

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

3 MAY 2001

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of report is to provide an update on the outbreak of foot and mouth disease and give details on the Council's response.

2. DISCUSSION

- 2.1 A comprehensive report on the outbreak and the initial action taken by the Council in response to the outbreak was submitted to the Council meeting on 8 March 2001. Since that date there have been a number of significant developments. This report provides members with details of these.
- 2.2 In the introduction to the previous report it was noted that there were 80 cases in the United Kingdom. The number of cases at the time of writing is now 1485, 174 of these are in Scotland, with 166 being in Dumfries and Galloway and the remainder in Scottish Borders.
- 2.3 Members have been given regular updates, through a series of briefing notes, on the situation locally and in particular on the action taken in relation to the dangerous contacts at Laigh Balsarroch Farm, Dalrymple and North and South Woodhill Farms, Kilmaurs. In both of these cases the subsequent results of blood and tissue samples were negative.
- 2.4 In so far as North and South Woodhill Farms, Kilmaurs are concerned, notification was received from the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department (SERAD) on Friday 13 April 2001 that due to contact with infected premises in Dumfries and Galloway, the farms had been classified as dangerous contacts. The precautionary cull of approximately 219 cattle and 130 sheep commenced almost immediately and was completed within 24 hours.
- 2.5 A number of employees from the Community Services Department assisted with the cull and the necessary cleansing and disinfecting procedures. This will continue for the next 2-3 weeks. The animals were disposed of on site following a full risk assessment by representatives of the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and SERAD. Public information leaflets were also distributed following consultation with Strathclyde Police and Ayrshire and Arran Health Board.

- 2.6 A licensing scheme for the movement of cattle and sheep directly to slaughter has also been introduced and to date 449 licences have been issued. This scheme has not only been important in maintaining food supplies but has also assisted farmers who may have otherwise faced financial difficulties. Special arrangements have been made to issue licences at weekends and on public holidays.
- 2.7 Animal welfare continues to play an important part of the work of the department and special arrangements have been established to deal with 'casualty' animals that require to be slaughtered for health and welfare reasons. The Intervention Board has also established a scheme to provide assistance to farmers whose animals are overwintered away from home.
- 2.8 It is hoped that, subject to various controls, over the next few weeks movement restrictions will be able to be relaxed and thereby some of the pressures removed from the farming community. At the present time, there are concerns that animal feeding is running short due to animals having to be kept in. Similarly, due to the cold wet weather over the winter, the grass is still relatively short.
- 2.9 Regular contact has been maintained with a wide range of bodies and organisations including the National Farmers Union, SERAD, SEPA, and Scottish Natural Heritage to ensure that any advice given by the Council is not only up to date but is also the best available having regard to current policy.
- 2.10 Following a decision by South Ayrshire Council to place disinfection points across all roads leading into South Ayrshire from Dumfries and Galloway, officers further reviewed the position in relation to East Ayrshire. It was, however, felt that this was not necessary since it was established from discussions with colleagues in Dumfries and Galloway that they have already placed a protective cordon of disinfection points on all roads leading into or out of their area. The location of these mats is moved according to the spread of infection.
- 2.11 As Members will recall, it was decided at the meeting on 8 March 2001 to close all Rights of Way until further notice. It is hoped that by using the framework which forms part of the "Comeback Code" issued by the Scottish Executive it will not be too long before Rights of Way can be opened again. Obviously, the timing will depend largely on the incidence and location of new cases.

- 2.12 Having carried out a full risk assessment and having consulted widely it is proposed to partially reopen the Dean Castle Country Park with effect from 5 May 2001. The park has now been divided into three areas of low, medium and high risk with different restrictions applying to each area.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The action taken by the Council will be carried out within existing overall budgetary provision. Any costs that can be charged to SERAD for work carried out on their behalf at the farms at Kilmaurs will be invoiced in due course.

4. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 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

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 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. Hopefully this report provides a brief synopsis of the position to date and outlines some of the action that has been taken both at strategic and operational levels. In view of the wish to open Rights of Way as soon as it is safe to do so, it is suggested that the Council may wish to agree to delegate this decision to the Director of Community Services in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair of the Community Services Committee.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Council:-
- (i) remit to the Director of Community Services to consider and remove the current restrictions on the use of Rights of Way as soon as is reasonably practicable;

- (ii) endorse the action taken by officers as outlined in this report; and
- (iii) otherwise note the content of this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/JS

27 April 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report dated 6 March 2001 on Foot and Mouth Disease to East Ayrshire Council on 8 March 2001.

Any person wishing to inspect the background paper above should telephone 01563 576023 and ask for William Stafford, Director of Community Services.

Implementation Officer – william.stafford@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

AGENDA