5. The second meeting

5.1 The minutes of the second meeting on 10 November 1988 record that discussion included veterinary and biological products, incidence of TSE in mink in the United States, monitoring of CJD and an update on BSE epidemiology.

5.2 In relation to the first of these, it was considered that advice could be given to manufacturers on a number of practical steps which should be taken on a voluntary basis. Sir Richard agreed to write to the CSM on this issue. It was also agreed that:

... the Report should contain a section on veterinary and medicinal products advising that the VPC and Biological[s] Subcommittee should have regard to the emergence of BSE in making recommendations and that they should take account of the products currently in use as well as new ones.49

5.3 On the instructions of Sir Richard, Dr Kimberlin was scheduled to attend to provide his input to the Working Party at midday. In the event he travelled down from Edinburgh with Dr Martin and was present throughout the meeting. He was invited to speak on any matter under discussion and intervened on a number of occasions.

5.4 Dr Fraser’s results (see paragraph 4.1) were discussed and the Working Party agreed that they seemed to confirm the hypothesis that BSE was very closely related to scrapie and that meat and bone meal (MBM) was the source of the disease. Dr Hope’s advice was considered. Dr Kimberlin expressed the view that cattle-to-cattle transmission was ‘possible’ rather than ‘likely’. Cattle could prove to be a ‘dead-end host’. When giving evidence to us Dr Kimberlin explained what he had meant by dead-end host:

... what I mean is a host species which is susceptible and can be infected but will not naturally sustain that infection endemically. In other words the natural animal-to-animal transmission is not efficient enough to keep that infection going in the host; there has to be intervention, you have to feed the stuff, you have to inject it, you have to do something. Of course the precedent of that was TME [in mink] and indeed kuru [in humans]. We had two remarkable precedents of dead-end hosts.50

5.5 The minutes provide the following record of Dr Kimberlin’s contribution to the discussion:

Dr Kimberlin was in attendance throughout the meeting and had commented on a number of aspects at various stages. These have been recorded in earlier sections of this note. At this latter stage Dr Kimberlin made a number of other points including, if the analogy is made with scrapie, his conclusions that as regards the latter a link with CJD has not been established and that this should be referred to in the Report.

49 YB88/11.10/2.1
50 T40 pp. 121–2
... Dr Kimberlin also emphasised that spongiform encephalopathies did not just ‘hop about’ from species to species. He also gave his view on the research priorities which were (a) the epidemiological investigation, (b) the vertical transmission, (c) infectivity in different tissues and (d) routes of infection.\textsuperscript{51}

5.6 Mr Meldrum, who had taken over as CVO in June, had submitted a note to the Working Party before the meeting seeking their advice on the disposal of milk from suspect cattle. The note stated that:

MAFF are now coming under some pressure to destroy the milk derived from animals suspected of being affected with BSE. The veterinary profession, in particular the Veterinary Public Health Committee of the British Veterinary Association, the Milk Marketing Board, the general public and media have all pointed to the discrepancy between our policy on carcass disposal and continued consumption of milk from suspect animals.\textsuperscript{52}

5.7 The note continued by adding that the destruction of milk would not involve undue financial hardship to the owner (because of the very low milk yield from the large majority of infected animals, which also proved unmanageable in the milking parlour).

5.8 The Working Party agreed to recommend to Mr Andrews that, although the risk of transmission via milk from suspect cattle was very low, it would be prudent to advise that such milk should be destroyed.

5.9 A paper on rendering plants presented by MAFF was discussed. The Working Party concluded that it would probably never be possible to be wholly sure that material rendered by existing plants was safe. It was agreed that Sir Richard would write to the Permanent Secretary at MAFF recommending that the ruminant feed ban be extended beyond 31 December 1988.\textsuperscript{53}

5.10 In addition, there was discussion about the significance of the placenta as a source of infection, to which the Report would need to refer in relation to research into BSE transmission. The Working Party also agreed to include a recommendation in the Report that clinicians and pathologists should be looking out for any evidence of a change in the incidence of human spongiform encephalopathies. The CMO was considered the appropriate person to take the initiative on this.

**Ox-brain**

5.11 The minutes of the meeting record:

11. The format and a number of sections of the draft Report were discussed in detail. As a result, a re-draft will be circulated prior to the next meeting. Apart from the areas already mentioned it was agreed to include a brief bibliography and, as part of the recommendations, a list of topics for the

\textsuperscript{51} YB88/11.10/2.5
\textsuperscript{52} YB88/11.09/2.1
\textsuperscript{53} YB88/11.10/2.6
Research Committee to consider. It was felt that the labelling of processed food which contained ox-brain was worthy of consideration, but that it was inappropriate to recommend banning all ox-brain for human consumption. 54

5.12 Dr Pickles’s note to alert the CMO to matters which MAFF might raise at short notice with him records:

Another question is identification of brain in human processed food such as pies. Current regulations would prohibit any material from known affected animals entering the human food chain but of course there will be unidentified infected animals. The group rejected the idea of a ban on UK ox-brain for human consumption or the labelling of country of origin or the prohibition in processed food, but will suggest there is a case for labelling to indicate whether processed food contains brain to enable an informed customer to make his/her own choice. Sir Richard will be writing to MAFF about this. If accepted, it is likely the ‘meat’ pie industry will find alternatives to brain, rather than include it but with labelling. Like the milk question above, this move may raise fears about the safety of eating any cow products, including beef, which might come from infected but clinically well animals. 55

5.13 When giving evidence to us Sir Richard commented:

We were concerned, I was concerned, as you know even before the Committee was set up and I went to talk to butchers in Oxford about ox-brain and the availability of ox-brain. We continued to be concerned because, I think I can remember Sir Anthony saying, what about the animals that are not showing symptoms but will obviously have some of the agent in their brain and nervous core; and we all thought ‘What can we do about this? But it is the whole British cattle herd. How were we going to deal with that? Was there some way we could find the part of that which was at most danger and somehow exclude it from the human food chain?’ 56

5.14 While Dr Kimberlin remembered pharmaceutical products being discussed he had no recollection of discussion about risks from food. He told us: ‘I got a sense that they were covering a lot of the ground. I felt under considerable pressure, frankly; but the issue of food never came out as such.’ 57 He said that he would have had something to say about whether or not ox-brain was something that humans should be permitted to eat in the context of his risk assessment factors.

5.15 At the time that he gave evidence to the Working Party Dr Kimberlin was in the course of advising a major manufacturer of pet foods which was concerned whether offal from cattle should continue to be incorporated in its products. His work on analysing existing data to assess the risks was not yet complete. He added that this work had been carried out in confidence and that it would have been absolutely unthinkable from his client’s point of view to tell the Southwood Working Party about it.

54 YB88/11.10/2.5
55 YB88/11.11/1.1–1.2
56 T3 p. 134–5
57 T40 p. 139
5.16 Dr Kimberlin told us that, in retrospect, there were aspects of the meeting which, from his viewpoint, were a little unsatisfactory. He had not been given in advance any indication of the areas in which his assistance was being sought. The time available for his contribution was compressed because the meeting was running behind schedule:

I think it is possible that I only spoke for 15 minutes against the clattering in the background going on as the buffet lunch was being prepared . . . Richard Southwood just said something along the lines of ‘Well Dr Kimberlin before we have lunch do you have anything to add?’ I had not really done anything, so why was I there?\(^\text{58}\)

5.17 The Working Party, however, pointed out that Dr Kimberlin was present throughout the meeting and was invited to comment on all items discussed. Had he wished, he could have written to them after the meeting to raise any additional matters.