

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Committee 2nd April 2008

Report Title Status report on Animal Welfare and Disease Control Measures by the Trading Standards Service

Summary This report gives full detail of the scope, resources and outputs of the TSS in this area of work.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not Applicable
- Other Elected Members Councillor R Chattaway, Councillor K King, Councillor C Davis, Councillor B Kirton, Councillor G Collett, Councillor B Longden
- Cabinet Member Councillor R Hobbs
- Chief Executive
- Legal Alison Hallworth, Adult and Community Team Leader
Ian Marriott, Community and Environmental Legal Services Manager
- Finance Philip Lumley-Holmes, Financial Services Manager
Paul Walsh, Financial Services Manager
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by
this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

**Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee
– 2nd April 2008**

**Status Report on Animal Welfare and Disease Control
Measures by the Trading Standards Service**

**Report of the Strategic Director of Adult, Health and
Community Services**

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Supports the recommended actions in section 9 of this report.
- Use this report as an opportunity to scrutinise this area of work and advise on areas for policy development on changes in the delivery of service.

1. Introduction

The Trading Standards Service (TSS) has a duty, on behalf of Warwickshire County Council to regulate the movement and welfare of livestock with the following objectives:

- Traceability
- Safeguarding Human Food Chain (BSE; TB & other diseases)
- Environmental Protection (Animal by-products)
- Animal Welfare
- Disease Control (significant impact on the rural economy)

2. Background

There are more than 1700 livestock premises within Warwickshire, three livestock markets are held each week with an additional horse sale held monthly. The markets are situated at Rugby in the east of the county, Stratford in the south and Henley in Arden in the west. The busiest is Rugby, which can see a throughput of up to 2000 cattle and 2500 sheep per market. In addition to the markets there are six abattoirs, a rendering plant, knackers yard and hunt kennel. Situated in the centre of the county is the National Agricultural Centre, which hosts a variety of agricultural shows including the Royal Show.

The following activities are reported to DEFRA (Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs) as the 'profile' of the County and this is relevant to the Framework Agreement for each year. The profile for 2008/09 is as below:

2.1 Livestock Premises

	Risk				
Total	High	Medium	Low	No Inspectable Risk	Not Assessed
1768	13	141	724	681	209

2.2 Markets and Collection Centres

	Livestock markets (all types)	Collecting Centres (all types)
Number	3	0
Operating days per month	13	0

NOTE: It is likely that 2 extra markets and 1 collection centre will become operational on a weekly basis during 2008. This would result in 6 livestock collections being held every week instead of 3.

2.3 Other Premises

Number of				
Abattoirs (all types)	Knackers/ Hunt Kennels	Rendering Plant	Ports/Airports	Commercial Hauliers
6	3	1	1	15

3. Trading Standards Service Activity

3.1 A large number of events and activities are monitored for legal compliance by the TSS, including:

- i. Livestock Premises
Livestock farms are visited for compliance with requirements for movement records of cattle, sheep, pigs, goats & deer and cattle breeding records (to ensure traceability for disease control); medicine records (to protect the human food chain from residues); cattle 'passports', eartag supplies held; disposal of fallen stock ('animal by-products' – to prevent disease spread and environmental contamination); vehicles to ensure design, condition & cleanliness is adequate; and spot checks to ensure welfare of animals on site.
- ii. Markets & Collection Centres
Every licensed market or animal collection centre is monitored from start and a presence maintained during at least 90% of its operation. This is to ensure compliance with the following:

Fitness of animals to travel and be sold (to ensure welfare);
Identification of animals (ear-tags etc to ensure traceability for disease control);

- Licences and paperwork connected with animals (to ensure traceability for disease control);
 Transportation of animals to and from the market (to ensure welfare, cleanliness and appropriate construction of vehicles);
 Bio-security of the site (for disease control);
 Handling of animals (to ensure welfare);
 Marketing of animals (to ensure accurate descriptions and fair trading).
- iii. Farm Sales Checks are carried out at livestock farms on bio-security (cleanliness of vehicles etc); identification of animals (to ensure traceability for disease control), animal welfare (fitness to travel); and provide advice on how to understand and comply with animal health and welfare law.
 - iv. Airports Respond to incidents where animals are suspected to have been illegally imported, primarily to prevent spread of rabies.
 - v. Transport Static road checks, working with many other agencies including Police, to ensure compliance with law on animal welfare during transport. 'Blue light' (mobile) checks with the Police were carried out under the DEFRA Framework but have ceased due to funding cuts.
 - vi. Royal Show Significant emphasis is given to the preparation, licensing of the site and during the running of the show. This covers bio-security of the site (to prevent disease spread) and a contingency plan for Foot & Mouth Disease. Officers are present prior to the show (when animals are arriving), during the show and after (when animals leave).
 - vii. Knackers yard, Maggot farms and Rendering Plant These premises are visited to ensure compliance with animal by-products law (to prevent disease spread; and prevent 'specified risk material' being used for products e.g. cosmetics).
 - viii. Complaints Investigate complaints re suspected animal welfare issues e.g. fallen stock or suffering of animals.
 - ix. Formal Investigations Carry out formal investigations where serious breaches of the law are suspected, resulting in a range of actions from informal caution to prosecution in Court.
 - x. Circus Visits Visiting circuses are inspected to ensure compliance with welfare, transportation and licensing requirements.
 - xi. Performing Animals Licences are issued for performing animals (e.g. display falcons) and visits are made prior to issue to ensure welfare of the animals.

- xii. Education & Business Advice Regular talks are held with stakeholders e.g. NFU; and responses are provided to requests from business to provide information, advice and guidance on relevant law and best practice.
- xiii. Licensing There are two national databases where data is required to be inputted, the Animal Movement Licensing System (AMLS2) where the movement of all pigs, sheep, goats and deer into Warwickshire are recorded and any pre-movement licenses processed and the Animal Management and Enforcement System (AMES) that records all Animal Health enforcement activities carried out by the authority.
- xiv. Notifiable and/or Exotic Diseases Contingency Plans, linked to Corporate emergency plans and Regional agency plans are maintained in readiness to deal with suspected or confirmed cases of disease including Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Bluetongue, Avian Influenza, Rabies, Anthrax, Classical Swine Fever etc. The main TS role is to lead on behalf of WCC in providing information to the public and farming businesses; and assist the Animal Health agency in managing and controlling any notifiable disease situation.
- xv. Regional Partnership Working Close liaison is maintained with TS colleagues across the midlands via the Central England Animal Health and Welfare Panel. This includes events to discuss and achieve consistency of legal interpretation and enforcement practice. Similar links are maintained with the regional Animal Health Agency office (formerly SVS) based in Leicester, particularly regarding the DEFRA Framework Agreement, which they administer.
- xvi. TB Assist Animal Health agency in ensuring compliance with the requirement for testing of animals including joint visits and in extreme cases prosecution.

3.2 2007 Disease Outbreaks

These recent high profile outbreaks had a huge bearing on our Service. Whilst no disease was found in Warwickshire there was a large increase in the demand of our regulatory services, mainly in the following areas:

Communication – e.g. keeping the rural communities informed about the ever changing legal backdrop; responding to enquiries from the media and livestock holders; providing stakeholder updates on the situation.

Enforcement – e.g. checks on the road and at market and other planned events to ensure no illegal movements of livestock; and following up complaints about alleged illegal movements. Warwickshire also led the way by hosting regional meetings of regulators to ensure that rules were consistently applied, these meetings also involved the NFU (National Farmers Union).

This work was all managed within the existing resources at the expense of some lower priority work and involved staff from across the TS Service.

4. DEFRA Framework Agreement

Under this agreement DEFRA provides Warwickshire TSS with £140,000 (originally £149,000) of revenue funding. In return for this, an agreed program of work is undertaken across a range of activity as listed above. The framework agreements came in to being following the FMD outbreak of 2001 and have ensured that over all more effective disease control measures are actively enforced than in previous years.

In comparison with other rural counties, Warwickshire receives a small allocation of funding from DEFRA. The TSS has been active in lobbying for a fairer allocation system to ensure that our rural communities are as well protected as elsewhere. We await the outcome of proposed changes to the funding model; however current indications for 2008/09 are funding of only £131,000.

5. Resources

Approximately half of the resources available within the TSS for Animal Health and Welfare service delivery are provided directly by DEFRA as described above.

DEFRA provide funding for 2.5 FTE Animal Health inspectors, WCC base budget provides for the remaining 2.5 FTE.

DEFRA provide further funding for 2.25 posts. This is to provide staff and supervision for the data input on the AMLS2 and AMES databases (described above).

These cuts have resulted in the reduction in staffing funding by 0.5 FTE inspector and 0.5 FTE data officer for 08/09.

6. Priorities

The National Review of Priorities for Trading Standards and Environmental Services (Rogers Review) has identified Animal & Public as one of the five top national priorities. One of the 198 National Indicators is being developed to measure success in this area.

New responsibilities for food hygiene on farms (likely to be arable rather than livestock farms) and animal feed hygiene also increase the focus on rural business and economy. This new work provides some scope for efficient working e.g. single comprehensive visit but we haven't had enough resource to complete all the visits and risk assessments on farms to date anyway – hence 209 premises “not assessed” in the profile. There has been good progress recently in using “business questionnaires” to gain data to enable some remote risk assessment but lack of co-operation in data sharing from the RPA (Rural Payments Agency) has been unhelpful.

7. Current Situation

During 2007/08, DEFRA have made significant cuts to this agreed funding. These cuts have been most significant for large rural counties such as Warwickshire. The 12% cut has meant that we have to work with DEFRA to prioritise the activities that are addressed. We have no additional funding for disease control in terms of the recent additional activity around FMD, Bluetongue, and Avian Flu. This has to be resourced from within existing framework funding and TSS base budget. No management time is funded by DEFRA and there is no budget for the “communication” activities – a key part of our role. Other framework activities have to cease and/or TS base budget has had to cover this. With such a small resource covering this huge agenda, it has been a challenge to cover officer sickness/maternity leave; we are unable to claim some of this through DEFRA.

8. Risks

2007 demonstrated that the staff, management and processes that we have in place for delivering regulatory services in this area are fit for purpose, resilient and high performing.

However, WCC responsibility in this area of work does carry risk:

8.1 Local disease outbreaks

- FMD (Foot and Mouth Disease)
- Bluetongue
- Avian Flu

The cost to the local economy of an FMD outbreak is huge. The national cost that has been estimated as a result of the 2001 outbreak is in the region of £8 billion, furthermore:

- BSE crises cost equivalent to 0.1% of UK GDP
- BSE compensation payments to industry totalled £1.5 billion
- £3.9 billion cost to dispose of 8.5 million cattle aged over 30 months to prevent cattle possibly infected with BSE from entering human food chain
- £600 million costs per year due to BSE crises as result of ban on exports of cattle and beef over a 10 year period.

8.2 Reputation – Animal Welfare

Animal Welfare is set as a high priority for WCC. This is an emotive subject and there are risks associated with not performing in this area. However, priorities in the Animal Health and Welfare are led by protecting the food chain and animal disease control.

8.3 Reduction in DEFRA Funding

Significant management time in addressing the proposed changes with uncertainty for staff and risk that no staff would be available for service delivery/continuity due to cuts and job insecurity. All DEFRA funded posts are on temporary, renewable contracts with significant implications for training/retraining should officer's leave. The likely increase in market activity this year will put further strain on this resource.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That the TSS continues with the commitment to train and develop staff, including, as a long-term strategy those currently outside of this specialist field. This will build capacity to cover staff sickness and provide capacity in the event of an emergency situation.
- 9.2 That the TSS continues to work closely with colleagues from Animal Health and DEFRA to get assurances around future funding; this has not yet been made clear for 2008/09 or beyond. This situation is not desirable for staff on short-term contracts or for managers when trying to plan for the future.
- 9.3 That the TSS continues to review, update and test emergency plans and to test our response in case of local, nearby or national disease outbreak.
- 9.4 That the TSS continues to commit to respond to all allegations relating to animal welfare and to pick this work up during routine inspection at market and on farms.

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March 2008