



Foot and Mouth Disease – Bulletin 2

6 August 2007

Dear Member

The following information has been sent by Robert Broadbent, Chairman of the British Camelid Vets Association (BCVA). He has asked that we make it clear that this is his opinion not that of the BCVA as time is too short to get consensus. It is a considered opinion, which may be different, from current advice given by DEFRA, Animal Health or the Government as things are changing by the hour.

The confirmed outbreak in August 2007 of Foot and Mouth disease (FMD) in Surrey affects all camelid owners if only in legislative terms. It should be assumed that the nationwide ban on animal movements includes camelids. That means that no animal can be moved on to, or off, a premise or Holding without the possession of a Movement Licence issued either by a DEFRA vet or a Local Veterinary Inspector (LVI) who may be your own vet. An application for a Licence can be obtained through your own vet. That application can only be granted by DEFRA, and certainly in the early stages of the outbreak, may well be turned down except for movement for slaughter or treatment at a surgery.

There has been much discussion about the involvement of camelids in FMD before and since the 2001 outbreak. The general conclusion of scientists is that camelids appear not to develop the disease. DEFRA however are concerned that they have been shown, after contact with the virus, to develop a very short lived immune response. They say that because of this, it is not possible to say that camelids cannot carry the virus. The general disease description always states that the FMD virus affects 'cloven hooved' animals. This saga of discussion will run for many years to come, but the end product is that DEFRA are likely to request the slaughter of camelids found within a Protection Zone on premises contiguous to those where an outbreak has been confirmed.

Any camelid owners who also have other cloven hooved animals on their premises should contact their local vet about the possibility of getting the camelids into a 'separate epidemiological unit' (SEU). In the event of a compulsory on farm slaughter, DEFRA have said that they will view those animals in an SEU as a separate herd, and providing evidence is provided that the SEU is indeed separate, and has been so for the previous 30 days, those animals may then be exempt from slaughter.

In the event of a DEFRA request for the slaughter of camelids, your own vet should be contacted to see if this is indeed a request or if there are enforceable legislative powers to force that slaughter.

The DEFRA website is currently being updated at regular intervals and can be accessed at:
www.defra.gov.uk/footandmouth

Bio security should be utmost in everyone's minds. The FMD virus can be carried by anything that moves, so as well as being carried in large numbers by infected cattle, sheep, pigs etc, you should be very aware that your own feet, cars, lorries, your local vet, walkers and their dogs can all mechanically and unknowingly carry the virus. It is therefore imperative that until the disease is once again eradicated from the UK, camelid owners treat anything that moves as a potential carrier. The farm gates (assuming all camelid premises are called 'farm') should be closed and if possible locked, there should be regularly replenished and refreshed disinfectant foot and wheel baths or mats at the entries and exits from the farm. Movements of vehicles and people on to and off the farm should be kept to the absolute minimum.

Further information and advice may be sought from any BVCA member.

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