Suspicions grow that myxomatosis has spread to hares

MYXOMATOSIS has ‘definitely’ moved from rabbits into hares in the UK, according to a researcher at the University of East Anglia.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme last week (13 October), Diana Bell, conservation biologist in the university’s School of Biological Sciences, said she had received an ‘overwhelming’ response to a request for reports and photographs of sick and dying hares following a series of mysterious hare deaths in East Anglia in recent months. Reports of dead hares had since come in from Scotland and throughout England.

From the pictures she has received, she concluded that ‘we’ve definitely got a jump of myxomatosis to hares’.

There have been few reports of confirmed myxomatosis in European brown hares; however, a case has previously been confirmed in Great Britain (VR, 19 July 2014, vol 175, pp 75-76).

Investigations will continue to determine what is causing the current spate of deaths.

Further case of bluetongue detected

BLUE Tongue has been detected and ‘dealt with’ in a consignment of four sheep imported to Lancashire from France.

Defra announced on 12 October that the virus had been found in the sheep during routine testing after import. All four sheep were culled and movement restrictions have been imposed on the affected premises.

The finding in the sheep follows detection of bluetongue virus in two imported cattle in Yorkshire last month (VR, 29 September 2018, vol 183, p 368).

The UK’s chief vet, Christine Middlemiss, said the case highlighted the risks that came with importing animals from disease-affected areas.

‘It is also a clear reminder for farmers that the disease remains a threat, despite coming towards the end of the season when midges are active,’ she said.

Just a flesh wound?

HORSE owners are being asked to help with a project that aims to produce clear guidance on which equine skin and flesh wounds need veterinary care.

Researchers at Nottingham vet school have teamed up with the British Horse Society to launch the Equine Wound Project. They are inviting horse owners to submit details of the initial wound their horse suffered, any subsequent assessment, treatments and how the wound healed. Information about any type of equine wound is wanted, regardless of size or whether it was treated by a vet.

The intention is to produce some freely accessible educational resources to support decision making and improve owners’ recognition and care of wounds.

More information at www.bhs.org.uk/wounds

BVNA freezes fees

THE British Veterinary Nursing Association has frozen its membership fees for this year. At its AGM last week, its honorary treasurer Erika Feilberg said the organisation had recovered its financial position from a low point in 2015, when it was feared the membership body for vet nurses would have to fold. Now, after careful financial management and successive successful congress events, it has built reserves to £64,000. ‘With austerity hitting everyone’s pockets, we’d like to pass on that benefit to our members,’ Feilberg said. Under a new strategic director, Robin Miller, the BVNA has identified three distinct areas of operation – membership, congress and learning and development.

MADONNA MAKES GOOD RECOVERY AFTER TUMOUR OP

Vets at the University of California – Davis in the USA have removed a 1.1 kg gonadal tumour from the abdomen of a six-year-old koi called Madonna. A CT scan had shown an extensive mass, with fluid-filled regions, that extended forwards within Madonna’s abdomen, pressing on her heart. The prognosis was poor, but the fish’s owners decided to go ahead with the surgery to help the vet school learn more about koi and how to treat tumours in them.

A team of four specialist veterinarians performed the 90-minute operation with anaesthesia being maintained by a flow of anaesthetic-containing water over the fish’s gills. The tumour made up almost half Madonna’s total bodyweight of 2.3 kg.

Madonna returned to her home pond four weeks after surgery and a recent 10-week recheck examination concluded that she was ‘in great health’.

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