

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH  
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 07-08 MARCH 2006**

**(Section Controls and Import Conditions)  
(Section Animal Health and Welfare)  
(Biological Safety of the Food Chain)**

Presidents: Bernard Van Goethem and Alberto Laddomada

All the Member States were present, except Austria absent on 08 March but represented by Germany

**1. Update information in relation to the avian influenza situation**

**The Austrian delegation** delivered a timeline concerning the outbreak which occurred in the animal shelter in Graz. On 22 February the National Reference Laboratory confirmed H5N1 in a wild swan which was brought to the animal shelter and died on 16 February. 5 further birds which were clinically healthy were tested positive for H5N1. As a precautionary measure, samples were also taken from 40 cats and on 6 March three samples were found PCR positive for H5N1. On 2 March samples were taken from 34 cats and the PCR results were negative. A total of 170 cats were brought to a quarantine station where investigations will be carried out by experts of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna. The employees of the animal shelter have been under medical supervision and no signs of an infection have been detected.

**The Polish delegation** distributed and presented “Avian Influenza in Poland”. On 5 March the Polish authorities have informed the Commission of confirmed cases of H5 in two dead swans found in a park in the city of Torun. A protection zone with radius of 3 km and a surveillance zone have been established. 33 farms keeping poultry were registered and identified in the protection zone until 6 March.

**The German delegation** updated the Committee on the avian influenza situation. Up till now 6 Länder have detected confirmed cases of the H5N1 virus. The German delegation assumes that the source of the disease is coming from Eastern Europe. On 8 March the German delegate informed that, a total of 3 cats have been tested positive for H5N1 by the National Reference Laboratory. The Commission requested Germany to send as soon as possible written information on the cases in cats.

**The Spanish delegate** informed that due to the cold weather there has not yet been a big wave of spring migration from the African continent.

**The French delegation** informed that a swan infected with the H5N1 virus was found in the Department “Bouche du Rhone”. Another case was detected around Lake Geneva. Vaccination in ducks was started on 24 February in the department “Lande”. Up till now, 38 holdings have been vaccinated.

**The Italian delegation** presented “Protection measures in relation to confirmed cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 in wild birds in Italy “. H5N1 was confirmed in a mallard found dead in a lake in Umbria. Another case of H5N1 was detected in a swan in the South of Calabria. The census of all swan flocks carried out by Italian National Wildlife Institute is still ongoing.

**The Hungarian delegation** provided a “Summary record on the epidemiological situation concerning HPAI outbreaks in wild birds in Hungary”. The virus H5 has been isolated on 3 March in three swans. Samples will be submitted to the Community Reference Laboratory on 8 March.

**The Dutch delegate** informed that preventive vaccination has not started yet. It will be launched on 15 March in backyard flocks. The Netherlands will provide detailed information on the implementation in the subsequent Committee.

**The Bulgarian delegation** informed that since the last SCFCAH no new cases were found in Bulgaria.

**Slovakia** has no new information to report since the last Committee meeting.

**The Slovenian delegation** informed that 24 cases of the H5N1 virus were detected out of which there are 22 cases in mute swans. One new case was detected in the region of Markovci. As notified by Slovenia already at the last SCFCAH, a new surveillance zone was established which comes up to the Croatian border.

**The Swedish delegation** distributed “Update of the Swedish Avian influenza (AI) situation”. Two tufted ducks found at the South East coast of Sweden were confirmed positive on 28 February by the National Veterinary Institute as regards highly pathogenic AI (HPAI) subtype H5. Samples have promptly been sent to the Community Reference Laboratory in Weybridge. So far, another 8 tufted ducks from the same area have been tested positive for H5. The precautionary measures set out in Commission Decision 2006/115/EC were immediately applied following the findings of HPAI, and surveillance and protection zones were put in place. New cases in wild birds were detected on 8 March at the South East coast of Sweden and the Swedish delegate informed the Committee thereof by distributing a written report.

As regards the avian influenza situation in Romania, the Commission stated that new outbreaks in domestic poultry were detected in the province of Constanta. The Commission also informed the Committee that H5N1 virus was confirmed in samples of chicken from Albania.

Furthermore, the Commission reported back from a conference where the situation in Vietnam was discussed. In the last months massive vaccination has been applied. Controls of chicken movements have been enforced. A DIVA strategy is not being applied; however a lot of PCR testing is being performed. All these measures have led to a clear improvement of the situation during the last months.

In the context of the discussion concerning the avian influenza situation, vaccination programmes of zoo birds against avian influenza were presented by Italy, Lithuania, Estonia, Ireland and Sweden. During the last weeks, the Commission has received also programmes

from France, Netherlands, Portugal, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Latvia and Hungary. All these countries are now in a position to vaccinate zoo birds. The vaccination programmes will be forwarded to all Member States.

## **2. Information on the classical swine fever situation in Germany**

The German delegation reported on a new outbreak of classical swine fever in domestic pigs. The last outbreak in domestic pigs occurred in 2003. Last Friday classical swine fever was confirmed in three fattening farms in Haltern in the Kreis Recklinghausen. Following the confirmation with ELISA on 3 February, stamping out was immediately applied. The virustype is 2.3 Güstrow. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing, especially with regard to an illegal backyard pig holding which is located in close proximity to one of the three fattening farms. There is evidence of recent illegal slaughter in the backyard holding. The outbreak might have been spread by rodents. As regards protection measures, a protection zone of 3.000 m and a surveillance zone of 10.000 m were put up on 3 February.

Some Member States expressed their concerns on the disease situation and the Netherlands has already stepped up several measures such as double cleaning of tracks coming from Germany to the Netherlands.

The Commission commented that the situation is unclear, in particular due to the unknown source of the outbreak. The Commission requested maps of the protection zone and recommended suspending or at least reducing the movement of pigs within North-Rhine Westphalia until the epidemiological examinations are finished. The Commission will closely follow the situation and asked Germany to keep the Commission informed about any development.

The German delegation agreed to send to the Commission a written report on a daily basis.

## **3. Final Request for Member States to submit results on the amount of product of animal origin removed from personal luggage during 2005 as required under Annex IV of Commission Regulation (EC) No 745/2004**

The Commission stated that the deadline for submitting information has passed already. However Member States can still send in their information.

## **4. Information from the Commission on a draft Commission decision approving a Diagnostic Manual establishing diagnostic procedures, sampling methods and criteria for evaluation of the laboratory tests for the confirmation of Avian Influenza (SANCO/10212/2006)**

The Commission's representative explained that the laboratory techniques for diagnosis of avian influenza shall be laid down in a separate document called "Diagnostic manual". Experts from the Community Reference Laboratory have compiled the disease description, clinical diagnosis, laboratory techniques and safety requirements. Sampling and surveillance procedures referred to in the Articles of the Directive are not completed and work is still ongoing. The most recent developments concerning testing strategies for wild birds have not

yet been included such as a protocol for the M gene test and the optimal sampling/swabbing techniques. The Commission asked the Member States to submit comments on the draft document.

#### **5. Update information on the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) situation in South America**

The Commission stated that it has received information that Brazilian animals are being exported from the North of Brazil to Lebanon (FMD endemic area) without any certification. The Commission will try to inquire more details on this issue.

As for Argentina, there was a second outbreak on 27 February; one sick animal was found within the restricted area. Brazil has eventually confirmed 6 outbreaks in Parana. The Commission highlighted that it receives weekly information from the Brazilian authorities.

The Commission also informed that vaccination is ongoing in the affected parts of Turkey and recommended Greece to step up appropriate measures at the border to Turkey. Member States were also asked to reinforce the control of passenger luggage from any flight coming from Turkey.

#### **6. Information by Italy on African swine fever and the implementation of Commission Decisions 2005/363/EC and 2005/624/EC**

The discussion was postponed.

#### **7. Information from UK on the system for the identification and registration of ovine and caprine animals implemented in Great Britain and Northern Ireland temporarily recognised by Commission Decision 2005/617/EC**

The UK delegate stated that the intention is to distribute as much information as possible on the derogation provided for UK concerning the system for the identification and registration of ovine and caprine animals. Member States should reflect on the issue and a discussion and possible vote is foreseen for one of the next Committee meetings.

The Member States thanked the UK for having circulated the documents. The Commission clarified that it will dispatch the FVO report to the Member States before asking them for an opinion.

#### **8. Russian import conditions for animals and products of animal origin. (RH) (See point 3 of the 17 December 2004 SCFCAH and point 2 of the 19 October 2004, 18 January, 16 February, 16 March, 21 April, 24 May, 21-22 June, 23 September, 18 October, 22-23 November, 20-21 December 2005 and 24 January SCFCAHs)**

The Commission informed the Member States of the state-of-play as regards veterinary talks with Russia. The next technical meeting in Moscow takes place 9-10 March. The draft addendum on transit controls and the draft regionalisation memorandum are on the agenda. The Commission distributed to the Member States copies of Dr Nepoklonov's letter of 16.2.2006 concerning the amendment of the common EU export certificate for feed of

animal origin and Ms Husu-Kallio's letter of 3.3.2006 concerning the resident Russian inspectors.

**9. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision on the evolution of animal diseases in the Community and in third countries and in particular in relation to avian influenza**

a) The Commission presented a “draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2004/639/EC as regards Croatia”.

The purpose of this Decision is to add Croatia to the list of third countries from which imports of semen of domestic animals of the bovine species are authorised in the light of the situation achieved with regard to animal health in Croatia.

The German delegate requested an inspection of the semen station in Croatia.

**Vote: Unanimously in favour. Austria absent but represented by Germany.**

**10. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision amending Annex I to Council Decision 79/542/EEC as regards import of bovines from Chile (SANCO/10145/2006) (HLB)**

The Commission explained that Chile has requested to be authorised to import bovine animals into the Community. The disease situation in this country is acceptable and, in addition it is already listed for non-domestic animals other than swine; therefore Chile should be listed for imports of bovines into the Community.

**Vote: Unanimously in favour**

**11. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission amending Decision 2004/438/EC concerning raw milk from Chile (SANCO/10137/2006) (HLB)**

Following a Commission inspection mission to Chile the competent veterinary services confirmed that Chile should not be listed for import into the Community of raw milk for sanitary and technical reasons. In addition it is opportune to update certain footnotes in regard to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

**Vote: Unanimously in favour**

**12. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the United Kingdom and repealing Council Decision 98/256/EC and Commission Decisions 98/351/EC and 1999/514/EC (Right of scrutiny of the European Parliament) (Document SANCO/3991/2005 Rev.4) (KVD) (See point 12 of the 24 January and point 4 of the 22 February 2006 SCFCAH's)**

The purpose of this proposal is to allow the lifting of the ban on UK exports of live cattle, beef and beef products, which had been put in place in March 1996 due to the high BSE incidence at the time. Some derogation was granted under the Date Based Export Scheme. From 7 November 2005, the pre-1996 rule replaces the Over-Thirty-Months rule implying that bovine animals born before 1 August 1996 will permanently be excluded from the food and feed chain. Since October 2004, the UK applies the same monitoring programme as the other Member States for the bovine population born after 31 July 1996. As the UK has a BSE incidence below 200 cases per million animals and the EU Food and Veterinary Office released a satisfactory report on BSE controls, the embargo can be lifted.

In order to meet the concerns of French and Spanish delegations, the UK made the following declaration on its legislation:

“In December 1997 the UK introduced a ban (Statutory Instrument No 2959 of 1997) on the sale of beef containing any bone from bovine animals aged over 6 months at slaughter and the use of such bones in any products for human consumption:

In December 1999, following an assessment of the risk to human health from the consumption of beef containing vertebral column, the rules were changed to allow fresh meat containing bones to be marketed in the UK (Statutory Instrument No 3371 of 1999). Such meat could only come from cattle aged no more than 30 months at slaughter.

The ban on the use of all vertebral column for manufactured and processed products for human consumption remains in force. However restaurants are permitted to sell cooked beef including bones, such as T-bone steaks, in meals. Bones could also be used in gravy or sauces sold to the final consumers at the premises where the production takes place, such as restaurants.”

Moreover, the UK will be able to resume trade in live animals born after 1 August 1996, and in meat and meat products produced after 15 June 2005 (linked to the date of the favourable FVO inspection). Its legislation on beef-on-the-bone will have to be adjusted to reduce the current age limit of 30 months for the removal of the vertebral column to 24 months, which is in line with the rule applied by all other Member States.

Furthermore the Commission made the following declaration:

“The Commission declares that following the adoption and coming into force of the Commission Regulation lifting the UK trade restriction, the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission will conduct a mission to the United Kingdom to assess the compliance with BSE legislation and in particular to assess the restrictions laid down in the annex of this Regulation before the end of 2006.”

The Commission thanked the UK for its huge work and effort in tackling the issue of BSE and all the Member States for their cooperation.

**Vote: Unanimously in favour**

**13. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee amending Commission Decision 2004/407/EC as regards import from certain third countries of photographic gelatine (Legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002) (Right of scrutiny of the European Parliament) (MM) (SANCO/10226/2006/Rev.2)**

The purpose of this draft Decision is to extend the scope of Decision 2004/407/EC enabling import of photo gelatine from USA into Belgium and Luxembourg for the production of polyester film for X-ray purposes in the European Union. The Commission's representative highlighted some changes that have been made following comments made by the Legal Service.

Sweden made the following declaration regarding agenda point 13 on photographic gelatine:

“Sweden voted against the Decision 2004/407/EC and abstains from voting as regard the amending Decision, mainly since the Decision contradicts the principles established by TSE and ABP Regulation (999/2000/EC and 1774/2003/EC).”

**Vote: Qualified majority in favour. Netherlands represented by Hungary. Austria absent but represented by Germany. Sweden abstained**

**14. Exchange of views on a draft Decision amending Decisions 2005/710/EC, 2005/733/EC and 2005/758/EC as regards an extension of their period of application (SANCO/10217/2006) (LK)**

The discussion was postponed to the next Committee meeting

**15. Exchange of views on a draft working document for a Commission Regulation laying down measures with regard to imports of products of animal origin by travellers for personal consumption (SANCO/10195/2006/Rev. 4) (AEF/HN)**

A draft working document was discussed in detail at the last meeting and the Commission collected the views of the Member States. Although Member States acknowledged that the objective was sensible, it appears that several Member States' customs authorities will have difficulties to make this system operational. The Commission highlighted that the proposal mainly aims at raising passenger's awareness and should be seen as a tool for enforcement officials. In addition, although there maybe resource implications for customs authorities, these must be seen in the context of the potential risk, and subsequent costs, of a major animal disease epidemic within the EU; delegates were reminded that the direct costs of the 2001 FMD crisis were estimated to be 12 Billion Euros.

Although some Member States' reported that they were already cooperating with the airlines as far as the distribution of information sheets is concerned, the Commission urged all delegates to ensure leaflets were distributed to all passengers, and that the posters advertising the rules on personal imports were clearly displayed at all EU entry points.

The Commission will take on board the comments from the Member States and stressed once more that it is in close contact with DG TAXUD. Member States were requested to send further comments in writing.

**16. Exchange of views on a draft Commission Decision concerning measures to prevent the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza caused by influenza A virus of subtype H5N1 to susceptible birds kept in zoos in the Member States and repealing Decision 2005/744/EC (SANCO/10168/2005/rev.2) (MP)**

The Commission's representative explained that it is appropriate to lay down at Community level detailed rules concerning preventive vaccination of birds kept in zoos that the Member States should follow, if they consider it appropriate to vaccinate such birds. Furthermore it is appropriate to lay down at Community level detailed rules on bio-security measures for the prevention of highly pathogenic avian influenza caused by influenza A virus of subtype H5N1 in birds kept in zoos in the Member State to protect wild fauna and to conserve biodiversity. The Commission asked the Member States to send their comments and suggested that the date for submission of the amended plans can be changed to July.

**17. Exchange of views on a draft Commission Decision concerning certain transitional measures in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry or other captive birds in the Community (SANCO/10194/2006/rev.1) (MP)**

The Commission explained that pending transposition of Directive 2005/94/EC by the Member States, it is appropriate to lay down transitional provisions on measures to be applied on holdings where outbreaks of avian influenza caused by HPAI viruses are suspected or confirmed in poultry or other captive birds. The Commission requested the Member States to send their comments on this transitional measure.

**At the end of the meeting, the Committee made the following Statement:**

**“Statement of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health  
8 March 2006**

Current information on the susceptibility of pigeons to avian influenza (especially H5N1) suggests that this species is relatively resistant to the infection. However it appears that if pigeons do contract infection, the species is capable of shedding infective virus. Information from Thailand, Russia and Turkey suggests that wild pigeons can be infected and die from the infection and may contribute to the spread of the disease.

In the light of the present situation with almost daily reports on new detections of H5N1 in wild birds in EU Member States the following is recommended with regard to racing pigeons:

- Racing pigeons may be allowed to fly in the vicinity of their quarters for the purpose of exercising and training, provided that the birds are fed and watered indoors.
- The competent authorities of a Member State may, based on a risk assessment, allow pigeon races on their territory, taking into account the epidemiological situation and the location of the high risk areas defined in the framework of Decision 2005/734/EC.
- The competent authorities of the Member States may based on a risk assessment agree to authorise a pigeon race crossing their borders when they have given each other mutual assurance that races do not start, cross or end in high risk areas of their territories as defined by Decision 2006/734/EC.

However, no pigeon racing should take place in or through the areas under restriction established in accordance with Decisions 2006/115/EC and 2006/135/EC, and if practically possible all birds, including pigeons should be kept indoors in such areas.”

## **Miscellaneous**

### 1) BSE suspicion in France and Cyprus

Further to the BSE suspicion in 2 sheep in France and 1 sheep in Cyprus, the Commission intends to increase the number of tests on healthy animals and fallen stock during a 6 months period. Samples have been sent to the Community Reference Laboratories and results should come out shortly. The European Food Safety Authority is also expected to release its views. The Commission distributed to the Member States a table of statistical figures from Eurostat on the monitoring of healthy slaughtered sheep in 2004 in the EU. The MS were requested to check the accuracy of these data.

N.B. The proposals on which the Committee expressed an opinion are subject to a defined procedure in relation to the formal adoption by the Commission.

Mission reports are available on the Internet at the following address:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/vi/reports/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/vi/reports/index_en.html)

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