

# Foot and Mouth Bulletin

## North Cumbria Health Services

Issue 2

6 April 2001

### Foot and Mouth Disease in North Cumbria

#### NCHA Action

The Health Authority has approved an action package to provide support during the outbreak.

- Two nurse practitioners will be recruited to work in the community with people affected by FMD.
- An intensive training package is being developed with St Martin's College for community and practice nursing staff.
- The Health Authority will assist with locum fees for General Practitioners who cannot practice normally because of restrictions on their movement.

Nurse practitioner posts will be advertised locally and information will be widely distributed. Details of the training package will be posted to Primary Care Trusts and Teams as soon as they are available.

GPs who may need to incur locum fees should contact Peter Tiplady at the Health Authority office, tel:

#### Policy on disposal of dead ani-

The policy operating in North Cumbria now is as follows:

- 1 Sheep and cattle up to 5 years old can be buried in the authorised sites at Great Orton, Flusco and Hespun Wood.
- 2 Older cattle can be incinerated and the Health Authority is now being consulted over the location of the pyre. Risk assessments will be carried out on an individual basis when between 200 and 1,000 cattle are being incinerated. There is no requirement for needs assessment for burns under 200, and the Health Authority have been assured that pyres of more than 1,000 carcasses should not now be needed.
- 3 Rendering of carcasses is still

an option but capacity is limited.

- 4 MAFF are notifying the Health Authority of each proposed burn and any comments have to be made within 3 hours. The Public Health doctors lead this, and take account of the proximity of the pyre to residential property and prevailing winds. There are no nationally agreed environmental criteria, and a common sense approach is being taken. The public health view would be that burning should not be within 500 metres

#### Risk of BSE

The Environment Agency has commissioned an assessment of risk due to BSE infectivity from burning cattle. In turn, The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) has commented on the risk assessment.

The conclusion is that a pyre of 100 dairy cattle aged over 5 years old could result in a total of seven thousandths of an infectious unit being subsequently ingested by people exposed. An infectious unit is equivalent to the amount of BSE infected material in grams that would be needed to produce the disease in half of those exposed to that amount when swallowed. This is obviously a very small risk, indeed, and is reduced even further because the infectivity would be spread out across a wide area. If that amount of infectivity was spread over 1,000 people the risk to an individual would be less than 1 in a million per year. This is on the borderline of the widely accepted upper limit for additional risk of 1 per million per year.

These risks, however, are increased with larger burns or if the infectivity is concentrated on fewer people. Burning 1,000 cattle at one time, in theory, doubles this risk and because of that individual

## Burial of carcasses

Sheep, and cattle under 5 years of age can be disposed of by burial. Risk assessment on the site is carried out in detail and particular attention is given to making sure that there will be no contamination of

drinking water, and also that gas production is controlled.

Burial, when properly controlled on properly assessed sites is safe and speeds up the process of the disposal of dead animals. There have been many complaints about the numbers of carcasses lying around for too long, and a mass burial should

## County Task Force supports health and social care

The County wide Task Force, which is chaired by Stuart Young, the Leader of the County Council, has sent a Communique to Mr Michael Meacher, Minister of State, which highlights the impact FMD is having - and will continue to have for a long time yet - on the health and social care needs of the community. Extra resources are being sought to provide additional help and social care,

## Good things happening!

In spite of the serious impact of this outbreak, or perhaps because of it, people are working together in exciting ways. At community level there are many stories coming in of good neighbour schemes to collect groceries and deliver prescriptions

so on for people who cannot leave their households. Someone to talk to is very important in these situations and telephone contact has been worthwhile. General Practitioners have been telephoning farmers on their list to offer help and support. Rural clergymen, unable to visit parishioners have been developing a ministry on the phone.

General Practitioners are encouraging people to meet in their surgery and in one case have installed coffee facility.

Information like this is very helpful to pass on to the Minister, and also harder facts about the impact of the disease on the community. Please let Peter Tiplady have details of anything that would help.

