



Final report on CA Workpackage 9

Mary Marshall, Stakeholder representative
10 May 2008

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CA AND OF WORKPACKAGE 9

At the time of writing, the CA website is temporarily not available, but from the IAH website, the following description is currently available (<http://www.iah.bbsrc.ac.uk/research/vesicular/vesicular1.shtml>)

“The EU has established a coordination action (CA), led by IAH, to gather and share information relevant to the control of two of the most important animal diseases - foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and classical swine fever (CSF). Both of these have caused devastating outbreaks of disease in Europe and continue to pose a serious threat to our livestock industries www.fmd-and-csf-action.org. The CA has established a web-based central network resource, invites partners and project associates to working groups, and analyses the information obtained. In this way reports, manuals and recommendations of significance for EC and international policy development and implementation are delivered. The project is focused on research, global disease surveillance, risk analysis, vaccine reserves, diagnostics, laboratory preparedness, and control policies, including vaccination and wild boar issues.”

A notable absence from this general description is the role of stakeholders as specified in the project description:

WP9 Central network resource – lead contractor: John Bashiruddin, Institute of Animal Health (IAH), UK, and lead subcontractor: Mary Marshall, Animal Health Resources Ltd. (AHR), UK

Objectives: To develop a virtual FMD and CSF network, through an electronic communications centre which will provide a platform of web-based tools to be used by partners and other interested parties, to enable: (1) Effective information exchange between partners on technical and administrative CA-related FMD and CSF activities; (2) Information related to the CA to be imparted to the wider scientific community and to other stakeholders with an interest in the control of FMD and CSF; (3) Feedback to be imparted from the wider stakeholder community, so that concerns and issues can be identified and then considered by the CA network.

Deliverables:

- Inventory of key electronic links, key contributors and key stakeholders
- Needs assessment, options
- Create and administer the virtual centre, maintain development
- Electronic forums
- Stakeholders conference reports

The goals and objectives of this CA were and are admirable. However, to achieve them, the partners, and especially the host institute, need enthusiasm, transparency and a strong will. In the early days of the CA, this appeared to be present, but as time went on, this disintegrated, at least with regard to my own workpackage on communication between scientists and stakeholders. The first alarming warning came during an early meeting with partners in Berlin when one of the partners flatly stated that he did not have time or interest in sharing information with or commenting on the concerns of stakeholders and would therefore not contribute to this workpackage. I sat in disbelief, my dismay heightened by the failure of any of the others present to challenge his statement.

WEBSITE

Surely, the use of the CA website, managed by Pirbright and, ultimately, by the BBSRC, would enable us to mitigate this lack of cooperation? Sadly, no. The website's birth was difficult, and it never functioned properly. Stakeholders complained that they could not register to enter into forum discussions. The crashes of the website sealed the fate of this part of the workpackage, which was heavily dependent on the internet for dissemination of information and discussion throughout EU Member States.

The final website crash, when all data was lost, has meant that the contributions of those who sincerely, indeed passionately, wanted the CA's role with stakeholders to succeed were lost forever, no backups having been made. Thus some fascinating and important exchanges between scientists, stakeholders and government officials are lost, as well as my own reports and reviews.

Thankfully, much information is still available online at an independent and unfunded website: www.warmwell.com. I suggest that one outcome of the CA should be to enable the content of warmwell.com to be preserved for future reference.

If Defra had not failed to support the CA website, perhaps more effort might have been put into its development? At stakeholder meetings and by email, on numerous occasions, I asked Defra officials to distribute information about the CA website. With obvious reluctance, and on only a very few occasions, Defra allowed me to say a few words to invite participants to visit and to contribute. But Defra never encouraged dissemination of information about the CA to stakeholders, and certainly not participation in the CA Forum Discussions. Requests by me for Defra to contribute information directly and also to comment were met politely, but were never followed up.

Whilst Defra have an overall responsibility to aid the dissemination of knowledge and discussion, it is sometimes difficult for individual contributors to understand the way that they choose to manage the agenda, the information and the time allotment for discussion within the anonymous format of the stakeholder groupings. The proper functioning of this CA website would have been invaluable in avoiding these walls of Chinese whispers and in allowing full and free discussion between stakeholders and scientists, unfiltered by policy makers.

CHALLENGES TO CONTROL POLICIES

The last, long and serious breakdown of the CA website unfortunately coincided with the accidental release of FMD virus from the Pirbright site and the undetected arrival of BTV-8 into the UK in East Anglia. Stakeholders and CA partners therefore were unable to benefit from the opportunity to openly discuss and question the circumstances and control measures of these different, but not unrelated, events. Some questions that I raised at stakeholder telephone conferences, but which were not discussed nor reported, were:

1. Why was the FMD virus not detected earlier on some of the holdings?
2. Why was portable handling equipment not available to Defra vets to enable them to undertake thorough clinical inspection and to collect samples for diagnostic testing?
3. Did the vaccination teams that were immediately put on standby have access to mobile handling equipment as they are bound to do? If they did not, why not? If they did, why was the equipment apparently not available to Defra vets?
4. Why were the control measures widely applied for a prolonged interval with serious consequences nationally, when immediate vaccination of the known strain in an enlarged ring would have significantly and predictably limited the consequences?
5. Why was the initial identification of BTV-8 allowed to be delayed by first testing for FMD and only later for BTV, rather than testing for both viruses simultaneously?
6. Why did Defra not allow production of BTV-8 vaccine at the Merial site to resume earlier, as recommended by Professor Spratt in a BBC report dated 1 October 2007 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7022697.stm>)?

“Defra says it hopes that problems on its Pirbright site will have been sorted out within weeks.

But Professor Brian Spratt - who revealed the problems with the government run site in an official inquiry - said that there was no reason why Defra could not allow Merial to begin production now.

"Bluetongue is not directly transmissible to livestock, it needs midges," he said.

"So I think the risk to livestock is pretty small.

And I don't really see why they can't start to produce a vaccine at the Merial site for bluetongue.""

Instead, production was not allowed to resume for more than a month (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/071106b.htm>).

As a personal example of the potential benefits of open questioning, a private email that I sent to the CVO shortly before the lifting of movement restrictions in September (which only lasted one week when the more extensive spread of the initial Surrey outbreak was identified), remained unanswered. In this email I suggested that Defra might test livestock that would now be allowed to move from East Anglia for BTV-8 as well as for FMD. Had this been done, it is possible that the spread of infection with BTV-8 might have been limited to a smaller area outside East Anglia, with only other primary sites involved.

More detailed discussion of some of these issues can be found in:

a) An invited paper for the OIE: Biological disasters of animal origin: The role and preparedness of veterinary and public health services (http://www.oie.int/eng/publicat/rt/A_RT25_1.htm), M.J. Marshall, P.A. Roger & J.B. Bashiruddin, [Making better use of technological advances to meet stakeholder needs](#) (http://www.oie.int/eng/publicat/rt/2501/A_R2501_MARSHALL.htm), Rev. sci. tech. Off. int. Epiz., 2006, 25 (1), 233-251.

b) Submission by Mary Marshall to the Cabinet Office Anderson enquiry, November 2007, available online at: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/fmdreview/~/_media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/fmdreview/submissions/mary_marshall%20pdf.ashx

WORKSHOPS

While the website was a marked failure, the two workshops were an outstanding success. However, both workshops would have benefited from an earlier commitment in their planning and support for the participation of stakeholders not belonging to well-funded "key" organisations.

The first workshop took place at IAH-Pirbright in 2006 and involved participants from across the EU, both within and outside the project. Delegates from the FVE, BVA, the RCVS, as well as NFU and other livestock sectors, and representatives from the Netherlands and UK agriculture ministries, joined with scientists across the project to be informed and to question the direction and efforts in establishing new approaches to the identification and control of diseases as well as to challenge accepted control methodology. Please see Appendix 1 below, the Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations from this workshop.

The second workshop took place in Brussels in 2007 and again involved a wide ranging mix of delegates from farming backgrounds, including European small scale farmers and UK hill farmers, as well as veterinary practitioners and representatives from leading European and international diagnostic laboratories. At the time of writing, a report on this workshop has not yet been written due to technical difficulties and lack of adequate backup. However, we are grateful to participant Christine Bijl for the summary, in Appendix 2 below, that she wrote for the European Livestock Alliance.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS and SUGGESTIONS

In summary, my own assessment is that the value of this workpackage should not be underestimated and that this component should not be eliminated from future EU projects. Most of the partners, and those working directly on the project, put in an enormous amount of time and effort. But to be effective, the host country must fully support this component and be willing to examine the role of trade in animal disease control. I would therefore suggest that countries with a transparent approach to communication, to sharing of information and to responding to questions and challenges should host this type of project. A commitment to funding research with no political pressure, e.g. on institutional funding or the employment/pensions of researchers, is necessary.

I understand that the other CA workpackages have been far more successful. These involve closed communication amongst partners, and I have not been in the loop. The only meetings I have gone to were largely at my own expense. These included the USAHA and AAVLD annual meetings and several conferences in Europe. At some of these meetings, and in private correspondence, I have detected a degree of dissatisfaction at the lack of easy sharing of samples especially with regard to the development of diagnostic assays and to the role of government labs that develop their own diagnostic tools for financial survival, yet at the same time validate diagnostic tools developed elsewhere and provide advice to government. Since I am not included in the technical components of the CA, I am unable to comment.

The future of these collaborative strategies that seek an inclusive approach and greater global understanding of the wishes and needs of all stakeholders will depend on the inclusion of a funding component to reimburse the participation of small stakeholders

who are necessarily outside institutional assistance. This would balance the influence of those with no lack of funding for participation in these events and for lobbying and would increase the value to such EU projects by enabling wide and necessary feedback and thoughtful comment on the practical limitations and applications of some of the developing science. It would also provide a forum for the independent questioning of the perceived absence of science from some policy developments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful and fortunate to have benefitted from the support and advice of my Animal Health Resources co-directors, Martin Hugh-Jones, Paul Kitching and Paul Roger, and from support from and challenging discussion with my IAH colleague John Bashiruddin.

Mary Marshall
10 May 2008

.....

Appendix 1

“Disease Control Workshop: Stakeholders’ Interests in the use of Science/Technology and Decision Making” was held on 12 May 2006 by the EU-funded FMD & CSF Coordination Action (see <http://www.fmd-and-csf-action.org/>) at the Institute of Animal Health – Pirbright. The participants included representatives from the NFU, BVA, RCVS, RVC, VLA, Elm Farm Research Centre, COPA-COGECA, European Livestock Alliance, NBvH (Dutch Smallholders Association), European Livestock and Meat Trading Union, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, Defra, SVS-Scotland, the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture and Universities. Discussion focused on (a) the use of diagnostic tests; (b) control measures; and (c) stakeholders’ involvement in disease control.

Concluding thoughts and recommendations

SURVEILLANCE

Rapid portable diagnostic tests that are already available should be assessed by scientists, veterinary experts and the livestock sector, and recommendations should be given for their use. Those that are considered to be useful should be incorporated into emergency exercises and contingency plans. Simple, disposable diagnostic tests would be a welcome new technology.

Use of tests as a means of preventing entry of infection. Infection can enter through legal or illegal imports of animals or animal products. Measures that could be taken to minimise these risks include: (1) Testing of illegal seizures at ports of entry to identify pathogens and geographical origins in order to base control measures at ports of entry on better epidemiological evidence than is presently available; (2) Use of multiplex assays to test live animals that move

between EU Member States for exotic pathogens, rather than allowing such movements to be approved solely on clinical veterinary inspection which could allow entry of pre-clinically or sub-clinically infected animals or asymptomatic carriers; this should be an option for each Member State depending on its own risk assessments.

Use of tests as a means of identifying first entry of infection. There is limited consensus about the role of diagnostic tests to monitor apparently healthy animals or their products as a means of detecting infection prior to the recognition that an outbreak has started in a FMD-free country or region. However, tests might be used as a means of providing livestock keepers with alternatives to complying with restrictions on animal movements that have been designed to reduce the impact of undisclosed introduction of an exotic disease. The reality is that at present, such restrictions may be ignored for a variety of reasons, including lack of trust in government support for food production and in appropriate and proportionate control measures, and inundation with paperwork. Policy makers and scientists are sometimes unaware of these realities of livestock keeping and that as a consequence, unrecorded movement of sheep and other animals is commonplace. The “stick” approach is unlikely to be productive; the “carrot” of providing incentives is likely to be more productive. Various cost sharing schemes (see below) which would involve private insurance and shared responsibilities between government and industry should be explored. Through such schemes, livestock keepers could, for example, be given a choice of alternatives for movement of animals: (1) restrictions for a given length of time; (2) use of rapid diagnostic tests; (3) use of sentinel animals (e.g. cattle among sheep for FMD).

Rapid portable diagnostic devices can be used as pen-side tests, on farm (or over the farm gate) and at sites where there is a greater risk of exposure/spread such as markets, shows, and milk collection/creameries, and as a tool in safe movement of animals. Their use should not be considered to be for identification of an index case, but as an alert of a possible index case. Identification of an index case and identification of serotype and sequencing for vaccine production should remain under the sole jurisdiction of the national reference laboratories.

The use of such portable devices (for example, by Regional State Veterinary Labs, private veterinary group practices, quarantine facilities, ports of entry) must be regulated.

Decisions about the appropriate regime and level of sampling should be based on risk. The level of risk should be conveyed to livestock keepers as, for example “green”, “amber” and “red” alert which the livestock sector has requested.

Advice and decisions on testing and sampling regimes, risk, and other control matters such as vaccination, should be filtered through a balanced Expert Group, as specified by the EU FMD Directive, and by other appointed bodies, where they exist, such as the Science Advisory Council in the UK whose role is to challenge Defra’s preparedness policies.

Use of tests as a means of confirming secondary outbreaks. When disease has been identified, the wide use of rapid portable diagnostic devices would be welcomed by both livestock keepers and by their veterinarians. Some devices are already available, others are being developed. The use of those already developed and accepted by unbiased assessment should be incorporated into emergency exercises and contingency plans. Consideration should also be given to devolving tests to regional laboratories in order to reduce sample to lab transit times.

Logistical difficulties need to be examined; for example: (1) potential problems of disinfection could be reduced when one person takes the samples and passes them over the farm gate to

another person; (2) transport of samples to reference labs and regional centres may need support from the military; (3) how to ensure having enough devices available and in the right places.

Recommendation: Competent authorities need to review the use of regional laboratories and portable diagnostic tests. Proper assessments should be made for the use – depending on circumstances - of already available diagnostic devices and for the direction of development of new technologies.

VACCINATION

There must be clear criteria for deciding: (1) when to vaccinate; (2) what animals should be vaccinated; (3) the size of the vaccination zone and (4) priorities for vaccinating within a vaccination zone. Currently, there is much uncertainty about the way in which these decisions are made and some debate about the role of modellers in such decisions. Many livestock keepers believe that vaccination of their own stock would be more efficient than employing dedicated vaccination teams.

Vaccination to live is a strategy that must be prepared for in advance and requires availability of vaccine and reagent banks. To overcome problems of limited shelf-life, consideration should be given to rotate unused banks so that, in a timely manner, vaccines and reagents could be made available to developing countries where disease is endemic.

Recommendation: The criteria for the decisions on vaccination must be more transparent and inclusive.

CONTROL OF DISEASE

Government should be more transparent and inclusive in its communications, consultations and responses to the diverse needs of stakeholders. The goals of disease control are fundamental to specific strategies. Mass slaughter of healthy animals as a response to disease can be avoided by using other approaches if the goal is optimisation of animal health and food production. The international Animal Health Foresight Project is an example (see www.usaha.org/committees/aem/presentations2005/CarolTuszynski_AnimalHealthForesightProject.ppt).

Obstacles can be overcome, given the will.

New mechanisms for disease control that include cost sharing with the livestock industry and other industries involved in disease should be examined. The paper by Roger Breeze makes useful and important points (see <http://www.fmd-and-csf-action.org/forums/fmdv/>). Small-scale livestock units must also be represented (see: Marshall M J, Roger P A & Bashiruddin J B. Making better use of technological advances to meet stakeholder needs. In Biological disasters of animal origin: the role and preparedness of veterinary and public health services. Rev. sci. tech. Off. int. Epiz., 2006, 25 (1), available online at: <http://www.oie.int/eng/publicat/RT/2501/PDF/20-marshall233-251.pdf>). Possible mechanisms include national animal health associations, a European Animal Health Association, and/or certified production standards which would be determined and monitored democratically by a Livestock Stewardship Council.

Comments are welcome on the FMD & CSF Coordination Action Forum (www.fmd-and-csf-action.org/forums) and information pages will soon be available. Expressions of interest in

participating in the CA's large stakeholders meeting to be held next year should be sent to mary.marshall@bbsrc.ac.uk and/or john.bashiruddin@bbsrc.ac.uk.

Appendix 2

18 October 2007 – FMD & CSF Coordination Action

“The future of science-based prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases”

The FMD & CSF Coordination Action (CA), coordinated by the Institute for Animal Health at Pirbright, organised a Second International Disease Control Workshop on “Stakeholders’ Interests in the use of Science/Technology and Decision Making: The future of science based prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases”.

In the aftermath of the 2007 FMD outbreak in the UK, a burning issue is the benefit and risks of bio-containment laboratories for research and vaccine production and the involvement in science and policy making of small scale livestock keepers (mindful of the fact that around Pirbright most farms are smallholdings). The aim of the workshop was to discuss the issues in general and gain opinions on the benefits and perceived risks of such facilities and their roles in disease control. The meeting considered not only Foot and Mouth Disease and Classical Swine Fever, but also other transboundary and emerging diseases that are a risk to Europe and that involve similar policies for research, prevention and control, e.g. Bluetongue, Avian Influenza, African Swine Fever, Rift Valley Fever.

Speakers included laboratory directors, experts in diagnostics and vaccine production, livestock representatives including small scale farming, veterinarians; and policy makers.

Ample time was allocated for discussions, and participants from all sectors were invited to actively participate. Participants included representatives from the commercial and smallscale livestock sector, veterinarians, scientists, national governments and OIE.

The presentations were earnestly monitored by the various chairs to ensure that the packed programme was completed successfully within the timeframe.

Don King of IAH-Pirbright, -“FMD 2007, an update from IAH”-

Don King presented a summary of the 2007 FMD outbreaks affecting 8 premises (10 separate holdings). The source of the second phase (October) was discussed which occurred one week after the "all clear" had been given and was located outside of the surveillance zone setup after the first phase of outbreaks (August). He briefly outlined the activities that have been undertaken by the IAH (Pirbright) including diagnosis and investigations (using full genome sequence data) into the spread and source of the outbreak. An escape from the Pirbright site housing the IAH and vaccine production facilities of Merial has been identified as the most likely origin of the virus causing these outbreaks.

The precise source and route of transmission from the Pirbright site has been the subject of independent inquiries (HSE and Sprat Committee) and was not discussed in this presentation.

Martin Beer of the Friedrich Loeffler Institut, -“Role and limitations of bio-containment labs in diagnostics”-

A choice must be made whether one turns a lab into level 3 or level 4 security unit. The rules governing level 4 security were, of necessity, very onerous, with obvious ramifications regarding resources and costs. He went on to detail how his institute had carefully reappraised their classification system to ensure the highest efficiency and safety of all their procedures, to great effect.

Klaas Johan Osinga, COPA-COGECA -“Towards acceptable vaccination policies”-

How can we ask farmers to vaccinate their stock if the animals then lose half their value? And yet farmers would vaccinate tomorrow if the price for products was guaranteed. We need the commitment from the retailers.

Paul van Aarle, Intervet International -“From reaction to pro-action”-

Starting an urgent production line (for BTV-8 f.i) means taking capacity away from other production lines. Without the commitment of governments the producers will not take that step. In the past they had produced large quantities of vaccine speculatively, in good faith, only to end up throwing it away, at a huge loss to their companies. They were not prepared to take this risk with a BTV-8 vaccine. He explained that they had the capacity to produce it, but at the time of the meeting, no firm orders had been received. He explained that if there was to be any chance of making a vaccine available in early 2008, they needed firm orders within 10 days. He also provided an amusing but stark anecdote about his own decision to cease keeping hobby poultry; he said he was no longer prepared to keep birds when ultimately they were suddenly being regarded almost as some kind of high risk toxic threat residing in his back yard, alluding to avian flu, and therefore highlighting the ridiculous misinformed perception by some sectors to vaccination. It was a very poignant moment.

Philippe Dubourget, Merial France, -“Towards a reinforced role of bio-containment manufacturing laboratories”-

Not only will there be an increased need for vaccines due to the (re)emerging animal diseases. Vaccination will be indispensable for third world countries. More vaccines will be needed; hence the title.

Nick Honhold, International Consultant (Veterinary Epidemiologist), -“Surveillance for detection of Transboundary Animal Diseases”-

Efficient control needs speed.

1. Either we have active surveillance - other diseases go up, because people are taken off their other duties for active surveillance. We have to ask ourselves each time: What is high risk? Does a positive PCR result really mean presence of an infection? Which animals do you select for surveillance (swabs)?

2. Passive surveillance: reports from farmers - but one needs to trust collaboration of farmers, private vets to rely on such reports.

3. Trust urgently needs to be re established between, in the case of the UK, Defra and the farming community, it had all but disappeared, and without it, there could be no cohesive, successful animal health policy. Government communication is crucial!

Note: In the Netherlands for quite some time now farmers can report without notification and consequent shut down of the farm.

Rudy Meiswinkel, CIDC Lelystad -“Overview of the bluetongue situation in Europe with emphasis on the Culicoides vector”-

OIE regulations rule the EU policies. Yet to make an OIE regulation they need 5 years of research results. So the regulations are always slower than the diseases present themselves.

Housing animals is no protection against BTV-8. Midges come into the buildings especially in cold weather, so there is really no practical control possible unless animals were kept in lab security conditions which of course are impossible at any scale. Even insecticides will not keep the midges away. The only solution seems to be vaccination, but have we waited too long?!

There followed an in depth presentation of the life cycle and habits of *Culicoides*; so little is known about them, for example, midge samples were historically collected at night for analysis, but they had since discovered that they also feed off animals during the day, this was just one of the many disturbing and yet fascinating points he illustrated . One could not have wished for a more detailed and informative, up to the minute summary of the BTV-8 situation.

Alistair Davy, Northern Dales Farmers Markets -“Observations of a small scale hill farmer affected by FMD restrictions”-

Most hill farmers have no computers. So communications about diseases, especially new diseases, come to them only by TV and radio. And yet information is crucial to have early warning, to contain the disease and to control it. Hill farmers are crucial to the countryside, yet get isolated by the outbreaks and are desperate about their starving lambs which cannot be moved due to illogical and unhelpful movement restrictions. Alistair’s presentation brought home the human cost of disease outbreaks.

G rard Choplin, Small & Family Farms Alliance and Coordination Paysanne -“Role of small and family farms in Europe, their needs and mechanisms for input into policy making”-

It’s not the small farmers or the wild birds that carry the diseases around the world. It’s the trade policies. And it’s the combination of the huge industry, especially combining poultry and pigs that result in high risk outbreak plants.

Sam Mansley, State Veterinary Service, Scotland, -“Strategic use of Veterinary Practitioners”-

The number of veterinary practitioners (VPs) is going down due to loss of farm work value (more vets prefer companion animal practice). But in an outbreak increased numbers of VPs will be needed. Where do we get them? Sam went on to describe the numbers of vets required during the 2001 FMD outbreak in the UK. The shortage was hugely amplified by the fact that once vets had been active on infected premises, they had to stay clear for one week before they could work again; a veritable army of vets is required under such circumstances. Vets are seen as traitors so they lose the trust of farmers. This factor increases reluctance to accept the job. It left none of us

under any misapprehension about the terrible position vets and their organisers found themselves in at the time, if anybody needed reminding that prevention was better, if only from a logistical point of view, this was the man to listen to.

Peter Jinman, British Veterinary Association UK, -“The practitioner and the research laboratory – a symbiotic arrangement”-

Peter offered an extraordinary insight into the role of a veterinary practice during disease outbreaks. During an Avian Influenza priority period, he had a suspect wild bird delivered to his surgery by a private person for post mortem; the immediate result was the closure of his premises to reduce the risk of potential disease spread. The immediate effect of this action is that the practice can no longer support its normal day to day clients with the knock on effects in regard to the financial position of the practice, the forced abandonment of clients’ needs, which is hardly an inducement for practices to play a front line role in emergencies.

Also, if offering practice vets to the ‘national pool’ for government use, this could also affect the level of service a practice could offer.

Peter foresees a role for practices to include their own research and diagnostic facilities, which could have obvious advantages in emergency situations, including rapid confirmation or otherwise of positive results.

Christian Griot, Institute of Virology and Immunoprophylaxis, Switzerland -“Laboratory accidents: how to prevent them”-

Bio-security and bio-safety are the key words. The world cannot do without highly qualified laboratories with the emerging and re-emerging animal diseases all around the world.

Roger Breeze, Centaur Science Group Washington DC -“A close to real time surveillance, reporting and detection system for control and elimination of transboundary livestock diseases”-

Within our lifetimes, we must resolve to eliminate those transboundary diseases that threaten global agribusiness and trap tens of millions of subsistence farmers in poverty. We cannot build walls around our countries tall enough to keep these infections out: they must be removed at their sources. We already have the technologies - the problem is that unless we reserve these for use in the future when our animals are dying at home, we must resolve to use them now in those parts of the world that are dark at night, that is, those parts of the world that are less developed, such as parts of the former Soviet Union. Centaur Science is active in several such countries, advising US government programs in building world class laboratories and rapid diagnostic surveillance systems. It is perhaps ironic that these poorer countries will be better equipped than those in the EU and elsewhere to detect and control disease. But he left the choice of using any which system entirely up each government itself.

Unfortunately British Airways had lost the demonstration unit Roger had travelled with to demonstrate how easy and how fast detection can be. It arrived the morning after the meeting and only two ELA members [Mary Marshall and Mary Critchley] were able to see it.

At the end of the presentations all speakers formed a panel to receive questions from the floor.

One of the main issues obviously was ‘when will we have a BTV-8 vaccine?’ The manufacturers all replied that the main question was whether they were assured of the governments’ will to buy. Once the process of developing the vaccine has started it would take 6-8 months before a safe vaccine is available.

There were questions about controlling the midges with insecticides. There is no evidence that it is at all possible or that the use of insecticides even slows the midge down.

All were in agreement that we need to urge the various authorities to commit to vaccination.

The day ended with less formal discussions, exchanges of contact details and promises to keep in touch. All in all it showed stakeholders have a need for open discussions with one another and with scientists and policy makers. And that is exactly what happened.