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Surf and turf: surveillance and control of notifiable disease in UK aquaculture and agriculture

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Notifiable disease outbreaks limit production and trade in UK agriculture and aquaculture and the approach to cost sharing and veterinary involvement is often debated. To highlight the different strategies employed in livestock and fish production, surveillance and control measures are described for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and infectious salmon anaemia (ISA), both notifiable, exotic, non-zoonotic diseases which have occurred recently in the UK. Active, government-funded, sampling surveillance for ISA is carried out at regular intervals on UK fish farms. Livestock farms rely on observation by vets and farmers to detect FMD. The salmon industry must bear financial losses resulting from control measures as no compensation is given for ISA-infected fish stocks in line with other European salmon-producing countries. Farmers are compensated at full market value for FMD-affected livestock. Surveillance and disease control in aquaculture operates with minimal public veterinary input: non-veterinarian fish health inspectors collect samples and investigate and manage suspected cases of ISA. Vets carry out passive surveillance for FMD on farms and at abattoirs and government veterinary officers are responsible for outbreak investigation and control. In all recent UK outbreaks of ISA and FMD, the index cases were detected by veterinary surgeons. Veterinarians are more involved in livestock disease surveillance and control than in farmed fish; the origins of this are probably historical and linked to UK legislation which allows fish disease to be diagnosed without veterinary input. Current contingency plans and recent responses to ISA and FMD outbreaks are reviewed to explore how policy decisions affect financial support for producers and supply and demand for veterinary services related to control of notifiable disease.