



## UK STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT RELATING TO THE HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH ASPECTS OF TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES

### Issue

1. Research on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) in the UK is, in the main, funded by the five UK public funders, the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Department of Health (DH) the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).
2. Representatives from these public organisations form the TSE R&D Joint Funders Co-ordination Group (JFG), which was set up in 1996 and whose present chairman is Sir John Pattison. The JFG meet to discuss the research portfolios of each organisation to ensure that research programmes in the TSE field address priority areas, and form the basis of a coherent strategic approach between funding bodies.
3. The JFG is currently drafting a strategy for research and development in TSEs. One section of the document comprises an appraisal of the current state of scientific knowledge of these diseases, and a draft has been provided for you to comment.
4. Professor Chris Bostock authored the science section at the JFG's invitation and has included topics such as:
  - Structure of PrP
  - In vitro conversion of PrP<sup>C</sup> to PrP<sup>Sc</sup>
  - The challenge of TSE strains
  - Production of processing of PrP in cells
  - Function of normal PrP
  - Pathogenesis of TSEs
  - Diagnosis of TSEs
  - Prospects for treatment
  - Epidemiology for TSEs

5. The publication of the final document, scheduled for the autumn of 2003, will include a detailed strategy within the science section, and will outline the priorities identified by the Funders. This will go out to public consultation.

**Advice sought from the Committee**

6. Members are not requested to provide detailed drafting comments and should only consider the advice sought below.
  - Is the science section a good reflection of our current state of knowledge?
  - Does the science section cover all the necessary topics?
7. At a later stage in the drafting process Members will be asked to comment on the priorities identified by the JFG.