

**relu**

Rural Economy and  
Land Use Programme

# The Relu Programme and Animal Disease Management

# The RELU Programme

*RELU is promoting interdisciplinary research collaborations to advance understandings of the social, economic, environmental and technological challenges facing agriculture and rural areas*

- ESRC, BBSRC, NERC, Defra, Scottish Government
- Additional funding from Defra for disease research
- Budget = £25 million
- 2004-2011
- 85 projects to date, 500 researchers

# Key Public Challenges

- Restoring trust in food chains
- Promoting robust rural economies
- Sustaining agriculture in a liberalised economy
- Reducing stress on water catchments
- Adapting rural living and land use to environmental change
- **Tackling animal and plant disease in a socially acceptable manner**



# New Ways of Doing Science

Two fundamental demands:

- For joined-up science
- For socially accountable science

Combined together these two demands have led to a new approach to knowledge transfer

# Re-Framing Science

## The management of animal diseases

- There are environmental risks and social and economic consequences of narrowly based technical decision making
- Interdisciplinary research brings together different perspectives and methodologies to reframe such problems
- Research is considering how the constraints on, and options for, disease prevention and management are being altered by changes in the countryside, shifting social, economic, environmental and ethical concerns, technological developments and globalisation

# Strengthening Links Between Bio-science and Social Science Communities

- Relationship not strong in the past
  - limiting ability to respond to cross-cutting issues of critical importance concerning plant/animal and human interactions
  - distorting the evidence base on which policy can draw, to the detriment of both communities
- Through casting research in a broad social and economic framework, Relu is reframing and reprioritising research on animal and plant resources
  - validating a variety of functions from rural land and resource management, and their public and commercial benefits
  - setting fresh agendas commanding public and stakeholder support
  - easing socio-technical change

# RELU and BBSRC

The Sustainable Agriculture Panel was “very positive about the potential value of - and the need for - inputs from the social sciences to enhance the relevance and reach of agricultural research supported by BBSRC, and to extend its impact on policy and practice. ... there is a need for societal and economic issues to be considered also at the other (BBSRC’s) end of the spectrum, in the design and development of interdisciplinary programmes of strategic and basic research, where social science potentially has a role to play, for example, in contributing to the framing of research questions relevant to policy or practice. The RELU programme has provided an unique assessment of these challenges and opportunities.”

*Paper from Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Panel  
to BBSRC Strategy Board*

# Experiences of People Exchange

“invaluable” insight into the workings of their animal welfare team and policy objectives and a “third pair of eyes”.

a “challenge to the accepted ways of working from an alternative perspective, objective analysis of current policies”.



“a valuable contribution to the development of our forthcoming strategy for reducing Campylobacter in the Scottish population”.

... improved “technical skills”, “scientific credibility”, and expansion of “people’s skills at reasonable cost”



# Relu Animal and Plant Disease Forum

- **John Lloyd Jones**, Countryside Council for Wales
- **Jeff Waage**, London International Development Centre
- **Jeremy Blackburn**, Commission for Rural Communities
- **David Brown**, Horticultural Trades Association
- **Helen Browning**, Eastbrook Farm Organic Meat
- **Ian Crute**, AHDB
- **Helen Ferrier**, NFU
- **Susan Gallacher**, Scottish Government
- **David Gregory**, Marks & Spencer
- **Brian Harris**, BBSRC
- **Stephen Hunter**, formerly Defra
- **Chris Lewis**, Fields Farm
- **Robbie McDonald**, Central Science Laboratory
- **Tom MacMillan**, Food Ethics Council
- **Martin McPherson**, Stockbridge Technology Centre
- **Bill Parish**, Defra
- **Howard Petch**, Commission for Rural Communities
- **Lynn Raw**, Defra
- **Philip Sketchley**, National Office of Animal Health
- **Christopher Wathes**, Farm Animal Welfare Council
- **Abigail Woods**, Imperial College London

# Risk in Relu

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## Safe recycling of livestock manures

A Rural Economy and Land Use Programme research project that investigates the impact of livestock farming on microbial water quality and develops new ways of assessing and managing risks at the farm and field levels.

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## Bovine tuberculosis: a problem for farmers, conservationists and policymakers

Bovine tuberculosis has posed increasing challenges to policymaking in the past forty years but research is providing some new angles from which to address the problem.



Policy and Practice Notes

Note No. 4  
November 2008

The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is carrying out interdisciplinary research on the multiple challenges facing rural areas. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Biological Sciences Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council, with additional funding from the Scottish Government, Food and Rural Affairs.

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## Stakeholder participation in the management and communication of food chain risks

A Rural Economy and Land Use Programme research project investigating the extent to which stakeholder participation can improve the management and communication of risks associated with the food chain.



Policy and Practice Notes

Note No. 5  
January 2009

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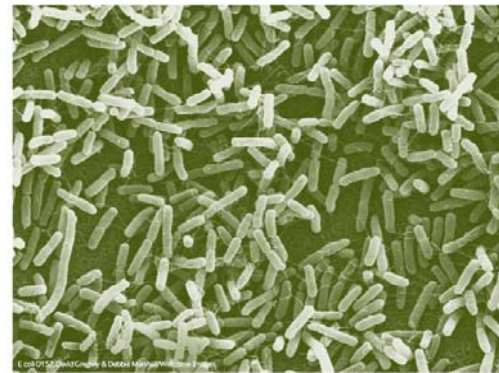
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## Policy-making for animal and plant diseases: a changing landscape?

The growing threat of animal and plant disease outbreaks in the UK makes this a critical time for reassessing disease management strategies. With new pressures to introduce responsibility and cost sharing measures, what is the best way to balance policy needs against the importance of a sustainable agriculture industry?



Policy and Practice Notes

Note No. 16  
February 2010

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# The Projects

- Reducing E coli risk in rural communities
- Assessing and communicating animal disease risks for countryside users
- Assessment of knowledge sources in animal disease control

# Looking Forward

- Synthesis of key implications for management of animal and plant disease
- Identifying future social science and interdisciplinary research agendas