



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

DG(SANCO)/7618/2005 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN CYPRUS
FROM 14 TO 24 NOVEMBER 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 ANIMAL CONTROLS, AND
CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR EPIZOOTIC DISEASES

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



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT</u>	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION	4
3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION	5
4. MAIN FINDINGS	5
4.1. Competent authority performance	5
4.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls	5
4.3. Establishment upgrading and approval	7
4.4. Food safety controls	8
4.5. Animal welfare at slaughter	10
4.6. Animal health controls	10
4.7. Contingency plans	15
5. CONCLUSIONS	18
5.1. Competent authority performance	18
5.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls	18
5.3. Establishment upgrading and approval	19
5.4. Food safety controls	19
5.5. Animal welfare at slaughter	19
5.6. Animal health controls	19
5.7. Contingency plans	20
6. CLOSING MEETING	20
7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF CYPRUS	20
ADDENDUM	21
ANNEX - LEGAL REFERENCES	22

ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

AI	Avian Influenza
BT	Blue Tongue
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent authority
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
EBL	Enzootic Bovine Leucosis
EU	European Union
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HACCP	Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
MS	Member State(s)
ND	Newcastle Disease
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
RBT	Rose Bengal Test
TB	Tuberculosis

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Cyprus from 14 to 24 November 2005. The mission team comprised 2 inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO). A second sub-team of 2 inspectors joined the mission for the first week to evaluate the contingency plans for poultry.

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

Both inspection teams were accompanied during the mission by a representative from the central competent authority (CCA), the veterinary services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment.

An opening meeting was held on 14 November 2005 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);
- the contingency plans for epizootic diseases, in particular (classical swine fever (CSF), foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), avian influenza (AI), Newcastle disease (ND)).

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

VISITS			COMMENTS
Competent authority	Central	4	Opening and Final meeting National Disease Control Centre Central Animal Database
Competent authority	Regional	6	4 districts and 2 veterinary stations
Central/reference		1	National Reference Laboratory (virology and bacteriology)
Regional		1	Regional laboratory (bacteriology)
Farms		5	Pig, cattle and goat holdings and poultry farm
Slaughterhouses		3	2 red meat and 1 poultry slaughterhouse
Temperature controlled stores		2	
Meat product premises		1	
Meat preparation premises		1	

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, Article 22 of Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000, Article 21 of Council Directive 2001/89/EC, 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.

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

Since the previous mission (reference number (DG(SANCO)/7183/2004) there have been no major changes in the structure of the competent authority. The CCA clarified during the mission that the veterinary service has 4 instead of the earlier reported 5 district offices.

Observations:

- the number of staff employed in the animal health department of the national reference laboratory (NRL) is low¹: 2 veterinarians and 4 technicians;
- during the mission no statistical information has been provided on the production of products of animal origin and only partial information has been provided on animal populations.

4.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

4.2.1. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

Holding registration

A database for registration of cattle, sheep and goats is in operation and pig holdings are electronically centrally registered.

Observations:

- in two districts visited the official veterinarian was not fully aware of the rules for the registration of pig holdings regarding the minimum number

¹ *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities noted that “in case of emergency, say an outbreak of an important disease like FMD, CSF or ND, the NRL will be assisted by the other laboratories of the veterinary service in which a total of 5 veterinarians and 26 technicians are employed”.*

of pigs to be present. One official veterinarian was not aware of the rules for sheep holdings regarding the minimum number of sheep;

- the derogation foreseen in Article 5, point 4 of Regulation (EC) No. 21/2004 for holding registers has been notified to the Commission. Evidence was present that some, but not all, MS have been informed;
- the CCA stated that there are no assembly centres or animal dealers in Cyprus.

Animal identification

Animal identification of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs remains unchanged since the last FVO mission (reference number SG(SANCO)/7183/2004). Since the last visit, electronic identification of sheep only has been started for genotyping in the framework of scrapie control. It is foreseen to extend the project to all sheep holdings in Cyprus.

Observations:

- a number of goats and cattle were seen during the inspection with one eartag only. The keeper of cattle had ordered and received replacement tags for most animals but they had not yet been applied. Moreover, replacement tags were provided in duplicate for some animals. The keeper of goats had not ordered replacement tags;
- goats imported from another Member State in July 2004 were re-identified with Cyprus eartags and the date of import was recorded as date of birth;
- in one holding, the date of birth of goats was not the actual date but was based on batch registration, giving a common date of birth to animals born at different times;
- although a special table has been created to identify sheep holdings with unidentifiable sheep present (sheep with very small or no ears), recording the total number of unidentifiable sheep, this list has not been updated since 2004.

Movement controls

The CCA stated that the new programme for the pig database is shortly to be introduced. The test phase is already finished and some last adjustments are needed. Pig movements are about to be recorded in a central database. New movement documents have been recently introduced.

Observations:

- a number of documents seen were not correctly completed.

4.2.2. Inspection of holdings

The CCA did not address recommendation 8.3 from the previous report (reference number DG(SANCO)/7183/2004) in order to implement criteria for checks on bovine identification, on the basis of risk analysis in accordance with Regulation (EC) 1082/2003.

The first round of inspections, aiming for checks on all holdings after its start in 2004 should be completed by the end of 2005.

Sanctions are not applied when irregularities are detected and owners of animals are given recommendations in order to address deficiencies found, which included retagging of animals which are unidentified (with both eartags lost).

Observations:

- results of some inspection visits by the district veterinary officers demonstrated that some cattle were present on farms without identification, and in some cases a high number of cattle have one lost eartag;
- checks on late entries of data on movement notification, notification of births and deaths in the central database by the CAs are not included in the inspection visits;
- while carrying out sero-surveillance programmes, a high number of cattle were detected as still being registered in the CDB, when they have in reality been slaughtered or are dead.

4.3. Establishment upgrading and approval

In their reply to recommendation 8.5 of the previous report (reference number DG(SANCO)/7183/2004) the CCA stated that a new procedure had been created for the approval of establishments. Instructions have been issued regarding this new procedure.

The CCA stated that all establishments will be re-approved in the framework of Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004, applying from 1 January 2006.

The official list of approved establishments is published on the website of the veterinary service: www.moa.gov.cy/vs.

Observations:

- some establishments have been approved before being in full compliance with all relevant EU criteria e.g. cross flow of products in one meat preparation establishment visited, presence of wood and walls which are not easy to clean in a meat product establishment visited. Both establishments were approved before the introduction of the new approval procedure;
- the published list of approved establishments is not accurate;
- letters which were sent to the establishments concerning their approval did not always specify all activities which were included in the approval;
- Council Directive 91/495/EEC has been transposed in Cypriot legislation (Order 505/2004). However, so far no rabbit slaughterhouses have been approved and no rabbit farms are registered. Rabbits are currently slaughtered on farm and rabbit meat is placed on the market without having received ante-mortem and post mortem inspection and without being health marked.

4.4. Food safety controls

4.4.1. Inspection tasks

The CCA has developed checklists for performing controls in approved establishments. Controls are in principle carried out twice a year and sometimes more frequently, based on risk evaluation. The CCA has provided training for specific control tasks e.g. ante-mortem inspection and animal welfare during transport.

Observations:

- in several establishments, results of water tests showed the presence of coliforms without proper follow-up by the competent authorities;
- ineligible fresh meat and meat products entered establishments e.g. one meat product establishment received fresh meat from a local butcher;
- beef was present in several establishments without having all the necessary information on the labels;
- the official veterinarian of one slaughter house visited did not follow the instructions on record-keeping of results of ante-mortem inspections despite having attended the training provided. In another slaughterhouse visited, a number of pigs showed lesions not detected during the ante-mortem inspections;
- no system was in place for traceability of meat from emergency slaughter;
- one slaughterhouse visited did not take samples for bacteriological checks on carcasses;
- in two coldstores visited, evidence of unapproved cutting activities was present.

The following deficiencies identified in a FVO mission on animal by products carried out in February 2005 (reference number DG(SANCO)/7567/2005) were not corrected:

- unlabelled containers and incompletely labelled vehicles transporting category 2 and category 3 material.

4.4.2. Meat hygiene requirements

Meat hygiene requirements were largely complied with in most establishments visited.

Observations:

- in some establishments inadequate maintenance mainly related to floors, walls, ceiling and equipment was seen;
- in some establishments insufficient protection against rodents and insects was seen;
- in some establishments cleaning of facilities was insufficient.

4.4.3. HACCP and own check controls

All establishments visited had HACCP plans in place and own checks controls were established.

Observations:

- one meat preparation establishment visited did not inform the district veterinary officer when *Listeria* was detected in the final product;
- in three establishments visited results of water tests showed that the water quality did not meet EU standards. Only in one establishment was this properly followed up, although district veterinary officers concerned were aware of these non-compliant results;
- one slaughterhouse visited did not take samples for bacteriological checks on carcasses as laid down in Commission Decision 2001/471/EC. The district veterinary officer was aware of it without imposing corrective action;
- most HACCP plans seen identified as critical control points steps which are only control points.

4.4.4. Health marking and traceability

The slaughterhouses visited had systems in place to guarantee traceability of carcasses back to individual animals.

Observations:

- in one slaughterhouse visited the CCA could not demonstrate in all cases that meat from emergency slaughter did not enter the EU circuit;
- registers were not always present in establishments visited and, when present, did not always provide a link between in- and outgoing meat;
- in two cold stores visited, fresh beef was seen which was not properly labelled;
- in one of the two cold stores, the system in place and procedures applied did not allow traceability of numerous products e.g. high number of cartons were open, fish, chicken, beef and other fresh meat were packed in cartons with the health mark of a meat product establishment, a high number of cartons were opened and the primary packing of various products did not contain health marks. Milk products were present without being health marked;
- checks by the FVO inspection team in both cold stores revealed deficiencies in establishments having delivered goods to the cold stores, which are demonstrated by the following examples:
 - documents accompanying meat and products upon their arrival did not always mention the approval number of the establishment of origin or were not issued at the establishment of origin but via an intermediate company;
 - fresh pork was found in one cold store which had been produced and packed in a meat product establishment. The CCA took immediately action;

- in one cold store a high number of deficiencies were identified: the presence of unidentified meat, expired meat, meat in re-used boxes, meat which was not correctly labelled, meat with a new expiry date after secondary cutting and fish packed in a carton with the label of a meat product establishment.

4.5. Animal welfare at slaughter

Stunning equipment and other aspects of animal welfare were checked in one slaughterhouse visited and were found to be in compliance with the requirements of Council Directive 93/119/EEC.

4.6. Animal health controls

4.6.1. Eradication programmes

Programmes for the eradication of bovine tuberculosis, bovine brucellosis and ovine and caprine brucellosis have been approved for the period from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2005 by Commission Decision 2004/840/EC, and, as a result, are co-financed.

4.6.1.1. Bovine tuberculosis

As mentioned in a previous report with reference number DG(SANCO)/7183/2004 Cyprus follows Annex B to Council Directive 64/432/EEC regarding tuberculosis testing and all cattle above 6 weeks of age have to be tested annually.

Observations:

- in their reply to the evaluation plan, the CCA stated that no animal has reacted to the single dermal test since testing of cattle above 6 weeks of age began. However, in one district visited one reactor animal was found. A comparative intradermal test carried out on the animal 42 days later gave a negative result.
- on one holding visited not all animals over 6 weeks of age had been tested (male animals were excluded)².
- 514 animals over 6 weeks of age were recorded in the central database as being present on another cattle holding for which the documentation was checked. However:
 - 43 animals were no longer present on the day of testing, having been slaughtered or died more than one month before testing, some nearly 3 months before;
 - additionally for 34 of the 43 animals which were no longer present, no explanation was given;
 - the list printed from the central database was dated June 2005 while testing of the herd started on 02 August 2005. The last testing of

² *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities noted that “due to difficulties in some holdings not all animals over six weeks old have been tested. Consequently these farms will not be assigned the officially free status until all their animals over six weeks old react negatively to two consecutive intradermal tuberculin tests, conducted at an interval of at least six months”.*

animals of the holding took place on 30 August 2005. For some animals tested on 30 August, no test results were available.

- 356 animals over 6 weeks of age were recorded in the central database as being present on a second cattle holding for which the documentation has been checked. However:
 - 14 animals were no longer present (13 of them were confirmed via the central database as having been slaughtered);
 - in addition, 2 animals were recorded as tested on 19 September 2005 despite also having been declared as slaughtered on 15 September 2005;
 - in addition, 1 animal recorded as negative on 22 September 2005 had been declared as slaughtered on 20 September 2005.

4.6.1.2. Bovine brucellosis

The CCA stated that only *Brucella melitensis* has been isolated so far in susceptible species.

Results of brucellosis testing in cattle 2001-2005:

Cattle	N° of herds under the programme	N° of herds tested	N° of herds with one or more reactors	N° of animals under the programme	N° of animals tested	N° of reactor animals
2001	308	308	15	40590	40590	233
2002	317	317	20	31003	31003	358
2003	317	317	25	35872	35872	164
2004	345	345	7	41899	41899	116
2005 (not completed)	341	285	3	41324	32880	21

The CCA has provided instructions to the districts on the test regime for bovine herds for serological sampling and sampling of milk.

The FVO inspection team checked the implementation of the statement of the CCA in their reply to the mission evaluation plan regarding the test regime for bovine herds. The requirements are:

- all bovine animals older than 12 months have to be tested yearly;
- all dairy herds are milk sampled 4 times a year;
- re-examination starts at least one month after slaughter of reactor animal(s).

Observations:

- the number of cases of bovine brucellosis has decreased in recent years;
- conflicting statements from different districts visited have been made regarding the test regime for cattle herds in order to obtain officially-free brucellosis status when no reactors have been detected, and where reactors have been detected during the sero-surveillance test. Several instructions were in circulation. Additionally the CCA could not clarify the precise procedure to be applied;
- not all bovine animals above 12 months were routinely tested;

- no evidence was present that all animals other than milking cows in lactation were tested after detection of a reactor animal in a group of milking cows;
- re-examination of the herd started within three weeks after slaughter of the reactor animal and within three weeks after testing the other animals;
- on documents which accompanied reactor animals for slaughter the following details were omitted:
 - date of transport
 - transporter, and
 - identification of the vehicle used;
- although epidemiological investigations are carried out, these are not carried out in depth in order to trace possible source of infection, e.g. no investigation on possible abortions, no presence of proper floor plan of facilities, holdings and contact holdings;
- for one bovine reactor animal slaughtered on 11 October 2005 but seized on 5 October 2005 no explanation has been provided for where it was kept during this period³;
- some holdings were not tested in 2004, although it was stated that they should be tested annually;
- one cattle herd visited has been declared officially free from brucellosis, but the FVO inspection team found that not all female animals older than 12 months were tested for brucellosis and evidence of consecutive bulk milk sample tests could not be provided;
- at district level no evidence could be provided of supervision of cleaning and disinfection of infected premises;
- absence of updated lists, e.g. of bovine animals registered in the central database, did not facilitate a proper control.

4.6.1.3. Ovine and caprine brucellosis

Results of brucellosis testing in sheep and goats, 2001-2005.

Sheep/goats	N° of flocks under the programme	N° of flocks tested	N° of flocks with one or more reactors)	N° of animals under the programme	N° of animals tested	N° of reactor animals
2001	4319	996	50	637000	85693	1153
2002	4438	4438	252	640000	334085	3006
2003	4007	4007	279	453052	1022467	1385
2004	4059	4059	30	506428	506428	212
2005 (not completed)	4035	747	4	549114	89262	188

The CCA has provided instructions to the districts on the test regime flocks of sheep and goats for serological sampling.

³ *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities noted that “the animal was seized on 11th October 2005, but mistakenly the date in the confiscation form was written the date of the evaluation of the reproductive value of the animal”.*

The FVO inspection team checked the implementation of the statement of the CCA in their reply to the mission evaluation plan regarding the test regime for flocks of sheep and goats:

- all animals over six months have to be tested yearly;
- re-examination starts at least one month after the slaughter of reactor animal(s).

Observations:

- the number of cases of ovine and caprine brucellosis has decreased in recent years;
- for one sheep holding the annual testing was overdue and testing was carried out in the context of pre-movement control;
- no evidence could be provided on the burial of reactor sheep, the means of transport used for transporting cadavers to the burial place, the transporter, the date of burial and the place of burial;
- for movement of sheep from a restricted herd to a slaughterhouse, no special authorisation by the district veterinary officer has been granted. Moreover, at the slaughterhouse visited no systematic check on the health status of the holding of origin is carried out, so that animals from infected flocks entered the normal slaughter process;
- no evidence could be provided that all sheep older than 6 months, registered in the database as being present, had been tested;
- common grazing of sheep was in one case not properly investigated as one of the possible sources of infection or as possible further spread;
- at district level no evidence could be provided of supervision of cleaning and disinfection of infected premises;
- the absence of updated lists i.e. regarding the registration of ovine and caprine animals of the central database did not facilitate a proper control.

4.6.1.4. Laboratories for brucellosis testing

The department of animal health of the NRL and three district laboratories carry out the Rose Bengal Test (RBT) for the annual monitoring programme for bovine brucellosis and ovine and caprine brucellosis. The NRL carries out the confirmation test in case of positive test results on RBT. The NRL has organised in, 2004, a ring test for the three district laboratories involved for RBT.

Observations:

- one district laboratory visited, which carries out the RBT for the brucellosis eradication programme, is not accredited and although it was stated by the CA that good laboratory practice is applied no standard operational procedures have been developed, e.g. for:
 - reception and storage of samples;
 - test methods used;
 - interpretation and reporting of test results; and
 - when samples need to be forwarded to the NRL;

- the district laboratory visited participated in 2004 in a ringtest, organised by the NRL, with favourable results for the RBT.
- according to one district veterinary officer the NRL has carried out an inspection visit to one district laboratory carrying out the Rose Bengal Test. However, no report from this visit could be presented.

4.6.2. *Surveillance programmes*

Cyprus has been recognised as officially-free from enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL) by Commission Decision 2004/320/EC. Checks on EBL on animals over 24 months of age continue for holdings to obtain or maintain officially-free status.

The annual surveillance programme for 2005 is in place for swine vesicular disease, classical swine fever, Aujeszky, PRRS, coronavirus and TGE and brucellosis in domestic pigs. 872 samples have to be taken from 47 holdings.

Animals found dead along the buffer zone to Northern Cyprus and imported pet animals that die during quarantine are tested for rabies.

The CCA stated that a renewed surveillance programme for bluetongue (BT) has been introduced since April 2005. 25 sheep on 23 selected holdings will be sampled and, if negative to the screening test for bluetongue these sheep will be used as sentinel animals and will be tested monthly. Positive samples will be forwarded to an external laboratory for virus isolation. Insect traps are placed. The implementation of the reviewed programme was not checked during this mission.

Observations:

- None of the 834 samples taken at 45 pig holdings for the 2005 sero surveillance programme for the diseases mentioned in domestic pigs has been tested yet⁴;
- one pig holding visited was also approved as a semen collection centre and was trading in live pigs and semen. According to chapter II of Annex B to Council Directive 90/429/EEC samples must be taken regularly for brucellosis and other testing. No evidence could be provided of sampling and the results for brucellosis although certificates for export have been issued;
- the CCA stated that until now no cases of rabies were reported;
- based on information received at the NRL, 5 animals were tested for rabies in 2004 and 3 in 2005. The total number of animals sent in one district however, exceeded the total number of animals tested for 2004 in the whole of Cyprus. Districts visited reported not receiving all test results for rabies;
- at the NRL, the CCA stated that ring tests for bluetongue were never organised and blood samples (except when sero-conversion was detected

⁴ *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities noted that “all 834 samples were tested by the 19th of December 2005”.*

in cattle in November 2003) were not forwarded to external laboratories for confirmation of test results.

4.7. Contingency plans

4.7.1. Plan documentation

4.7.1.1. Diseases covered

Contingency plans for FMD, CSF, BT, AI and ND have been prepared. The plans for FMD and CSF were approved by Commission Decisions 2004/435/EC and 2004/431/EC. The contingency plans for AI and ND were approved by Commission Decision 2004/402/EC.

Observations:

- all contingency plans except that for BT have been recently updated.

4.7.1.2. Content of plans

Observations:

- the manual for CSF present in the NRL was not updated as the amendment introduced by Commission Decision 2002/106/EC was missing;
- the manuals of operation were not updated with regard to local information e.g. on a map present in one local disease control centre (LDCC) the location of all pig farms were not indicated. In another LDCC visited, layer farms were not indicated on the available map;
- burial sites were not identified for outbreaks of FMD, CSF or BT. The burial site of a pig farm visited was not fenced.

4.7.2. Legal provisions and emergency powers

The CCA stated that the EU legislation is covered by the Animal Health Laws 2001 and 2003 (No. 109(1)/2001 and No. 82(1)/2003). Emergency powers are covered by the National Orders. The control of diseases rests with the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment who delegates the direction of control strategies to the Director of Veterinary Services.

4.7.3. Organisation and chain of command in relation to contingency plans

When a state of crisis is declared, the Department of Animal Health and Animal Welfare becomes the national disease control centre and the Head of the Department becomes the official in charge of the centre under direct management of the chief veterinary officer.

According to information received at different levels, district veterinary offices or rural veterinary stations would become LDCCs at the time a herd or flock is officially put under suspicion. In one district visited, the district veterinary officer claimed that the LDCC would be activated only upon

confirmation of the presence of the disease⁵. The LDCC was not activated when ND was possibly the cause of deaths in two pigeon lofts at the end of 2004⁶.

4.7.4. Provision of resources

Equipment was generally available, including culling equipment and heavy duty signposting for holdings and zones under restriction.

Observations:

- some shortcomings were identified e.g. lack of availability of PBS solution, although described in the AI plan.

4.7.5. Laboratories

In their reply to recommendation 8.2 of the previous report with reference number DG(SANCO)/7183/2004 “to proceed with the accreditation of the Department of Animal Health in the national reference laboratory (NRL)” the CCA gave a satisfactory response. The implementation of the guarantees given has been verified.

The department of animal health of the NRL carries out tests or forwards samples to external laboratories for testing of diseases covered by contingency plans. It has biosecurity level 2 and does not deal with live virus. The CCA stated that in case of virus isolation (FMD, CSF and BT), samples will be sent abroad and contracts with external laboratories have been established. For ND and AI, virus isolates are sent to the Community Reference Laboratory for typing as the NRL does not carry out intra-cerebral pathogenicity index or intra-venous pathogenicity index testing.

Observations:

- the accreditation of the department of animal health of the NRL has not progressed. Accreditation is now targeted for 2008:
 - standard operational procedures have not been established for all test methods or are have not yet been validated;
 - anonymity of samples is not guaranteed;
 - temperature records are not kept of the freezer where samples are stored pending testing. The current pressure on testing samples for AI and ND has caused backlogs for other analyses and monitoring programmes.
- the capacity of laboratory is limited from 600 tests (in peacetime) to maximum 1,200 tests per day in case of a disease outbreak;

⁵ *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities noted that “according to all contingency plans LDCC is activated upon suspicion of the disease and not after its confirmation”.*

⁶ *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities stated that “the tentative diagnosis was Pigeon Paramyxovirus-1 and not Newcastle, a disease which does not fall in the current EU definition. The disease is not unusual in pigeons in Cyprus (since 1984). For these reasons the LDCC was not activated.”*

- no proper arrangements have been established to define the tasks of a private laboratory involved in official testing and to avoid possible conflicts of interest;
- two samples originating from neighbouring pigeon lofts clinically suspected of pigeon PMV-1 were investigated only after a delay of several weeks;
- SPF eggs are not used, either for AI or ND testing. For the latter, in the past the NRL used 60 eggs per week purchased in a remote backyard flock of some 20 hens, which was tested every 6 months for ND antibodies. No contingency plan existed for the event where this flock would be contaminated or vaccinated or would not be able to supply eggs due to other causes;
- in spite of the lack of a contingency plan for this situation, the NRL managed to reach a significantly increased capacity, needed for the surveys for AI, by purchasing incubated eggs from a commercial hatchery in the neighbourhood. Flocks of origin were assumed to be negative for AI as all breeding flocks in Cyprus had been tested annually for AI antibodies. No evidence of these tests could be provided to the mission team. As all breeders in Cyprus are vaccinated routinely for ND, these eggs would not be used for ND testing;
- in view of the limited capacity for virus isolation tests in the NRL, the Chief Veterinary Officer instructed the district veterinary officers on 2 November 2005, after consultation of the Central Reference Laboratory, that they should preferably send only samples from suspected cases, from aquatic birds and from dead birds found near shorelines;
- according to information received, red blood cells to be used in haemagglutination tests were sourced from non-tested hens kept in the laboratory, which is not in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Directives.

4.7.6. *Animal tracing – pre and post outbreak*

See chapter 4.2.1 on holding registration, animal identification and movement controls.

4.7.7. *Provisions for emergency vaccination*

The contingency plans include the possibility of emergency vaccination after informing the EC or after getting its approval.

Observations:

- the plans does not provide details of the estimated quantity of vaccines required in the event of the reinstatement of an emergency vaccination strategy⁷.

⁷ *In their response to the draft report the Cypriot Authorities noted that “it is very difficult to estimate the quantity of needed vaccine doses in the case of an outbreak, depending on the infected area and the number of animals has to be vaccinated. This is the main reason that the estimated quantity of vaccine doses is not provided in the contingency plans”.*

4.7.8. Training and awareness of programmes, simulation

Specific training of staff for disease outbreaks of AI and ND has been provided and seminars for other diseases have been organised. Leaflets with information on different diseases are available and the CCA stated that these were sent to the different holdings.

Observations:

- so far no real time alert simulation has been carried out for AI, ND and CSF;
- however, a general meeting with all relevant services possibly involved in an AI outbreak, such as the district veterinary officers, police, fire brigades, took place in October 2005 and was documented;
- in one district visited the information obtained at the seminar on FMD and CSF has not been forwarded to local staff;
- at holdings visited a difference was noted between awareness of diseases by keepers of poultry and keepers of other animals: the keeper of a cattle holding visited was not aware of symptoms of FMD nor was the keeper of a goat holding visited. The latter was also not aware of the symptoms of BT. At the poultry farms visited the keepers were well informed about the different diseases;
- a lack of, or a low level of, biosecurity was noticed in farms visited even in poultry farms located in “defined risk areas”; these had not been noticed by the CA who had allegedly visited the farms several times in previous months.

4.7.9. Additional issues regarding Highly Pathogen Avian Influenza

The team received detailed information regarding all measures taken in view of the increased preparedness for AI. Copies of all relevant documents were received and evidence of the implementation of the measures was seen on the spot.

In particular, the CCA has taken the necessary administrative steps to implement the different Commission Decisions taken in this context. The necessary documents were available to the team to demonstrate this.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Competent authority performance

No major changes have been noticed in the structure and organisation of the competent authorities.

The animal health department of the NRL remains understaffed.

5.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

Although recommended in a previous mission (recommendation 8.3 of report reference DG(SANCO)/7183/2004), the CCA did not implement criteria for checks on bovine identification, on the basis of risk analysis, in accordance

with Regulation (EC) No. 1082/2003. Sanctions are still not applied when irregularities are detected.

Incomplete information in the central animal database on notifications of movement of animals, births and deaths, the absence of holding registers on sheep holdings and the incomplete registration of the total number of unidentifiable sheep and their holdings of origin do not contribute to effective tracing of movements of animals and do not facilitate a correct management of animal health surveillance programmes.

5.3. Establishment upgrading and approval

Significant overall progress has been made in relation to the structure, lay-out and equipment of food establishments.

The implementation of Council Directive 91/495/EEC has not been completed regarding approval of rabbit slaughterhouses and control procedures.

5.4. Food safety controls

A number of deficiencies regarding HACPP and own check controls were identified, some serious, in particular regarding the quality of potable water, without being properly followed-up by the competent authorities.

Traceability of products could not be guaranteed in all cases, in particular in one cold store visited. The CCA could not provide evidence that beef from emergency slaughtered animals did not enter the EU chain.

5.5. Animal welfare at slaughter

No deficiencies were observed during this mission.

5.6. Animal health controls

Although progress in the eradication of brucellosis has been made, a number of weaknesses have been identified which can jeopardise the eradication of bovine, ovine and caprine brucellosis.

Instructions on the current test regime for brucellosis could not be clarified during the inspection visits.

According to statistics provided 100 % of herds and cattle participating in the brucellosis control programme were tested in 2001 – 2004 and 100 % of flocks and sheep and/or goats participating in the programme were tested in 2004. However checks of documentation could not justify these statistics.

The statement of the CCA that all animals above 6 weeks of age are tested for tuberculosis could not be confirmed during the mission.

The serological sampling in place in a semen collection centre for pigs was not in conformity with the requirements laid down in Council Directive 90/429/EEC (chapter II of Annex B).

5.7. Contingency plans

Contingency plans for AI and ND were further developed than those for CSF, FMD and BT.

Accreditation is still in its initial phase and is now targeted for 2008. The NRL is still in the initial phase of implementing the guarantees given previously on accreditation.

Taking into account the following factors:

- the limited capacity and current number of staff of the NRL,
- insufficient adaptation of contingency plans to local conditions as required in Council Directives 2001/89/EC, 2003/85/EC and 2000/75/EC,
- limited training, simulation and awareness in particular for FMD, CSF and BT as required in Council Directives 2003/85/EC, 2001/89/EC and 2000/75/EC and
- the level of biosecurity measures currently in place,

Cyprus could have difficulties in dealing with a major outbreak of FMD, CSF or BT.

6. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 24 November 2005 with the central competent authority, the veterinary service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The representatives took note of the main findings and conclusions and informed the mission team of actions planned or already taken regarding certain public health aspects.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF CYPRUS

- (1) To complete the implementation of the approval of rabbit slaughterhouses and control procedures on the production of rabbit meat.
- (2) To ensure that the lay-out and structure of food producing establishments are in compliance with relevant EU legislation.
- (3) To ensure that proper systems of traceability of products of animal origin are in place in food producing establishments.
- (4) To ensure that own check controls are carried out in food producing establishments in a satisfactory way and corrective action is undertaken where deficiencies are detected.
- (5) To ensure the accurate and prompt updating of central animal database and incorporate system tools required for full traceability of animals in case of a disease outbreak.

- (6) To implement criteria for checks on bovine identification, on the basis of risk analysis, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1082/2003.
- (7) To introduce a system of sanctions in respect of irregularities detected during checks on animal identification.
- (8) To ensure that clear instructions on the test regime for brucellosis are in place in all districts.
- (9) To improve the control on the implementation of animal health control programmes in place, in particular brucellosis and tuberculosis.
- (10) To ensure that the NRL, in particular the animal health department, is properly structured and staffed in order to enable the NRL to carry out all its tasks in a satisfactory way.
- (11) To adapt the contingency plans, in particular FMD, CSF and BT, to the local conditions as required by Council Directives 2003/85/EC, 2001/89/EC and 2000/75/EC.
- (12) To ensure that training, simulation exercises and awareness in relation to contingency plans, in particular FMD, CSF and BT, are carried out regularly as required by Council Directives 2003/85/EC, 2001/89/EC and 2000/75/EC.

An action plan with a timetable to address the recommendations in the report should be forwarded to the Commission Services within one month of receiving the final report.

ADDENDUM

In their response to the draft report, the Cypriot authorities have stated that all recommendations have been taken into account and corrective measures have been implemented.

Their response to several observations of the report includes some initial information on actions planned and being undertaken.

ANNEX - LEGAL REFERENCES

COMMUNITY LEGISLATION CITED IN THIS REPORT

Legal acts cited in this Annex refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

European legislation	OJ	Title
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 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 This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
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. This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
Council Directive 77/391/EEC	L 145, 13.06.1977, p. 44	Council Directive 77/391/EEC of 17 May 1977 introducing Community measures for the eradication of brucellosis, tuberculosis and leucosis in cattle
Council Directive 90/429/EEC	L 224, 18.08.1990, p.62	Council Directive 90/429/EEC of 26 June 1990 laying down the animal health requirements applicable to intra-Community trade in and imports of semen of domestic animals of the porcine species
Council Directive 91/494/EEC	L 268, 24.09.1991, p. 35	Council Directive 91/494/EEC on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in and imports from third countries of fresh poultry meat This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
Council Directive 91/495/EEC	L 268, 24.09.1991, p. 41	Council Directive 91/495/EEC of 27 November 1990 concerning public health and animal health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of rabbit meat and farmed game meat This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
Council Directive 92/40/EEC	L 167, 22.06.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/40/EEC of 19 May 1992 introducing Community measures for the control of avian influenza
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 This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
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

European legislation	OJ	Title
		This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
Council Directive 92/66/EEC	L 260, 05.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/66/EEC of 14 July 1992 introducing Community measures for the control of Newcastle disease
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
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 This Directive has been repealed by Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 from 01.01.2006.
Council Directive 2000/75/EC	L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 75	Council Directive 2000/75/EC of 20 November 2000 laying down specific provisions for the control and eradication of bluetongue
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
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 Regulation (EC) No. 21/2004	L 5, 09.01.2004, p. 8	Council Regulation (EC) No. 21/2004 of 17 December 2003 establishing a system for identification and registration of ovine and caprine animals and amending Regulation (EC) No. 1782/2003 and Directive 92/102/EEC and 64/432/EEC
Regulation (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
Regulation (EC) No 853/2004	L 139, 30.04.2004, p. 55 corrected and re-published in L 226, 25.06.2004, p. 22	Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin
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 Decision 98/139/EC	L 038, 12.02.1998, p. 10	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 Member States

European legislation	OJ	Title
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
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
Commission Decision 2004/320/EC	L 102, 07.04.2004, p. 75	Commission Decision 2004/320/EC of 31 March 2004 amending Decisions 93/52/EEC, 2001/618/EC and 2003/467/EC as regards the status of acceding countries with regard to brucellosis (<i>B. melitensis</i>), Aujeszky's disease, enzootic bovine leucosis, bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis and of France with regard to Aujeszky's disease
Commission Decision 2004/402/EC	L 123, 27.04.2004, p. 111	Commission Decision 2004/402/EC of 26 April 2004 approving contingency plans for the control of avian influenza and Newcastle disease
Commission Decision 2004/431/EC	L 154, 30.04.2004, p. 40 corrected and republished in L 189, 27.05.2004, p. 31	Commission Decision 2004/431/EC of 29 April 2004 approving certain contingency plans for the control of classical swine fever
Commission Decision 2004/435/EC	L 154, 30.04.2004, p. 57 corrected and republished in L 189, 27.05.2004, p.45	Commission Decision 2004/435/EC of 29 April 2004 approving certain contingency plans for the control of foot-and-mouth disease
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