

1. Miss E M Jones
 2. PS/Parliamentary Secretary
 3. PS/Secretary of State

RE 19/8

- cc Permanent Secretary
 Mr J W Lloyd
 Dr D Hine
 Mr R Jarman
 Miss M Bull
 Dr E J Ludlow
 Mr L Walford
 Mr D R Williams
 Mr G Podmore
 Mr H G Roberts

Mrs George.

Thank you. The Secretary of State has asked.

*D. Jennings
 25/2/93
 APS/S&S*

CREUTZFELDT - JACOB DISEASE (CJD).

Purpose

1. This submission advises of the publication of the second annual report on the surveillance of CJD in the UK and of the recent death of a dairy farmer from Sussex from CJD.

Background

2. CJD is one of a family of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, so called because of the spongy appearance of the brain under a microscope. The family of diseases includes bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle and scarpie in sheep. It is a rare disease which occurs sporadically worldwide with approximately 0.5 - 1 new cases per million per year.

Monitoring of CJD

3. Cases of CJD have been monitored in a study conducted at the National CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh. In the Government's response to the Agriculture Select Committee into BSE in 1990, DH agreed to make an annual report to the House of Commons, on the number of CJD cases in the UK. In the first annual report information was provided on a retrospective study which looked at cases of CJD between 1985 and 1990 and also the first two years of the prospective study which commenced 1 May 1990. The second report, doc 1, gives an update on the study covering the period 1 May 1992 to 30 April 1993 and provides various analyses of the data.

4. The studies shown that between May 1990 and 30 April 1993, 250 suspect cases of CJD were identified in the UK. 117 of these were classified as definite, or probable CJD, as follows:-

1 May 1990 - 30 April 1991	32
1 May 1991 - 30 April 1992	37
1 May 1992 - 30 April 1993	48

5. While Ministers will note that the annual incidence of CJD has increased, the report concludes that this is not statistically significant, and is likely to be related to increased awareness of CJD. Similar increases in the annual incidence of CJD have been observed in the early years of similar national surveys in other countries. The report concludes that there has been no significant change in the epidemiological or clinical characteristics of CJD since the occurrence of BSE. Additionally it states that current information does not suggest that occupation is linked to an increased risk of developing CJD, and this includes occupations which might involve exposure to BSE.

Death of dairy farmer

6. The recent death of a dairy farmer in Somerset from CJD, may raise fears of a casual link between BSE and CJD. The farmer is known to have had 3 cases of BSE in his herd, and this is the second death from CJD of a dairy farmer, in whose cattle one or more cases of BSE have been confirmed. This recent case has already attracted media attention in the West Country. A number of national newspapers have also shown an interest and copies of recent press articles are at doc 2. There is however, no evidence to suggest that BSE is transmissible to humans.

7. A special meeting of members of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (the Tyrrell Committee) was convened to consider the case. The outcome of this meeting is the statement at doc 3 which has been agreed by Dr Tyrrell. Ministers will note from this that experts are of the view, that there is unlikely to be a direct link between the cases of BSE, and the occurrence of CJD in the farmer.

8. DH have prepared a question and answer brief in anticipation of further enquiries on this case. Copies of this are at doc 4. If the Department's press office, to whom this briefing is copied, should receive any enquiries they will wish to refer to the Q and A briefing and the recent statement from the Tyrrell Committee. Any further enquiries should be directed to DH.

Advice

9. Ministers are invited to note the publication of the second report on CJD incidence in the UK and the recent death of a farmer from CJD.

18 August 1993

H. C. George
Mrs H C George
PHF2

93/08.18/4.2