

Mr R.N. Elmhirst
Chairman
British Deer Farmers Association
Holly Lodge
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Berkswell
Coventry
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October 1994

Dear Mr Elmhirst,

CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE (CJD) SURVEILLANCE UNIT REPORT

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the publication of the third annual report from the CJD Surveillance Unit. I am sorry that you are dissatisfied with the way in which this report was published.

The Surveillance Unit is a completely independent outside body and the Department of Health is committed to publishing their reports as soon as they become available. In the circumstances it is not the practice to circulate the report for comment since the findings of the report would not be amended. In future we can ensure that the British Deer Farmers Association receives a copy of the report in advance of publication.

The Chief Medical Officer has undertaken to keep the public fully informed of the results of any research in respect of CJD. This report was entirely the work of the unit and was produced completely independently of the the Department.

The statistical results regarding the consumption of venison was put into perspective in the body of the report and was not mentioned at all in the press release. Media attention regarding this report was low key but gave a realistic presentation of the statistical findings of the Unit. This approach to publication was successful in that consumption of venison was highlighted only once by the media ie. in the News At One television programme.

I believe that a further statement about the report, or indeed statistical links between CJD and consumption of venison, would increase, and quite possibly give damaging credence, to the whole issue. From the low key media reports of which I am aware it seems unlikely that venison consumption will suffer adversely, if at all.