

Date: Wednesday 28 March 2001
Time: 2.00pm to 5.05pm
Venue: Committee Room, National Assembly Building

REPORT OF THE MINISTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

Foot and Mouth Disease

1. As at 1200 hours on 26 March, there were a total of 40 confirmed cases in Wales: 24 in Powys; 13 in Anglesey; and 3 in Monmouthshire. In addition, thirteen more cases were under investigation: 9 in Powys and 4 in Anglesey.
2. At the time writing, some 30,500 animals had been slaughtered in Wales under the foot and mouth control measures in place – 2767 cattle; 27,735 sheep; 13 pigs and 11 goats.
3. To date, 4638 licences have been issued in Wales to allow the limited movement of animals under strict conditions for welfare purposes. These include 3169 occupational licences and 1469 local licences. Additionally, outside the infected areas and to address welfare issues, a licence scheme permitting the movement of livestock over longer distances has been introduced. So far, 373 such licences have been issued.
4. On a wider level, I announced on 22 March the establishment of the Rural Task and Finish Group to look at the issues arising from foot and mouth and advise the National Assembly on the steps to help rural businesses. The Group, jointly chaired by the Deputy First Minister and myself, is drawn from the Wales Rural Partnership and comprises all the key rural interests. The Group's terms of reference are:
 - to advise the government of the National Assembly on the issues for the rural economy arising from foot & mouth;
 - to advise on the steps necessary to help rural businesses; and
 - to produce a plan to help re-launch the rural economy.
5. The Group met for the first time on Friday 23 March. I will provide the Committee with an oral update on the Group's deliberations and also more generally on the foot and mouth situation.

Tir Mynydd payments

6. As at 22 March, over £34.8 million of Tir Mynydd Element 1 payments have been processed. This means that 86% of eligible Element 1 Tir Mynydd claims have been paid.

Other CAP payments

7. The percentage of Suckler Cow Premium (SCPS) 2000 Advance claims processed by Thursday 22 March was 94% (£15.1million).
8. In addition we have paid 77% (£895,000) of Transitional Agrimonetary Compensation (2nd Tranche) to producers who received 1999 Suckler Cow payments.
9. Sheep producers will benefit from Sheep Annual Premium Scheme (SAPS) Transitional Agrimonetary Compensation (3rd Tranche) payments being processed from 22 March (total value of £1.5 million) - this is the first of the Agrimonetary payments that I have brought forward to help farmers through the foot and mouth crisis.
10. SAPS 2000 Balances will be paid earlier than ever before, starting the first week of April and SCPS and beef premium scheme balances will commence as soon as possible after 1 April.
11. 96% of Arable Area Definitive Agrimonetary Compensation payments worth over £330,000 were also made to Welsh farmers last week..