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ACDP/82/P8

NOTE FOR ACDP MEETING – 17 JANUARY 2006: DEFRA'S REVIEW OF RABIES IMPORT POLICY

- Defra has begun work on a review of its policies relating to preventing rabies entering the UK through an imported animal.
- The ACDP were informed of this review by letter in December 2005.

Background

- Historic requirements: UK has required all rabies-susceptible animals to be quarantined for six months.
- Since 2000: UK's Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) has allowed pet dogs and cats to enter the UK without quarantine provided certain conditions are met.
- Since 2004: UK's pet import policy has complied with the European pet movement regulation.
- By February 2007: EU will have carried out a review of some of the requirements of that regulation, such as blood testing and anti-parasite treatment (pre-entry measures which the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Malta are allowed to retain under special derogation).

The policy review

Defra's evidence-based review of rabies import policies has the following main aims:

- 1 To ensure UK rabies controls relating to all rabies susceptible mammals are proportionate and sustainable, bearing in mind that their primary purpose is protecting public health.
- 2 To inform the UK's response to the EU review of some requirements of the EU pet movement regulation.

The review will assess the risk of introduction of rabies and other exotic diseases into the UK under current rabies policies and under alternative policies and make appropriate recommendations. Risk assessment will form the basis for decisions on future rabies policy.

Questions to consider

The review will take account of:

- Available evidence relating to the risk of introducing rabies into the UK through an imported animal;

- The risk of introducing other animal diseases and zoonoses through an imported animal;
- The practical aspects of implementing, operating current policies and alternatives;
- The costs and benefits of current policies and alternatives;
- The way in which other parts of Europe address the risk of rabies and other exotic diseases entering their territories.

The review will be informed by the strategic direction outlined in Defra's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy, other government policy guidelines, and the guidelines of international organisations such as the World Health Organisation.

Timetable

- Defra launched a public consultation on 17 November 2005. The deadline for comments is 9 February 2006.
- The published aim is to complete the review in 6 months.

Next steps

The terms of reference state that Health Department's input will be required in respect of a public health risk assessment, and that the views of the ACDP will be sought.

The ACDP's view is requested on how it wishes to input into the review.

RABIES POLICY UNIT
ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND MOVEMENT DIVISION
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