

Dreadful epidemic of Foot and Mouth Disease

Als eingeschriebenes Mitglied auf der Mailing-Liste der Europäischen Organisation der Landärzte und «isolierten Ärzte» EURIPA (European Rural & Isolated Practitioners Association) (<http://www.rural-health.ac.uk/euripa.htm>) habe ich die folgenden zwei eindrücklichen Briefe des Präsidenten von EURIPA, des walisischen Landarztes Dr. John Wynn-Jones, erhalten. Er schildert darin die bedrückenden Folgen der Maul- und Klauenseuche in seiner Region und in Grossbritannien.

Bernhard Rindlisbacher

Brief vom 01.04.01:

Dear All

Some of you are aware that we are in the middle of a dreadful epidemic of Foot and Mouth Disease in the UK. This is clearly the worst crisis that I have had to deal with in 22 years in general practice/family medicine. Wales is not as badly hit as some areas such as Cumbria, Devon or Southern Scotland, but our practice seems to be in the middle of a small local hot spot and we have a quarter of all the infected farms in Wales Montgomery seems to be in the middle.

Like many of my colleagues in Cumbria the smell of burning carcasses and the sight of fires across the landscape has become a regular and sinister sight. I find it difficult to cope with the fact that it is Spring time and there are hardly any animals to be seen anywhere.

We are trying to support our farming patients and friends. The level of stress in the community is very high and I have no doubt that this will have an impact on physical and mental health in the short and long term. The long term social, economic and cultural consequences of this epidemic will be long lasting and substantial. The Institute of Rural Health (and especially Jane and Julie who have been working extremely hard) have been busy setting up a local help line for farmers which will be going live in the next few weeks. We have also been very active lobby-

ing politicians at the Welsh Assembly to ensure that the resources and structures are put in place to cope with the economic, social and health impact of the catastrophe.

No end seems to be in sight at present with more cases being confirmed across the country everyday. We are all beginning to despair at the massive loss and waste of animal life as farmers who are clear of the disease are having their animals culled to form "fire-breaks" against this very infectious disease. Many of our local pedigree herds have been built up over three or more generations but they have to go like all the others.

These farming families are having to cope with significant bereavement reactions and cope with the prospect of zero income for some times. I am very worried about the impact of the disease on the children!

John

Brief vom 02.04.01:

Thanks for your kind words.

We are just having 15 of our local farms culled in the next few days to the south Montgomery. Another area to the North of us called Brooks has had all its animals culled. It is very strange looking at rolling green pasture and countryside empty of animals! The worst thing is that all the lambs have gone! We also sadly had our first farming suicide today. I fear that we have more to come!

John