



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/7615/2005 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION  
CARRIED OUT IN SLOVENIA  
FROM 22 NOVEMBER TO 2 DECEMBER 2005  
IN ORDER TO REVIEW THE UP-GRADING OF CERTAIN CLASSES OF FOOD  
PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS, CONTROLS OVER CERTAIN PRODUCTS OF  
ANIMAL ORIGIN INTENDED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION, CERTAIN LIVE  
ANIMALS CONTROLS, AND CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR  
EPIZOOTIC DISEASES

*Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected. Clarifications provided by the Slovenian Authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic, type, to the relevant part of the report.*



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## ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

AI	Avian Influenza
AHWD	Animal Health and Welfare Department
AIRS	Animal Identification and Registration Service
BIP	Border Inspection Posts
BST	Brucellin Skin Test
CA(s)	Competent Authority (Authorities)
CCA(s)	Central Competent Authority (Authorities)
CDB	Central Database (cattle, sheep and pigs)
CFT	Complement Fixation Test
CFU	Cell Forming Units
CP	Contingency Plan
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
CRL	Community Reference Laboratory
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
EBL	Enzootic Bovine Leucosis
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
ND	Newcastle Disease
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
NVI	National Veterinary Institute
OV	Official Veterinarian
RBPT	Rose Bengal Plate Test
RVO	Regional Veterinary Office
VARS	Veterinary Administration of the Republic of Slovenia
VHI	Veterinary Hygienic Service

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Slovenia from 22 November to 2 December 2005. The mission team comprised 4 inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in the first week of the mission and 6 inspectors during the second week of the mission.

The mission was undertaken as part of the FVO's planned mission programme.

The inspection team was accompanied during the mission by representatives from the Central Competent Authority (CCA), the Veterinary Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (VARs) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF).

An opening meeting was held on 22 November 2005 in Ljubljana 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 objectives of the mission were to review:

- the follow-up action taken by the CCA with regard to the up-grading of certain classes of food-processing establishments (red meat and milk);
- the operation of controls over certain products of animal origin intended for human consumption (fresh meat, meat products, minced meat and meat preparations, milk and milk products, farmed game and wild game);
- holding registration, animal identification and movement controls;
- certain animal health controls (tuberculosis, brucellosis, classical swine fever and enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL));
- Contingency plans for epizootic diseases, in particular, Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Avian Influenza (AI), and Newcastle Disease (ND).

In pursuit of these objectives, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	4	VARs for opening, closing and intermediary meeting and the Central Database (CDB).
	Regional	6	5 RVO offices and 1 LDCC

FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS			Comments
Slaughterhouses		4	3 high capacity, 1 low capacity
Game meat premises		1	Wild game processing house

Cutting premises	6	4 integrated in slaughterhouse
Meat product premises	5	2 integrated slaughterhouse, 1 in cutting plant
Milk processing premises	4	2 high capacity, 2 low capacity
Cold stores	1	
<b>ABP PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS</b>		
Processing plant	1	for Category 1 and 2
Intermediate plants	1	1VHS – Collection centre for fallen stock, 1 composting plant for Category 2
<b>LABORATORIES</b>		
National Veterinary Laboratory	1	National Veterinary Institute (NVI) in Ljubljana – National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for FMD, CSF and AI
Regional Veterinary Laboratory	2	NVI in Ljubljana - Regional labs in Maribor and Nova Gorica
<b>LIVE ANIMAL CONTROL SITES</b>		
Farms	7	
Assembly Centres for live animals	2	
Disinfection points	2	
Border inspection posts	2	

### 3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

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

Article 12 of Council Directive 64/433/EEC, Article 12 of Council Directive 77/99/EEC, Article 15 of Council Directive 91/495/EEC, Article 12 of Council Directive 92/45/EEC, Article 17 of Council Directive 92/46/EEC Article 9 of Council Directive 94/65/EC, Article 10 of Council Directive 77/391/EEC Article 14 of Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993, Article 22 of Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and Council, Article 21 of Council Directive 2001/89/EEC Article 7 of Council Directive 91/494/EEC, Article 18 of Council Directive 92/40/EEC, Article 22 of Council Directive 92/66/EEC, Commission Decision 98/139/EC of 4 February 1998.

References to relevant Community legislation in the framework of this mission are listed in Annex to the Report.

### 4. MAIN FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Competent authority performance

##### 4.1.1. Organisational structure of VARS

No significant organisational changes took place during 2005. The Internal Control Department, currently staffed by 3 people, will become the Quality Control, Audit and Internal Control Department next year and it will report directly to the Chief

Veterinary Officer (CVO). One of its new responsibilities will be to audit the technical aspects of work carried out by VARS.

#### 4.1.2. Legislation

The new Act on Veterinary Compliance Criteria was adopted on 12.10.2005 and will come into force on 1.1.2006. The Act differentiates between activities to be carried out by the state service and other veterinary activities. It specifies who is competent to perform these activities and sets the sanctions to be applied where they are not performed correctly. The Act also provides rules for the implementation of derogations laid down in Regulations (EC) No. 852/2004/EC and (EC) No. 853/2004. It also drops the requirement for pre-movement veterinary certification of live animals moving within the country.

Observations:

- Secondary legislation implementing the new EU Hygiene package had not been adopted at the time of the mission but is expected to enter in force in January 2006.
- The scope and scale of food processing activities permitted at farm level (e.g. on farm slaughter for domestic consumption, agro-tourism) are included in the Act on Veterinary Criteria and Compliance. However, rules on the quantity of wild game that may be offered for direct sale have not yet been decided.
- New rules on the registration and approval of establishments are being prepared where all competence for the approval and registration of food establishments will be transferred to the regional level. Routine auditing of all establishments will commence in January 2006.
- During 2006, approved veterinary practitioners are expected to be given responsibility for ante-mortem inspection on farms, live animal identification controls and annual farm inspections. Detailed arrangements for these new responsibilities still need to be specified.<sup>1</sup>
- Although pre-movement veterinary certification is expected to end early in 2006, no instructions have been issued to RVOs concerning alternative

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<sup>1</sup> *In their response to the draft report the Slovenian Authorities stated that “Under the new Act (Veterinary Compliance Criteria Act – VCCA) the approved veterinarians will carry out supervisory checks of all holdings keeping farm animals. Checks will provide for the regular veterinary control of holdings in order to comply with the trade rule requirements. Approved veterinarians will be obliged to notify the relevant RVO of VARS of such activities and of all inconsistencies found at holdings checked. As practised in the past it will remain unchanged also in the future that the official veterinarians of RVOs are the authority competent for carrying out the prescribed measures at such holdings as well as the inspection and control of holdings in accordance with a pattern envisaged in the VARS work programme”.*

means to enforce animal identification provisions and animal health movement restrictions<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.1.3. *Human resources*

Staff in the VARS Public Health Department (PHD) has been increased from 2 to 5 since 2003. This Department, together with personnel from the Internal Control Department, has introduced a system (on a trial basis) to audit official controls of food establishments approved for intra-Community trade. They expect to have visited 10-15% of these establishments by the middle of 2006.

The Animal Health and Welfare Department (AHWD) carried out advisory visits in 9 out of 10 RVOs during 2004. Advisory visits planned for 2005 were not carried out due to staff shortages. Instead, regular monthly coordination meetings involving AHWD and the RVO took place.

Observations:

- Staff shortages as a main factor meant that RVOs have not completed all planned inspections of holdings.
- In some food establishments visited only one supervisory visit (instead of two) had been carried out due to staff shortages in the RVO.

#### 4.1.4. *Official controls and supervision*

An annual inspection programme for 2005 has been approved by VARS. This lays down the minimum frequency of the visits by the RVO director to food establishments and the percentage of holdings to be inspected.

The programme requires the RVO to carry out two controls on each veterinary practice every year in addition to routine checks on documents (e.g. medicines records), which are completed by veterinary practitioners and kept on holdings.

The work of OV's in food-producing establishments should be supervised by the director of RVO at least twice annually.

Observations:

- Official controls to enforce the prohibition on feeding swill to pigs were carried out. However, in one region fewer than 5% of pig farms (which is the requirement set in the annual programme) had been visited and the prescribed inspection protocol was not used.

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<sup>2</sup> *In their response to the draft report the Slovenian Authorities stated that "General information and/or instructions on movements of animals and food chain information was prepared by the Veterinary Administration of the Republic of Slovenia and published on the VARS website on 20 December 2005. VARS convened a meeting with the representatives of food industry, Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, and Veterinary Chamber. Information on movements of animals was published also in the "Kmečki glas" newspaper".*

- Deficiencies were not always detected during official inspections in plants and holdings (e.g. insufficient cleaning and disinfection procedures in 2 assembly centres and 1 disinfection centre, no treatment of waste water and manure in assembly centres, insufficient temperature during composting in a Category 2 ABP processing plant, incomplete flock records).
- RVO supervision of veterinary practices was confined to documentary checks. No evidence was seen of direct supervision of veterinarians during the performance of field activities, e.g. blood sampling or TB testing.
- In one establishment daily supervision was carried out by the head of the RVO Public Health section. No higher level supervision had been carried out in this establishment due to the long-term absence of the RVO director on sick leave.

#### *4.1.5. Training*

An annual training programme, agreed with the CVO, is in place. The main focus during 2005 was on the training of the OV on the new EU Hygiene package. A more limited range of animal health training events was planned.

Observations:

- Some planned animal health training events did not take place, e.g. training on epidemiology and geographical information systems, laboratory diagnostics.
- RVO veterinary inspectors responsible for epizootiological investigations in case of disease suspicion (e.g. CSF, bovine Brucellosis) did not receive any specific training for this task.

## **4.2. Establishment upgrading and approval**

The procedure for granting or amending approval for a food producing establishment requires an inspection by an ad-hoc commission comprised of the OV, representatives from the local RVO plus another RVO. In the case of transitional period establishments, the commission also includes a representative from the CCA. A follow-up RVO inspection to verify that any deficiencies identified by the ad-hoc commission have been corrected is required before VARS can grant the approval.

Establishments not meeting deadlines for upgrading (transitional period or in connection with accession to EU) had been downgraded by VARS to limited capacity until they were able to fulfil all the requirements for establishments with unlimited production.

The accuracy and updating of lists of approved establishments has been improved substantially since the last mission and only minor inaccuracies were noted, although there are still some technical problems in publishing the register on the VARS website.

Observations:

- Some establishments had not received a new approval consequent upon the country's accession to the EU (e.g. game meat establishments already approved for the EU market).
- One establishment visited had been approved for unlimited capacity without having corrected all the deficiencies identified during the commission report. The second report issued two weeks later by the RVO stated that all deficiencies had been corrected although this had not been the case.
- Cross flows in production areas were seen in some approved establishments and no clear instructions on time separation were in place to deal with situations where the deficiency could not easily be corrected.

### **4.3. Food safety controls**

#### *4.3.1. Inspection tasks*

RVOs are responsible for the supervision of all establishments. OV's are permanently present in slaughterhouses throughout slaughtering and on a regular basis in other food processing establishments.

In high capacity slaughterhouses, Trichinella testing was carried out in compliance with Council Directive 77/96/EEC (method VI: The magnetic stirrer method for pooled sample digestion). In low capacity slaughterhouses and game processing houses, samples were sent to an external laboratory for testing (NVI or one of its regional units).

Observations:

- Supervision in cutting plants was not assured as required by current EU legislation and VARS stated that due to staff shortages they already apply risk-based control frequencies inspired by the new EU hygiene package which comes into force 1 January 2006.
- VARS has accepted, without having given any derogation, that the time limits in Council Directive 92/45/EEC for bringing large wild game into game processing houses are not respected (up to 5 days after killing in the plant visited). The CCA also accepted that the 18 hours time limit for carrying out post-mortem examination is not respected (up to 2 days after game enter in the plant visited). These strict deadlines do not appear in the new EU hygiene package.
- Official records were kept of the ante-mortem and post-mortem results in all the slaughterhouses visited, but no records of the second examination of game carcasses after de-hiding were kept in the game establishment.
- Trichinella testing in one high capacity slaughterhouse was carried out by the OV who had not received any additional training for this task. No proficiency testing (ring test) has been carried out and the concentration of the hydrochloric acid and the strength of the pepsin used in one slaughterhouse were not in compliance with the prescribed method.

#### 4.3.2. *Hygiene requirements, HACCP and own check controls*

Own check controls including HACCP programmes were available in all the establishments visited.

Observations:

- Maintenance problems were seen in some establishments, mainly related to damaged floors, ceilings, wall and doors, worn cutting boards and conveyor belts, rusty equipment or excessive condensation.
- Faecal contamination was found on several beef quarters ready for shipment in one slaughterhouse. Faecal contamination of meat surfaces during de-hiding was seen in another establishment and hand-held hoses were used for cleaning during slaughter (e.g. carcasses and aprons) with risk of splash contamination of exposed meat.
- The laboratory results from the regular checks on the general hygiene carried out by the NVI were not clear as regards the results (e.g. cfu or log values, cfu/cm<sup>2</sup> or cfu/20cm<sup>2</sup>). No process control charts or tables were available in the slaughterhouses visited for the last 13 weekly results from the bacteriological sampling of carcasses.
- Some HACCP programmes seen did not include a proper and well-documented risk evaluation (hazard analysis) in relation to the identification of the CCP(s) and work descriptions were sometimes insufficiently detailed (e.g. controls at reception only relating to temperature).
- The pest control programme in one large milk establishment showed constant presence of cockroaches without effective action being taken.
- Official records in one milk establishment did not provide evidence that the OV had been informed when problems occurred or had responded to such problems in a satisfactory way. Furthermore, the internal procedures for re-sampling had not been respected (e.g. water sampling and bacteriological cleaning tests).
- In several establishments bait stations (rodent control) were only placed inside in transport corridors, storage areas and production rooms. No checks on rodent activity were carried out in the vicinity of the establishment.

#### 4.3.3. *Health marking and traceability*

Health marking was generally in compliance with the EU requirements in the establishments visited and traceability systems for the identification of lots were established.

Observations:

- Health marks on lambs and, in some cases, other species were illegible and in some cases only one health mark had been applied to lamb carcasses.
- Labels with round health marks bearing the approval number of an older establishment were used in newly-approved premises.

- Labels on cut pig meat stated that it came from animals that had been born and raised in Slovenia without any such guarantees being provided from the farms of origin. The RVO stated that this labelling was a legal requirement in Slovenia.

#### **4.4. Animal welfare at slaughter**

Stunning equipment was checked in all the slaughterhouses visited and facilities for restraining of animals and spare stunning equipment were available in all establishments.

The electrical stunning equipment had devices indicating the voltage and current and was fitted with visible indicators to mark the end of the stunning cycle.

Observations:

- Stunning had not been performed correctly on calves in one slaughterhouse visited (more than one hole after stunning or inaccurate positioning of captive bolt).

#### **4.5. Holding registration, animal identification and movements**

##### *4.5.1. The system in operation*

The system for animal identification and registration was described in the previous mission report (DG(SANCO)/7181/2004) and the Animal Identification and Registration Service (AIRS) is still the CA for this activity.

The primary responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of the information entered rests with the keepers of animals and they understand and generally comply with the requirements. Keepers of pigs and small ruminants are obliged to notify the CA of the number of animals moving to and from their holdings. They must also report the total number of animals on their holdings annually.

Dealers and assembly centres are registered separately in the central database (CDB) and are obliged to report animal movements to the CA. As of November 2005, 94 dealers were registered.

RVOs, NVI laboratories and veterinary practices have direct access to the CDB. The link between the epidemiological surveillance database and the bovine database has been established since January 2005 and herd health status and the results of monitoring programmes are recorded on the system by veterinary practices and the NVI.

Observations:

- AIRS currently has more than 44,000 pig holdings registered on the CDB. Data used by VARS for the 2005 CSF programme declared that there were approximately 600,000 pigs in Slovenia and these were kept on 26,000 holdings. Only 8 holdings keep more than 500 pigs and approximately 21,000 holdings keep between 1-9 pigs.
- AIRS estimates that approximately 15% of pig holdings are unregistered. Typically, these keep 1-5 pigs for home slaughter and domestic consumption.

However, there are no procedures to cross check lists of holdings on the CDB against other information gathered by RVOs.

- The central register does not include geographical coordinates for all pig holdings and no alternative system is authorised to be used by VARS<sup>3</sup>.
- During 2005, 23% of births were notified to the central register later than the legal deadline. The system in place does not show who is responsible for these delays (e.g. the keeper, the person who tagged the animal, or the person who entered the information on the CDB).
- Completion of the annual inventory for sheep holdings is linked to the payment of subsidies and the information sent to the CDB was up-to-date. No subsidies are paid to keepers of pigs and last year more than 30% failed to report the number of pigs kept<sup>4</sup>.
- Currently pig keepers are only obliged to notify the CDB of movements to their holding. Consequently, the CDB was not able to supply the registration number of the last holding in all cases.
- Discrepancies in the status of assembly centres (i.e. approval for intra-Community trade or national market only) were found between the list approved by VARS and information kept in the CDB.

#### 4.5.2. *Official controls & administrative sanctions*

On-farm inspections complying with Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003 are carried out. Holdings are selected using risk analysis and more than 10% of registered cattle holdings were inspected during 2004 (2.5% of them by VARS and 7.5% in conjunction with subsidies inspections). Since July 2005, the results of these inspections can be recorded directly into the CDB by both agricultural and VARS inspectors.

In addition, printed CDB lists showing the animals registered on holdings are regularly used by veterinary practitioners to cross check the identity of the animals on the farm as part of the disease monitoring programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> *In their response to the draft report the Slovenian Authorities stated that “there are 45.000 pig holdings registered in the CDB. Complete data, including geographical coordinates (all crosschecked with the national register of spatial units) are kept for these holdings. In addition to these »fully registered« holdings, 10000 holdings are registered via the simplified system.”*

*The Slovenian Authorities also stated that “AIRS has introduced a simplified system for registration of holdings keeping no more than one pig for own use. Such holdings are recorded in the database on the basis of the movement document.”*

<sup>4</sup> *In their response to the draft report the Slovenian Authorities stated that “Slovenian legislation requires that each holding, with the exception of holdings keeping one pig for own use, yearly report the number of pigs on the holding. By December 31 2005, 39.898 reports were received (90 % response rate).”*

Identification inspections are also carried out on 3% of pig holdings (1% of them by VARS). The results of these inspections are reported monthly by the RVOs but are not entered into the CDB.

For cattle, the existing system for pre-movement certification, which is due to be scrapped in 2006, effectively ensures that the movement of animals is prohibited if they are incorrectly identified or not accompanied by a valid passport.

Observations:

- Agricultural inspectors are still not legally empowered to apply movement restrictions in cases where animal identification, registration and notification requirements are breached.
- Although livestock dealers with an associated holding are subject to controls, no inspections were carried out on dealers without premises during 2005.

#### **4.6. Animal Health controls**

The monitoring program for CSF is approved by Commission Decision 2004/840/EC. All pig holdings that keep breeding sows or more than 10 fattening pigs are tested annually. More than 38,000 blood samples had been tested by November 2005. 415 of these samples, which came from 243 small pig farms, were seropositive.

The country has been officially recognised as being free from brucellosis (*B. melitensis*) and EBL by Commission Decision 2005/179/EC. Four suspected cases of EBL were investigated in 2005 with negative results. The number of animals and herds found positive for bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis annually is very low (less than 0.1% and 0.2% respectively), which is compatible with the requirements of Council Directive 64/432/EEC for countries to be considered officially free from these diseases. Abortions are notified monthly by veterinary practices to RVOs and a special protocol is used.

Instructions for the investigation of positive bovine brucellosis blood tests and on the use of the Brucellin skin test (BST) were issued by VARS in June 2005.

Observations:

- No preventative measures aimed at increasing awareness and preparedness of the farming community and private veterinarians were taken by VARS in relation to sero-positive CSF findings on pig farms. The awareness of rules and risks associated with the feeding of household wastes to pigs were poorly understood on 2 farms visited.
- Positive CSF serological results were evaluated as post-vaccination antibodies. However, it is generally not possible to determine the vaccination status of sows born before 2003, when compulsory identification was introduced.
- Epidemiological inquiries of sero-positive herds were carried out by RVOs. However, the investigation protocol did not adequately cover all relevant points (e.g. concerning tracing of animal movements, recent reproductive

history of suspect and in-contact animals) and inspectors carrying out the investigation did not receive any specific training.

- In approximately half of the cases where a CSF seropositive animal was found serological and epidemiological inquiries did not clearly identify a cause. Even so additional testing (e.g. detection of virus) was seldom carried out.
- Sometimes the RVOs did not take appropriate measures to prevent disease spreading from suspect holdings (e.g. positive serological findings) before the final investigation results were known. For example, 12 piglets were sold from one suspect farm to other holdings; autopsies of fallen pigs were not carried out; measures to destroy rodents and special disinfection procedure were not applied on one pig holding visited.
- Although the monitoring programme requires that all wild boar found dead must be tested for CSF virus, only one such sample was tested in 2004 and none in 2005 until October. At one NVI carcass collection centre 15 fallen wild boars were collected during 2005 (until November), but no samples were taken by the OV.
- In one region, three cattle in different herds gave positive Rose Bengal Plate Test (RBPT) results in 2005. The RVO carried out epidemiological investigations on the affected holdings but not on in-contact holdings. These investigations included clinical examinations and two serological blood tests, using both RBPT and the Complement Fixation Test (CFT). In all cases clinical examination was negative and both RBPT and CFT were positive. Positive animals were retested using BST. All gave negative results and suspicion of Brucellosis was excluded in each case.
- VARS did not specify the indicators leading to suspicion of Brucellosis (e.g. abortion) or the nature of samples that should be taken from live or slaughtered suspect animals. 12 blood samples from aborted animals were tested in 2005 (until November) - all gave negative results. No follow-up serological blood test or microbiological examination of appropriate samples from these animals was ordered.
- The RVOs did not supervise the actions taken by veterinary practices at holdings to investigate abortions.
- No checks were performed on the temperature of blood samples received at a regional NVI laboratory visited. The same NVI recorded the results of all RBPTs carried out in 2005 as negative although 3 inconclusive cases had been investigated by the RVO.
- 5 cases of bovine tuberculosis-like lesions were detected during post-mortem examinations at slaughterhouses in 2005 (until October). However, only one sample was submitted for histopathological examination. The veterinary inspector who carried out post-mortem inspections in one slaughterhouse was not fully familiar with the actions to be taken in case of suspicion.

## 4.7. Contingency Plans

### 4.7.1. Plan Documentation

The Commission has approved Contingency Plans (CPs) for FMD, CSF, AI and ND. The CPs for FMD and AI were updated in 2004 and in October 2005 respectively.

Observations:

- National CPs were detailed, but operational manuals adapted to local conditions had not been prepared.
- CPs did not take into account the resources needed to control a large number of outbreaks occurring within a short time.
- The CPs did not include guidance on measures to be taken to protect the environment. For example, no list of appropriate sites and undertakings for the treatment or disposal of animal carcasses and animal waste in the event of a mass outbreak had been prepared.
- CPs did not contain provisions for Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) and staging points and did not specify the roles of BIPs and CVOs or RVOs when an outbreak occurs at a BIP.
- VARS has not taken steps to harmonise the assessment of ‘risky’ holdings specifically for contingency planning. For example, in one region a very large pig holding (approximately 45,000 pigs) was considered to be no more risky than an average holding. In another region, the same conclusion was reached for a livestock staging point handling 10,000 cattle and sheep per year.

### 4.7.2. Legal provisions and emergency powers (eradication, compensation)

#### 4.7.2.1. “Peacetime” legal provisions

Each RVO is responsible for the establishment of the Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) and preparedness for eradication of initial outbreak (contacts, equipment, training etc.). They recently received delivery of emergency equipment from VARS. Additional equipment may be obtained from central stores or by contractual arrangements with private companies.

Observations:

- Not all of the equipment listed in CPs (e.g. sedatives, killing equipment) was available in RVOs visited and no arrangements were in place for the supply of additional equipment from alternative sources. The deficit would be most marked in the event of a mammal disease outbreak.
- No regular inventories of the supplies of equipment in stock were carried out by VARS, RVOs or veterinary practices.
- No list of equipment providers had been prepared by VARS or RVOs, except for carbon dioxide to be used for the mass killing of poultry.

- Neither practical instruction for on-site burying or burning of carcasses nor formal arrangements or contracts with contractors capable of carrying out the necessary work within the regions has been prepared.

#### 4.7.2.2. Emergency powers available

In the case of suspicion, VARS coordinates the initial investigation. If an outbreak is confirmed, the National Disease Control Centre (NDCC) shall adapt the national strategy for eradication and contact the Civil Protection agency.

Observations:

- The CP defines the duties of the NDCC and LDCC, and rooms and other facilities were available for their use. However, the plan does not include arrangements to ensure that these facilities will be available immediately in the event of an outbreak being confirmed.

#### 4.7.2.3. Availability of emergency funds

The costs of staff, equipment and consumer goods to be used in the suppression of an outbreak, emergency vaccination, destruction of carcasses and compensation shall be covered from the national budget.

Observations:

- Compensation must be paid as soon as possible, but no time limit for compensation is laid down in national legislation.

#### 4.7.3. *Organisation (suspicion and following confirmation of disease)*

The NVI is responsible for all equipment needed by the Expert Group to take initial samples and for the analysis of the materials collected. Equipment for subsequent sampling (e.g. within the Protection Zones) will be maintained in RVOs.

Observations:

- In the contingency kits kept in the NVI for the Expert Group the disinfectant was beyond the expiry date.
- The CP foresees that in the case of multiple outbreaks, veterinarians in the RVOs may be required to take probang samples. However, the required equipment is not included on the list of equipment stored in these offices nor have the veterinarians been trained in its use.

#### 4.7.4. *Traceability of animals pre and after outbreak*

RVOs rely on information from veterinary practices and pre-movement veterinary certification (to be abolished in 2006) to locate outbreak holdings, to define zones and to trace animal movements. The checks carried out to identify backyard flocks are a useful tool to prevent spreading of disease in the case of AI outbreaks.

#### Observations:

- The CDB provides a search function that could be used to trace cattle in the event of an outbreak. However, awareness of how the system could be used was very low at the RVOs visited. In general, veterinary inspectors preferred to use locally-held records and information from veterinary practices to locate farms and estimate the scope and size of their activities.
- The CDB can provide a list of bovine holdings within each region and trace the movements of individual animals. However, it is not possible to select all holdings with recent movements from this list<sup>5</sup>.
- For cattle, the CA hopes to develop a computerised module to integrate geographical information system data into the CDB.
- The holding location system used in the CDB for pigs is very basic and limited (only coordinates of large farms available) and a map system used by MAFF is not authorised to be used by VARS.

#### 4.7.5. *Eradication of outbreak*

VARS has established an agreement with other bodies and institutions that could possibly assist in the event of a disease outbreak. The sole Category 1 ABP processing plant in the country has been contracted to dispose of all high risk wastes in the event of a disease outbreak. The maximum daily rendering capacity is estimated at 250 tons for 7 days (currently operating at 50% capacity) and 21 trucks are available to transport carcasses.

#### Observations:

- Few practical arrangements have been made for killing different categories of mammals and poultry, including the provision of material and human resources and the disposal of carcasses.
- Locations to be used for burying and burning carcasses have not yet been selected and facilities and equipment were not specified (e.g. process of building, treatment capacity, material required, measures to control environment pollution).
- Arrangements for the use of alternative approved processing plants (e.g. composting plants) to dispose of Category 2 ABP during a mass disease outbreak were not included in the national CP.
- The operators of the Category 1 ABP processing establishment were not familiar with the transport requirements described in the CP, particularly with regard to the cleaning and disinfection of vehicles between holdings.

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<sup>5</sup> *In their response to the draft report the Slovenian Authorities stated that “A procedure for selection of holdings with recent movements from the list is in place and that data from the CDB database can be obtained and/or selected. As the procedure is rather complicated it could not be successfully demonstrated during the Mission visit”.*

However, they plan to include special vehicle cleaning instructions in their HACCP programme.

#### 4.7.6. *Laboratories*

The NVI participates in the preparation of the national CP as well as in proficiency tests organised by Community Reference Laboratories.

The NRL for AI is accredited for both H5 and H7 and has adequate facilities and the capability to perform all necessary tests, including virus isolation and sub typing as required by Council Directive 92/40/EEC.

The NRLs for FMD and CSF have not been accredited as EU laboratories capable of handling live virus. A mutual agreement was signed between the NVI and the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) in Pirbright, United Kingdom for virological testing for FMD. Virus isolation and serological testing for CSF is carried out in the NVI.

Observations:

- There are seven regional laboratories, five of which are equipped to carry out autopsies in the event of a disease outbreak. However, this role is not specified in the CP.
- Sufficient stores of reagents are kept in the NVI to provide for 1 week's serological testing for FMD and CSF. However, no formal arrangements are in place for the further purchase, storage and supply of sufficient quantities of specific reagents or diagnostic tests in case of an emergency.
- No standard laboratory submission form has been prepared to accompany samples from a suspect holding.
- The cooperative agreement between the NVI and the CRL has not been notified to the Commission and is not included in the special column in the table in Part A, Annex XI of Commission Decision 85/2003/EC.

#### 4.7.7. *Provisions for emergency vaccination*

The use of FMD and CSF vaccines is generally prohibited, although the CVO is empowered to introduce emergency vaccination. General vaccination manuals for FMD, CSF and NCD are included in the CPs.

Observations:

- VARS has not established national antigen and vaccine banks for the storage of reserves for emergency vaccination. A contract for the supply of FMD vaccine which expired in 2001 has not been renewed.
- Vaccination manuals did not give a precise indication of the vaccine requirements considered necessary in the event of the introduction of emergency vaccination or of the regions with a high population density of pigs and poultry.

#### 4.7.8. *Training and awareness of programmes, simulation*

The CPs for FMD, CSF, ND and AI including a comprehensive information about AI are available on the VARS website. During November 2005, information seminars on AI were organised for the farming industry. Information leaflets on the disease have been distributed. 6,000 copies of a brochure for farmers and hunters covering the clinical signs of CSF were distributed by VARS in 2000.

VARS and the RVOs are separately responsible for training their own staff and veterinary practices. The last national FMD exercise took place in 1997 and another planned for this year was postponed until spring 2006. The latest CSF simulation exercise, organised in conjunction with TAIEX, was held in 2004. A simulation exercise for AI took place in June 2005.

Observations:

- FMD CP training for the NVI pathologists was organised regularly but not for RVO officials or veterinary practices in 2004 or 2005.
- Veterinarians in one veterinary practice visited showed little knowledge of the role foreseen for them in the CP. The RVO explained that provision of training of veterinary practices was not their responsibility.
- VARS organised seminars for private vets on CSF in 2004 and on AI in 2005, but few private practitioners participated. Similarly, 650 registered poultry keepers were invited to a meeting on AI and only half of them participated.
- Some important stakeholders (e.g. rendering plant, industry) did not participate in the exercises carried out to date. No national FMD simulation exercises have been organised since the approval of CP in 2004.
- A practical coordination exercise on AI between the RVO and the Civil Protection unit had been organised in one region visited. No training took place for diseases of mammals.

## 5. **CLOSING MEETING**

A closing meeting was held on 2 December 2005 with VARS. At this meeting, the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The representatives of the CCA took note of these and expressed their willingness to correct the shortcomings observed.

## 6. **CONCLUSIONS**

### 6.1. **Competent authority performance**

All establishments and holdings visited were under supervision, but some deficiencies were found in the practical implementation of controls. The annual training programme was not fully completed and the very limited training organised for animal health inspectors did not cover some essential topics i.e.

epizootiological investigation in pig holdings or aspects of the new system of movement controls in live animals after 1.1.2006.

## **6.2. Establishment upgrading and approval**

The lists of approved establishments were up-to-date. Establishments visited satisfied structural and layout requirements in order to be approved. Correct approval procedures were followed in most establishments visited, but in one case approval was granted before the establishment was in full compliance with relevant Directives.

## **6.3. Food safety controls**

Although most establishments visited were of an acceptable standard and complied with EU requirements, some deficiencies were identified in nearly all establishments. In one establishment previously benefiting from a transitional period for up-grading and one establishment approved without being in compliance with basic EU requirements, the deficiencies identified were more serious in nature. Shortcomings were noted mainly in handling wild game, Trichinella testing, implementation of bacteriological checks on carcasses in accordance with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC and pest control programmes. The OV did not always check outcomes of the own checks programme implemented by the operator and deficiencies identified were not always corrected.

## **6.4. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls**

Systems for the identification and registration of cattle, sheep and pigs, movement controls, and for identification controls conforming to current EU legislation, are in operation. Important improvements have been made since the last mission. However, the database of pig holdings is incomplete, both in terms of the number of holdings registered and the information held on each holding. Responsibility for late notification of bovine births is unclear. The CDB is fully accessible to the veterinary services, but veterinarians lack the knowledge to use it to trace animals.

## **6.5. Animal health controls**

The national monitoring programme for CSF has been implemented, but sampling was not carried out in accordance with Commission Decision 2002/106/EC (the diagnostic manual) and action taken by the RVO at the holdings placed under official surveillance was not always in compliance with Article 4 of Council Directive 2001/89/EC<sup>6</sup>. The percentage of cattle herds testing positive for bovine brucellosis is lower than 0.2, however, not all requirements for an officially free country have been fulfilled due to inconsistent investigations of abortions by the

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<sup>6</sup> *In their response to the draft report the Slovenian Authorities stated that "the mission findings on monitoring of CSF (point 4.6., the first to fifth indents) and following Recommendation 8 that Mission findings refer to the state of affairs as encountered during the Mission visit. It needs to be pointed out that on 6 December 2005 and 9 December 2005 the NDCC reconvened and assessed the strategy of implementing measures on the basis of monitoring performed. NDCC adopted a decision, determined the diagnostic procedure and measures in accordance with the provisions of the Diagnostic Manual. By the end of January 2006, of a total of 267 holdings with serologically positive reactors the measures were lifted at 263 holdings. In the remaining 4 holdings the SN test results of re-sampling and the PCR test results are awaited."*

CA. Moreover, BST was used to rule out brucellosis when both RBPT and CFT were positive, which is not in accordance with Annex A and Annex C of Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

## **6.6. Contingency Plans**

The national CPs for FMD, CSF, AI and ND were prepared based on relevant Directives, but instruction manuals were not prepared reflecting particular conditions in regions. Legal powers necessary for the implementation of CPs exist, but practical implementation did not comply with the provisions of Council Directives 2001/89/EC and 2003/85/EC, mainly due to the lack of regular simulation training and insufficient guarantees to provide the access to all facilities, equipment, personnel and other appropriate materials necessary for the rapid and efficient eradication of an outbreak. Implementation of the CP for AI in general complies with requirements of Council Directive 92/40/EEC, but some shortcomings need to be addressed mainly relating to disinfection procedures and incomplete vaccination arrangements.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF SLOVENIA**

1. To ensure that regular checks on hygiene are carried out in food establishments in compliance with Community requirements and that pest control programmes are effective.
2. To ensure that the OV is kept informed and takes appropriate corrective action when deficiencies are identified by the establishments own check controls.
3. To ensure that production and placing on the market of wild game comply with Community requirements and proper records are kept of the result of the post-mortem examination in wild game premises.
4. To ensure that those responsible for delaying the notification of bovine births beyond the deadline stipulated by Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004 are identified and that effective dissuasive sanctions are applied.
5. To ensure where bovine animals and holdings do not comply with identification and registration requirements that sanctions are consistently applied in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) 494/98.
6. To ensure that assembly centres and dealers meet all requirements and are supervised as laid down in Article 11 and 12 of Council Directive 64/432/EEC.
7. To ensure that the pig database complies with the provisions of Commission Decision 2000/678/EC, and the bovine database with Article 18 of Council Directive 64/432/EEC, to ensure the accurate and prompt traceability of animals in case of disease outbreak.
8. To ensure that Commission Decision 2002/106/EC and Council Directive 2001/89/EC are fully implemented when cases of fallen wild boar or positive serological findings detected in domestic pigs are investigated.

9. To ensure that investigations carried out when bovine brucellosis is suspected, fully comply with Council Directive 64/432/EEC.
10. To ensure that flock records include feed and water consumption, as required by Council Directive 71/118/EEC for fresh poultry meat and necessary for early detection systems specified in Commission Decision 734/2005.
11. To up-date the CP for FMD and CSF for worst case scenario (e.g. emergency vaccination arrangements details, integrated environment permits) and to adapt them to the local conditions of regions and BIPs as required by Council Directives 2003/85/EC and 2001/89/EC.
12. To ensure that equipment stored at VARS, RVOs and the NVI and the system in place for supply of additional equipment can guarantee full availability for detection of outbreaks and eradication of disease.
13. To ensure that training and simulation exercises in relation to contingency plans, in particular FMD and CSF, is carried out regularly as required by Council Directives 2001/89/EC and 2003/85/EC.

## **8. ADDENDUM**

### Response of the Slovenian Authorities to the draft mission report

The Slovenian Authorities commented on the draft report by means of an e-mail dated 20 February 2006. The comments indicated some action already taken (see footnotes 2 and 6) and have been incorporated into the final report.

## ANNEX – LEGAL REFERENCES

### COMMUNITY LEGISLATION CITED IN THIS REPORT

European legislation	OJ	Title
Council Directive 64/433/EEC	L 121, 29.07.1964, p. 2012	Council Directive 64/433/EEC of 26 June 1964 on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat
Commission Decision 2001/471/EC	L 165, 21.06.2001, p. 48	Commission Decision 2001/471/EC of 8 June 2001 laying down rules for the regular checks on the general hygiene carried out by the operators in establishments according to Directive 64/433/EEC on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat and Directive 71/118/EEC on health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat
Council Directive 77/99/EEC	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 85	Council Directive 77/99/EEC of 21 December 1976 on health problems affecting the production and marketing of meat products and certain other products of animal origin
Council Directive 94/65/EC	L 368, 31.12.1994, p. 10	Council Directive 94/65/EC of 14 December 1994 laying down the requirements for the production and placing on the market of minced meat and meat preparations
Council Directive 77/96/EEC	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 67	Council Directive 77/96/EEC of 21 December 1976 on the examination for trichinae ( <i>Trichinella spiralis</i> ) upon importation from third countries of fresh meat derived from domestic swine
Council Directive 92/45/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 35	Council Directive 92/45/EEC of 16 June 1992 on public health and animal health problems relating to the killing of wild game and the placing on the market of wild-game meat
Council Directive 92/46/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/46/EEC of 16 June 1992 laying down the health rules for the production and placing on the market of raw milk, heat-treated milk and milk-based products
Council Directive 93/119/EC	L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 21	Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing
Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98	L 060, 28.02.1998, p. 78	Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98 of 27 February 1998 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 as regards the application of minimum administrative sanctions in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals
Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No. 1760/2000	L 204, 11.08.2000, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation EC No. 820/97

Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003	L 156, 25.06.2003, p. 9	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003 of 23 June 2003 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the minimum level of controls to be carried out in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals
Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004	L 163, 30.04.2004, p. 65	Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004 of 29 April 2004 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards ear tags, passports and holding registers
Commission Decision 2000/678/EC	L 281, 07.11.2000	Commission Decision 2000/678/EC of 23 October 2000 laying down detailed rules for registration of holdings in national databases for porcine animals as foreseen by Council Directive 64/432/EEC
Commission Decision 2004/840/EC	L 361, 08.12.2004, p. 41	Commission Decision 2004/840/EC of 30 November 2004 approving programmes for the eradication and monitoring of certain animal diseases and of checks aimed at the prevention of zoonoses presented by the Member States for the year 2005 and fixing the level of the Community's financial contribution
Commission Decision 2005/179/EC	L 61, 08.03.2005, p.37	Commission Decision of 4 March 2005 amending Decisions 93/52/EEC and 2003/467/EC as regards the declaration that Slovenia is free of brucellosis ( <i>B. melitensis</i> ) and enzootic bovine leukosis and Slovakia of bovine tuberculosis and bovine brucellosis
Council Directive 64/432/EEC	L 121, 29.07.1964, p. 1977	Council Directive 64/432/EEC of 26 June 1964 on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine
Council Directive 2003/85/EC	L 306, 22.11.2003, p.1	Council Directive 2003/85/EC of 29 September 2003 on Community measures for the control of foot-and-mouth disease repealing Directive 85/511/EEC and Decisions 89/531/EEC and 91/665/EEC and amending Directive 92/46/EEC
Council Directive 2001/89/EC	L 316, 01.12.2001, p. 5	Council Directive 2001/89/EC of 23 October 2001 on Community measures for the control of classical swine fever
Commission Decision 2002/106/EC	L 39, 09.02.2002, p. 71	Commission Decision 2002/106/EC of 1 February 2002 approving a Diagnostic Manual establishing diagnostic procedures, sampling methods and criteria for evaluation of the laboratory tests for the confirmation of classical swine fever
Council Directive 92/40/EEC	L 167, 22.06.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/40/EEC introducing Community measures for the control of avian influenza
Council Directive 92/66/EEC	L 260, 05.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/66/EEC introducing Community measures for the control of Newcastle disease
Council Directive 71/118/EEC	L 055, 08.03.1971, p. 23	Directive 71/118/EEC on health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat
Commission Decision	L 274, 20.10.2005, p. 105	Commission Decision 2005/734/EC of 19 October 2005 laying down biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of transmission of highly pathogenic avian

2005/734/EC		influenza caused by virus A subtype H5N1 from birds living in the wild to poultry and other captive birds and providing for an early detection system in areas in particular risk
Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No 1774/2002	L 273, 10.10.2002, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 October 2002 laying down health rules concerning animal by-products not intended for human consumption