A “L3 laboratory” at the CODA/CERVA

On January 30, the Minister of Public Health, Mr Jef Tavernier, has inaugurated a new laboratory complex of high biosecurity (level “L3”) in the Belgian Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre (VAR or CODA/CERVA). The CODA/CERVA is a scientific federal institution whose main missions consist in scientific research, expert advice and services in the field of veterinary science and agricultural chemistry. But the CODA/CERVA is also involved in human health by diagnosing and/or confirming several diseases transmitted by animals to humans - called zoonoses. It plays the role of national reference laboratory for several zoonoses potentially involved in bioterrorism such as anthrax, tularemia, brucella and Q fever (coxiella). Any laboratory for microbiology may send suspect samples for those diseases to the CODA/CERVA. Source: VAR internet website www.var.fgov.be and IPH programme on infectious diseases. Follow-up of zoonoses at the IPH: Dr G. Marchant.

Increase in reports of infectious syphilis in Scotland in 2002

In Scotland, an enhanced surveillance system was implemented in late 2002. Between 1990 and 1999, the total number of cases of infectious syphilis diagnosed in Scottish genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics ranged from 5 to 24 per annum. Between 2001 and 2002, however, the number of cases of infectious syphilis diagnosed in GUM clinics increased from 13 to 39 cases. This increase was primarily due to an increase in infections in men who have sex with men, which rose from 6 cases in 2001 to 31 cases in 2002. Source: Eurosurveillance, 7, 5, 30/01/03, http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ew/2003/030130.asp

New WHO guidelines for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)

On January 30, the World Health Organization published a new document to assist governments, consumers associations, and other concerned organizations to protect consumers from the dangers of consuming beef infected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE or "mad cow disease"). The document provides governments and others involved in consumer protection with background information on the disease and how to prevent its spread.