

Paris, May 29, 2001



Directorate General for Food

## Management of the foot and mouth disease outbreaks in 2001 by the French authorities

### I. Preventive measures

As early as 21 February 2001, following the announcement of the first case of foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom, the French authorities immediately implemented the following measures:

1. An **embargo** on all livestock of susceptible species originating from the United Kingdom, along with high-risk animal products derived from such livestock (slide 2).
2. **Reactivation of the emergency action plan defined in 1991** (slide 3) both at the French national level (a foot and mouth crisis management team was set up at the *General Directorate for Food at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and meetings of National Commission for foot and mouth disease control*) and at the level of the territorial *Département* (local inspection teams under the authority of the *Préfet* of the *Département*).
3. A **risk exposure analysis** (slide 4) including the identification of high-risk livestock movements using information supplied by the European community ANIMO computer system, and the carrying out of surveys.

Slide 5 illustrates the details of the evaluation of the risk that foot and mouth might be brought into France.

4. **Implementation of preventive measures on all premises holding "high-risk" livestock** (slides 6, 7 & 8):
  - The quarantining of premises and clinical examination of livestock present;
  - The culling on site of ovine livestock originating in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands or Ireland, along with all animals of susceptible species in physical contact with such livestock (49,315 animals from the United Kingdom or having been in contact with British-sourced livestock; 8,653 animals from the Netherlands, or which had been in contact with Dutch animals);
  - on site burial or incineration of the carcasses of slaughtered animals;
  - blood samples were taken from 10% of culled animals of British, Dutch or Irish origin (minimum 30 per batch of livestock); these were submitted to AFSSA (the French Food Safety Agency, to which the national laboratory of reference for FMD belongs) for serological and viral testing.

5,076 blood samples were taken from livestock sourced in the United Kingdom. The results returned by AFSSA break down as follows: 5,048 samples from 172 premises tested negative; 28 samples from 6 premises holding ovine livestock originating in the United Kingdom tested positive using the ELISA

*serology technique (5 territorial Départements were involved). 328 blood samples were taken from livestock originating in the Netherlands; the results were negative for all 328 samples and the 17 agricultural holdings concerned.*

- Implementation of protection zones (3 km radius) for periods of 30 days around premises on which animals had presented positive serological tests ;
- animals of non-susceptible species on premises subject to culling measures were quarantined for 7 days following the slaughter of the last animal;
- on 5 March 2001, a ban was imposed by Ministerial order on the movement and transportation on French territory of animals belonging to susceptible species (cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and other cloven-hoofed species) and equine livestock. These restrictions applied to movements within the country, exports, imports and transit through France of livestock originating in other countries.

## **II. The two French outbreaks**

### **1. First outbreak : 12 March 2001 in the territorial *Département* of Mayenne (slides 9 and 10)**

Premises holding 114 cattle located as follows:

- 500 metres from a farm which had brought in sheep sourced in the United Kingdom prior to the appearance of the first case in that country (link with UK case no. 11);
- within the protection zone already put in place following the notification of positive serology tests in accordance with the prevention plan described at I-4.

As soon as these infected premises were detected, the French authorities proceeded to take the following steps:

- Slaughter and destruction of the 114 heads of cattle on the premises;
- Establishment around the premises of protection (3km) and surveillance (10km) zones. In these zones, the following measures were applied to restrict movements of livestock:
  - A ban on movement and transportation of livestock of susceptible species;
  - A ban on gatherings of livestock (markets, fairs, shows) irrespective of species;
  - A ban on livestock of susceptible species entering or leaving the relevant zones;
  - Identification, isolation and quarantining of premises holding livestock of susceptible species;
  - Disinfection of vehicles and containers used for the transportation of dead animals, milk, meat or other materials capable of carrying the virus;
  - A ban on artificial insemination;
  - Installation of facilities for the disinfection of the wheels of vehicles and the shoes of staff on high-risk premises (slaughterhouses, knacker's yards, dairies, animal feed depots, and so on);
  - Definition of a separate route for the collection of milk for premises located within the zone placed under tight control.

In addition, in the protection zone (3 km around each infected premises):

- A ban on transportation of all livestock irrespective of species;
- A ban on putting livestock of susceptible species out to graze.

Details of the above protective zones are given in slide 10.

- Epidemiological surveys, including serological and clinical monitoring of livestock in protection and surveillance zones (slide 10);

- Preventive culling of swine (slide 10).

## **2. The second outbreak : 23 March 2001 in the territorial *Département* of Seine-et-Marne (slides 11 and 12)**

Premises holding 119 cattle, 147 sheep and 10 pigs epidemiologically linked to the outbreak in Mayenne (the farm had brought in ovine livestock from Ireland which passed through the Mayenne holding).

As soon as this case was detected, the French authorities proceeded to apply measures identical to those following the detection of the Mayenne outbreak (slide 9).

The details of the protection and surveillance zones, along with detailed information on official surveillance in these zones (clinical and serological), are provided in slide 12.

## **3. Preventive measures at EU level**

The occurrence of cases of foot and mouth disease outbreaks in France led the Standing Veterinary Committee of the European Commission to take specific steps with respect to France: a ban on movements of animals of susceptible species, their genetic material and products of animal origin derived from such livestock, unless treatment had been applied to inactivate the foot and mouth virus.

## **III. Termination of the crisis (slide 13)**

- As stated above, the French authorities implemented throughout the country, immediately following the appearance of the first case of foot and mouth disease in France, an intensive programme of epidemiological surveillance, especially in the zones subject to restriction measures.

This involved visits to all premises in the protection and surveillance zones for clinical examination of the livestock present there: no symptoms indicative of foot and mouth were observed.

Samples for serological testing were taken from all animals in the sheep and goat herds in the protection and surveillance zones: test results were negative in all cases.

**Consequently, the protection and surveillance zones surrounding the infected premises in the Mayenne *Département* were removed on 7 April and 23 April 2001 respectively. Regarding the zones subject to restriction measures around the Seine-et-Marne outbreak, the protection zone was lifted on 21 April, and the surveillance zone on 6 May 2001.**

- **In the light of the favourable development of the FMD situation in France**, the protective measures imposed at EU level were gradually lifted:
  - Until 2 April 2001, a ban was imposed on the export from metropolitan France of all products (meat and meat-based products, milk and dairy products) which had not been treated in order to inactivate the FMD virus, along with all livestock of susceptible species, their semen, ova and embryos;
  - From 2 April 2001, restriction measures were applied only to the territorial *Départements* of Seine-et-Marne, Seine-Saint-Denis and Val d'Oise, insofar as no new cases of the disease had been notified;
  - From midnight on 12 April 2001, all specific EU measures restricting the movement of livestock and trade in products applied to France were lifted. Intra-EU trade with France was once again permitted.

#### **IV. The initial lessons of the crisis (slides 14 & 15)**

Certain key factors essential to the successful management of the crisis need to be kept in mind (slide 14): the speed with which decisions were taken, the adjustment of measures to match individual situations, the involvement of the various actors, the veterinary network, transparency, communications.

Other factors nevertheless merit close attention (slide 15) in order to improve the system for preventing and managing health-related crises.

#### **Conclusion (slide 16)**

In the end, the management of the episodes of foot and mouth infection detected in France resulted in a successful outcome, but the appearance of the disease led to major fears due to the nature of the disease itself, which is extremely contagious, France's high level of exposure to risk (Eid-el Kebir festival), the alarmist reaction of the public opinion (already sensitised in respect to BSE), and the ongoing development of the disease in the United Kingdom.

We now need to draw the right lessons from this crisis in order to avoid the future appearance of any new scourge of this kind.