

UK Evaluates National Pig Disease Preparedness Exercise

12 March 2014

UK - AHVLA has published an 'evaluation and lessons identified' report on Exercise Walnut, the UK's Classical Swine Fever (CSF) exercise which took place in 2013.

Exercise 'Walnut' was designed to simulate a national scale outbreak of CSF to test existing plans and policies for the control and eradication of this significant exotic notifiable disease.

The exercise was organised by AHVLA and involved Defra, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government, the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland (DARDNI) and key operational partners.

Exercise Walnut provided an effective examination of the contingency plans and control strategies that would be invoked in the event of an outbreak of CSF.

Feedback from participants and observers was positive. The exercise was seen as being well-planned and challenging. It successfully met its objectives and provided reassurance that the UK and its four administrations would be able to respond effectively to a similar sized outbreak of exotic disease. Of encouragement was: the development of remote Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) functions such as tracings and surveillance and closer engagement amongst the different governments, their operational partners (OPs) and stakeholders.

The main lessons identified from the Exercise were:

1. Some drafting changes are proposed for the draft Statutory Instrument for Classical Swine Fever
2. The practicality of applying compensation policy needs to be reviewed
3. Need to review whether a short-term nation-wide movement ban at the onset of an outbreak is feasible and beneficial
4. The need for an opportunity for the pig industry to brief officials at the start of any outbreak and to provide background data on the pig industry
5. The need for reviewing staffing levels for LDCCs to reflect the current operational model
6. Pig bleeding and handling skills are at a premium in AHVLA and there is a need to tap into industry expertise
7. The liaison role with the resilience community and the chief of staff role need to be formalised.
8. The tracings process could be further streamlined
9. The operations manual need to be updated to the new format
10. More visibility is needed of the call-off requirements for emergency contracts
11. More work is needed on the provision of high level management information. More use needs to be made of key briefs and of shared mailboxes
12. Government needs to provide more practical guidance on secondary cleansing and disinfection
13. The relationship between the NDCC and the strategic management structures in the Devolved Administrations needs to be better defined.

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