

Malta's 2009 Enzootic Bovine Leukosis Programme

Malta and Gozo are considered as one region.



Data on herds

Region	Total number of herds	Total number of herds under the program	Number of herds checked	Number of positive herds	Number of new positive herds	Number of herds depopulated	% positive herds depopulated	Indicators		
								% Herd Coverage	% positive herds Period herd prevalence	% new positive herds Herd incidence
Malta and Gozo	*363	139	139	75	13	2	2.67%	100%	54 %	9.35%

*including holdings with beef cattle for slaughter purposes only

Data on animals

Region	Total number of animals	Number of animals to be tested under the programme	Number of animals tested	Number of animals tested individually	Number of Positive animals	Slaughtering		Indicators	
						Number of Animals with a positive result	Total number of animals slaughtered	% coverage at animal level	% positive animals Animal prevalence
Malta and Gozo	16,861	8,214	*12,703	12,703	2,153	954	1083	155%	17%

- This includes animals over one year, since these have been regularly tested from mid 2009 irrespective of herd status. Total number of animals over one year is 12,204.

Measures taken in case of a positive animal include:

- Stop movement on all animals to and from holding
- On-farm inspection and farm census
- Slaughtering of positive animals. Farms with over 80% positivity are totally depopulated.
- Compensation based on rules set out in national legislation.

Information on diagnostic tests used

Disease/Species	Test	Type of sample	Type of test	Number of tests performed
EBL / Bovine	ELISA	Blood serum	Routine Test	21, 569

A collaboration relationship has been established with the NRL of Italy, the Istituto Zooprofilattico di Perugia.

The NRL, carries out Agar gel Immunodiffusion test in the following cases :

- dubious ELISA positive reactors
- on animals that first give rise to a positive reaction, than on a repeated test give rise to a negative reaction
- on positive reactors that arise the first time on previously negative farms.

Conclusions

- Malta is a small island and market for meat and meat products. The demand remains limited and the possibility of placing on the market beef originating from the EBL eradication programme remains problematic. This involves staggering of slaughter in accordance with demand and carries with it some delay.
- A further technical difficulty arises from the small size of the holdings and the short distances between holdings. These limitations may be responsible for the resulting of new positives within herds in view of possible horizontal transmission.
- Nonetheless, the targets set are being met as one thousand and four (1004) animals have been slaughtered. Even though the prevalence shows an increase, this is also partly due to the larger percentage of animal coverage.
- Testing was extended to all animals over one year since mid-year , irrespective of the status of the farm, to increase sensitivity of testing and possibly increase the early alerting of positive animals.

Conclusions

- There is a large number of extremely small farms of meat-producing herds having a few male bovine animals for meat production. The total number of meat-producing farms is 224. 115 meat holdings have animals over two years.
- The total number of animals over 24 months on these farms is 449.
- For 2009, these holdings were not under the EBL programme since they only account for 5% of all bovine animals over 24 months in Malta/Gozo.
- The effort of sampling and testing was focused on the milk-producing herds, however towards the last quarter of 2009, these farms were being tested for EBL.
- 37 farms were tested with a total of 220 animals over 24 months that were tested.
- Therefore even if not under the EBL programme, half of the male bovine animals on these meat-producing farms were tested. The data however does not appear in the tables.