

# Livestock sellers should provide more information about disease risk, say researchers

September 22 2011

---

University of Warwick Scientists from the UK research councils' Rural Economy and Land Use program say that better information for buyers could provide the key to controlling many endemic livestock diseases.

They argue that anyone purchasing [livestock](#) should be fully informed about the health status of the herd from which they are buying and about any known risks. If provision of this data were mandatory, they say, any such risks would drive down prices. Thus, farmers would have a much greater incentive to eliminate disease in their herds.

The interdisciplinary team, all from Warwick University, has been investigating the links between the political, biological and epidemiological aspects of common livestock diseases. These so-called “endemic” diseases cost farmers money and have adverse effects on animal welfare. Yet they persist within herds, and in groups of herds that are linked by animal movements, people and equipment. The pathogen may survive in carrier animals that show no symptoms, within the environment, or in wild animals that come into contact with livestock.

Most of these endemic diseases – such as Johne’s Disease and infectious bovine rhinotracheitis - have a low political profile and are regarded as “industry problems”. The result is that there is no concerted action to tackle them.

But the researchers think that they should be taken more seriously, and their “endemic” status should be challenged. They would like to see government resources being allocated in response to real impacts of different diseases, rather than because of their label.

Professor Graham Medley who led the research explained: “These diseases have economic and welfare implications, but they persist because there is insufficient incentive to get rid of them.

“In order to eliminate any disease of livestock, there has to be collective effort and that requires some compulsion. Otherwise there will inevitably be some farmers who freeload – enjoying the benefits of reduced risk to their own herd, but not contributing either financially or in terms of effort.

“But the Government could also exploit market forces as an incentive and better information would be an efficient means of doing this. If we could eliminate the philosophy of “caveat emptor” and employ prices as an additional tool in the armoury against livestock disease that would be a very positive step forward.”

Provided by University of Warwick

Citation: Livestock sellers should provide more information about disease risk, say researchers (2011, September 22) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-09-livestock-sellers-disease.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.