

URGENT COPY please to Mr. Guattelle  
1/4/7 + Mrs. Davis  
(+ 1 for me) U.S.A.  
Reference .....

RESTRICTED

MINISTER'S MEETING ON BSE (EXPORTS AND TRIPE) AND ANTHRAX, 14 JULY 1989

1. The Parliamentary Secretary (Mr Thompson), the Secretary, Mr Meldrum, Mr Cruickshank and Mr Crawford saw the Minister this morning to discuss export issues relating to BSE. The bovine offals question and the anthrax outbreak in Wales were also discussed.

BSE - EXPORT

2. Mr Meldrum circulated a copy of the telex he had just received from the Commission (no. 22203AHSURBG), setting out the assurances they wished us to give in relation to exports of ruminant based feeds and live cattle from herds infected with BSE.

3. In discussion of point A in the telex, relating to non-use of ruminant products as a constituent of feed intended for ruminants, the following main points were made:

- Messrs Meldrum and Crawford thought the wording used by the Commission did not accurately reflect their intention. The Commission had orally given the clear impression that they would be requesting us to ban the export of ruminant feed for ruminants, whereas the text simply asked for an assurance that ruminant products would not be used as a constituent of feed for ruminants, whether for domestic use or export.
- If the text was taken at face value, it would not pose us significant difficulties, since there was already a ban in the UK on the use of ruminant products in feed for ruminants.
- On the other hand, the legal position in relation to the export of ruminant based feeds was unclear. (Mr Cruickshank - I should be grateful if you would obtain clarification).
- We should certainly object if the Commission pressed the stronger line (i.e. not that in the telex, but that which they had indicated orally), requiring us to ban exports of ruminant based feed for ruminants. We should regard this as both unnecessary and undesirable, and in any case we probably did not have the powers.
- The Commission argued that the UK approach was unsatisfactory because unless there was a ban on exports, it would be in practice impossible for some other Member States, in particular West Germany, to monitor whether the imported feed was being used for ruminants or other animals. Our position on this, however, was that it was an internal matter for the Member States concerned to control. Our preferred route was to seek a Community ban on all feeding of ruminant based material to ruminants.

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- It was not explicit in the telex that the Commission was seeking assurances relating only to export to other Community states, but it was presumed that this must be their intention, since they would not have competence to seek assurances in relation to exports to third countries.

Summing up on this point, the Minister concluded that we should be prepared to give assurance A as worded in the telex at the 18 July Standing Veterinary Committee, but if, as expected, the Commission pressed their request for a formal ban on exports of ruminant feed for ruminants, we should resist.

4. Items B and C in the telex did not cause such difficulties. B, that live cattle from BSE herds should not be exported to other Member States, was accounted for a fortiori by our existing arrangements, and C, that the situation with respect to use of bovine offal for human consumption should be reviewed and that the Commission and Member States should be kept informed of developments, did not cause difficulties.

#### BSE - TRIPE

5. The Minister indicated that he did not wish to go out to consultation on the basis that we were proposing to ban tripe. Such a proposal would attract similar opposition to that encountered against our proposal to ban green top milk, and the outcome would be likely to be the same. The risk from tripe was in any case extremely small. The consultation paper should therefore not contain any such proposal.

6. In this connection, the Minister stressed again his frustration with the provision of the 1984 Food Act which required the Minister to re-consult on issues where he wished to make even minor changes to proposals on the basis of which a consultation exercise had been carried out. The Minister wishes this legal situation, which he regards as ridiculous, to be rectified in the Food Bill (Miss Neville-Rolfe - to note and for advice please. I relayed to Mrs Robbs yesterday the Minister's strong views on this point in another context).

#### ANTHRAX OUTBREAK IN WALES

7. There was some discussion of the continuing anthrax problem on a Welsh farm. The outbreak appeared to be rumbling on. This presented real practical problems (e.g. in the disposal of slurry) and continuing potential human health problems (e.g. a Council estate was situated not far from the farm). There was a strong case, therefore, for slaughtering the whole herd of pigs that was infected. It was decided that the best solution would be to reach an agreement with the farmer that he would slaughter his herd and we would make him an ex-gratia payment in compensation. An order providing for compulsory slaughter and compensation was undesirable in this case for a number of reasons, not least because it would set a precedent. The Secretary undertook to pursue this urgently today, consulting the Welsh Office and the Treasury, as appropriate (Miss Phillips - to note).

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8. In this connection the Secretary said that he was very worried by the Ministry's current financial position. It was beginning to look as though our resources would not meet our commitments for the current year. The problem was severe in the animal health area, but also applied in others. He said he would provide a paper for the Minister on this (Miss Phillips and Mr Dickinson - to note).

*S. D. Lambert*

S D Lambert  
PS/Minister  
14 July 1989

Miss Bowles

cc: Private Offices  
Mr Hadley/Packer  
Mr Capstick  
Mr Hilton  
Mr Jenkins  
Prof Bell  
Mrs Attridge  
Mr Cruickshank  
Mr Dickinson  
Mr Meldrum  
Mr Crawford  
Mr Wentworth  
Mr B Atwood  
Mr Lawson  
Miss Neville-Rolfe  
Mr Suich  
Dr Shannon  
Mr A J Lawrence  
*Mr Coe*

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