SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT EXOTIC DISEASES OF ANIMALS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Covering exotic notifiable animal diseases of livestock

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SCOTTISH'S GOVERNMENT'S EXOTIC DISEASE OF ANIMALS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Scottish Government has comprehensive contingency planning arrangements in place for responding to an exotic animal disease incursion. Each outbreak or incident of exotic notifiable disease of animals requires effective communication; whether that is between government and those dealing with the disease; or with stakeholders, animal keepers, the public and the media. Accurate and timely updates on the latest situation are essential in helping reduce the impact and spread of disease or potential impacts on human health.

1.2 Every disease outbreak will present some variation in scenario and response meaning that a 'one size fits all' approach to communications is unsuitable. Also, in the event that an outbreak crosses one or more border, communications will need to be coordinated across the other affected administrations. Setting out the roles and responsibilities of the organisations and agencies involved will help ensure gaps in communication are minimised and communications are kept clear and consistent.

1.3 This Communications Strategy sets out the objectives for the communications aspects of a disease control response. It details the responsibilities of those involved in the disease response, from suspicion of disease through to its eradication, and their relationships; and describes communication activities at the GB, national[1] and local level. Planning is also considered, as it helps to ensure a comprehensive communications response can be delivered in the event of a disease outbreak and that all those involved or affected are included in that process.

1.4 This Communications Strategy has been updated in line with organisational restructuring within the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). APHA is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), working across Great Britain on behalf of Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government. The strategy has also been updated to align with the recent publication of both[2]:

- A revised "Scottish Government Exotic Diseases of Animals Contingency Framework Plan" and;

- The "Scottish Regional Resilience Partnerships' Framework for Exotic Notifiable Animal Diseases Contingency Plan"

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[1] Throughout this document the term "national" refers to Scottish arrangements or policies. UK or GB arrangements or policies are identified separately.

[2] Both plans are available at: http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

1.5 In addition to the above plans, the Communications Strategy should be read in conjunction with 'Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of NHS led Incident Management Teams'[3].

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[3] Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/08/6455

2.   STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.1 To control and eradicate an exotic animal disease it is vital that communications are fully integrated into the response from the suspicion phase through to confirmation of disease, disease control and finally disease eradication and a return to normal conditions. Only by getting the right mix of communication channels operating at the right time and fully coordinated with wider government, operational partners and stakeholders, will the Scottish Government be able to lead Scotland's response to disease incursion anywhere within Great Britain (GB). The Scottish Government's main communication objectives are to:

- coordinate disease response communication activities with and between operational partners and disease control stakeholders
- ensure the right information is targeted and available to all responders when they need it
- supply operational partners and, where appropriate, other stakeholders, with the pertinent facts and figures before they enter the public domain
- maintain a close working relationship with all GB administrations regardless of where disease incursion takes place in GB (links will also be maintained with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland)
- utilise the right mix of communication channels in order to maximise coverage of information to all target groups and individuals and ensure there are no gaps in the information cascade
- maintain a close working relationship with the media to avoid misleading and contradictory information reaching the public domain
- ensure all information is accurate before it reaches external audiences and ensure all stakeholders are aware of the message sign-off procedure before they put any information into the public domain (via social media for example)
- maintain a close working relationship with industry to both, convey Scottish Government policy; and to assist in disseminating key information to industry grass roots.

3. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

3.1 Disease outbreaks can take many forms, so it is necessary to be prepared to respond to a range of possible circumstances. Although the primary aim of the Communications Strategy is to set out structures for managing communications during a disease outbreak in Scotland, it is also designed to deal with:

- disease being present within UK but outwith Scotland
- an extended outbreak with multiple Infected Premises (IPs) across UK
- concurrent exotic animal diseases that need to be dealt with
- diseases with zoonotic potential (potential to spread between animals and humans).

3.2 The Communications Strategy must also recognise the environment it will operate in. Communications must take into account:

- the demand for news 24 hours a day
- the diverse ways in which people access and share information and the ways in which social media in particular can spread news that may not be entirely accurate
- news travels more quickly with new /social media and mobile internet access
- the need for understandable, comprehensive and up-to-date information and;
- the expectation that Government will respond swiftly and effectively to an exotic notifiable animal disease outbreak
- the need to tailor media formats to target specific audiences

4. THE COMMUNICATIONS FLOW

4.1 Communication is integral to the management of disease response. Effective and consistent communication is essential to warn and inform those involved in the response to the outbreak and those affected by it, of the risks presented and how best to mitigate them. If people are better informed, there will be a more effective response to the outbreak.

Figure 1: The Communications Flow
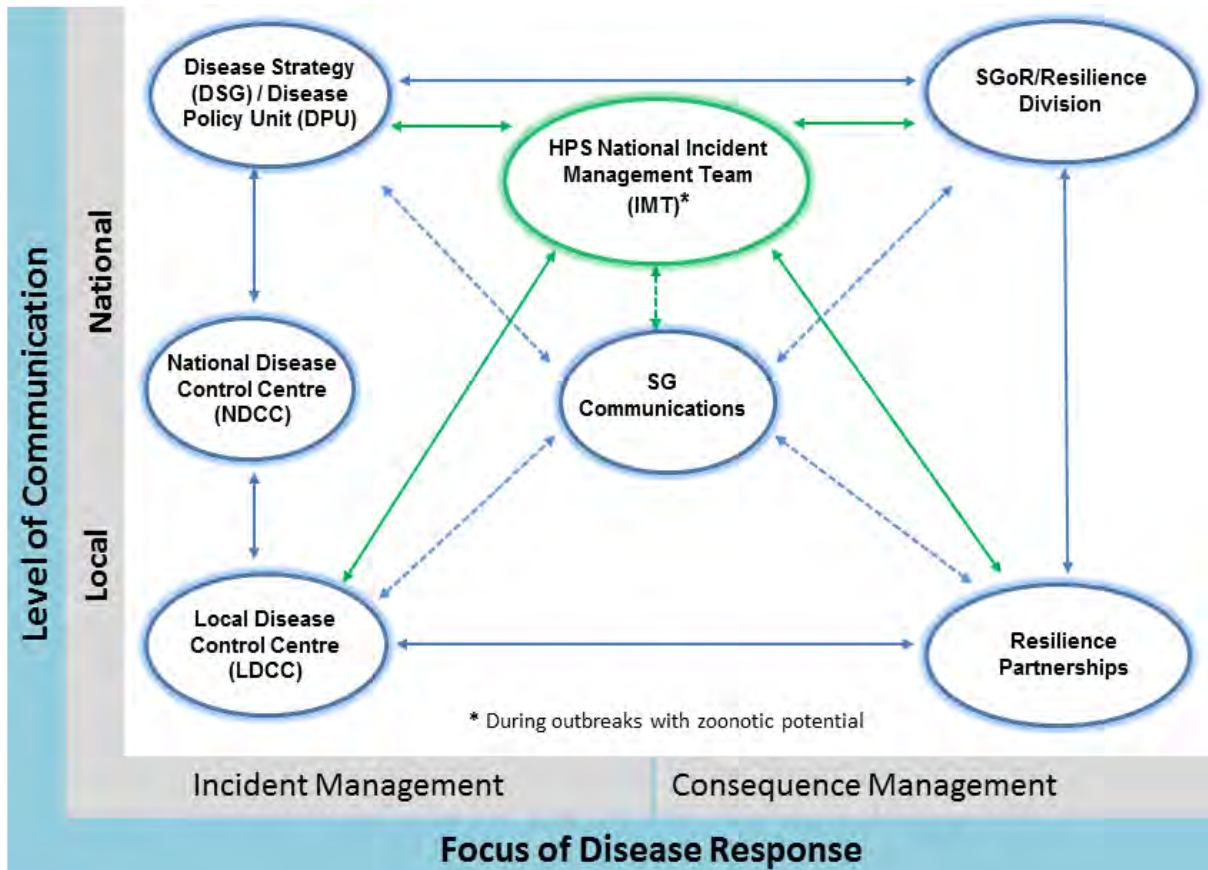
4.2 Communication during a disease outbreak has two main elements:

- a focus on the response, that is, managing immediate disease control or the wider consequences that might arise
- the different information demands of target audiences, whether national, local, internal to Scottish Government and/or its operational partners, external stakeholders.

A wide range of groups and organisations are involved in the communication process but responsibility for its coordination falls to seven key players (fig 1). Each has a distinct role in responding to disease incursion and a coordinated approach to communications can help ensure consistency in the messages delivered. Figure 1 highlights the relationships between these groups whose roles are described in more detail in the following sections.

5.   SUSPICION OF DISEASE

Communications at suspect stage

5.1 When Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has been informed about a suspect notifiable disease that requires investigation by an official veterinarian, APHA Scotland will immediately alert Scottish Government's Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), CVO UK and operational partners as agreed with APHA's Head of Field Delivery (Scotland). A suspect case is one in which susceptible animals have been examined by a Veterinary Inspector who cannot rule out disease on clinical grounds. As a result samples are taken and sent for laboratory testing to confirm or negate the presence of disease. If, based on a risk assessment, the suspect case is considered to be a cause for concern, CVO UK will call a case conference involving the four territorial Chief Veterinary Officers supported by key policy and veterinary officials from each Administration. This case conference will consider the emerging issues and next steps. It will also determine whether further investigation is required or if the circumstances warrant triggering an Amber Teleconference.

5.2 Coordination of communications will be important from the outset. The Amber Teleconference meeting is the forum where any planned communications are discussed and reviewed with all UK administrations and operational partners based on the emerging situation. Scottish Government are responsible for arranging Scottish representation at the Amber Teleconference. The list of Scottish representatives is pre-agreed. This process is explained more fully in Chapter 1 of the 'Scottish Government's Exotic Disease of Animals Contingency Framework Plan'[4].

Wider government notification

5.3 The Head of the Scottish Government's Exotic Disease Branch and CVO Scotland will brief relevant Government contacts to ensure initial preparations are made in the event disease is confirmed. This will ensure adequate resources are available to support the disease control operation.

Notifying Resilience Partnerships (RPs)

5.4 When APHA has been informed about a suspect notifiable disease that requires investigation by an official veterinarian, APHA Scotland will alert relevant operational partners in any affected area as agreed with the Head of Field Delivery (Scotland). The timing and method of communication to operational partners will be based on a veterinary risk assessment of the likely consequences and impact of the disease suspected. Any email notifications will be on form EDO12 Suspect Disease Notification

5.5 Although APHA will alert the relevant operational partners in any affected area, the Scottish Government's Resilience Division will discuss with Scottish

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[4] Available at http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

Government's Exotic Disease Branch if all RPs should be alerted, particularly where confirmation of disease may impact across multiple regional and local partnership areas. This will facilitate a coordination of resources as operational partners prepare for possible confirmation of disease. This decision will be based on factors including:

- type and location of suspect disease
- likelihood of disease confirmation based on risk assessment
- potential requirement for consequence management should disease be confirmed.

5.6 RPs have developed a template for a Scottish animal disease framework plan ('Framework for Exotic Notifiable Animal Diseases Contingency Plans'[5]) which details a consistent command and control structure for responding to suspect and confirmed outbreaks of exotic notifiable animal diseases.

Stakeholder notification

5.7 If Scottish Ministers consider that alerting stakeholders at the suspect stage will be beneficial, the Head of The Scottish Government's Exotic Disease Branch will co-ordinate communications with relevant stakeholders to alert them to the latest developments and initiate preparations for confirmation of disease.

Proactive communications on suspicion of disease

5.8 If, following advice from officials, Scottish Ministers agree there is sufficient benefit to be gained from alerting the public to the existence of the suspect case, proactive communications will be undertaken, e.g. to publicise the imposition of area movement controls if there is a high risk of disease spread.

5.9 Any news release at the suspect stage will contain limited information, highlighting that a routine investigation is underway into a suspect case of notifiable disease and any movement controls that have been imposed. Coordination between the Scottish Government's Communications Directorate, communications teams from other UK administrations and operational partners, will ensure that the consistency of messages is maintained.

Policy on naming of locations at suspect stage

5.10 If proactive communications are undertaken at the suspect stage, it will not normally name suspect locations unless there are specific disease control reasons for doing so. Although the exact location of the suspect case will not be identified, a map showing any area placed under movement restrictions will be issued. Operational partners, such as local authorities, should refer all media calls on this subject to the Scottish Government's Communications Directorate in the first instance.

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[5]Available at: http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

6.   CONFIRMATION OF DISEASE

Immediate communications on confirmation

6.1 As soon as disease is confirmed the following steps will be taken immediately:

- APHA will notify the owner of affected livestock, local operational partners and where relevant, the owner's private vet
- Scottish Government will issue a news release confirming disease
- CVO Scotland (if disease is confirmed in Scotland) will be made available for media bidsCMO Scotland may be made available for media bids where outbreaks have zoonotic potential
- a disease specific area on the Scottish Government's web site will be activated to provide regular updates
- the Disease Strategy Group (DSG) and Disease Policy Unit (DPU)[6] will be activated
- a meeting of key industry stakeholders will be held as soon as practicable.

6.2 CVO UK will notify the European Commission, other Member States and the OIE of an outbreak of exotic notifiable disease within any part of the UK.

Zoonotic Diseases – Public Health Communications

6.3   Where disease has zoonotic potential (e.g. rabies and certain strains of avian influenza) public health communications will also be a consideration and will be discussed and agreed by the Health Protection Scotland led Incident Management Team (IMT). Both the Disease Strategy Group (DSG) and the Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) will be represented at the National Incident Management Team (IMT).

6.4 HPS will lead the management and coordination of the public health incident response following the principles set out in the 'Guidance on the Management of Public Health Incidents'[7]. The IMT will have communications representation from HPS who will liaise with SG communications and other agencies as required. As is standard practice, the IMT will agree public health communications and messages as part of the standing agenda. The IMT will identify and agree media spokespeople, e.g. local CPHM, chair of the IMT or Chief Medical Officer (CMO), depending on the scale of the incident and public health implications.

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[6] For more information about the DSG and DPU see section 2 of Scottish Government Exotic Diseases of Animals Contingency Framework Plan available at : http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

[7] "Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of NHS led Incident Management Teams"- Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/08/6455

6.5 Links between animal disease related control structures and existing structures for communicating public health messages will be made through IMT representation at the DSG, the LDCC-MCT and the NDCC to ensure messages are correct and consistent. In addition, HPS communications will be represented at any national communications meetings convened in relation to the incident.

Policy on naming of locations on confirmation

6.6 If a fast spreading exotic disease (such as Foot and Mouth Disease) is confirmed, the premises <u>may</u> be named and its location disclosed. In such circumstances, there can be benefits in terms of disease control i.e. raising awareness of the disease; and obtaining support for activities such as tracing possible contact animals. This policy does not extend to endemic diseases - such as sheep scab - where the different nature of the disease makes such disease control benefits unlikely to arise, therefore making it difficult to justify breaching an individual's right to privacy.

Convening of stakeholder groups on confirmation

6.7 Stakeholder organisations play an important role in relaying essential information to their members and the public (and vice versa). It is therefore important that initial stakeholder group meetings take place at the earliest possible stage. Stakeholder groups generally fall into three categories:

- Scottish stakeholders groups chaired by CVO Scotland
- Local stakeholder groups chaired by APHA's Outbreak Director[8]
- GB exotic disease core stakeholder groups chaired by CVO Scotland or Defra.

6.8 Members of the relevant species GB exotic diseases core group will be invited to attend the Scottish Stakeholder groups, however, if there are concurrent disease outbreaks in another GB Administration the GB core group will convene in its own right.

Scottish Government website on confirmation

6.9 The Scottish Government website contains general information on a number of exotic animal diseases. Where appropriate, links to specific animal disease SG webpages will be included in Scottish Government news releases and statements. Where relevant, news releases will include links to information on other government departments or agencies websites e.g. DEFRA and APHA.

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[8] For more information about the Outbreak Director see section 2 of Scottish Government Exotic Diseases of Animals Contingency Framework Plan available at :
 http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

7.   MEDIA STRATEGY

Scottish Government Communications Directorate (SGCD)

Working with wider government

7.1 The SGCD will develop the media strategy for the disease response outlining the approach to engaging with the media and responding to media enquiries. SGCD will liaise with Defra Group Communications (APHA Team) in managing media coverage; and will maintain close links to ensure that all media enquiries are channelled through SGCD.

7.2 Scottish Government Communications directorate (SGCD) will also work alongside other UK administrations (through attendance at the daily GB Communications Group Meetings, Animal Disease Policy Group, daily birdtable meetings) and operational partners. Frequency of operational partner meetings will be agreed between SGCD and and the relevant RP Communications Group (PCG) to ensure national and local media are kept updated and that an accurate and consistent message is being projected from all agencies. The relationship with the media is a reciprocal one. The Scottish Government can expect to receive requests for interviews and information, whilst in turn will also want to use a range of media outlets to help disseminate information.

Working with journalists

7.3 The SGCD will ensure journalists are kept informed of developments and that information is imparted as widely as possible to the relevant people. Regular updates and specialist briefings will help convey the Scottish Government's message to the public, including matters relating to human health, where disease has zoonotic potential.

7.4 Jargon-free information on the disease and its implications to animals and the general population will be made available through a range of digital and social media channels. This information will be crucial in ensuring the wider news media have an understanding of the situation and should help prevent misleading information reaching the public.

7.5 Social media and online media will be used proactively to get information to the public on fast changing issues. Consideration will also be given to posting Podcasts, videos and messages on the Scottish Government's own website.

Strategic feedback on the developing media story

7.6 SGCD will provide strategic feedback to DSG, NDCC, LDCC and other key disease response structures on what direction the media story is taking and highlight potential opportunities and threats. This will facilitate informed discussion for the development of the media strategy.

Local level media coordination

7.7 In the early phase of the disease following confirmation, SGCD will consider deploying a Communications Officer to the Forward Operating Base (FOB) to manage local media coverage at the IP. If a Defra Group Communications (APHA Team) is requested to fulfil this role, or to maintain a presence at an additional IP, then SGCD will liaise with Defra Group Communications (APHA Team). The Communications Officer will brief both, FOB and LDCC staff from the outset, so that any approach from journalists is referred to SGCD. A key means of engagement with operational partners will be through attendance at the LDCC Management Control Team meetings. All media queries in relation to disease control MUST still be routed through SGCD, even if a Communications Officer is on site locally.

Spokespeople

7.8 The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity and CVO Scotland are likely to play a central role in speaking to the media. Officials involved in wider consequence management, such as the Chief Medical Officer Scotland (CMO), may also be called upon to act as spokespeople. Where an outbreak affects other parts of GB, as well as Scotland, Defra Communications Group will coordinate the response to national (UK) media bids; liaising with the SGCD and Communications officers from the other UK Administrations.

7.9 There may also be scope for the Outbreak Director for Scotland to become involved in media briefings at the LDCC, supported by the Local Communications Officer. This, however, is only likely to occur after least 72 hours into the disease response. In the early stages the Outbreak Director and other LDCC staff will be fully occupied with disease control duties and CVO Scotland should have covered all the salient points as national spokesperson.

7.10 Operational partners are also likely to receive media bids. SGCD will keep in contact with operational partners to share bids, key lines and messaging through established contacts within SG Communications and key operational partners' representatives within the LDCC Management Control Team.

Social Media

7.11 People use social media during emergencies for up-to-date information and to and share information on the developing situation. Social media channels complement existing communication channels and can be used to inform people about risks in their area, together with additional information on the possible impacts and precautions to take.

7.12 Rumours and misinformation can spread rapidly during a disease outbreak so it is important to counteract inaccurate or misleading information at the earliest opportunity.

7.13 During a large scale outbreak it is not expected that the Scottish Government will be able to monitor or deal with the volume of social media traffic in isolation. Working with Defra, the Welsh Government, Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), APHA, HPS National Incident Management Team (where an outbreak has zoonotic potential) and relevant RP Public Communication Groups, the SGCD will determine the arrangements for effective partnership working and coordinate the drafting, clearing and release of information via social media channels.

7.14 Scottish Government will use the most relevant social media accounts, this is likely to include (but not be limited to):

Twitter

> @ruralmattersSG

> @GreenerScotland

> @CVOScotland

Facebook

> 'Rural Matters' (Facebook page of Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID))

8.   GB LEVEL COMMUNICATIONS

National Disease Control Centre (NDCC)

8.1 At a GB level the National Disease Control Centre (NDCC) coordinates the communications flow. This is vital, particularly if disease is present in more than one part of the UK. A communications team from within APHA will be set up as part of the NDCC to gather information on the disease outbreak and will work with the LDCC and DPU to ensure correct and timely information is made available to meet communication demands.

8.2 A UK Daily Communications Teleconference[9] will involve representatives from Scottish Government, APHA, Defra, Welsh Government, DAERA and several other government departments, as required, to identify key points for internal and external communications. The chair of the meeting will be determined according to where the outbreak is but if the outbreak crosses one or more border it is likely that Defra's Director of Communications, or deputy, will chair the meeting. This is in line with the document entitled 'Communicating across GB in the event of animal disease outbreaks' endorsed by all three GB administrations.

8.3 Regular 'birdtable' meetings will take place to ensure all parties involved in the disease control operation have a clear idea of the current situation. These meetings will provide a forum for policy, operational, and communications functions to provide brief situation reports and facilitate a coordinated and cooperative response. Key emerging issues will be identified and responsibilities for resolving them and reporting back, allocated.

8.4 The Outbreak Director will provide the NDCC with a situation report at the end of each day, highlighting in particular, any issues to be addressed at a GB level.

NDCC Liaison Officer

8.5 The DSG will determine the need for a Scottish Government official to be dispatched to the NDCC depending on the scale of the outbreak. This NDCC Liaison Officer will provide the key link between the NDCC and the DSG in Edinburgh. In appointing an NDCC Liaison Officer, the DSG will take account of the demands presented by the specific circumstances of the outbreak and existing available resources.

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[9] See section 4.5 of the United Kingdom Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals
http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

9.   NATIONAL (SCOTTISH) LEVEL COMMUNICATIONS

Disease Policy Unit (DPU)

9.1 Directed by the DSG, communications will play a central part of DPU activities to ensure key internal and external stakeholders are kept fully informed of the developing disease situation and response including information on movement restrictions in place and permitted movements.

Communication Coordinator

9.2 Following confirmation of disease, and once the initial actions have been undertaken, the emphasis will be on providing consistent, accurate and up-to-date information. A Communications Coordinator, who will liaise with SGCD, will be appointed within the DPU to support the disease control response and will have responsibility for overseeing communications requirements and implementation. The Communications Coordinator will be pivotal in ensuring the right mix of communication channels are being utilised to provide targeted and timely information to the organisations and individuals who need it. The individual selected for this role will be a senior manager from within the Scottish Government and will be able to identify and respond to communication needs. This role is central to the Communications Strategy so it will be important for the post-holder to be highly visible and known to all involved in the emergency response. Initially, the Head of DPU will fulfil this role, until a Communications Coordinator can be appointed. Given the importance of communications to the overall disease response strategy, the Communications Coordinator will participate in DSG meetings.

9.3 Depending on the scale of the outbreak consideration will also be given to embedding a Communications Officer from SGCD within the DPU to support the Communications Coordinator. The Communications Officer will also participate in DSG meetings and the daily UK Daily Communications Meeting[10].

Scottish Government Resilience (SGoR)

9.4 Disease outbreaks will often require a response from across the Scottish Government, particularly when dealing with a zoonotic disease or other consequence management issues. When a corporate response is required, SGoR will be activated. The precise role of SGoR will vary depending on the nature of the outbreak and circumstances at the time but SGoR will consider the wider consequences of the emergency, advise Scottish Ministers and coordinate the activities of Government and other responders. The role of SGoR and its response structures are described in 'Preparing Scotland: Scottish Guidance on Resilience'[11]. A representative from SGCD will participate in all SGoR meetings.

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[10] See Chapter 2 of "Scottish Government Exotic Diseases of Animals Contingency Framework Plan ' Structures for Control and Co-ordination' – Available at: http://www.gov.scot/ahwcontingencyplans

[11] Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/03/2940

9.5 Depending on the scale of the outbreak, a member of the Scottish Government Directorate for Safer Communities' Resilience Division may be embedded in the DPU to support the Communications Coordinator and to coordinate information flow to and from SGoR. SGoR will monitor DPU and DSG activity to ensure their response level is appropriate. For example, if the outbreak is small or isolated, the DPU will handle the response end to end without SGoR support.

9.6 Resilience Division may also send Liaison Officers to support RPs directly; helping to ensure effective communication between responders and Government and provide general advice and support.

News Releases

9.7 News releases are an important means of getting key messages to the public. News releases will be used to reinforce the need for good biosecurity and vigilance while covering headline announcements such as:

- outbreak status updates
- movement restriction updates
- important European Commission Decisions/Regulations.

9.8 Where appropriate, the Communications Coordinator will involve operational partners and stakeholders in the development of news releases. Finalised news releases will be shared with operational partners and stakeholder groups prior to issue, in order that they can make any necessary arrangements and ensure a consistency of message in their own communications.

Scottish Government website

9.9 Websites are useful for conveying detailed information widely, quickly and cost effectively. As highlighted above (see paragraph 6.9) the information currently on the Scottish Government website about exotic notifiable animal disease will be supplemented by additional information specific to the disease outbreak, which will, as far as possible, have been readied in advance. This will provide a comprehensive and well structured disease outbreak web section that can be launched on confirmation of disease. The Communications Coordinator will ensure the content of these webpages is regularly reviewed to ensure all information is up-to-date. For ease of access, dedicated disease outbreak pages will be signposted on both the main Scottish Government and the Farming and Rural Issues homepages. Where crosscutting issues arise like public health concerns, the disease outbreak web section will be updated with links to other relevant websites.

9.10 Stakeholder websites also provide an invaluable information point for their members and other interested parties. Stakeholders will be requested to include links from their own websites to the Scottish Government's disease outbreak web section. Information provided at stakeholder meetings and in e-mail updates will enable stakeholders to include details of the latest developments on their own organisation's website.

Briefing

9.11 A Key Brief document will be developed to provide the starting point for DPU members, other Scottish Government Directorates, the LDCC, operational partners and stakeholders. The Key Brief document will provide the basis for a briefing page on the Scottish Government website. A weblink to the briefing page can then be emailed to stakeholders. The Communications Manager will ensure the Key Brief document and webpage are regularly updated and made available to those who require it.

Stakeholder group meetings

9.12 There is likely to be huge demand for information during disease outbreaks. The role played by stakeholder organisations in relaying information to their members and the public can help to reduce the number of calls made to staff engaged in the disease response.

9.13 Regular stakeholder meetings will be held at both national and local level for the duration of the outbreak (see paragraphs 6.7 and 6.8). At a national (Scottish) level, CVO Scotland will chair these meetings, providing a forum for policy officials, veterinary advisers, industry representatives, welfare specialists and operational partners to share and exchange information, highlight areas for concern and contribute to their resolution. Those discussions will also consider the development of complementary communications which avoid duplication of effort, maximise the audience reached and maintain clarity and consistency of message. The frequency of meetings will be determined in discussion with stakeholders but are likely to take place at least weekly.

Stakeholder e-mail updates

9.14 In addition to face-to-face meetings, Scottish stakeholder groups will receive regular e-mail updates on the latest developments. Recipients of these information updates will be strongly encouraged to cascade the information to their members and other interested parties. This is an essential tool in reaching as much of each target audience as possible.

National helplines

9.15 The DSG will determine whether, and at what point, it is appropriate for Scottish Government to activate a national (Scottish) helpline. Once activated, the helpline will be geared mainly toward fielding queries from outwith the immediate vicinity of the IP.

9.16 The helpline will have a dual function; to provide information and assistance and also to gather intelligence on developing problems. Helpline calls will be monitored in order to, enable the Communications Coordinator to identify any developing communication needs; and to help highlight potential problems. Where disease outbreaks have zoonotic potential, the DSG will consider arrangements for handling calls relating to public health matters.

9.17 Once activated, it is likely that the helpline will remain in place until restrictions are lifted. Call volume will be monitored to help determine the helpline's hours of operation and staffing levels. There will also be an element of calls being fielded by Scottish offices – these will also be monitored and any trends/themes requiring communication to the

general public will be fed into SGCD. A Core Script will be produced by the DPU which will be the main reference source for helpline staff when dealing with queries.

9.18 A routine GB helpline is in place during office hours to report wild bird mortality incidents of 5 birds or more in the same location to 03459 335577. Opening hours may be extended during exotic notifiable avian disease outbreaks.

Text messaging services

9.19 APHA offer a disease alerts subscription service to help people keep in touch with the latest developments regarding animal disease. The service is mainly for farmers and livestock keepers but it is available to everyone. Subscribers receive information via their choice of text, fax, voicemail or email on a number of notifiable animal diseases (see http://animalhealth.system-message.co.uk for more information).

Mailshots

9.20 Mailshots can help to ensure that essential, specific information on the disease situation reaches those who do not have internet access or receive communications from a stakeholder organisation. Mailshots will generally be reserved for significant announcements.

10.   LOCAL LEVEL COMMUNICATIONS

Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) Communications

10.1 The LDCC assumes responsibility for disease response communications at the local level. APHA's Outbreak Director for Scotland will ensure operational partners, local stakeholders and other affected parties are kept informed of the disease response as it develops. The Outbreak Director will also act as a central point of contact for operational partners, stakeholders, the NDCC and other LDCCs as appropriate. The Outbreak Director will brief the relevant RPs on the operational disease control response to ensure a consistent message is going out to all operational partners and will liaise closely with local stakeholders to ensure they are kept updated.

10.2 Communications with the local media on disease response will be led by SGCD. SGCD will draft and issue all news releases – both local and national. A Communications Officer from Defra Group Communications (APHA Team) may be deployed within the FOB/LDCC to liaise with local media, however, all media calls and queries should still be routed to SGCD (if lines are already available and cleared the communications officer on site can provide them to local media). They will also work with Defra, DAERA, Welsh Government communications and the relevant RP Public Communications Group to manage media relations at the scene of incidents and to ensure a consistent message is being projected from all agencies. All media queries received by operational partners should be referred to the Outbreak Director in the first instance.

10.3 Consideration may also be given to establishing a media centre at the suspect/infected premises. However, this is unlikely unless there is a high media presence around the premises and establishing a media centre is deemed the most effective way of liaising with the media. Any decision to establish a media centre will be taken by SGCD's Head of News. The Head of News will also seek support from Defra Group Communications (APHA Team) and RPs in resourcing the media centre.

Regional and Local Resilience Partnerships (RPs)

10.4 Depending on the disease, there may be wider consequences arising from a disease outbreak for a range of sectors and industries, meaning more organisations will need to be kept informed. RPs will coordinate communications with all the relevant the public, commercial and voluntary responder organisations involved in consequence management.

10.5 In any emergency, the effectiveness of the response and recovery processes will depend on cooperation from a number of different public groups. Clear communication lines with the public will help ensure their cooperation. At a national (Scottish) level, liaison between SGCD and SGoR will help RPs ensure all responders are well briefed ahead of putting information into the public domain.

Initial local level communications

10.6 Where appropriate, APHA/LDCC staff (with support from SG Rural Payments and Inspection Division (RPID) where required) will telephone animal keepers who are directly affected by area movement controls to tell them about the requirements they must observe, and to give general biosecurity advice. This briefing will be based on information provided in the relevant movement control zone declaration and the Key Brief. A letter, approved by the DSG, providing more detail will for most diseases then be issued by APHA on confirmation of disease to keepers in the Protection and Surveillance Zones.

Local Stakeholder Group

10.7 The Outbreak Director will establish and chair a local level stakeholder group. Meetings will provide a forum for updating local stakeholders and operational partners and for discussing any concerns. The frequency of meetings will be determined by the Outbreak Director in discussion with stakeholders.

Local Helpline

10.8 A decision on the need for a local helpline will be taken by the LDCC's Management Team. Establishing the local helpline will involve liaising with RPs and possibly stakeholders to ensure a service capable of dealing with a wide range of local issues.

10.9 If established, helpline numbers will be included on the Scottish Government website and in future news releases. The numbers will also be advertised locally. A Core Script will be produced by the DPU and will be the main reference source for helpline staff when dealing with queries.

LDCC/IP media support

10.10 The Scottish Government or APHA Communications Officer at the FOB will advise the LDCC Management Team on communications issues and coordinate any communications with the media at the local level.

Local disease control operations

10.11 The Local Communications Officer will continue to work with the LDCC Management Control Team to ensure that local disease control operations and related activities are supported by coordinated and consistent messages. Operational partners will be expected to focus on their specific area of expertise and collaborate with others to ensure consistency in the messages sent out. This will be coordinated through the LDCC Management Control Team.

11. EXIT STRATEGY

11.1 Communications requirements will be continually reviewed throughout the duration of the outbreak. As the incident response winds down there will still be a need to engage with stakeholder groups and the wider public until all issues arising as a result of the disease control response have been resolved. It is also important that stakeholders and the public are notified when all restrictions have been lifted and there is a return to normal conditions.

11.2 As disease control response activities are scaled back, the Communications Coordinator will determine on-going communication needs. If, as part of the scaling back, the Communications Coordinator is released to return to their normal duties, the Head of the Scottish Government's Exotic Diseases Branch will perform this role.

12. PLANNING

12.1 This Communications Strategy has outlined what will happen in the event of an outbreak. However, there are a range of measures that can be put in place in advance of an outbreak that will help in the Strategy's implementation.

Exercising

12.2 It is essential to develop an understanding of how other organisations will respond in an outbreak. Scottish Government, APHA, other operational partners and key industry stakeholders exercise together regularly to test contingency plans and procedures. As well as rehearsing the functions that would be delivered, these exercises provide an opportunity to test the Communications Strategy and identify any issues or gaps. Building a clear mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities will help foster a co-ordinated approach to communications in the event of a disease outbreak.

Engagement with stakeholders

12.3 During any disease outbreak, information will enter the public domain from a variety of sources and much of this will flow from stakeholder organisations. These bodies have an important role in reinforcing Scottish Government messages as well as communicating to their own members and audiences. The Scottish Government's Animal Health and Welfare Division has well established and clear lines of communication with Scottish stakeholder groups and is committed to two-way communications with stakeholders.

Informing stakeholders

12.4 Stakeholders have an important role to play during an outbreak in terms of supporting the disease response as well as communicating messages to their own members and audiences. Advance notice allows them to prepare internally and activate their own contingency procedures as well as giving them access to essential information. Failing to engage with all stakeholders in the early stages of a disease outbreak could hinder the response efforts. It is therefore essential to identify the target audiences, the level of information they require and the best ways of communicating with them. A communications matrix (see Appendix A) has been included to help ensure that communications are tailored for the relevant audiences and delivered by the most appropriate means.

Post-outbreak wash-ups

12.5 When conducting post-outbreak wash-ups it will be important to get the views of all who were involved in disease control, consequence management and communication activities, including those of stakeholders. This will allow all involved to identify issues relevant to their own strategies and see how individual approaches to communications complemented those of other organisations. The issues identified will allow all involved to identify improvements and refine their respective communications plans.

13.   REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

13.1 The head of Exotic Diseases Branch in Scottish Government's Animal Health and Welfare Division will be responsible for periodically reviewing the Communications Strategy, consulting as appropriate with operational partners and stakeholders.

13.2 Any comment or questions relating to the content of this plan should be sent to:

Exotic Diseases Branch
Animal Health and Welfare Division
P Spur
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

Tel +44(0)300 244 3338
Email: ahwcontingencyplanning@gov.scot

APPENDIX A: THE COMMUNICATIONS MATRIX

Responsibility	Information Provided	Routes of Communication	Type of Message	Target Audiences
DSG/DPU	• Access information • Contact details • Detailed outbreak status and impacts • FAQ • General background on disease • General biosecurity advice • Government policy • Next steps/compensation • Operation information • Outbreak status • Practical advice • Regulations • Response strategy • Scientific information	• Text alerts • Briefing documents • DSG meetings • e-mail updates • National helpline • Parliamentary research papers • SG website • Stakeholder meetings	• How the disease outbreak is being managed at a national level. • National policy for managing the disease outbreak.	• Farmers/animal keepers • General public • LDCC • MSPs/MPs • NDCC • Resilience Division/SGoR • Scottish Ministers • SG Directorate of Communications • Special interest groups • Stakeholder groups

LDCC	• Access information • Contact details • Business recovery • General background on disease • Government policy • Next steps/compensation • Operation information • Outbreak status • Practical arrangements • Regulations • Response strategy	• DSG and NDCC meetings • APHA website • Direct mail • E-mail updates • Local helpline • Local stakeholder group meetings • Telephone contact • Text alerts	• Practical advice relevant to those directly affected by the disease outbreak at the local level.	• DSG/DPU • Farmers/animal keepers • Local stakeholder groups • NDCC • Operational partners • RPs • SG Directorate of Communications • Internal stakeholders
Resilience Division/SGoR	• Business Recovery • FAQ • General Background on Disease • Government Policy • Next steps • Outbreak status • Regulations • Response strategy	• SGoR meetings • DSG/DPU meetings • e-Mail updates • Ready Scotland website • RRP meetings • Stakeholder meetings	• How Scotland will respond and recover from the wider impacts of the disease outbreak. • National policy supporting business continuity across Scotland.	• DSG/DPU • General public • RPs • Scottish Government Departments • Scottish Ministers • SG Directorate of Communications • UK Government

Resilience Partnerships	• Access information • Business Recovery • Contact details • Detailed outbreak status and wider impacts • FAQ • General Background on disease • Impact on Local Services • Next steps • Operation information • Outbreak status • Response strategy • Scientific information • Welfare support	• e-mail updates • LDCC meetings • Local press conferences • Media interviews • News releases • Partner organisation websites • RP meetings • Social media	• How the wider impacts of the disease outbreak are being managed at a local level. • Practical advice for those affected at the local level by the wider impacts of the disease outbreak.	• General public • LDCC • RP partner organisations • SG Directorate of Communications • SGoR/Resilience Division
SG Directorate of Communications	• Access information • FAQ • General background on disease • Government policy • Next steps/compensation • Outbreak status • Regulations • Scientific information	• Media interviews • Local press conferences • News releases • SG website • Social media	• What information is appropriate for organisations involved in the management of the disease outbreak and its consequences to communicate. • Public awareness of how the disease outbreak and its consequences are being managed and advice on how they may be affected.	• DSG/DPU • General public • LDCC • Resilience Division/SGoR • RPs

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Abbreviation	Term
APHA	Animal and Plant Health Agency
CPHM	Consultant in Public Health Medicine
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland)
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DSG	Disease Strategy Group
DPU	Disease Policy Unit
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GB	Great Britain
HPS	Health Protection Scotland
IMT	HPS (National) Incident Management Team
IP	Infected Premises
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
MDRT	Media Disease Response Team
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Member of Scottish Parliament
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
PCG	Public Communications Group (RRP or LRP level)
RP	Resilience Partnership
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SG	Scottish Government
SGCD	Scottish Government Communications Directorate
SGoR	Scottish Government Resilience
WG	Welsh Government

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