

Return to an Address of the  
Honourable the House of Commons dated  
11 March 2008 for the

Foot and Mouth Disease 2007:  
A Review and Lessons Learned

Chairman, Dr Iain Anderson CBE

Presented to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs

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## Section one

# Foreword

by Iain Anderson

In 2002 I published the report of my inquiry into the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak of 2001, setting out my analysis of the main lessons to be learned and a comprehensive range of recommendations to government and other relevant organisations. Last summer, in the middle of the recent FMD outbreak, I was asked by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to conduct a review to find out if the lessons of 2001 had indeed been learned and whether there might be new lessons and further recommendations. This report is the result of that work. It is a closely-documented description of what happened, from the first steps taken on 3 August in response to the FMD outbreak, through to 22 February when the last international restrictions were removed.

The report is built around the findings from 2001, with a chapter devoted to each of the major lessons identified six years ago. We also look at the Pirbright facility – the source of the virus incriminated in this recent outbreak – to see what further lessons may be drawn. Each chapter ends with key conclusions and recommendations. The report is preceded by a summary of events and a complete list of recommendations.

A Review such as this is an intensive – and extensive – collective effort. I want to express my gratitude to my support team who worked so tirelessly: to Alun Evans, who once again was prepared to join me, as Secretary to the Review, and to each one of my small secretariat who patiently researched the details and brought them together into the final report. I would also like to thank the many people who have taken time to send submissions or have been willing to share their knowledge in discussion. I include in my thanks those officials in the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and elsewhere who agreed to be questioned about their roles and actions. We have endeavoured to be accurate and fair in our analysis, comments and reflections.

We consulted experts to help inform our opinions and avoid errors of fact or interpretation. For any that have slipped through I apologise.

In analysing how the 2007 outbreak was handled, with its innumerable, interwoven decisions and actions, we found much to applaud, along with some deficiencies. On balance, the positive easily outweighs the negative.

There were many examples of strong leadership, from the Prime Minister down which contributed to setting the right tone at the outset. Improved contingency planning and far better integration of scientific advice and capabilities at the centre of disease control strategies were big lessons learned from 2001. And external communication too was greatly improved, especially with the news-hungry media.

Less encouraging were the inadequate infrastructure and governance of the Pirbright facility where the Institute for Animal Health (IAH) is located, and the poor regulatory regime in place to license work with dangerous animal pathogens. Defra's information systems too were found wanting. We make specific recommendations in this report on these and all other matters needing attention.

A personal recommendation concerns the future of IAH itself. Looking across all the evidence we sifted and the analyses we made, I have become convinced of the need to reposition IAH as a new 'National Institute of Infectious Diseases' supported by multiple sources of funding from government and elsewhere. This new Institute should be devoted to vital short, medium and long term research into animal and zoonotic viral diseases. It should also have the capability to respond to disease emergencies by providing support for surveillance and control. To be effective the Institute would need to have the capacity to deploy and direct a critical mass of resources to selected, strategic areas of work, ideally via forging formal links with one or more universities.

The events of last summer brought home that the old arrangements at Pirbright must now be discarded. My hope is that a new consensus can be formed to move forward swiftly on a firm, sustainable basis, and I believe that Defra is best placed to take the lead in making this happen. The ambiguities of departmental leadership – and the lack of long-term sustainable funding – that have bedevilled progress in this area must be tackled and not left in doubt any longer. The increasing movement of people and goods as a result of globalisation, together with the advance of climate change, contribute to the growing risks to this country from the introduction of exotic diseases. Accordingly, I hope action will be taken to address this recommendation urgently and progress reported regularly to Parliament.

With the creation of a National Institute of Infectious Diseases, I believe parallel steps should also be taken to create an Independent Advisory Committee on Animal and Emerging Infectious Diseases along the lines, perhaps, of the successful Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC). This would be a high level group of distinguished

experts, along with stakeholders, with a mission to provide independent advice to government. It would be required to take a strategic overview on all aspects of animal health, transcending artificial boundaries defined by government departments. It would link closely with the Government's and departmental Chief Scientific Advisors and count among its members the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Chief Medical Officer.

I do not share the view, held in some quarters, that Defra lacks the deep-seated commitment to research that would be needed to champion and lead the kind of co-ordinated, sustained investment now called for. On the contrary, I believe Defra will properly support well argued, peer reviewed research programmes if it is confident that value will be delivered and budget pressures allow.

If, however, these issues cannot be resolved at departmental level, or Defra is constrained by lack of funding, then I urge the Prime Minister to ensure that appropriate new arrangements are brought into being as soon as practicable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Anderson', with a small flourish at the end.

**Iain Anderson**  
March 2008