

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Rethinking animal and plant disease policy for the 21st century and beyond**

The UK Research Councils’ Rural Economy and Land Use Programme calls for a radical rethink of our approach to animal and plant disease, in the light of groundbreaking interdisciplinary research.

The programme has brought together natural and social scientists from a wide range of disciplines to look at diverse challenges, ranging from the prevention of disease in plants and animals we use for food, to communicating the risk of tick-borne zoonotic infections to people using the countryside for leisure.

All the research has included people actually involved in managing animal and plant disease, as well as academics, and the programme has focused on real world situations and problems.

Their latest report draws both on the research and on discussions with stakeholders, and identifies a need for fundamental changes in approaches to policy.

In particular it recommends:

* Going back to basics on the labelling of disease as “exotic” or “endemic”.
* Learning lessons across sectors – for example, animal disease and plant disease are generally dealt with in separate “silos” but valuable experience could be shared.
* Better collection and dissemination of risk data that really meets the needs of users.
* A clearer rationale for allocating costs and responsibilities.
* Increased public and stakeholder engagement and debate about the whole range of animal and plant disease issues.

“[Growing concerns: animal and plant disease policy for the 21st century](http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings/BRIF14%20Growing%20Concerns/briefings/BRIF14%20Growing%20Concerns/RELU%20Growing%20Concerns%20Briefing%20Paper_WEB.pdf)” may be downloaded from [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) or hard copies are available from relu@ncl.ac.uk.

Notes for editors:

1. The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), with additional funding provided by the Scottish Government and Defra. See [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) for more information about the Relu programme.
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