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○○○ Chair: Dr Alf-Eckbert Füssel



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS POSED BY WILDLIFE IN THE DIAGNOSIS AND EPIDEMIOLOGY OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE INFECTION

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It is essential that appropriate attention be accorded to wildlife and feral animal populations in exploring the macro- and micro-epidemiology of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). The reasons why this is so are discussed in this paper relative to a consideration of wild/feral animal populations of different species known to be important in the maintenance and transmission of FMD as well as other populations suspected to play a role or for which there is unexplored potential of involvement. Where area- rather than commodity-based disease status is a prime concern in trade regulation, determining the status of wildlife populations can be crucial. Although FMD in these populations needs to be monitored and studied, there are very real constraints to doing so effectively. These relate primarily to gaining access for sampling and consequent high costs, and lack of validated, robust, affordable and freely available assays for serological studies and detection of cryptic infection. Given that multi-species, wild animal farming, or at least harvesting, is set to become progressively more important, as illustrated by the Trans-frontier Conservation Area initiatives in southern and eastern Africa, it is suggested that more attention must be paid to developing the tools, for both laboratory technology and epidemiological analysis, needed to study FMD in wild and feral animal populations.