Introduction

In Great Britain, foot and mouth disease (FMD) was first confirmed on 20 February 2001. The alarm was immediately raised throughout Europe. European Union (EU) member states and the European Commission (EC) took measures to prevent spread of the disease (2). Despite these measures, FMD spread to Ireland, France and the Netherlands.

The Netherlands had been free of FMD since 1984. Prophylactic vaccination was abolished in all EU member states in 1992.

A contingency plan for FMD eradication as prescribed by EU Directive 85/511 was prepared in the early nineties, but this plan was updated, based on experience gained during the major outbreak of classical swine fever (CSF) (hog cholera)
from 1997 to 1998 (8). Scenarios had been developed and a detailed hand-book for the organisation of FMD eradication was available.

On 15 March 2001, the first clinical symptoms of FMD were reported on a farm with milking goats and veal calves at Oene, Province of Gelderland.

A total of 26 farms became infected during this FMD outbreak (Table I). Emergency vaccination of all susceptible animals was applied in an area around affected farms to prevent further spread of the disease.

All vaccinated animals were slaughtered. The last affected farm was confirmed on 22 April 2001. The last vaccinated animal was slaughtered on 25 May 2001.

According to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE: World organisation for animal health) International Animal Health Code, the Netherlands could be considered as free of FMD without vaccination on 25 August 2001 (7). The OIE Commission for FMD and Other Epizootics declared the country free of FMD without vaccination on 18 September 2001.

This paper describes the preparation for FMD eradication, the precautionary measures taken after the first outbreaks were reported in Great Britain and France and the eradication measures including the emergency vaccination and the screening of the affected areas. Information is also given on reactions from the farming community and the general public during the eradication programme.

### Preparation

The Netherlands had suffered from a large outbreak of CSF in a very densely populated pig producing area, which started in February 1997 and lasted until May 1998 (8). The contingency plan which had been implemented for CSF outbreaks was an

### Table I

Outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in the Netherlands in 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foot and mouth disease number (2001)</th>
<th>Date of suspicion</th>
<th>Date of confirmation</th>
<th>Date of depopulation</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of animals culled</th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Pigs</th>
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appropriate guideline for the organisation of the eradication at
the beginning of the outbreak, but proved insufficient for the
size and magnitude of the problems as these developed in the
first weeks of the epizootic. The practical experiences learned
from this outbreak provided the basis for a new strategy for
CSF eradication and were set out in very detailed hand-books
with instructions for all the parties involved.

An outbreak of FMD affecting more species would have had an
even more dramatic effect in a country with an animal density
as high as the Netherlands. Hence, a new strategy for FMD had
to be developed for the country. As a first step, a project group
including virologists, epidemiologists, government and private
veterinarians involved in disease eradication, drafted a
document containing recommendations for preventive and
eradication measures. This draft was discussed with
representatives of all relevant organisations of farmers, trade,
meat and dairy industry, etc. Recommendations and
suggestions from these discussions were incorporated in a
revised draft document. This document was discussed within
the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries
and finally, a definitive proposal (6) was sent to Parliament
where the measures were discussed and adopted.

The strategy included the following:

– preventive measures when FMD is present in a neighbouring
country, such as a ban on the collection of susceptible animals,
extra cleaning and disinfections of lorries and other vehicles for
animal transport returning from that country, inspection on
farms where animals from the infected country had been
delivered recently

– measures on and around suspected farms, such as clinical
inspection by expert teams, blocking of the farm, transport ban
in the suspected area, diagnostic confirmation

– measures when the first case of FMD is confirmed in the
Netherlands, including a total ban on all transport of animals
throughout the country for at least 72 h, closing of markets,
collection centres, slaughterhouses; special hygiene
requirements for feed delivery to and milk collection from
farms; banning of visits to farms

– culling of the cloven-hoofed animals on the affected farm
within 24 h of confirmation of FMD

– pre-emptive culling of all susceptible animals on all farms in
contact with the affected farm and on all farms within a radius
of 1 km around an affected farm; this culling should be
completed within 4 days of detection of the disease

– slaughtering of animals on the farm; drastic hygiene
measures to prevent spreading the disease from those farms

– if, due to lack of slaughtering capacity or processing capacity
for the slaughtered animals, the above-mentioned deadlines
could not be met, vaccination of animals on farms to be culled
pre-emptively should be applied as soon as possible.

Vaccinated animals should be killed as soon as the required
capacity is available. Fourteen days after vaccination, the
animals are sufficiently protected to limit virus spread and to
allow transport to a slaughtering facility located within the
surveillance zone

– epidemiological information can indicate the need for
vaccination in a wider area

– as soon as tracing has identified where the disease might have
spread to, the total ban on transport can be lifted in areas
considered free of risk; in general, 72 h after the confirmation
of the first case, but if necessary, after a longer period

– the country is then divided into compartments. Transport
contacts between farms are limited to only one compartment.

This strategy was designed and presented in detail in hand-
books for all personnel involved in the eradication and related
activities. Most hand-books were completed in the summer of
2000.

The National Inspection Service for Livestock and Meat (RVV)
is responsible for the organisation and implementation of the
eradication. Personnel of the RVV was trained to recognise
contagious diseases, the internal organisation was adjusted,
software had been developed for the administrative support
and contracts had been made with suppliers for a variety of
materials and equipment. A plan for rapid vaccination was
prepared.

### Measures taken after the first report of foot and mouth
disease in Great Britain

When the first report on the FMD outbreak in Great Britain
was received, the following action was taken immediately:

– all imports from the United Kingdom (UK) and Northern
Ireland of live susceptible animals which had reached the
Netherlands after 24 January 2001 were traced

– pigs on farms where animals had been imported from the UK
were examined clinically. If a period of 30 days had elapsed
after the arrival of these animals, blood samples were taken for
serological testing. Seven farms were blocked until FMD-
freedom was established

– on farms where sheep or deer had arrived from the UK, all
FMD-susceptible animals were pre-emptively culled. Blood
samples from these animals were also tested. Such a drastic
step was taken because the symptoms of FMD are generally
difficult to detect in sheep and deer. A total of 2,826 sheep,
662 deer, 711 cattle, 512 pigs and 2 lamas were slaughtered on
eleven farms. None of these animals appeared to be infected after serological testing

– all collections of susceptible animals were prohibited, so markets and collection centres were closed, transport of cattle and pigs was allowed directly to a slaughterhouse or to another farm

– transport of sheep and goats was banned

– all lorries used for the transport of animals imported from the UK had to be cleaned and disinfected in an officially supervised facility.

Measures taken after the detection of foot and mouth disease in France

When the first outbreak of FMD was reported in France on 13 March 2001, the same measures as described above for animals imported from the UK were taken on farms that had imported cloven-hoofed animals from France after 1 February 2001.

Forty-nine farms with imported cattle or pigs were examined in the same way as the farms with pigs imported from the UK. Animals on three farms with sheep or goats from France were culled. All 52 farms were found to be negative to FMD tests.

The disease was approaching the Netherlands, the Channel had been crossed and the farming community and politicians became increasingly worried about the risk that the disease should enter the Netherlands. For this reason, on 13 March 2001, all transport of susceptible animals was prohibited throughout the country.

Suspicion of foot and mouth disease

On 15 March 2001, a veterinary practitioner reported clinical symptoms of FMD on a mixed milking goats and veal calf farm in Oene, Province of Gelderland. The RVV specialist team sent to this farm concluded that some of the goats had fever, acute lameness and small blisters in the mouth, on the teats and on the coronary bands of the feet. However, laboratory tests with this material were negative in the antigen-detection enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). On 16 March 2001, some additional goats showed blisters. Pathological examination conducted at the Institute for Animal Science and Health ID-Lelystad indicated the presence of FMD although the antigen-detection ELISA was inconclusive. The decision to cull the animals of this farm was taken and this was performed on 17 March 2001.

As all transport of cloven-hoofed animals was already banned in the Netherlands since 13 March 2001, no additional restrictions on animal movements were deemed necessary.

Detection of the first foot and mouth disease outbreak and measures

On 20 March 2001, a dairy farm in Olst reported clinical symptoms of FMD. The RVV expert team found characteristic FMD lesions in adult cattle on this farm and the next day, the ID-Lelystad laboratory confirmed FMD in the antigen-detection ELISA (case 2001/1).

On 21 March, a second farm reported FMD. This farm was situated in Welsum and belongs to the brother of the owner of the goat farm at Oene. The outbreak was also confirmed the same day (case 2001/2). The outbreak on the goat farm in Oene was confirmed on 22 March 2001 and registered as case 2001/3.

The following decisions were taken immediately:

– culling of the susceptible animals on the affected farms

– implementation of a protection zone of 3 km around the affected farms and a surveillance zone of not less than 10 km around the affected farms

– pre-emptive culling of all susceptible animals on farms with a dangerous contact with one of the affected farms

– pre-emptive culling of all susceptible animals on farms within a radius of 1 km around the affected farms

– tracing forwards and backwards

– screening of all farms in the protection zones

– stand-still of all animal movements throughout the country for at least 72 h

– national ban on all exports of animals and animal products.

Origin of the infection

On the goat and veal calf farm of case 2001/3, calves had been imported from Ireland on 23 February 2001. On 21 March 2001, evidence was received that these calves belonged to a consignment that had been exported from Ireland on 22 February 2001 and that had rested at a staging point in Mayenne, France. Coincidentally, sheep imported from an affected farm at Llangarron, UK were present (UK case 2001/11) at this staging point. Several of these sheep were later found to be serologically positive.
The consignment from Ireland consisted of 250 calves destined for a farm in Sprang-Capelle, in the Noord Brabant Province. From there, 75 of these calves had been transported to the farm in Oene and 85 to a farm in Beesd, Province of Gelderland. The other calves were kept in Sprang-Capelle. The animals on the farms in Sprang-Capelle and Beesd were culled pre-emptively. No FMD infection was demonstrated in these calves. Five samples of 75 taken from the calves at the farm in Oene were serologically positive. No clinical signs were recorded in these animals.

Nucleotide sequencing carried out with the strain cultivated from case 2001/3 proved that it was identical to the strain identified as UK case 2001/6.

These data gave rise to the conclusion that case 2001/3 was probably the index case.

Pre-emptive culling

On 22 March 2001, FMD infection had been confirmed on three farms. Animals on the affected farms were culled on 17 March (2001/3), 21 March (2001/1) and 22 March (2001/2). The pre-emptive culling of animals on farms in a radius of 1 km followed thereafter. The number of farms waiting for culling increased substantially on 24 March 2001, a farm in Nijbroek and on 25 March, another farm in Oene were found to be FMD-positive. The deadline initially imposed (culling within 4 days) was no longer realistic because of insufficient culling capacity. It was then decided that pre-emptive culling of the farms connected to the first three cases would have priority, but that vaccination should start immediately around the next cases.

Vaccination conditions and areas

European Directive 85/511 prohibits prophylactic vaccination against FMD, but allows emergency vaccination (1).

Article 13 of this Directive offers two possibilities, as follows:
– the member state asks for a Commission Decision for emergency vaccination which requires the advice of the Standing Veterinary Committee (SVC) or
– the member state takes a unilateral decision to commence emergency vaccination and informs the Commission in advance.

On 24 March 2001, vaccination was found to be inevitable and a request for a Commission Decision on emergency vaccination was made. A Commission Decision has the advantage that there is no uncertainty about the conditions that have to be met.

The EC was very efficient in drawing up a draft decision and arranging a meeting of the SVC. The situation in the Netherlands was explained at the meeting and the Commission prepared a draft decision and the member states agreed to vaccination. Commission Decision 2001/246 of 27 March 2001 allowed suppressive vaccination within a radius of 2 km around an FMD-affected farm (3). Suppressive vaccination required that all vaccinated animals be marked with an indelible mark and slaughtered as soon as possible. One month after the slaughter of the last vaccinated animal, normal intra-EU trade in meat from the Netherlands would resume.

In the meantime, a separate organisation had been prepared to perform vaccinations. Vaccination was initiated on 28 March 2001 in the 2-km zones around all affected farms, commencing with case 2001/4. The culling zone of 1 km was extended to a 2-km vaccination zone because, during the week that had elapsed since the first outbreak, new farms had been affected just outside these 1-km zones.

Vaccination was performed from outside the 2-km circle inwards. Pre-emptive culling was practised on the farms adjacent to the affected farms. When the vaccination teams reached these adjacent farms, the culling was stopped. In the 2-km zone, all susceptible animals on those farms were then either vaccinated or culled.

On 1 April 2001, 12 FMD-affected farms had been reported. Figure 1 gives the location of these farms, the 2-km vaccination zones and the border of the surveillance zone. On that day, the situation was evaluated with epidemiologists. The conclusions of this evaluation were as follows:
– the disease was spreading more rapidly and was more dispersed than expected
– difficulties had been encountered in tracing contacts with affected farms; there were obviously many more dangerous contacts between farms than farmers mentioned in the interviews
– the impression was that the disease could not be contained with the strategy applied
– vaccination in a larger area was found to be necessary.

It was decided to apply vaccination to the entire area between the IJssel River and the forests of the Veluwe. Both form natural borders, i.e. a large river on the eastern side with a forested zone on the western side. Railway lines were chosen as northern and southern borders. This vaccination area was called the ‘Noord Veluwe’ (Fig. 2).

This plan was discussed with the EC. A draft decision was discussed in the SVC and a positive response was obtained. This Commission Decision 2001/279 came into force on 5 April 2001 (4).
This decision allowed a choice between two options, as follows:

– suppressive vaccination with the effect that all vaccinated animals had to be slaughtered
– protective vaccination.

Protective vaccination implied that all vaccinated pigs, sheep and goats should be slaughtered, but the vaccinated cattle could be kept alive. Milk of these cattle could be processed (treatments in conformity with OIE rules) and then traded within the EU. Thirty days after vaccination, the meat of the vaccinated cattle could be traded freely in the EU after maturation (pH below 6) and deboning (OIE requirements). The vaccinated animals had to remain in the vaccination zone for at least 12 months. Around the vaccination zone, a buffer zone of at least 10 km should be maintained for 12 months. This regime was the same as that for a surveillance zone.

These options created a dilemma in that dairy farmers could live with the conditions for protective vaccination. They were allowed to retain their valuable animals and their commercial disadvantage was limited. However, for pig, sheep and goat farmers, the situation was the opposite. Vaccinated animals had to be slaughtered, restocking of these farms would be difficult and farmers in the buffer zone would face lengthy restrictions on their products because these were excluded from EU trade.

Before taking a decision on this dilemma, the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries asked the National Farmers’ Organisation (LTO), the Organisation for the Meat Trade (COV) and the Netherlands Dairy Organisation (NZO) for advice. These organisations indicated a preference for suppressive vaccination. One week after the preference was indicated through the EU Commission Decision, the Minister selected this option.

On 5 April 2001, vaccination commenced in the entire ‘Noord Veluwe’ area and was completed within a few days. On 3 April 2001, two more affected farms were reported in Oene. In this vaccination zone, eight more outbreaks were detected on farms where the animals had just been vaccinated. No new affected farms were registered in the ‘Noord Veluwe’ area after 11 April 2001.

Outside the ‘Noord Veluwe’ area, outbreaks were detected on farms in Kootwijkerbroek on 28 March 2001 (case 2001/8), Oosterwolde on 28 (case 2001/9) and 29 March (case 2001/10), Olst on 3 April (case 2001/13), Wijhe on 22 April (last case 2001/26), Ee on 11 April (case 2001/22) and Anjum on 11 April (case 2001/25). In all these outbreaks a vaccination zone of only 2 km was applied and proved sufficient.

The villages of Ee and Anjum are part of the Province of Friesland in the north of the country and at a distance of more
than 100 km from the main infected area (Fig. 3). The relation between these outbreaks and the others has not been found. Some contact with a farm in the Oene area was assumed but this was not proven.

Equipment for the vaccination teams was delivered by companies who had a contract with the RVV to maintain an adequate stock for immediate supply.

Serum samples were taken before the animals were vaccinated. All susceptible animals were vaccinated. Vaccinated animals were marked with an indelible mark (a punch in one ear). Thus, vaccinated animals could be recognised with ease.

After vaccination, the animals were left on the farm. Milk from dairy cows and goats was delivered to the dairy industry and processed under the required conditions. Fourteen days post-vaccination, the vaccinated animals were transported to one of four designated slaughterhouses where they were killed. These slaughterhouses only operated as killing stations. If there was sufficient capacity available, carcasses were delivered directly to a rendering plant for destruction and incineration. When insufficient processing capacity was available, the carcasses were divided into smaller pieces, which were temporarily stocked in designated cold stores. Later, all the stored meat was rendered and incinerated.

Blood samples were taken from the slaughtered animals for further epidemiological evaluation. These samples will be tested with several available discriminatory antibody ELISAs for non-structural proteins (NSPs).

In total, 186,645 animals were vaccinated on 1988 farms. The last vaccinated animal was slaughtered on 25 May 2001.

Final screening

The final screening of the protection and surveillance zones was conducted according to Commission Decision 2001/295 with extra serological screening of young cattle (5).

For the protection zone this included the following:

– visits of all farms for clinical inspection and administrative control

– on farms with sheep, goats and young cattle (up to 2 years of age) serological screening was also performed. Sampling was based on a sample size to detect a within-herd prevalence of 5% (with 95% confidence).

In the surveillance zone the following regime was applied:

– visits of all farms for clinical inspection and administrative control

– visits of 150 randomly selected farms for serological sampling. The number of farms was based on a protocol to detect a between-herd prevalence of 2% (with 95% confidence). Sampling of each herd was performed on a sample size to detect a within-herd prevalence of 5% (95% confidence).
During the final screening, six animals on six farms were found to be FMD-positive by ELISA and the virus neutralisation test (VNT). In one case, no serological positive samples were found at re-sampling. In three cases, only one animal was positive on re-sampling, so this was a singleton reactor. The seropositive animals were culled. In two cases, the sampled cows were born before 1990 and had been vaccinated before prophylactic vaccination had been abolished.

Reactions of the farming community

In general, the farmer organisations were happy with the relatively rapid eradication of FMD. Many dairy farmers, however, were not convinced that the killing of their animals was justified. Several of them tried to prevent the culling of their vaccinated cattle through court cases against the Government. The judges ruled against the claims of the farmers in all the court cases, but these attracted much attention from the press and influenced public opinion.

Large numbers of sheep and goats are kept as pets. These animals are often not registered and are difficult for the RVV to detect. Many of these owners also resisted and tried to prevent the culling of their animals.

In the surroundings of the only affected farm at Kootwijkerbroek, several farmers doubted the positive result of the laboratory test. The laboratory invited some spokesmen of this group of farmers and explained the laboratory procedures and results. Nevertheless, many of them could not be convinced of the results.

Other farmers suspected that the owner of the affected farm had introduced the disease deliberately. No proof of this was found.

These uncertainties caused massive resistance against the culling in this area. Special duty police with armoured cars were required to facilitate the work of the culling teams. Despite these measures, several culling activities had to be postponed and the RVV teams performing their work were molested or taken hostage. Several cars and lorries belonging to these teams were damaged.

A minister of religion organised a non-stop church service on a farm where the animals had to be culled. He claimed that the law prohibited police and the RVV teams from interrupting the service.

The interested parties and their lawyers were very creative in finding arguments against the decisions the Government had to take within the framework of EU legislation.

Some retired scientists who had worked in FMD research supported the farmers in court.

Reaction of the public

During the CSF outbreaks between 1997 and 1998, the public in the Netherlands was frequently confronted with televised pictures of slaughtered animals. During that period, more than 10 million healthy animals were slaughtered to eradicate the disease or to solve animal welfare problems on overstocked farms. Resistance against these eradication techniques increased.

The feelings were even stronger during the FMD outbreak. The slaughtering of sheep, lambs, goats and cattle to eradicate a disease provokes greater emotion than when this occurs in pigs.

The public does not accept that trade consequences prevent the use of vaccine for eradication purposes. Most human diseases are prevented effectively by protective vaccination and vaccinated people are not prohibited from travelling worldwide.

In this context, it is very difficult to convince the general public of the necessity to apply stamping-out as the ultimate measure in animal disease eradication.

This feeling will make it very difficult for the Government to apply the same strategy again in the Netherlands should FMD reoccur.

Eradication measures not only affect the agricultural community, but also have far-reaching consequences for most economic and social activities in the endangered areas.

Conclusions and lessons

The transport limitations and the ban on the assembling of animals at markets and collection centres, measures which were taken in the Netherlands when FMD was detected in the UK, limited contacts between farms and thus the spread of FMD before the disease was confirmed.

The controls on farms in the Netherlands with recent imports from FMD-infected countries, including the pre-emptive culling of animals on farms with imported sheep, did not demonstrate introduction of FMD virus. However, in France, serologically positive sheep imported from the UK were detected and an outbreak of FMD was confirmed near a farm where these sheep were present. These facts demonstrate the need for this type of measure.

Staging posts where animals are unloaded in order to rest during long-distance transport do not always guarantee the preservation of the disease status of the transported animals.

The first case of FMD was detected at a relatively late stage, which is an increasingly frequent experience. The disease can
then spread to other farms. This risk is higher in a country densely populated by susceptible animals such as the Netherlands. When several secondary outbreaks are confirmed within a short period, it is difficult to apply a stamping-out policy rapidly enough to contain the disease.

Emergency vaccination was very effective in containing the FMD epidemic rapidly.

As soon as animals receive adequate protection from vaccination, they can be transported to a culling station without the risk of spreading the virus. The culling of these herds can be performed more efficiently in a centralised killing facility within the infected area, such as a slaughterhouse.

It was difficult or impossible to convince farmers and the public of the necessity to slaughter vaccinated animals which were perfectly healthy and protected from developing the disease (they were not protected from infection). Politicians and the public at large are very strongly opposed to large-scale slaughtering of vaccinated animals in a future outbreak of FMD.

At present, discriminatory tests based on NSPs, such as the 3ABC ELISA, that are now becoming available need to be used in herds of animals vaccinated in emergencies to separate infected herds from non-infected animals. Infected herds should be culled. Herds that have been found to be negative with the 3ABC ELISA should be considered safe. When all herds in the vaccination area can be considered safe on the basis of these tests and a selective culling policy, there is no justification for restrictions on international trade in products derived from the remaining farms in the vaccination zone.

The OIE should consider the possibility of incorporating guarantees based on systematic control of vaccinated animals with NSP tests in the chapter on FMD in the International Animal Health Code.

Les enseignements du foyer de fièvre aphteuse survenu aux Pays-Bas en 2001

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Résumé
Alors que les Pays-Bas venaient d’élaborer une nouvelle stratégie d’éradication de la fièvre aphteuse, les premiers cas de cette maladie furent signalés en Grande-Bretagne et en France. Dès que la nouvelle fut confirmée le pays adopta des mesures préventives, associées à la recherche des animaux sensibles récemment importés de ces deux pays. Le 21 mars 2001, la présence de la fièvre aphteuse était confirmée aux Pays-Bas. La maladie avait été introduite par des veaux qui avaient été infectés, dans un poste de contrôle sanitaire à Mayenne (France), par des moutons contaminés en provenance de Grande-Bretagne.

Au total, 26 exploitations ont été atteintes. Tous les animaux sensibles ont été vaccinés d’urgence. Compte tenu du choix de la vaccination dite suppressive, tous les animaux vaccinés devaient être abattus. La vaccination périphérique de tous les animaux sensibles se trouvant dans un rayon de 2 km autour des troupeaux infectés est devenue la procédure normale. Toutefois, dans le Noord Veluwe, la vaccination s’est étendue à une zone plus vaste. La dernière exploitation a été reconnue contaminée le 22 avril 2001. La vaccination d’urgence a permis de maîtriser rapidement cet épisode de fièvre aphteuse. Le dernier animal vacciné a été abattu le 25 mai 2001.

Peu convaincus du bien-fondé de l’abattage de leurs animaux vaccinés sains, de nombreux exploitants ont tenté, en vain, de s’opposer à la mesure. Les responsables politiques et l’opinion publique seront désormais radicalement opposés à l’abattage à grande échelle des animaux vaccinés en cas de nouveaux foyers de fièvre aphteuse.
Dans le chapitre du Code zoosanitaire international consacré à la fièvre aphteuse, l’OIE devrait inclure le contrôle des animaux vaccinés à l’aide d’épreuves discriminantes fondées sur la recherche des protéines non structurales du virus.

Mots-clés

Lecciones a raíz del brote de fiebre aftosa de 2001 en los Países Bajos

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Resumen
Los Países Bajos habían recién elaborado una nueva estrategia de erradicación de la fiebre aftosa cuando se confirmó la presencia de esta enfermedad en Gran Bretaña y Francia. A partir de ese momento se rastrearon las importaciones de animales susceptibles efectuadas en los últimos tiempos desde ambos países y se adoptaron medidas preventivas. El 21 de marzo de 2001 se confirmó la presencia de la enfermedad en los Países Bajos, introducida por terneras que se infectaron al coincidir durante una escala en Mayenne (Francia) con ovejas infectadas procedentes de Gran Bretaña.

Se registraron casos de fiebre aftosa en un total de 26 explotaciones. Se decidió proceder a la vacunación supresora, lo que significaba que debían sacrificarse todos los animales vacunados. Aunque el procedimiento habitual fue la aplicación de vacunaciones perifocales a los animales susceptibles en un radio de 2 km alrededor de los rebaños infectados, en Noord Veluwe fue preciso cubrir un área más extensa. El 22 de abril de 2001 se confirmó el último caso de explotación infectada. La campaña de vacunaciones de emergencia había servido pues para contener el brote de fiebre aftosa con rapidez. El 25 de mayo de 2001 se sacrificó el último animal vacunado.

Muchos ganaderos, poniendo en duda la necesidad de sacrificar sus ejemplares vacunados sanos, intentaron sin éxito poner trabas a esa medida. En la eventualidad de que surgiera un nuevo brote de fiebre aftosa, la clase política y el gran público se oponen ahora con firmeza al sacrificio a gran escala de animales vacunados. En el capítulo del Código zoosanitario internacional dedicado a la fiebre aftosa, la OIE debería prever la posibilidad de controlar los animales vacunados mediante pruebas de detección de proteínas no estructurales.

Palabras clave
References


