

CONFIDENTIALBSE: PRESS PRESENTATION

1. I attach three draft press notices on the news items to be announced at the press briefing on Monday. We agreed that it would be better to treat the items individually rather than include them all in one press notice. This means we will be seen to be announcing a number of different measures relating to BSE as the Minister wishes, which would be more difficult to achieve with one press notice. We also avoid the problem we would have with one press notice of losing the other news items if we put the results of the pig experiment first or being accused of a cover up if we do not.

2. The press notice announcing the result of the transmission of BSE to a pig follows the format of the press notice used to announce in February the preliminary results of transmission to mice and cattle. It was decided at the time to announce the results of experiments related to BSE as and when they were available. This would take the form of a factual press notice explaining the result to be given at a background, on-the-record briefing for journalists by officials. This format was very successful in the February announcement and the press reports the next day were balanced and reasonable. We agreed that we should follow the same format for this announcement but include the fact that the results had been referred to the Tyrrell Committee and that the Government had accepted their recommendation that the specified offals should be banned from all animal feed as well as from human consumption. By putting the results of the experiment first and the Government's reaction further down the press notice we give the impression of a measured response and not a panic reaction which might be the case if we the Government's action first. Officials may wish to consider including information on other action to be taken, such as surveillance of developments in the field.

3. For the announcement of the new appointments to the Tyrrell Committee it would be useful to add a short biography for Prof Barlow and Mr Pepper for the notes for editors.

4. In Robert Lowson's minute to you dated 19 September he included in his draft press notice a paragraph on the future course of the disease. I do not think we should include this in any of the press notices because it has no intrinsic news value and could make us a hostage to fortune. We are already being asked by journalists why Southwood's predictions are being exceeded. Although I see no reason why we should make excuses for those predictions being inaccurate I do not think we should be making predictions now which could place us in the same position next year. These sorts of questions could be answered verbally at the press briefing, but not on paper.

5. These announcements will be made at a press briefing chaired by Mr Meldrum at 3.30pm on Monday 24 in Conference Room B. The briefing will be on-the-record but not open to film cameras or radio recorders, but the relevant officials should be available to give interviews afterwards. There will be a separate briefing for the trade in the

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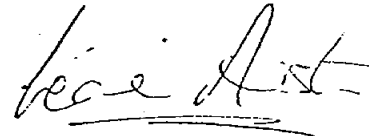
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Cinema in the basement, Whitehall Place West, at 2.30pm. Members of the trade are not invited to the press briefing, that is for the benefit of journalists only. If the information leaks out before the Monday briefing we should be ready to bring these arrangements forward.



Léonie Austin  
Press Office  
20 September 1990

Mr K Smith  
cc PPS/Minister  
CVO  
Mr C Capstick  
Mrs E Attridge  
Mr S Wentworth  
Mr R Bradley  
Mr J Wilesmith  
Mr A Lawrence  
Mr J Maslin  
Dr H Pickles (DoH)  
Mr R Lowson

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Draft press notice

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24 September 1990

BSE TRANSMISSION EXPERIMENTS IN PIGS

Research into the transmissibility of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) shows that under experimental laboratory conditions it can be transmitted to a pig.

In an experiment at the Central Veterinary Laboratory a pig became affected following inoculation with infected material. This result is the first evidence of the susceptibility of pigs to any form of spongiform encephalopathy.

It does not indicate the degree of susceptibility, or provide any evidence that pigs might be susceptible under natural conditions or show whether there might be any difference between breeds of pigs. It does demonstrate that pigs are capable of succumbing to the disease under extreme laboratory conditions.

So far only one of the ten animals that were subject to identical tests has succumbed to the clinical disease.

The symptoms of the disease could not be easily confused with those of another condition. It is therefore unlikely that the disease has occurred unnoticed in the field. There are sufficient sows and boars in the national herd for the distinctive symptoms to have been revealed should these occur. No cases have been reported.

The Tyrrell Committee has assessed the implications of these results. The Committee concluded that there were no new implications for human health as a result of this experiment.

The Government has accepted the Committee's advice to prohibit the use in all animal feed (including pet food) of those specified offals already prohibited from food for human consumption. The specified offals are bovine tissues where the BSE agent might be found if it was being incubated. Many animal feed compounders and pet food manufacturers are already applying such a ban on a voluntary basis.

There are no grounds for extending to feed for non-ruminant species the ban on the feeding of ruminant protein to ruminants that was introduced in July 1988. Pigs, and other species, will have been exposed for many years to material from scrapie-infected sheep without apparently developing a spongiform encephalopathy.

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24 September 1990

NEW MEASURES TO IMPROVE RECORD KEEPING IN CATTLE HERDS

New legislation, which comes into force on 19 October, will require all cattle farmers to keep a record of calves born into the herd and the identity of the dam.

Agriculture Minister John Gummer said the new arrangements are designed to tighten up the disease control procedures, and urged cattle farmers to be diligent in maintaining records.

Under the new legislation farmers will also have to keep movement records for 10 years instead of the current three.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Bovine Animals (Identification, Marketing and Breeding Records) Order 1990 requires owners of bovine animals to identify them and to keep a record of calves which are born into the herd, including the identity of the dam, within either 36 hours of birth in the case of dairy animals or seven days for all other cattle. It also prohibits the movement of unidentified animals.

2. The Movement of Animals (Records) (Amendment) Order 1990 amends the Movement of Animals Order 1960 by requiring that records are kept for 10 years instead of the current 3 years.

3. The Tuberculosis (England and Wales) (Amendment) Order 1990 amends the Tuberculosis (England and Wales) Order 1984 by transferring certain identification and marking provisions to the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marketing and Breeding Records) Order 1990.

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