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DG(SANCO)/7233/2004 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION  
CARRIED OUT IN SLOVAK REPUBLIC  
FROM 24 TO 28 MAY 2004  
IN ORDER TO REVIEW CONTROLS  
CONCERNING ANIMAL WELFARE

*Please note that clarifications provided by the Slovak Authorities on a draft version of this report are given as footnotes, in bold, italic, type to the relevant part of the report.*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This report describes the outcome of a mission carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in Slovakia, from 24 to 28 May 2004.*

*The objective of the mission was to evaluate the control system in place concerning animal welfare. In order to achieve this objective the scope of the mission included the legal and administrative measures in place regarding requirements for laying hens, transport of animals and at slaughterhouses.*

*The report concludes that although the CCA has set up a reasonable system of controls, its implementation is not yet fully adequate. This arises in some instances due to a lack of practical training or more generally due to the lack of involvement by the regional level of the CA.*

*The report makes a number of recommendations addressed to the Slovak competent authorities, aimed at rectifying the identified shortcomings and further enhancing the control measures in place.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in the Slovak Republic from 24 to 28 May 2004, as part of the planned mission programme of the Food and Veterinary office (FVO).

The mission team comprised 2 inspectors from the FVO and one Member State expert, and was accompanied during the whole mission by a representative from the central competent authority (CCA), the State Veterinary and Food Administration of the Slovak Republic.

An opening meeting was held on 24 May 2004 with the CCA. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the mission were confirmed by the inspection team, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission requested.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The objective of the mission was to evaluate the system of controls for animal welfare on farm, during transport and at the time of slaughter, as operated by the Competent Authorities (CA). This was the first mission undertaken to the Slovak Republic specifically for this purpose. The legal references for the EU requirements included in the scope of the mission are given as an endnote to this report (<sup>1,2</sup>).

In pursuit of this objective, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY		Comments
State Veterinary and Food Administration	2	Opening and closing meetings.
Regional and District Veterinary and Food Administrations	2	The organisation of checks and follow up actions were discussed at meetings with both regional and district officials in two districts of two different regions (Trenčín district in Trenčiansky region and Nitra district in Nitriansky region).
LIVE ANIMAL SITES		Comments
Slaughterhouses	2	Procedures regarding lairaging, stunning and bleeding of pigs and cattle were assessed.
Farm	1	Laying hens in cage system.

## 3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular:

- Article 9 of Council Directive 91/630/EEC;
- Article 9 of Council Directive 1999/74/EC;
- Article 10 of Council Directive 91/628/EEC;
- Article 14 of Council Directive 93/119/EC;

- Commission Decision 98/139/EC of 4 February 1998 laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in the Member States<sup>1</sup>.

## **4. MAIN FINDINGS**

### **4.1. Competent authority**

The CCA for animal welfare is the State Veterinary and Food Administration, which is a service of the Ministry of Agriculture; it includes eight Regional Veterinary and Food Administrations, 40 District Veterinary and Food Administrations (covering the 79 Slovak administrative districts) and two border inspection posts.

There are two veterinarians working on animal welfare at central level, one of whom is dedicated to laboratory animals. Veterinarians at both regional (eight) and district level (230) divide their resources between public health and animal health and welfare duties<sup>2</sup>, but in each district a veterinarian is designated to take the lead on issues concerning animal welfare. Private practitioners carry out certain tasks on behalf of the CA such as completing certificates for national movement.

### **4.2. Legislation**

EU animal welfare legislation was transposed and entered into force in 2003. Although a comprehensive check of the adopted legislation was not carried out, the mission team noted that legislation is often more specific than EU requirements on which it is based, with interpretations made of terms such as “adequate” and “sufficient”, e.g. for welfare at slaughter, it indicates the correct positioning of stunning devices and the maximum stun to stick times according to the method of stunning and species.

### **4.3. Measures supplementary to inspections**

Regarding requirements for farms, in 2003 the CCA co-operated with 15% of the local Agriculture Chambers<sup>3</sup>. Meetings with ca. 600 farmers were organised to provide information on many different issues arising from the recently adopted EU legislation including animal welfare. The mission team noted that there are 4,165 pig holdings, 2,324 calf holdings and 38 laying hen holdings in Slovak Republic.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 38 of 12.02.1998, p. 10

<sup>2</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities stressed that the greatest number of veterinarians (c. 180) involved with animal welfare issues, were those supervising slaughterhouses.*

<sup>3</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the State Veterinary and Food Administration has offered its resources to the local Agriculture Chambers to explain the new requirements and practical solutions to animal welfare problems. The percentage of Agriculture Chambers, who take up this offer, depends upon their interest.*

Regarding animal transport, it is part of the authorisation procedure for transporters to undergo a training course and vehicles are approved annually. Transporters should have registered by 1 November 2003 and vehicles should have been approved by 1 February 2004. Training and vehicle approval are not explicitly required by EU legislation and regarding training the CCA indicated that they intend to amend legislation, to require drivers to carry a training certificate, which is foreseen for the end of 2004. The institute for post-graduate studies (IPSVS) in Košice has already organised such courses.

The CCA cannot yet determine whether registration of transporters (Art. 5(1)(a)(i) of Directive 91/628/EEC) had been completed as they are relying on subsequent inspections which started in January 2004 to confirm this. The mission team noted that:

- The register of transporters is available both on internet and on intranet.
- The delay between authorisation of transporters and vehicle approval was up to four months.

Regarding welfare at slaughter, the CCA provides a binding opinion on new equipment for stunning animals available in the territory of the Slovak Republic. For new equipment not used before, this opinion is based on tests performed by a technical institute and for equipment already used in another Member State, on the technical documentation provided by the manufacturer and a physical check of compliance with legal requirements and effectiveness of the equipment.

The CCA have developed a working relationship with the relevant national NGO and a representative of this organisation will assist in delivering training to Official Veterinarians (OVs) on animal welfare at slaughter.

#### **4.4. System of inspections**

##### *4.4.1. Training*

During 2003, the CCA in co-operation with the post-graduate institute in Košice organised training sessions for veterinary inspectors. This training covered farm, transport and slaughter domains. The mission team noted that:

- Training was provided for at least one official per district and at least one OV per slaughterhouse.
- Training on slaughter requirements focused on the legal text and practical examples were based on systems of restraint and slaughter in the USA not typically seen in Slovakia<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the images used demonstrated good practice regarding the handling of animals and the main signs of effective stunning and were also used to spread information on new technologies.*

- Further training on slaughter started in May 2004 with further sessions planned for June<sup>5</sup> and autumn 2004. A representative from the national NGO, who received training in the UK, will help to present this training, which is intended to give more practical support to inspectors.
- Private practitioners, who carry out tasks on behalf of the CA, were excluded from the training programme.

#### 4.4.2. Farm checks

CCA instruction of 12.11.2003 (amended on 23.04.2004) indicated:

- An annual inspection target of at least 20 pig farms (or 7.5%)<sup>6</sup> and 100% of laying hen farms in each district. Regarding inspections of pig farms, this had been modified after a survey in 2003 indicated that the previous target of once every two years was not achievable.
- Each inspection must be recorded on a checklist. The checklist for pig holdings indicates the transitional periods applicable for certain requirements.
- The measures to be taken in the event of shortcomings, emphasising that where welfare is compromised corrective action has to be taken immediately. A representative of the CCA indicated that during training inspectors had been informed that overstocking of cages would be such a case.

#### Holdings with pigs

- In the whole country in 2003, 7.85% farms were checked and the main deficiencies were in relation to staff (30%), record keeping (10%), buildings (18%) and mutilations (13.5%).
- In Nitra region, 5.3% of holdings had been checked, the number and type of deficiencies followed the overall country findings, however, in Trenčiansky region 54.5% of holdings were checked and only two deficiencies on the same farm regarding swill feeding had been detected. Regional level in Trenčiansky could not explain this variation and stated that their role was merely to compile the data and send it to the central level. Similarly, regional level in Nitra could not explain the variation between districts regarding the number of inspections carried out<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that training courses for approximately 90 officials were held in June.*

<sup>6</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the concentration of pig holdings varies from district to district. In the district with the highest number of pig holdings, 7.5% of farms might represent more than 67 pig farms per year.*

<sup>7</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that one reason for unclear information is that deficiencies might be assigned to more than one category in Commission Decision 2000/50/EC or it is impossible to assign them to the prescribed categories. To avoid repeating this problem, SVFA plans to make the report form more explicit but still satisfy Commission Decision 2000/50/EC.*

### Holdings with laying hens

- The registration of the laying hen farms has been completed in compliance with the requirements of Directive 2002/4/EC. The register is available on internet (providing the distinguishing number inclusive of the code indicating the farming method, the name and the address of the farms) and on intranet (including details of maximum stocking rate). However, due to an error when updating these sites, the register on the intranet was not the latest version and contained details of only a few farms.<sup>8</sup>
- In the whole country, 76% of farms had been inspected in 2003 and the main deficiencies were overstocking (31%), lack of back-up and alarm for the ventilation system (24%) and insufficient light (17%). Cage height was a problem on five farms and a representative of the CCA indicated that three of these had been refurbished.
- In Trenčiansky region all farms (three) had been inspected in 2003 and one farm had been detected as overstocked. Following this inspection in December 2003, the veterinary inspector indicated that stocking density should be corrected at the next restocking. However, following an inspection of the same farm during the mission, the veterinary inspector imposed an immediate ban of placing the eggs on the market until stocking density was corrected.
- In the Nitriansky region, following a request in January to reduce stocking densities on one farm, the initial 20% overstocking had only been reduced to 13% overstocking by April, and an administrative procedure, that foresees a maximum fine of 100,000 SKK (ca. 2,500 €), was started.
- According to representatives of the district level in Trenčiansky, between February 2003 and May 2004 new unenriched cages were installed on one farm. This contravenes the prohibition in Article 5 of Directive 1999/74/EC which is effective in the Slovak Republic from 1.1.2003. Also on the farm visited, the cage system installed in one building in December 2003 did not meet the requirements (Article 6 of Directive 1999/74/EC) and in this case the veterinarian indicated that a perch and nest would have to be installed before the next restocking of these cages<sup>9</sup>.
- Not all measurements of cages were accurately made. Manufacturers specifications are usually accepted for assessing the slope and the area at

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<sup>8</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the error has been already corrected. The new list available on intranet includes all the information required by Commission Directive 2002/4/EC.*

<sup>9</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the District level had given the farmer a binding opinion to replace the unenriched cages with enriched ones. The farmer changed the cages accordingly, but, when they were brought into use, removed the nests and some of the perches. The District level is initiating corrective measures against this farmer.*

the back of certain cages were included even when this was occupied by a large ventilation pipe, which restricted the space available<sup>10</sup>.

#### 4.4.3. Transport checks

The CCA issued guidelines in October 2003 and in April 2004 and set up a plan in pursuance with Article 8 of Directive 91/628/EEC. The plan indicates minimum targets of:

- Four inspections in each district at departure.
- One in each region during transport.
- Three in each district at destination and additionally, 10% and 20% of consignments at low throughput and high throughput slaughterhouses respectively.

Both regions had developed a plan for these checks. The mission team noted that:

- In the district of Trenčín five controls at departure (at farms) had been performed between February and May 2004. One vehicle had been prevented from loading calves to go to an assembly centre as it lacked several basic requirements. A representative of the district indicated that the transporter had been asked to supply a copy of the inspection report to the district in which he had been registered. The transporter concerned had been registered in January but this vehicle had not yet been approved.
- Regarding long distance transport, most consignments from the districts visited were either dogs to Belgium and France or wild hares to Italy, neither of which requires a route plan. One randomly selected route plan for calves to Northern Italy had been approved although several details were missing: incomplete itinerary, signature of the person responsible during the transport, indication of the place for mid-journey rest. The returned route plan did not indicate the time of arrival. A representative of the CCA was also aware that there were problems with the return of route plans and was going to contact other Member States in order to obtain their collaboration to achieve better compliance.
- Representative of the CA in Trenčiansky region indicated that as they needed to make written contact with the Police, implementation of their plan would be delayed. There had also been delays in implementing the other checks in Nitriansky, but here representatives of the CA said that arrangements with the Police could be made informally through a phone call.

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<sup>10</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the main scope of the training in autumn 2004 will be to present the correct documentary and physical checks as well as the correct measurements and to take appropriate measures and/or sanctions.*

- Controls at slaughterhouses had been performed in the two abattoirs visited: three since January in one and six in the other, and no deficiency had been identified. The OV's varied in the effectiveness of their controls, as a similar problem with the state of repair of the unloading ramp was detected by one but not the other, where the OV was not familiar with the check-list.

#### 4.4.4. Checks within the slaughterhouse

The CCA issued an instruction on 18.12.2003 including a checklist to be used every three months in each abattoir concerning unloading, lairaging, stunning and bleeding. The mission team noted that:

- In Trenčiansky, reports from two slaughterhouses indicated that deficiencies such as the lack of drinking facilities, inadequate stunning equipment and backup had been followed-up and corrected. At the slaughterhouse visited the electrical stunning of pigs was inadequately performed, with pre-stun shocks administered to two out of five pigs and no backup device at the place of stunning. Although the veterinary inspector had attended the training organised by the CCA, she had not identified these deficiencies and stated that pigs were normally just stunned, whereas they were subsequently killed by cardiac stun during the visit. If pigs had just been stunned the time taken to carry out bleeding was much too long as bleeding only commenced when a group of five pigs were hanging on the line<sup>11</sup>.
- In Nitriansky, there were inconsistent findings in the reports from one slaughterhouse regarding the appropriateness of the stunning equipment. At the slaughterhouse visited new equipment for the electrical stunning of pigs had been installed. The height of the pen made it difficult for the operator to place the electrodes, which resulted in the animals receiving pre-stun shocks. In the same slaughterhouse, the stunning pen for bovines did not provide a proper facility for the slaughterman to access the captive bolt pistol<sup>12</sup>.
- The CA at local and regional level did not refer to a binding opinion on the equipment for stunning animals.
- The ante-mortem and post-mortem records at both slaughterhouses were consistent and well kept, although the documentation which had accompanied the animals had not been kept at the slaughterhouse in Nitriansky.

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<sup>11</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the particular veterinarian will be suspended from duties unless she demonstrates satisfactory knowledge of the requirements on animal protection. She will be subjected to a written test targeted on concerned issues and the same action will be taken in any other case of incompetence of the official veterinarian.*

<sup>12</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that the facilities for restraining pigs and cattle in this slaughterhouse have been already repaired to allow correct positioning and use of the stunning apparatus.*

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1. Legislation

Legislation is more specific than EU Directives on which it is based, with interpretations which are useful for its practical implementation.

### 5.2. Measures supplementary to inspections

- 1) Disseminating information through the Chambers of Agriculture is a positive measure to achieve wider compliance with EU requirements. However animal welfare was only one among many EU requirements adopted in recent years to be discussed, and this initiative was not uniformly adopted throughout the country. Given that there is a large pig sector and inspections can only cover a small percentage of these farms, insufficient information has been made available to promote the adoption of EU requirements.
- 2) Regarding authorisation of transporters, the availability of the register on the internet and intranet is a good means for the CA to rapidly identify a transporter who fails to comply with the requirements (Article 5A, 1 of Directive 91/628/EEC). Compulsory training for drivers and yearly approval of vehicles is an enhancement of EU requirements, although prolonged delays between authorisation and approval weakens the usefulness of relying on vehicle approval rather than carrying out checks.

### 5.3. System of inspection

- 1) The detailed checklists provided by the CCA and the availability of farm details via the intranet represented a good basis for inspections. One region had carried out a high number of inspections of questionable value, as their focus was more on animal health. In the other region a lower number of inspections had been more thoroughly carried out. The CCA have recognised that their previous targets produced more quantity than quality and have revised them accordingly.
- 2) For certain requirements such as measurements of cages for laying hens, inspectors had not received adequate practical training. Actions taken to correct deficiencies were inconsistent with one region considering overstocking a problem which needed to be immediately corrected and the other not<sup>13</sup>.
- 3) Regarding checks of transport, implementation of inspection plan is at an early stage and control of route plans and communication between offices of the CA are not yet satisfactory. Private practitioners although involved in movement controls, have not been included in surveillance

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<sup>13</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that training in autumn 2004 will present how checks should be carried out and the appropriate corrective measures and/or sanctions to take.*

on animal welfare, and organisation of checks during transport has not been given a high priority. The quality of transport checks by officials at slaughterhouses is variable as it depends on the motivation of the individual veterinarian and is not monitored by the other levels of the CA<sup>14</sup>.

- 4) Problems in relation to stunning have arisen because the veterinarians have insufficient knowledge of the equipment used. In addition, the binding opinion in relation to the suitability of the stunning equipment is not effective in assisting the job of the OV as the CA at regional and local level are not aware of it or do not pay attention to it.

#### **5.4. Overall conclusion**

While the CCA has set up a reasonable system of control for animal welfare, its implementation is not yet fully adequate. The designation of officials with responsibility for animal welfare at local level is an effective way to increase the quality of the work but this is undermined by, in some cases, the lack of practical training, and more generally by the lack of monitoring and involvement by regional level.

### **6. CLOSING MEETING**

A closing meeting was held on 28 May 2004 with the CCA. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. Representatives of the CCA did not express disagreement on these findings and conclusions and provided additional information regarding the forthcoming training organised for the veterinary inspectors.

### **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To the competent authorities of the Slovak Republic

Regarding animal welfare on farms ensure that:

- (1) Information on the requirements for pigs is distributed through available networks such as the Chambers of Agriculture.
- (2) Quality of inspections is improved, in particular through practical training and subsequent monitoring of inspection results by each level of the CA.

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<sup>14</sup> *In their response to the draft report, the Slovak Authorities indicated that this problem was to be expected as it relates to a general personnel problem (cumulative functions of officials). The explanatory report concerning the proposal for a Government Ordinance laying down the requirements for animal welfare during transport stated that there was a need for at least one additional official veterinarian in each district to deal with these issues. The government adopted the ordinance together with the request for these new veterinarians, but unfortunately the posts have not yet been created.*

- (3) Instructions are sufficiently explicit so that veterinarians are aware that excessive stocking densities need to be corrected without delay (Article 5 and 6 of Directive 1999/74/EC) and cage systems brought into service after 1.1.2003 meet the requirements of Annex 5 of Ordinance of the Government of the Slovak Republic of 11.12.2002 No. 736/2002.

Regarding animal welfare during transport ensure that:

- (4) The inspection plan is achieved, in particular through contact at the appropriate level with the Police.
- (5) A system is set up to verify the consistency of route plans submitted and that these are duly returned and checked in respect of Artt. 3(1)(aa, second indent) and 5(2)(d) of Directive 91/628/EEC.
- (6) There are effective means of recording deficiencies and communicating this to other offices responsible for any offending transporters.
- (7) Where private practitioners carry out movement controls they should also receive appropriate guidance and training in order to achieve basic surveillance of animal welfare for national transport.

Regarding animal welfare at slaughter ensure that:

- (8) Measures are taken to ensure that Article 3 of Directive 93/119/EC is respected, in particular adequate training is provided for staff supervising welfare at slaughter and that their work is subsequently monitored.

**8. ADDENDUM TO MISSION REPORT DG(SANCO)/7233/2004**

In their comments on a draft version of this report, the CCA provided the following initial reaction to the recommendations:

- (1) The distribution of information concerned is not necessary for the pig sector, as the CCA provides this service for all farmers on a permanent basis through the local bodies of Agricultural Chamber.
- (2) The necessity of practical training is clear, staff resources are the only limitation. Continuity is missing when personnel attending are changed or there is no person responsible for animal welfare. Restructuring of the veterinary administration in this regard may be the only way to satisfy the effectiveness of training.
- (3) The instructions on the animal welfare requirements and appropriate follow-up actions are included in each training or meeting. It is planned to deal with the instruction for laying hen farms through training in autumn 2004.
- (4) Districts have been instructed to communicate in writing to the local Police to achieve co-operation for road checks on animal protection during transport.

- (5) The CCA issued an instruction No. 5281/04-220 on 21 June 2004 explaining how to evaluate and verify submitted route plans and to check the correctness of the plans returned after the journey.
- (6) The system for notifying infringements will be discussed at each level in order to prepare a better functioning system.
- (7) Training or guidance for practitioners will be prepared at district level when their contracts are signed. In future, such training or guidance will precede the signing of the contract.
- (8) Training courses, with a NGO expert, were held in June for approximately 90 officials and further training is planned for autumn 2004. The main problem is motivation of the OV's; the monitoring of their work and the possibility to take stricter actions.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Legal acts quoted in this report refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Directive 91/630/EEC of 19 November 1991, laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs (OJ L 340 of 11.12.1991, p. 33).

Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998, concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (OJ L 221 of 8.8.98, p. 23).

Council Directive 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999, laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens (OJ L 203 of 3.8.1999, p. 53).

Commission Decision 2000/50/EC of 17 December 1999, concerning minimum requirements for the inspection of holdings on which animals are kept for farming purposes (OJ L 19 of 25.01.2000, p. 51).

Council Directive 91/628/EEC of 19 December 1991, on animal welfare during transport (OJ L 340 of 11.12.1991, p. 17).

Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993, on animal welfare at the time of slaughter and killing (OJ L 340 of 31.12.1993, p. 21).