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From the Director General Animal Health & Welfare
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CVO/1101

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Dear Dr Edwards

Royal Society/Academy of Medical Sciences study on pandemic Influenza

Thank you for your letters of 2 March addressed to me and to my deputy Fred Landeg asking if our organisation wished to submit evidence to the above study. Please accept this initial reply on behalf of both of us.

You will no doubt be aware that Defra is the responsible Government department for the prevention and control of avian influenza. This Department works with other Government Departments, principally the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency to develop a coherent policy to avian influenza prevention and its control and to mitigate any risks to human heath from the avian disease.

We work with the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and with a wide range of delivery partners from HMRC to the State Veterinary Service and Local Authorities.

We have available to us the resources of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, an executive agency of Defra, to provide consultancy, advanced diagnostic capability, and international surveillance as the EU Community Reference Laboratory as well as expert advice from world class virologists in avian influenza.

In Europe we have worked hard to develop the European legislative framework for the prevention and control of avian influenza. We will also work with a diverse range of poultry stakeholders from international integrated commercial poultry companies, to hobby flock keepers, the game industry, captive birds and zoos. We will also work with others in Defra to minimise the impact of an outbreak of avian influenza on the rural economy.

Clearly the study is primarily about pandemic flu and the interest arises in the control and prevention of avian influenza because avian influenza may be a progenitor virus, either by mutation or reassortment, of a human pandemic influenza virus. The prevention and rapid

control of avian influenza in domestic birds may therefore be an important step in reducing the risk of such an occurrence.

We are therefore very keen to contribute to the Working Group. We have carried out a great deal of work, covering a wide range of issues and would very much appreciate a steer as to what evidence the Working Group would like from us and in what form. We could not even begin to summarise the potential evidence we could offer in four pages. You will see from our avian influenza pages on our website www.defra.gov.uk that we have a great deal of evidence to offer. The broad headings (not exhaustive) are as follows:

- International Disease surveillance
- Surveillance for Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza in domestic poultry
- Surveillance in wild birds
- Qualitative risk assessments on the likelihood of introduction of avian influenza into the UK from wild birds and other pathways.
- Epidemiology
- Preliminary Outbreak Assessments on risk to UK of an outbreak in a specific country
- Science and evidence based policy making
- Preventative measures against smuggling including publicity.
- European legislative framework for prevention and control.
- National legislation for prevention and control
- Control Strategy
- Slaughter and disposal
- Cleansing and disinfection
- Surveillance to prove freedom following an outbreak
- Protection of staff, poultry workers and disposal operatives including their vaccination to minimise the risk of reassortment.
- Contingency Planning and Published contingency plan laid before Parliament
- Policy on Prophylactic vaccination and Emergency vaccination in the face of an outbreak
- State of readiness
- Laboratory diagnosis
- Research
- Development of policy in the light of new findings or evidence
- Modelling of avian influenza in the UK situation
- The science and evidence base for these policies
- Lessons learnt from previous outbreak of avian influenza and other animal epidemics
- Effects on the rural economy

It may be that you wish to receive written evidence in specific areas or it may be the case that you wish to interview some Defra staff to cover particular issues in more detail.

I and Fred Landeg would be very happy to discuss the ways in which Defra can be of assistance in providing evidence.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

Debby Reynolds

DEBBY REYNOLDS