SUMMARY RECORD OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 23 AUGUST 2007
(Section Animal Health and Welfare)

President: Bernard Van Goethem for item 1 - Alberto Laddomada for items 2 to 8

All the Member States were present, except Estonia, which was represented by Finland.

1. Foot-and-mouth disease situation in the United Kingdom.

The UK delegation provided the committee with updated information on the outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) which have occurred in Guilford in Surrey and were reported by the UK authorities on 3rd and 7th August 2007.

The UK reported that all the measures required by community law were implemented and that in addition a restrictive zone was put on, covering the whole of Great Britain and excluding Northern Ireland, considered free of FMD. By 9th August all the culling and preliminary cleansing and disinfection of infected holdings was completed.

The two Commission Decisions were implemented, the initial one (2007/552/EC) and the second decision (2007/554/EC) part of it including a requirement to ensure that personal export did not leave UK. Additional certification measures were also put in place and disinfection of cars at ports.

In the protection zone there were 87 premises with livestock on them, all sheep and goats have been sampled for serology with negative results and multiple clinical risk-based inspections have been carried out. Additional clinical inspection of all stock will start on 24th including in the surveillance zone, in view of lifting the protection zone.

The strain has been identified as FMD O1 BFS 1860/67 and comes from the 1860th case in the UK in 1967. The strain is used for research and for vaccine manufacture at the Pirbright site.

A detailed examination is ongoing to find the source of the infection. The suspicion points to a release from the Pirbright site. How it occurred is still subject to an independent investigation held by a multi disciplinary team. Options are still open like windborne, effluents or formite spread from the premises. Two independent reports will most probably be published early next week.
In terms of spread from the infected premises all possible routes of spread of infection have been investigated: movements of animals, people and vehicles. Some extensive modelling has been done that shows that the spread from the infected area is very low.

From the first infected area only one cattle moved directly to slaughter on 10 July and there were no recent movements off the second infected area. There was an intensive surveillance in the protection zone and all results were negative.

The UK delegation concluded as follows:

- Localised outbreak with only two infected herds
- Point source of infection has been established
- No at-risk live animals or products moved off the infected holdings
- Good evidence from tracings and surveillance that at-risk animals did not leave the protection zone or surveillance zone.

2. **Highly pathogenic avian influenza situation in the Czech Republic, Germany and France.**

The French delegation informed the Committee that the situation regarding highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has not changed a lot since the last report. The infected area is still in the department of Moselle in the North East of France. The surveillance has been reinforced on wild birds found dead. All the 260 samples taken were negative. An increased surveillance has been maintained on the whole of the French territory in view of avoiding contacts between wild birds and others.

The German delegate gave a short update presentation outlining the evolution of the HPAI cases in Germany, reaching a total of 329 infected wild birds including the latest cases in Bavaria.

The Czech delegate reported that no new cases occurred since the last positive case in July. The restriction measures were lifted last week.

The Commission strongly encouraged the Czech Republic to perform a thorough epidemiological investigation on the origin of the outbreak.

3. **Information from Italy on low pathogenic avian influenza and from Hungary on seropositivity for avian influenza in poultry holdings.**

The Italian delegate reported that some cases of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) of the H7 subtype were diagnosed on 31 July 2007 in the Municipality of Ruoti - Potenza Province (Basilicata Region).

Starting from 13 August 2007, three LPAI of the H5N2 subtype outbreaks have occurred in the Municipality of Lugo di Romagna in the Ravenna Province (Emilia Romagna Region). Cases of positive H7 subtype occurred on 21 August in the same province.
On 17 August small poultry tested positive for H7 serology in the Conselice Municipality. No LPAI virus was isolated. On 18 August control measures were enforced according to Directive 2005/94/CE and on 19 August all the birds were killed.

In all cases none of the birds showed clinical symptoms, control measures were enforced according to Directive 2005/94/CE and all the birds were stamped out.

In the Lombardia region two outbreaks of LPAI H7 subtype have occurred, starting from 22 August.

Restriction measures were enforced in all the regions affected and at-risk regions. Italy is also planning to implement an emergency vaccination programme according to article 53, 54 and 55 of Council Directive 2005/94/EC.

The Commission stated that the topic of vaccination will be further discussed.

Referring to the situation in Emilia Romagna and Basilicata region, the Commission expressed some doubts on the necessity to report primary outbreaks of LPAI when only seropositive animals were found but completely agreed with the strong measures taken in Italy, considering the bad experience Italy had with LPAI.

In this regard, the Commission made the following statement, with the consensus of the Committee:

The Italian authorities have informed the Committee today of two suspected outbreaks of low pathogenic avian influenza of subtype H7 in the province of Brescia, Lombardy region, and the measures taken as foreseen in Directive 2005/94/EC.
In addition, the Italian authorities have informed about additional measures they intend to take in the following days in particular the standstill for 10 days of movements of all live poultry in the affected region and the prohibition of restocking of turkey holdings in the areas of Northern Italy at higher risk of infection (Densely Populated Poultry Area – DPPA).
Furthermore the Italian authorities have informed the Committee that they intend to apply emergency vaccination in the area at major risk of Veneto and Lombardy.
In due course a vaccination plan will be submitted to the Commission for approval.
The Committee supports the measures taken by Italy so that they will lead to a rapid halt of the disease.

Further to the detailed report which was sent to the Commission end of July, the Hungarian representative gave a short update about the LPAI situation in geese and duck holdings in Hungary. There were initially 2 HPAI outbreaks in January (in the county of Csongrád) which led to a comprehensive surveillance further to which 3 more seropositive flocks were found. As only breeder holdings appeared to be positive, all poultry breeder holdings in the country were tested and 15 were found positive. All virological tests proved to be negative but H5N2 antibodies were found. Restrictive measures were implemented and are still in place. At the moment 5 goose
breeders are still seropositive. There were no clinical signs and no evidence for illegal vaccination so no explanation was found to the seropositivity.

The Commission commented that the Members States should continue to discuss the option of vaccination with the stakeholders but making clear that vaccination cannot be applied on individual initiatives.

4. Information from the Commission on avian influenza surveillance in Member States.

A representative of the Commission presented the state of play of the online reporting system on avian influenza surveillance (AI) in the Member States. In the July meeting the report on surveillance data in wild birds for 2006 was presented and afterwards put on the SANCO web site and comments from Member States were requested. A few comments were received only a few days ago so it was not possible to provide the final version for today's meeting. The final report for 2006 will be ready for next meeting as well as the first report for the first quarter of 2007 and the report concerning the surveillance data for poultry and wild birds.

The Commission representative thanked the Committee members for their efforts in trying to use the new system and as a result of the various problems encountered it was decided to further extend the deadline until 30th September in order to allow the Member States to feed the information for the second quarter of 2007, exclusively through the online system. It was requested that the Member States who have not yet answered to the message concerning the AI surveillance system for 2008 should try to do so as quickly as possible. The Member States will soon receive their own login and password to have access to their personal data. An explanatory document will be sent providing guidance on how to get into system.

5. Information from Bulgaria on Newcastle Disease.

The Bulgarian delegate gave a presentation on Newcastle Disease (ND) informing the Committee that there have been 3 outbreaks in Bulgaria in 2007. One occurred in Gigen, municipality of Guliantsi (administrative district of Pleven), the second one in Kostelevo, municipality of Vratsa (administrative district of Vratsa) and the last one was confirmed on 25th July in Medeni Polyani in the municipality of Velingrad (administrative district of Pazardjik).

Bulgaria informed the Committee that all measures for the control of ND had been taken in accordance with Council Directive 92/66/EEC. Between 6 and 10 August 191 cloacal samples were taken from poultry and waterfowls kept in the villages in the 10 km surveillance zone and the results were all negative. The Bulgarian delegate concluded by saying that the last cleaning procedure and final disinfection will be carried out next week in view of lifting the restriction measures.

6. Bluetongue situation in the EU.

The Luxembourg delegate gave an update of the bluetongue situation, showing a map of infected holdings (5) and of suspected holdings (22). The virus activity has increased and since 20th August, the 20 km zone has been enlarged, to cover the whole country. Serological and virological surveillance is still being carried out.
The Belgian delegate shortly informed the Committee on the bluetongue situation. To date, 658 cases were confirmed, mainly concentrated in the North of the country. He also pointed out that the virus with serotype 8 has much higher virulence in sheep flocks with an increase in mortality. Regarding trade, Decision 2005/393/EC has been applied and protocol number 7 has been signed with other countries.

The delegate from the Netherlands drew a comparison between the 2006 bluetongue outbreak and the one they are experiencing now. Since the summer there have been 378 new outbreaks in the South of the country and on 22nd August they had one in the North of the country (Friesland). On 22nd August the whole of the country was declared surveillance zone. The outbreak of this year has somewhat different characteristics to the one of last year because of rapid increases of cases. It seems to be spreading faster, which explains the rapidly increasing number of outbreaks. There are 10 times more culicoides in the traps, clinical signs in the cattle and the sheep are more serious and the mortality is higher.

The German delegate gave a short update presentation of the bluetongue situation in the country. Since 1st July, 633 outbreaks have been confirmed in Germany which is far more than in 2006. Amongst these cases the spread in species is more or less the same as last year, 2 third in bovine and 1 third in sheep. The distribution of the cases is similar to last year with a slight move to the south east of the country. The 20km surveillance zone was extended accordingly.

The French delegate gave a presentation on the evolution of the bluetongue situation in France noting that 30 cases were found in 2006. Today's state of play shows that, like in other Member States, there has been an increase, both in cases and in 20 km affected areas, nearly all situated near the Belgian border. To date, 36 cases have been confirmed and 50 suspicions are pending. The French delegate said that, only one case so, like in other Member States an increase of clinical symptoms has been noted.

The Commission concluded that the numbers of bluetongue outbreaks has clearly increased in comparison to last year and that more outbreaks and further geographical spread could be expected in the coming weeks. The Commission explained that it has received a request from France to change the annex of Decision 2005/393/EC as regards restricted zones in relation to bluetongue. Consequently, the Commission presented a Draft Commission Decision SANCO/10269/2007 amending Decision 2005/393/EC as regards restricted zones in relation to bluetongue.

Following the notification of outbreaks of bluetongue in mid-August and early September 2006 by Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands, the Commission has amended several times Decision 2005/393/EC as regards the demarcation of the restriction zones concerned. Following a substantial request submitted by France, it is appropriate to amend the demarcation of the restricted zone in France. Decision 2005/393 should therefore be amended accordingly.

Vote: unanimous in favour.
7. Information from Romania about the classical swine fever situation.

The Romanian delegate gave an update of the situation regarding classical swine fever (CSF) in the country, as two outbreaks of classical swine fever (CSF) were confirmed on 2nd and on 6th August 2007 in 2 professional farms in the County of Timis (Transylvania). The initial epidemiological investigation revealed major problems in the 2 holdings were the outbreaks occurred such as deficient management, poor bio-safety measures, overpopulated shelters, etc. It also appeared that they had no sanitary veterinary approval for functioning, such as more than half of the holdings situated in the Timis County. Blood analysis proved that the first outbreak started in Cenei. A vaccination programme started in December 2006 but the process was stopped in July 2007 because of lack of vaccine.

Control measures were implemented in accordance with Council Directive 89/2001/EC provisions. 7000 pigs were killed up to 21st August 2007 and some problems were met concerning the neutralizing the corpses, which slowed down the process of stamping out animals.

A new outbreak was confirmed on 22nd August in the holding of Igris 1 (Timis County).

The Commission showed its serious concern on the current situation and pointed on the fact that the outbreak was notified very lately and that essential information is missing, including very basic data. The Commission insisted on the importance of good epidemiological information, it expressed its consternation on the fact that so many holdings were not authorized, that many farms were not vaccinated in time and there was no proper control.

The Commission informed the Committee of a FVO mission which will be held next week in Romania that will provide further information on the situation.


Taking account of the current FMD situation in the UK, the Commission proposed to adjust the areas under restriction to take account of the outcome of tracing of possible contacts to the infected holdings and the implemented controls on the movement of animals and products.

At this point of time and based on information provided by the United Kingdom, the areas listed in Annex I and in Annex II to Decision 2007/554/EC should include the protection zones around the confirmed outbreaks and the surrounding consolidated surveillance zone in Surrey.

In the light of the epidemiological situation and the effective control measures implemented in the high risk area, the aforementioned modification removes the buffer zone between the reduced high risk area and the disease free part of the United Kingdom. It requires however for the part of Great Britain outside the surveillance zone to apply the same additional veterinary supervision and certification as in place for Northern Ireland since Decision 2007/554/EC was adopted.
In addition, restrictions on the movement of equidae and the requirement to expose vehicle tyres to disinfectant throughout the United Kingdom should be withdrawn.

**Vote: unanimous in favour.**

9. **Miscellaneous: Brucellosis in Bulgaria**

The Bulgarian delegate gave a recapitulation on the situation on brucella melitensis in 2006 and reported on a recent outbreak, which was confirmed on 20\textsuperscript{th} August 2007. The Committee was informed that 20 ruminants in 11 backyards were affected in the village of Valchio pole, municipality of Lubimets (administrative district of Haskovo).

On 20\textsuperscript{th} August 20 small ruminants were affected in the village of Valchio pole, municipality of Lubimets (administrative district of Haskovo).

All large ruminants and equines in the village gave negative results for brucellosis. The National Veterinary Service has taken all the measures in accordance with Council Directive 1991/68/EC.

The probable sources of infection are the contacts with legal or illegal imports of ruminants from neighbouring countries.

- The item on the Avian Influenza surveillance in Norway was postponed to the next meeting, to be held next 11-12 September.