

Elin Jones AM/AC
Y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig
Minister for Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref EJ/00167/07

Alun Davies AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
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18 September 2007

Dear Alun

Thank you for your letter of 7 September 2007 asking for a short report outlining the actions taken by Government to protect Wales during the recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Surrey.

When there is a disease outbreak the procedures set out in the Welsh Generic Exotic Animal Diseases Contingency Plan are followed closely and this involves contact from the outset with the UK Government.

Meetings, by way of teleconferences, are held daily on the disease situation. My officials participate in these meetings which comprise senior Defra officials, veterinary experts and stakeholders. I chair the stakeholder meetings, which includes representatives from the farming industry, the auction industry and other rural interests. My officials also take part in the meetings of the Animal Disease Policy Group, chaired by CVO, UK, and I and my officials take part in Cabinet Office Briefing Room meetings in the Cabinet Office, chaired by the Prime Minister. This ensures that Wales is fully conversant with the situation as it develops and allows Wales to have an input in any policy that may affect Wales.

My officials, both veterinary and administrative, brief me continually so that I am able to take decisions, which, in the light of all the circumstances, are proportionate and pertinent to the best interests of Wales. All decisions are based on veterinary risk assessments prepared by my veterinary advisors. Additionally I ensure that I know at first hand the issues of concern to the industry in Wales by holding regular stakeholder meetings.

I am well aware that the farming community needs to be kept informed of what is happening and the nature of restrictions imposed. As I have mentioned, regular meetings take place with stakeholders so that they are up to date with the situation, allowing them to impart information to their members. I make announcements in the press and have been interviewed frequently on TV and radio throughout this outbreak. Updates on the emerging situation are being sent to key stakeholders on a regular basis.

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Following all animal disease outbreaks, Government considers lessons learned and feeds the outcome into further preparation and planning. This is an invaluable process. Officials will, with the benefit of the views of stakeholders examine and evaluate all actions taken during the outbreak and recommend areas where improvements can be made.

Compensation is available under a statutory scheme for animals that have been slaughtered as a result of Foot and Mouth Disease and property, including carcasses that have been seized and destroyed, in order to prevent the spread of disease. It is not Government policy to pay farmers or businesses compensation for consequential losses such as loss of earnings.

I hope this provides you with sufficient information.

Yours sincerely
Alan