

Ref: BSE23h

IN CONFIDENCE

Dr Smales (PS/CMO)

From: Dr H Pickles
Med ISD/3

Date: 23 August 1990

Copy: Dr Metters (o/r)
Mr Otley
Dr Harper
Mr Murray

EXPERIMENTAL PORCINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

1. CMO should be aware that a pig inoculated experimentally (ic, iv and ip) with BSE brain suspension has after 15 months developed an illness, now confirmed as a spongiform encephalopathy. This is the first ever description of such a disease in a pig, although it seems there are no previous attempts at experimental inoculation with animal material. The Southwood group had thought pigs would not be susceptible. Most pigs are slaughtered when a few weeks old but there have been no reports of relevant neurological illness in breeding sows or other elderly pigs.

2. The pig in question was one of 10 inoculated in March 1989. Two pigs died early from other causes, one litter mate is a possible suspect case, the other 6 are well. The current case developed signs in mid June 1990 and by late July had a full spectrum of scrapie-like disease. Neuropathology confirmed spongiform encephalopathy a few days ago. Mr Murray and I were informed yesterday together with Dr Tyrrell at a meeting at CVL.

3. An urgent meeting is being called of the full Tyrrell committee but since key members and the chairman are now overseas at a meeting this may not be until the week beginning the 3rd September. Points for consideration:

(i) In view of the long term exposure of pigs to scrapie without ill effect, does this suggest the species range for BSE is wider than that of scrapie, and if so what are the implications?

(ii) should the feeding of ruminant protein including BSE and scrapie-infected offal to pigs now be discontinued?

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- (iii) is any action needed to protect humans, eg extending the offal ban to pigs?
4. The Medicines Control Agency and the Procurement Directorate have been alerted to the need to consider medicines and devices manufactured from pigs.
 5. For information, there are now 9 cats confirmed with feline spongiform encephalopathy, suggesting this is indeed a new disease and exposure to BSE unlike exposure to scrapie has been hazardous for cats.
 6. Mr Maclean was informed last night and has agreed an early meeting of the Tyrrell group is required to give advice on which decisions will be made. In the meantime, he does not want to go public. Mr Maclean is expected to advise Mr Gummer. In these circumstances, CMO might like to consider whether PSH should be informed.
 7. Mr Murray and I will keep you informed of developments.



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