**Stamping-out during foot and mouth disease emergency situations and animal welfare**

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Countries, including Member States of the EU, which are foot and mouth disease free without vaccination, have a policy of stamping out to deal with incursions of disease. Stamping out involves the killing of infected herds, safe carcase disposal, cleaning and disinfection. In addition, area restrictions are imposed to prevent the direct or indirect spread of infection by the movement of animals and fomites and to carry out surveillance. EU legislation is in place to protect the welfare of animals on infected farms at the time of killing. In an extensive, prolonged outbreak, severe animal welfare problems also arise on livestock premises because of movement restrictions.

The nature and scale of these problems are illustrated by the UK outbreak in 2001, where the number of animals killed for welfare reasons (2.3m) greatly exceeded the number of animals killed on confirmed infected premises (1.3m). Prophylactic vaccination for fmd is prohibited in the EU but emergency vaccination (either suppressive or protective) may be used as an adjunct to stamping-out. Whether, when and where to use vaccine in the face of an outbreak are problematic with current vaccine technology and DIVA tests. It remains the case that ‘Prevention is better than Cure’ and measures to limit the extent of an outbreak are explored in the light of the lessons learned from the UK outbreak.