), were considered before the appointment was made. In considering the cost, however, it is worth remembering that SEAC, with the esteem it commands internationally, has played a highly significant role in the success we have had in protecting the UK beef and cattle industry, which in export terms alone is worth some £340m pa. The cost should also be seen in comparison to the major cost of the epidemic; for 1993/4, an estimated £35m on slaughter and compensation.

**LINE TO TAKE**

- Dr Tyrrell said Committee needed high calibre epidemiologist in the field of spongiform encephalopathies. No one comparable in the UK known other than John Wilesmith who works for MAFF at CVL and therefore ineligible to serve on SEAC as not independent.

- Reputation of SEAC very important with regard to restoring confidence in beef and cattle industry whose exports are currently worth some £340m pa.

- SEAC advice has played a significant part in the development of our domestic policy, the success of which in controlling the disease is now clearly evident.

- The cost of bringing Dr Hueston from Colorado for meetings (approx £6000.pa) was, of course, carefully considered but it is not unreasonable in relation to:

- (i) the high cost of controlling the epidemic (some £35m pa in 1993/94) and
- (ii) the importance of protecting the beef and cattle industry (worth some £340m pa)

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