In-depth interview-based study of farmer perceptions of and attitudes towards biosecurity on English and Welsh beef suckler farms

Cardwell, J.M., Beauvais, W., Alarcon, P., Lewis, E., Van Winden, S., Fishwick, J., Mastin, A. and Pfeiffer, D.U., Royal Veterinary College, Veterinary Epidemiology & Public Health Group, United Kingdom; jcardwell@rvc.ac.uk

A qualitative study was undertaken to investigate English and Welsh beef farmers’ perceptions of and attitudes towards infectious disease biosecurity. A semi-structured interview schedule was designed to explore barriers and motivators to adopting new biosecurity practices, as well as farmers’ opinions of advice given by the veterinary profession and attitudes to research. Forty farmers who were willing to be interviewed were purposively selected from those who had participated in a larger intervention study of the effect of tailored farm-level biosecurity strategies. The sample included 20 ‘intervention’ farms, to which a specifically tailored biosecurity advice package had been provided, and 20 ‘control’ farms, to which more general advice had been provided. In-depth one-to-one interviews were conducted with each farmer and the resulting textual data were explored using established thematic methods. The findings were triangulated with quantitative data on how the same farmers responded to advice given over the course of the four-year intervention study. Preliminary findings will be presented and discussed in the context of the potential benefits of a mixed-methods approach to the investigation and development of realistic biosecurity practices.