

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP)

Summary of the 85th ACDP meeting

The ACDP held its 85th meeting on 5 February 2007. The agenda items discussed were:

Steering Group for revision of the ACDP guidance on blood-borne viruses

The work, under the chairmanship of Professor Will Irving, to revise the 1996 ACDP guidance "Protection against blood-borne infections in the workplace: HIV and hepatitis" was progressing well.

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE)

Further guidance has been added to the TSE infection control guidelines. Information is available at www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk/acdp/tseguidance.

Revision of the 1996 ACDP guidance *Management and Control of Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers (VHFs)*

Work to revise the guidance is underway with anticipated completion by the second quarter of 2008. The new guidance will include all Hazard Group 4 agents.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme for poultry workers

The vaccination programme in England started on 15 January and was scheduled to continue until the end of March. Some Primary Care Trusts had reported that uptake was slow initially but had improved. Scotland and Wales had started their vaccination schemes. In Northern Ireland the issue was under consideration as there was no equivalent of Primary Care Trusts to deliver the vaccine. But employees of the Veterinary Service working with poultry had been immunised.

ACDP Appointments

Five new members had been appointed following the recruitment exercise.

Avian influenza in pigs

This item was deferred to the next meeting

Results of serological testing following H7N3 outbreak

The results of the serological testing of cases and contacts from the H7N3 avian influenza outbreak in Norfolk in 2006 were discussed. Good data would be obtained only if serum samples could be taken from all those people who may have been affected. However, the transient nature of some of the workforce made this impossible. This also prevented any conclusions being drawn about the relationship between clinical illness and serology, as sera

from only a third of those who reported symptoms of illness had been obtained.

Proposed changes to HPA operational approaches to avian influenza incidents

The HPA were proposing to change their guidance on the use of anti-virals in avian influenza incidents. Following discussions in European fora, the HPA accepted, subject to certain criteria, that antivirals would only be started from the outset of high risk incidents. Senior officials at the HPA would decide whether an outbreak was assessed as low or high risk. A revised paper detailing the changes would be submitted to ACDP.

Current Research

The HPA are engaged in two strands of research on influenza viz. laboratory based studies, including vaccine development on H5, H7 and H9 strains and diagnostics, and epidemiological modelling. The modelling studies are aimed at developing effective interventions for, and assessing their applicability in, the event of a pandemic.

Update on Rabies

Defra reported that it had commissioned two veterinary risk assessments in response to an EU review of the UK's transitional arrangements under the European pet movement regulations (998/2003). The results of these assessments have been published with a Press Notice seeking comments from stakeholders. Defra's Minister would respond after the consultation process had been completed. ACDP has already given its views.

West Nile Virus

The main discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting. The Department of Health had sponsored a mosquito surveillance scheme, as it is known that the WNV vector is present in the UK, but no positive results had been obtained on testing for the virus. Mosquito surveillance was not undertaken in 2006 and discussions would be held on whether to extend the surveillance scheme this year.

Occupational Exposure to *Coxiella burnetti* (Q fever) in the Agriculture and Food Sector

HSE inspectors investigated an outbreak of Q fever that occurred at a Scottish meat processing plant in summer of 2006. Forty six workers were serologically confirmed with clinical Q fever, raising the question as to whether vaccination of workers in this sector should be recommended in view of the Australian position where vaccination is mandatory. In 2004, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) had considered vaccination but had not made any recommendation. The issue of vaccination

would be referred again to the JCVI as there is currently no vaccine that is licensed for use in the UK.

Research Findings and Guidance on Isolation Facilities

Department of Health has commissioned a study on the design of patient isolation rooms with the aim of achieving all round improvements compared with the current negative pressure isolation rooms. The initial findings showed promising results for infection control and further work is being undertaken.

Pandemic Influenza

The Department of Health had sent the Committee copies of some widely papers that had been used to inform the preparation of the UK's pandemic influenza plan.

Any Other Business

The Home Office was revising Schedule 5 of the Anti Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001. There would be a parliamentary debate the week commencing 19 February 2007.

Secretariat

May 2007