



# Livestock Notifiable Disease Factsheets Cattle Plague (Rinderpest)

**If you suspect signs of any notifiable disease, you must immediately notify a Defra Divisional Veterinary Manager.**

## Introduction

Cattle plague, also known as Rinderpest, is a contagious disease that principally affects cattle, but occasionally can also affect sheep, goats and camels, certain wild ruminants and pigs.

## History and spread of the disease

Cattle plague was a major disease of livestock through most of the nineteenth century in Great Britain. It last occurred here in 1877 but it survives in other parts of the world. It is an OIE Class A disease reflecting its serious economic impact.

## Symptoms

The temperature rises in the early stages. The animal is off its food, dull and the coat is staring. Sometimes shivering is noticed. The breathing is quick: a watery or mucous discharge flows from the eyes and nostrils; in the latter case there may be a slight amount of blood in the discharge. In milking cows the secretion of milk is diminished or arrested. The membrane of the nostrils reddens, and an eruption, like grains of bran, appears in the nostrils and inside the lips and cheeks. This eruption is often followed by distinct ulceration. The animal is at first constipated, but in the later stages diarrhoea often sets in. In this case the dung has a foul smell and is often tinged with blood. The animal rapidly loses condition and the disease usually terminates fatally in from 6 to 10 days. Cattle plague does not attack single animals in a herd, but spreads rapidly from one to another.

## Post-mortem

The principal lesions here are in the alimentary tract. Small necrotic areas, which later develop into sharply defined deep ulcers, occur in the mouth, pharynx and oesophagus. These ulcers later coalesce to form large erosions. Similar lesions and also numerous small haemorrhages occur in the mucosa of the abomasum (fourth stomach). Zones of intense inflammation are found in the large intestine. Typically, these are arranged transversely giving a striped appearance. All lymph nodes are severely congested and dark red in colour.

## Legislation

Suspicion of Cattle Plague is compulsorily notifiable. Detailed rules for control of the disease are in the Cattle Plague Order of 1928 as amended. The main aspects of disease control are:

### i) Infected Premises

Restrictions on movements of farm livestock, horses, asses, mules and dogs, and also on carcasses, fodder, litter, dung, utensils, pens, hurdles and other things without permission. No person, unless tending an animal, shall enter the premises unless authorised by an Officer of the DEFRA. Persons leaving the premises are to wash their hands with soap and

water and cleanse and disinfect their boots. All liquid manure, urine and shed washings to be thoroughly disinfected. Animals are to be treated under the direction of an Inspector. Receptacle containing disinfectants to be kept.

### **(ii) Infected Area**

Where a Veterinary Inspector has certified that a premises is a suspected case of cattle plague, no person shall move any animal out of an area of a radius of five miles from the premises, with certain exceptions. Other control measures provide that an inspector may by licence authorise movements of animals which are otherwise prohibited if such movement is considered necessary or expedient and the movement is wholly within the area. Inspectors have powers to require isolation, housing or removal of animals, to prevent the spread of cattle plague. Animals affected or suspected of having cattle plague shall not be exposed in a market, fairground, sale-yard, place of exhibition or other place of sale, or lair or highway. Restrictions are imposed on suspicion that disease exists or has existed within 28 days. On confirmation of disease, no animal may be moved out of an area lying within a radius of 5 miles from the infected place. The infected area may be extended. Livestock (including horses and dogs) may not moved from an infected place. Movement of carcasses, fodder, litter etc controlled under licence. Slurry must be disinfected. Animals which are believed to have been in contact with the disease may be seized and isolated. The Order has separate provisions to seize animals and declare an infected place where the disease is found or suspected in a market, railway station, or other like place, or during transit. The infected area restrictions shall remain in force for two clear days after the Veterinary Inspector signs the certificate . The restrictions may be withdrawn or extended.

Compensation is provided for in Schedule 3 to the Animal Health Act 1981 but the maximum rates are seriously out of date and would have to be uprated in the event of a confirmed case of the disease.

### **EU Legislation**

Council Directive 82/894 includes Rinderpest in the list of diseases that are compulsorily notifiable. The provisions of Directive 92/119 regarding compulsory slaughter and the establishment of a 3km protection zone and a 10km surveillance zone around infected premises also apply to Rinderpest. The Directive includes minimum time limits before restocking can take place on infected premises.

### **Pictures of the disease**



Purulent ocular discharge and conjunctivitis



Erosions of buccal mucosa and gingiva



Erosions on ventral surface of tongue.

**Information current of June 16, 2005**