

## **Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) – Summary of the 76<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

The ACDP held its 76<sup>th</sup> meeting on 22 March 2004. The main agenda items discussed were:

### **➤ UK SARS Register**

Members were informed that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended that all countries keep a register of laboratories working with the SARS virus. HSE already maintains a register of all laboratories proposing to work with Hazard Group (HG) 3 and 4 biological agents (including SARS) under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002. Members felt it was important that this information be made available to WHO on request and agreed that the HSE data should form the basis for producing the necessary information if a request was received to provide the WHO with a UK register.

### **➤ SARS Like Viruses in Animals**

Defra outlined the current statutory provisions for the control of both the importation of agents from third countries under the Importation of Animal Pathogens Order 1980 (IAPO), and their handling in this country under the Specified Animal Pathogens Order 1998 (SAPO). An agent would only come under IAPO if it was an animal pathogen, or a carrier of such a pathogen. The SARS virus is not currently included as a specified pathogen in SAPO. Even though animals may be carriers of the SARS virus and can be infected in the laboratory, Defra was not aware that there was any evidence yet that the agent causes 'natural' disease in animals, thus the SARS virus was currently not subject to either of these two Orders. Defra asked members for any views or evidence that the virus was pathogenic in animals and if so, on possible containment requirements for both *in vitro* and *in vivo* work. Members recommended that a sub-group of the ACDP SARS WG, made up of the relevant experts, could be convened at short notice to discuss these issues if further scientific information became available. Defra would advise ACDP Secretariat if sufficient new data came to light.

### **➤ Approved List and West Nile Virus (WNV) Strategy**

Members were updated on the progress with the publication of the Health and Safety Commission's (HSC) Approved List and the Department of Health's West Nile Virus Strategy, both of which are expected for publication shortly.

### **➤ Transport of Clinical Samples**

The Chair drew members' attention to the recent correspondence between the Secretariat and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) relating to the movement of high-risk samples from regional labs to HPA Porton Down/Colindale.

### **➤ Working Group Updates:**

**Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) WG:** Members were updated on a recent ad-hoc meeting at which the WG discussed issues arising from the implementation of the EU regulations on the 'non commercial' movement of animals. The WG asked for any views and recommendations which Defra would take into account in formulating the UK position in discussions with the

Standing Committee of Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH)- a standing committee of vets from EU Member States.

The WG agreed that pet ferrets could be allowed to enter the UK from EU Member States and “low risk” third countries under the same conditions as cats and dogs entering the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme. They recommended that quarantine should remain in place as a control against rabies for those “other species” listed in the regulation entering the EU from third countries. The WG also prepared a list of some of the pathogens that may be of concern to the UK with regard to the movement of these “other species”.

**Revision of Categorisation guidance WG:** Members were informed that further consultation was needed on the draft *Managing the Risks* guidance, and the WG would be meeting again in May to discuss.

**The Containment Level (CL) 4 WG:** The Chair updated members on the background of the WG which will be reconvening shortly.

**European Bat Lyssavirus (EBLV) Group:** This group had produced an algorithm for assessing the risk of EBLV infection after exposure to a bat to help with decisions on post-exposure treatment. Updated advice would be included in the next revision of ‘Immunisation Against Infectious Diseases’ which is currently being drafted and would be approved by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) prior to publication on the DH website.

➤ **Classification of Akabane Virus (ACDP/76/P5)**

Members discussed the classification of the Akabane virus, and requested that the local risk assessment required by HSE should be sent to ACDP members for information.

➤ **ACDP Advice on working with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus in the Laboratory (ACDP/76/P6)**

Following a meeting of a subgroup of the National Expert Panel on New and Emerging Infections (NepNei), ACDP were asked if their advice for laboratory workers working with the agent was still current. After discussion, members did not see any need to amend their current advice on working with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza strains. Members also discussed the requirements for working with less pathogenic ‘flu strains, and specific members requested further information from HSE on the legislative controls governing this type of work.

➤ **Biological Agents- Horizon Scanning (ACDP/76/P7)**

An ACDP ‘Horizon Scanning’ document was produced in 2002 in response to a request by the Health and Safety Commission (HSC). This document was presented to members for review following a request by NepNei for all DH committees to complete a horizon scanning exercise. Members recommended adding a short reference to the recent SARS/Avian flu outbreaks in Appendix B of the document for completeness. The final version will be forwarded to this Committee accordingly.

➤ **ACDP Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies WG (TSE WG) (ACDP/76/P8)**

Members were asked to comment on the revised terms of reference of the TSE Working Group since its uncoupling from the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC). Members were content with the revised Terms of Reference for the Working Group which were:

“ To provide practical, scientific based advice on the management of risks from transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), in order to limit or reduce the risks of human exposure or transmission of TSEs in healthcare and other occupational settings. To provide advice to ACDP, SEAC and other Government Departments, as requested, and to handle issues referred by those bodies, taking into account the work of other relevant bodies”.

The rest of this discussion was closed.

➤ **Any other business (AOB)**

Items raised include:

- The recent Brucellosis case in cattle in Cornwall was brought to member's attention.

**Secretariat 2004**