

# Health and Social Consequences of the Foot and Mouth Disease Epidemic in North Cumbria, 2001-2003

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## Introduction

This study gives a sensitive and in-depth account of the experiences of the people, communities and a nation affected by the foot and mouth disaster.

The 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) epidemic had a profound effect on the economic, social and political life of rural Britain.

Unlike the other official FMD inquiries which focused on economic and agricultural policy issues, this research was designed to produce evidence about the human health and social consequences of the epidemic.

The research was sponsored by the Department of Health and focused in the Cumbria area, where economic, social and political life was greatly affected by the FMD outbreak.

"It was the two months when his stock was killed, his stock was killed off and then what do I do with myself and he was, he was at a loss, and he was waking up in a morning and he'd think well there's nothing to do, I mean he was just, for every day of his life since a little boy he'd always worked, going back to the old farm where he, well someday son this is yours, so he'd work on the farm and known that he always had your jobs to do and suddenly he'd lost it, and he was lost." (Interview 13, Group 5)

## Method

The research design was influenced by the 'Mass Observation' approach and placed respondents at the centre of knowledge generation, as experts in contributing to the understanding of 'a traumatic and devastating experience for all those who were affected by it'.

As such, a standing citizen panel of 54 respondents was professionally recruited to inform the study which was designed around weekly free-text diaries which document the effects of the disaster and the process of recovery.

The panel was recruited to reflect a broad range of occupations including farmers and their families, workers in related agricultural occupations, those in small businesses including tourism, hotel trades and rural business, health professionals, veterinary practitioners, voluntary organisations and residents living near disposal sites.

The panel members produced 3,200 weekly diaries of great intensity and diversity over an 18-month period. The data were supplemented by in-depth interviews with each respondent, focus group discussions, and 16 other interviews with stakeholders.

## Archive resources

From the project, a sample of data has been anonymised to permit longer-term access to researchers.

This data collection includes 42 digitised semi-structured interview transcripts, 40 semi-structured diaries, 6 focus group transcripts, and 1 audio-montage transcript.

There is also access, upon request, to the digital audio files of the above interviews and audio-montage, as well as to the monthly newsletter, *The Diarist*, published by the standing panel on the Health and Social Consequences of Foot and Mouth Disease.

## User documentation

User documentation for the study Health and Social Consequences of the Foot and Mouth Disease Epidemic in North Cumbria can be downloaded in PDF format from the Discover. It provides an overview of the study, methodological detail, and a guide to how the sample data were prepared for archiving.

[Study description and documentation.](#)

## Publications and other resources

The UK Data Service holds the final study report, Health and Social Consequences of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease Epidemic in North Cumbria, and links to resulting publications.

Some of the main publications are:

Bailey, C., Convery, I., Baxter, J., Mort, M. (2004) 'Narratives of trauma and on-going recovery: the 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic', *Autobiography*, 11, pp.37-46.

Mort, M., Convery, I., Baxter, J., and Bailey, C. (2005) 'Psychosocial effects of the 2001 UK foot and mouth disease epidemic in a rural population: qualitative diary based study', *BMJ*, doi:10.1136/bmj.38603.375856.68.

Convery, I., Bailey, C., Mort, M. and Baxter, J. (2005) 'Death in the wrong place? Emotional geographies of the UK 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 21, pp.99-109.

Bailey, C., Convery, I., Mort, M. and Baxter, J. (2006) 'Different public health geographies of the 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic: 'citizen' versus 'professional' epidemiology', *Health and Place*, 12, pp.157-166.

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We are supported by the Universities of Essex, Manchester, Edinburgh, University College London and Jisc. We are funded by UKRI through the Economic and Social Research Council.