



P R E S S R E L E A S E

Contact: Steve Bradley
Tel: 01946 514069
Fax: 01946 514091
Email: Steve.Bradley@westlakes.ac.uk
Date: Thursday 31 May 2001

DIOXIN LEVELS FROM FOOT & MOUTH PYRES

Despite wide concern about the levels of dioxins released from animal pyres during the Foot & Mouth outbreak, monitoring results from a pyre in Cumbria have shown that levels were unlikely to pose a significant health risk. Westlakes Scientific Consulting, who carried out the monitoring, found that during the 5-day lifetime of the pyre, average dioxin concentrations were increased above normal rural background levels with only a short period when concentrations were estimated to be slightly above quarterly averaged urban levels.

A mobile laboratory equipped with instruments to monitor SO₂, PM₁₀, NO_x, dioxins, PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) and other harmful organic compounds, tracked the plume and monitored concentrations close to residences. On average pollutant concentrations were below air quality standards set by the DETR. However, concentrations of PM₁₀ at one location were found to be sufficiently high that prolonged exposure to the smoke plume could lead to an exceedance of the air quality standard. This peak in particulate levels was associated with a short-term exceedance of the SO₂ standard.

The study was commissioned by Allerdale Borough Council in collaboration with Copeland Borough Council, Eden District Council, Carlisle City Council and the North Cumbria Health

Authority, in response to the public's concern about the possible health impacts from the large number of pyres lit across the County

Although the results are encouraging it must be noted they were based on measurements taken around only one pyre. The overall impact from all the pyres lit across the country has still to be determined.

...ENDS...