Foot and mouth disease: the perspective of farmers in Ireland

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Summary
The first outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) recorded in Ireland since 1941 was successfully eliminated due to four main factors, as follows:
− the willingness of the farmers in Cooley to sacrifice themselves in the national interest
− decisive action was taken rapidly once the first outbreak was declared
− geographical location of the Meigh and Proleek outbreaks which enabled the authorities to effectively seal off and regionalise the area, thus protecting exports from the rest of the country
− national awareness and willingness at all levels, from Government to the general public, to take whatever action was necessary to keep FMD out of Ireland.

The author recounts the story, from the perspective of a farmer, of the outbreak of FMD that occurred in Ireland in 2001, from the first confirmed case in Meigh, County Armagh, through Proleek and the cull, into dealing with the aftermath in terms of compensation payments, premia payments, the evolving human tragedy and lessons learned.

Major policy issues must be addressed at both a national and European Union level to prevent outbreaks of FMD in Europe in the future. At a national level, the dual animal health status between Northern Ireland and Great Britain and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland must not be allowed to re-emerge. Some regulation loopholes allowed FMD to enter Ireland. The Government of Ireland handled the initial FMD crisis very well, with the co-operation of farmers and the public in general.

Keywords

Introduction
The Irish Farmers’ Association (IFA) has had a representative body dating back to 1955 when the National Farmers’ Association (NFA) was founded. The aim of this association was to present a coherent national voice for Irish farmers on all issues affecting their livelihoods.

The early priorities of the NFA can be summarised in three main areas, as follows:
− right of direct negotiations with Government and with the purchasers of farm produce
− right to a fair taxation system, particularly reform of the penal system of rates on land
− promotion of better farming.

In the early morning of Wednesday 21 February 2001, an announcement that foot and mouth disease (FMD) was confirmed in the United Kingdom (UK) was made on Irish national radio and television. From that point on and for the next eight days, all conversation focused on the measures required to keep the disease out of Ireland. By virtue of these informal conversations, expressing sympathy for colleagues in England, the Irish farming community rapidly developed an understanding of the implications of an outbreak either north or south of the border.
When FMD was last recorded in Britain in 1967, Ireland adopted a ‘fortress Ireland’ policy, closing borders and halting most travel to and from Great Britain. This would not have been a feasible response in 2001 with open European Union (EU) markets, over 800 lorries per day arriving in Ireland and over 14,000 people per day arriving from the UK at Irish airports.

In 1967, FMD was kept out of Ireland. In late February, the question was raised whether the disease could be kept out of the country in 2001. The outbreak in Meigh, County Armagh (Northern Ireland) on Thursday 1 March clearly revealed that this would not be the case.

Irish farmers felt particularly frightened and threatened by FMD because Ireland exports 90% of beef production, 80% of milk production and 70% of sheep production. A single outbreak of the disease in Ireland would mean the loss of all export markets. The implications for Irish farmers and the Irish economy were truly enormous.

The unique ‘dual status’ of Northern Ireland
One of the greatest fears stemmed from the ‘dual status’ of Northern Ireland. Although Northern Ireland is part of the UK, in some instances Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are treated as a single entity when ‘island of Ireland’ animal health status applies. This dual status for Northern Ireland made it virtually impossible to prevent the spread of FMD from Great Britain to Ireland.

Pre-Meigh action
All movement of sheep and pigs between Ireland and Great Britain stopped. Cattle movements were already restricted since 1 March 1990 due to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) regulations.

Department of Agriculture personnel sealed the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, backed by the Gardai (police force) and the Irish Army.

Local IFA executives along the border set up meetings with local District Veterinary Officers (DVOs) to formulate a strategy and ensure co-operation on the ground to effectively seal the border and implement bio-security measures on border crossings.

Members of the IFA supplied water for disinfectant mats and local knowledge for the effective control of unauthorised border crossings.

As the most senior IFA representative locally, the author worked closely with a DVO to keep the farming and non-farming community informed through effective media communications.

Initial communication was aimed at the farming community asking farmers to stay away from other farms, to stop all non-essential traffic on their own farms and all IFA/farmer meetings were cancelled.

Communication was then extended to include the general public who were asked to refrain from visiting farms and the countryside, not to travel to the UK and if travel was vital, to avoid areas in the UK with suspected and confirmed outbreaks of FMD.

Members of the IFA co-operated with the Department of Agriculture to cull imported and suspected imported sheep from the UK.

First outbreak of foot and mouth disease
On 1 March 2001, the first outbreak of FMD was confirmed in Meigh, County Armagh, in Northern Ireland. This was the first confirmed outbreak of the disease on the island of Ireland since 1941 (Fig. 1).

The 3-km exclusion zone around the farm in Meigh extended across the border into County Louth. The outbreak was an enormous shock for urban as well as rural communities throughout Ireland. The first question raised by the entire population was how had the disease crossed the Irish Sea.

Investigations rapidly revealed a number of anomalies in the system, as follows:

– the entire island of Ireland sheep health status applied. This meant that sheep could legally move from Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland for either breeding or slaughter and vice versa
– sheep could be imported from Great Britain into Northern Ireland legally under permit. However, the destinations of these permits were rarely checked and once in the North, sheep could effectively travel freely throughout Ireland.

The IFA National Sheep Committee repeatedly warned the Department of Agriculture of this illegal importation of sheep in the period prior to the outbreak with video evidence shown on national television. However, very little action was taken at this time to halt this illegal activity. This lack of action was further compounded by the lack of an agreed sheep tagging system which played into the hands of smugglers. These were critical factors that exposed Ireland to FMD.

Reaction
The Irish Authorities reacted immediately to the outbreak, setting up a 10-km exclusion zone stretching from Meigh into the Cooley Peninsula. However, taking into account the
unfenced commonage grazing in Cooley, the exclusion zone was extended to include the entire Cooley Peninsula.

**Exclusion zone implications in Cooley**

All livestock movement into and out of Cooley ceased.

All livestock movements within the Cooley Peninsula also ceased except under specific licence from the Department of Agriculture. Following the initial standstill, a number of such licences were subsequently granted for activities such as feed supplies, welfare movements, equine movements, machinery movements and carcass burial. Licenses issued included the following:

- feed: 997
- animal movement: 90
- horses: 92
- machinery: 5
- burial: 136
- general: 2,753.

The County DVO office moved into a local hotel within the exclusion zone.

The Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS), which was set up in Ireland to facilitate area aid payments under EU regulations, was used effectively to identify parcels of land and the landowners, making the cull more efficient and rapid.

As a senior IFA officer in Louth, the author immediately began negotiations with the Department of Agriculture to set up a licensing system to bring animal feed into Cooley.

Milk collection ceased. Negotiations began with the Department of Agriculture and milk buyers to agree on biosecurity protocols which included fitting a virus filter onto the collection lorry. This solution took eight days to implement, which meant that in excess of 20,000 gallons of milk had to be destroyed. In addition, reluctance on the part of the milk buyers who feared a negative consumer reaction had to be overcome. Further problems with regard to paying for this milk were resolved in negotiations between the IFA, the Department of Agriculture and the relevant co-operatives.
The disease outbreak occurred at the commencement of the lambing season and massive animal welfare problems became apparent as farmers were forbidden to move sheep out of lambing sheds into fields. Once again, the IFA negotiated a protocol with the Department of Agriculture, which allowed movement under strict veterinary supervision on animal welfare grounds.

After two weeks of the exclusion zone being in operation, cashflow difficulties began to emerge. Animal movement restrictions and fodder shortages also began to cause problems with little or no financial/welfare assistance available for farmers.

During this period, approximately 800 suspect cases were reported throughout the country although none were confirmed. The stress levels among the farming community around the country were enormous despite massive public support.

During this same period north of the border, the situation was entirely different. The Northern Ireland Authorities applied the minimum requirements under EU regulations, slaughtering sheep and cattle within the 1-km zone around the Meigh outbreak and merely monitoring the 3-km zone. This contrasted sharply with the action taken in the Republic of Ireland. The geographical area within the 3-km exclusion zone was not being policed, to the extent that members of the media were able to walk freely onto the infected Meigh farm unchallenged. This situation caused grave concern. The author contacted Dundonald House in Belfast (Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture) and was informed that ’operational difficulties’ were being experienced in this area.

Sinn Féin Counsellors were also contacted in the South Armagh area who responded that they were encouraging all farmers to co-operate and participate in the cull.

The Proleek outbreak

On 21 March 2001, the Department of Agriculture announced that a suspect case of FMD had been reported in Cooley. All movement permits within County Louth were immediately revoked although it was hoped that this would prove to be another false alarm. However, on 22 March at 10.50 a.m., the Proleek case was confirmed (Fig. 2).
The immediate concerns of all involved were to ensure the following:

- elimination of the disease rapidly and decisively
- that the inevitable cull would be humane for both the animals and farming families
- immediate regionalisation of the area to enable the rest of Ireland to continue to export primary agriculture produce.

A proactive approach

A number of favourable factors contributed to containing and eliminating the disease in Cooley, as follows:

- there are no pig units in Cooley
- the exclusion zone had already been in place for three weeks
- Cooley Peninsula is surrounded by water on three sides
- there was a willingness on the part of most local farmers to sacrifice for the national good
- the owner of a local closed meat factory agreed to allow the premises to be used for the humane slaughter of animals
- the Department of Agriculture and the IFA agreed there would be no local funeral pyres as in the UK
- the Old Mill at Riverstown, within the exclusion zone, was opened by the IFA as a central location providing support services to farming families in the area; the IFA and officials from the Department of Health and Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs staffed this base (it is worth noting that the Minister of Social, Community and Family Affairs, had his staff in place within one hour of being approached by the author); IFA officials were also available to assist farmers with compensation negotiations; local volunteers provided counselling services; this facility ensured that Cooley farmers and their families were located rapidly for possible welfare support
- following discussions at the Standing Veterinary Committee meeting in Brussels, regionalisation was agreed.

The cull

The cull commenced on the evening of 22 March and was focused on the Rice holdings and a 1-km zone around these farms. The cull then moved onto farms within a 3-km radius of the Rice holdings. Although there was full co-operation between the farmers, Department officials and DVO staff, a number of operational issues arose.

According to the regulations, animals on the Rice farms had to be slaughtered in situ. Louth County Council, as the local authority, was therefore responsible for the disposal of the animal carcasses. A decision was taken to ensure that the dead cattle could not be buried on the Rice farm because, according to the Council, the site was not suitable for environmental reasons. Therefore, the dead cattle were moved by lorry to a nearby site for burial. There was also a grave danger that the movement of these cattle could have spread the disease. During this period, no attempt was made by the officers of the Council to communicate with the IFA or any of the neighbouring farmers.

The atmosphere was highly charged and fraught with emotion. The people involved were tired, stressed and traumatised. Every minor problem therefore became a major issue. The cull was carried out and completed under these circumstances.

Some of the other issues that arose are described below.

Initially, lambs were slaughtered on the farm and their dams were loaded onto lorries to be killed in the factory. This proved to be a disastrous approach because some lambs were left lying on farms for a number of days causing trauma, particularly to children whose pet lambs were among the dead animals. It subsequently proved more humane to take the lambs with their mothers for slaughter in the factory.

Lack of communication was a major issue in the early stages of the cull. Some farmers discovered that their flocks were to be culled only when the veterinarians and lorries appeared at their gate. The lack of respect shown to farmers under these circumstances inflamed passions and gave rise to heated exchanges. The veterinarians responsible for the overall project were skilled at managing the animal disease aspects of the crisis but showed less skill in human communication and operations.

To make matters worse, the Department of Agriculture Headquarters in Dublin then took over the management of the cull, providing information to the media from Dublin instead of to the local farmers and veterinarians who were directly involved in the cull. This further complicated and inflamed the situation. In effect, this was the beginning of the politicising of the problem.

As local County Chairman, the author highlighted and denounced this incorrect approach on national radio and television. This immediately resulted in the Minister of Agriculture visiting Cooley where a meeting was convened with forty of the affected farmers. As a direct result of this meeting, a daily briefing session was held at 6 p.m. in the local Ballymascanlon Hotel. Local farmers and IFA representatives, the Department of Agriculture Senior Veterinary Officer and the media attended these sessions. These daily meetings greatly reduced the tension and ensured that all of the relevant parties were informed on what was happening on a daily basis.

The issue of valuation of animals is an ongoing problem in Cooley, even at the time of writing in December 2001. In the first few days of the cull, the veterinarians on the ground implementing the cull issued the valuations. The Department of Agriculture subsequently employed livestock auctioneers to independently value the animals. A number of serious
discrepancies rapidly became apparent whereby the independent valuations were found to be inconsistent. Attempts to address these issues on an individual basis at the time of the depopulations ultimately proved unsuccessful and a number of cases remain the subject of legal proceedings today.

In practice, the cull was conducted in two parts. The first part focused on the Rice holdings and those farms within the 3-km zone immediately surrounding them. A decision was made to ask other farmers outside this exclusion zone to volunteer to cull their sheep as EU regulations were satisfied at that point. A number of farmers came forward and voluntarily culled their flocks. However, it rapidly became apparent from the returning blood tests from Pirbright where antibodies were found in blood samples from the wild goat population, that the cull had to be resumed on a mandatory basis and all sheep in the Cooley Peninsula had to be slaughtered without exception (Table I).

One exception was made temporarily. In the case of a rare breed of sheep, the farmer was allowed to retain a small number of rams and ewes in a specially constructed plastic house to facilitate restocking. However, blood tests subsequently indicated that this flock also had to be culled.

**Cross-border extended cull**

On Sunday 25 March 2001, an announcement was issued by the Minister of Agriculture stating that an extended cross-border cull would be implemented. The announcement came as a surprise to the local farmers and veterinary officers in the area and was first made public on national teletext services.

The Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture rapidly attempted to secure regionalisation in the same way as in Cooley to protect agricultural exports from the rest of Northern Ireland.

The author was contacted by personnel from the Ulster Farmers' Union seeking assistance in brokering the cull with the South Armagh farmers who were to be directly affected. Representatives of the South Armagh Farmers were contacted and agreed to a meeting with Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture officials in Newry provided that the author accompany them.

A further meeting was convened with the Northern Ireland Minister of Agriculture in Newry where the terms and conditions of the extended cull were agreed on, ensuring regionalisation in Northern Ireland. These terms essentially guaranteed farmers in South Armagh the same terms as farmers in Cooley, which differed from what was taking place in Great Britain.

**Wildlife and the cull**

The author personally insisted that all wildlife on the Cooley Peninsula be culled. This was an essential exercise to ensure that there were no residues of the infection in Cooley. Dúchas (State wildlife agency) used army snipers and helicopters to cull wild goats and deer on the mountain. Hindsight has shown that this radical and strong decision was correct as tests subsequently confirmed that some of these animals revealed antibodies for FMD.

**Aftermath**

The atmosphere in Cooley remained tense for several weeks after the cull was completed while people waited to see if this would be the only case of FMD in Ireland.

For scientific reasons, cattle outside the 3-km exclusion zone were not culled as these animals acted as sentinels. There was an ongoing requirement to supply feedstuffs into Cooley for these cattle. By this time, cashflow difficulties were becoming acute. The IFA organised the collection and delivery of hay and silage donated by farmers outside of the area to the Cooley farmers. Feedstuffs were provided free of charge to the Cooley farmers.

A number of critical issues emerged and required urgent attention.

**Inconsistencies in valuations**

The Department of Agriculture agreed that there was a problem and also agreed to a review of valuations. There were three types of sheep in Cooley, i.e. mountain sheep, cross-bred sheep and lowland sheep. A general formula was agreed on between the IFA and the Department of Agriculture whereby every sheep was valued as having lambed with a lamb index based on Teagasc (State Education Advisory and Research Service for farmers) figures. Financial valuations for lambs were also agreed on. This formula would have cost the Irish Government approximately IRL£1 million to implement and the problem would have been resolved with fair and proper compensation paid to all producers. Unfortunately, the formula was not implemented as agreed and about IRL£400,000 were paid in a non-transparent manner, leaving the problem unresolved. The author estimates that it will cost the Irish Government at least another million pounds in 2002 to solve a problem that could have been resolved for a total of IRL£1 million in mid-2001. The Government also ruled out any consequential losses for farmers as they believed this would set a precedent for other
sectors of society who were affected by FMD, for example, haulage businesses, tourism, etc.

At this time, political representatives at the highest level, including An Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and the Minister of Agriculture, reassured farmers in Cooley that they would be fully compensated for the sacrifices they had made in terms of slaughtering their entire flocks to control FMD. This has not been the case and as a result, confidence among the Cooley farmers in the willingness of Government to honour promises made has been undermined. Certainly, should a similar event occur in another part of Ireland, farmers would be very slow to allow their animals to be culled without full compensation terms being agreed upon initially.

**Missing sheep**
Information provided to the media, from Department of Agriculture sources, suggesting that around 100 farmers in Cooley had insufficient sheep to cover their ewe premia applications, was somewhat exaggerated and caused great anger in an already traumatised community. Despite clarification of the situation to the media, this misinformation had the impact of conveying a negative image of Cooley farmers and agriculture in general to the public. In the future, Government must imperatively take strong action against any member of staff who provides such sensitive and unconfirmed information, particularly during a period of crisis. The information was given at a crucial stage in the negotiations for proper compensation and totally undermined the case being made by the IFA on behalf of the Cooley farmers.

As local County Chairman, the author issued a public statement at this time, dissociating the IFA and IFA members from the small number of farmers involved in fraudulent premium applications. The author also strongly and publicly condemned this practice.

**Premia payments**
Ewe and disadvantaged area payments subsequently became an issue as farmers sought to clarify what payments would be made. Following negotiations between the IFA and the Department of Agriculture these payments were made in full for 2001. Payments for subsequent years are not assured.

**Sheep quota**
Under EU regulations there is a ‘use or lose policy’ with regard to quotas. However, the IFA has been assured that there is no threat to the Cooley Farmers sheep quotas in 2001.

**Restocking**
At an IFA meeting on 19 April in Carlingford, County Louth, in the heart of the Cooley Peninsula, Department Officials and experts from Teagasc explained that veterinary regulations prohibited restocking in high-risk areas for five months. Restocking in mountain areas is particularly difficult and the problems are neither properly understood nor particularly appreciated by civil servants. In the case of the Cooley Peninsula, Teagasc experts predict that three generations of sheep and approximately five years will be required to fully restock the mountain areas. Sheep introduced to a mountain area have to acclimatise to the local environment, i.e. develop immunity to local ticks, etc., and become familiar with the geography of the area, i.e. good grazing, shelter, dangerous areas, etc. This knowledge takes time to accumulate and many sheep are lost in the process. Sheep that survive and breed pass this knowledge on to their offspring and gradually the restocking process is completed.

The most recent Budget has recognised this fact and Cooley farmers have been allowed four years to restock from a taxation perspective.

**Rural environmental protection scheme**
Massive difficulties still need to be resolved with regard to rural environmental protection scheme (REPs) payments. The cull has effectively rendered REPs contracts null and void. Negotiations to provide a sensible solution are continuing between IFA representatives and the Department of Agriculture.

**Set aside**
County Louth cereal growers have been granted the option of 100% set aside to compensate for problems in tillage operations due to the fact that the County was an annexed zone during the peak sowing season.

**Analysis of the Irish approach**
Inevitably, Ireland handled some aspects well while other areas could be improved in the future. Overall, the management and eradication of FMD from Ireland was achieved successfully in 2001 with minimum damage. Lessons must be learned and documented for future implementation if required.

The initial response in Ireland was to take radical action rapidly. Resources were freely available. Decisions were made and implemented without delay.

Communication and effective use of the media to generate full-scale public support and co-operation regardless of personal inconvenience was unprecedented.

At the height of the FMD crisis in Ireland, there was co-operation between the Department of Agriculture and local IFA representatives and farmers. This co-operation evolved from a strong relationship between local DVO staff and farmers in County Louth. However, this level of co-operation was damaged when FMD became a political issue at Government level. Subsequently, the Department of Agriculture held a three-day review to which no representatives of the IFA or Cooley farmers were invited. Unfortunately, the Department of
Agriculture plan to manage FMD in the future contains no input from farmers who were directly affected or involved, i.e. farmers who suffered the consequences of the 2001 outbreak.

Towards the end of the cull, An Taoiseach visited Cooley. Promises of support to help Cooley recover were made and to a large extent these promises were honoured, with Cooley being awarded additional Government funding to attract tourism and outside investment. However, unfortunately, the issue of compensation and valuations of sheep still remains unresolved. This is a major lesson for the future.

The local IFA executive committee played a leading role as part of an unofficial crisis management team in Cooley. This meant that local IFA executive members were available at all times to resolve issues as they arose. This resulted in local IFA leaders being heavily criticised in some areas for lack of resolution in the valuations dispute.

Conclusions and recommendations

Prevention

The FMD outbreak which took place in Ireland in 2001 is less likely to have taken place if Northern Ireland had not had ‘special dual status’. Farmers in Northern Ireland must decide whether they want to be part of an all Ireland agricultural unit or remain part of the UK, but the dual status cannot be allowed to re-emerge.

The negative consumer reaction recorded in the Netherlands to vaccinated animals was a surprise development given that all animals were vaccinated up to 1991 with no known human health implications. Under these circumstances, vaccination is unlikely to provide any benefits for Ireland as the country must export 80%-90% of primary agricultural produce and is heavily dependent on positive consumer perceptions to sell produce.

There are a number of steps that can be taken to help prevent a future outbreak of FMD while maintaining the open market concept, as follows:

– the EU regulation which allows the importation of 1 kg of meat for personal consumption must be changed
– traceability of all EU and imported animals into the EU must be a priority
– development of microchip technology must be accelerated
– on an EU level, an early warning system, both political and veterinary, must be developed for List A diseases to minimise the risk to Europe.

Developing a plan

Individual member states and the EU must develop and maintain crisis management plans for tackling this disease in future.

The lessons learned during the 2001 outbreak across all affected countries must be compiled in a comprehensive document and contributions must be included from all parties involved such as farmers, farming organisations, veterinary officials, media, civil servants, police, army, etc.

Plans must include measures to eliminate the disease, deal with compensation issues and also contain an element of emergency support for farmers whose herds and flocks are culled.

Procedures must be clearly defined to prevent FMD from becoming a political issue.

Managing an outbreak of foot and mouth disease

Veterinary staff should concentrate on the elimination of the disease and animal welfare issues.

Independent valuers must be introduced immediately, at the commencement of the cull.

Crisis management plans should be issued to farmers and farm leaders in an affected area.

A local crisis management team should be formed, augmented by personnel with first-hand experience from the 2001 outbreak where possible.

Emergency financial support must be made available for affected farmers to tide families over the initial period of crisis as farm families do not usually qualify for existing benefits.

A central office should be established within the exclusion zone and daily briefing sessions (open to the media) should be scheduled.

Honest and comprehensive information should be made available to affected farmers, the media and general public whose support and co-operation are crucial to the elimination of any future outbreak.

Funeral pyres are unlikely to be acceptable during any future outbreak. The author recommends using mobile air curtain furnaces, one of which was used in Cooley with great effect. This would remove the fear associated with the movement of dead animals out of the area for rendering, as was the case in Cooley where culled animals were removed in sealed lorries to College Proteins in Nobber, County Meath for rendering. This caused alarm among farmers along the 40-km route (Fig. 3).
As a measure to maintain public support and minimise inconvenience, a licensing system must be introduced to accelerate the movement of commercial traffic through an infected area.

In Ireland, there are some lasting effects from the 2001 FMD outbreak. Many farmers who lost their flocks and herds in Cooley are bitter about the way in which they were treated. The lack of financial support has left many families vulnerable and the emotional scars are present for both adults and children. The human tragedy in Cooley and other areas affected by FMD is likely to remain an issue for some time. Many of the farmers in Cooley feel that they sacrificed their flocks in the national interest and as a reward, were victimised by a system that failed to support them when they were most in need.

At EU level, measures must be taken to protect Europe from FMD and other List A diseases. An early warning system for veterinary officials and farmers must be developed and a comprehensive EU plan could be implemented relatively rapidly by uniting people from affected countries across Europe. Once formulated, these EU and national plans must be updated at least every five years, unlike the situation in the UK, where the national plan had not been updated since 1991.

To maintain public support, which was a vital factor in the rapid elimination of FMD from Ireland, a licensing system must be introduced rapidly to enable commercial traffic to pass through an infected area, thus minimising the disruption to local business.

Traditionally, farmers have not qualified for welfare benefits in Ireland. This factor contributed significantly to the financial hardship experienced by many of the Cooley farming families in the weeks after the Proleek outbreak. European Union and national plans to deal with any future outbreaks of FMD must include some form of emergency financial assistance for affected farm families.

The 2001 FMD outbreak has left a very bitter residue among many of the farmers who were affected in Cooley. The psychological effects are only just beginning to emerge and as yet, the long-term impact on children and future generations of farmers in the Cooley area remains to be seen. The disease has been effectively eradicated from Ireland but the human tragedy is still evolving.

In summary, FMD eradication was dealt with very rapidly and adequately in Ireland. However, the repercussions on the inhabitants and the financial consequences of the disease were only partially dealt with. For little extra cost, all of these issues could have been resolved satisfactorily.

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Any implied criticism contained in this document has been included to provide constructive comment for the policy makers who have responsibility for developing plans to counter any future outbreak.

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Fièvre aphteuse : le point de vue des exploitants agricoles irlandais

R. O’Malley

Résumé
L’Irlande, qui a connu son premier foyer de fièvre aphteuse depuis 1941, a réussi à éliminer la maladie grâce à quatre facteurs principaux, à savoir :
– la bonne volonté des éleveurs de Cooley à se sacrifier dans l’intérêt de la nation ;
– la fermeté des mesures adoptées dès la déclaration du premier foyer ;
– l’emplacement géographique des foyers de Meigh et de Proleek, qui a permis aux autorités d’isoler puis de compartimenter efficacement la région afin de protéger les exportations issues des autres parties du pays ;
– la prise de conscience nationale et l’empressement général, que ce soit au niveau du gouvernement ou de l’homme de la rue, de mettre en œuvre toutes les mesures requises pour empêcher l’entrée de la fièvre aphteuse en Irlande.
L’auteur décrit les événements liés à l’apparition du foyer de fièvre aphteuse en Irlande, en 2001, en se plaçant du point de vue d’un exploitant agricole. Il évoque la confirmation du premier cas à Meigh (comté d’Armagh) et la découverte du foyer de Proleek, avant de passer en revue les conséquences de la maladie (indemnisations, paiement de primes, tragédies humaines et enseignements à tirer).
Il importe que les grandes questions politiques soient abordées au niveau national et au niveau de l’Union européenne pour éviter le retour de la fièvre aphteuse en Europe. À l’échelon national, l’existence d’un double statut zoosanitaire, en Irlande du Nord et en Grande-Bretagne, d’une part, et en Irlande du Nord et en République d’Irlande, d’autre part, ne doit plus être autorisée. Certaines lacunes de la réglementation sont à l’origine de l’introduction de la fièvre aphteuse en Irlande. La crise initiale déclenchée par la maladie a été gérée efficacement par le gouvernement irlandais, qui a bénéficié de la coopération des exploitants agricoles et de l’ensemble de la population.

Mots-clés
La fiebre aftosa desde el punto de vista de los ganaderos irlandeses

R. O’Malley

Resumen
La campaña realizada en Irlanda para erradicar la fiebre aftosa, a raíz del primer brote registrado en el país desde 1941, culminó con éxito gracias a cuatro factores principales:
– la buena disposición de los ganaderos de Cooley a sacrificarse en aras del interés nacional;
– las rápidas y decisivas medidas adoptadas en cuanto se declaró el brote;
– la localización geográfica de los brotes de Meigh y Proleek, que permitió a las autoridades instituir un eficaz cordón sanitario y regionalizar esa zona, salvaguardando así las exportaciones del resto del país;
– la conciencia y el espíritu de colaboración que prevalecieron en todas las instancias del país, desde el Gobierno al ciudadano de a pie, y la consiguiente voluntad de hacer todo lo necesario para mantener a la fiebre aftosa fuera de Irlanda.

El autor refiere, desde el punto de vista de un ganadero, la historia del brote de fiebre aftosa que se declaró en Irlanda en 2001, empezando por el primer caso confirmado en Meigh (Condado de Armagh), pasando por los casos de Proleek y los sacrificios sanitarios y examinando por último las secuelas del brote y sus consecuencias en cuanto al pago de indemnizaciones y primas de seguros, el drama humano que supuso (y sigue suponiendo) y las enseñanzas extraídas de la experiencia.

Para prevenir nuevos brotes de fiebre aftosa en Europa es preciso reconsiderar una serie de cuestiones de importancia en materia de política agrícola, tanto en el plano nacional como de la Unión Europea. En lo que a Irlanda se refiere, es menester evitar que Irlanda del Norte y la República de Irlanda por un lado y Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte por el otro vuelvan a hallarse en situaciones dispares con respecto al estatus sanitario. La enfermedad llegó a penetrar en Irlanda debido a la existencia de lagunas normativas. Con la colaboración de los ganaderos y de todos los ciudadanos, el Gobierno irlandés se enfrentó con éxito a la crisis en cuanto surgió.

Palabras clave