Breeds at risk - contingency plan guidelines for potential derogation from culling

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Introduction

Preventing disease in animals is vital to profitable production and to maintaining high standards of animal welfare. Fundamental to this are good biosecurity practices.

Active, regularly updated Flock and Herd Health Plans provide the foundations to limit the introduction and spread of infectious endemic diseases through carefully considered livestock movements, preventative vaccinations, good hygiene and effective health plans. Evidence of effective, functional and regularly updated health planning is key to the development of the following contingency plan guidance..

Some infectious diseases pose a more serious threat; these are the exotic and notifiable diseases including Foot and Mouth Disease. For notifiable exotic disease the government takes charge to control and eradicate the disease during outbreaks.

Notifiable exotic disease control legislation provides for the culling of animals for disease control reasons. These animals may be on infected premises, dangerous contact premises or any other premises where the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) authorises culling to contain disease (for example slaughter on suspicion). Certain categories of animals, however, may be considered for being spared from culling in very limited circumstances where the CVO is satisfied that granting such derogation from culling will not endanger disease control.

DEROGATION FROM CULLING IS NOT GRANTED AUTOMATICALLY!

It may however be considered by the CVO for animals which are kept for purposes related to the conservation of species or genetic resource and in the event of a disease outbreak a Veterinary Risk Assessment would be performed to determine if animals might be spared from culling.

Breeds of animals that are considered to be kept for conservation purposes are listed as **Breeds at Risk** as defined by the Farm Animal Genetic Resources Committee and can be found through the following link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-breeds-at-risk-from-exotic-animal-disease-outbreaks

The following Guidelines have been produced by the Farm Animal Genetic Resources Committee to provide keepers, of animals that fall into the categories of **Breeds at Risk** with guidance to help them develop their own contingency plan, through consultation and collaboration with their own private vet, as part of their Herd and Flock Health plans.

Contingency plan guidelines

In drawing up your plan you should prepare a folder of evidence and log books that can be reviewed promptly by a Veterinary Inspector undertaking a Veterinary Risk Assessment for discussion with the CVO. This guidance is designed to enhance existing good biosecurity practice in the event of a notifiable disease outbreak. It provides general guidance that you may need to adapt depending on the species of livestock (Breeds at Risk) you keep, your individual farm and circumstances or the disease threat. The contingency plan should be reviewed by your vet as part of your overall Farm Health plan

General principles

The contingency plan should be prepared and ready to put into action as soon as a Notifiable disease is declared.

Selection of animals to enter isolation would need to be carefully considered. The welfare of these animals is paramount as they may need to be maintained for an extended period within isolation. Selecting animals on the basis of age, sex, stage of management (e.g. pregnancy, lactation) it may be preferable and more pragmatic, for example to select a sub group of young females than adult pregnant females. This may also be guided by the genetic merit of the group selected.

In most cases the animals to be considered for being spared will need to have been secured inside a building from an early stage of the outbreak.

If there is geographical isolation, for example on a remote hillside where stocking density is low or on an island, for some diseases this may be an effective alternative to using a building as a means of preventing onward spread of disease. A detailed description of the geographical situation will be required; including measures taken that will mean the geographical isolation can be maintained.

Any testing deemed necessary to provide evidence of freedom of disease and any costs associated with veterinary care or implementing and maintaining the isolation status may have to be borne by the owner.

Detailed requirements for the contingency plan should include descriptions of the following:

Isolation facilities (buildings or fields)

- Security arrangements – these should describe what is in place to prevent access to the isolated livestock from wild animals including vermin, intruders or escape from the

facility.

- Are the facilities suitable to maintain the selected animals for an extended period to meet their needs in terms of space, lighting or protection against the elements?

- How the facility is defined - a map or detailed plan showing the layout of the building should be created and show the distance of the isolation facility from other buildings, livestock or activities on the premises that may pose a bio security risk.

- Details of cleaning and disinfection of the buildings before use or where the animals already contained within the building should be described.

- A description of vermin controls that are in place in the building to prevent contact between the animals and wild birds or other vermin.

- Consider and describe how an isolation field is defined - a map showing the layout of the field and the distance from other livestock. What features including fencing/walls/natural features demonstrate that the area is geographically isolated and ensures the containment of the livestock and prevention of access by other livestock or people?

- Consider how geographical isolation could be maintained? What is in place to prevent the movement of susceptible animals into neighbouring fields?

- Describe the cleansing and disinfection facilities. The plan should show the location of footpaths, hand washing facilities and storage of protective clothing.

Feed, bedding and water supply

For the isolation facility proposed you will need to consider how the animals can be managed to meet their physiological needs.

- Consider what forage and feed may be required, where will it be sourced from and stored on farm.

- Is there a ready supply of water available to meet the needs of the animals, or might water need to be brought to the isolation facility.

- Consider also any bedding requirements, how will this be sourced and stored?

Signs /doors/gates

- How are doors to a building secured to prevent unauthorised entry or animal escape?
- How are field gates secured for geographically isolated animals to prevent unauthorised entry or animal escape?
- How many signs are displayed with "**ISOLATION: strictly no admission to any unauthorised persons".**
- What details will you provide on a prominent sign to provide emergency contact details for use by emergency services or others in case of emergency (fire, vandalism etc.?)

Vermin and pest control

- Provide details of your current/planned vermin control methods e.g. rat traps poison or use of contractors (please note that contractors may pose a potential bio security risk and may require licences)
- What wild animals are you aware of that may be susceptible to the exotic notifiable disease relevant to your species and what measures are you taking to ensure these animals are excluded from contact with your animals or feed stores?
- You may need to consider control of disease vectors including flies and midges in some disease situations.

Staff and visitors

- The contingency plan should include a written guidance note for all staff and family members that detail their responsibilities during an outbreak. This should detail the recommended periods of time for avoiding contact with susceptible animals (usually 72 hours is the recommended time frame for avoiding contact with susceptible livestock for most notifiable exotic livestock diseases) and other duties that might risk carriage of virus into the isolation unit. Dedicated staff should be named and take responsibility for the isolated animals. They must have no other contact with any other animals, whether or not on the premises.

- ❖ Create and have ready a logbook to record all visitors to the farm. This should be activated from the first day of the outbreak. It should include for each visitor the date, time, purpose of visit, car registration and contact telephone. During an outbreak visitors must be limited to only those who are essential for operating the facility and maintaining the welfare of animals.

- ❖ Create and have ready an additional logbook to record all activities associated with the care of the isolated animals and maintain this throughout the outbreak.

- ❖ If the premises are confirmed as infected premises/dangerous contact/slaughter on suspicion premises then any staff who have been involved with the cleaning and disinfection of any part of the premises must have no contact with the isolated animals.

Hygiene facilities at entrances and exits

- ❖ The site plans should include the location of hygiene facilities that have been installed at all entrances to the isolated building or isolation field.

- ❖ A written protocol should be created as part of your contingency plan which defines the bio security precautions in place on entering and leaving the isolated building or isolation field should be in place. This should include:

    - ✓ The disinfectant footbath - capacity 10 L and 60 CM wide and 45 CM long. Knowing what you can use as a footbath will speed up your preparations.

    - ✓ The disinfectant in use in the footbath must be approved under the relevant order and using the dilation rate specified. It is helpful to work this out beforehand and have a measuring device for the appropriate quantity of disinfectant to hand for the footbath to be used.

    - ✓ Create a log book ready to record the daily replacement of the disinfectant. If the disinfectant becomes contaminated with organic matter or diluted e.g. by heavy rainfall if located outdoors, it should be replenished more regularly.

    - ✓ A hoof pick and brush should be available to remove gross organic matter from footwear before washing. Many disinfectants are inactivated in the presence of organic matter, so footwear and protective clothing should be washed to remove all visible contamination before disinfection is carried out. Use of a detergent may facilitate the initial cleaning.

- ✓ Availability of clean water – is there a tap nearby or will water need to be stored in containers.
- ✓ Consider how you can provide hand washing facilities and appropriate soap/sanitiser.
- ✓ Clearly identify clean areas and dirty areas with appropriate signage in place. A step-over hygiene barrier may be useful to delineate these areas and indicate where change of clothing/footwear is required.
- ✓ Can you provide weatherproofed hygiene facilities that can be used for geographically isolated fields (this is to ensure that bio security arrangements are not compromised for example footbaths diluted by rainwater)

Procedures for entering the area where animals are isolated

- ❖ A written protocol must be in place that defines the procedures for entering the isolation facilities - including vets. This should include the steps that people should take when entering or leaving the facilities. For example changing clothing, washing hands, using footbaths on entering the facility. Using footbaths changing clothes and washing hands on leaving the facility. The process should also include how dirty clothing should be bagged and transported for cleaning disinfection and laundering and where and how this will be carried out.
- ❖ Consider what protective clothing can be made available to staff that are entering the isolation facility. Can you supply dedicated outer protective gear (boots, jackets, leggings) that are waterproof and capable of being disinfected?
- ❖ Consider if gloves or protective headgear are required?
- ❖ Can you provide a storage facility for clothing to use in the isolation area and a storage space for any outer clothing and footwear which should be removed when entering the isolation facility?
- ❖ All protective clothing and footwear must be available and identified for the staff working with the isolated animals and essential visitors. This protective clothing must be dedicated for this use only and must be well maintained.
- ❖ All dedicated protective clothing and footwear must remain in the bio security station unless removed for disposal, cleaning, and disinfection or laundering at 60° C.

Record keeping

Dedicated registers and logs and templates for these should be prepared in advance with assistance of your own vet so that immediately notifiable disease is reported the contingency plan is ready to put in place

- An isolation monitoring log book which could take the form of a diary to include.
  - ✓ Details of the animals in the isolation facilities
  - ✓ Time and date of movement into the isolation facilities and individual identifiers for each animal.
  - ✓ Any animals leaving the facility (animals that have died or require specific attention).
  - ✓ Feed provided; Details of what has been delivered, the source of the feed and who delivered it.
  - ✓ Bedding deliveries; Details of what has been delivered, the source of the feed and who delivered it.
  - ✓ Details of animal health and welfare monitoring; details of daily inspection including any signs of illness or change in behaviour; treatments given; animals found dead; actions taken including advice sought from veterinary surgeon or notification of suspicion of illness to APHA regional office for assessment as to whether exotic notifiable disease is present
- Visitor record including name, contact details, date and time of entry into the isolation facility, vehicle registration and reason for visit.
- Staff logbook name, contact details, date and time of entry into the isolation facility

All these records must be made immediately available when requested by an APHA Inspector during an outbreak of disease.

Storage and waste disposal

A written plan detailing the storage and disposal of waste material including feed, bedding etc. generated during the isolation period should be prepared. All waste material must be stored securely and retained until the isolation period is satisfactorily completed or as directed by an APHA Inspector. The waste material must be stored according to standard animal by-product regulation requirements and may need to be stored for a long period.

Consider water sources and drainage, for buildings is bunding required so that effluent can be disposed of?

Reporting to APHA

The contingency plan should include a protocol for reporting to APHA. The protocol should include the contact telephone numbers and name of person or job title that should be used. The protocol must provide clear guidance that any signs of ill health or suspicion of disease in the isolated animals or animal deaths are reported without delay to APHA.

If any animals die while in isolation once the contingency plan has been initiated, their carcasses must be kept inside the isolation dirty area and be available for any APHA inspection.

Checklist

1. Written description of the isolation facilities
2. Detailed map or plan of the isolation facilities
3. Written guidance note for staff and family
4. List of essential contacts
5. Visitor log book
6. Isolation monitoring log book
7. Staff entering isolation log book
8. Signs
9. Vermin control plan and record
10. Foot bath
11. Disinfectant
12. Protective clothing
13. Waste storage and disposal

Please note that compliance with these guidelines in your contingency plan will help the CVO when having to quickly make a decision regarding any available derogation from culling. But having such a contingency plan in place can be no guarantee that such breeds at risk livestock can be spared, if the CVO is of the veterinary opinion that disease control measures are endangered in a way that still pose an unacceptable risk of continued spread of disease.