

Foot and Mouth News

Uplifting news 28th September:

The Prince of Wales has given £600,000 to the Farm Crisis Network (FCN) to help with their work with farmers in difficulties with cash flow caused by Foot and Mouth both in short and medium term.

September 28th Update

Defra have announced that markets will be opened from next Thursday. The conditions for licenses not yet announced so keep eye on Defra website link below.

Whilst this is very welcome it will not solve the financial crisis set in chain over last six weeks. The RAF will be trying to keep abreast of rural concerns not only in farming sector but throughout the rural economy so we can transmit your concerns to a wider audience.

To this effect we took part in a wide stakeholder meeting chaired by Tony Cooke, of Framework for Change, today. The meeting lasted two hours and was attended by farmers, support agencies, councilors, Yorkshire Forward, the Church, the banks, the police, to name but a few, and was addressed by the Regional Veterinary Service. Two major concerns arose; Better communication and gathering data from the different aspects to prepare an informed forward position paper for passing to Government via the RAF and F4C routes. The questions were "what problems do you see over next month, over the next six months" and "what do you see as solutions". If you wish to give your views please email Ian Smith at Ian.R.Smith@govh.gsi.gov.uk.

Other members of RAF were present and will be taking actions which I hope we become evident over next couple of weeks.

Update September 25th 2007

This afternoon Defra will allow further movements of livestock. See the link below for full details. The new rules allow the movement of animals farm to farm. In our case to most of England Scotland and Wales. There are restrictions of movement to our region from both Foot and Mouth and Bluetongue restricted zones.

Breeding sheep and female lambs will now be able to move to lowland pasture. Store lambs can also be sold and moved from hills to other pastures. Store cattle can be moved to over wintering sheds or pastures as well as be sold and pigs moved from rearing to fattening. Basically Defra have moved very quickly to head off welfare issues.

The economic damage still remains as the disruption of the export trade and lack of open markets interferes with trading meaning price setting is very difficult. No doubt systems will be invented to connect buyers and sellers over next few days to act as a substitute for markets which because of mixing of stock and random movement are considered much higher risk.

Foot and Mouth Update - September 21st 2007

Many people are working hard to ensure business in the countryside continues based on risk assessments related to the continued disease presence in Surrey. These updates are for those living in countryside so are general, rather than technical information for farmers who get this from their organizations such as NFU.

The Defra link below gives the official movement license situation and is updated as soon as new arrangements are agreed. Basically fatstock can be moved to abattoirs either direct or via collection points. The trading is based on what is termed a "red" market meaning it is one way and stock cannot be taken back to farms. Most trading is therefore done on prearranged prices but there are some bidding markets. My reports say beef is trading at reasonable prices but fat lambs are a poor trade.

Farmers with several farms or farms split by roads can now move stock within their patch with certain distance restrictions. This allows movement from pastures and some weaner pigs to finishing sheds. There are also some more specific welfare movements allowed.

The major problems still lies with our hill farmers particularly those with sheep where the situation outlined below still applies.

At the moment the replies one receives from trying to get help for these farmers are based around "to give monetary help or compensation breaks State Aid rules". These are the EU rules which restrict member states from giving support which would distort the so called level playing field created by the Common Agricultural Policy. All Government departments, Yorkshire Forward and Councils are covered by these rules as they all deal in public monies. There have been letters to the banking sector asking for tolerance on overdrafts. Their industry has had rather more immediate response from Government to deal with their troubles!!!

The voluntary sector is beginning to act, on the basis that they might be the only early response to this developing crisis in the hills. I have given below some numbers that you could use if you are approached by stressed members of our rural communities.

Obviously the voluntary sector needs donations to be able to help those in need. Can you encourage anyone to send donations to the [ARC Addington Trust](http://www.arc-addingtonfund.org.uk) as soon as possible. www.arc-addingtonfund.org.uk

Special notice on Foot and Mouth Outbreak from the Y&H Chair, Graham Ward

The new outbreak of Foot and Mouth is like a blow to the stomach of all those close to our farmers. Their livestock businesses have been at a standstill for six

weeks and now are stood still again. I would like all members of the RAF to try to explain to anyone they meet what it means as the national news coverage concentrates only on the actual outbreak.

Firstly our sheep farmers. This is the time of year for lamb sales. It is the major cash flow into the business. The time to pay back the bank finance for a year's work. No lamb sales = no money. The lambs have to remain on the farm. This is a major problem as now there are too many mouths to feed. Also the lambs are sold on in good condition, having benefited from their mothers milk and good grass, but now the ewes have to be separated to allow them to be mated for next year's crop and the grass has stopped growing. The lambs rapidly lose condition and value. This happened during the last six weeks; now the farmers have a much more urgent problem. The hay making season has been poor because of the rain but now the drought has totally stopped grass growth. There is literally no feed available on our hill farms to feed this retained stock. Animal welfare problems will arise. The stress caused to farmers listening to the hunger distress baaing of sheep is devastating and overwhelmingly distressing. Your Steering Group is in discussions with the NFU on both these aspects of the new crisis for hill sheep farmers.

Another knock-on effect to our sheep farmers is that it is the mating season for sheep. At this time of year the rams are brought back from their isolation to the ewe flocks. The rams are often away or in fields separated from the ewes by public roads. This means they can not be reunited. The gestation period for sheep is about five months so a delay in mating till October or even November will push next year's lambs much too late in the season for them to grow to marketable sizes in 2008.

Secondly, the pig farmers in our region. Pigs grow fairly rapidly and have to meet very detailed physical condition for slaughter. They quickly pass this stage and lose value. Because of this rapid growth, the pig numbers flowing through the housing is closely planned so little spare capacity exists. If you put a stop to outward movement then finding sufficient housing becomes very difficult. Finally the pigs are often bred on one site, often outdoors, but are moved to another site for the final high input feeding. These sites are also separated by public roads so total disruption of the flow is created. Unlike the sheep farmers, feed supply is not a problem but cost is. The cost of feed has escalated because of the rises in world grain price. The pig farmers are already in massive troubles because of this so feeding pigs which should have gone to market will be a really massive financial strain.

Thirdly, of course, there are our cattle farmers. The beef farmer shares the problems of both the sheep and pig farmers as outlined above. The dairy farmers have specific problems related to calves and older cows. I will cover some of these in detail in my next F&M notes.

Finally, I am aware of the possible knock on effects to other rural business, especially tourism and of course traders serving farmers. I will deal with this in later notes and would welcome feed back from these businesses again to build an evidence base. I am planning to use our website to carry personal experience stories so that we can highlight real case studies to national and regional authorities as well as to other bodies connected with rural Yorkshire and Humber. Please contact me directly at pandg@ivyhouse.karoo.co.uk with any inputs you feel could be relevant in our RAF role in representing the concerns of rural residents.

Graham Ward

Chair, Yorkshire and The Humber Rural Affairs Forum

Foot and Mouth Update 10th October

Defra Secretary Hilary Benn announced a package of aid late on Monday. The donation of a million pounds to the stress charities is very welcome and tops up the generous donations from HRH Prince Charles and his friends. This means the charities have a good ongoing level of funds so please encourage applications for short term financial need to the contacts given below. These funds are the only real cash available to relieve the worsening cash flow crisis and the donors do want them to be used. As a result of a stakeholders meeting at Yorkshire Showground our forum Police member has been able to get a brief to all police forces in North Yorks to be aware and look out for our residents and any signs of stress and our church representative has done the same for all parish vicars. Please use these extra eyes and ears. The measures for extra cash for hill farmers will mean some monies in November. Remember these are farmers who are receiving the Hill Farm Allowance who live quite high up and do not apply to those livestock farmers on the lower hill farms.

There are still very divided opinions on the need for a welfare cull of light lambs in England. The Scots and Welsh have introduced welfare cull schemes to remove from the market place the light lambs which would have gone to export or new lowland homes over last eight weeks Their reasons are that although movement restrictions allow some market activity the time has passed for a large number of lambs and markets are no longer there so there is nowhere for these lambs to go and feeding them is becoming impossible as autumn and winter approaches. Its rather like harvesting your strawberries, there is a time and if this passes you can not recover.

The other problem of the movements is the 20 day standstill (or 30 day if you want to move animals for export slaughter). These rules mean if you buy some stock, say some new breeding ewes, then you can not move any other animal off your farm for 20 days. You may have store or fat cattle as part of your enterprise which you want to move to market on a weekly basis so you stop all this happening. The normal rules are a 6 day standstill which fits around weekly

planning. This extended standstill is basically discouraging any real sheep breeding movements which are traditional at this time before the Oct/Nov tugging season so next spring is already being affected beside another log jam of sheep on the hills being created.

Finally the lowland farmers in the blue-tongue areas have basically stopped buying sheep or cattle until their future restrictions are clarified. This again leaves livestock in our region which would have moved out at this time of year.

Foot and Mouth is far from over and the crisis precipitated in our rural communities will be with us till at least the spring and this time round taken with the CAP regional Single Farm Payment scheme changes could severely affect the future of livestock farming and thus the landscape as well as other rural businesses. There will be "recovery" packages at some stage and the RAF will be able to input into these so please keep us informed of problems as you see them at grass roots.

January Update

Bluetongue vector-free period allows livestock movements to resume

Defra declared a "vector free period" on December 21. This allows ruminant livestock to be moved out of the bluetongue protection and surveillance zones, subject to licencing, testing and other conditions – full details of which you can find on Defra website. The declaration is recognition of the fact that average temperatures fell low enough and for long enough during December to stop movements of the midges that spread the disease. The 'vector-free period' will remain in force until further notice.

December Update

We have not yet received a reply but Lord Rooker's statement in the House of Lords debate noted below may be why.

"LORD ROOKER: HOUSE OF LORDS, Thursday 6TH December 2007, 2:30 PM

Debate: Agriculture/Defra

.....I will finish at this point. I also accept that there are problems with arables and that the milk price has changed, but the worst affected, most damaged farmers are the hill sheep farmers. They cannot do anything else. I was in two valleys, both of them six-mile cul-de-sacs. I had to drive from one to the other, which was the drive of a lifetime I can tell noble Lords. They were both cul-de-sacs, so it was difficult to get across them. I knew about the families I was going

to meet before I got there. I knew their ages, whether they had children who wanted to stay in farming or had left. I knew whether the farms were tenanted or owned. I could work out from the information that I had been given by my NFU colleagues and others that, in 10 years' time, they could both be wilderness valleys if no one goes into farm them.

We have to ask ourselves as a society whether we want the landscape maintained. Should the landscape be maintained for city dwellers who use it for their recreation? If we think that that is a good thing, we have to put a value on it and say that it is for the public good to maintain the landscape; otherwise it is a wilderness. Those are questions that we must ask. How we pay that, I do not know. Quite clearly, it will not work expecting sheep to go to market and come back through the food system. It appears that that is not a viable proposition. Those questions must be asked and answered. Otherwise, we will see the destruction of rural communities and the destruction of our landscape at the same time. In 10 years' time, I do not want to be someone who is fingered for being part of that.

Full record of this debate available at: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2007-12-06a.1819.3>

I am hopeful this will not be the Government position by the Spring!

November Update

The RAF focus is now concentrating on the medium and long term problems precipitated in the uplands by the livestock market disruption. This is coupled with other changes affecting the rural economies in these areas, which are limited in response options available because of climate and geology.

We have sent a reply to our Minister Mr Jonathan Shaw, and as it says we have been in close liaison with colleagues in the North East and North West on this issue. See below for the Jonathan Shaw's letter and the RAF response.

Letter to Hilary Benn MP and Lord Rooker 10th October 2007: [F&M Northern Situation](#)

Letter to the Minister 17th September 2007

Graham has written to the Minister expressing the RAF concerns for hillfarmers in the region affected by the Foot and Mouth movement restriction. [Read the letter to the Minister](#)

Response from Jonathan Shaw MP 10th October 2007: [Read](#)

RAF Reply to Jonathan Shaw MP 8th November 2007: [Read](#)

Movement and Licenses

Defra have issued licenses for movement of animals to slaughter and for fallen stock. [Click here for direct access](#)

Help and Advice

North Yorkshire information line 08453301221

[RSPCA Helpline](#) or 0870 7538333

Farm Crisis Network www.farminghelp.org.uk or 07002 326 326

The ARC-Addington Funds - 02476 690 587

Raise money for ARC-Addington Fund just by searching the web! We are listed on Everyclick.com, the search engine that helps charity. Please follow this link <http://www.everyclick.com/uk/arcaddingtonfund> and set Everyclick as your home page so that all of your searching benefits ARC-Addington.

Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) - 01865 727888

Samaritans - 08457 909090