



ACDP/71/P4

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS

Secretariat Report for the 71st meeting of the ACDP, and matters arising from the 70th meeting

1. This paper includes reports on progress made with matters arising from the last meeting that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda, reports from ACDP Working Groups and other relevant advisory committees, and other items that may be of interest to members.

West Nile virus (WNV) contingency planning

2.1 Members were updated on actions with regard to contingency planning for WNV at the ACDP meeting held on 11 September 2002. This report details actions taken since that meeting to progress the development of a strategy for the management and control of WNV.

2.2 The Department of Health (DH) convened a meeting on 17 October 2002 to discuss surveillance and laboratory testing for WNV in the UK. WNV was also discussed at the United Kingdom Zoonoses Group (UKZG) meeting held on 18 October 2002 and at a satellite meeting to the International Conference on Zoonoses held in Cardiff on 21-23 October 2002.

2.3 DH sought advice from the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) on their use as part of a contingency strategy for combating West Nile Fever. The ACP requested further information on the efficacy of the use of pesticides to reduce disease transmission. DH and HSE agreed to consider the points raised by ACP before the next ACP meeting. A meeting has also been held with representatives of English Nature to discuss the environmental aspects of control strategies for WNV.

2.4 DH will be considering the output from all of these meetings in developing the contingency plan further.

2.5 DH and DEFRA have now received research proposals for work on surveillance for WNV in animal and mosquito populations in the UK. These will be discussed at a further meeting on WNV surveillance and laboratory testing to be held on 9 December 2002.

2.6 A retrospective survey of CSF samples from cases of encephalitis of unknown origin has not identified any human WNV infection.

Biological Agents Bulletin

3. The fifth issue is completed and it should have been published onto the HSE & DoH pages websites by the time of the meeting. It will also be emailed electronically as a clickable URL to those who have requested it. Issue no.6 is proposed for early 2003 with features on Simian Herpes B, new COSHH, and changes to Notification arrangements, and the Approved List. The Secretariat invites your ideas and contributions for further features to include in the next issue.

Reports from ACDP Working Groups

Pet Travel Scheme Working Group

4.1 A meeting of the PETS Working Group was held on 24 September 2002. The draft minutes of the meeting are attached at Annex 1 for members' information.

4.2 In brief, the following issues were discussed:

- The Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) peer review of the 'Edinburgh report' was considered. It was noted that the report was critical of the methodology used in the Edinburgh risk assessment on importing rabies into the UK from North America, and that the peer review lacked clear conclusions. The Working Group advised DEFRA to commission a further peer review of the Edinburgh report from a neutral party;
- The advice given by the PETS Working Group on the extension of the Pet Travel Scheme to North America was made on the basis of the original Edinburgh report. This was not dependent on the VLA report, and the Working Group did not think there was any reason to change their advice having considered the VLA peer review;
- In the absence of sufficient information to make a full risk assessment, the Working Group concluded that the current tick and tapeworm treatments should be the **minimum** treatment regime for pets gaining entry from the USA/Canada into the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme. If other risks become evident, then the ACDP may need to consider further precautionary measures;
- New EU Regulations for the harmonisation of rabies controls are expected to come into force in 2004. The UK special arrangements for rabies control will continue for five years and will then be reviewed. There is no guarantee that the current UK scheme will be continued following this review, but the UK can lobby to retain it;
- Members agreed to hold a further meeting to discuss zoonoses other than rabies with the aim of identifying those animals that may pose a particular threat to public and animal health.

4.3 On 31 October 2002, Richard Cawthorne, the Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, wrote to Professor Whittenbury in his capacity as Chairman of ACDP, to inform the Committee that further work had been commissioned to clarify the points raised by the VLA peer review of the Edinburgh report. The newly commissioned work included a new risk model, which concluded that the risk of importing rabies, if the scheme was extended to the USA and Canada, was extremely low. Richard Cawthorne suggested that a further peer review of the Edinburgh report was not necessary. A copy of this letter is attached at Annex 2.

4.4 The extension of the Pet Travel Scheme, to include animals from all states of the USA and all provinces in Canada, was announced by Elliot Morley (DEFRA Parliamentary Secretary) on 20th November. The Press Release is attached at Annex 3.

Categorisation Working Group

5. The next meeting of the Working Group is to be held on 11 December 2002, when the Group will consider a further draft of the man guidance "Biological Agents – Managing the Risks", that is replacing the existing ACDP Categorisation Guidance. A copy of the minutes will be annexed to the March ACDP secretariat report.

Containment Level 4 Working Group (CL4WG)

6. Draft minutes of the 5th meeting held on 14 June 2003 were included with the secretariat report to the 70th ACDP meeting. No comments from WG members were received on these and they will be put to the WG for final approval at the next meeting. It had been hoped to hold the next meeting on 10 December 2002. However, the WG Secretariat have been obliged to postpone it owing to other priority work. It is hoped to hold the meeting early in 2003.

This material has been removed under Exemption 2 (information that would harm the frankness and candour of internal discussion) of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information

Reports from other Advisory Committees & Groups

Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC): Public summaries

8. Meetings were held on 11 September 2002 and 14 November 2002. Agendas and minutes when available are posted on the SEAC website (<http://www.seac.gov.uk/>). Jim Neilson will give an update on matters relevant to ACDP at the meeting.

Expert Advisory Group on AIDS (EAGA)

9. The 68th meeting of EAGA is to be held on 26 November 2002. A copy of the public summary will be tabled on 4 December if available by then.

UK Zoonoses Group

10. The third meeting of the UKZG was held on 18 October 2002. A note of the items discussed ahead of formal minutes is attached at Annex 4.

Dates of ACDP Meetings in 2003

9.1 The negotiated dates have now been fixed as follows:

Wednesday 19 March 2003

Department of Health, Room 136B/137B Skipton House

Tuesday 10 June 2003

Health and Safety Executive, Globe Room, Rose Court

Tuesday 16 September 2003

Department of Health, Room 136B/137B Skipton House

Tuesday 9 December 2003

Health and Safety Executive, Globe Room, Rose Court

Secretariat

November 2002