

TITLE:

UK Surveillance: New & Emerging – Dealing with the Unexpected

THEME: 8. EMERGING ISSUES

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ABSTRACT:

Assessment and communication of new conditions carries unique challenges for scientists and policy makers. A 'new' condition, by definition is undefined and unexpected and it takes time to characterise, identify and gather the information needed to determine firstly, whether a reported 'new' health event is genuinely 'new', and secondly, to be able to make an informed risk assessment and initiate appropriate management of any possible threat. Relevant, proportionate and affordable action must be initiated in the context of incomplete knowledge of the potential implications for human health, animal welfare, international trade and wider society. A further challenge, in an environment of 'open and transparent' policy making, is to determine how to communicate in a balanced, timely and effective way about an incomplete, but evolving picture.

A key step forward has been taken in the UK through the establishment of a dedicated policy Division for new and emerging animal – related issues within Defra. The presentation will describe various ongoing initiatives to strengthen our approach to new issues, principally through enhancements to communications and new strategic developments. We are seeking to improve communications through development of a risk communication strategy, for a wide-ranging stakeholder audience including the media; a more detailed framework of what should be communicated to whom, how, when, and the intended effect; expansion and enhancement of the 'Veterinary surveillance in the UK' web pages; and closer cross-government collaboration. Strategic activities include the commissioning of scientific projects to improve our ability to detect and assess new conditions.

247 Words