

BSE

CONFIDENTIAL

CMO

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## THE TYRRELL COMMITTEE

1. I attended the Tyrrell Committee meeting on 13 June. This was also Professor Ingrid Allen's first attendance.
2. Dr Pickles will be providing a note about the scientific discussion. My purpose is to draw attention to other problems facing Dr Tyrrell and his Committee.
3. First, I am very uneasy about the relative lack of urgency and interest that MAFF appear to hold for getting the necessary research programme on BSE and related encephalopathies started, and getting it going fast. For example, Mr Bradley of CVL said that there were difficulties in organising transmission experiments from the brain of the cat which died of an encephalopathy in Bristol. There were arguments going on about who should pay for this work. Should it be MAFF, the Bristol Veterinary School or someone else? Dr Tyrrell was clearly exasperated.
4. Next we were told that the mice necessary to do many of the transmission experiments will not become available until October. However, if large numbers are then used for experimental studies there would not be enough to breed from.
5. Thirdly, we were told that the Committee would have to advise on the hierarchical order in which the transmission experiments should be carried out, as finance (and experimental animals) will not be sufficient to cover everything.
6. Fourthly, the Committee were very concerned to hear that nothing had been done to set up a system so that any further cats that show signs of neurological disorder, can be referred to the "designated centre" for investigation, preferably *in vivo* and postmortem.
7. Fifthly, it was reported that MAFF have not agreed to pay for *in vivo*, as opposed to postmortem studies. The Committee were adamant that where possible, *in vivo* investigations should also be carried out to see if in ~~other~~ <sup>some</sup> species animals with spongiform encephalopathies can be distinguished from those with other neurological conditions.

8. These and other remarks about the lack of policy and co-ordination of the animal-related research were criticised by Committee members and led Dr Tyrrell, who was equally irritated, to ask the CVL observer and the MAFF member of the Secretariat to get these organizational problems sorted out.

9. Frankly, I had not realised the situation was so unsatisfactory. While I needed little convincing that a Directed Programme would be a better way to proceed, from what I heard at the Tyrrell Committee convinces me even more of the need for one. However, it appears that without a major change of attitude at "high levels" in MAFF, this will not happen.

10. The Committee discussed the two questions you had particularly asked them to address. On the question of an epidemic of encephalopathies in cats, the consensus was that an increase in the numbers was likely and would not materially change the Committee's perception. At present, there is no data about how common a spongiform encephalopathy is among cats with neurological disturbances. There is no information on whether the cat encephalopathy is transmissible to other species, or indeed to other cats. Further work needs to be done to review retrospectively the brains of cats that have died of neurological disorders to see if changes similar to that observed in the Bristol and Belfast cats can be identified.

11. The Committee were even less forthcoming on what their reaction might be if an encephalopathy is found in another species, perhaps in dogs. Their first reaction was that, as with the cats, the first step would be to investigate whether this was really a new disease, or simply one that had not previously been recognized and to see whether it has any links to BSE, scrapie or other transmissible encephalopathies. Indeed, some members of the Committee seem to regard the whole question of another species as a hypothetical question to be addressed only when it happened. A rather unsatisfactory posture.

12. In advance of your meeting with Dr Tyrrell on Monday morning, I have not voiced my anxieties about the support the Committee is receiving from MAFF to anyone other than Dr Pickles. This minute does little more than confirm a position we already suspected, but I am sure MAFF Ministers would be very disturbed if they were aware of lack of action to follow through the Committee's requests.

*I will be pleased to discuss further.*



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