Volume 2
Science

Terms of Reference, Committee Members and Report Volumes ix
A note on the footnotes x

1 Introduction 1
Background to the science of BSE 3
   DNA, genes and chromosomes 3
   Protein folding and degradation 11
   Infections and immunity 13
   Strain-typing, western blotting and titration 15

2 The Spongiform Encephalopathies – knowledge existing in 1986 20
Introduction 20
Animal and human transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) 20
   Scrapie 21
   Transmissible Mink Encephalopathy (TME) 23
   Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) 24
   Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) 24
   Gerstmann-Sträussler-Scheinker syndrome (GSS) 27
   Kuru 28
   Fatal Familial Insomnia (FFI) 28
   Prion mutations 29
Other neurodegenerative diseases 29
   Huntington’s disease (HD) 30
   Alzheimer’s disease (AD) 30
   Parkinson’s disease 31
   Summary 31
Nature of the TSE agent and mode of replication 31
   Virus hypothesis 32
      Inactivation studies 32
      Lack of immune response 33
   Nemavirus hypothesis 34
   Virino and replication site hypothesis 35
   Prion hypothesis 35
   Clarification of the pre-1986 theories by post-1986 studies 36
   Summary 39
Genetic aspects of scrapie 40
   Genes affecting scrapie incubation in mice 41
Genes affecting natural scrapie in sheep 42
Interaction between host genes and specific scrapie isolates 43
Summary 43
Transmission of TSEs 44
Maternal transmission 44
Scrapie 44
Other TSEs 46
Lateral transmission 46
Scrapie 46
Other TSEs 48
Iatrogenic transmission 49
Scrapie 49
CJD 50
Efficiency of routes of transmission 51
Species barrier effect 52
Summary 54
Pathogenesis 55
Role of the lymphoreticular system (LRS) in the spread of infection 56
Invasion of the central nervous system 58
TSEs other than scrapie 58
Post-1986 research on pathogenesis 58
Summary 60
Prion mutations and polymorphisms in human TSEs 60
Summary 65

3 The nature and cause of BSE 67
Introduction 67
The investigation of the BSE epidemic 68
Identification of BSE as a TSE 68
Epidemiological investigations 69
Changes in the thinking on rendering 73
Assessment of the initial epidemiological conclusions 74
(i) Does BSE have an extended common source? 75
Estimates of case numbers 75
Incubation period 76
Geographic spread 77
(ii) Was the source scrapie? 79
Host range 79
Transmission properties 82
Pathogenesis 84
(iii) The effect of changes in rendering 85
Alternative theories for the origin and route of BSE infection 86
The effect of route of infection on disease phenotype  
Summary  

5 Diagnosis and therapy  
Detection of ruminant protein in animal feedstuffs  
   Enzyme linked immunosorbent assay for the detection of ruminant protein  
   Development of the ELISA  
Diagnosis  
   Developments in post-mortem diagnosis of BSE  
   Developments in ante-mortem diagnosis of BSE  
   Diagnosis of vCJD  
Therapy  
Summary  

6 TSE research: planning, funding and implementation  
Introduction  

    Part 1: How research was commissioned and funded  
Before 1986 – background  
   The ‘arm’s-length’ principle – the Research Councils  
   The ‘customer/contractor’ principle  
   ‘Near-market research’  
   Overseeing the system (1): the machinery  
   Overseeing the system (2): the role of the Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)  
   Overseeing the system (3): the role of departmental Chief Scientists  
Summary  

    Part 2: Commissioning and funding of research, 1986–96  
Introduction  
Funding – the PES system  
Changing priorities for agricultural and food research  
Funders  
   The Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC), 1986–94  
   The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), 1994–96  
   The Medical Research Council (MRC)  
Summary  
Providers  
   The Neuropathogenesis Unit (NPU)  
Arrangements for commissioning and funding research  
MAFF
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversight</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAFF’s commissioning and funding system</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising research projects</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Health (DH)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding sources</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Policy Research Programme</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic research was the responsibility of the MRC</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wellcome Trust</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART 3: RESEARCH INTO TSEs – A NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim recommendations from the Southwood Working Party</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further input from Sir Richard Southwood</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Southwood Working Party’s approach to research</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tyrrell Committee</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Report of the Tyrrell Committee</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid for supplementary funds from the Treasury</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Treasury rejects the bid</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAC</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project funding and TSE research by others</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH-funded TSE research</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSE research by the Research Councils</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRC: the Murray Committee and the Allen Committee</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wellcome Trust</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7 Conclusions drawn from the scientific response to BSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of main conclusions</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of research in response to BSE</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The origin of BSE – transmission of scrapie to cattle</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal transmission</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk of BSE becoming endemic in sheep</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum oral infective dose – attack rate study</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity of the mouse bioassay</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-mortem test for BSE in cattle</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test for ruminant protein in feed – ELISA test</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses of bovine material</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies on research management and evaluation</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funding
Before the bid for supplementary funds was rejected 213
Effect of rejection of bid for funds 215
The background of cuts in research funding 217
Planning and coordination 217
Animal disease surveillance 220
The investigation and management of potential zoonoses 222

Annex: References for Table 2.2 – human mutations 225

Glossary of scientific and other terms 229

Who’s who 255

Index 259

List of figures and tables
Figure 1.1: a – DNA double helix section; b – Schematic representation of a single (coding) strand of DNA 4
Figure 1.2: Protein synthesis 5
Figure 1.3: Mitosis 7
Figure 1.4: Schematic representation of a locus and alleles 8
Figure 1.5: Meiosis 9
Figure 1.6: Generation of transgenic mice 13
Figure 1.7: Schematic diagram of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as a model for virus structure 14
Figure 1.8: Western blotting: the process 17
Figure 1.9: Western blotting: examples 18
Figure 1.10: Titration 19
Figure 2.1: Proposed three-dimensional structure (a) PrP\textsuperscript{C} and (b) PrP\textsuperscript{Sc} 37
Table 2.1: A – Distribution of scrapie infectivity in non-neural tissues of subclinically infected sheep; B – Distribution of scrapie infectivity in nervous tissue of clinically affected sheep; C – Distribution of scrapie infectivity in non-neural tissues of clinically affected sheep 57
Table 2.2: List of human mutations 61
Table 2.3: Codon 129 polymorphisms in CJD 65
Table 3.1: Host range of BSE 82
Table 3.2: Categories of tissue infectivity 116
Table 3.3: Cases of scrapie in sheep and goats, 1980–98 124
Figure 6.1: Funders and providers of BSE- and CJD-related research 148