

Effects of Foreign Animal Disease Outbreaks on United Kingdom Animal Health Policy: Implications for Emergency Response in the United States

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Project scope: Recent large scale outbreaks of foreign and emerging animal diseases have highlighted the need for well-planned and well-communicated animal health policies. While many of the shortcomings of current policies become apparent during a disease outbreak, the changes made after a large scale outbreak may be more enlightening. The purpose of this project was to examine the impact of numerous disease outbreaks on animal health policy, organization, and communication in the United Kingdom (UK). Three recent disease outbreaks in the UK, classical swine fever (CSF) in 2000, foot and mouth disease (FMD) in 2001 and again in 2007, and recurring highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (HPAI), have each posed serious challenges to their regulatory structure and policies.

Recent progress: For this project, individuals within the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Veterinary Laboratory Agency, and Animal Health Agency were identified based on their current roles in animal disease detection, prevention, and emergency response. Individuals were interviewed for varying lengths of time using an open-ended questionnaire. From these interviews, numerous themes emerged and were further explored through additional interviews and literature review. Recent disease outbreaks in the UK have had massive and long lasting effects on how diseases are controlled in many countries. However, within the UK, these changes have extended into every facet of animal health including animal identification and tracing, national and farm-level biosecurity, disease surveillance, and agency and public communications. Despite these changes, many of the negative consequences of FMD in particular, may still be seen in the UK in the form of distrust by farmers and the public in the government's ability to manage disease outbreaks.

Future plans: Further investigation into the relevance and applicability of these changes to the United States agriculture sector, as well as the potential implications of distrust resulting from the disease control response will be undertaken. The FAZD Center is also currently performing a "lessons learned" analysis from the most recent outbreak of FMD in the UK.

Relevance to DHS research areas: As the Department of Homeland Security continues to prepare for threats to food and agricultural security, understanding of the broader context of emergency preparedness and response is needed. While significant efforts have been made to develop scientifically-sound and economically-feasible emergency response plans, these may be inadequate to successfully resolve a large-scale outbreak of a foreign animal disease.