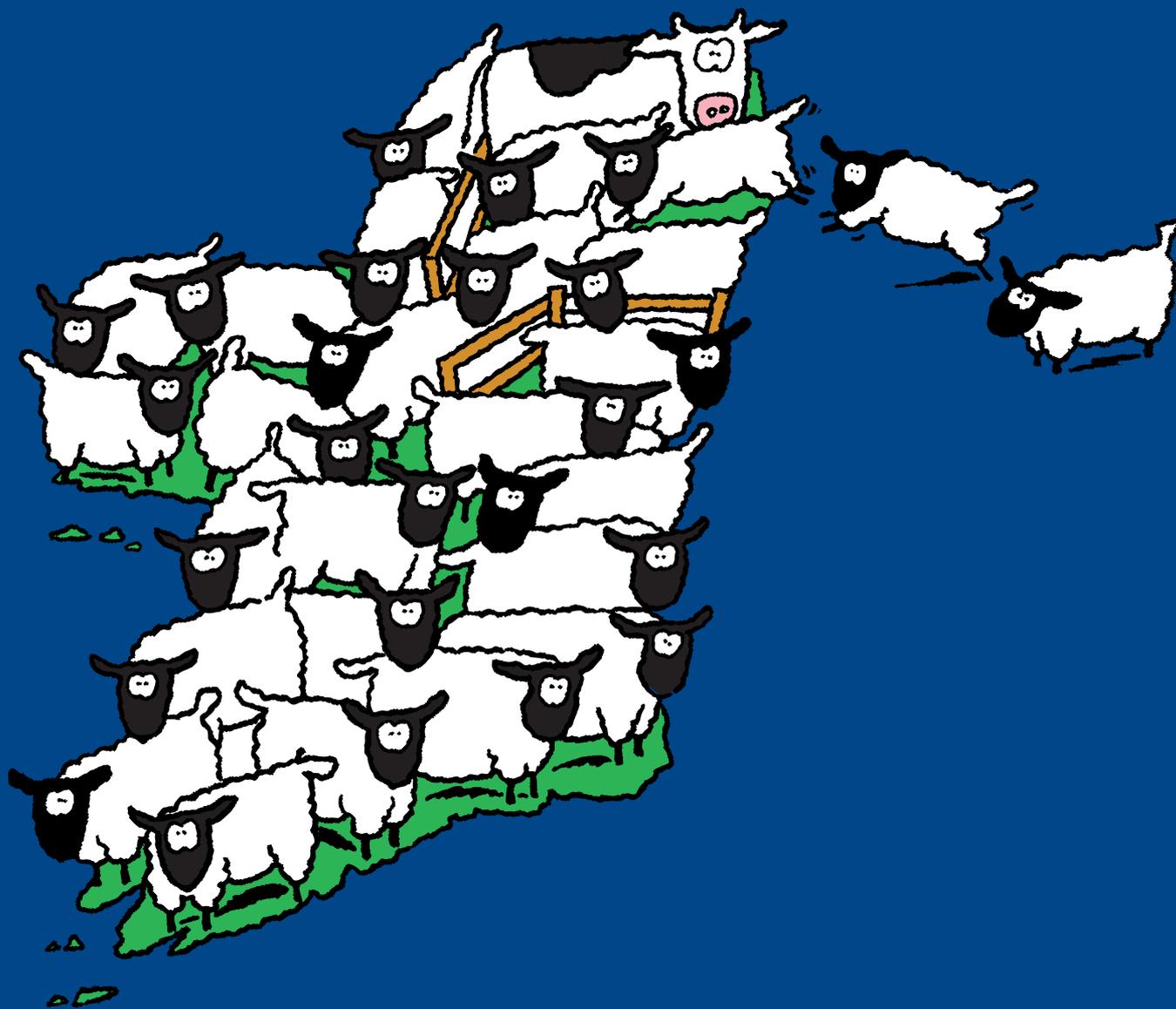


THE FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE CRISIS AND THE IRISH BORDER



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THE CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

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**WITH COMMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (NI) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (ROI)**



The Foot-and-Mouth Disease crisis and the Irish Border

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The Centre for Cross Border Studies

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About the Author

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About the Centre for Cross Border Studies

The Centre for Cross Border Studies, based in Armagh, was set up in September 1999 to research and develop co-operation across the Irish border in education, health, business, public administration, communications, agriculture and a range of other practical areas. It is a joint initiative by Queen's University Belfast, Dublin City University and the Workers Educational Association (Northern Ireland), and is financed by the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. In 2001 the Centre published reports on cross-border telecommunications, cross-border health services, all-Ireland co-operation to tackle disadvantage in education, EU cross-border funding before and after the Good Friday Agreement, cross-border co-operation in local government and cross-border co-operation between local history societies.

Other Reports from the Centre

The Evolution of Telecom Technologies: Current Trends and Near-Future Implications. Fionn Murtagh, John Keating, Susan Bergin, Chris Harper, Geraldine McParland and Mohsen Farid. February 2001.

Cross-border Co-operation in Health Services in Ireland. Jim Jamison, Michelle Butler, Patricia Clarke, Martin McKee and Ciaran O'Neill. March 2001.

Ireland's Learning Poor: Adult Educational Disadvantage and Cross-Border Co-operation. Paul McGill and Mark Morgan. April 2001.

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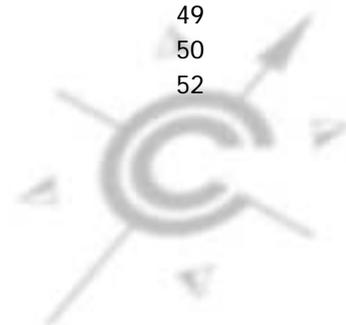


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Comments from the Departments of Agriculture

Comments from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Northern Ireland and from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (DAFRD) in the Republic of Ireland are incorporated into this report after the relevant sections. DARD comments are in *italicised type* and DAFRD comments are in ***bold italicised type***. DAFRD has also reserved the right to comment further on the report following publication.

Introduction

From very early in the spring 2001 foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Ireland it was clear that the profile of the disease was intimately connected with the cross-border movement of livestock. Such movements have been an integral part of farming, particularly in the immediate border area, as long as the border has existed. In this study, the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) aims to review the two governments' management of the FMD crisis, and particularly that management's cross-border dimension. In addition, the FMD crisis allows researchers a real opportunity to test the working of cross-border relationships in agriculture which have either been established or strengthened under the North-South institutions set up since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

1.1 Background

On 19 February 2001 an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease was detected among two cattle and 308 pigs at an abattoir in Essex in England. The initial source was soon traced to a pig holding unit in Northumberland in northern England, and in the days that followed it emerged that the FMD virus had already spread extensively throughout Britain, fuelled by the vast movement of sheep for sale and slaughter throughout the country.

On 21 February the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (DAFRD) in the Republic of Ireland responded by banning the import of animals and animal products from the UK, including Northern Ireland. This was a requirement placed on all Member States on that date in accordance with EU Decision 2001/145. The Irish Government sent large numbers of gardai and troops to assist DAFRD officials in policing the Irish border to prevent livestock movements across it.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Belfast took two immediate steps: it agreed to Northern Ireland's inclusion in a temporary EU ban on intra-Community and third country trade in UK animals and animal products, and placed its own ban on the import of animals and animal products from Britain into the North.

In both Irish jurisdictions airports and ports were put on alert, and control measures, as indicated in their respective contingency plans, were implemented to protect the island from the spread of the disease. The two Departments of Agriculture began extensive programmes of tracing UK imports to the island since 1 February.

Despite these efforts, on 1 March the first case of FMD on the island for over 60 years was confirmed at a farm in Meigh in south Armagh, close to the border. It emerged that sheep which had been imported to the North from Britain on a 'direct for slaughter' certificate had been illegally diverted to the farm in





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south Armagh. Most of the sheep were subsequently moved across the border and slaughtered at a Co Roscommon meat plant, but those that remained were the source of the first outbreak of FMD in Northern Ireland.

In the wake of the first outbreak in England, several investigations had begun into the trading of livestock across the Irish border; information was emerging about other shipments that might have caused the spread of FMD, and precautionary slaughterings were taking place on both sides of the border. On 22 March, a second case of FMD was confirmed a few miles on the southern side of the border at Proleek, Co. Louth. This outbreak was situated within the Southern exclusion zone already declared in response to the Meigh outbreak.

At this stage, the authorities, North and South, were beginning to believe that they had contained the spread of the FMD outbreak on the island to the south Armagh/north Louth region. Both Departments of Agriculture announced their intention to carry out a precautionary cull of animals in the cross-border area around and between the two outbreaks. However on Friday 13 April, the beginning of the Easter bank holiday weekend, a second case of FMD in the North was confirmed at Ardboe, Co. Tyrone. This news was doubly shocking to the public as a preliminary result from the Ardboe farm had been declared negative the previous day, although this had been a screening test result, and thus subject to confirmation. Two days later, on 15 April, a third case was confirmed in Cushendall in north Antrim, followed by a fourth case on 22 April in Ardboe on a farm adjacent to the previously infected farm there.

[DARD comments: Much is made in the report of the fact that we in Northern Ireland agreed to be included in the EU's temporary ban on UK trade. It is important that the full context in which that decision was taken is understood. When FMD was confirmed in pigs in Essex, it was far from clear as to the source of that infection. Northern Ireland pigs had passed through the establishment in question at the relevant time, so it was entirely possible that it was they that were the source of the infection. Moreover, there was every possibility that we had already by that stage unwittingly imported FMD into NI (as turned out to be the case). There were thus no veterinary grounds at that time for Northern Ireland to claim that it should be exempt from a UK-wide ban. Moreover, it was very clear to us that, even if we in Northern Ireland tried to distance ourselves from the ban on UK trade, the EU would include us in it anyway until the source of the outbreak, and its extent, were clearer. We would then have faced a much tougher task in subsequently achieving regional status and an early resumption of Northern Ireland exports. The decision we took was, therefore, based entirely on the realities of the situation in which we found ourselves. There was no practical prospect of our being excluded from the EU's ban on the UK, and indeed the veterinary situation was so unclear at that stage that it would have been irresponsible for us to have tried to escape the ban. However, as the report acknowledges and based on the need to prevent any further spread to or from GB, we immediately blocked imports from that source.]

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A map of Ireland showing the locations of the five FMD outbreaks, and a timeline of the FMD crisis, drawing particular attention to moments that highlighted the Irish border as factor in the crisis, are included as Appendices A and B of this report.

1.2 Key questions

There are seven questions this study aims to address:

- How were policy responses to the FMD crisis in both jurisdictions influenced by the existence of the border?
- Has the FMD crisis strengthened the case for an all-island animal health system?
- Was an all-island approach to the control of animal movements, and to disease risk reduction, an option in the two jurisdictions' policy responses?
- What were the levels of and limits to co-operation between the agricultural authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland during the crisis?
- How effective was the sharing and exchange of information between the agricultural authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland?
- Was there a measurable impact in and across the two jurisdictions of having the Good Friday Agreement institutions and procedures in place?
- What would be the benefits and problems associated with the introduction of an all-Ireland animal health system and how would such a system work?

The handling of the FMD crisis by the two Departments of Agriculture in Ireland has been called both a model of successful cross-border co-operation and a cross-border experience that could have been done without. The quality and quantity of this co-operation have not been examined in any detail. Now (autumn 2001) that the main threat has passed, questions need to be asked about how such joint actions can improve the effectiveness of all-island disease prevention in the future. The two Departments are conducting their own individual reviews of the FMD crisis, and agreed at the North/South Ministerial Council (Agriculture Sector) meeting on 4 October 2001 that the cross-border dimension would be an important component of this work.

Overall, and notwithstanding the criticisms contained in this report, which point to some very real lessons that need to be learned for the future, the Centre came to the conclusion that the two Agriculture Ministers, Mrs Bríd Rodgers and Mr Joe Walsh, and their Departments, together with the other state agencies involved, North and South, deserve great credit for the skill and dedication they demonstrated in containing the spread of FMD on the island, particularly given the potentially catastrophic consequences of a widespread outbreak. All involved can take satisfaction from an extremely difficult and challenging job well done. The issue now is learning from those situations where things went





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wrong, and ensuring that in the event of a future animal health crisis the lessons learned from handling FMD can be applied to the benefit of both parts of the island.

1.3 Process

The board of the Centre for Cross Border decided to carry out a case study of the foot-and-mouth disease crisis on the island of Ireland as a case study of cross-border co-operation and constraints in April 2001. The study, which began in June and was carried out by the Centre's research officer, Dr Patricia Clarke, aimed to explore the development and implementation of policy to manage the FMD outbreaks by the administrations in both Irish jurisdictions, and on the role of the border in that policy. Funding was secured from the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Republic to undertake the research. The study was subsequently extended to include an assessment of the East-West and North-South policies which encourage animal movement onto and within the island.

Initial meetings were arranged with key experts in Belfast and Dublin to identify and explore the main issues that would emerge for research. The Belfast meeting took place on 26 June and was attended by senior representatives of the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association (NIAPA) and Mr Richard Wright, a leading Northern agricultural journalist. Although invited to this meeting, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)'s animal health section informed the Centre that no decision had yet been taken at senior level to participate in the study.

The Dublin meeting took place on 10 July under the chairmanship of Mr Matt Dempsey, editor and chief executive of the *Irish Farmers Journal*, and brought together representatives of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (DAFRD)'s deputy chief veterinary officer, Mr. Michael Sheridan, and a senior official in its animal health section, Mr. Brendan Gleeson.

A North-South FMD study day was held in Armagh on 11 October 2001 (See *Appendix C for details*). The CCBS researcher, Dr Clarke, presented a discussion paper on the research so far to a group of key experts from the South's Expert Advisory Group, the farming organisations, North and South, Teagasc, veterinary and agricultural academics, border farmers, and business, rural health and local government representatives. The two Departments of Agriculture did not send representatives to this study day, although senior officials of the DAFRD said they would have no problems participating in the study at a later date following their own internal review (in mid-November) into the handling of the outbreaks. DARD said it would be inappropriate to take part in the CCBS study because the Department was planning to carry out its own review, including the cross-border dimension.

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Those attending this study day felt that DARD should be strongly encouraged to participate in the study. On 15 October DARD's head of farm policy, Mr Stewart Johnston, responded positively to a request from the Centre for an interview in order to allow Dr Clarke to check the accuracy of a number of research findings on a non-attributable basis. This interview took place on 22 October.

On 15 November Dr Clarke also met five senior members of DAFRD, led by the Chief Veterinary Officer, Mr Colm Gaynor, and they spent the afternoon reviewing the contents of the 11 October discussion paper, a revised version of which provides the bulk of this report. On 8 November a senior DARD official had also received a copy of this paper.

At the end of November, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Belfast and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in Dublin were sent the final draft report for comment. Factual errors and inaccuracies pointed out by the two Departments resulted in corrections, plus the inclusion of some critical comments and observations from the Departments. These are incorporated in the report at the end of the relevant section in *italics* (DARD) and *bold italics*** (DAFRD). DAFRD has reserved the right to comment further on the report following publication.**

Apart from individual interviews, expert group discussions and the North-South study day, this research involved an extensive review of published material over a 100 day period from 20 February 2001 to 31 May 2001. In particular the following information sources were scrutinised for cross-border elements of the FMD crisis:

- Key newspapers and agricultural journals (*Irish Times, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Veterinary Journal, Anglo-Celt*)
- Dáil Éireann parliamentary records
- Northern Ireland Assembly official report (Hansard)
- DARD and DAFRD press releases
- Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) press releases
- Teagasc records
- North/South Ministerial Council (Agriculture sector) joint communiqués.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 33 key players (*see Appendix D for details*) in both jurisdictions who had been identified through this review of published material as playing an important role during the FMD crisis. Whenever possible these interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. It was decided from the outset that interview material would not be attributed to individual interviewees in the final report, but for the sake of clarity and comprehensiveness comments would be attributed to representatives of named organisations where applicable.

A three-person research advisory committee was convened to monitor the research project and to provide feedback on the preliminary discussion paper and the draft final report.





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Particular thanks should go to the members of this committee: Mr. Matt Dempsey, editor and chief executive of the *Irish Farmers Journal*, Mr. Richard Wright, the prominent Northern agricultural journalist, and Mr. Brian Trench, lecturer in communications at Dublin City University and CCBS board member (who first conceived the idea for this research project). The researcher would also like to thank the deputy president of the Ulster Farmers' Union, Mr. John Gilliland, who provided valuable insights into the way the FMD crisis was handled in Northern Ireland; and Mr. Andy Pollak, director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, who assisted with the editing of this report.

1.4 Summary of answers to key questions

- *How were policy responses in both jurisdictions influenced by the existence of the border?*

Policies in the animal health area are EU-wide, with the result that they are very similar in both Irish jurisdictions. It was the manner in which these policies were interpreted and practically implemented which saw differences emerge. During the FMD crisis there were a number of examples of policy responses which were deeply influenced by the existence of the border, but were often very different in terms of their cross-border emphasis.

For example, after the outbreak of the disease in England, the authorities in the Republic focused a major part of their control measures on sealing off the border, using large forces of soldiers and gardai, whereas in Northern Ireland, understandably, measures were concentrated at ports of entry from Britain. When it came to the tracing of sheep which had been imported into Northern Ireland from Britain and then illegally diverted to farms in the North or to a destination in the Republic, there was a high level of cross-border co-operation.

- *Has the FMD crisis strengthened the case for an all-island animal health system?*

Senior civil servants and farming union representatives in both jurisdictions agreed that the level of cross-border co-operation during the FMD crisis played a significant role in preventing the widespread introduction of the disease to the island and in containing it to the four infected areas. Interviewees said the practical and successful experience of working together in an emergency situation had emphasised the benefits of preparing an island plan on how to deal with any future animal health emergencies which may arise in Ireland.

The dominance of the media coverage of the crisis for more than two months in spring 2001 has raised political and public awareness of agricultural and rural development issues. In the past, the wider community generally became concerned with animal diseases only when such diseases had significant human

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health implications. There is now a heightened realisation in the two jurisdictions that the threat of animal diseases has the potential to impact directly or indirectly on all sectors of society, and in all parts of Ireland, and that the most successful way to avoid future emergencies is to utilise the natural water barrier around the island by moving towards an all-Ireland animal health system.

- *Was an all-island approach to the control of animal movements, and to disease risk reduction, an option in the two jurisdictions' policy responses?*

The central thrust of policy by both governments, North and South, was to keep the disease out of their respective jurisdictions and thereafter to contain it within the areas of the outbreak. DAFRD officials have stressed the decision on 21 February to include Northern Ireland as part of the UK in the EU prohibition on intra-Community and third-country trade in live animals, meat, milk and other products, as the factor which made it impossible to consider an all-Ireland approach to protecting the island from the disease. Instead, the Departments of Agriculture in the two jurisdictions worked separately but with a very high level of cross-border co-operation.

- *What were the levels of and limits to co-operation between the agricultural authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland during the crisis?*

When the extent of the FMD outbreak in England became apparent, the North's Agriculture Minister, Mrs Brid Rodgers, placed a temporary ban on the importation of animal products from Britain until the origin of the outbreak was established. As the crisis developed, cross-border co-operation was intensified across all sectors of the farming industry. The two Departments of Agriculture, through the respective Chief Veterinary Officers, were in constant liaison, often on a half-hourly basis, after the threat of the disease became evident after 20 February.

In November 2000, three months before the outbreak, the North/South Ministerial Council had endorsed proposals to formalise cross-border arrangements at official level on animal health matters. Since the crisis, cross-border animal health committees have been active both between the Irish Farmers' Association and the Ulster Farmers' Union, and between Veterinary Ireland and one of the two Northern veterinary bodies, the North of Ireland Veterinary Association.

- *How effective was the sharing and exchange of information between the agricultural authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland?*

There were numerous examples throughout the FMD crisis where the sharing and exchange of information between the agricultural authorities in both jurisdictions was very effective. The most publicised example was that of tracing the movement





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of British sheep which had been brought on to the island and illegally diverted either to farms in Northern Ireland or to destinations in the Republic. On this issue the two authorities co-operated at the highest level, even to the extent that a joint team of officials travelled to England to interview one livestock dealer. Other noticeable examples include the exchange visits made by the authorities to local animal disease control centres in the other jurisdiction, and co-operation in dealing with the day-to-day logistical problems of moving agricultural produce across the border.

This did not prevent some Northern unionist politicians claiming that the Republic's authorities were hiding the extent of FMD in their jurisdiction, and some government ministers in the Republic claiming that the UK authorities were falling in their response to the crisis.

- *Was there a measurable impact in and across the two jurisdictions of having the Good Friday Agreement institutions and procedures in place?*

The long history of practical co-operation between the two Departments of Agriculture was referred to on numerous occasions throughout the FMD crisis. Both Ministers, Mrs Brid Rodgers and Mr Joe Walsh, stressed that the links between their departments, now formalised under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC), had facilitated a high level of co-operation and were very important for the long term maintenance of animal health on the island. Senior officials in both Departments echoed this, noting that the post-Good Friday Agreement arrangements under the auspices of the NSMC had given a new energy to existing inter-departmental contacts. The NSMC's unique procedures, under which a nationalist minister like Mrs Rodgers is 'shadowed' by a unionist minister at all North-South meetings, appear to have legitimised the option of working on a cross-border basis towards an all-Ireland animal health policy.

- *What would be the benefits and problems associated with the introduction of an all-Ireland animal health system and how would such a system work?*

At the Centre for Cross Border Studies North-South FMD study day in October 2001 the main reasons for pursuing a common animal health agenda were summarised as: the ability to trade internationally if the island is kept relatively disease free; the ability to bring localised outbreaks of animal disease quickly under control, and the capacity to anticipate and react to common problems in the farming industry.

It is accepted that there are significant political and practical hurdles to overcome in developing such an all-Ireland animal health system. Among these are the imbalance in political and administrative powers between the North as a region of the UK and the South as a sovereign EU Member State; the fact that the agricultural industries, North and South, currently operate in direct competition

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with each other; the limited ability of the island to pursue a 'fortress Ireland' approach in the context of a single EU market; the problems caused by the present and future currency differentials between the two jurisdictions; and the traditional trading patterns between Northern Ireland and Britain, the extent of which are not mirrored in the South.

Discussions on a future strategic policy aiming towards an all-Ireland animal health system are currently under way between the two Departments of Agriculture under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council. However the farming communities in both jurisdictions are concerned about their lack of input into this process, and would like to see a multi-sectoral group established which would bring commercial, rural development and other factors into the discussions. Such a group, perhaps modelled on the Expert Advisory Group set up by Minister Walsh during the FMD crisis, should have access to high quality scientific advice and become a focal point for co-ordinating an all-island approach to animal health.

[DAFRD comments: To model a group to discuss the future strategic policy of an all-Ireland animal health system on the Expert Advisory Group set up by Minister Walsh is to misunderstand the nature and structure of that Group. The Expert Group set up by Minister Walsh consisted of scientists who gave advice on the degree and proportionality of controls that should be in place to prevent foot and mouth disease from gaining access to the South from the United Kingdom. There is no parallel between the two types of groups involved.]

The various sections of this report provide a more in-depth picture of the cross-border dimension to the FMD crisis in Ireland. The summary answers above have also informed the series of recommendations outlined in Section 6.





The Weakest Link

It is impossible to look at the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) crisis in Ireland without considering the interplay of East-West and North-South policies which encourage animal movement onto and within the island of Ireland. The special circumstances of Ireland, encompassing two states within a relatively small, tightly bound geographical space, give rise to special factors in the movement of livestock. There is no dispute that the immediate reason why FMD came to the island was through the importation of sheep. However there are broader incentives which have traditionally encouraged the movement of animals onto and within the island. In order to maintain a high disease free status in Ireland, North and South, these factors need to be managed. A number of these incentives are addressed below.

2.1 The context of agriculture

A principal focus of European Union policy-making since 1997 has been the package of proposals for reform known as Agenda 2000. The response to these proposals and subsequent negotiations, which included a major reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), highlighted significant differences in the agricultural economies of Ireland and the UK. The UK is a net contributor to the EU and the British agricultural sector is much less important in comparison to other sectors of the economy, whereas Ireland is a net beneficiary from the EU budget and has a large agricultural sector. While countries like the UK and Germany support reducing direct aids to farmers in favour of funding rural development, the Republic of Ireland's view is that funding for rural development should not be at the expense of other supports, which remain vital to Irish agriculture.

In the longer term, UK government statements seem to indicate a wish to switch funding totally in the direction of rural development, thus ending premium payments to farmers. Many in the industry feel that the recent dropping of the word 'agriculture' from the title of the responsible British department, so that it has become the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), is symbolic of the UK Government's intentions. The lack of reference to compensation for the farming industry in the 2001 Queen's speech is seen as another indication of the perceived lack of importance of the agricultural sector within the UK economy as a whole.

Confirmation of the UK government's approach was given at the European Farming Congress in Belfast on 26 September 2001. The British Minister, Mrs Margaret Beckett, announced her Department's intention to pursue the abolition of milk quotas, the removal of compulsory setaside, decoupling and degressivity in direct payments, and the phasing out of these payments in the long term. Minister Beckett indicated that individual regions such as Northern Ireland should be able to operate their own systems of support within





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the overall model. Ulster Farmers' Union President Mr Douglas Rowe described the Minister's suggestions as "disastrous". Strong opposition to the UK line can be expected from several EU Member States, including Ireland.

The agricultural economy of Northern Ireland, both in its emphasis on grass-based beef and dairy production and its importance within the wider Northern Ireland economy, resembles that of the Republic more than it does the rest of the UK. Any UK-wide agricultural policy reforms would have a disproportionately severe impact on Northern Ireland farmers. In addition, Republic of Ireland agricultural interests are by common consent well represented in EU decision-making, whereas traditionally Northern Ireland agricultural interests have suffered by being represented in Brussels at one remove. It is the widely held view that since EU membership nearly 30 years ago, agriculture in Northern Ireland has lagged behind the South, in part due to the development of more successful agricultural and rural policies by the Irish Government. A recent report (July 1999) by the British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body concluded that UK policy-making processes prior to devolution needed to take greater account of the interests of Northern Ireland agriculture.

At a Centre for Cross Border Studies North-South agriculture study day in April 2000, one of Ireland's leading agricultural economists, Professor Seamus Sheehy, gave a valuable insight into the island's agricultural income statistics (TIFF). He noted that in the South an average family farm income, including subsidies, is usually between 40-50% of total outputs. However in the North it is much lower and falling rapidly, averaging 20% in 1996 and only 7% in 1999. The farm income collapse in Northern Ireland is the result of several major factors, including the BSE crisis since 1996, the strong pound Sterling, the pig production crisis and the adverse weather conditions of 1999. Estimates from a survey published in October 2000 by consultants Deloitte & Touche concluded that the incomes of Northern farmers had fallen by nearly 90% over the past five years.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the drastic drop in agricultural incomes over the past few years has meant that some people in the farming industry have had to resort to radical action, even including illegal practices, to survive.

2.2 Controls on animal importation

Global distribution and the free movement of goods have facilitated trade, but have also permitted the rapid dissemination of contaminants from one country to another that can affect animal or human health, or both. The arrangements governing intra-Community livestock trade in the EU, laid down in legislation by the respective authorities, are primarily derived from the requirements of Council Directives on animal health conditions. Directive conditions apply unless there are specific derogations available. Imports of bovine animals from the UK (Britain and

The Weakest Link

Northern Ireland) to the Republic of Ireland are currently not permitted for BSE reasons. Council Directive 64/432/EEC covers the movement of pigs between the UK (Britain and Northern Ireland) and the Republic of Ireland. Sheep imported from GB to Northern Ireland in 2001 did not have to meet the full requirements of Council Directive 91/68. There were Maedi Visna requirements on breeding sheep imports, but not on those going direct to slaughter. The Republic of Ireland have additional requirements in respect of GB sheep going for slaughter, but there is no record of any movements of such sheep going directly to the Republic, so that requirement is somewhat academic.

The movement of sheep and goats from Britain to Northern Ireland is controlled by two general 'import' licences. These licences are issued under the Disease of Animals Order (Northern Ireland) 1981 and the Importation of Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

General 'import' licence DANI/GEN/96/04 governs the movement of sheep and goats for breeding and production from Britain to Northern Ireland. This licence provides for the movement of two categories of sheep and goats:

- Those which are from a flock accredited under the Scottish Agriculture College scheme in respect of Maedi-Visna/ Caprine Arthritis-Encephalitis.
- Those which are from a non-accredited flock. In this case, animals to be moved to Northern Ireland are subject to both pre-'export' testing, post movement isolation for six months in pre-approved facilities and testing for Maedi-Visna prior to release.

General 'import' licence DANI/GEN/96/05 governs the movement of sheep and goats for immediate slaughter from Britain to Northern Ireland. Requirements of this licence include:

- That animals are delivered directly to the meat plant/abattoir of destination.
- One working day's advance notice of movement must be given to the DARD official at the meat/abattoir of destination.

Each movement under this licence must be accompanied by official MAFF (now DEFRA) certification (certificate 2104EHC).

While the movement of sheep between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (in either direction) does not require health certification, there is one subtle difference between the two jurisdictions. The Northern Ireland authorities do not require Maedi-Visna certification where sheep are certified for immediate slaughter in Northern Ireland. It is the diversion of British sheep which have been certified 'direct for slaughter' to farms in Northern Ireland or to any destination in the Republic of Ireland which adds the illegal dimension. After the FMD crisis, there is now full EU Directive certification required for sheep moving across the border in either direction.



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Officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Veterinary Service Portal Inspectorate should normally intercept consignments of livestock which arrive at Northern Ireland ports of entry (Larne or Belfast). Accompanying documentation should be verified, and full details of the livestock recorded and forwarded electronically to the relevant Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO). The consignment should only be permitted to travel to the destination as declared on the accompanying certification if the outcome of the checks is satisfactory.

The import of sheep into Northern Ireland is recorded in a number of ways:

1. The local Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) receives an ANIMO message that a consignment of sheep or goats from Britain¹ will arrive in Northern Ireland. (ANIMO is the European-standard computerised imports/exports data-base with terminals at all DVOs.)
2. Portal staff should record the basic consignment details, complete a pro forma 'Livestock Importation through Larne/Belfast harbour' for each health certificate and fax it through to the relevant DVO.
3. On receipt of the relevant health certificate, the DVO updates the veterinary service imports/exports data-base.

In late 2000 an anonymous telephone call alerted DARD to the fact that a haulier from Co. Antrim was importing consignments certified for immediate slaughter which were not being presented at the destination slaughterhouse. An investigation of portal records of all incoming livestock was undertaken which showed that this haulier was importing consignments of between 300 and 400 hoggets up to five times per week. These loads were usually certified as going for direct slaughter at a particular slaughterhouse, but a cursory check showed that these consignments had not arrived. DARD officials decided to trace the haulier's movements to find out where in Northern Ireland he discharged sheep, and on 8 December 2000 he was followed from Larne harbour to the premises of a dealer in Co. Londonderry. In January 2001 the haulier was informed by letter that his activities were being investigated and that files were being prepared for his prosecution.

At the same time the veterinary officer in charge of the Portal Inspectorate introduced new measures to detect and prevent the practice of diverting 'direct for slaughter' sheep to other destinations. The communication system between the Portal Inspectorate and the abattoirs was improved to include correlation of consignments arriving at the ports with their subsequent slaughter. A staff instruction and a notice to hauliers were issued. However the proposed 16 hour per day surveillance at Belfast was under-implemented due to a shortage of staff,

1 During November and December 2000 problems were experienced in upgrading the ANIMO computer links in Britain and a manual fax system was installed. A number of loads dispatched in January 2001, following re-instatement of the computer system, were not notified to recipients in EU countries.

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leaving the early hours of the morning 'Nightrider' sailing into Belfast without DARD cover. It is now known that the infected consignment of sheep which caused the first outbreak of FMD in Meigh arrived in the North on the 2:10am 'Nightrider' ferry into Belfast harbour when no DARD officials were on duty. DARD officials say that these sheep arrived on a legal 'direct for slaughter' certificate, and even if they had been intercepted it would have been impossible to stop them leaving the port.

It is clear from this series of events that import legislation was not fully enforced. The ports of Larne and Belfast were seen as an easy way to import sheep illegally onto the island and this is particularly true of the 'Nightrider' ferry. The ease of obtaining a 'direct for slaughter' certificate, together with lax controls at the ports and the lack of an audit trail, made such importation "like taking candy from a baby", in the words of one Northern farmer.

Members of the farming community thus feel that a share of the responsibility for bringing FMD on to the island should be shouldered by DARD for failing fully to enforce importation controls. However Minister Rodgers has said that holding DARD officials responsible for the spread of FMD to Ireland was the equivalent of holding the police responsible for a road traffic accident caused by someone driving over the speed limit.

[DARD comments: This section records the DARD view – that even had the consignment in question been inspected by Departmental staff, it would have made little difference to the outcome – but fails to take account of it. It also ignores that it was DARD's early follow-up of the consignment in question which allowed the sheep to be traced.]

The general tenor of this entire section is therefore, in our view, quite unbalanced. It is in effect blaming the UK for following a policy direction agreed at EU level and then blaming DARD for not manning its ports round the clock in order to prevent illegal activity. Those same illegal activities are then excused as a reasonable response to falling farm incomes flowing from the first of those factors. None of that analysis is accepted here.

DARD's position is very clear. Illegal activities were the sole cause of our foot and mouth disease outbreak and are not excusable. While the Department does what it can to guard against such activities, it does not have infinite resources and has to decide on its priorities. There was no EU requirement to check ANY consignments of sheep coming from GB to Northern Ireland, being within a single Member State, and neither was there any national legal requirement that we do so.]





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2.3 Meat industry

There is a highly developed meat industry in the Republic which has a huge capacity for processing and exporting lamb. The growth of this 'state of the art' industry was facilitated by government encouragement and grants in the early 1990s. It is estimated that the processing industry in the South requires over four million sheep per year to reach full capacity. Northern agricultural spokesmen believe that this industry is creating a vacuum and effectively pulling products from the North for processing as 'origin of Ireland' exports to markets such as France where Irish lamb commands a premium price. In addition, the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association believes that the largely flat rate buying system in the South leads to the acceptance of heavier and fatter lambs than would be acceptable in British supermarkets or for the British export trade.

In January 2000 meat factories in the South were picketed by farmers demanding a fair price for beef. Even after a threat of legal action against the farmers, support from the IFA saw the factories backing down and agreeing to the farmers' demands. The meat companies still vehemently deny that they were operating a cartel and no evidence was ever found to prove these allegations. However Northern Ireland producers continue to believe that meat plants in both jurisdictions, some owned by the same firms, are unofficially regulating the market for lambs in the island. Several people expressed the view that policies which promote the movement of lambs from Britain to Ireland help to deflate the price paid to farmers both North and South.

2.4 VAT rebate

There is a recognition by the meat industry and farmers unions that North-South smugglers have taken advantage of the VAT levy rebate system in the South (meant for domestically produced sheep) by presenting Northern sheep as locally owned to Southern plants. This 4.3% levy may seem small but is significant in the light of the dramatic drop in farm incomes in the North in recent years. Cross-border tax harmonisation is one aspect of the drive to a Single Market within the EU, removing distortions to trade between its members. However the UK government (on behalf of Northern Ireland) has never raised the abuse of the VAT rebate system in the Republic of Ireland for discussion at EU level, and there is clearly no incentive for the South to do so.

Two-three years ago there was a well-publicised investigation in both Irish jurisdictions into instances of VAT fraud. In early 1999 a Tipperary sheep farmer and the IFA drew attention to the midnight smuggling of Northern sheep to Southern meat plants, and RTE broadcast an accompanying film of the midnight deliveries. However no prosecutions were ever brought as a result of this information.

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An audit of eleven meat plants by the Revenue Commissioners in the Republic (at the request of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development) clawed back over £350,000 in VAT fraud over a three year period. These settlements were reached on the basis of private negotiations rather than through legal actions (this is not considered to be an unusual way of settling fraud cases). The Revenue Commissioners, the Garda or the DAFRD did not initiate prosecutions against any of the factories or dealers involved. During a Dáil debate on 4 April 2001 the Taoiseach, Mr Ahern, referred to DAFRD's actions in 1997 following concerns that the VAT refund regulations were not being observed. These included increased vigilance at meat plants in the South, the issuing of circulars to meat inspectors reminding them of import requirements, and the agreement of the Sheepmeat Forum² that the most effective solution to the problem would be sheep tagging. However an individual sheep tagging system was not introduced at this time following resistance from the main farmers union in the South, the Irish Farmers' Association.

The Dáil Public Accounts Committee is now asking both the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Agriculture to account for the decision not to take legal action. In March 2001 the Republic's Minister for Finance announced that all 30 lamb slaughtering factories and abattoirs would be audited by the Revenue Commissioners.

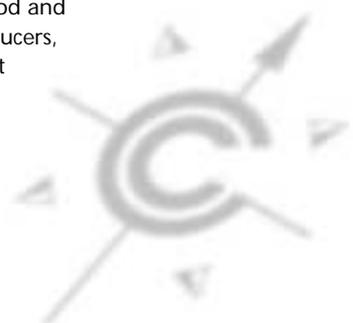
[DAFRD comments: The VAT issue is largely a matter for the Revenue Commissioners and issues arising out of the allegations of VAT fraud were brought to their attention at the time. It was not within the competence of DAFRD to initiate prosecutions relating to VAT against the meat processing factories.]

2.5 EU subsidies

Simply to survive, most small farmers are now heavily dependent on EU subsidies and/or on additional off-farm income. The monitoring of EU subsidy claims is based on a head count of sheep over a 100-day period during which Department officials can arrive unannounced to inspect any flocks for which a claim has been made. The 2001 retention period was due to finish on 7 April. During the early months of the year farmers say there is a demand (either by accident or design) for older sheep to make up the numbers of sheep on farms to the number of subsidy claimed (any ewe that is one year old at the end of the retention period will suffice). There is no

2 The Sheepmeat Forum was established by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in February 1998 and included representatives of producers, processors, Teagasc, An Bord Bia, ICOS, UCD and DAFRD. The objectives set by the Minister for the Forum were:

- i) to evaluate the future direction of the sheepmeat sector; and
- ii) to assess how the industry can address existing constraints and future challenges.





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need to buy in quality stock as EU subsidies are based on a count of sheep with no reference to quality or condition of animals (as decided by EU law). The Departments of Agriculture in both jurisdictions complete a compulsory random check of a minimum of 10% of all sheep flocks every year. Discussions with the farming community suggest that in the past sheep were being moved from one farm to another to boost their subsidy counts, although it is accepted that this practice is no longer as widespread as it once was.

Discrepancies in northern subsidy claims were discovered in cull areas during the FMD crisis. Of the 199 farmers in the North who claimed compensation for FMD, 106 had fewer sheep than they claimed for, while 17 had no sheep at all. The discrepancies were worse in south Armagh where, of 93 farmers claiming sheep annual premiums, 58 had fewer than required to meet the quota and 16 had no sheep at all. The shortfall in the area amounted to 3,187 sheep. Similar Southern discrepancies were noted in the Cooley peninsula. Of the 257 farmers who had applied for ewe premium there, 106 had fewer sheep than they claimed for. 51 farmers had a deficit of 20% or greater, nearly two-thirds of whom were living within three kilometres of the border.

Under EU regulations penalties are applied where it is found that the number of sheep applied for are not maintained. There is a sliding penalty scale, but if the difference between the number of ewes declared or the quota held, whichever is the lower, is greater than 20 % of the number found, no premium is payable for that year. It is understood that approximately half the discrepancies discovered were shortfalls caused by routine casualties in the days before the cull and were within tolerance limits under EU law. Market opportunities during the retention period could have provided an incentive for farmers to sell younger eligible ewes rather than wait for the Ewe Premium. The mistake these farmers made was in not notifying their respective Departments about the change in their sheep numbers. While DAFRD officials have not completed their comprehensive investigation of the 2001 Ewe Premium Scheme in the South, their evidence to date suggests a relatively low level of fraud in the scheme. There is already a close liaison between the two Departments of Agriculture in terms of policing the EU Sheep Subsidy Scheme. For the past six years the authorities in both jurisdictions have had the same application period (i.e. same retention period) and field inspectors have tried to co-ordinate their visits to farms along the border.

The recent spread of FMD to Northern Ireland through imported sheep has underlined the dangerous links between fraud and animal health, and the way in which this can jeopardise the viability of the whole industry. However the illegal practices appear to be committed by a small number of individuals. For example in 1999-2000, of the 80,000 claims for producer subsidy that were subject to inspection in the North, less than three hundred (0.35%) were referred for investigation. The DARD Accounting Officer's estimate of annual fraud in Northern Ireland agriculture (at between £240,000 and £480,000), even if it is conservatively based on evidence unearthed during FMD outbreak, pales into insignificance

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beside fraud and error figures for social welfare Income Support payments. A recent report (2001) from the Northern Ireland Assembly's Public Accounts Committee said the level of error and fraud in social welfare Income Support payments was now estimated at £57 million.

It is felt by many in the farming community, North and South, that the Departments should not have publicised the raw subsidy fraud figures before an investigation had been undertaken and people were given the right to justify themselves. They feel that the publication of these figures has meant that the entire farming community, and not just the individuals involved in illegal practices, has been labelled as dishonest. Both Departments have stated that the raw figures were published in the interests of openness and transparency and that at no stage were individual names published.

On 22 November 2001 Minister Rodgers announced her intention to tighten the Sheep Annual Premium regulations for 2002 after it became evident that some farmers who had claimed for sheep they did not have would escape prosecution because of loopholes in current Northern Ireland legislation. 12 farmers from south Armagh who had claimed subsidies for non-existent animals had their cases referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, but Mrs Rodgers said a technical deficiency in the law meant that prosecutions could not go ahead.

2.6 The agri-monetary system

Politicians have long believed that there is a need to intervene in the agricultural sector either to pursue price stability or to protect farm incomes. Until 1993 there was a currency adjustment mechanism ('Green Rates') for agricultural trade within the EU, fixing farm prices according to the Common Agricultural Policy. This meant that, in principle, the price of each product was comparable throughout the EU. In order to iron out currency-related distortions in cross-border farm trade, a complicated system of levies and subsidies known as the Monetary Compensatory Amounts (MCAs) was calculated by the EU on a continuing basis in line with the movements of the various intra-EU exchange rates.

The introduction of the EU Single Market in January 1993 saw the abolition of the MCAs system, and removed one of the main incentives for smuggling livestock across the borders: subsidy claims.

The system of green currencies came to an end on 31 December 1998, with the introduction of the Euro as the basis of support payments and price calculations. For the UK, Sweden and Denmark, the three Member States not participating in the Euro, compensation was allowed under the agri-monetary system. At times the UK Government has been reluctant to accept this compensation because the UK Exchequer and taxpayer bear 71 per cent of EU agri-monetary





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compensation claims as a result of the 1984 Fontainebleau agreement negotiated by the former UK Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher.

At frequent intervals since January 1999 the UK Government has been pressed to accept compensation available from the European Commission, with British farmers seeing the agri-monetary payments as simply a way of ensuring that they receive the money intended for them. On 26 February 2001 the UK Agriculture Minister announced that most of the £152 million emergency aid for the livestock sector as a result of the FMD outbreak would come from the EU agri-monetary compensation then available. However UK farmers argue that the agri-monetary compensation was designed specifically to compensate farmers for the weakness of the Euro, and was already sorely needed regardless of the FMD crisis. Further targeted help is now required, they stress.

In theory, UK farmers should be compensated for the weakness of the Euro, which means that their Sterling prices are 20% higher than their Eurozone competitors. In practice, Northern Ireland farmers feel that they are forced to absorb part of the currency differential, thus further lowering their incomes. This provides another incentive to engage in smuggling. This will continue to be a problem until the two currencies are again equalised through the Euro. A recent report by the Economic and Social Affairs Committee of the British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body (February 2000) found Northern Ireland farmers to be strongly in favour of entry into the Euro. As one leading Northern farmer said: "The longer that Sterling stays strong, the poorer the agricultural community will be".

[DARD comments: This comes close to being another apologia for illegal activities and, as stated earlier, we do not agree. The statement that the Sterling/Euro issue will "continue to be a problem until the 2 currencies are equalised through the Euro" does not stand scrutiny. When and if the UK adopts the Euro, the exchange rate will merely be fixed, rather than being equalised. If the UK adopted the Euro tomorrow, the weakness of the latter compared to the Pound would simply be permanent.]

2.7 Animal traceability

The main lesson from the FMD crisis concerns the movement of livestock and the importance of being able to trace food sources in order to control disease. The FMD outbreak was first discovered at an abattoir in Essex on 19 February 2001. On the same day a livestock dealer based in the Republic of Ireland imported sheep from England through Northern Ireland, apparently intending to transport them to a meat plant in Co Roscommon. The sheep were stationed at a farm in south Armagh, on the northern side of the border. Most of the sheep were subsequently moved to the Co Roscommon meat plant, but those that remained were the source of the first outbreak of FMD in the North – and possibly the indirect source of the only outbreak of FMD in the South.

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It emerged that the trucks taking sheep to Northern Ireland from Britain were weighed in order to ascertain the number of sheep on board rather than by carrying out a count, which is the normal practice. The difficulties of tracing the 'missing' sheep were thus compounded by the fact that the exact number of sheep was unknown, the estimates rising to 60 from an initial figure of 21. This was not a reassuring prospect for tracing sheep that had travelled to Ireland in the critical period before the outbreak in the UK. It was over two months after the transactions took place that criminal investigations led to a tax demand being served on the dealer in question, although this happened as soon as he returned from the UK to his Republic of Ireland domicile.

Northern Ireland has had a flock-based sheep tagging system in place for a number of years. There was no system in place within the South as past plans by the Department to introduce an individual sheep tagging system had been blocked by the main farming union in the South, the Irish Farmers' Association, for various reasons. Therefore it was impossible to track movements of sheep on the island on a North-South basis. This proved to be critical in the race to identify sheep which had been smuggled across the border.

While the movement of sheep between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (in either direction) did not require health certification before the crisis, the animals had to be identified with a tag or tattoo showing the holding code or flock number of the consigning premises. It was recognised that these ear tags were often removed to facilitate free movement within the island. There is now full EU directive certification for sheep moving across the border in either direction.

A new national sheep tagging and traceability system was introduced in the South on 21 June 2001 as a reaction to the FMD crisis, and sheep are now individually tagged prior to movement. From 15 December 2001 all sheep in the South must be individually tagged on the farm. An individual ID system for sheep in the North is also being considered.

[DAFRD comments: By whom was it recognised that ear tags were often removed to facilitate free movement within the island? The statement is an over-generalisation about a problem which was discovered in a few instances only. As a matter of fact it cannot be assumed that this was the norm.]

2.8 Smuggling

There is a long tradition of smuggling, especially in the border region, which is seen by many there as stealing from the rich to feed the poor. It is considered to be only human nature that farmers would try and work the system for their own financial gain, particularly at a time of hardship caused by sharp falls in farm incomes.





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However dealers may be better suited than farmers to take advantage of any price fluctuations between North and South. A dealer is flexible and can trade in whatever commodity he/she can make a profit margin in the short-term. The vital role played by dealers in smuggling livestock into the South was uncovered during the search to locate all sheep imported from Britain to the South since 1 February 2001. On 26 April the livestock dealer who brought infected sheep from England to the farm in Meigh, south Armagh, apparently intending to transport them to a meat plant in the South, was charged with four counts of illegally importing sheep into the Republic and 10 revenue offences following a joint investigation between DAFRD's Special Investigation Unit, the Republic's Criminal Assets Bureau and the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Legislation was passed in the South on 9 March to control dealers by making it law that animals would have to be retained for 30 days after purchase. In addition, all dealers in the South were required to register with DAFRD by 17 August, when they were issued with photographic identity cards.

The difficulty of securing reliable information became a recurrent theme of Ministers' statements and other political pronouncements on the crisis. On 27 March the Republic's Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Walsh, referred to the "long history of smuggling and illegal activity" in border areas that meant officials in his department were "getting scraps of information". The North's Minister for Agriculture, Mrs. Rodgers, told the Northern Ireland Assembly a week later that tackling the crisis was made more difficult by the absence of information, or the presence of false information, on animal movements.

However the information passed to confidential hotlines established during the FMD crisis indicated a decline in tolerance for this smuggling behaviour, and a change in the situation where it had been impossible to get any information on smugglers within their agricultural communities.

2.9 Official procedures

It is the opinion of many Northern farmers that irrespective of the illegal North-South importation practices, FMD should never have reached Northern Ireland. Some farmers believe wrongly that existing regulations stipulate that any sheep 'imported' into the North must either be certified 'direct for slaughter' or, if intended for any other destination, must be quarantined for six months. DARD says that such sheep do not have to be quarantined "as a general rule". It also says that the only sheep that are subject to such quarantine are those that are not Maedi Visna accredited.

The Dáil Public Accounts Committee has suggested that the Department of Agriculture in the Republic (DAFRD) had turned a blind eye to smuggling. Irish vets, who work in all meat plants in the South, must have noticed the holes in the ears of the sheep they were inspecting where the ear tags from UK or Northern

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Ireland had been removed. DAFRD maintains strongly that its vets' job is to ensure that the carcasses were fit for consumption, and the holes could have been from genuine farm identification tags. However without a market for this smuggled livestock, there would have been no demand for the illegal practices to continue. Bearing in mind in the words of the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Walsh, that "agriculture is the most legislated activity on the island", it would be important to look at the enforcement of the Republic's legislation in this area.

It is evident that the different import regimes on both sides of the border exert a major influence on the disease free status of the island, and this influence must be addressed in determining and implementing agricultural policy. Indeed the influence of the border has been considered in the development of some recent policy-making decisions. For example, the need to avoid possible distortion between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland heavily influenced the recent DARD decision to top-up the heifer premium from the beef national envelope, in line with a similar decision in the Republic. This reflected the consensus view of the Northern Ireland agricultural industry and the Northern Ireland Assembly's Agriculture Committee.

[DAFRD comments: The whole tenor of the second paragraph in this section suggests that it could have been possible to determine from the examination of sheep at meat factories that they were indeed smuggled animals from Northern Ireland from whom the tags had been removed. This is not and could not be the case. Not only are the holes and other marks in ears associated with genuine farm identification tags, but also with the practise of many farmers of marking sheep's ears for a variety of purposes by cutting notches in those ears. No presumption whatsoever could be drawn by any officer enforcing the law in relation to holes in the ears of sheep at lairages at slaughter houses.]





Constraints and Co-operation

In considering the prospects for an all-island policy emerging in the animal health area – and the constraints to and benefits of such a co-operative policy – there are many pointers from the handling of the FMD crisis in Ireland.

3.1 Northern Ireland as a region of the UK

On 21 February 2001, after discussions with London and Brussels, the Northern Ireland Minister for Agriculture, Mrs. Rodgers, agreed that Northern Ireland should be included in an EU plan to impose a temporary (7 day) prohibition on intra-Community and third country trade in live animals, meat, milk and other products from the UK. Minister Rodgers stated that this was a normal precautionary practice for FMD control purposes and if Northern Ireland was free of the infection then the controls would be reviewed in early March. It is not known what pressure Minister Rodgers came under to include Northern Ireland in this prohibition order. At the same time, in an unprecedented move, she placed a temporary ban on the importation into Northern Ireland of these same products from Britain until the origin of the FMD outbreak was established.

DAFRD officials in Dublin say that if Northern Ireland had been classified as exempt from this EU prohibition order, then an all-Ireland “fortress approach” could have been adopted. By choosing to be included in the EU prohibition, the North had effectively ruled out this option.

[DARD comments: Our Minister came under no pressure as such to join the UK ban. We simply had no grounds for attempting to secure any other outcome. I have to say that the views attributed to Dublin colleagues are difficult to understand. They seem to imply that, had Northern Ireland not been included in the ban on UK exports, existing North/South trade could have continued. If that is what this Section means, it is very odd indeed given that, by the time the EU ban on UK exports had been imposed, the foot and mouth disease virus was already circulating, at least in Northern Ireland. Quite how a “fortress Ireland” approach could by that stage have helped in controlling FMD is far from clear, and indeed all the evidence suggests that the absence of border controls would have exacerbated the situation.]

3.2 The border as a constraint

In several episodes of the crisis, the role of the border as a political and cultural constraint on the development of coherent policy in both states was highlighted. The following are some examples:

- The authorities in the South focused their control measures on the border, including the deployment of several thousand soldiers and gardai. These controls were put in



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place on 21 February 2001 before the first outbreak in south Armagh (Meigh) and were reinforced on 22 April following the second Northern outbreak in Co. Tyrone (Ardboe), also a border county (although the outbreak was further away from the border in this instance). These controls represented the largest Southern security effort in controlling cross-border movement since the 1970s. On 28 February, a spokesman for the Department of Agriculture in Dublin declared he was 'confident....[the] disease could be kept out of the Republic.' Thus the relevant boundaries were defined as being those of the political jurisdiction rather than the island of Ireland. (The specific strain of virus which was implicated in the FMD outbreaks in the UK and Ireland was not prone to travelling long distances by air).

- Northern unionist politicians accused authorities in the South of understating the incidence of FMD in their jurisdiction and of maintaining inadequate controls. Rev. Ian Paisley, chair of the Agriculture Committee in the Northern Ireland Assembly, called on 23 March for the British Army to close the border and for Northern Ireland to dissociate itself from the South's efforts to achieve exemption from European Union restrictions arising from the FMD crisis.
- Some politicians in the South accused the UK and Northern authorities of not implementing effective border controls and the UK authorities of responding inadequately to the crisis there. Mr. John Ellis, a former meat processor who is TD for the border area of Sligo-Leitrim, accused the Northern Department of Agriculture of helping to spread FMD. Ministers of State Mr. Hugh Byrne and Mr. Eamon O'Cuiv were among those who charged the British Government with failing to tackle the crisis seriously. The Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, raised with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, the need for tighter controls at UK ports when they met in the margins of the European summit in Stockholm on 23-24 March.
- While the authorities in the two states agreed to co-ordinate their precautionary livestock culls in the area between the Meigh and Proleek outbreaks, the cull on the Northern side of the border was delayed for 48 hours by disagreements between local farmers and DARD, and by difficulties faced by the security forces operating in the restricted area, which was in strongly republican south Armagh. Affected south Armagh farmers were reported in the media to be seeking immunity from prosecution in exchange for information on smuggled sheep, and to be abusing the cull by infiltrating low-quality sheep from outside the area in order to gain compensation. This was later denied by officials from both Departments of Agriculture. DARD stresses that it sealed off the perimeter of the cull zone to prevent such infiltration, and that if such infiltration had taken place they would have expected the number of sheep present to have matched more closely the number on which EU payments were claimed.
- Restrictions on social activities differed considerably in the two jurisdictions. An Expert Advisory Group was appointed in the Republic by Minister Walsh on 9 March to advise on the categorisation of such activities and on appropriate controls. Membership of this group, which was chaired by a leading veterinary academic, Professor Michael Monaghan, included non-civil service technical

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and professional experts as well as senior civil servants. Subsequent statements on the imposition and relaxation of social restrictions were of a more formal nature. No corresponding structure was put in place in Northern Ireland, where the restrictions on social activities were graded by a cross-departmental group of civil servants.

3.3 The experience of co-operation

3.3.1 North-South departmental co-operation

The long history of co-operation between the two Departments of Agriculture, North and South, was referred to on numerous occasions throughout the FMD crisis. The two Departments, through the respective Chief Veterinary Officers, were in constant liaison, often on a half-hourly basis, after the threat of the disease became evident on 20 February.

North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Agricultural Sector meetings

Prior to the FMD outbreak, the two Ministers of Agriculture had already held two North/South Ministerial Council meetings in agriculture sectoral format. In November 2000, at the second of these, the NSMC endorsed proposals to formalise liaison arrangements at official level on animal health matters. These proposals included:

- the establishment of a Strategic Steering Group which would replace the existing arrangements to co-ordinate animal health policy on the island, and would make regular reports to the NSMC on animal health co-operation together with recommendations for policy and/or operational decisions;
- the establishment of civil service Policy Working Groups which would consider animal health policy issues which apply to the whole island. Initially working groups were due to be created to explore eight different areas:
 1. Import/export of live animals and their products, and all EU matters in the veterinary/animal health field of interest to the two Departments
 2. Bovine TB/brucellosis
 3. TSEs (e.g. BSE in cattle and Scrapie in sheep)
 4. Veterinary medicines
 5. Zoonoses and Exotic/Novel Diseases (i.e. animal diseases that are transmittable to humans)
 6. Animal welfare
 7. Animal health schemes
 8. Disease surveillance;
- continued co-operation in operational aspects of schemes.

The Council also requested that the new Strategic Steering Group prepare an initial report on animal health on the island of Ireland with a view to the development by March 2002 of joint strategies for the improvement of animal health on both sides





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of the border. It is somewhat surprising that, as of late October 2001, key players in the farming organisations, North and South, did not appear to know about the plans or the progress of this Strategic Steering Group or the Policy Working Groups in any detail. DARD says: "No doubt the industry will be invited to contribute as the work of these bodies progresses, but we are not yet at that stage."

A special meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (Agriculture Sector) was held in Dublin on 6 April 2001. This meeting was exclusively devoted to the FMD crisis and the efforts to combat its spread on the island of Ireland. Officials agreed that sustained co-operation between the two administrations was essential to reduce the risk of the further spread of the disease. It was also agreed that the two Departments would:

- develop a strategy for the control of animal movements on the island of Ireland drawing on work done in both jurisdictions; and
- in light of the experience gained from the FMD outbreaks, consider the means of prevention, containment and eradication of future epizootic outbreaks on the island.

A fourth meeting of the NSMC in Agriculture Sector, held in Co. Louth on 4 October 2001, referred to the progress of the Strategic Steering Group, in particular in relation to harmonised sheep identification arrangements on both sides of the border. In addition, the Council considered a position report on the establishment of the Policy Working Groups and noted the establishment of an additional group to consider the cross-border dimension of fraud. The difficulties in progressing this work due to the FMD crisis were noted and a revised target date was set for production of joint strategies. However it was also noted that the all-island approach to controlling the FMD outbreak had minimised the spread and impact of the disease in both parts of Ireland.

Two of the original eight working groups have met following the FMD outbreak. During the first week in October the Disease Surveillance Working Group met to discuss individual sheep ID and tracking systems. The British Government is keen to wait for EU trials on electronic tagging to be completed in approximately 18-24 months. DARD is still deliberating over the type of animal ID system to introduce in Northern Ireland. There is no official timescale yet on implementing such a tagging system, but Minister Rodgers announced her commitment to such a process in August.

One of the possibilities being considered is that Northern Ireland will implement the same manual tagging system as was introduced in the South in June 2001. The two systems would essentially be run in parallel but with mutual access to records. While this may appear to be an ideal solution to ensure traceability of sheep on an all-island basis, officials from both Departments were keen to highlight certain impracticalities. For example, the livestock sectors in the two jurisdictions are essentially in competition with each other, so mutual access to

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records would not be justified. A second possibility being considered is to adopt the same approach as the rest of the UK: to wait for the EU trials to finish and then implement an electronic tagging system. No matter what option is adopted, officials in both jurisdictions do concede that there are converging policies in this area.

During the second week in October the TSE policy group met to discuss their scrapie eradication plans and the UK Contingency Plan for this disease (it had already met twice in November 2000 and February 2001, immediately before the FMD outbreak). In a statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 22 October, Minister Rodgers referred to agreement having been reached on an all-Ireland strategy for the eradication of scrapie in sheep, and to discussions on TB and brucellosis. An initial meeting of the additional policy working group on fraud was also held in Belfast during October to look at potential fraudulent activities and border issues.

Prior to the outbreak of FMD, the two Departments were preparing animal health status reports on their respective jurisdictions. These reports are now being revisited.

NSMC and emergency situations

During a Northern Ireland Assembly debate on 5 March 2001, Minister Rodgers was asked if the absence of NSMC meetings had inhibited her officials from dealing with FMD as effectively as possible. She stated that the links with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (DAFRD), which had been established under the auspices of the NSMC, were very important for the long-term maintenance of animal health on the island. On the issue of short-term solutions, however, she said that no NSMC meeting had been held in the middle of the crisis for the simple reason that it would have been "daft" for officials to spend time preparing the papers necessary for setting up such a meeting when they should be dealing with the emergency in a practical manner.

In July 2000 an Irish Government decision had established North-South co-ordination units in all Southern government departments. The Northern Ireland Departments have a more informal system, with key people in each department acting as liaison officers on North-South co-operation.

While fairly regular meetings between the two Departments of Agriculture did take place prior to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, officials in both Departments have noted that the new arrangements under the auspices of the NSMC have given such meetings a renewed energy. The new system is considered by civil servants to be heavily bureaucratic, with its elaborate choreography designed to ensure full transparency, but it has given Ministerial backing to cross-border working practices so that people are now obliged to work together. The objective of the North/South Ministerial Council is to progress





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from agreed principles of co-operation to the reality of working co-operatively against a background of mutual agreement. This involves co-ordinating two systems (North and South) that are operating at two different levels (EU region and EU member state), something that takes enormous effort to make happen in an effective, co-ordinated way.

When asked on 26 March about the establishment of an all-Ireland FMD task force, Minister Rodgers replied that sometimes people believed that the answer to everything was to set up a committee. She said that both governments on the island were doing what they needed to do to deal with the immediate emergency situation in both jurisdictions. She stressed that both Departments were working closely together and that therefore it could be said that there was a task force in all but name, in the sense that the North-South institutions were working effectively.

3.3.2 North-South farming union co-operation

Traditionally farmers unions and other agricultural interests in Northern Ireland have directed their attention to influencing Westminster policy-making. The FMD crisis saw the strengthening of relationships between the new devolved administration in Belfast and the key agricultural players in the North.

During the height of the crisis the Northern Minister, Mrs. Rodgers, chaired a weekly (and occasionally daily) series of meetings with key organisations associated with Northern Ireland's agri-food industry. Included in the talks were the banks, retailers and meat plants, the Northern Ireland Grain Trade Association, the Northern Ireland Auctioneers' Association, the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) and the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association (NIAPA). It was this group that dealt with practical problems, such as milk sales, arising from the ongoing FMD restrictions. These meetings aside, key representatives from UFU and NIAPA were in constant contact with DARD officials throughout the crisis. In discussions and interviews for this research, many farmers said UFU and NIAPA representatives were much more efficient and knowledgeable about the crisis than DARD civil servants, and thus became their main source of information during it. The UFU, in particular, was seen to occupy a unique role during the FMD crisis in linking with Belfast, Dublin, London and Brussels. This meant a hectic schedule for the UFU leaders, but it enabled them to see the broad picture from a North-South, East-West and European viewpoint.

On 3 April, just over a month after the Meigh outbreak, the main farming organisations in the two states, the UFU and the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), met to consider co-ordination of their policies. They called jointly for an "island of Ireland" approach to animal health, and for the branding of animal food products as of "Ireland origin", whether produced in Northern Ireland or the Republic.

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Both the IFA and the UFU have voiced their approval for an all-Ireland approach to animal health. The cross-border Food Safety Promotion Board has welcomed the joint working group on all-island animal health status announced by the IFA and UFU. This group will pursue the agreed objective of the two organizations: the highest possible animal health status for the island of Ireland.

Representatives from the UFU animal health committee met with their counterparts from the IFA on 24 October 2001 to discuss a wide range of issues relating to cross-border animal health. In the wake of the FMD crisis the two farming organisations say they are particularly anxious to ensure that bio-security on the island is maintained at its highest level. At this meeting the two unions exchanged knowledge and expertise on tackling the sources and spread of TB and brucellosis; reviewed the BSE situation, which is having a negative impact on the profitability of the beef sector in both jurisdictions; and agreed to work together to resist the “unnecessary and additional regulations” outlined in the recent EU Commission proposal that all veterinary medicines for food producing animals should be made prescription only.

3.3.3 North-South veterinary bodies co-operation

In January 2001 four of the five³ main veterinary bodies in the Republic of Ireland merged to form one body: Veterinary Ireland. This was important in that the veterinary profession in the South was henceforth better co-ordinated to deal with the FMD crisis.

Veterinary Ireland convened a Veterinary/Farming Forum on 15 March which was attended by a number of designated representatives from Veterinary Ireland, DAFRD, the Irish Farmers' Association, the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association, the Irish Cattle Traders and Stockowners' Association and Macra na Feirme, as well as Professor Michael Monaghan, chairman of the Irish Government's Expert Advisory Group on FMD. This forum was held to exchange views and to identify measures or co-operative initiatives which would help to further contain the spread or impact of FMD.

The forum reconvened on 26 March 2001 following the confirmation of the FMD outbreak in Co. Louth to discuss the practical implications of measures which had emerged from meetings of the Expert Advisory Group (22/23 March) and the EU Standing Veterinary Committee which had also met on 23 March. The primary purpose of the second forum was to co-ordinate further practical responses by vets and farmers at ground level, and to support and reinforce actions taken by

³ On 1 January 2001 the Irish Veterinary Association, the Irish Veterinary Union, the Irish Companion Animal Veterinary Association and the Veterinary Officers Association merged to form Veterinary Ireland. As of November 2001 the Local Authority Veterinary Officers Association was still considering whether it would also become part of this unified veterinary body.





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the Government at national level. This forum process provided a mechanism for farmers and vets to put their individual and collective views directly to the chairman of the FMD Expert Advisory Group.

The FMD crisis presented a unique opportunity for farming, veterinary and DAFRD representatives in the Republic to work closely together. It is rare to find the heads of all the major agricultural bodies in the South working together around the same table. However the main farming union, the IFA, did not attend the second forum and this was regretted by the other organisations as indicating a lack of interest in co-operation.

Representatives from the two main veterinary bodies in the North, the Association of Veterinary Surgeons Practising in Northern Ireland (AVSPNI) and the North of Ireland Veterinary Association (NIVA), met with officials from Veterinary Ireland in June 2001 to discuss the possibility of forging closer links between the veterinary bodies on the island. It is generally accepted that the main veterinary policies in both jurisdictions are very similar, with the majority of policy decisions being taken at EU level. It is the manner in which these policies are interpreted and practically implemented which sees differences emerge.

One possibility discussed at this meeting was that of Veterinary Ireland becoming 'Veterinary All-Ireland', with vets from Northern Ireland becoming associate members of the Southern organisation. When the Veterinary Ireland animal health committee, one of five interest groups in the new Southern veterinary structure, was being established in early 2000, the president of the NIVA accepted an invitation to become a member, thus ensuring that its discussions would benefit from a Northern perspective. However, this committee was not active during the FMD crisis.

Veterinary Ireland's animal health committee has since identified a number of areas on which it will focus its attention over the coming months:

- examining ways of maintaining high animal health standards in a market which allows free movement of animals between countries;
- updating policy in relation to BSE, tuberculosis, brucellosis and other major diseases;
- promoting research that will develop a database of 'normal' or 'background' disease levels in the Irish animal population.

3.4 Evidence of cross-border co-operation during the FMD crisis

There were key moments throughout the crisis which demanded North-South co-operation, and these moments allow us to appraise the level of practical co-operation that did occur. Specific examples are given below where co-operation played a valuable and practical role at departmental level, at farmers union level and at a local level.

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3.4.1 Traceability of sheep (departmental level)

One of the main thrusts of cross-border co-operation involved the tracing of sheep, which had been brought into Northern Ireland from Britain and then illegally diverted to farms in the North or destinations in the Republic of Ireland.

Once FMD had been confirmed in Britain, DARD staff carried out checks to establish the destination of all susceptible species (not just sheep) imported from GB with effect from 15 January 2001. DVOs were instructed to commence this tracing work on Friday, 23 February. Movement restrictions were applied to destination premises and an immediate visit by DARD veterinary officers undertaken. This proactive tracing detected the first outbreak of FMD at a very early stage and prevented many more outbreaks on the island of Ireland.

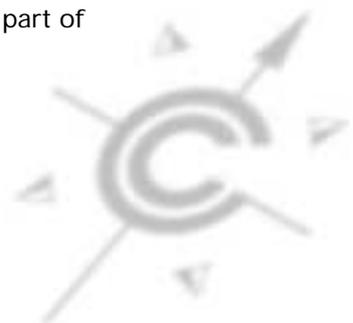
DARD inquiries were hampered by the lack of information from people involved, who were afraid of incriminating themselves. However the Northern authorities rejected attempts to plead immunity in return for information on the destination of sheep. The difficulties of tracing the 'missing' sheep were compounded by the fact that the exact number of sheep was unknown, with media reports estimating these rising to 60 from an initial figure of 21. On 23 April Minister Rodgers stated that 19 cases of illegal importation into Northern Ireland were being investigated by the RUC and DARD's Investigation Unit. She said that during the period 11-19 January alone 2,200 sheep were brought into Northern Ireland legally but traded illegally.

The most up-to-date figures for the Meigh sheep are outlined by DARD in the following paragraphs.

The DARD tracing exercise so far has shown that a consignment of sheep, imported from England on 19 February for immediate slaughter, had not been confirmed at the listed destination. Subsequent investigations implicated premises in Meigh, Co. Armagh which were visited by a DARD official late on Sunday, 25 February. Twenty-one sheep on the farm were isolated and inspected by a Veterinarian. At an inspection on 27 February, FMD lesions were detected in four of the animals. Samples of the lesions were forwarded to the Reference Laboratory in Pirbright and FMD was subsequently confirmed.

The infected farm was small, consisting of a barnyard and field of less than seven acres. There were no other susceptible livestock on the premises and no apparent direct contact between the 21 sheep and livestock on neighbouring farms.

Backward testing of the infected sheep revealed that they were part of a consignment of 373 that had originated in Scotland and England. The load consisted of three groups, two of which were purchased in Longtown Market, Cumbria on 15 February, while the third had been held at farm premises in Penrith. Backward





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tracing from Longtown showed that the infected sheep from a farm in Lancashire had been present in the market on the 15 February and probably infected the group destined for Northern Ireland.

After arrival in the province, the sheep were taken directly to Killeen, Co. Armagh where a group of 71 was unloaded. These were then taken by a different vehicle to a farm in the Republic but eight were subsequently returned to Killeen.

The rest of the imported consignment was taken to Meigh where the sheep were held for approximately 20 hours. Thereafter 248 sheep were taken in two vehicles to an abattoir in Athleague in Co. Roscommon, while others were removed, during the following week, to various premises in the Republic. The sheep sent to the South were traced to four premises in Counties Meath, Laois and Louth. These sheep and all in-contact animals were examined, tested, slaughtered and destroyed. All such tests were negative for foot-and-mouth disease.

Fourteen animals were left at the end and these, together with seven sheep already on the premises, formed the group examined by the Veterinary Officer on 26 and 27 February. The 21 sheep at Meigh and the eight at Killeen were destroyed at the respective sites. DARD investigations into this matter are still underway, however, and it is possible that the above understanding will change further.

DAFRD officials in the Republic also traced imports which were considered to constitute a FMD risk: UK imports from 1 February, French imports from 16 February and Dutch imports from 20 February. However their investigations concentrated on the illegal diversion of sheep brought into Northern Ireland from Britain for immediate slaughter to other destinations in the North and their subsequent transport across the border. Co-operation between the authorities identified a number of such consignments, including the consignment from northern England which caused the initial outbreak in Meigh in south Armagh. Over 1,500 tracings of imported (legal and illegal) animals from the UK (GB and Northern Ireland) resulted in the culling of more than 5,500 imported and in-contact animals in the Republic. Approximately 140 suspect cases of illegal importation from the North were investigated by DAFRD's Special Investigation Unit with assistance from the Garda Síochána's National Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Prosecutions are being prepared in a number of cases. Where imported animals had been slaughtered at an abattoir in the South, tracing of personnel, livestock and vehicle movement was undertaken to determine if the disease had been spread to other farms.

There is no doubt that the two Departments co-operated at the highest level in tracing animal movements, even to the extent that a joint team of officials travelled to England to interview one livestock dealer.

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3.4.2 Extended cull in South Armagh (farmers union level)

Following the outbreaks of FMD in Meigh in south Armagh (1 March) and Proleek in north Louth (22 March), both Departments announced their intention to carry out a precautionary cull of sheep in the area around and between the locations of the two outbreaks, on both sides of the border. The rationale was the creation of a firebreak around both outbreaks to prevent the spread of any further infection in the area.

Cross-border negotiations played an important role in ensuring that this extended cull of animals in south Armagh went ahead. Representatives from the two main farmers unions in the North, the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association, and the Irish Farmers' Association in the South, met representatives from the local farmers group in south Armagh on 27 March to open up communications after local concerns had halted the commencement of the cull. The local community was angry that the North's Department of Agriculture had begun preparations for a mass burial grave in the grounds of a local tourist site without any consultation.

Throughout the FMD crisis in Northern Ireland the farmers' unions played a major role in communicating and negotiating how departmental policies could be implemented on the ground. For example, Minister Rodgers referred to their involvement as being crucial in finding a resolution of the problems in south Armagh.

Here the personal friendship between the UFU deputy president, Mr. John Gilliland, and the IFA County Louth chairman, Mr. Raymond O'Malley, played a key role in defusing a potentially damaging situation. At the request of the UFU, Mr. O'Malley was included in cull discussions. Traditionally in south Armagh there have been strong links with north Louth and there are numerous cross-border farms in the area.

The inclusion of an IFA official immediately dispensed with any hearsay concerning higher compensation payments to farmers in the South, as Mr. O'Malley was able to state categorically what was happening in the extended cull in north Louth. It was in the Irish Government's interest to ensure that the south Armagh cull went ahead in order to eliminate as far as possible any risk to the EU-agreed regionalisation policy which had isolated north Louth in the Republic. Similarly, Minister Rodgers stated in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 2 April that while the decision to cull had come from the two Departments and not from the EU, the EU Commission had made it clear that concerns over whether the virus was still present in the province would be a crucial issue in deciding on regionalisation for the North.

An acceptable method was agreed at these negotiations for the disposal of animals which was similar to that already in





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place in the South. It was agreed that mass burial pits would not be used to dispose of dead animals, but that they would be transported in sealed containers to a rendering plant in Belfast.

During the discussions reference was made to the possibility of using the Ravensdale abattoir, which was handling the cull just over the border in Louth. This abattoir was situated within the north Louth exclusion zone and adjacent to the south Armagh exclusion zone. The option of using the Ravensdale plant was never officially discussed with the Southern authorities. The EU Standing Veterinary Committee ruling had banned all animal movements out of Northern Ireland (as part of the UK). It would have taken too long to apply for a derogation of this ruling to allow animals from the North to be taken to the Ravensdale plant.

3.4.3 Day-to-day logistical problems (ground level)

There were a number of 'on the ground' logistical problems which cross-border co-operation was able to overcome. For example, the SDLP Fermanagh/South Tyrone MLA, Mr. Tommy Gallagher, called on Minister Walsh to remove some of the more "absurd" restrictions that were put in place at the border during the crisis. Examples of inconvenience included cases of children not being allowed to take sweets or chocolate across the border into the South; parents of infants being asked to awaken them and take them out of their safety seats in order to have their feet dipped, and people on their way to work being searched daily and told not to have butter on their sandwiches. Other examples cited were of people from the South being prohibited from taking produce such as milk or apple tarts back to their homes across the border, even though such produce originated in the Republic. It was reported that towns and villages along the northern side of the border experienced considerable reductions in trade as a result of such restrictions.

There were also numerous reports from the Northern farming unions about the significant difficulties experienced in moving materials (e.g. poultry meat, vegetables, milk powder and mushroom compost) that were not affected by the export ban to the South. Minister Rodgers announced in mid-March that the main problems caused by this "over diligence" had been resolved through discussions with Minister Walsh. DAFRD officials stated that a blanket ban on foodstuffs had been initiated because of the speed needed to react to the FMD threat (such a ban was much simpler to implement than training their staff in specific tasks). A report by the EU Food and Veterinary Office in late June reminded member states that it was not acceptable to impose controls on trade in agricultural products beyond those laid down in EU legislation.

Another example of cross-border co-operation on the ground was the agreement by vets whose work straddled the border to restrict their activities to one side of the border after a request from the Republic's Department of Agriculture.

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The importance of co-ordinating actions across the border and being aware of the practical implications of such actions was highlighted by an example on the south Armagh border. In order to enforce the ban on Northern food imports to the South, a checkpoint was placed by DAFRD on the main Dublin to Belfast road on the Louth-Armagh border. Inevitably this resulted in long delays for motorists, with reported tailbacks of up to seven kilometres. In an effort to avoid these delays, a large volume of traffic diverted off the main road using secondary routes through south Armagh. Thus in the days before final arrangements were made to cordon off the area around the infected farm at Meigh, this largely cross-border traffic was passing less than 100 yards from Ireland's only outbreak of FMD.





The central thrust of policy by both governments, North and South, was to keep the disease out of their respective jurisdictions and thereafter to contain it within the areas of the outbreak. On 22 February the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) proposed that the FMD crisis should be tackled on an all-island basis. Instead, the Departments of Agriculture in the two jurisdictions worked separately but with a high level of cross-border co-operation. DAFRD officials have highlighted the decision on 21 February to include Northern Ireland as part of the UK in the EU prohibition on intra-Community and third-country trade in live animals, meat, milk and other products as the factor which made it impossible to consider an all-Ireland approach to protecting the island from the disease. However DARD officials stress that by the time the IFA made its call on 22 February the FMD virus had already been imported some 3 days previously so those calls were to some extent already too late. If DARD had made the assumption that the FMD virus had not been imported and had not adopted the approaches that it did there is little doubt that the outcome would have been much worse for both jurisdictions, with infection moving back and forth across an uncontrolled border.

The fact of having two different systems working side by side provides an opportunity for comparing the effectiveness of different responses to the same animal health crisis. It is important to note that actions taken in one jurisdiction were sometimes influenced by those in the other jurisdiction. Some in the farming community now ask if this could be done on a continuing and more structured basis in the animal health area.

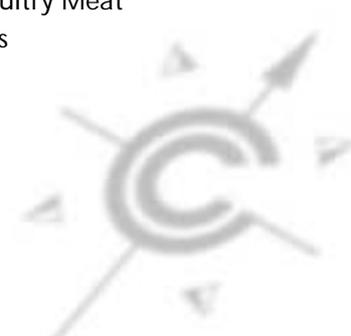
The following section reviews the approach of both jurisdictions to managing the FMD outbreak by looking at the management structures, the contingency plans and the control measures in both jurisdictions.

4.1 Resources

4.1.1 Management resources

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), answerable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through the Minister for Agriculture, Mrs Rodgers, is responsible for matters relating to FMD in the North. In relation to the involvement of the police and army in the FMD controls in the North, these forces are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The DARD Veterinary Service comprises 700 staff, including 115 Veterinary Officers and Temporary Veterinary Officers (TVOs), 147 Meat/Poultry Meat Inspectors, 170 field staff and 220 administrative staff, as well as imports inspectors and a central informatics section. Staff employed in the tuberculosis and brucellosis control programmes were also re-deployed to FMD duties when their testing programmes were temporarily suspended. Meat





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Inspectors were used to assist Valuation Officers on roadside checks, in sampling packaging and in cleaning and disinfection. More than 300 staff were drawn from other divisions such as the Agri-food Development Service, the Grants and Subsidies Inspection Division, the Rivers Agency, the Forestry Agency, the Environment and Heritage Service, the Water Service, the Roads Department and the Veterinary Sciences Division.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (DAFRD) is responsible for matters relating to FMD in the Republic. DAFRD employs 367 veterinarians on a full-time basis. This figure includes veterinarians working in laboratories as well as officials employed in meat establishments. 387 Technical Agricultural Officers (TAO) are employed in veterinary public health with an additional 208 TAOs employed in District Veterinary Offices. TAOs are trained to undertake a variety of tasks, including assisting the official vet in the supervision of hygiene in meat establishments, valuation of animals and mapping of herds following tuberculosis or brucellosis outbreaks. In addition, 238 staff (including 37 veterinarians included in the above figure) are employed in the Veterinary Laboratory Services. Personnel were also recruited from a number of other government agencies - e.g. the Customs Service, the Department of Environment and Local Government, Bord Failte - to provide specialist services. In some cases private companies were employed in the cleansing and disinfection of vehicles and rodent control on infected premises.

4.1.2 Other resources

4.1.2a Private Veterinary Practitioners

Both Departments employed additional private vets on a temporary basis. In the Republic private veterinary practitioners provided local knowledge and advice to the Local Disease Control Centre in the Cooley area. In Northern Ireland private veterinary practitioners were employed when the outbreaks in Ardboe, Co. Tyrone and Cushendall, Co. Antrim were confirmed. They were not employed in Meigh.

4.1.2b Police and Army

In the South the Garda Síochána was deployed at 141 border crossings with Northern Ireland, at ports, and at the boundaries of the restricted zones. Gardaí throughout the country were involved in the enforcement of animal movement restrictions. At one stage, 20% of the Garda Síochána's manpower resources were devoted exclusively to FMD control measures. Irish Defence Forces personnel assisted in the establishment and manning of checkpoints and also in the tracking and culling of feral goats and deer in the cull area (Cooley Peninsula).

The initial involvement of the police and army in the North was much more limited. Seven officers from the RUC's police liaison teams were deployed in

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DARD HQ in Belfast and two in Local Epizootic Disease Control Centres. Following the outbreak of FMD in Ardboe, Co. Tyrone on 13 April, 253 troops were deployed in building pyres, loading animals for rendering, advising on potential deep burial sites and provided mapping and imagery support in the form of aerial photographs. DARD has referred to the difficulties faced by the RUC and the army in carrying out FMD duties due to the terrorist threat in some of the infected areas, particularly in south Armagh. However DARD denies that it was unable to police the border because of security concerns and stresses that its priority was the control of ports and airports, neither of which required police or army presence.

In both jurisdictions the police were involved in investigating criminal activity in relation to illegal animal movements and the illegal entry of animals into the island.

4.1.2c Other

In the Republic, Teagasc (Advisory Service for Agriculture) staff were involved in the implementation of the system for issuing permits for animals moving to slaughter. They also provided an advisory and counselling service for farmers. As well as utilising the existing county structure, 20 further advisors were redeployed from other areas of Ireland to work as part of the team in Co. Louth.

A Veterinary Epidemiology and Tuberculosis Investigation Unit had been set up in 1989 in the veterinary department of University College Dublin in conjunction with Teagasc for the investigation of bovine tuberculosis, and is funded and run as a resource continuously available to DAFRD. Its role was subsequently expanded to cover the epidemiological investigation of other significant animal diseases. The epidemiological expertise of the unit and its geographical information system were deployed by the Southern authorities to assist in FMD eradication.

As part of the FMD contingency plan for Northern Ireland, the DARD Veterinary Service maintains an epidemiology team, comprising a group of veterinary officers under the management of the Divisional Veterinary Officer (Epidemiology). This group meets bi-monthly with the express purpose of updating its members on epizootic disease.

4.1.3 Mobilising support

There was early recognition by the Departments of Agriculture, North and South, of the need to mobilise the support of the general public, whose co-operation was vital in terms of dealing with the threat of FMD.





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In both jurisdictions there was a largely positive response from the public and support for the measures being taken, with an expressed sense of national pride in being involved particularly strong in the Republic. While most cultural, sporting and other bodies in both jurisdictions willingly made cancellations, there were examples of major events taking place in the North against the desired wishes of the Department. The most publicised of these was the holding of an ice hockey match against a Welsh team by the Belfast Giants on 26 February, a week after the first FMD outbreak in England and a day before the first confirmed outbreak in Wales. As a British League sporting fixture, the Belfast Giants were acting on advice from the British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in London rather than DARD in Belfast.

Two days after the confirmation of FMD at Proleek (22 March) in the Republic, the Southern authorities decided to hold public briefings in the Co. Louth Local Disease Control Centre every evening at 6 pm. Farming representatives say that this policy of meeting and co-operating with the local communities reassured them that everything possible was being done to control the spread of the disease.

The media played a major role in mobilising support for the cause. Apart from carrying official advice, agricultural correspondents and other journalists in both jurisdictions attended regular briefings by their respective Ministers. It was felt by some interviewees that the freedom of information legislation being implemented in the South played a valuable key part in ensuring that generous and open information was given to members of the press. Minister Walsh and his officials held daily press conferences in Dublin at which they openly addressed journalists' questions and updated the media on the day's events.

There was extensive coverage of all relevant events in most newspapers. Investigative journalists like Sean McConnell of *The Irish Times* played a key role in discovering the extent of illegal practices in the agricultural industry, often to the discomfort of the authorities, and raising the public's awareness of such practices. Interviewees said that the sensationalist coverage of the FMD crisis by the UK media reinforced the determination by both Departments of Agriculture and the media themselves in both jurisdictions to avoid a similar problem in Ireland. The two Departments have paid tribute to the valuable contribution made by the media in communicating their messages to people on the ground.

The findings of a survey commissioned by Agri-Aware, the Republic's food industry awareness body, and carried out by University College Dublin's Rural Development Unit, showed 92% of the general public there commending the state's response to the FMD outbreak. The only equivalent data for Northern Ireland is that provided by the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, which measured the public's view of the credibility of the local agricultural industry by the way it handled the FMD crisis. Simply put, the general public considered that DARD handled the FMD crisis in the North well while the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had mishandled the situation in Britain.

4.2 Contingency planning

Contingency plans for dealing with FMD in the two jurisdictions were approved by a European Commission decision (93/455/EEC) in July 1993, and both jurisdictions had recently updated their plans as part of routine business.

The FMD contingency plan for the Republic of Ireland was last updated in May 2000 when a two day training course involving 47 DAFRD vets was held. The FMD Contingency Plan for Northern Ireland as a region of the UK was drawn up in 1991 and updated in 1996. On 23 November 2000 the local Divisional Veterinary Offices were requested to update their epizootic disease dossiers. As part of routine contingency planning, all local Divisional Veterinary Officers were asked to check their FMD supplies on 18 January 2001. A FMD training exercise had been held in April 1999 and was attended by the DARD epidemiology team and one veterinary officer from each of the 10 Divisional Veterinary Offices in the North.

Both contingency plans define the responsibilities of the respective Veterinary Service HQ in preparing for, and dealing with, cases of suspected and confirmed epizootic disease. Feedback from two separate missions of the EU Food and Veterinary Office to Ireland reported recognition from DARD (June 2001) and DAFRD (August 2001) that the response needed to deal with the FMD crisis had been much greater than that anticipated in the contingency plans. The main concern of members of the farming communities, North and South, was that the two Departments had these action plans but farmers did not have access to them.

4.3 Structures

A number of structures were put in place in both jurisdictions which proved effective in dealing with the FMD crisis. The structures set up in the Republic in particular proved popular with the farming community and persuaded the general public to take serious precautions.

4.3.1 National and Local Disease Control Centres

The contingency plans for both jurisdictions provided instructions for establishing and operating central and local centres for controlling FMD. In the case of Northern Ireland these centres are known as the Central Epizootic Disease Control Centre (CEDCC) and the Local Epizootic Disease Control Centres (LEDCC). In the South they are known as the National Disease Control Centre (NDCC) and the Local Disease Control Centres (LDCC). While the proposed work of these structures was broadly similar, there were marked differences in their application.





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Following the initial outbreak of FMD in Britain, the CEDCC was set up in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Belfast HQ on 23 February as a precautionary measure. In the South the NDCC, which is established on a permanent basis at the Veterinary Service HQ in Dublin, was put into full operational mode on 28 February.

Following the upgrading of the central facility to full operational mode, all 27 District Veterinary Offices in the Republic were instructed to set up LDCCs as a precautionary measure. Thus when the first FMD outbreak occurred in Meigh in South Armagh on 1 March, a LDCC was already in operation in Co. Louth. On 2 March the activities of this LDCC were transferred to a local hotel which was closer to the restricted zone. The facilities of a local sports club were taken over by the LDCC for use as a disinfection point for staff returning from visits to farms.

In the North LEDCCs were officially set up in each Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) area where a FMD outbreak had occurred and only after FMD had been confirmed, although DARD stresses that DVOs were acting as LEDCCs before being officially designated as such once outbreaks were confirmed. Thus local centres were established in Newry DVO on 28 February, in Dungannon DVO on 13 April and in Ballymena DVO on 15 April.

These centres in both jurisdictions provided a focal point for local activities, ensuring that there was a link between what was happening at departmental and ground levels. The mapping of exclusion zones, the manning of checkpoints and the issuing of licences for movements of vehicles and personnel within the infected zones was managed through these centres.

In the South it was widely felt that decisions were made and enforced by people who knew the locality. In contrast, one of the main criticisms from the Northern farming community was the communication deficit between the Department and people on the ground. This gap was bridged to a considerable extent by the main farming union in the North, the Ulster Farmers' Union, which developed strong relationships both with the Department and with the farmers on the ground.

A team of veterinary officers from the Republic's Veterinary Service attended a three-hour workshop in the northern LEDCC in Newry within days of the nearby Meigh outbreak. Ideas and information were exchanged at this meeting and a return visit was subsequently made to the southern LDCC in the local hotel in Co. Louth. These exchange visits were seen as routine practice by Department officials in both jurisdictions.

4.3.2 High Level Task Forces (Inter-Departmental Co-ordinating Committees)

In both jurisdictions, high level inter-departmental groups were established to co-ordinate all the efforts involved and to assess developments and new issues as they arose.

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The Irish Government's group, which was convened on 28 February, initially met daily at 8:30 am. It was chaired by the Taoiseach, Mr. Ahern, and included Ministers from all the relevant government departments: the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Enterprise, the Department of the Environment and Local Government, plus senior representatives from the Garda, the Defence Forces, and the Revenue and Customs services. This group was able to agree on actions before the start of the working day and proved to be a timely and effective method of co-ordinating actions across departments.

In the North immediately after the first FMD case was identified, Minister Rodgers established under her personal chairmanship, a group of senior officials including at least two Permanent Secretaries, drawn from all Northern Ireland Departments and from the Northern Ireland Office, to co-ordinate the efforts against the spread of the disease. The group quickly set about producing guidance to farmers and other rural dwellers, schools, hospitals, occupants of public buildings throughout Northern Ireland and to the wider general public. The group met for the first time on 3 March and subsequently twice a week for several weeks, thereafter moving to weekly meetings and later still to an ad hoc basis when necessary. Early issues considered by the Group included the major ice hockey fixtures at the Odyssey Arena and the North West 200 motor cycle race. The Group also provided regular and frequent reports to the Executive and other briefing material as necessary.

Separately, the Executive established a second inter-Departmental group chaired by a senior official from the Office of the First Minister/ Deputy First Minister, to consider the wider implications of the disease outbreak. This group also included senior officials from most Departments as well as the local Enterprise Development Unit and the Tourist Board. Its agenda was to consider actions taken in Great Britain by the FMD Task Force (*see Appendix E for details*) and to consider their application to Northern Ireland. It met for the first time on 30 March. The group produced an information leaflet with details of the Rate Relief Scheme for business affected by FMD and other measures designated to offer assistance to those who had suffered economically from the restrictions imposed as a result of the disease.

One of the main issues highlighted by Northern interviewees was the lack of co-ordination between different sectors of government, which resulted in specific logistical problems within exclusion zones – for example, in the collection of household waste and the staffing of disinfectant checkpoints in the immediate aftermath of FMD detection in an area.

[DARD comments: The issues which are identified in the final sentence of the last paragraph – collection of household waste and staffing of disinfectant checkpoints – are precisely the sorts





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of issues which fell to Minister Rodgers' group. The latter issue was discussed at considerable length, leading to constructive co-operation from many other Departments, notably the Environmental Health Service in the Department of the Environment and, subsequently, District Councils. We have no recollection of the issue of refuse collection being raised in that Forum and it may have been dealt with at local level, where decision making would have dictated the most effective solution. We regard this section as misrepresenting the institutional response to FMD in Northern Ireland, which we believe to have been swift and effective.]

4.3.3 Expert Advisory Group

On 9 March the Republic's Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Mr Walsh, established an Expert Advisory Group to consider the range of controls already in place and to make recommendations on adapting them as the situation unfolded. This group, which was chaired by the Professor of Large Animal Medicine at UCD, Professor Micheal Monaghan, included Irish experts in the fields of veterinary science, biotechnology, animal research, and epidemiology, plus senior civil servants from DAFRD. The first task of this group was to draw up guidelines for high-risk groups and controls to allow low-risk events to recommence.

Special advice was also given by the expert group in relation to travel to and from FMD-infected areas. Risk-based assessment techniques were used to draw up a series of stringent protocols for the eventual resumption of certain activities such as horse-racing. This group's practical and soundly-based recommendations reflected the high level of technical and professional expertise of its membership. The establishment of this group was hailed by many as a master stroke by the Minister. In effect, it allowed the Department to avail of sound scientific advice removed from the usual constraints of politics.

4.4 Processes

Many interviewees commented that luck played a part in preventing a large-scale outbreak of FMD on the island. It was lucky that the only outbreak of FMD in the South happened to take place on a peninsula, making it easier to police movements and contain the spread of the disease. It was also lucky that the Proleek outbreak was discovered early due to the fact that it was in the Southern exclusion zone already declared in response to the nearby Meigh outbreak just across the border. However it is also accepted that everyone in the industry (the two Ministers, the two Departments, farming unions, farmers themselves and others) worked tirelessly to prevent the introduction of FMD and to control the spread of the disease once it had been detected.

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4.4.1 Procedures in suspected/infected premises

4.4.1a Clinical examination

In both jurisdictions the clinical examination of animals on farms was undertaken by official Department vets. In the North the vet could request a specialist vet to assist in this diagnosis. In suspicious cases in the South the vet was required to remain on the farm and to discuss the findings with the LDCC, which would contact laboratory personnel and arrange for a Laboratory Research Officer to come and carry out a clinical examination so as to gain a full picture of the state of the animals involved, and to take samples.

Following the veterinary examination, the premises could be:

- upgraded to a suspected infected premises and the flock slaughtered;
- restricted and the live animals sampled - restrictions to remain in force until negative results were received;
- downgraded on the basis that the disease was not clinically suspected.

4.4.1b Slaughter and destruction of animals

In the North almost 42,000 animals (including 253 bovine animals, 37,880 sheep and 3,588 pigs) were culled in the three main areas where the FMD outbreak occurred, namely Meigh, Ardboe and Cushendall. On infected and contiguous premises, all animals were killed onsite and burnt in funeral pyres or sent for rendering.

The original plans to dispose of culled animals from Meigh in deep burial graves were halted after protests by local farmers over possible health and environmental damage and compensation arrangements for the cull. Following interventions from the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Irish Farmers' Association, the cull was eventually completed with arrangements made to dispose of animals in a similar fashion to the South. This meant that when the culling was extended to surrounding areas, animals were transported to a local site and killed. The carcasses were then transported in sealed trailers under direct Veterinary Service supervision to a rendering plant in Belfast.

In the South a total of 53,000 animals (800 bovine, 600 pigs, 3,000 deer, 230 goats and the rest sheep) were culled in the Co. Louth zone. On the infected and contiguous premises all animals were killed *in situ*. Funeral pyres were not used by DARFD, as this method of disposal was not considered acceptable for a number of reasons including public relations and environmental considerations. Where culling was extended to surrounding areas, animals were transported to an unused local slaughterhouse where they were killed by stunning. The carcasses and blood were transported in sealed containers under DAFRD supervision to a rendering plant in Co. Meath.





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Culling of large wild game in the Cooley protection zone in Co. Louth required a large military operation involving up to 100 Army personnel including marksmen and helicopter support, under supervision of three DAFRD veterinary officers. The bullet method was only used for the culling of wild animals. The majority of these carcasses were transported by helicopter or all-terrain vehicle to the slaughterhouse used for the main cull, from where they were sent for rendering.

4.4.2 Controls in protection and surveillance zones

4.4.2a Definition of zones and identification of animals

Protection and surveillance zones in both jurisdictions were implemented in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 85/511/EEC. The protection zone was defined as a circle of three kilometer radius around the infected premises. The surveillance zone was defined as a circle of 10 kilometer radius around the infected premises, extended to natural boundaries (e.g. main roads, rivers). In both jurisdictions the details of the surveillance zones were published in the local and national press.

In the South the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS), a system required for the administration of premium payments, was used to identify sheep farms. No electronic information was held on dairy or pig herds. In the North the identification of animals in the zones was easier to complete as electronic records of animals were held on the APHIS (Animal and Public Health Information System) and PHS (Pig Health System) computer systems. These systems hold map references for all holdings, which enabled the use of GIS software for mapping purposes. In both jurisdictions electronic information was supplemented by local knowledge and patrols. In both jurisdictions sero-surveillance was undertaken in accordance with EU Commission Decision 2001/295/EC.

4.4.2b Policing of movement restrictions

There were three major differences between the two jurisdictions in terms of enforcing the movement restrictions:

1. Involvement of the police force
2. Policing the border
3. Daily face-to-face briefings with farmers

The location of the first outbreak of FMD in the North was at Meigh in south Armagh. The RUC was unwilling to introduce static patrols in this area due to the potential security threat. Instead policing of animal movements was carried out by DARD staff through static vehicle checkpoints situated at the perimeter of the 3km protection zone. The police conducted mobile vehicle checks within the 3km protection zone and the 10km surveillance zone, and were requested by DARD staff on two occasions to deal with journalists who refused to obey instructions

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by DARD staff to move away from restricted areas. On 2 April Minister Rodgers announced that the RUC had intercepted 163 movements of animals since the controls had been established, and that 60 of these were being investigated and processed.

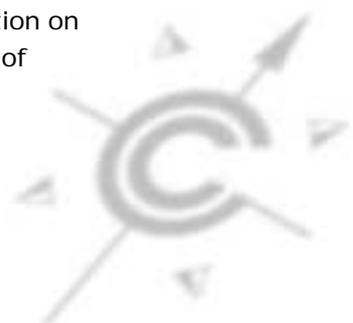
In the South policing of movements was carried out by DAFRD and the Garda at static disinfectant and cleansing checkpoints on the edge of the 3km protection zone and the 10km surveillance zone.

After the Irish Government received notification of the outbreak of FMD in the UK on 21 February, it placed an immediate ban on UK imports of susceptible animals and products, and made arrangements with the Garda for appropriate resources to be sent to the border region. Resources were deployed to 141 recognised entry points along 251 miles of border between Northern Ireland and the Republic and steps were taken for the disinfection of vehicles and people entering the state from the North. These crossings were staffed 24 hours a day, with over 1,000 troops and gardaí drafted into the border region. 31 crossing points were designated for the transport of agricultural products. DAFRD, the Farm Relief Service, Civil Defence and other agencies provided back-up support in dealing with people, disinfecting and associated duties. Retired personnel were recalled to ensure that all border crossings were staffed on a round-the-clock basis.

In contrast, border controls were only put in place on the Northern side within the exclusion zone in south Armagh. On 7 March Minister Rodgers said there was no justification for controls of movement from the South as it had FMD-free status. Apart the controls on the Armagh-Louth border, no other controls were ever put in place on the Northern side of the border despite the outbreak of FMD at Proleek in Co Louth on 22 March and a statement from Minister Rodgers on 2 April that her main concern was now the threat from the South.

The cost of enforcing the ban on animal movements in the border region has not been published, but it appears to have been a cost borne to a greater extent by the Exchequer in the Republic. This researcher has been given estimates that the Northern authorities spent £5-£6 million (Sterling) dealing with the FMD crisis, while the Southern authorities spent approximately £40 million (Punts).

The different approaches to policing the border were adopted according to the different perceptions of risk in the two jurisdictions. The border patrols on the southern side were very heavy as government and people in the Republic saw Northern Ireland dealing with an extension of the very serious FMD problem in Britain. The situation was exacerbated by the lack of information on illegal movement of animals and the seemingly erratic behavior of the FMD virus in sheep. The Southern authorities felt that there was validity in restricting movement from the North as the risk of FMD entering their territory in other ways (i.e. airborne) was





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very low. (This specific strain of FMD⁴ was not renowned for travelling long distances by air). In contrast, the Northern authorities did not view the Republic as a major FMD risk, and DARD officials directed their efforts to policing the entry ports and airports from Britain.

In both jurisdictions the local disease control centres (LEDCCs and LDCCs) issued notices to individual farms and imposed movement restrictions. The initial DARD direct mail shot to Northern farmers outlining the movement restrictions was held up once it was discovered that postal deliveries to farms were suspended due to disease control measures. There was considerable criticism from local farmers in the affected areas in the North over the seemingly uncoordinated manner in which DARD informed the local community of the measures being undertaken.

[DARD comments: There is anecdotal reference here to what is described as considerable criticism from local (NI) farmers, which typifies the approach adopted in several places in the report, where generalised criticism is levelled based purely on anecdotal evidence. It is difficult to comment on that beyond saying that, while we would not claim that there was not an occasional communication problem, there was absolutely no evidence of the scale of the problem which is indicated in the report. Since we were in constant dialogue with the farming representative bodies, that is something that would have been raised with, and quickly rectified by, the Department.]

In contrast, in the South initial daily face-to-face meetings were held with farmers in their local areas to explain the measures being undertaken. DAFRD has stated that these meetings were extremely useful in enlisting the co-operation of those affected by the outbreak.

[DARD comments: In Northern Ireland, the cornerstone of our approach to FMD was the idea of "fortress farming" where farmers were encouraged to avoid wherever possible allowing anything on to or off their premises. Clearly, any meetings of farmers would have been in direct contravention of that principle and we therefore took a conscious decision at an early stage to discourage any such meetings of farmers so as to prevent the spread of FMD via indirect contact.]

4.4.3 Procedures at airports and ports

While there was some early criticism of the control and disinfectant procedures at airports and ports in the South, they were generally considered to be of the highest quality. DAFRD officials say initial criticisms reported in the media, notably those of politicians travelling through Cork airport for a British Irish Inter-Parliamentary meeting on 26 February, have subsequently been proved to be

4 A pandemic strain of FMD virus serotype O, named Pan-Asia.

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inaccurate. The protection at entry points against importing infection from Britain was a critical element in the Republic's overall defence - so much so that the Irish Government provided additional disinfection facilities at British Irish Sea ports, claiming that "the British port authorities there were unwilling to do so" (Minister Walsh, 28 June).

In contrast, there were many critical media reports about the disinfectant procedures that were put in place in the ports and airports in Northern Ireland. On 21 February, after livestock movements into Northern Ireland from Britain were suspended, disinfecting of lorry wheels with power washers commenced at Larne, Belfast and Warrenpoint, Co Down. However it was not until 4 March that disinfectant-soaked mats were put in place for all vehicles, drivers and foot passengers disembarking from ferries coming from Britain. At the same time announcements were broadcast on planes and ships for persons who had been in contact with animals to contact DARD staff. One DARD official said they may have over-relied on transportation companies to assist in directing members of the public to DARD contacts.

[DARD comments: The disinfectant-soaked mats to which the report refers were never seen by this Department as representing a particularly effective defence against FMD. Their true value was seen to lie in raising public awareness. The short delay in providing such mats was not, therefore, viewed as particularly serious in a direct disease control sense and we preferred instead to concentrate on measures, such as spraying of vehicles, that were more effective.]

There were a few travellers who refused to follow the disinfection procedures on arrival at Belfast airport, stating that there was no legal basis for disinfecting people who were travelling within the UK. The different legal basis for such procedures in Northern Ireland as a region of the UK and the Republic of Ireland as an independent nation state was quoted by the media as one reason why there might have been delays in enforcing disinfection and cleansing procedures at Northern ports and airports. However this was denied by DARD officials.

The removal of border disinfectant procedures in August 2001 was evidence that the Irish Government had confidence in these Northern procedures. A report by the EU Food and Veterinary Office in June 2001, following a mission to review FMD management in Northern Ireland, said the controls at Northern Ireland ports and airports, both before and after the outbreak of FMD in Britain, were similar to, and in some cases exceeded, those applied between EU member states.





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4.5 Extended serological testing

While the tracing of the origin of the Proleek outbreak failed to establish a verifiable link to the outbreaks in Northern Ireland, the Southern authorities are confident that the Co. Louth outbreak came as a result of indirect contact with infected sheep at the farm in Meigh, across the border in Armagh.

Likewise the Northern authorities have been unable to establish any link between the outbreaks in Meigh, Ardboe and Cushendall. They were unable to exclude the possibility of further undetected illegal diversions of sheep from Britain. Working on the assumption that FMD was present in the sheep population, on 23 April DARD commenced a serological survey of all sheep flocks in the North. It has been a considerable success and is one of the most extensive responses to FMD surveillance anywhere in the world. By October 2001, over 80% of all sheep flocks in Northern Ireland had been sampled, with over 0.5 million samples having been tested. All inconclusive tests have generated a detailed epidemiological flock investigation and the survey has not detected FMD in any Northern Ireland flocks.

The Southern authorities also instigated a national serological survey of sheep on 8 May in order to demonstrate the South's freedom from FMD in accordance with OIE (Office International des Epizootics) guidelines. This survey was divided into two phases. The first and more intensive phase took place in the eastern part of the country where the sheep population is less stable. This was followed by a second phase in the west and south of the country. DAFRD stresses that this survey was conducted "at levels well in excess of the OIE guidelines."

4.6 Timing of actions

In general, the two jurisdictions implemented similar control measures, but there were differences in the timing of the controls, with some at least being put in the place in the South first and then being replicated in the North. For example, on 8 March the Irish Government introduced primary legislation in the form of an amendment to the Disease of Animals Act. This legislation was drafted over a weekend, approved by the Government on the Tuesday, passed by Dáil Eireann on Thursday and signed into law on Friday. It provided for

- extensive powers for authorised officers
- the definition and regulation of dealers
- the forfeiture of assets such as land and premises used in the commission of offences
- disqualification by the courts of convicted persons from agriculture related activities
- inferences to be drawn in relation to items such as ear tags in court proceedings.

It was not until 2 May that Minister Rodgers announced proposals to curb illegal movement of livestock and increased penalties for those involved in such

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movement. DARD officials say the process of amending similar legislation in the North may take up to two years.

[DARD comments: This paragraph creates the erroneous impression that the legislation in question was relevant to the handling of the immediate FMD outbreak and that Northern Ireland was tardy in acquiring the necessary powers. That is not the case. DARD had and has comprehensive FMD control and other legislation which allowed us, as the report recognises elsewhere, to take all the steps we needed to deal with the outbreak at the time. What the Republic has done, and what we are committed to doing, is to review the more general animal health legislation in order to help prevent future outbreaks of FMD etc. and to clear up some legal ambiguities. None of that affected our ability to handle the outbreaks we had earlier this year. Moreover, the Republic legislation in place at the outset of FMD was very different from that in Northern Ireland and the changes we need to make to the latter are also very different. In some regards, the existing Northern Ireland legislation goes beyond the revised legislation in the Republic, so the needs in each jurisdiction are quite different.]

In the early days, after the FMD outbreak in Britain, the scale of the epidemic was still unclear. However as more and more cases were confirmed and concerns arose as to what might happen in Northern Ireland, the Republic put controls in place firstly along the border and then cross the entire state. For example, a ban was placed on livestock marts in the Southern border counties (23 February) which was extended to all marts in the Republic by 26 February. On 28 February the movement within the South of all susceptible animals other than those going to direct slaughter was banned.

Discussions with DARD and farming union officials offered some views on the perceived contrasts in implementing controls in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland:

1. Many people in the North, particularly in nationalist areas, wanted DARD to mirror what was being done in the South, but this was not always the best or most effective option for the North.
2. The focus of many people's attention was on the border and not on the entry ports and airports where DARD's efforts were rightly concentrated.
3. The South was better at public relations than the North. For instance, the South had fully uniformed police manning checkpoints at the airports which Northern officials claimed was as much for public show as for effectiveness. In the North, DARD relied on transportation organisations at the ports and airports to announce control measures. It was conceded by DARD that on some lower risk flights direct from London, these announcements may have been patchy. This led to bad publicity for DARD when compared to people's experience of arriving at Southern airports. DARD is keen to stress that the higher risk areas, such as the disinfecting and cleansing of lorries at ports, were always controlled thoroughly.



4.7 The devolved administration in Northern Ireland

The most important decision taken by the devolved administration in Northern Ireland during the FMD crisis was the ban on 'imports' of animal and animal products from Britain to the North from 21 February. This effectively stopped the clock and allowed the island's agricultural authorities to take control of tackling the crisis. This was the first high profile example of Northern Ireland's new ability to make its own decisions. The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs. Brid Rodgers, said in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 5 March that this ban had attracted considerable criticism from Britain because of the trade implications involved.

DARD officials confirmed that this decision was contested by a major supermarket chain, which repeatedly and strongly raised its concerns with the Department and sought copies of the relevant legislation. It is important to note that to a large extent the Northern Ireland administration has autonomy over animal health issues in the North. As one DARD official pointed out, Northern Ireland has its own Chief Veterinary Officer while the rest of the UK has one Chief Veterinary Officer to cover England, Scotland and Wales. The ability of the Northern Ireland Executive to bring in its ban on British produce was due in part to the fact that the Northern legislation in this area was draconian, having been put in place nearly 40 years previously and having never been reviewed.

While the FMD crisis was tackled as a national emergency in the Republic, in the early days it appeared to be treated as a farming/agricultural crisis in the North. However the Northern Ireland devolved government did not look towards London for direction, as certainly would have happened under Direct Rule, but largely took its own decisions.

The initial ban by the Northern Ireland administration on the movement of animal, meat and meat products from Britain to Northern Ireland influenced the EU decision to grant regionalisation status to Northern Ireland (firstly on 3 April 2001 and again on 5 June 2001). However DARD officials have said that this ban has now been superseded, and once the UK is declared FMD free it will again be illegal to restrict animal movement between Britain and Northern Ireland (the same applies, of course, between Britain and the Republic and all other EU Member States).

4.8 Counselling and community relations

There were significant differences in the policy of providing advice to people on the ground in the two jurisdictions. For example, in the South Teagasc, the Government's agricultural research, advisory and training agency, provided a 24-hour advice and counseling service to people in Co. Louth. As well as utilising the agency's existing county structure, 20 further advisors were redeployed from elsewhere to work as part of the Co. Louth team.

There was no comparable service in the North. DARD's county advisory service had been dismantled more than three years previously as part of a centralisation plan. There were some individual initiatives. In south Armagh a DARD-funded rural stress advisor was employed locally for six months to deal with FMD issues. A Rural Support Helpline and website were established for Northern Ireland by the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone partnership, with funding from the DARD Rural Stress Initiative. The Rural Support Helpline – a listening and signposting service – initially operated seven days a week from 9am to 10pm. On 4 April, the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Ms Bairbre de Brún, and the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs. Bríd Rodgers, met with a delegation⁵ representing health and agricultural interests to discuss ongoing support for farm families.

Approximately 15-20% of calls to the Teagasc FMD advisory service originated in Northern Ireland. This could reflect the superiority of such services in the South compared to the North, or it could be a reflection of people availing of services within their natural hinterland, irrespective which side of the border they are situated. It should be noted that approximately 10% of the Rural Support Helpline calls in the North originated from outside the region, mostly from the South although some from Scotland.

The Ulster Farmers' Union has played a key role in raising Northern farmers' concerns. In particular it highlighted the fact that many farmers in the 10km zones around Meigh, Ardboe and Cushendall would suffer economic losses because of the FMD restrictions on animal movements in their areas. Farmers were unable to bring livestock to meat plants in these areas. As a result some cattle will now only qualify for the Over Thirty Months Scheme, which provides much lower payments. Other farmers have seen their pigs and lambs become overweight, which again means they will receive a much lower price. The UFU has urged the UK Government to look closely at the financial problems which these farmers have suffered, stressing that this is a UK-wide issue. The same problems do not exist in the Republic, as farmers there were able to move livestock for slaughter under veterinary supervision.

⁵ This group included Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone, Ulster Farmers' Union and the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association.





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Many interviewees underlined the personal aspect of the FMD crisis and emphasised that behind every culled animal there was an owner and his/her family. There were occasional newspaper articles during the crisis which highlighted the grave consequences to the people of the farming and rural communities - at best, major stress and anxiety; at worst, suicide and its consequences for families. During the fieldwork for this research, numerous examples were given where farmers and their families have become ill due to the stress of dealing with their individual situations. However there does not appear to be any work planned to review the health impact of the FMD outbreaks on rural communities in Ireland. An official from the Irish Farmers' Association suggested that any future contingency plan should include details of how to deal with the people caught up in an animal disease crisis alongside disease control measures.

One particular case was that of a Northern pig farmer living within one of the 3km restricted zones. His pregnant wife was dissuaded from travelling to her part-time work outside the restricted zone. She gave birth to a baby during the FMD crisis and this brought the extra complications of visiting the hospital, which was outside the restriction zone. The farmer, who was working alongside departmental vets inspecting the animals for signs of FMD, was diagnosed with glandular fever and was unable to spend any time with his newborn baby. Their small family haulage business, which served pig farmers in the locality, has closed down permanently as a direct result of the FMD crisis. In addition their pig herd, which was situated just outside the slaughter zone, has since developed illnesses as a result of being kept in overcrowded conditions, and this has resulted in dramatic increases in their veterinary bills. This family feels that they have been abandoned by the Department of Agriculture (DARD says that it is not aware of this case). This story is typical of many others heard by this researcher.

There also appears to be no mention of the wider health and environmental consequences arising from the methods of controlling the disease. For example, there are no guidelines on the widespread use of disinfectant to help prevent its spread: given the large quantities involved, what will be the impact on people's health of so much absorption or inhalation of these disinfectant products? Similarly, it is likely that there will be a significant environmental impact from the disinfectant on watercourses in the form of run-off. Will there be extra surveillance of human health to check for the possible effects of contaminated water? The FMD virus may not have had a direct effect upon human health, but the way in which it was dealt with may have.

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[DARD comments: It is wrong to say that “there was no comparable service in the North” in relation to the description of the service provided by Teagasc in the previous section three. DARD’s Agri-food Development Service developed a co-ordinated approach in each of the three outbreak areas. In addition to ongoing advisory contact with farmers, this involved:

- *advisers being available 24 hours a day at crisis times via mobile phones;*
- *all farmers affected by a cull being phoned to make contact and to offer help;*
- *advisory letters with contact numbers and advice and information being sent out;*
- *liaison meetings being held with local veterinary colleagues to try to solve practical problems on farms; and*
- *temporary offices being opened where needed within the affected areas.*

On the counselling side, DARD initiated and funded the opening of the rural support line with the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone. Another group was funded for additional training of people in day-to-day contact with farmers and farm families on identifying stress and providing them with help. Family Farm Development was funded to allow it to be available to help farm families worried about the future. Each of the three affected areas were offered help where needed to provide support for those affected. In the South Armagh area, a Rural Support Worker was established as mentioned in the report. In the other two areas, local groups and local support agencies were involved and the production of regeneration plans has since been facilitated.]





Towards an All-Ireland Approach

5.1 The spread of animal disease to the island

In the last 10 years Newcastle disease has struck the poultry flock; Aujeszky's disease and blue ear disease have struck the pig herd; BSE has infected the cattle herd, and finally FMD has spread into the sheep (and cattle) herd. Salmonella Enteritidis, found in poultry and eggs, has spread from Britain to Northern Ireland, but not to the South. All these diseases have affected Britain and Ireland in recent years. Veterinary experts suggest that the earlier detection of such animal diseases in the North relative to the South reflects the traditionally high trade in live animals between the North and Britain.

While there was already a stated high level of co-operation between the two jurisdictions before the FMD outbreak, it was clearly not sufficient in itself to keep disease out of the island. In the view of many interviewees, both the government authorities and the agriculture industries, North and South, should examine ways of strengthening and improving co-operation between the two jurisdictions, so that the risk of animal diseases entering the island are reduced to the lowest possible level.

Prior to the FMD outbreak, the main animal health problems in Northern Ireland were considered to be bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis and BSE. Annual compensation payments in the North because of the spread of brucellosis had increased from £200,000 in 1996-97 to £9.3 million in 2000-2001, resulting in a total of £22.5m in the last five years. The increased rate of brucellosis is primarily attributed to animal importation. The proximity of the Republic of Ireland and cattle movements from the South have been cited by DARD as significant reasons why the incidence of tuberculosis is consistently higher in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK, despite rigorous efforts to reduce it. (DAFRD does not accept these reasons, saying that it is more likely that TB levels in both Irish jurisdictions are attributable to common factors such as similar wildlife influences, herd management practices and animal movements.) Controls to remove BSE-infected animals from the food chain now appear to be working.

On 31 August 2001 the Ulster Farmers' Union raised producers' concerns about brucellosis and TB with DARD vets. The UFU president, Mr Douglas Rowe, said that delays in the collection of brucellosis and TB reactors are totally unacceptable and a much more effective strategy is needed. While appreciating that DARD resources had been stretched because of FMD, producers felt that other animal health problems also needed to be given priority. In September the UFU again reiterated the need for resources within DARD to be targeted effectively at bringing brucellosis under control and to move towards its eradication in the province.





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Similarly the main animal health issues in the South prior to the FMD outbreak were also considered to be bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and BSE. In the context of the Southern Programme for Prosperity and Fairness⁶, all parties agreed to a range of measures to reduce the incidence of TB by 50% and to make significant progress towards the eradication of brucellosis within the next four years. The measures taken to control BSE were expected to lead to a decline in the number of cases during and after 2002. The DAFRD *End of Year Report 2001* outlines the progress made towards achieving these goals. DAFRD stresses that the increased number of cases of BSE during 2001 (225 at the end of November) was due entirely to the operation of the active surveillance programme and that the age profile of the cases identified indicates that the control measures put in place in 1996 and 1997 are proving effective - 52% of cases were aged five years or less in 1998 and this was reduced to 16% during 2001. There has been a continuous downward trend in the number of TB reactors in recent years with 44,900 reactors recorded in 1999 and 34,000 reactors recorded in 2001. In the case of brucellosis, the position has improved significantly over the last two years, with 251 herds restricted at 1 December 2001 compared to 557 herds restricted on the same date in 1998. Active surveillance of scrapie is continuing and arrangements to depopulate flocks where scrapie was diagnosed in the last three years have been finalised.

5.2 Divergent animal health interests

There have been examples in the recent past where the divergent interests of some agricultural sectors, North and South, have led to differences over animal health policy. One example has been the view of some in the Southern pig sector that the Northern authorities have failed to implement a blue ear disease eradication programme for pigs.

Blue ear disease is a serious disease but it is not catastrophic – it is probably similar to flu in humans (although DAFRD stresses that when it strikes a herd for the first time, it can be catastrophic for that herd's owner). The island of Ireland was declared free of this disease until approximately four years ago when DARD officials identified a single case. Northern officials initiated tests to find the extent of the disease in the Northern pig herd and found it was already at endemic proportions. At that point the spread of the disease to the South was limited. Officials in the North had two choices - to eradicate or to control the disease. After reviewing the costs, DARD decided to implement a disease control system and blood tests are now taken of all pigs before they are moved to the Republic. At the time the Southern authorities would have preferred that an

6 A new national agreement - The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) - was agreed in January 2000 by all the parties to the negotiations which included the Government and representative groups from the four 'pillars': employers and business groups, trade unions, farming organisations and the community and voluntary sector.

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eradication programme was put in place in the North, but in hindsight they accept that the DARD decision was justified given the considerable cost implications. The South continues to restrict herds which have this disease, and at the present time 43 such herds are in existence. A serological survey is ongoing in slaughter plants to ensure that these are the only herds which are affected.

[DARD comments: Slaughter pigs from Northern Ireland are not tested for blue ear disease prior to movement to the Republic of Ireland. Neither is there any EU requirement for Northern Ireland to provide any guarantees in respect of blue ear disease.]

5.3 Why is an all-Ireland approach desirable?

There has been much discussion over the years about the benefits of an all-island animal health system. This issue has been highlighted by farming unions, politicians, veterinary bodies and marketing boards in a variety of different debates including the 1995 Forum on Peace and Reconciliation, the CAP reform negotiations, the British and Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body debates and the negotiations leading to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Indeed it was following a joint presentation by the Irish Farmers' Association and the Ulster Farmers' Union at the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in March 1995 that one of Ireland's leading agricultural economists, Professor Seamus Sheehy, referred to the "lax importation restrictions which could be leaving the island open to disease such as FMD".

Senior civil servants and farming representatives in both jurisdictions agreed that the levels of cross-border co-operation during the FMD crisis played a significant role in preventing the widespread introduction of the disease to the island and in containing it to the four infected areas. However people tend to talk about the need for change during a crisis, and the sense of urgency about moving towards an all-Ireland animal health system appears to have diminished in recent months as the threat of FMD on the island has receded (although both Departments of Agriculture contest this).

While the farming communities on the island are divided into two political jurisdictions, they do have a common agenda of achieving a fairly uniform status of animal health. At the Centre for Cross Border Studies North-South FMD study day in October 2001, the main reasons for pursuing a common animal health agenda were summarised as follows :

1. *The ability to trade internationally if the island is kept relatively disease free.*

There was agreement among all the key players, North and South, that the cornerstone of any all-island animal health system is the common interest in keeping diseases which would damage Ireland's good international trading





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reputation off the island. It is generally accepted that there is a heavy responsibility on all sectors of the farming community (departmental, farming, industry etc.) to establish codes of practice and to police those practices by co-operating in a way that is mutually beneficial. This co-operation, particularly regarding the illegal movement of animals, was severely tested by FMD and was found to be defective.

2. *The ability quickly to bring localised outbreaks of epizootic disease quickly under control.*

If good communications and animal identification systems existed throughout the island, the extent of animal movements could be quickly established and localised outbreaks of epizootic disease could be quickly brought under control. The starting point of any good disease control programme is to identify all susceptible animals and to restrict their movement. The FMD outbreak has highlighted deficiencies in the Irish authorities' ability to identify and restrict movements on the island.

3. *The ability to anticipate and react to problems in the farming industry.*

If there was better co-operation between the authorities North and South, then the island could engage in joint surveillance and anticipate problems in the farming industry rather than just reacting to them.

5.4 Recognised difficulties

It is accepted that there are significant political and practical hurdles to overcome in developing an all-Ireland animal health system. Among these are the imbalance in administrative power between the North as a region of the UK and the South as an EU Member State; the fact that the agricultural industries, North and South, currently operate in direct competition with each other; the ability of the island to pursue a 'fortress Ireland' approach within the context of a single EU market; and the present and future currency differentials between its two jurisdictions.

During a Dáil debate on 4 April 2001 the Taoiseach, Mr Ahern, referred to the excellent relationships that have been built up under the North-South Ministerial Council in the context of agriculture. However he also stated that the establishment of a single veterinary regime for the island would require agreement between the Irish and UK Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive. While pledging his support for such a regime, he said that for such an all-Ireland system to make sense the regulations governing the control of animal movements from other European countries would have to be the same in Northern Ireland as in the Republic of Ireland.

The Taoiseach stressed that any decision to establish a single veterinary regime on the island would also require equivalent animal health status in both parts of the island. He said that while there is a considerable equivalence at present, the situation is complicated by the high incidence of BSE in the UK cattle herd, which

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has meant that the export of cattle from Northern Ireland has been banned since March 1996. He also referred to the Over Thirty Month Scheme operating in the UK, where such bovine animals are excluded from the food chain.

5.5 Credible data

Food safety was identified early as one of the policy areas to be addressed on a cross-border basis. This led to the establishment of the Food Safety Promotion Board (FSPB) as one of the six North-South 'implementation bodies' set up in 2000 under the auspices of the Good Friday Agreement. Like other cross-border bodies, this board's establishment and operation has been hampered by political differences within the Northern Ireland Executive, but also, ironically, by the impact of FMD-induced restrictions on non-agricultural activities (i.e. during the height of the FMD crisis all cross-border organisations cancelled their meetings). The direct risks from FMD to the safety of food sold to the public are negligible, but those illegal cross-border practices which the FMD crisis has highlighted do represent potentially major risks. The only effective policy to minimise or eliminate such risks would be an all-island policy.

The Food Safety Promotion Board is principally charged with tasks involving food safety awareness – campaigns, conferences, training and advising professionals and the general public. It is also involved in supporting North-South scientific co-operation, and in links between institutions working in the field of food safety – laboratories, statutory food safety enforcement agencies, international and domestic research bodies. Its remit includes the promotion of specialised laboratory services in both Irish jurisdictions.

Over the past 20 years there have been numerous food safety crises in Ireland, ranging from scares over botulism, listeria, salmonella, e-coli and new variant CJD to the more recent concerns over genetically modified foods. In the British context many of these same crises are considered to have been badly handled, with contradictory positions by manufacturers, consumer groups, the medical profession and government spokesmen and no-one attempting to co-ordinate advice, policy or activity.

Food safety is intimately linked to human health and in the case of zoonosis (i.e. any animal disease that can be transmitted to humans) to animal health. The surveillance of animal health status on the island is currently controlled by the two Departments of Agriculture. At the moment the Republic of Ireland produces an annual zoonosis report which features statistics on animal health, human disease and food safety. Similar statistics from Northern Ireland are collated on a UK-wide basis and are not published in regional format.





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One clear example of the need for better baseline data on pathogens in animals, which could be used to protect the animal, the industry and the consumer, is that of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*. *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* commonly infects dairy cows, leading to Johne's disease, a chronic inflammatory disease of the intestine. More recently the same bacterium has been found in humans suffering from a similar disease, Crohn's disease. There is no evidence to indicate that *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* causes Crohn's disease in humans, but while the debate continues in the medical and scientific community the official terminology is that there is a 'strong association' between the two diseases. Milk has been suggested as a possible vehicle of transmission of this organism to humans, with detectable qualities previously been found in the milk of cattle infected with Johne's disease.

A team of experts from Queens University Belfast, the leading researchers in the UK and Ireland, have recently found that even when the pasteurisation of milk has been extended to its highest levels, in approximately 1.6% of milk samples, this bacterium is still present. In other words processing does not remove the bug – it requires improved animal health. If the link between these diseases were proven, this would have very serious trade implications for an industry that is operating on a cross-border basis. However if the authorities had clear, credible animal health data it would be possible to remove diseased animals from the food chain. Essentially the authorities would be able to weed out the bug before it entered the food chain and prevent it from entering the human chain.

Because this bacterium is not (yet) classified as a zoonotic agent, it is the considered opinion of food safety bodies that it has not received enough attention. Both the interim scientific committee of the Food Safety Promotion Board and the microbiology sub-committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland have suggested that work should be undertaken in relation to the survival of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* in pasteurised milk. The Food Safety Promotion Board would like to see the American model of extensive disease surveillance adopted, where integrated, baseline data on animal health, human health and food safety is collated and this process is repeated every 2-3 years to ascertain if the implemented disease controls are working.

In fact the FSPB is currently finalising a draft report (due to be published in January 2002) in which it proposes to undertake such an integrated process on the surveillance of all zoonotic disease in Ireland, North and South. Veterinary Ireland has said the FSPB would be an ideal body to oversee such a programme of work, having formal institutional links between the North and South yet maintaining its scientific credibility. However any improvement to the current zoonotic disease surveillance system would require significant commitment and resources from government.

[DAFRD comments: Mention is made in the fifth paragraph of this section of Johne's as an example of a disease that could benefit from a North/South

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approach. The sentence that says that there is a 'strong association' between Johnes and Crohn's is overstating the position. Another equally valid presentation would say: 'There is a suspected association between Johnes and Crohn's which is of concern to the authorities. However after twenty years of active research no one has yet been able to describe the nature of this association'. In this regard, it is understood that a paper will be submitted to the Food Safety Authority at its meeting on 8/2/02 which will state the majority view that there is no link between the two diseases. The paper will also state that the opposite view is held by some but that this minority view is very limited.

Furthermore, there is an implication that Mycobacterium paratuberculosis is commonly found in Ireland. In the South the disease is notifiable and affected animals are slaughtered and destroyed. 17 herds were affected in 2001.]

5.6 Learning from the experience

Throughout the FMD crisis the Departments in both jurisdictions were conscious of exposing themselves to a valuable learning experience. Following an appeal by the Veterinary Service in the UK, both DARD and DAFF sent over some of its veterinary staff to assist their UK counterparts. Veterinary Ireland also encouraged and facilitated private vets to help out in Britain if required. The primary objective for doing so was to provide some badly needed assistance to the hard-pressed UK service. From a purely Irish viewpoint the sooner the disease was brought under control in the UK, the lower the risk that it would eventually spread again to Ireland. The initiative was also seen as an opportunity for Irish vets to experience dealing directly with FMD. Within the Local Epizootic Disease Control Centres in both Irish jurisdictions there was also a policy of rotating staff so that the maximum number of people could gain experience of working in the unique emergency environment facilitated by the FMD outbreak.

Representatives from the farming community in both jurisdictions have said it is important to reflect on the FMD outbreak in Ireland and Britain so that the island will be in a better position to stay free of the disease and to respond more quickly and effectively to any future crises. In the United Kingdom there are currently at least 11 different inquiries and reviews into the FMD outbreak (see *Appendix E*). Within Ireland, North and South, there are three reviews either planned or completed (apart from this Centre for Cross Border Studies study):

5.6.1 Vision Group

DARD was engaged in a review of its overall operations in Northern Ireland at the time the FMD crisis broke. The brief for this review, by the Vision Steering Group, was extended to include examination of the lessons to be learned from the FMD crisis. A FMD sub-group was established to consider and report to the





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Minister on any issues relevant to the FMD outbreak, and in particular to look at the regulations which govern animal movements and trading in the sheep sector. The recent publication of the Vision Group report allows a greater insight into DARD's vision for the next 10-15 years. A number of the recommendations on animal health suggest closer co-operation or co-ordination with the equivalent authorities in the South. For example:

- Where possible DARD should pursue and develop an all-Ireland approach aimed at controlling the spread of, or eliminating, diseases that already exist on the island.
- Northern Ireland should lobby the UK and Republic of Ireland governments to raise with the EU Commission the issue of third country trade. There are very few direct passenger movements into the North from outside the EU, and as such the biggest threat of unregulated personal food imports from such sources arises from passengers travelling to the North via Britain.
- DARD should encourage enhanced policing by the Southern revenue authorities of their VAT system with respect to the origin of sheep slaughtered in Southern meat plants (although DARD emphasises that it is not its function to 'encourage' the Republic of Ireland authorities to do anything in relation to their VAT regime).
- An individual animal identification system should be put in place with close co-operation between the Northern Irish, British and the Irish authorities on at least the broad principles to be applied on this issue, with regions then able to operate within an overall framework.
- The identification of R&D priorities and the implementation of an R&D programme should be done on an all-Ireland basis.

But there are also recommendations made in the Vision report which pertain specifically to Northern Ireland but which have been raised as all-Ireland issues by key players, North and South, who were interviewed for this study. Examples of these are:

- An objective assessment of the animal health status of Northern Ireland compared with EU member states. Based on this assessment, informed decisions can be taken on animal health policy and, in particular, on any moves to eradicate diseases of current or potential economic or public health significance.
- A farm quality assurance scheme should be established in Northern Ireland which would include a herd/flock health plan and cover farm bio-security.
- DARD must aim to secure the resources it needs to enforce adequately the existing legislation.
- All herds/flocks importing animals from outside Northern Ireland should be subject to a 21-day standstill rule rather than just the individual imported animals.

5.6.2 DARD independent review

On 15 June 2001 Minister Rodgers announced her intention to conduct an independent investigation into the FMD outbreak in Northern Ireland. On

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12 October she announced that DARD would be requesting tenders from independent consultants to review the outbreak of FMD in the North with particular reference to contingency plans, preparedness, cause, spread, handling, logistics, compensation, cross-border issues and trade implications. The review is expected to take account of the wider economic impact of the disease and to look at the extent to which North-South co-operation was effective in dealing with it. In light of the lessons learned, the review should make recommendations on how any future outbreak of epizootic disease in Northern Ireland should be handled.

The handling of the FMD outbreak by the British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) has been described in the UK media as one of the worst examples of British government maladministration in modern history, and there has been strong criticism of the UK government's refusal to hold an all-embracing public review. Minister Rodgers stressed that while the Northern Ireland review would not be a public inquiry in the usual sense of the word, this exercise would be conducted in an open manner and the findings would be published. The original 31 March 2002 deadline for recommendations is already seen as ambitious and may require to be reviewed.

5.6.3 DAFRD internal review

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently held a three-day (12-14 November 2001) internal review of its handling of the FMD outbreak. The purpose of this review was to update DAFRD's contingency plan, and this will be publicly available once it is approved by the European Commission. Invitations to participate in this review were extended to a limited group of people from outside DAFRD, such as Professor Michael Monaghan, chairman of the Republic's Expert Advisory Group. Officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the North also participated. DAFRD is also arranging for a consultancy study on the economic impact of the FMD crisis.

5.7 Is the timing right?

Various members of the farming community in both jurisdictions, and especially the South, have commented that the solidarity shown between the Departments, the farming unions, the veterinary professions and the industry during the FMD outbreak is not typical of their normal working relationships, and once the threat of FMD dissipates people will revert back to their usual modes of behaviour.

There is some concern that the present environment may not be conducive to progressing an all-Ireland animal health agenda because of competing priorities in the newly re-established administration in the North and a forthcoming general election in the South. There are fears in the wider agricultural





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community that governments are not good at long-term planning where immediate benefits are not obvious. However the UK Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, has signalled the need, once the FMD crisis is over, for a fundamental rethink of the British agricultural industry and its role in the rural economy.

The fact that the Irish media was dominated by coverage of the crisis for more than two months in spring 2000 has raised political and public awareness of agricultural and rural development issues. In the past, the wider community generally became concerned with animal diseases only when such diseases had significant human health implications. There is now a common realisation that the threat of animal diseases has the potential to impact directly or indirectly on all sectors of society, and in all parts of the island of Ireland. Discussion of an all-Ireland approach to maintaining disease-free status for the island and to animal health in general should be intensified, with clear guidelines set for conclusion and implementation.

[DARD comments: Here again, there is anecdotal material with which we would take issue. The views recorded fail to acknowledge the long history of cross-border co-operation in the field of animal health. More particularly, the views also ignore the realities of the political imperative for ever closer ties in this area.]

Recommendations

The following recommendations relating to the cross-border and all-Ireland dimensions of the FMD crisis in Ireland have been drawn from this work:

6.1 A realistic assessment of the animal health status of the island should be undertaken.

It is recommended that a thorough and realistic assessment of the animal health status of Ireland be undertaken. This assessment should be based on an objective comparison with other EU member states and review the spread of all animal diseases, including the method of spread, onto the island over the past decade. This assessment should also include a review of routine animal health data collection systems in both jurisdictions with a view to improving the surveillance of such diseases on the island.

6.2 A study of the advantages and disadvantages of an all-island animal health system should be undertaken.

Any serious analysis of an all-island animal health system needs to incorporate a study of the costs and benefits associated with the introduction of a common approach to animal (and plant) health on the island. A comprehensive and objective examination of an all-Ireland approach has yet to be attempted. It is important that this review is based on commercial reality and grounded in EU legislation. Policy making within agriculture is largely as a result of EU directives. The lead on the implementation of EU directives in the UK is taken by Westminster and not by the devolved administration in Northern Ireland, so it is important that the East-West dimension is included in this work.

6.3 An all-island multi-sectoral group, with key representatives from the food supply chain, should be established to drive forward proposals for an all-Ireland animal health system.

The strategic policy for an all-Ireland animal health system is currently being taken forward by the two Departments under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC). There is a concern among the farming communities that they have little input into this policy development process, and that while the NSMC has legitimised the relationships between the two jurisdictions, it is politically, and not commercially, driven. It was the considered opinion of key players at the CCBS North-South FMD study day in October 2001 that a multi-sectoral group should be convened which would bring commercial, rural development and other relevant factors into the discussion in order to produce a workable all-Ireland strategy. This group should have access to high quality scientific advice and become a focal point for co-ordinating an all-island approach to animal health.





Recommendations

While there is unanimous agreement that any all-Ireland approach should be led by the two Agriculture Ministers, it is worth bearing in mind that any new system must be 'bought into' by the people on the ground. There is a sense that progress towards an all-island animal health system may be becoming fragmented, with the Departments, farming organisations, food safety bodies, industry and veterinary bodies already working separately. A cross-interest group would serve to marry these different perspectives into one co-ordinated all-Ireland approach.

6.4 The contingency plans in both jurisdictions should be urgently reviewed.

Following the individual departmental inquiries, North and South, the contingency plans for both jurisdictions need to be urgently reviewed. With the benefit of hindsight, a single contingency plan should be developed for the island outlining all the possible scenarios that a future outbreak may bring. Issues to be considered should include an epidemiological analysis of how the FMD virus entered the country and the subsequent method of spread; an examination of how disease surveillance and other early warning procedures can be improved, and a determination of whether legislative and other support frameworks need to be improved. This contingency plan should also address the issue of whether both Departments of Agriculture should have the same powers as the military in emergency situations.

[DAFRD comments: While certain aspects of an all-island single contingency plan could certainly be coordinated, or indeed form a single point on a contingency plan, it is clear that separate structures institutionally and legally exist on the two sides of the border in terms of the delivery of veterinary services at farm level, and in this respect a contingency plan cannot address in a single way how these various organisations will configure themselves and what they have to do in the event of an outbreak. Accordingly we are not entirely certain what is being got at in this recommendation.]

6.5 The convening of an all-Ireland Expert Advisory Group should be considered in any future emergency situations.

The convening of the Expert Advisory Group in the Republic was hailed as a considerable success in terms of removing the politics from the crisis and applying high quality scientific advice to all decisions made by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. While acknowledging that politics can never be totally removed from any North-South situation, the convening of an all-Ireland Expert Advisory Group during any future emergency situation – made up of independent experts as well as civil servants – might go some way towards meeting this objective.

Recommendations

6.6 The links between the main farming bodies, North and South, should be developed.

The main farming organisations on the island, the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association in the North and the Irish Farmers' Association and the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association in the South, are very strong political lobbying groups. All possibilities of developing closer links between these groups to promote an all-Ireland animal health agenda should be explored, including the possibility of secondments. Any developments need to consider the risk of adverse effects on existing relationships with other UK bodies.

6.7 All-island animal herd/flock health plans should be developed.

The bio-security measures introduced on all farms as part of the FMD response governed the restriction of movement of animals, people and machinery; adequate disinfection; quarantine facilities for sick animals; secure feed and water; vermin control, and handling and disposal of slurry. If such measures were adopted routinely, the incidence of salmonella, TB, brucellosis, and many other diseases could be dramatically reduced throughout the island. It is important to remember that, quite apart from FMD, there are other major animal disease problems on the island which have serious human health implications. The potential to produce significant financial benefits by reducing veterinary treatment costs and thus controlling production losses needs to be emphasised at ground level.

6.8 A uniform approach to animal ID on the island needs to be developed.

Animal traceability is being addressed at an EU level, with trials of electronic identification systems currently being sponsored by the EU Commission. It is expected that proposals for EU legislation will eventually emerge, but these are not expected for at least 18 months. The South has already implemented a manual, tag-based, individual identification system for sheep in the short-term, and the North has also announced its intention to introduce an individual tagging system. The inability to identify animal movements was shown to be a huge disability in the fight against FMD on the island. Plans should be made to harmonise ID systems for all animals on a North-South basis and methods for promoting mutual access to records should be developed.





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6.9 A forum should be developed for inclusive all-Ireland discussions.

By highlighting or questioning certain practices and basic assumptions, the FMD crisis represents an opportunity to put certain activities on a sounder all-Ireland footing. However now that the FMD crisis has passed, the intensity of discussions on all-Ireland animal health problems appears to have lessened somewhat, although the two Departments are still meeting regularly on the issue. While there has been much ad hoc support for an all-Ireland system of animal health, there has never been an instance where all the key organisations (Departments of Agriculture, politicians, veterinary bodies, farming unions, industry and local farmers representative groups) have collectively committed themselves to the examination of such an option. There is a need to develop a forum where people can actively and collectively engage in these discussions.

A number of pertinent questions need to be discussed on an all-Ireland basis and a joint programme of research needs to be initiated:

- *How should greater control be exercised over live animal dealers?*
- *How can greater control be exercised over marts on the island in view of their potential adverse effects on both bio-security and animal welfare ?*
- *Should more reliable methods, such as electronic implants, be examined in order to ensure traceability of livestock movement?*
- *Do we have a similar approach to FMD vaccination policy North and South?*
- *Should farmers be encouraged to pay into consequential loss insurance funds?*

The extensive animal movements revealed by the FMD outbreak seem problematic not only from a bio-security point of view but also from the prospective of animal welfare and sustainable development. In the three weeks before the FMD outbreak was discovered, about two million sheep were moved around the UK (Cabinet Office 2001). Movement of replacement breeding ewes and store lambs for finishing from upland breeding flocks to lowland finishing flocks is an essential part of the sheep industry.

However the outbreak highlighted the opportunistic role of sheep dealers in this process. Animals were being bought and resold through marts in different regions of the UK over very short periods of time, with some animals going through a succession of different farms. Under these circumstances, sheep which were infectious but had gone unrecognised as having clear clinical symptoms of disease came into contact with large numbers of previously uninfected animals over large areas. The problem was compounded by unofficial dealing at marts of animals never registered in the official sales records and therefore not readily traceable as dangerous disease contacts.

During the height of the FMD crisis in England, the UK government was actively considering the policy of ring vaccination before the winter months. Such a

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vaccination policy would have major implications for exports. Is there an agreed North-South policy on how the island would react to such a policy move?

6.10 An all-Ireland research programme should be developed

Discussions on a future all-island animal health policy need to be backed up by a joint research programme which could include such topics as :

- Risk assessment studies of the different methods whereby disease can be introduced
- A socio-economic study of the role of marts
- Information Technology developments facilitating automated, low cost animal traceability
- A socio-economic study of the feasibility of a return to more localised meat production/processing chains
- Modelling of disease epidemiology in relation to new restrictions on animal movements
- The gathering of integrated baseline data on animal, human and food safety
- The implications for rural policy of diversifying from farming to the rural tourism industry, which was shown to be equally vulnerable during the FMD crisis.





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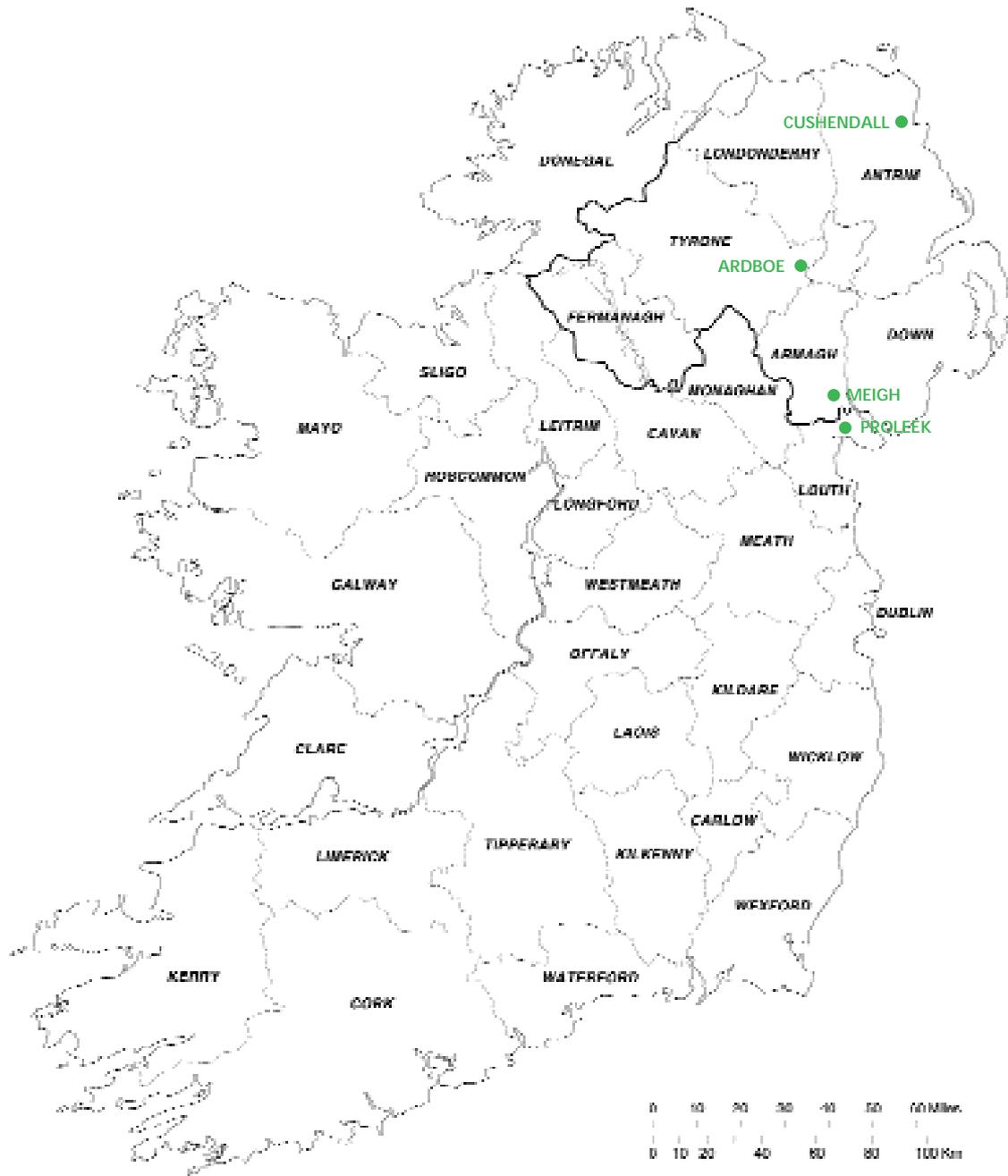
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The location of foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks in Ireland

Appendix **A**



Foot-and-mouth disease and the Irish Border - A lifeline of events with particular relevance to the border

Appendix B

Date	FMD cases	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland
19/02/2001	FMD is detected in an abattoir in Essex.		
21/02/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures to combat FMD are announced after confirmation that consignments of pigs from two NI farms had recently arrived at the Essex abattoir. A temporary ban on animals and animal products from Britain is announced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An immediate ban is placed on importation from GB and NI. DAFRD staff, meat plants and ports are put on alert and recent imports are traced with a view to detention. Garda and Defence Forces are mobilised to enforce ban on imports from NI with major resources concentrated on sealing the border.
22/02/2001	Two Co. Down farms and one Co. Tyrone farm undergo tests for FMD - they had recently sent pigs to the Essex abattoir.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Rodgers defends the RoI decision to ban NI imports. DARD introduces additional precautionary measures banning unauthorised movement of animals. Farmers are urged to adopt a 'fortress' attitude. Public is asked to refrain from walks through farmland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DAFRD, Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Garda meet to co-ordinate efforts. A public information campaign begins. IFA calls for a 32-county approach to prevent FMD reaching the island.
23/02/2001	NI is ruled out as the source of the FMD outbreak. Negative preliminary results on Co. Down and Co. Tyrone suspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DARD restricts farms that had 'imported' animals from Britain since 15/01/2001 and begins immediate veterinary officer visits to check such animals for FMD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public is asked to avoid visiting farms and farmland in NI. All livestock markets near the border are stopped. Border entry points from Northern Ireland are designated.
27/02/2001	<p>Confirmed FMD in Anglesey, Wales. Northern Ireland pigs declared free of FMD.</p> <p>Kildare Chilling Company, Co. Kildare, a Co. Louth farm and three farms in Monaghan are checked for FMD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK emergency cabinet meeting (including Minister Rodgers) held to discuss the crisis - support is sought for NI regionalisation plan. Over 100 farms in NI are placed under movement restrictions as vets examine animals imported recently from Britain. Minister Rodgers asks EU Standing Veterinary Committee meeting in Brussels for NI special regional FMD free status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Walsh announces upgrading of measures at all airports and ports with UK traffic. All marts in Republic suspended.

KEY

DARD = Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland
 DAIRD = Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ireland
 FMD = Foot-and-mouth disease
 IFA = Irish Farmers' Association
 NI = Northern Ireland
 NSMC = North South Ministerial Council

RoI = Republic of Ireland
 UFU = Ulster Farmers' Union
 UK = United Kingdom





Date	FMD cases	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland
28/02/2001	'Hot suspect' sheep on south Armagh farm which arrived a week previously in a consignment from Carlisle in northern England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The South Armagh FMD case was detected early due to proactive tracing work by DARD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern extension of 8km zone around Meigh is put under veterinary supervision. Control zone established in north Louth. Minister Walsh is given an unconfirmed report that some of the Meigh sheep may have entered the RoI. All animal movement in RoI is prohibited, except those going for direct slaughter. All imports of sheep from UK since 1 February are being slaughtered as precaution. A top-level group (to meet every morning) is convened to co-ordinate management of FMD. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, travels to London for talks with British PM, Tony Blair, on FMD.
01/03/2001	Confirmed FMD in sheep on farm in Meigh, south Armagh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original 8km surveillance zone is extended to 10km and now crosses the border to include part of the Cooley peninsula in Co. Louth. RUC investigates claims that the Meigh outbreak was connected to a smuggling ring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A DAFRD investigation begins into the movement of sheep from south Armagh into the RoI. IFA describe the confirmed FMD outbreak in south Armagh as a serious blow for the planned defence of the whole island. Leaflets are issued to airlines and shipping companies.
02/03/2001	Confirmation that all 21 sheep on Meigh farm had been infected by FMD. Suspect case in Co. Tyrone. 1000 pigs are incinerated on a farm within the exclusion zone in south Armagh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 officials mount roadblocks and check livestock in the vicinity of Meigh farm. NI Executive meets in emergency session to discuss the establishment of an interdepartmental group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Walsh states that there is no evidence whatsoever of cross-border smuggling into the state. Irish army have additional troops on standby to move to the border. Advertisements are placed in media (TV and print) and advice leaflet is issued to over 130,000 farmers.
07/03/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NI and RoI Agriculture Ministers meet in Dundalk to compare respective situations. Minister Rodgers says there is no justification for controls on movement from the RoI as it has FMD-free status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Patrick's Day parades are cancelled. Irish Rugby Football Union postpones matches against Scotland and England.
12/03/2001	'Hot suspect' case in Dungannon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is now thought that 60 sheep (and not 21) linked to the original FMD outbreak at Meigh are still unaccounted for. Major pop concert held at Odyssey concert hall in Belfast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border controls are stepped up following reports that 241 sheep from illegal consignment have been taken to Roscommon meat plant. First meeting of the Expert Advisory Group held.

Foot-and-mouth disease and the Irish Border - A lifeline of events with particular relevance to the border

Date	FMD cases	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland
13/03/2001	Negative preliminary result on Dungannon suspect. First FMD case confirmed in France.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DARD admits that it is relying on chief suspects to locate illegal sheep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Walsh issues a further letter on FMD to all farmers.
21/03/2001	Alert at Proleek, Co. Louth farm, about 4 miles from the outbreak in Meigh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Rodgers issues guidelines on relaxing FMD controls in NI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border crossings are strengthened, leading to lengthy delays for motorists.
22/03/2001	Confirmed FMD in sheep at Proleek, Co. Louth within the existing cross-border surveillance zone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border controls are put in place to monitor crossings from the RoI within the south Armagh-north Louth 10km zone and to implement disinfectant procedures on main roads. Minister Rodgers says emphasis is on tracking source of outbreak, which could be in NI or RoI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A state of emergency is declared. Exports of animal products are temporarily banned. 25 counties (apart from Louth) are granted regional status by the EU.
23/03/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UFU is angry at lack of regional status for NI despite speedy introduction in most of RoI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An aggressive slaughter begins to contain FMD to Co. Louth. DAFRD and gardai begin an investigation into source of the FMD outbreak.
24/03/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Rodgers dismisses a call from Rev Ian Paisley for the British army to close the border. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Taoiseach refuses to criticise the UK's handling of FMD.
25/03/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Rodgers says she is surprised by Taoiseach's comments about inadequate FMD controls at NI ports. 50th anniversary celebrations of Free Presbyterian Church held at Odyssey are attended by 10,000 churchgoers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Taoiseach discusses with the UK Prime Minister the need to bring emergency measures in NI up to the standard of those in the RoI.
26/03/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A joint statement from Ministers Walsh and Rodgers is issued agreeing to an immediate precautionary slaughter of sheep within a cross-border zone in south Armagh and north Louth. DARD reports that it has located some of the missing Meigh sheep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Garda Criminal Assets Bureau is asked to examine the earnings of people involved in animal smuggling.
02/04/2001			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Walsh announces National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) to begin in May.

Foot-and-mouth disease and the Irish Border - A lifeline of events with particular relevance to the border





Date	FMD cases	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland
03/04/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister confirms details of completion of south Armagh sheep cull, creating a firewall with RoI. Meeting of EU Standing Veterinary Committee in Brussels where NI is granted regional status. Minister Rodgers announces 18 road checkpoints to seal off Newry & Mourne area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UFU and IFA meet in Dublin to review control measures and to discuss all-Ireland animal health policy once the current controls are lifted.
06/04/2001	FMD antibodies found in wild goats on Cooley peninsula, Co. Louth		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSMC agriculture sector meeting agrees to develop a strategy for control of animal movements on entire island.
12/04/2001	Negative preliminary result on suspect cattle on farm at Ardboe, Co. Tyrone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major advertising campaign is launched. 	
13/04/2001	Positive confirmation of FMD in cattle at Ardboe, Co. Tyrone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All exports of dairy and meat products from NI are halted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ban on the import of animal products from NI is re-imposed.
14/04/2001	Hot suspect in Co. Antrim.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cull of 4,000 sheep and pigs begins in Co. Antrim. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garda and army put on high alert to prevent spread across the border.
15/04/2001	FMD confirmed in sheep on farm at Cushendall, Co. Antrim Two further 'hot suspect' cases in Ardboe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Rodgers states that there had been some indication of illegal movement of animals in one of the three confirmed FMD cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFA demands that the border be more thoroughly sealed off.
17/04/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Rodgers meets with UFU and NIAPA and they issue a joint call for information on illegal movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Walsh calls on vets whose practices straddle the border to limit their activities to one jurisdiction.
18/04/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DARD officials widen investigation to include movement of sheep to NI from 1 January. Letters are sent to every sheep farmer in NI appealing for information on illegal movements. 	

Foot-and-mouth disease and the Irish Border - A lifeline of events with particular relevance to the border

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particular relevance to the border

Date	FMD cases	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland
19/04/2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministers Rodgers and Walsh meet in Belfast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU trade restrictions on a range of Irish exports are lifted. NI products import ban is lifted, but supplementary veterinary certification from DARD is still needed to enter RoI.
20/04/2001	Negative preliminary result on suspect sheep at another farm at Ardboe, Co Tyrone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 10km surveillance zone around Meigh is lifted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warnings are issued that the FMD virus is still active on the island.
22/04/2001	Second confirmed FMD outbreak in Ardboe, Co. Tyrone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The herd in which this outbreak was detected had already been slaughtered as part of a 1km contiguous cull around the first Ardboe outbreak. 	



CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES**North-South FMD Study Day****Thursday 11 October 2001, The Market Place Theatre, Armagh****PARTICIPANTS**

Alexander, Mr Roy	North/South Ministerial Council
Campbell, Mr James	Irish Farmers' Journal, Belfast
Carragher, Ms Toni	South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee
Clarke, Dr Patricia	Research Officer, CCBS
Clarke, Mr Sean	Vice-chairman, NIAPA, Cookstown, Co Tyrone
Collins, Mr Tom	Director, Dundalk Institute of Technology
Dempsey, Mr Matt	Editor, Irish Farmers' Journal, Dublin
Dillon, Mr Frank	North/South Ministerial Council
Dillon, Mr Oliver	Chief Agricultural Officer, Teagasc, Dundalk, Co Louth
Gibson, Mr Chris	Chairman, CCBS
Gilliland, Mr John	Deputy President, Ulster Farmers' Union, Belfast
Hughes, Ms Mairéad	Administrator, CCBS
Kelly, Mr Brian	Irish Farmers' Association, Co Monaghan
McCabe, Mr Aidan	Farm Development Officer, Town of Monaghan Co-operative
McDonagh, Mr Philip	Chief Economist, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Belfast
McElroy, Mr Henry	South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee
McGenity, Mr Damien	Rural Support Services Worker, Rural Support Project
McMullen, Cllr Oliver	Moyle District Council
Monaghan, Professor Michael	Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University College Dublin
Ó Laoide, Mr Sean	Vice President, Veterinary Ireland, Dublin
Ó Suilleabhain, Mr Brian	Veterinary Consultant, Food Safety Authority of Ireland
O'Farrell, Dr Kevin	Teagasc, National Dairy Products Research Centre
Pollak, Mr Andy	Director, CCBS
Quinn, Professor Joe	Professor of Veterinary Microbiology and Parasitology, University College Dublin
Weir, Ms Lily	Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone
Wright, Mr Richard	Northern agricultural journalist

North-South FMD Study Day

PROGRAMME

9.30 a.m.	<i>Refreshments</i>
10.00	Opening remarks by Dr Tom Collins, director, Dundalk Institute of Technology
10.15	Opening remarks by the chairman, Mr Matt Dempsey, editor and chief executive, <i>Irish Farmers' Journal</i>
10.30	Presentation by Dr Patricia Clarke, research officer, Centre for Cross Border Studies
11.15	<i>Refreshments</i>
11.45	Discussion groups
12.45	Report back and closing session
1.30	Lunch



List of Key Players Interviewed

Appendix **D**

Name	Organisation
Agricultural Sector Managers	North/South Ministerial Council
Mr Peter Bishton	Operations Executive, Veterinary Ireland
Ms Toni Carragher	Secretary and P.R.O., South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee
Mr Allan Chambers	Northern Ireland farmer and member of Northern Ireland Vision Steering Group
Mr Sean Clarke	Vice chairman, Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association
Mr Albert Costello***	Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, DAFRD
Mr Seymour Crawford	Fine Gael TD for Monaghan-Cavan and farmer
Mr Matt Dempsey*	Editor, Irish Farmers Journal
Mr Declan Fearon	Chairman, South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee
Mr John Fox***	Assistant Secretary DAFRD
Mr Colm Gaynor***	Chief Veterinary Officer, DAFRD
Mr Pascal Gibbons	President, Veterinary Ireland
Mr Vincent Gilhawley	Chief Executive, Town of Monaghan Co-operative
Ms Eleanor Gill	Manager, Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone
Mr John Gilliland**	Deputy President, Ulster Farmers' Union
Mr Brendan Gleeson*	Animal Health Section, Department of Agriculture Food and Rural Development
Mr Seamus Healy***	Assistant Secretary DAFRD
Mr Stewart Johnston	Head of Farm Policy, Animal Health, Welfare & BSE, DARD
Mr Séan MacConnell	Agricultural correspondent, Irish Times
Mr Aidan McCabe	Farm Development Officer, Town of Monaghan Co-operative
Mr Henry McElroy	Cross-border farmer, south Armagh
Mr Damien McGenity	Rural Support Services Worker, Newry
Cllr Patsy McGlone	SDLP Councillor, Cookstown
Mr Gerry McHugh	MLA, Sinn Fein Agricultural Spokesperson
Mr Nigel McLaughlin**	Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association
Cllr Oliver McMullan	Independent Councillor, Moyle District Council
Dr Kevin O'Farrell	Expert Advisory Group and national co-ordinator of Teagasc FMD control programme
Mr George O'Hagan*	Donegal County Chairman, Irish Farmers' Association
Mr Raymond O'Malley*	Louth County chairman, Irish Farmers' Association
Mr Patrick O'Rourke*	President, Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association
Dr Thomas Quigley****	Food Safety Promotion Board

List of Key Players Interviewed

Mr Ciaran Quinn	Northern Ireland pig farmer
Dr Michael Sheridan*	Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, Dept of Agriculture Food and Rural Development
Mr Richard Wright**	Agricultural journalist, Northern Ireland

- * Group meeting of key players from the Republic of Ireland
- ** Group meeting of key players from Northern Ireland
- *** Group meeting of officials from the Department of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Development in Dublin
- **** Telephone conversation



1. **Inquiry into the lessons to be learnt from the FMD outbreak**

This inquiry will offer recommendations on how the British government and the devolved administrations in Edinburgh and Cardiff should handle any future major animal disease outbreak in the light of the lessons identified from the handling of the 2001 FMD outbreak in Britain. It will be headed by Dr Iain Anderson, former chairman of British Telecom, working with the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat. The recommendations will be addressed to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. The inquiry will not begin until the current outbreak of FMD in Britain is over, and should aim for completion within six months. If there are important emerging recommendations which should be passed to the government sooner, the inquiry may publish interim findings.

2. **Scientific review by the Royal Society**

The Royal Society will lead a scientific review of the transmission, prevention and control of infectious diseases in livestock, asking about the potential risks of future farm epidemics and whether the UK has the necessary early warning systems in place to prevent future infections. The review will study the threat posed by the 15 most dangerous epidemic (List A) diseases of farm animals, and will also consider possible health hazards for humans resulting from livestock epidemics. The review will be carried out by a committee chaired by Sir Brian Follett FRS and including veterinary scientists, virologists, epidemiologists, and representatives of farming and consumer groups. It has agreed to provide recommendations by summer 2002.

3. **Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food**

The UK Government's Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food will advise on how to create a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector within a thriving rural economy which advances environmental, health and animal welfare goals. It will have a key role in informing the Government's approach to policies affecting rural areas in future, and will be led by Sir Don Curry, the former chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission. The Commission, which will only cover England, has been asked to report by 31 December 2001.

4. **Rural Task Force**

The Rural Task Force was set up by the UK Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, in March 2001 to advise the Government on the impact of foot-and-mouth disease on the rural economy, and reported on 18 October. The Task Force, which was chaired by Mr Alun Michael, Minister for Rural Affairs, comprised representatives from a range of government departments and agencies together with stakeholder bodies, including representatives of farming, tourism, small business, conservation and local government. Besides making recommendations for the short-term survival of rural businesses and the revival of the rural economy in the medium term, its report assessed the

United Kingdom and European-wide FMD Inquiries

impact on the rural economy of foot-and-mouth disease and the measures taken to control it, including closure of rights-of-way and access land. It also examined the effectiveness of measures taken to help affected rural businesses.

The Task Force was established as a UK-wide body and Ministers from the Northern Ireland Executive made a contribution to its work. However its focus has been primarily on the situation in England, and it remains for the devolved administrations to decide whether to follow similar policies or adopt their own measures.

5. DEFRA Select Committee Inquiry

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (formerly DAFF) Select Committee began taking oral evidence on FMD on 21 March 2001. The exact terms of reference are to be confirmed but the inquiry, which is led by Rt. Hon. David Curry MP, started to record evidence from Minister Beckett and other key players during October 2001.

6. UK National Audit Office investigation

The UK National Audit Office (NAO) is an independent body which, on behalf of the UK Parliament, monitors all aspects of spending by the government. The NAO has begun a 'value for money' investigation into the government's contingency planning and the effectiveness of its response to the FMD outbreak. This investigation will ask whether the government responded in a cost-effective manner, and will look at the overall cost of the outbreak both in terms of immediate public expenditure and the wider economic costs. It is due to report by the end of summer 2002 and is confined to England and Wales.

7. Commons Public Accounts Committee

The Commons Public Accounts Committee agreed to review the FMD outbreak by summer 2002. The terms of reference have yet to be finalised, but it is expected that the UK government will be forced to answer questions about the conclusions drawn by the National Audit Office.

8. Royal Society of Edinburgh FMD Inquiry

The inquiry, initiated by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, will look at the implications for Scotland arising from the FMD outbreak. Its remit includes assessment of the impact of the disease on animal health and in terms of its social and economic consequences on the countryside and on Scotland as a whole. The emphasis of the review will be on future methods of prevention and control, and recommendations on lessons learned. It will report to the president and council of the Society.





United Kingdom and European-wide FMD Inquiries

9. Commons Tourism Committee Inquiry

No details exist about this proposed inquiry, but it will no doubt consider the impact of the FMD outbreak on the UK's tourism industry.

10. Devon Public Inquiry

A five day independent inquiry into the FMD outbreak in Devon - one of the worst affected areas of the UK with 173 confirmed cases - opened on 8 October 2001 under the chairmanship of Professor Ian Mercer. The inquiry heard evidence from many of the 350 farmers, tourist organisations and other businesses who had made written submissions. Preliminary findings and recommendations were produced so that they could be forwarded to the Government's Policy Commission on the future of Farming and Food, whose chairman, Sir Don Curry, had asked for responses to his consultation by 26 October 2001. The Devon Inquiry's preliminary report concluded that MAFF's handling of the FMD crisis had been "bungled", "insensitive" and had jeopardised the welfare of local communities. It called for the creation of a national contingency plan on the disease which would be regularly reviewed and tested. The Devon Inquiry's full report is expected to be published before the end of 2001.

11. European Commission Fraud Investigation

The European Commission is conducting a fraud investigation into the compensation payments being made to farmers following the revelations of alleged fraud involving the Ewe Premium System in Ireland. This fraud investigation also includes the UK after an EU committee criticised the UK government's decision to let farmers choose their own experts to make farm valuations in the wake of a cull.

12. EU Technical symposium

On 26 September 2001 the EU Chief Veterinary Officers held a strategic seminar in Brussels entitled: "Development of prevention and control strategies to address animal health and related problems in densely populated livestock areas in the EU". No further details are known about this symposium.





The Centre for Cross Border Studies, based in Armagh, was set up in September 1999 to research and develop co-operation across the Irish border in education, health, business, public administration, communications, agriculture and a range of other practical areas. It is a joint initiative by Queen's University Belfast, Dublin City University and the Workers Educational Association (Northern Ireland), and is financed by the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. In 2001 the Centre published reports on cross-border telecommunications, cross-border health services, all-Ireland co-operation to tackle disadvantage in education, EU cross-border funding before and after the Good Friday Agreement, cross-border co-operation in local government and cross-border co-operation between local history societies.

Other Reports from the Centre

The Evolution of Telecom Technologies: Current Trends and Near-Future Implications. Fionn Murtagh, John Keating, Susan Bergin, Chris Harper, Geraldine McParland and Mohsen Farid. February 2001.

Cross-border Co-operation in Health Services in Ireland. Jim Jamison, Michelle Butler, Patricia Clarke, Martin McKee and Ciaran O'Neill. March 2001.

Ireland's Learning Poor: Adult Educational Disadvantage and Cross-Border Co-operation. Paul McGill and Mark Morgan. April 2001.

Creating Living Institutions: EU Cross-Border Co-operation after the Good Friday Agreement. Brigid Laffan and Diane Payne. May 2001.

Cross-Border Co-operation in Local Government: Development, Management and Reconciliation. Derek Birrell and Amanda Hayes. May 2001.

The Local History Project: Co-operating North and South. Jacinta Prunty, Raymond Gillespie and Maeve Mulryan-Moloney. October 2001.

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