

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**8 MARCH 2001**

### **FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAK**

#### **Report by Director of Community Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak and give details on the Council's response.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 On or about 20 February 2001, an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease was discovered at a pig fattening unit at Hodden-on-the-Wall in Northumberland. It rapidly spread through a number of pig farms primarily on the east coast of England and thereafter to sheep farms in Devon and Anglesey. The disease is highly contagious and can be spread by the wind. A number of neighbouring farms to the original sites therefore became infected within a few days. In the early part of last week, the numbers of infected farms increased rapidly but over the past few days the numbers have increased more slowly.
- 2.2 Attention has focused on the markets at Longtown and Carlisle and following further detailed tracing of animals which had passed through these markets and examination of animals at farms at Lockerbie and Cannonbie in Dumfries and Galloway, outbreaks were confirmed on three farms on 1 March 2001. The suspected outbreak at a farm in Aberdeenshire proved to be negative.
- 2.3 At the time of writing, there are approximately 80 confirmed outbreaks in the UK. Reassuringly in many ways, all of these outbreaks can be traced back to the original source and the principal routes have been hauliers, markets and dealers.
- 2.4 Due to the highly contagious nature of the disease, the number of outbreaks will continue to increase until the preventative measures taken to minimise the spread is effective. The incubation period for the disease is also a critical factor.

#### **3. LOCAL POSITION**

- 3.1 At 1330 hours on Friday 2 March 2001, the Department of Community Services were notified that animals at a farm near Galston were suspected of having Foot and Mouth Disease. There was a clear link between the suspected animals and Longtown Market. The appropriate forms were immediately served and control measures put in place.

- 3.2 During the night between 2 and 3 March 2001, appropriate notices were served on 34 farms in a 3km exclusion zone around the Galston Farm. The effects of these notices include banning of movement of animals and banning of slurry spreading.
- 3.3 Blood from the suspected animals was sent for testing to the MAFF laboratory in England and the initial results have proven negative. Further samples have been taken and the results are awaited.
- 3.4 At 1500 hours on 2 March 2001, the Department of Community Services were notified that there was another suspected outbreak near Stair. In this case, the beast concerned had developed a degree of lameness and there was veterinary concern that this could be early indication of clinical symptoms. Further investigations continued and on Saturday 3 March 2001 it was established that the reason for the lameness was not Foot and Mouth Disease. The notices and restrictions were therefore removed later the same day.

#### **4. COUNCIL SERVICES**

- 4.1 In addition to fulfilling statutory obligations in respect of animal health and welfare and the protection of public health, the Council have an obligation to take all reasonable steps to minimise the possibility of spreading the disease through its own activities. As a result, the following precautionary procedures have been put in place by the various Council departments:-

##### **4.1.1 Waste Management**

All bins in country areas will be uplifted from roadends and no vehicles will enter farms. In addition, vehicles will be disinfected when they return to the waste transfer station or depots at Western Road, Kilmarnock or Underwood, Cumnock, and the civic amenity sites at Garlaff, Cumnock and Western Road, Kilmarnock.

##### **4.1.2 Roads**

At this time of the year, snow ploughs and gritters are active on country roads throughout the area on a regular basis. Disinfection procedures have therefore been introduced at depots at Gauchalland, Galston and Underwood, Cumnock. As an additional safety measure, basic disinfection procedures will be put in place at Crookedholm.

In one case, to date, it has been necessary temporarily to close a road. Roads employees are on standby to carry out this work wherever it might become necessary.

The Scottish Executive has also issued advice on placing disinfection ramps (straw soaked in disinfectant) across roads and there have been a considerable number of enquiries on this issue. Each enquiry is being considered on a case by case basis in consultation with Strathclyde Police.

#### **4.1.3 Environmental Health**

The outbreak has led to a considerable number of food related enquiries particularly in relation to export certificates. Particular attention is already being given to the inspection of imported meat to check for banned material such as spinal cord which could possibly be linked to the spread of BSE.

The regular inspections of country areas and rural properties by Pest Control Officers has been suspended.

#### **4.1.4 Education**

As members will be aware, there is an extensive network of arrangements in place for transporting children to school from rural areas. This involves buses, taxis and mini buses and in some cases these vehicles go into farmyards. Arrangements have been put in place to collect children at farm roadends, to ensure that the risk of transmission of disease from farm to farm is minimised. Special arrangements have been made for children with special needs who must be uplifted from their home.

In addition, the Outdoor Education service has been limited in its activities.

#### **4.1.5 Social Services**

Social Services have a number of meals on wheels and home care clients on farms and rural properties. Arrangements have been put in place to continue these services, with appropriate disinfection procedures for staff. The emergency standby service has been advised of the arrangements.

Procedures have also been put in place for dealing with child protection and mental health emergencies in rural areas should they arise.

#### **4.1.6 Dean Castle Country Park**

The park has been closed to the general public since Monday 26 February 2001.

#### **4.1.7 Rights of Way**

Using new powers available under a Foot and Mouth Disease Order, all rights of way in East Ayrshire have been closed. Signs and barrier tape have been erected at all entrances to rights of way.

#### **4.1.8 Libraries**

The mobile library service to farms has been suspended.

#### **4.1.9 Helpline**

The Helpline has been provided with basic information to filter public enquiries. However, Community Services Department staff in Trading Standards who are leading on this matter are available 24 hours per day to deal with specific and detailed enquiries. Staff have been working over the weekend to provide a co-ordinated response to the incident.

General information has been provided to Local Offices and Libraries giving contacts etc.

#### **4.1.10 General**

Directors and staff have been requested to minimise their visits to rural properties and where this cannot be avoided, to take suitable precautions such as disinfection. Protocols have been issued on this particular issue.

On 27 February 2001, 100 litres of approved disinfectant was purchased which, following dilution, will provide approximately 60,000 litres of disinfectant. This should be sufficient for the foreseeable future but stocks will be monitored closely.

#### **4.1.11 Food Supplies**

At the present time there would appear to be no cause for concern over food shortages.

However, to maintain the national food supply and to relax some pressure on farmers in non-affected areas, a licensing scheme for the movement of animals directly to slaughter or to specified animal collection centres has been introduced. This scheme will be run and regulated by the Council's Trading Standards Service. At the time of writing, some 15 licences have been issued.

The first animal movements took place on 6 March 2001 with dealers holding quantities of animals for slaughter who can take the animals direct to abattoirs being given priority. Farmers with lesser numbers of cattle will be dealt with next since their animals will be gathered at the designated collection centre, Kilmarnock Market, prior to conveyance to abattoirs.

#### 4.1.12 **Communications**

Sound communication links have been established with the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department, MAFF and Strathclyde Police, all of whom are directly involved in this incident. All of these agencies have established 24 hour incident and emergency rooms and there is a good flow of information. Contact has been made with some other local authorities. Internal communication systems were established and further developed as the incident has progressed.

#### 4.1.13 **External Agencies**

In addition to the agencies mentioned above, contact has been made with the Health Board, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union, Royal Mail, Fishing Clubs and various other organisations who potentially could become involved in the outbreak.

The Farmers Markets throughout East Ayrshire have been cancelled.

General advice has also been given to all staff of the Council not to visit the countryside except for essential purposes.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Council action being carried out within existing overall budgetary provision.

### **6. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Animal Health Act 1981  
Foot and Mouth Disease Order 1983  
The Foot and Mouth Disease (Scotland) Declaratory (Amendment) Order 2001  
The Export Restrictions (Foot and Mouth Disease) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2001

### **7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Nil.

### **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 The Council is taking all reasonable steps not only to fulfil statutory animal health obligations but also to minimise the spread of the recent outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease across the country which are placing considerable pressure on the already strained farming industry.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 It is recommended that the Council:-

- (i) endorse the actions outlined in this report including the closure of rights of way until further notice; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

William Stafford  
Director of Community Services

WS/JS

6 March 2001

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

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**AGENDA**