



## **PRESS RELEASE**

7 March 2007

### **FARMERS ARE UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT IN LIVESTOCK DISEASE**

#### **DEBATE**

In a climate of argument over who should take responsibility for outbreaks of animal disease, including avian flu, key figures in the development of rural policy will be debating the complex issue of whether we can leave it to farmers to keep disease out of the food chain.

“Farmers should be responsible for controlling livestock diseases” will be the hot topic at 6 pm on Wednesday 14 March when Jeff Waage, Professor in the Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College; Sean Rickard, Senior Lecturer in Business Economics at Cranfield University and former National Farmers’ Union Chief Economist; Michael Winter, Professor of Rural Policy and Director of the Centre for Rural Research at Exeter University, and John Lloyd Jones, Chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales will debate the motion.

The debate, which takes place in front of an invited audience of policy makers, civil servants, academics, students, and the general public, is the

third in a series organised by the UK Research Councils' Rural Economy and Land Use Programme to mark the Festival of Social Science and National Science and Engineering week, under the title "Power and Responsibility: Who decides? You decide!"

Professor Philip Lowe, Director of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme said: "This is a time of major changes and challenges for the countryside and every issue has at least two sides – often more. These debates give us an opportunity to explore some very hot topics in a way that is informative and fun and makes us all sit up and think a bit more.

"Traditionally, the responsibility for keeping out animal disease has fallen to government, but now some would argue that this has discouraged farmers from taking these problems sufficiently seriously and that the burden should be shifted. On the other hand, some diseases, such as avian flu, have wider implications, because they may threaten human health. And keeping us safe from disease may be well beyond what individuals can achieve. Is it reasonable, therefore, to expect farmers to take all the responsibility?"

The other debates in the series are:

- "The environment would be fine, if only scientists were in charge, at 6 pm on Friday 9 March, with Bill Sutherland, the Miriam Rothschild Professor of Conservation Biology at Cambridge University, and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' Director of Conservation Policy, Mark Avery v Susan Owens, Professor of Environment and Policy,

Cambridge University and Andy Stirling, Professorial Fellow at the University of Sussex Science Policy Research Unit.

- “Consumers cannot be left to themselves to decide what to eat” at 6 pm on Monday 12 March with Gareth Edwards-Jones (Professor of Agriculture and Land Use Studies at the University of Wales, Bangor and Dr Michelle Harrison, Director of the Henley Centre, v Bruce Traill, Professor of Food Economics at Reading University and Dr Tom MacMillan Executive Director of the Food Ethics Council.

For further information contact:

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Notes for editors:

- 1 The debate will take place at 6 pm on Wednesday 14 March at the Royal Academy of Engineering, 29 Great Peter Street, London and members of the press are invited to attend. To attend, please contact ESRC conference desk tel 020 8542 8223 or [esrc@vistaevents.co.uk](mailto:esrc@vistaevents.co.uk).
- 2 The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is a UK-wide research programme carrying out interdisciplinary research on the multiple challenges facing rural areas. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Biotechnical and Biological Sciences Research Council and the Natural Environmental Research Council, with additional funding from the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- 3 The Festival of Social Science is organised by the Economic and Social Research Council, and runs from March 9th to 18th, alongside National Science and Engineering Week. It celebrates some of the very best British social science research, as well as highlighting the ways in which social science makes a difference to everyday lives. Press releases detailing some of the varied events are available at [www.esrcfestival.ac.uk](http://www.esrcfestival.ac.uk) or for more information please contact the ESRC Press Office on 01793 413032 or via e-mail: [alexandra.saxon@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:alexandra.saxon@esrc.ac.uk)

- 4 National Science and Engineering Week (formerly National Science Week) is an opportunity for people of all ages to take part in science, engineering and technology activities. National Science and Engineering Week is coordinated by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, funded by the Department of Trade & Industry and working in partnership with the Engineering and Technology Board. See <http://www.the-ba.net/the-ba/Events/NSEW/>.

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