

## **VETERINARY IRELAND PRESS RELEASES**

20 November 2001

### **Vets role in coping with bio-terrorism.**

Veterinary Ireland has called on Irish veterinary surgeons to be vigilant for signs of bio-terrorism. Veterinary Ireland's President Sean O'Laoide emphasised the role of veterinarians in recognising pathogens of danger to humans and the environment, as well as animals that could be used as bio-terrorist weapons.

This call echoes requests made by such bodies as the world Veterinary Association and Federation of Veterinarians of Europe for veterinary surgeons to be aware of the threat. "The use of biological warfare agent, as well as deliberately released chemicals or radiological agents, should not be totally excluded when making diagnoses, carrying out autopsies or in the inspection of human food of animal origin as well as the inspection of animal feed", Mr. O'Laoide said.

Speaking at the launch of the inaugural Animal Health Exhibition to be held at the RDS in Dublin in February next, he said that "whilst the use of these agents in Ireland remains highly unlikely and whilst at present there is no specific threat, there is nevertheless an increased threat. Veterinarians are well placed to detect the possible use of such agents and increased vigilance by veterinary surgeons at this time can provide a valuable safeguard."

The Animal Health 2002 Exhibition will provide a forum for all relevant parties with an interest in animal health to come together to share knowledge and information on all aspects of this important facet of everyday Irish life. The Minister for Agriculture, Joe Walsh T.D. wished "all those involved in the organisation of the exhibition every success" and expressed the hope "that it will benefit the many whom I am sure will attend". It will be held at the RDS in Dublin on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2002.

A final point that Veterinary Ireland wished to emphasise on the threat of bio-terrorism is the importance of veterinarians liaising with relevant agencies and other professions "All health professionals should exercise increased caution in this area and organisations such as the National & European Food Safety Authorities and Departments of Agriculture and Health also need to be fully conscious of the importance of veterinarians", Mr. O'Laoide concluded.

**ENDS**

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