

Assessment of the risk of FMD transmission posed by continued public access to the countryside during a FMD outbreak

Lisa Boden¹ and Harriet Auty², Dominic Duckett³, Julie Fitzpatrick⁴, George Gunn² and Dominic Mellor¹

¹University of Glasgow, ²SRUC, ³James Hutton ⁴Moredun

During the 2001 UK foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak, local UK authorities took a precautionary approach to disease control and used blanket bans to close all footpaths, even in uninfected areas. Many activities which depended on access to rural land were either prohibited or suspended voluntarily. This measure was extremely efficacious and as a result countryside usage fell dramatically, but resulted in an unintended and significant detrimental effect on the rural economy.

This study describes the results of subsequent qualitative veterinary risk assessments (VRAs) undertaken by the EPIC Centre of Expertise on Animal Disease Outbreaks commissioned by the Scottish Government. These VRAs assess the likelihood of different recreational activities causing new outbreaks of disease as part of contingency planning for future outbreaks. Despite acknowledgment of the wider economic ramifications of the 2001 UK outbreak on rural businesses, this is the first study to provide scientific evidence to underpin refinement of rural access management plans.

Risk associated with public access to the countryside during a FMD outbreak



RISK LEVELS
 Negligible: so rare it doesn't merit consideration
 Very Low: very rare but cannot be excluded
 Low: Rare but could occur
 Medium: Occurs regularly
 High: Occurs very often
 Very high: Events occur almost certainly

Horseshooting/racemeets/
equestrian events

A circle behind an icon represents a change in risk for that activity following a mitigation strategy. For example, in the restricted zone, the risk associated with stalking deer is medium prior to mitigation strategies, and low after mitigation strategies are implemented.

Activities without a circle show that there is no change in risk for that activity following a mitigation strategy.

Shooting birds

Fishing/canoeing

Stalking deer

Cycling Walking

Drag hunting

Restricted Zone

Outside the PZ and SZ.
As large as necessary to prevent disease spread.

Surveillance Zone

Minimum radius 10km from an infected premises

Protection Zone

Minimum radius 3km from an infected premises

FMD Infected Premises

Across all zones, activities which increase the risk, are those that involve large groups of people or vehicles, movements of non-susceptible animals (dogs, horses) and activities involving susceptible wildlife.