

SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING, 22ND APRIL 1993, AT THE CENTRAL VETERINARY LABORATORY

Present: Dr D A J Tyrrell (Chairman)
Professor I Allen
Professor F Brown
Mr D Pepper
Dr R G Will
Dr R H Kimberlin
Dr W A Watson
Mr R Bradley (CVL)]
Dr A Wight (DH)] Observers
Mr C Lister (DOH)]
Mr R Lawson (MAFF)] Secretariat

In

Attendance: Dr J Gunning - AFRC
Mr R McIvor - MAFF
Mr J Maslin - MAFF
Mrs S Townsend - MAFF

A. INTRODUCTORY

1. Dr P Dukes (MRC) had sent his apologies. Dr Gunning was deputising for Dr Reid. Mr Lister introduced himself as the new DH Secretary to the Committee succeeding Mr Murray. Mr Lawson announced that he too was leaving the Secretariat and introduced his successor within MAFF, Mr McIvor.

2. On behalf of the Committee, Dr Tyrrell thanked Mr Lawson for his excellent work as Secretary. He also congratulated Mr Bradley on his receiving a Meritorious Award from the Office International des Epizooties.

B. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. These were agreed with the following amendments:
(a) paragraph 3, line 1 insert "BSE" before "material";
(b) paragraph 17, line 9, insert "devices" after "medical".

C. MATTERS ARISING

Feeding Porcine Protein to Cattle

4. Mr Maslin reported that MAFF Ministers had accepted the Committee's advice that porcine material should not be fed to cattle. They felt that a statutory ban was unnecessary but the industry would be told that legislation would be introduced if there were any indications that in practice it might be used.

Creutzfeldt Jakob disease

5. Dr Will expressed disappointment over the breach of patient confidentiality in media coverage of the case of CJD in a cattle farmer. There were no other confirmed CJD cases related to farmers but one farmer's wife was alive with suspect CJD. There had been no cases of BSE on the farm and the wife had not handled the animals. Dr Will was also aware of a case of CJD in a Belgian farmer but Belgium had of course no confirmed cases of BSE. He went on to report that the CJD study continued to show no link with occupation or diet. Although 1992 had seen the highest number of CJD cases, the increase was not significant and probably just reflected increased ascertainment.

Dr Wight sought the Committee's views on the possibility that milk might carry the BSE agent. It had been suggested that the farmer may have drunk milk from a BSE-infected cow. Mr Bradley reported that epidemiological evidence from beef and dairy herds and from the human population did not suggest that milk transmitted disease. This was supported by experimental data, from completed and in-progress mouse transmission studies. The Committee therefore took the view that there was no evidence to suggest that milk was a hazard to animals or man and no further measures were needed to protect public health.

Relations between the St Mary's Group and the CJD Surveillance Unit

6. The Committee were pleased to note that the problem in relations between these workers had been resolved.

Tallow and SEs in other species

7. Ministers had accepted the Committee's advice and will be introducing legislation to bring the rules on SBO-derived tallow for animal consumption into line with those for human consumption and to make laboratory diagnosis of SEs notifiable.

D. THIRD INTERIM REPORT

8. At Dr Tyrrell's request the Committee made a number of comments on the draft report (SEAC 14/1) which he and Mr Bradley had prepared as a general structure. Dr Tyrrell undertook to consider the points raised and to amend the text as necessary. He also proposed to consult several experts in the field of SEs individually, including some members, on the revision/writing of contributions for the report.

E. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Development of the BSE epidemic

9. Mr Bradley updated the Committee on the progress of the BSE epidemic. he pointed out the welcome signs of reduction in the age specific incidence of the younger age groups and in the report rate of cases compared to previous years. Less welcome was the increasing number of cases born after the feed ban (BABs) including three cases born in 1990 which were likely to be confirmed. There remained however no evidence of maternal transmission.

10. The Committee supported the proposed case control study on BABs aimed at establishing what, if any, factors beside feed were involved in these cases. They also noted that, until the overall number of new cases began to decline, it was only possible to say that the trends looked promising but that we could not yet be confident the epidemic was beaten.

BSE case with atypical lesion distribution

11. Mr Bradley informed the Committee of a suspect case of BSE with negative histology on examination of the obex but vacuolation in the septal nucleus and the putamen. No fresh tissue was available so SAF examination was not possible. No

Bov 92 c

PrP was found in the medulla. Because of the possibility that this might be a different strain of BSE a full epidemiological study of the farm had been initiated and fixed material was being used for transmission studies.

F. BOVINE BRAIN DISORDER

12. The Committee emphasised the importance of defining this new condition in detail with transmission studies and PrP examination (3 had already been examined for PrP, all negative). The total number of cases was now 50 with still only one in England.

G. WHO MEMORANDUM

13. The Committee noted the Memorandum and Dr Wingfield's written comments on it.

H. BOOK BY DR HUNTER - DISPOSAL OF CARCASSES

14. Mr Lawson introduced SEAC 14/4 which sought the Committee's endorsement of incineration as the Government's preferred disposal. The Committee agreed that incineration was preferable to burial.

I. SE IN ZOO ANIMALS

15. Mr Maslin reported on a second confirmed case of SE in a cheetah.

16. The Committee considered SEAC 14/5. They supported the precautions taken by the Institute of Zoology, in particular the caution on exporting animals at risk, and had nothing to add. The Committee recommended however that the Institute give researchers access to greater kudu tissues to study the basic biology of the species in relation to others and try to establish why these animals appear to be so susceptible to SE.

J. RESEARCH

(a) Dr Narang

17. The Committee considered SEAC 14/6 and agreed that it was necessary to have independent corroboration of Dr Narang's findings.

(b) Research on scrapie

18. Mr Lawson reported on a meeting of representatives from MAFF and CVL to discuss future research on scrapie. A record of the meeting would be sent to the Committee. Dr Kimberlin commented that he would like to see field research on scrapie continued and for the Committee to monitor developments on molecular markers of genetic susceptibility of sheep to scrapie.

(c) Inoculation of pigs with scrapie

19. Mr Bradley tabled the protocol of an experiment to test for infectivity in tissues from pigs fed scrapie infected brain material. The Committee was reassured that the experiment design followed closely that done using BSE infected brain material.

(d) AFRC BSEP Meeting

20. The Committee noted SEAC 14/7. Mr Bradley raised a request from Dr Collinge for BSE material for inoculation into transgenic mice with the human PrP gene. The Committee agreed that, because of the danger that any results might be misinterpreted, it was reasonable to seek information on the protocol and objectives of the proposed study. Parallel studies using non-transgenic mice and scrapie material were also suggested.

K. ACDP WORKING PARTY ON SES

21. Dr Wight reported that the Working Party was likely to finalise its advice this year and may then be disbanded. As this could mean that no-one would have responsibility for considering the occupational risks involved in SEs, the Committee agreed to take on this role. (See also paragraph 23.)

L. TRANSMISSION STUDIES

22. Mr Bradley tabled an update on transmission studies in BSE and other SEs. He mentioned in particular that:

- BSE had transmitted to mink but the disease did not resemble TME;
- no pigs had gone down from BSE by the oral route;
- BSE infectivity from spinal cord had now been transmitted, cerebro-spinal fluid was negative; and that

- previous concerns about the effectiveness of sodium hydroxide, porous load autoclaving at the lower end of the temperature scale and some other treatments were upheld since some residual infectivity may remain.

23. The Committee commented that it was important to know the initial level of infectivity in order to assess the significance of the deactivation results. It was decided that this issue and the ACDP guidelines should be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

24. The Committee commented that the embryo transfer project was very good work.

M. MATERNAL TRANSMISSION STUDY

25. Mr Bradley reported that there had now been nine confirmed cases of BSE in animals within the trial. The code of which animals were offspring or controls remained undisclosed. The Committee asked for a paper for their next meeting on which they could consider whether or not the code should now be broken and the results so far examined.

N. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Article by Professor Lacey

26. The Committee considered Professor Lacey's article "BSE - The Offal Ban Fails". It was agreed that Dr Tyrrell should write to Professor Lacey pointing out the errors on which his conclusions had been based.

O. NEXT MEETING

27. 7 October 1993 at the CVL.