

27 September 2007

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FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAK SURREY

As representatives of the Scottish farming, livestock and ancillary industries we are gravely concerned about the impact of the current Foot & Mouth Disease outbreak in Surrey on the survival of Scotland's livestock industry and the many rural communities it supports. The potential for this to be compounded by the first cases of Bluetongue virus in England only adds to our concern.

The disease outbreak over 400 miles away has not occurred due to any action (or failure to act) on our part, yet we are being seriously damaged by movement restrictions and the loss of important export markets. The UK Government has an obligation to do all it can to alleviate the plight of the Scottish industry and it controls the financial resources required.

We fully support the case which Scottish Government has made for a **livestock welfare disposal scheme**. By failing to urgently support this, Defra are causing unnecessary suffering to our livestock which have rapidly diminishing feed, are subject to increasingly harsh climatic conditions and have no market through which they can move or be traded. Defra are presiding over a situation which will have truly disastrous consequences. Hopefully this would be limited to animals but human casualties become more likely the longer Defra fails to act in the interests of all parts of Great Britain. **A livestock welfare disposal scheme must be introduced now, fully funded by the UK Government, which cannot avoid its responsibility for the dreadful situation we are in.**

We also call on the UK Government to accept the case made by the Scottish Road Haulage Industry and the Scottish Government for a modest, short term **derogation from the rules on drivers' hours**. Failure to do this again demonstrates the UK Government's lack of knowledge and concern for the industry in Scotland. This small concession would have a disproportionately beneficial effect on animal welfare by enabling essential, indeed critical, movements of stock which are prevented by a shortage of vehicles and drivers in Scotland. Again animal welfare, not to mention human well-being, is being severely compromised through the disregard of UK Government for this part of Great Britain.

We jointly call on Defra to recognise the crisis it has created and to facilitate these two measures without delay, thus beginning the long process of repairing the damage done to Scotland's rural industries by the failure of DEFRA to properly control bio-security at Pirbright.

Yours sincerely

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President NFU Scotland