



NINETY SECOND MEETING OF THE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee held its 92nd meeting in London on 28th April 2006 and discussed the following matters:

CURRENT ISSUES

SEAC was informed about the following issues:

- DH has requested that the HPA convene a group of experts to consider how to take forward the recommendation from SEAC¹ for testing of post mortem tissues to ascertain better the prevalence of vCJD infection in the UK. HPA is actively engaged in convening this group. In addition, DH will continue to fund the HPA National Anonymous Tonsil Archive that is prospectively collecting tonsils for prevalence estimation.
- Sir William Stewart has agreed to chair the vCJD Patient Advisory Group being convened by DH to advise on the appropriate counselling and care for individuals defined as 'at risk from vCJD for public health purposes'.
- Defra and FSA tabled plans for studies to address recommendations made by the SEAC Sheep Subgroup for research on atypical scrapie². Material from atypical scrapie cases for this research is in very short supply. Defra, FSA and VLA are convening a group to consider priorities for use of the available material. Ways to generate more material are under consideration.

¹ <http://www.seac.gov.uk/statements/state260106.htm>

² <http://www.seac.gov.uk/pdf/positionstatement-sheep-subgroup.pdf>

- Unusual TSE test results were recently obtained during routine surveillance from two French and one Cypriot sheep. Although the presence of BSE was ruled out by additional rapid tests, further investigations are underway with results expected in about 18 months.
- Preliminary results from bioassays from one UK sheep TSE case that had given an unusual result in biochemical tests in a prospective survey. The incubation period for this isolate was inconsistent with the presence of BSE.
- The SEAC Chair had attended a recent FSA stakeholder meeting in England and the SEAC Secretary attended equivalent meetings in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to present and discuss the SEAC Sheep Subgroup statement. These meetings sought stakeholder views on options for possible additional precautionary measures in relation to atypical scrapie. The FSA Board would return to this issue at its June 2006 meeting.
- The SEAC Chair attended the FSA Board meeting on 6 April 2006 when the Government's contingency policy for BSE in sheep was discussed.
- The study on transmission of BSE and vCJD in humanised mice³ considered in reserved business at SEAC 90 had been published. The minutes of the discussion had been placed on the SEAC website.
- Progress was reported on recommendations made at SEAC 91 in relation to disposal of manure, crops and livestock at VLA Drayton. Defra accepted the SEAC recommendations with regard to the disposal of composted manure on arable land on the farm. However, disposal would be restricted to material from unchallenged animals and, for contingency purposes, animals inoculated by the intracranial route.

³ Bishop *et al.* (2006) Predicting susceptibility and incubation time of human-to-human transmission of vCJD. *Lancet Neurology*. On line.

- The CJD Incidents Panel had been provided with the SEAC advice from SEAC 91 on the assessment of potential risks from medical implants containing bovine material.

CONCENTRATION OF vCJD INFECTIVITY IN BLOOD COMPONENTS

The UK Blood Service and DH asked SEAC to consider TSE infectivity in whole blood and blood components and other issues relating to assessment of the risks of vCJD transmission via blood transfusion. The discussion was held in a reserved business session to allow consideration of unpublished research. The committee agreed to produce a statement of its conclusions.