Foot and Mouth Disease: US County to UK County Outreach Project

Jean C. Walter and Scott Daniell, University of Georgia

Introduction and Purpose of Poster
A request posed by a farm family member in the United Kingdom this past Spring, 2001, to think of ways that our young people and farmers could assist our U.K. companions in coping with the devastating effects of the recent Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD), led to the development of a locally-driven, “one person can make a difference”-type, humanitarian, U.S. county to U.K. county outreach project. The project process from inception to completion is shown including photos of participants and recipients in United States and United Kingdom.

Major Points of Information to be Shared
A letter-writing campaign was launched locally by the Jasper County Extension Service, in conjunction with Georgia Association of County Agriculture Agents (GACAA), and countywide youth and agriculture programs. County 4-H, FFA, and other interested students, along with farmers, representatives from other county agencies, wrote letters intended for English young farmers and their families.

Conclusion and Educational Importance
In April, almost 150 letters were delivered to U.K. National Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs (NFYFC). Attached to each personally written letter, there was a cover letter from GACAA, plus stamped, self-addressed envelopes so the U.K. young farmers could easily write back. In summer 2001, The NFYFC from England and Wales sent the letters to two of its most hit counties, Cumbria and Devon. Cumbria County Chairman Emma Hetherington hoped that some of her members would become pen pals with American children: “It’s great to think that young people across the Atlantic care enough to write and help lift the spirit of our members. We are particularly touched by the fact that for some of the children, it was the first time they had ever written a letter and I will make sure they were all replied to.”

At this date, numerous letters-describing the tragic FMD situation-have been received by the Jasper County youth. Extensive media coverage of the project included: different articles written and printed in the “Monticello News” (circulation over 3,000); “The County Agent” magazine Issue July 01 (read in every county in the U.S.); inclusion on “Evening News” of Channel 13 in Macon (with viewer estimates of several thousand); in the “Ten26” NFYFC magazine (England and Wales), also the Michigan State University Dairy Team wrote an article about the project in their Michigan newsletter and forwarded letters from their farmers. A poster was designed and presented in the GACAA 2001 Educational program poster contest at the Rome, Georgia GACAA Conference with over 300 state agriculture agents and educators in attendance.