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Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

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FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION

CARRIED OUT IN ESTONIA

FROM 7 TO 18 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 ANIMALS CONTROLS, AND CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR EPIZOOTIC DISEASES

Please note that clarifications provided by the Estonian 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

ABP	Animal by-products
AI	Avian Influenza
AM	Ante-mortem inspection
ARIB	Agricultural Registers and Information Board (*PRIA - Põllumajanduse Registrite ja Informatsiooni Amet*)
AV(s)	Authorised Veterinarian(s)
(C)CA	(Central) Competent Authority
CCP	Critical Control Point
CDB	Central Database (cattle and pigs)
CP(s)	Contingency Plan(s)
CRL	Community Reference Laboratory
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
ELISA	Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
HC/SH(s)	High capacity slaughterhouse(s)
IF	Immunofluorescence test
LC/SH(s)	Low capacity slaughterhouse(s)
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
MA	Ministry of Agriculture
ND	Newcastle Disease
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
NRP	National Residues Plan
OA(s)	Official Auxiliary (Auxiliaries)
OF	Officially free (status)
OIE	*Office international des Epizoozies*
OV(s)	Official Veterinarian(s)
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
PM	Post-mortem inspection
RCA	Regional Competent Authority
RVO(s)	Regional Veterinary Office(s) (*Maakond Veterinaarkeskus*))
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange unit (EC)
VFB	Veterinary&Food Board (*VTA-Veterinaar-ja-Toiduamet*), the CCA

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Estonia from 7 to 18 November 2005. The mission team comprised 2 inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in the first week of the mission and 3 inspectors and 1 national expert during the second week.

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

The inspection team was accompanied during the mission by representatives from the Central Competent Authority (CCA), the Veterinary and Food Board (VFB), within the Ministry of Agriculture (MA).

An opening meeting was held on 7 November 2005 in Tallinn 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 was 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, rabies);

– 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 these objectives, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	6	VFB for the opening, closing, and two intermediary meetings, the National Disease Control Centre and the Central Animal Database
	Regional	6	Regional Veterinary Offices, including visits of three Local Disease Control Centres
	Laboratories	2	Two National Reference Laboratories

FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS		Comments
Slaughterhouses	2	Low capacity
Game meat premises	3	One wild game collection centre and two high capacity cutting and processing premises
Cutting premises	4	One low capacity and three high capacity
Meat product premises	4	Three high capacity and one low capacity
Meat preparations premises	3	Two high capacity and one low capacity (including minced meat)
Milk processing premises	3	Two high capacity and one declared closed
Farms	8	2 cattle, 1 pig, 3 poultry (1 laying hens, 1 breeder and 1 broilers) and 2 mixed farms (including sheep on one farm)
Collection centre for live animals	1	

3. 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, 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.

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

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1. Competent authority performance

The CA is well organised, with clear structure, and it has well defined competencies.

The central level (with its five Departments: Animal Health and Welfare, Food, Animal Breeding and Market Regulation Control, Trade/Import/Export, General) plans and supervises the activities carried out at regional and establishments/farms level, grants approvals for milk and high capacity meat establishments and establishes the programmes of monitoring of animal diseases and of official sampling. The CCA meets every 2 months with the regional CA and also supervises the regional offices once a year in each main sector of activity (meat, milk, fish, animal health & welfare).

The 15 regional veterinary offices (RVOs), one per county, are responsible for the practical implementation of the monitoring programmes and for supervision of the activities at local level. They carry out, at least once a quarter, comprehensive inspections in all meat and milk processing establishments; in addition, they supervise the activities of the Authorised Veterinarians (AVs) and hold monthly meetings with them. The supervision and inspection activities were carried out according to the plan and were well documented.

AVs are in charge of animal health and welfare tasks at farm level, of official controls in low-capacity slaughterhouses (LC/SHs) and carry out comprehensive inspections once a year in farms, including holding registration, animal identification and related issues. The financial resources for their annual contract are allocated from the budget of the VFB.

Comprehensive training for OVs and AVs is provided both at central and county level, covering recommendations of earlier FVO missions and other topics.

Observations

– Supervision by the CCA was carried out at the prescribed frequencies and was well documented.

– Check lists for inspections on farms and in milk processing plants have been amended recently to include recommendations of the previous FVO mission (DG(SANCO)/7250/2004[1]), including controls on heat-treatment equipment in dairy plants, animal welfare at slaughterhouses and control on swill feeding ban.

– Despite the new checklists and the training provided, the CA failed to identify some shortcomings occurred during animal health controls (see point 3.5) and during inspections in food processing establishments (see point 3.3.2).

– A new establishment database, previously planned to be fully operational by early 2005, has now been delayed further, and it is not expected before 2006.

4.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

The Agricultural Registers and Information Board (ARIB) is responsible for maintaining the Central Database (CDB), and enforcement of the requirements concerning animal identification and holding registration is the responsibility of the VFB.

Dealers and animal traders are not registered as such in the CDB, but only as farmers. However, a list of 7 approved dealers and one collection centre for live animals, with approval numbers given by CCA, was provided during the initial meeting.

The number of registered holdings has increased considerably since last year.

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

Cattle holdings

In 2005 1,289 cattle farms were registered by ARIB. When errors in notifications are detected by the system, a request of clarification is sent to the owner; a note about these errors, if not corrected by a certain time (generally one week), is sent monthly also to VFB. Delays in notifications are not considered as errors, but a monthly report is received by VFB for further controls to be carried out by AVs.

Before cattle, sheep, goats and pigs may move from a holding, a movement document is issued by the AV at the point of departure. These documents were available in the relevant sites visited.

Sheep and goats holdings

Since the beginning of July 2005, Council Regulation (EC) No 21/2004 is applicable in Estonia, and national application regarding farm registers, movement and double eartag as an individual means of identification of sheep has been given effect by Regulation of MA No 75 of 21/06/2005. According to these national rules all sheep born after 9 July 2005 must be individually identified within 6 months of birth, or otherwise at their first movement from holding of birth, by a double eartag.

Pig holdings

Not all pig holdings are registered at present; this is partly because a derogation has been granted for holdings keeping only 1 pig for own consumption, according Art. 3(2) of Council Directive 92/102/EEC. A census of the pig population was carried out in May 2005.

Observations

- The CDB is supposed to receive a double notification with all the details of the movement; however, this was not always the case. The collection centre did not notify all animal movements to ARIB because of the very short time the animals stay in its stables. Moreover, the register lacked animal identification and destination of the animals.
- A number of delayed notifications of events made by owners (births, deaths, movements, imports) up to 882 days is recorded by ARIB. Moreover, in case of errors or missed data in notifications, data are not entered into the system until corrected by the owner[2].
- In the pig holding visited, identification of animals was properly made by tattoo, in line with requirements of Council Directive 92/102/EEC.
- On the mixed bovine/sheep holding visited, the sheep were properly identified by metallic or plastic eartag. However, two sheep coming from another holding from the same village, and temporarily housed in this holding, lacked documentation concerning origin and movement.

[2] ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that since June 2005, new software has been operational and this has led to higher quality data. The current high number of errors is partially due to manual notification by keepers.***

- Holdings with only one pig for own consumption, which are exempted from registration by way of the said derogation, are usually included in official control for animal health purposes only if other animals are also kept.
- In the 4 bovine holdings visited not all animals were properly identified (1 lacked both eartags, and several others lacked one) and only one owner kept a farm register.
- Procedures for ordering replacement eartags are now faster than in the past. According to ARIB, 91% of the requests are satisfied within 3 weeks. However, replacement eartags are not identified as such.

4.2.1. Inspection of holdings

Cattle holdings

Almost all farms are checked once a year by AVs. In order to harmonise these official controls, a common check-list is used, including a chapter on animal identification and farm registration.

Pig, sheep and goats holdings

Almost all farms are inspected once a year by the AVs on the basis of a comprehensive check-list.

Observations

- Deadlines set by AVs for corrective actions concerning shortcomings in animal identification and farm registration were sometimes quite long.
- Sanctions are not always applied in case of infringements according Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98, and a lack of harmonisation between RVOs was noted; in the visited counties the RVO had often avoided the use of sanctions and instead just sent reminder letters to farmers. So far, the sanction of destroying unidentified animals has not been applied.
- AVs inspect farms in the framework of yearly checks and ARIB staff carries out checks according Commission Regulation (EC) No 2419/2001 (aid scheme control system): when infringements of Community rules on animal identification are detected, both authorities do not systematically exchange these information, leading to possible overlapping or gaps.

4.3. Establishment upgrading, approval and capacities

Estonia did not use the possibility of having a transitional period for upgrading of certain establishments.

A list of 8 LC/SHs benefiting from the derogation (up to 1,500 livestock units/year) in accordance with Art. 4(C) of Council Directive 64/433/EEC has been sent to the Commission services.

Although the territory of islands is considered to be an area with geographical constraints, for the purpose of the approval of LC/SHs no derogations (up to 2,000 livestock units/year) have been granted under Art. 4(D) of Council Directive 64/433/EEC.

Observations

– The actual throughput of the visited LC/SHs and cutting plants did not exceed the limits given in the approvals.

– A list of the main food processing establishments has been made public on the web site of the CCA. Collection centres for wild game are not yet included in such a list on the web site; however, according to the list received, 8 wild game collection centres are registered in Estonia.

4.4. Food safety controls

4.4.1. Inspection tasks

The ante-mortem (AM) inspection of animals is carried out either by the OVs in high-capacity slaughterhouses, or by the AVs in the low-capacity slaughterhouses. The post-mortem (PM) inspection is carried out by OVs, AVs and, in high-capacity slaughterhouses, sometimes by Official Auxiliaries (OAs) under the supervision of the OV.

Both AM and PM inspections were well documented, including trichina examinations on susceptible species (pigs, wild boars and brown bears).

Wild game collection centres and processing establishments, and milk processing establishments are under permanent official supervision.

Evidence of comprehensive checks (time of killing, carcase temperature if coming from a game collection centre, hunter's licence, place of killing and hunter's declaration about health status) was seen at the sites visited.

Official sampling is carried out on the basis of an annual plan.

According the CCA, following the National Residues Plan (NRP) 2004, of a total of 1,240 milk samples, 4 were detected as positive for inhibitory substances with a microbiological test, and only one of them was confirmed by a chemical test[3]. The total amount of milk rejected was 255 tons in 2004.

According to the same NRP, of 100 samples of wild game meat, 44 were found positive for heavy metals.

Observations

– No controls (ante- and post-mortem examination, BSE testing) are carried out during slaughter at farms for own consumption (neither for cattle over 30 months of age nor for small ruminants), which is not in line with requirements of Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council (EC) No 999/2001.

– The trichina examination, when carried out at LC establishment level, was performed by compression method, but read by a standard

[3] ***In their response to the draft report the CA stated that "all positive microbiological tests were reanalysed by multi-plate method" and that "the positive sample was further confirmed by the chemical method".***

microscope rather than with a trichinoscope. In one LC/SH visited, the health mark on pig carcases was put on before the trichina examination result was known. In one game meat processing establishment, no clear evidence was provided to show that wild boars were only processed after the result of trichina examination was known.

– The CA in some cases had failed to identify packaged frozen meat without a health mark and date of freezing as being non compliant.

4.4.2. Hygiene requirements

In general, maintenance and operational hygiene in the establishments visited were adequate.

Observations

– Inspection protocols were regularly filled in at the prescribed frequencies by the OV/AV responsible for the supervision of the establishment and were countersigned by the operator when needed.

In several establishments visited, the following deficiencies were observed (some of these deficiencies were not spotted by the CA.):

– maintenance deficiencies: walls/floors/ceilings with cracked tiles/worn-out and rusty or out of order equipment,

– inadequate working space to allow for the hygienic performance of all operations,

– storage of packed and unpacked meat and meat products together in the same chilling rooms,

– lack of sterilisers (including those for carcass-splitting saws) in some processing areas,

– hand operable taps,

– insufficient protection against rodents and insects,

– insufficient cleaning of facilities and equipment,

– problems of condensation with dropping of water onto the meat and products,

– extensive use of water during slaughter,

– rodent traps in production areas,

– Electrical wires without suitable protection.

4.4.3. HACCP and own check controls

Programmes in accordance with the HACCP principles were available in all establishments visited.

Observations

– In some cases, the flow diagram of products had not been updated and some products were missed in the procedures: in one dairy plant visited, one product with recurring Listeria monocytogenes problems in the raw material had not been included in the HACCP plan. Furthermore, the documentation of the pasteurisation chart of this product was insufficient. This had not been noted by the OV.

– Evidence of official supervision was seen, although not always effective. Tests results exceeding the limits set in the HACCP plan in relation to microbiological/mould/yeast controls were in general properly investigated, in collaboration with the official services, and were available in all establishments visited.

– In some cases, internal audits planned in the HACCP plan were not carried out, or they were too general.

– CCP parameters, in case of heat treatment of meat products, lacked the definition of time against temperature.

– According to some of own check controls plans, non conformity report forms must be used in case of non conformities: however, it was not always the case.

– In one establishment visited, results on microbiological parameters of potable water coming from the establishment own well not in line with requirements of Council Directive 98/83/EC were not considered to be a non-conformity by the management or by the CA; moreover, no corrective action (except enhancement of mechanical filtration) was taken.

4.4.4. Health marking and traceability

The raw material seen in the establishments visited was mostly eligible for human consumption. Statistics on the Estonian raw milk quality were received: in 2004, 97% of the raw milk delivered to dairies fulfilled the Community requirements laid down by Council Directive 92/46/EEC in relation to Somatic Cell Count and Total Plate Count.

Observations

– Some raw materials of animal origin lacked the health mark.

– Evidence was available that milk rejected because of the presence of inhibitory substances is sent back to the responsible farmer and the Regional Competent Authority (RCA) is informed; however, the CA do not carry out further controls on the destination of this animal by-product (ABP).

4.5. Welfare at slaughter

The mission checked the response by the CA to the recommendation of report DG(SANCO)/7250/2004 on supervision of the welfare of the animals at the time of slaughter.

Evidence of training provided by the CCA was presented to the mission team.

In the slaughterhouse visited where slaughter was in operation, pigs had to wait in the slaughter room before stunning, which was not in compliance with requirements of Council Directive 93/119/EC. Moreover, parameters of stunning (amperage, voltage and time) differed from those set by the manufacturer.

4.6. Animal health controls

4.6.1. National monitoring programmes

Annual animal disease monitoring plans were available. These plans are drafted by the CCA and implemented by the counties (mainly by AVs under the supervision of the RVOs). The monthly reports of the AVs are compiled into quarterly RCA reports sent to the CCA. The inspection team noted that at the date of the mission most targets for the 2005 plan had already been achieved.

Bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis are notifiable diseases and the last outbreaks were registered in 1986 and in 1961 respectively. The country has not yet applied to the Commission Services, according Council Directive 64/432/EEC, to be declared officially free (OF) for these two diseases.

According to Regulation No 61 of MA of 23.04.2004, and in compliance with requirements of Council Directive 64/432/EEC, all bovine animals over 6 weeks old must undergo a yearly tuberculin test; when suspicions of tuberculosis have been identified, status of OF farm must be suspended, reactors must be slaughtered, or suitably isolated and re-tested after 42 days and the milk originating from this farm has to be heat-treated. At slaughterhouses all slaughtered animals must undergo post mortem inspection. In 2004 13 suspected cases were submitted for bacteriological examination for Mycobacterium bovis, with negative results.

Regulation No 120 of MA, of 21.07.2004, lays down rules for the control of bovine brucellosis. Pooled milk samples from bovine holdings must be tested three times per year at intervals at least of three months, by ring test or ELISA. No positive cases are recorded. Aborting cows must be blood tested with at least 2 serological methods (one of which shall be the complement fixation reaction) and a bacteriological investigation shall be carried out.

No positive results were detected during recent years for ovine brucellosis, and during 2005 for Enzootic Bovine Leucosis.

The last outbreak of classical swine fever (CSF) was registered in 1994; 4.053 domestic pigs and 84 wild boars were investigated with negative results in 2004.

Observations

– Although the compulsory notification of all abortions to the CA is stipulated in the national legislation, only 4 abortions were notified and investigated in 2004, out of a total cattle population of 115,784. In 2005

only 4 cattle and 1 sheep abortions were investigated, although the CCA considered this to be under-reported.

- The monitoring of bovine tuberculosis is largely applied as laid down in the CCA procedures, except in case of reactors to tuberculin test: status of OF farm is not suspended and no specific restrictions on the use of milk are applied, which is not in line with requirements of Council Directives 64/432/EEC and 92/46/EEC.
- In one big cattle farm, in which 9 animals reacted to the tuberculin test, re-testing was carried out 42 days after on only 8 of these animals; this shortcoming was not detected by the animal health supervisor at the RVO level.
- The traceability and anonymity of samples was guaranteed in both the laboratories visited.
- Although the layout and equipment of the collection centre visited for live animals could be considered as satisfactory, some bio security measures (pest control, cleaning and disinfection of means of transport, equipment for disinfection of truck wheels at the entrance) were not properly applied or documented.

4.6.2. Rabies eradication programme

In autumn 2005 a campaign of oral vaccination of foxes against rabies has been carried out on the northern territory of Estonia (25,800 sqKm on a total of 40,000); it was mainly aimed at reducing rabies cases amongst wild animals and domestic grazing animals. The baiting density was 20 baits/sqKm and aerial distribution was monitored by means of Global Positioning System equipment. No manual baiting was performed.

The number of rabies cases in Estonia is shown in the following table:

Year	Cases in domestic animals	Cases in wild animals	Total cases
2002	68	354	422
2003	116	698	814
2004	46	196	242
2005 (30.09.2005)	26	149	175

An agreement has been signed between the CCA and the Estonian Hunters Association to provide the necessary number of wild animals (red foxes and raccoon dogs) for the monitoring of the effectiveness of vaccination; a financial incentive is foreseen per animal brought to Veterinary Services. The effectiveness of the vaccination will be established by analysis on bones, to detect the marker (tetracycline), and culling of animals for this purpose started on 15th of November 2005.

Staff of the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) has been trained in ELISA method at the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) in Nancy. The NRL also provides proficiency tests for Rakvere and Tallinn regional laboratories (direct immunofluorescence – IF) on brain smears. Rabies diagnosis is provided by IF as a first step, completed by bioassays in cell

culture and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) in case of human contact, or when the result is unclear, or when an unvaccinated animal is involved.

Vaccination against rabies is compulsory for pets (dogs and cats) and free of charge for the owners. Vaccination of grazing farmed animals is not compulsory but is also state-funded. According to the CCA, in 2004 126,380 dogs and cats and 7,947 farmed animals were vaccinated against rabies.

Observations

- The results of the last 2 proficiency tests organised in April and June by the NRL showed errors for both regional laboratories. No evidence of appropriate follow-up actions by NRL or CCA was presented to the mission team.
- Tthe NRL has not yet received the necessary equipment to detect tetracycline used as bio-marker in bones and teeth, and the material already collected for this purpose is stored frozen. A chief specialist of the Pathology Department was trained for detection of tetracycline at the CRL in Nancy on October 2005.
- Both laboratories visited had professional and dedicated staff. Quality control systems were operated as planned.
- Evaluation of the effective coverage of the pet population against rabies proved to be difficult, because data on population is only provided by lists of pets vaccinated by AVs.

4.7. Contingency Plans

4.7.1. Plan Documentation

4.7.1.1.Diseases covered

Contingency plans (CPs) for FMD, CSF and AI/ND were approved by Commission Decisions 2004/435/EC, 2004/431/EC and 2004/402/EC respectively.

Observations

There are 10 Manuals of instructions (for African Swine Fever, Swine Vesicular Disease, Rinderpest, *Peste des Petits Ruminants*, Vesicular Stomatitis, Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopaties, Lumpy Skin Disease, Sheep and Goat Pox, African Horse Sickness and Bluetongue) that are under preparation and thus have not yet been forwarded to the Commission for approval.

4.7.1.2.Content of plans

After the approval of the plans by the Commission, they were subject to amendments and reviewed once a year or when needed. A general plan exists which describes the legal basis, the chain of command and the actions to be taken in case of suspicion or confirmation of disease; the expert group has been established at national level.

Observations

- Printed versions of CPs were available at all administrative levels. The CPs are not forwarded to all interested parties but they are available through the VFB website.
- The latest review of the AI/ND CPs was made in April 2005.
- Some statements in the plan for AI and ND are similar to those for FMD and CSF, but are not appropriate for poultry diseases.
- An epidemiological questionnaire has been drawn for general infectious diseases, however, the epidemiological investigation for poultry OIE list diseases is not supported by specific forms (nothing is included in the annexes to the CPs).
- The AI definition was not in compliance with the AI definition set in Council Directive 92/40/EEC.
- Some annexes do not correspond to the reference made in the operational manual, e.g. instead of the destruction form, the annex refers to the evaluation report of materials.
- The AI CP does not contain specific written instructions for destruction of materials in case of confirmation of an outbreak of AI. Burial sites for the purpose of burying large numbers of dead animals have been identified in 9 Regions by the CA. Incineration places have not been considered for this purpose.
- The swine vesicular disease CP lacked instructions of records to be kept of visits carried out by AVs/OVs on farms located in the protection zone, which is not in line with Art. 11 of Council Directive 92/119/EEC.
- Deadlines are set for valuation of animals and materials to be destroyed.

4.7.2. Legal provisions and emergency powers

The Infectious Animal Disease Control Act (RT I 1999) provides the necessary legal framework for disease diagnosis and eradication, including notification of suspects, measures to be taken in case of suspicion or confirmation, protection, eradication, establishment of surveillance networks and compensation.

4.7.3. Organisation (suspicion and following confirmation of disease)

The definitions of suspect cases are included in the respective CPs and the procedure to be followed by the farmer, the private veterinarian and the OV is described in the Infectious Animal Disease Control Act.

The CPs did not provide specific instructions in the case that the control zones extend beyond the national borders.

4.7.4. Provision of resources

There are specific provisions on resources in the CPs; it is also foreseen that staff from the Health Protection Inspectorate and the Army will co-operate with the VFB on a particular crisis when it emerges.

Emergency kits at DVOs were found in compliance with the provisions of the plans.

Observations

– Company managers from the visited poultry farms confirmed their availability to assist in culling animals if it is necessary.

– Only in a few cases the emergency kits had some material expired.

4.7.5. Laboratories

The National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for FMD, Swine Vesicular Disease, Rabies and CSF is the Veterinary and Food Laboratory in Tartu; the NRL for AI and ND is the Veterinary and Food Laboratory in Tallinn. No other laboratories in Estonia have diagnostic capacity to support emergencies involving epizootic diseases.

The NRL in Tartu has participated with success in ring tests organised by the different Community Reference Laboratories (CRLs). The maximum capacity for FMD and CSF serology (ELISA test) is 800 tests/day for each disease. The NRL in Tallinn participates regularly in proficiency tests organised by the CRL. Documentary evidence of its participation in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 was shown to the mission team. The laboratory is equipped to identify subtypes H5 and H7 of AI virus, which is in compliance with Council Directive 92/40/EEC. The tests are performed according to the OIE standard methods. The maximum capacity for AI serology (ELISA test and inhibition-haemagglutination test) is 250 tests/day plus 20 samples/day using the virus isolation test in embryonated fowls' eggs.

Observations

– There is a standard form to accompany samples to the laboratory, but it is not included in the annexes to the CPs.

– No maximum laboratory capacity has been set for other diseases of list A, and virus isolation is not planned to be carried out.

4.7.6. Provisions for emergency vaccination

Specific conditions and scenarios under which vaccination might be justified are not defined. The issue of strategy for AI, FMD, ND and CSF vaccination is only generally covered in the plans and does not provide details of the quantity of vaccine estimated to be required in the event of a reinstatement of emergency vaccination. Furthermore, there is no agreement or contract for supply of AI, ND, FMD or CSF vaccines with any manufacturer.

4.7.7. Training and awareness of programmes, simulation

Specific training for disease outbreaks of FMD, CSF and AI/ND has been provided at central and regional level for authorised veterinarians. Meetings at central and regional level provided recent information.

The CPs are available at the official web site www.vet.agri.ee. Information on relevant diseases had been sent to different boards, travel agencies and press. This information mainly comprised measures to be followed in order to prevent the introduction or spread of significant mammalian or poultry diseases.

Observations

– The mission teams saw different versions of the CPs in different sites visited; in some versions of the AI/ND CPs, reference to Tartu laboratory was made instead of Tallinn laboratory. In the version available at one slaughterhouse visited, one chapter was missing, and it was possible to retrieve it only by making reference to another CP. In some cases, identification of the valid version amongst several versions presented of the CPs, proved to be difficult.

– A simulation exercise for FMD in 2002 and for ND, in co-operation with TAIEX, in 2004 have been carried out. The next exercise for AI is planned for 2006. Estonia has not yet participated in any cross-border exercise with other Member States. Collection centre for animals did not participate in the exercises organised.

4.8. Miscellaneous

Animal by-products

In several establishments visited, containers for ABPs were found not properly labelled.

In one red meat and wild game meat establishment visited, hundreds of wild game hides and 20 large open containers overloaded with ABP were found in two unapproved buildings. These buildings were not properly pest proof. In addition, problems with the correct indication of amounts of ABP in the commercial documents were noted. The responsible OV in the rendering plant had failed to detect these discrepancies.

Raw milk rejected from dairy processing plants for the presence of inhibitory substances, and sent back to farmers was not accompanied by the prescribed commercial documents, but only by a copy of the document of delivery of milk in which a hand written note indicated the total amount of rejected milk.

The issue of the management of Category 1 material, when bovines or small ruminants are slaughtered at the farm for own consumption, has not yet been addressed by the CA.

5. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 18 November 2005 with the CCA. At this meeting, the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The representatives of the CCA took note of these and expressed their willingness to correct the shortcomings observed.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Competent authority performance

Structures and resources of the competent authorities (CA) were adequate and the control system in place ensured, except in some cases, satisfactory supervision through all levels and uniformity of procedures.

6.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

The registration of livestock holdings has progressed, but is not yet complete in relation to registration of small holdings.

The national bovine database generally complies with Articles 14 and 18 of Council Directive 64/432/EEC. However, there is still a relatively high number of errors and late notifications of events, including non-reported movements, which cannot guarantee the full traceability of animals within the database in the case of an outbreak of a rapidly spreading infectious disease.

Sanctions, as provided for in Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98, are not always applied in cases of non-conformity.

6.3. Establishment upgrading, approval and capacities

In general, the establishments visited complied with the relevant Community legislation (Council Directives 64/433/EEC, 92/46/EEC, 92/45/EEC, 77/99/EEC, 94/65/EEC), with few exceptions. The maximum capacities set in the approvals were respected.

6.4. Food safety controls

A system is in place concerning certain food safety controls but shortcomings were noted in the proper application of the controls. The implementation of certain hygiene requirements and of certain elements of the HACCP system was incomplete.

Trichina examination of domestic pigs was not fully in line with EU requirements (Annex I to Council Directive 77/96/EEC).

6.5. Animal welfare at slaughter

Some minor shortcomings were noted in relation to animal welfare at slaughter.

6.6. Animal health controls

The national monitoring programme including bovine tuberculosis, enzootic bovine leucosis, brucellosis and other diseases had been implemented as planned. Some shortcomings in relation to restrictions on farms where tuberculosis reactors have been detected were noted.

A first round of wildlife rabies vaccination programme has been carried out this autumn and evidence of its implementation was available. Controls on its effectiveness will start as soon as the necessary equipment will be made available.

The two NRLs visited were well equipped and had professional and dedicated staff. Quality control systems were operated as planned. Proficiency tests between regional laboratories involved in rabies diagnosis showed some diagnostic deficiencies, which had not yet been followed up by the NRL.

6.7. Contingency plans

In general, implementation of the contingency plans can be considered satisfactory, with a clear chain of command. Some shortcomings need to be addressed to meet the requirements of Community legislation (Council Directives 92/40/EEC, 92/66/EEC and 92/119/EEC).

The awareness of the CPs is satisfactory at all levels, but different versions of the plans were found in the sites visited.

National and Local Disease Crisis Centres are well organised and equipped, a list and register of poultry farms were present at CCA level, and knowledge of backyard poultry flocks was seen at RVO level.

High bio security measures were seen in most of the poultry farms visited.

6.8. Miscellaneous

Incorrect application of Community legislation on animal by-products (Regulations (EC) No 1774/2002 and No 999/2001) was found in farms where slaughtering for own consumption is allowed, and in some visited meat and milk processing establishments.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF ESTONIA

(1) To ensure the registration of all eligible livestock holdings.

(2) To take measures to avoid delays in notification of events (births, deaths, movements) to the Central Database.

(3) To ensure that irregularities on animal identification and holding registration are corrected as soon as possible, and that sanctions are applied according to Community legislation (Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98).

(4) To correct the shortcomings detected in the visited establishments on trichina examination.

(5) To ensure effective supervision of own-check control plans in food processing establishments, according to Community legislation (Council Directives 64/433/EEC and Commission Decision 2001/471/EC).

(6) To ensure the full application of the national monitoring programme for bovine tuberculosis and to strengthen the control measures on farms where reactors are detected.

(7) To guarantee appropriate follow-up action as regards rabies diagnosis between all laboratories involved, included further training for the benefit of staff.

(8) To amend the contingency plans taking into consideration the findings made in this report, to bring them fully in line with Community legislation (Council Directives 92/40/EEC, 92/66/EEC and 92/119/EEC).

(9) To enhance controls in the food processing establishments, on farms allowed to slaughter animals for own consumption and in ABP processing establishments, to ensure compliance with requirements of Regulations (EC) No 1774/2002 and No 999/2001.

ADDENDUM

On 26 January 2006 the Estonian authorities informed the Commission services of actions either already taken or planned in respect of the recommendations set out in the draft report.

ANNEX

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
Council Directive 77/96/EEC	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 67	Council Directive 77/96/EEC of 21 December 1976 on the examination for trichinae (trichinella spiralis) upon importation from third countries of fresh meat derived from domestic swine
Council Directive 77/99/EEC	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 85	Council Directive 77/99/EEC of 21 December 1976 on health problems affecting the production and marketing of meat products and certain other products of animal origin
Council Directive 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 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
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
Council Directive 92/40/EEC	L 167, 22.06.92, 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
Council Directive 92/46/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/46/EEC of 16 June 1992 laying down the health rules for the production and placing on the market of raw milk, heat-treated milk and milk-based products
Council Directive 92/66/EEC	L 260, 05.09.92, p.1	Council Directive 92/66/EEC of 14 July 1992 introducing Community measures for the control of Newcastle disease
Council Directive 92/102/EEC	L 355, 05.12.1992, p. 32	Council Directive 92/102/EEC of 27 November 1992 on the identification and registration of animals
Council Directive 92/119/EEC	L 062, 15.03.1993, p. 69	Council Directive 92/119/EEC of 17 December 1992 introducing general Community measures for the control of certain animal diseases and specific measures relating to swine vesicular 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
Council Directive	L 330, 05.12.1998, p. 32	Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on

European legislation	OJ	Title
98/83/EC		the quality of water intended for human consumption
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 of the European Parliament and of the Council	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
Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council	L 147, 31.05.2001, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies
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 Regulation (EC) No 2419/2001	L 327, 12.12.2001, p.11	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2419/2001 of 11 December 2001 laying down detailed rules for applying the integrated administration and control system for certain Community aid schemes established by Council Regulation (EC) No 3508/92
Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council	L 273, 10.10.2002, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 October 2002 laying down health rules concerning animal by-products not intended for human consumption
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 the identification and registration of ovine and caprine animals and amending Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003 and Directives 92/102/EEC and 64/432/EEC.
Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004	L 163, 30.04.2004, p. 65	Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004 of 29 April 2004 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards eartags, passports and holding registers
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 in L 189, 27.05.2004, p. 31	Commission Decision 2004/432/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 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