EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/7609/2005 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION

CARRIED OUT IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

FROM 3 TO 14 OCTOBER 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 clarifications provided by the Slovakian 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
CA(s)	Competent Authority (Authorities)
CCA(s)	Central Competent Authority (Authorities)
CDB	Central Database
CRL	Community Reference Laboratory
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DVO	District Veterinary Officer
DVFA	District Veterinary and Food Administration
EU	European Union
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
ND	Newcastle Disease
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
NPVP	National Plan for Veterinary Protection
OV	Official Veterinarian
RVFA	Regional Veterinary and Food Administration
SBI	State Breeding Institute
SVFA	State Veterinary and Food Administration
TAIEX	Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place from 3 to 14 October 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 State Veterinary and Food Administration.

An opening meeting was held on 3 October 2005 in Bratislava 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 addition, the mission sought an update of any actions recently undertaken by the CCA to cope with the current threat of introduction of Avian Influenza from some Asiatic countries or regions.

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

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	4	SVFA for the opening, closing, and intermediary meetings and the National Disease Control Centre
	Regional	10	RVFA offices, of which four visited as Local Disease Control Centres
	District	15	10 of which at establishments

FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS		Comments
Slaughterhouses	9	5 high capacity and 4 low capacity, some with integrated cutting and meat products departments
Game meat premises	3	2 wild game processing houses, 1 game collecting centre
Cutting premises	8	7 integrated with slaughterhouses and 1 stand-alone, integrated with a meat product department
Meat product premises	4	All integrated with fresh meat establishments
Milk processing premises	4	2 high capacity and 2 medium capacity

LABORATORY VISITS		Comments
Central/reference	1	National reference laboratory

LIVE ANIMAL CONTROL SITES		Comments
Farms	18	cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry and mixed farms
Assembly centre for live animals	1	
Dealer	1	

3. BACKGROUND

Since the accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU, one FVO mission (DG(SANCO)/7180/2004)[1] has been carried out to review the upgrading of certain classes of food processing establishments and animal health controls. Prior to accession, the FVO carried out missions in the framework of the accession preparations, in order to assist and monitor progress with the adoption of the relevant EU requirements. In response to recommendations made following these missions, the CCA gave satisfactory assurances.

4. LEGAL BASIS

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 of the Council, 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 of 4 February 1998.

[1] A copy of the report may be downloaded from http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fvo/index_en.htm

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

5. MAIN FINDINGS

5.1. Competent authority performance

The Veterinary Act No. 488/02 establishes three levels of official control:

– State Veterinary and Food Administration (SVFA)

– Regional Veterinary and Food administration (RVFA)

– District Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA)

Additional information is available on the SVFA website: http://www.svssr.sk.

The National Plan for Veterinary Protection (NPVP), which is prepared annually by the SVFA, defines the animal health and food safety activities that the DVFA must carry out in all districts. Within the animal health sector, each District Veterinary Officer (DVO) is responsible for translating the NPVP into targets (e.g. number of herds or animals to be tested), which take account of the animal population within the District. Based on these targets the DVFA prepares annual contracts with private veterinary practitioners in the district, who carry out the majority of the official animal health activities.

Within the food safety sector, the DVFA carries out regular supervisory visits in high and low capacity establishments. Additional visits to establishments are also carried out in relation to e.g.: export certification, consumer complaints or new approvals. Standardised checklists are used for all inspections.

Observations

- An RVFA inspection of a DVFA office concerning implementation of the NPVP failed to detect obvious shortcomings in the system for reporting animal tests.

- Despite having access to reports summarising the current situation regarding completion of the NPVP, RVFA officials could not explain significant differences in performance between DVFA offices.

- Evidence was received in most districts visited that the food safety inspection visits had been carried out. However in one district visited no reports could be presented after April this year. The explanation was given that reports only had to be prepared in cases where shortcomings were identified.

5.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movements

5.2.1. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

The DVFA is responsible for enforcing animal identification requirements and the State Breeding Institute (SBI) is responsible for maintaining the central database (CDB).

The following table summarises the information available on the registration of holdings and animals:

	Registered holdings	Registered population	Estimated population
Cattle	20,233	550,510	540,146
Sheep	4,159	288,131	321,227
Goats	522	3,211	39,012
Pigs	6,338	916,328	1,149,282

Data in the first two columns of the table was extracted from the central database on 30 September 2005. The estimated population is based on FAOSTAT[2] data for 2004.

Before cattle, sheep, goats or pigs may move from a holding they must undergo a clinical inspection and identification check carried out by a Veterinary Inspector or private veterinary practitioner. Authorisation to move is withheld if animals are incorrectly identified or otherwise are in breach of identification and registration requirements.

The cattle database has been enhanced by the inclusion of logical controls which detect inconsistencies in data entered (for example, a report of an animal being moved on a date before it was reported to have been born).

Since the beginning of July 2005 all commercial sheep must be identified. Breeding animals must be identified with two matching eartags or an eartag plus a matching tattoo, and lambs for slaughter must be identified with a single button tag applied immediately before departure. In all cases the first means of identification must be applied within 40 days of birth and a second means of identification must be applied if the animal is retained beyond six months of age. Keepers must notify the birth, movement or death of each individual sheep to the CDB on a weekly basis.

Commission Decision 2004/775/EC[3] permitted the Slovak Republic to omit from the national registers keepers who keep one pig intended for personal consumption. This derogation expired on 30 June 2005, although the CCA explained that an application for a renewal of the derogation in respect of pigs has been made.

Keepers are obliged to notify details of the movement of pigs from the holding at least once each month.

Observations

- Although the number of registered pig holdings has increased, evidence from the census of holdings carried out in the region surrounding the recent CSF outbreak indicated that many small holdings (some containing 2 or more pigs)[4] had not yet

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2 http://faostat.fao.org/

3 References to Community legislation cited in this report are given in the Annex.

4 ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that authorisation has been granted to exclude natural persons who keep one single pig which is intended for their own use or consumption from the list of holdings required by Article 3(1) of Council Directive 92/102/EEC.***

been registered. The initial census of pig farms in the surveillance and protection zones, which was based on the holdings included in the central register, found a total of 3 large commercial farms (comprising 3,026 pigs) and 252 small holdings (comprising approximately 1,000 pigs in total). A follow up census completed 21 days later with the assistance of the local authorities found a total of 315 small holdings, on which 1,238 pigs were kept.

- In almost all cases examined, holding registers were found to be maintained in accordance with the requirements and evidence was provided that the vast majority of cattle notifications (birth, death and movement) were made by farmers correctly and within the prescribed time limits.

- Many examples were found where cattle movement data that appeared to have been notified correctly were recorded incorrectly on the CDB or were not available on the CDB more than one week after the notification was sent. In one case, incorrect movement dates were recorded for four animals from a batch of 44 animals slaughtered at an abattoir and for which a notification was sent to the CDB.[5]

- Neither the template for the sheep and goat holding registers nor the authorised movement document provides space for data concerning the means of transport and the transporter.

Controls on holdings

The annual report prepared on the results of controls made during 2004 in the bovine sector regarding Community provisions for identification and registration was submitted to the Commission Services in June. It shows that 1,291 holdings of the 12,038 registered holdings (i.e. more than 10%) were inspected.

Although DVFA offices have been instructed to register all sheep holdings within their districts, so far no instructions have been issued regarding official inspections of these holdings to verify that they comply with identification requirements.

Observations

- Evidence was provided that inspections were carried out regularly on cattle holdings by Veterinary Inspectors from the DVFA. One case was seen in which the Inspector verified on the spot that a discrepancy found during an earlier inspection had subsequently been corrected.

- Examples were given where authorisation to move cattle was routinely not given unless the animals were properly identified and accompanied by a valid passport.

- Copies of inspection reports that reveal infringements of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 were not sent to the competent authorities responsible for agricultural support schemes.

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[5] ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that it is impossible to determine on the farm or at the slaughterhouse whether the movement notification documents are completed and sent to the CDB in the right form.***

5.3. Establishment upgrading and approval

The process of up-grading establishments is almost completed. Only one establishment still operates under transitional approval and is listed as such in Commission Decision 2005/661/EC.

The SVFA publishes on its web site (www.svssr.sk/) the list of approved establishments, including those under transitional approval, and the list of registered collection centres for wild game. The lists correspond with the data kept at Regional Offices.

Observations

- Approval procedures were followed and in all cases the activities carried out by the establishments were in accordance with the activities mentioned in the approval document.

- In general, the layout of the establishments visited was adequate. However, in the red meat sector, the layout for the bovine slaughter lines in two low capacity establishments, including the post-mortem facilities in one of them, were inadequate. The approval of another establishment had been granted without consideration of likely cross flows between fresh meat and meat products in the dispatch area.

- An alternative sterilisation method (hyperchlorination) had been accepted for use in one establishment without prior evaluation of the method.

- Lack of sterilisation equipment for the leg cutter was noted by the mission team in one cattle slaughterhouse.

- In one meat establishment visited, there were no facilities for spare equipment, which was stored unprotected in a yard.

5.4. Food safety controls

5.4.1. Inspection tasks and supervision

The DVFA is responsible for the direct supervision of all establishments and OVs are permanently present in slaughterhouses and high capacity cutting plants. Other food processing establishments are visited regularly.

The ante-mortem inspection of animals is carried out by official veterinarians (OVs). The post-mortem inspection was carried out both by OVs and auxiliaries.

Observations

- Ante-mortem inspection was well-documented, including controls of health and movement documents, identification, passports of bovine animals, pen cards and results of the examination.

- Post-mortem inspection was carried out in a satisfactory way and there was a good correlation between carcases and corresponding offal.

- In the wild game processing houses the OVs carried out checks on arrival of the wild game including documentary checks, checks of the place of origin, time of

killing, arrival time and hunters' declarations concerning health status. The controls were seen to be well-documented.

- Trichina testing was carried out in all pig slaughterhouses visited using either the magnetic stirrer method or the trichinoscopic examination method (in low capacity slaughterhouses). In the wild game establishment documentation for testing of wild boars in the collection centre was received or samples were taken at arrival. Health marking was only done after receiving the result of the test.

- In respect of controls on the operators' own check programmes, variation was noted between establishments visited. While in most establishments documentary evidence was seen, in some cases no documentation was kept.

- In some cases the frequencies of bacteriological testing of carcasses had been reduced without prior agreement with the OV and without intervention.

5.4.2. Meat hygiene requirements

Meat hygiene requirements were largely complied with in the majority of the establishments visited. Inspection protocols were regularly filled in by the OV.

Observations

In general maintenance and operational hygiene in the establishments visited was adequate. However, some deficiencies were noted:

- In some meat establishments, maintenance problems were seen, mainly related to the floor, walls, and rusty equipment;

- Problems were noted in relation to maintenance of floors in one milk establishment although a plan for their repair was presented;

- Lack of sterilising equipment was noted in one establishment (see section 4.3 above) and some sterilizers were not in operation during slaughter;

- Ventilation problems resulting in condensation were seen in some chilling rooms;

- All establishments visited had annual programmes for water control in place. The results of analyses were satisfactory in all but one case, in which evidence of effective follow up was presented;

- Annual programmes for pest control were in place in all the establishments visited. However, flies were seen in some establishments. Insufficient protection from insects was noted in two establishments and some doors were not rodent proof. Those shortcomings had not been noted either by the external pest control company or by the official control;

- Programmes for cleaning and disinfection of premises and equipment were in place in all establishments visited and the results presented were satisfactory;

- Temperature registers were available in all the establishments visited both in computerised programmes and print out records.

5.4.3. HACCP

Programmes in accordance with the HACCP principles were available in all establishments visited. In particular, in fresh meat establishments HACCP based plans were in line with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC. Evidence of supervision by OVs was seen.

Observations

- In one slaughterhouse, faecal contamination was seen on many beef carcases kept in chilling rooms. The OV stated that laboratory results for microbiological parameters were in compliance with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC;

- In one establishment there was no evidence that marginal results in the bacteriological control of carcasses were properly investigated;

- The risk of faecal contamination due to incorrect operational procedures during skinning was noted in one bovine slaughter line. This had not been detected by the OV;

- CCP monitoring records were not always available and procedures for corrective actions were not always described;

- In one establishment visited, the CCPs identified did not reflect the actual procedure applied.

5.4.4. Traceability

Traceability of products was checked in some of the high capacity meat establishments and in the wild game processing houses visited.

Observations

- In all the establishments traceability systems were in place. Carcases or quarters could be traced back to the owner of the animal (ear tag number on the commercial label was seen). Final products in the cutting department could be traced back to 1-3 days of slaughter;

- In the game sector the system was based on the serially numbered seal applied to the carcase, combined with the hunter's declaration and the register kept in the establishment on incoming game. In the processing house a register was kept on carcases entering the cutting room on a specific production day and on carcases sent to other processing houses in skin. Final product in the cutting department was identified by the production date.

5.5. Welfare at slaughter

Stunning equipment was checked in all slaughterhouses visited. It was found to be in compliance with Council Directive 93/119/EC.

Observations

- Facilities for restraint of animals were available and spare stunning equipment (captive bolt) was always present within the range of the operator.

- The electrical stunning equipment in one pig slaughterhouse did not have a device indicating the voltage and current.

5.6. Animal health controls

5.6.1. Collection centres for live animals

The RVFA is responsible for approval of collection centres, including assembly centres approved for intra-Community trade. The complete register of collection centres is kept at Central level.

Observations

- In the assembly centre visited, the approval included livestock buildings that would be used to isolate suspect animals if the need arose but that were unsuitable for the purpose;

- The equipment available for the cleaning and disinfection of buildings and vehicles was inadequate. This had not been noted by the OV.

5.6.2. Eradication Programmes

Bovine tuberculosis (TB), brucellosis and enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL)

The Slovak Republic is recognised as being officially free from bovine TB and bovine brucellosis (*B. abortus*). A request to be recognised as being officially free from EBL was presented to the Commission Services in June 2005. As a result, the requirement to test all herds annually for these diseases was relaxed in 2005. The NPVP now requires annual testing of all eligible animals over 24 months of age in 100% of small holdings and in 30% of commercial holdings, which are randomly selected by the DVFA.

Observations

- In two DVFAs, TB test reports for holdings with a large number of animals did not record any increase in skin thickness measurement between injection and reading of the test. The DVO had not considered this to be unusual;

- In one DVFA, cases were found of cows which had aborted being slaughtered before the second post-abortion brucellosis test had been completed. No further investigation of the herd was carried out in any of these cases.

Ovine brucellosis

Commission Decision 2004/320/EC recognised the Slovak Republic as being official free of ovine brucellosis (*B. melitensis*).

According to the NPVP, all sheep flocks are tested annually, with 5% of ewes over six months of age and all the rams in each flock being tested. All cases of abortion must be notified and investigated.

Observations

- On all sheep farms visited, most of which kept a large number of ewes, no cases of abortion or stillborn animals had been notified to the CVFA in 2005. The district officials had not considered this to be unusual.

Classical Swine Fever (CSF)

Pigs moving between holdings anywhere within the country must undergo 30 days quarantine before joining the receiving herd. The pigs are also tested for CSF during quarantine and are only released if the laboratory results are satisfactory. In addition, if pigs are moving from the infected area they must undergo pre-movement clinical inspection and serological testing for CSF, and may not move to another Member State. The OV carrying out pre-movement inspection of animals routinely checks that the transport vehicle has been cleaned and disinfected. There are no pig semen collection centres in the Slovak Republic approved for intra-Community trade.

The NPVP requires 100% of boars killed or found dead in the infected zone to be sampled. The same rule applies to the monitoring area, which is established around the vaccination zone, so as to ensure early detection of emerging CSF. Elsewhere, the proportion of the hunted population to be tested is decided regionally, but is at least 20%.

During 2004 a total of 23,161 wild boar deaths (animals shot plus animal found dead) were recorded. Surveillance was carried out as follows:

Surveillance in 2004			
Detection of antibodies		Detection of virus	
Examined	Positive	examined	positive
12,965	616	15,337	11

Note: So far, no case of CSF in wild boars has been detected during 2005.

Hunting is strictly licensed, with a numbered seal being applied to each shot boar. In this way, accurate information is obtained on the number and location of animals killed and sampled. Hunters are obliged to collect and submit the samples to the DVFA and receive training on the procedures they must follow.

National legislation (Ordinance No. 311/2003) requires wild game intended for sale or for personal consumption to be brought to a registered collection centre or approved processing establishment within 12 hours of killing. Wild boar carcases must remain in the collection centre until the result of sampling is received from the NRL. If an animal is found to be virologically positive it must be destroyed and the hunting associations are instructed to intensify hunting in the area. An Ordinance issued at the end of 2004 prohibits trade of wild boar meat originating from the infected zone.

Plans for the eradication of CSF in feral pigs and the emergency vaccination of such pigs in certain districts were approved by Commission Decision 2005/59/EC.

Observations

- The quarantine premises visited were located on a totally separate holding from the main farm (several km apart). The mission team was informed that this is the case for all breeding holdings;

- Evidence was provided that DVFA supervised the quarantine, pre-movement clinical inspection and serological testing of pigs leaving the infected area;

- The programme for vaccination of CSF in wild boars in the infected zone is in place and running as scheduled. Hunters actively participate in the wild boar vaccination campaign and their awareness of purpose of the campaign was good.

5.7. Contingency Plans

The contingency 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.

The National Disease Control Centre (NDCC) and the Local Disease Control Centres (LDCC) are responsible for the organisation of the emergency veterinary measures and co-ordination of activities with relevant institutions (army, police, fire brigade and municipalities).

The manuals of procedure describe the legal bases, the chain of command and the actions to be taken in case of suspicion and confirmation of disease.

One group of experts has been established at national level, equipped with sampling and communication equipment and expert groups have been established in each LDCC.

The National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for FMD, CSF, ND and AI is located at the State Veterinary Institute of Zvolen. The serological and virological tests are performed according to the OIE standard methods. The laboratory participates regularly in ring-tests organised by the relevant Community Reference Laboratory (CRL).

In the CSF plan it is stated that the NRL can carry out 3,000 serological and 1,200 virological tests per week. These capacities can be increased twofold within two weeks. The plans for ND and AI do not provide an equivalent estimate for the diagnostic capacity of the laboratory to deal with viral diseases of poultry.

According to the CCA the rendering capacity is considered to be sufficient to cope with minor outbreaks not covering the whole country.

The plans for mammal diseases consider the possibility of emergency vaccination and are supported by contracts with private companies for the supply of vaccines.

Observations

The contingency plans contained the required information, with a few minor shortcomings:

- The manuals included in the plans for mammal diseases do not provide:

- Specific instructions in the case that control zones extend beyond the national borders;

- Guidance on defining the limits of the control zones taking account of administrative boundaries and natural barriers;[6]

- Realistic instructions for displaying geographical information on holdings within the protection and surveillance zones on the surveillance map. In the case of the recent outbreak, the number of holdings was too great to fit on the most detailed map that was available.[7]

- The following points were noticed in both the AI and ND plans:

- Some references are made to terminology used in plans for infectious diseases in mammals which are not applicable to birds;

- Although in the plan the only method of disposing of carcases mentioned is rendering, in the manual of instructions several other methods are also described.

- Contingency plans for CSF, FMD, AI and ND based on the national template but duly updated with regard to local information were available in all DVFA offices and slaughterhouses visited and even in farms, in the case of AI;

- The emergency equipment provided for the LDCC was available and properly maintained in all but one DVO visited, in which the probang was not available;

- The plans refer separately to an expert group and an epizootological team, which operate at LDCC level. The duties of these teams seem to overlap, making it unclear who is responsible for epidemiological activities during an outbreak;[8]

- A standardised epidemiological questionnaire is available for FMD and CSF but not for ND and AI;

- The mission team estimated that the laboratory could currently handle a maximum of 200 avian virology samples per month. This is based on the current monthly supply of 360 SPF eggs and the size of the egg incubator (800 egg capacity);

- Although the Laboratory is routinely supplied with SPF eggs, no special provisions for additional emergency supplies are in place and it was not clear whether the laboratory would be able to obtain an adequate supply of SPF needed in the event of an AI or ND epidemic, as required by Annex III, Chapter 2 of Council Directive 92/40/EEC;

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[6] ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that information in the CP concerning outbreaks extending beyond national boundaries and the delimitation of control zones will be amended.***

[7] ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that the Veterinary Geographical Information System (GIS) is in the first phase of operation and that it can now be used to identify the holdings within protection and surveillance zones.***

[8] ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that the information in the CP concerning the epizootological and expert groups will be clarified.***

- For the emergency killing of poultry the CA proposes to use skips filled with carbon dioxide. The slaughtering capacity using this method was calculated during the depopulation of a *Salmonella*-infected farm. On that occasion it took two weeks to slaughter a flock of less than 40,000 birds;

- No contracts for the supply of AI vaccines have been signed with any company. In the event of a decision to vaccinate it would take at least 3 months to have sufficient vaccine available;

- The mission team visited the premises on which the last CSF outbreak occurred and reviewed the documents available at the LDCC and the NRL. A coherent record was available of all the actions taken, which were in accordance with the provisions of the contingency plan.

- Simulation exercises have been organized by TAIEX in 2002 for FMD and in 2004 for poultry diseases. The State Veterinary Institute of Zvolen provided training to officials responsible for the collection and despatch of samples. A special training session was organised in 2005 for staff working at BIPs, where AI was in particular discussed. The civil protection agencies have also organized simulation exercises in collaboration with the army and other relevant organization;

- In the districts and regions visited, the knowledge of the contents and provision of contingency plan was very good. Videos and other training material have been prepared by the SVFA and are available at local level. Several meetings were held since March involving all levels of the CAs to direct how awareness of AI among stakeholders could be raised. Meetings on AI were held with ornithological groups and mass media were used to disseminate information on AI;

- The operators in establishments and holdings showed a good level of awareness with regards to risks and actions to be taken in case of suspicion. Awareness concerning AI has been, in particular, increased by the distribution of the contingency plans at holding level;

- In poultry holdings, most farms have an agreement with their workers that they should not keep poultry at home and require them to change clothes when entering the farm. However, shortcomings where noticed on the use of foot bath at the entrance of poultry houses which were not always properly set up and not always used by the workers. Furthermore no instructions were found in the farms on movement control of vehicles entering or leaving the farms;

- Although flock records were maintained on the poultry farms visited, they did not include data on drinking water consumption.

6. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting with the CCA was held on 14 October 2005 at which the inspection team presented the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the mission. The CCA took note of these and expressed their willingness to correct the shortcomings observed.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Competent authorities performance

In general, the monitoring programme put in place by the CA to supervise the different levels of the services was respected. However, shortcomings were not always effectively detected or corrected.

7.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

The overall system for holding registration, animal identification and movement controls is in place and, in general, works effectively.

For all species, the number of registered holdings has increased. Nevertheless, significant numbers of small pig and goat holdings appear to be unregistered.

Keepers fulfil their obligations to identify animals and to register and notify their births, movements and deaths.

The national bovine database generally complies with Council Regulation (EC) 1760/2000. However, entry of the data in the CDB is often delayed.

The system for identification and registration of sheep and goats generally complies with Council Regulation (EC) 21/2004.

Although identification controls on bovine holdings are carried out in accordance with the requirements of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1082/2003, the results of these inspections are not reported as required to the agencies responsible for the payment of agricultural premiums.

7.3. Establishments upgrading and approval

In general the upgrading process has been well-managed. Approval procedures have been followed and were well-documented in all establishments visited. Nevertheless a few establishments had been approved despite deficiencies in structure and layout.

7.4. Food safety controls

In general inspection tasks were carried out in a satisfactory way, in particular, in relation to ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection. 100 % testing was carried out for *Trichinella spiralis* in the establishments including for wild boars in the game sector.

Variation was seen between establishments in respect of the supervision of HACCP and own check programmes, in particular, in relation to the nature of records that were considered acceptable and the extent to which the OV ensured that the check programmes were properly implemented.

Systems for own controls were in place in all establishments visited. In general the systems were well-managed by the operators. However the HACCP plans did not always reflect the actual situation in the establishments and a basic understanding of the background for bacteriological carcase testing (process control) could occasionally not be demonstrated.

7.5. Animal welfare

In general, provisions made by slaughter establishments for the protection of animals at slaughter were in accordance with Council Directive 93/119/EC.

7.6. Animal health controls

The assembly centre visited did not fully comply with the requirements of Article 11 of Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

The eradication programmes for TB, bovine brucellosis, EBL and ovine brucellosis have been implemented. However, clinical signs giving rise to a suspicion of brucellosis (abortion) in cattle and sheep as well as unusual findings in TB test reports were not always thoroughly investigated.

Appropriate plans (including surveillance, protective measures and vaccination of wild boars) are in place for the eradication of CSF. These plans are implemented in an effective and co-ordinated manner.

Adequate controls on the movement of domestic pigs are in place to implement Commission Decision 2003/526/EC, concerning protective measures relating to CSF.

7.7. Contingency Plans

The contents of the contingency plans, in general, were in compliance with the Directives and the Commission guidelines.

With the exception of minor shortcomings, the contingency plans are well-structured, detailed, provide a clear chain of command and reflect the situation in the country.

The limited availability of SPF eggs in the NRL represents a serious shortcoming in the diagnosis capacity in case of ND or AI outbreaks.

The management of the CSF outbreak was in accordance with the contingency plan and proved to be effective. Written procedures were generally followed and were supported by the required documentation.

The low capacity currently available for the slaughter of poultry could be a serious limiting factor in the prompt stamping-out of disease.

The bio-security of farms is generally acceptable, although there are some important shortcomings on poultry farms.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

8.1. To ensure supervision of official activities is carried out consistently and that appropriate follow up actions are taken.

8.2. To take further measures to complete the registration of livestock holdings, particularly those on which pigs or goats are kept.

8.3. To remove obstacles to the accurate and prompt entry of animal birth,

movement and death notifications on the CDB.

8.4. To review the adequacy of structures and layout in approved food establishments, taking account of the new requirements applicable from 01/01/2006.

8.5. To ensure that OVs in red meat establishments have a thorough understanding of the importance of analysing the results of operators' own check programmes, in particular those carried out in accordance with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC.

8.6. To ensure that the follow-up in case of cattle and sheep abortions will be done according to Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

8.7. To guarantee a supply of SPF eggs to the NRL adequate to meet the diagnostic demands of a major outbreak of ND or AI.

8.8. To increase the slaughtering capacity necessary to deal with a major outbreak of poultry disease.

8.9. To review bio-security at poultry farm level, considering the potential risk of spreading of diseases in case of outbreak of ND or AI.

ADDENDUM

Response of the Slovakian Authorities to the draft mission report

The Slovakian Authorities offered comments on the draft report. Where appropriate these comments have been incorporated into the final report. They also provided an initial reaction to certain conclusions and recommendations in the report, in particular by providing details of action already taken or to be taken to correct deficiencies noted.

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 71/118/EEC	L 55, 08.03.1971, p. 23	Council Directive 71/118/EEC of 15 February 1971 on health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat
Council Directive 91/40/EEC	L 167, 22.06.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 91/40/EEC of 19 May 1992 introducing community measures for the control of avian influenza
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 (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
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 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 2003/526/EC	L 183, 22.07.2003, p. 46	Commission Decision 2003/526/EC of 18 July 2003 concerning protection measures relating to classical swine fever in Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg
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
Council Regulation (EC)	L 5, 09.01.2004, p. 8	Council Regulation (EC) 21/2004 of 17 December 2003 establishing a system for identification and

European legislation	OJ	Title
21/2004		registration of ovine and caprine animals and amending Regulation (EC) 1782/2003 and Directive 92/102/EEC and 64/432/EEC
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 (B. melitensis), Aujeszky's disease, enzootic bovine leukosis, 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 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 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 Regulation (EC) 499/2004	L 80, 18.03.2004, p. 24	Commission Regulation (EC) No 499/2004 of 17 March 2004 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003 as regards the time limit and the model for reporting in the bovine sector
Commission Decision 2004/775/EC	L 342, 18.11.2004, p. 29	Commission Decision 2004/775/EC of 18 November 2004 granting Slovakia the derogation provided for in Article 3(2) of Council Directive 92/102/EEC on the identification and registration of animals
Commission Decision 2005/59/EC	L 24, 27.01.2005, p. 46	Commission Decision 2005/59/EC of 26 January 2005 approving the plans for the eradication of classical swine fever in feral pigs and the emergency vaccination of such pigs in Slovakia
Commission Decision 2005/661/EC	L 245, 21.09.2005, p. 18	Commission Decision 2005/661/EC of 16 September 2005 amending the Appendix to Annex XIV to the 2003 Act of Accession as regards certain establishments in the meat sector in Slovakia