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15 March 2001

TO APHIS  
TO DR LISA FERGUSON

FROM IRISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON DC  
FROM KENNETH THOMPSON

Dear Dr Ferguson

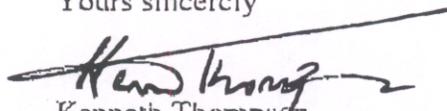
Thank you very much for the briefing you and Dr Malik gave the EU yesterday. It answered a lot of our queries and helped to clear up some of the uncertainties about the scope of the US ban on the EU.

As I said yesterday at the meeting our formal position is that the US ban on Ireland is unjustified as we have not had any case of FMD and should be lifted.

You expressly asked for information on measures that EU member States are taking in relation to animals, and I am therefore attaching a bulletin issued by our Department of Agriculture which sets out clearly what we are doing.

We will keep you informed.

Yours sincerely

  
Kenneth Thompson  
Economic Counsellor

**BRIEFING NOTE ON FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE SITUATION IN THE  
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

**Situation at 13<sup>th</sup> March**

**1. Ireland's Animal Health Status**

Ireland has a high animal health status and its agricultural products have access to the most discerning markets world-wide. Irish meat is recognised as a good product, produced in a clean environment under good conditions and in accordance with good standards of husbandry. Ireland's cattle and sheep production is predominantly grass based and is based on a largely self contained national herd.

There have been no cases of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the Republic of Ireland since 1941

**2. FMD in the UK**

The first case of FMD was confirmed in Cheale Meats in Essex on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2001. Since then the disease has spread rapidly throughout Great Britain. 183 cases had been identified to 13/3/01. A case was confirmed in Meigh, Co. Armagh, on **1 MARCH**, 2001. No other cases have been confirmed in Northern Ireland since then.

There is, at present, a suspect case in Augher, Co. Tyrone, in Northern Ireland. Preliminary tests for FMD are negative.

**3. FMD in France**

A case of Foot and Mouth disease has today been confirmed in a bovine animal in NW France. Ireland will immediately take action to prevent the importation of animals and animal products from the infected areas.

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#### 4. Action Taken to prevent the spread of FMD to Ireland

The protection of Irish Agriculture from the effects of FMD is a top Government priority. A co-ordination committee comprising representation from the Taoiseach's Office, the Department of Agriculture & Food and, the Garda Siochana, the Army and other organisations meets regularly to co-ordinate the National effort to prevent the disease from spreading to Ireland

Immediately upon the confirmation, on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2001, of the outbreak of the disease in Great Britain, a range of control measures was put in place to prevent the spread of the disease to the Republic of Ireland.

##### 4.1 Imports from UK

On 21<sup>st</sup> February the importation from the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland), of susceptible species (cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, deer) and of a range of animal products from such animals was banned.

Staff of the Department throughout the country were put on alert and arrangements were made with the army and the Garda Siochana to deploy appropriate resources to the border with Northern Ireland. Garda and/or Department of Agriculture staff are manning 141 border crossings at present.

On 27<sup>th</sup> February, the ban on the import of live animals from the UK was extended to horses and greyhounds from Great Britain and subsequently to horses and greyhounds from Northern Ireland.

##### 4.2 Controls within the State

Despite the fact that there has been no case in the South, DAFD, Garda Army and other staff have been put on a State of high alert. A range of precautionary controls over the movement of animals has been put in place throughout the State to prevent the spread of the

disease in the event that the disease spreads to the Republic of Ireland:

- Susceptible animals (Cows, sheep, pigs, goats, deer) may be transported only directly to slaughter or in exceptional cases, e.g. welfare cases. Permitting systems have been put in place by DAFRD with the assistance of the Garda Síochána and Teagasc and the restrictions in force have been strictly enforced;
- Horses may only be transported for a limited number of reasons (e.g. breeding, emergency veterinary procedures, export) and then only under licence.
- A ban was imposed on livestock markets in the border counties initially, on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, and throughout the State when the case in Northern Ireland was confirmed.
- As a precautionary measure, a control zone was established in the Northern part of County Louth closest to the outbreak in Meigh Co. Armagh, with strict controls on the movement of livestock and products into the zone, out of the zone and within the zone. The perimeter of this zone is manned by the Garda Síochána and Department of Agriculture Staff and there are Garda mobile patrols within in the area to control the movement of animals and animal products.
- All sheep imported from the UK since 1<sup>st</sup> February are being traced and slaughtered. Flocks and herds that might have been in contact with such animals are being restricted and examined. Approximately 710 herds/flocks had been restricted to 13/3. To date there are no serious concerns in relation to any of the restricted herds/flocks.

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In order to minimise the risk of spreading the virus from a range of activities, the following codes of practice have been put in place :

- Code of practice for limited, restricted exercise arrangements in Curragh agreed with Racehorse trainers G/3.
- Code of Practice re. spreading of slurry agreed and distributed
- Code of practice for agricultural students being prepared in case of additional manpower requirements for farm relief (lambing, etc.)
- Code of Practice for OPW operatives, contractors, consultants, being developed .

DAFRD is continuing, as the need arises, to liaise with a variety of bodies in relation to the necessity to put codes of practice in place.

#### 4.3 Public Awareness

- A publicity campaign was launched to heighten the awareness of the general public and the farming community. This campaign, involving television, radio and newspaper coverage, has proved extremely successful and there is an extremely high level of public awareness of the need to prevent the disease spreading to Ireland.
- The commitment of the farming community, and more especially the general public and a range of sporting, cultural and commercial organisations with no direct connection to farming has been remarkable. Many events, such as the World Cross Country Championship, international rugby matches with Wales, England and Scotland, and G.A.A. matches have been postponed to reduce any risk the virus being spread by human contact. DAFRD continues to advise the public not to travel to the countryside, and to advise sporting and other organisations to postpone events which are likely to attract large numbers of people from the countryside and more particularly from the UK.

### 5. Summary

Despite our rapidly diversifying and successful economy, Agriculture remains at the core of economic and social life in Ireland. The effort to ensure that Foot and Mouth Disease does not spread to this country will continue to be a top Government priority for so long as the threat of the disease in the UK continues. The Government's commitment to this effort is apparent from the comprehensive range of control measures put in place in the short space of time since 20<sup>th</sup> February. These efforts have, to date, been highly successful and we are convinced that with the continued co-operation of all sectors of society we can retain the FMD free status that we have carefully guarded since 1941.

Animal Health and Welfare Division