President: Alberto Laddomada.

All the Member States were present. Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Portugal were partly absent but represented. Finland was partly absent and not represented.

1. Update from the Member States on the bluetongue situation.

The Swedish representative made a presentation on the BTV-8 situation. Surveillance started in June 2008 all over Sweden. On 6 September, BTV-8 was confirmed in 5 animals by PCR test in one dairy herd after routine surveillance. Immediate measures applied and a restricted and protection zone established.

Vaccination and sampling applied in the holdings located within a 2km radius from the infected holding. Holdings within a 10km radius were investigated and in total, 13 animals were found PCR positive in six of those holdings. Animals didn't show any clinical signs. All positive animals were culled. Vaccination in a 20km radius is ongoing and will be expanded to a 60 km zone and later to the rest of the 100km radius during autumn and winter. Holdings around the infected herds are under investigation.

The Commission representative commented that this further geographical spread of bluetongue is an indication of the risk that this disease poses for the EU. The Commission representative also stressed out the importance of having a good surveillance plan in place. Despite the fact that in Denmark such a plan is established and that the virus circulation is very limited, the virus has managed to cross the sea and spread over for about 150km.

The Hungarian representative made a presentation on the first positive case in Hungary confirmed on 5 September 2008. That case concerns animals imported from France in July from a BTV-8 zone, un-vaccinated and according to the certificate, serologically negative. After arriving in Hungary, 47 animals were found serologically positive and of those, 17 were found PCR positive. Immediate measures applied in the infected holding. The PCR positive bovine animals were killed and destructed and the seropositive but vironegative animals were slaughtered. Protection and surveillance zones were established covering a 150km radius from the infected holding. Those zones cover parts of Romanian and Slovakian territory. Investigations are still ongoing with negative results so far. Vaccination is applied in a 20km radius from the infected holding and
after an assessment of the situation it might apply in the whole protection and surveillance zone. The virus serotype is still not known awaiting for the results of the tests on samples sent to the Community Reference Laboratory. However, the animals were from the part of France where there is only BTV-8 circulation, far from the restricted zone for BTV-1.

The Slovak representative informed that due to that case in Hungary, certain protective measures apply in Slovakia as well.

Romania, the Netherlands and Germany informed the Committee that in some cases, animals are found to be seropositive when they arrive on their territory after having been vaccinated in the country of origin and sometimes they are not. Therefore, the Community's Reference Laboratory should assist in further investigations on the vaccines and the tests that are being performed.

The Belgian representative made a presentation. To date, 7 outbreaks occurred in 2008 most of them in dairy herds, all in non-vaccinated animals. In comparison to 2007, there is a strong reduction of outbreaks. Vaccination is ongoing and until the 11th of September, a total of 2 million vaccine doses were distributed among cattle, sheep, goat and deer populations.

The Spanish representative made a presentation. In total, 327 outbreaks occurred until 2 September 2008, most of them in cattle. Currently two restricted zones exist with regards serotypes 1, 4 and 8. There is only a small disease free zone in the centre of the country. The Spanish authorities announce that vaccination against BTV-8 will apply all over Spain and therefore the whole territory of Spain will be regarded as a BTV8 zone.

The Danish representative made a presentation. 5 outbreaks occurred in Denmark in 2008, between 27 August and 16 September. The protection zone covers the whole of Denmark. Vaccination will apply all over the country covering more than 1 million of animals. As there was limited availability of vaccine, Austria has provided Denmark with the rest of the vaccine doses needed to start vaccination.

Germany informed the Committee that 329 new cases occurred in September; 9 of them at the borders in the northern part of Saxony. In total, in 2008, there are 1018 outbreaks.

The French representative made a presentation. In 2008, until 15 September, 1217 outbreaks of BTV1 and nearly 14000 of BTV8 occurred. The whole territory of France is affected and two restricted zones are currently in place; one for BTV-8 which covers all the country and one for both BTV-8 and BTV-1 at the border with Spain. Vaccination against BTV-8 applies in the whole of the country and for this purpose 26 million of vaccine doses will be distributed among bovine and a further 10 million among small ruminants. Vaccination against BTV-8 is obligatory for animals intended for intra-community trade if the Member State of destination requires so. Vaccination against BTV-1 will apply in certain departments and is obligatory. 3, 5 million of doses will be distributed for bovine and 4 million for the small ruminants.

The Luxembourg's representative briefly informed that in total in 2008, 12 cases were detected (11 in bovine and 1 in a goat).

The Dutch representative informed that there are no major developments. There are 33 outbreaks so far and all in the north of the Netherlands. From the 7 million of vaccine doses ordered, 6 million were distributed in July and August, 0,5 million will be
distributed in September and the last 0.5 million is expected to be delivered to the Dutch authorities in September.

The British representative informed that there are no new cases detected in 2008 however, there were 145 cases linked to infection from 2007. Furthermore, epidemiological investigations are ongoing in 7 holdings which have imported PCR positive animals. 35.5 million of vaccine doses were ordered to cover the whole of England and Wales. Vaccination started on 15 September and 13 million of doses will be distributed.

A hard copy of the presentations of the Czech Republic, Romania and Portugal were distributed during the meeting however those were not discussed due to shortage of time.

1A. Information on Listeria cases in Canada.

Member States were informed about the listeria cases in Canada during the last meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September. Information received by the Canadian authorities has been forwarded to the Member States. The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have taken all appropriate measures. The meat products (approximately 200) produced at the implicated plant (Maple Leaf Products) have been recalled and the plant suspended operations on August 20. Those are products distributed at the national market and were not exported to any EU country. The Canadian competent authorities continue investigations in order to trace the source of the disease. Public awareness was raised and Canadian establishments that manufacture ready-to-eat meat products were advised to take stringent cleaning and disinfection measures.

The listeria investigation report on the outbreak which includes questions and answers for consumers and was prepared by the Canadian competent authorities has been communicated to the Commission and was distributed to the Member States during the meeting.

Some Member States asked the Commission to also investigate possible infection in products other than meat products and to request further information on this issue from the Canadian authorities.

2. 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.

No item raised.

3. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Regulation laying down a list of third countries for imports and transit through the Community of meat of wild leporidae, farmed rabbits and wild land mammals and the veterinary certification requirements thereof. (Doc. SANCO/1823/2008 – Rev.4)
The title of the draft Regulation presented at the meeting has changed from the one included on the agenda, to read as follows:

Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Regulation laying down a list of third countries or parts thereof, for imports into, or transit through, the Community of meat of wild leporidae, of certain wild land mammals and of farmed rabbits and the veterinary certification requirements.

This draft Regulation was presented earlier on the day of 16 September, during the meeting of the Biological Safety section of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (see item 3 of that agenda). The Commission took note of comments from the Member States and amended the draft accordingly. The members of that Committee expressed their agreement on the draft.

The revised draft was presented again during the meeting of this Committee for an opinion.

Community provisions concerning health conditions for import from third countries and transit through the Community of meat of wild leporidae, farmed rabbits and wild land mammals are laid down in Commission Decision 2000/585/EC. That Decision draws up a list of third countries from which Member States are to authorise such imports.

Council Decision 79/542/EEC draws up a list of third countries or parts thereof to be used for imports into, or transit through the Community, of meat of wild leporidae and of farmed rabbits. That list should be laid down for imports or transit through the Community, for meat of wild land mammals other than ungulates and leporidae.

The existing Community legislation as regards imports of meat of wild leporidae, farmed rabbits and wild land mammals should take into account the public health requirements laid down in Regulations (EC) Nos 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, 853/2004 on specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin, 854/2004 on specific rules for the organisation, of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption and 882/2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules. For harmonization purposes, conditions for imports into the Community of the commodities concerned, as well as making them more transparent and simplifying the legislative procedure for amending such conditions, those conditions should be set out in the appropriate model veterinary certificates laid down in this draft Regulation. The veterinary certificates should comply with the appropriate standard models set out in Commission Decision 2007/240/EC and be compatible with the TRACES system. To avoid any disruption of trade, the use of veterinary certificates issued in accordance with Decision 2000/585/EC should be authorised during a transitional period.

The purpose of this draft Regulation is to repeal and replace Commission Decision 2000/585/EC for clarity reasons.

Vote: unanimous in favour.

4. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Regulation derogating from Regulation [SANCO/1140/2008] and suspending the
imports into the Community from Malaysia of consignments of certain live fish. (Doc. SANCO/2771/2008 – Rev.1)

The title of the draft Regulation presented at the meeting has changed from the one included on the agenda, to read as follows:

Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Regulation derogating from Regulation (EC) No xxx/2008 (SANCO/1140/2008) and suspending imports into the Community from Malaysia of consignments of certain aquaculture animals.

This draft Regulation was presented at the previous meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September 2008 (agenda item 13D). Then, Member States were asked to send any comments to the Commission with the intention to present this document for an opinion at the Biological Safety section of this Committee. However, since that meeting was held on the same day as the one of the Animal Health and Welfare section, on 16 September 2008, the Commission presented the draft for an opinion at the latter one.

Following the suggestion of the Commission's legal service, some editorial changes were introduced on the text. This draft Regulation is expected to be published and enter into force on the same date as document SANCO/1140/2008.

Vote: unanimous in favour.


The title of the draft Decision presented at the meeting has changed from the one included on the agenda, to read as follows:


This draft Regulation was discussed during the last meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September 2008 (agenda item 14). Member States have sent comments on the draft which were taken into account during the preparation of revision 2 of the document. The new version is still under exam of the Commission services. Member States further discussed the document and were requested to send additional comments to the Commission.

Vote: postponed.

conditions for imports of certain birds into the Community and the quarantine conditions thereof. (Doc. SANCO/2787/2008 – Rev.1)

This draft Regulation was discussed during the last meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September 2008 (agenda item 18).

Commission Regulation (EC) No 318/2007 lays down the animal health conditions for imports of certain birds other than poultry into the Community and the quarantine conditions applicable to such birds after import. Annex V to that Regulation sets out a list of quarantine facilities and centres approved by the competent authorities of the Member States for import of certain birds other than poultry.

Italy has reviewed its approved quarantine facilities and centres and has sent an updated list of approved quarantine facilities and centres to the Commission.


Vote: unanimous in favour.


Council Decision 79/542/EEC draws up a list of third countries or parts thereof from which Member States are authorised to import fresh meat of certain animals. That Decision also lays down animal and public health and veterinary certification conditions, for importation into the Community of certain live animals and their fresh meat.

In July 2008, the status of foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination was reinstated by the OIE for the Brazilian State of Mato Grosso do Sul. Considering the results of inspections carried out in Brazil, this State should be re-included in the list of territories from which imports into the Community of fresh-de-boned and matured bovine meat are authorised.

Furthermore, certain areas of the Brazilian States of Mato Grosso and Minas Gerais are at present not included in the list of territories from which imports into the Community of fresh de-boned and matured bovine meat are authorised. The status of foot-and-mouth disease free with vaccination was recognised by the OIE for those two States. Based on the OIE recognition and on the guarantees provided by the Brazilian authorities as regards the animal health controls in place in those States, those should be included in the list of territories from which imports of such products are authorised.

The purpose of this draft Decision is to amend Decision 79/542/EEC accordingly.

The draft could not be presented for an opinion since the internal consultation procedure was not finished. Member States discussed it and commented on specific issues.

Vote: postponed.
8. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1266/2007 as regards the minimum requirements for bluetongue monitoring and surveillance programmes. (Doc. SANCO/2157/2008 – Rev.4)

The title of the draft Regulation presented at the meeting has changed from the one included on the agenda, to read as follows:

Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1266/2007 as regards the minimum requirements for bluetongue monitoring and surveillance programmes and the conditions for exempting semen from the exit ban provided for in Council Directive 2000/75/EC.

This draft Regulation proposes three changes in Regulation (EC) No 1266/2007.

Firstly to amend the requirements for the surveillance and monitoring programmes, taking into consideration the change of the immune status of the susceptible species population, resulted from the mass emergency vaccination campaign against various types of bluetongue implemented in the EU.

Secondly, for clarity reasons and for a more harmonized approach, the beginning and the end of the seasonally vector-free period should be based on standardized surveillance data.

Finally, in the interests of certainty of Community legislation, it is appropriate to clarify certain requirements as regards the testing regimes of semen donor animals, in particular as regards post-collection testing. Regulation (EC) No 1266/2007 should be amended accordingly.

Italy abstained and made the following statement regarding Annex I of the Regulation:

"Italy considers that the only adequate surveillance system is the one based on sentinels and therefore decided to abstain because random surveillance does not provide sufficient information."

Vote: qualified majority with 309 votes in favour, 29 votes abstained, 7 votes absent, five Member States were absent but represented.


This draft Decision was discussed during the last meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September 2008 (agenda item 17). Since then, the Commission's legal service has suggested some minor linguistic amendments and those where taken into account for the preparation of this new version of the draft.

Vote: unanimous in favour.
9A. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2007/716/EC as regards certain establishments in the meat and milk sectors in Bulgaria. (Doc. SANCO/2733/2008 – Rev.1)

Commission Decision 2007/716/EC lays down transitional measures for structural requirements of certain establishments in the meat and milk sectors in Bulgaria. As long as those establishments are in transition, products originating from them should only be placed on the domestic market or used for further processing in Bulgarian establishments in transition.

According to an official declaration from the Bulgarian competent authority, certain establishments benefiting from a transitional period have ceased their activities or have completed their upgrading process and are now in full compliance with Community structural requirements. Those establishments should therefore be deleted from the list of establishments in transition.

The purpose of this draft Decision is to amend the Annex to Decision 2007/716/EC accordingly.

Vote: unanimous in favour.

9B. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Decision amending the Appendix to Annex VI to the Act of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania as regards certain milk processing establishments in Bulgaria. (Doc. SANCO/2734/2008 – Rev.1)

Appendix to Annex VI to the Act of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania lists milk establishments which comply with structural requirements and have been authorised to receive and process compliant and non-compliant raw milk.

According to an official declaration of the Bulgarian competent authorities six milk processing establishments have completed their upgrading process and are now in full compliance with Community structural requirements. However those establishments will receive and process compliant and non-compliant raw milk. Therefore those establishments should be deleted from the list of establishments in transition and should be included to the list of Chapter I of the Appendix to Annex VI.

The purpose of this draft Decision is to amend the Appendix to Annex VI to the Act of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania accordingly.

Vote: unanimous in favour.

9C. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2006/241/EC as regards the import of certain species of snails for human consumption from Madagascar. (Doc. SANCO/2498/2008 – Rev.1)
This draft Decision was discussed during the last meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September 2008 (agenda item 15).

Commission Decision 2006/241/EC concerns certain protective measures with regard to certain products of animal origin, excluding fishery products, originating from Madagascar. According to that Decision, imports of animal products, other than fishery products, originating from Madagascar are prohibited.

The results of an inspection mission carried out in March 2007 in order to assess public health controls and the conditions for the production of fishery products in that third country and the follow-up information submitted by the Malagasy authorities, show that the appropriate guarantees are provided by that country to also allow imports from it into the Community of certain species of snails for human consumption.

The purpose of this draft Decision is to amend Commission Decision 2006/241/EC accordingly.

**Vote: unanimous in favour.**

**9D. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Decision concerning preventive vaccination against low pathogenic avian influenza in mallard ducks in Portugal and certain measures restricting the movements of such poultry and their products. (Doc. SANCO/1469/2008 – Rev.2)**

Decision 2008/285/EC approved an emergency vaccination plan against low pathogenic avian influenza in breeding mallard ducks in one holding in Portugal that was completed by 31 July 2008.

The information provided by Portugal indicates that the low pathogenic avian influenza outbreak is now contained.

However, based on a further risk assessment carried out by Portugal, it is deemed that there is still a risk that avian influenza could be introduced in holdings that keep poultry intended for restocking.

Portugal has therefore on 11 September 2008 submitted a preventive vaccination plan to the Commission for approval, which should be carried out until 31 July 2009.

The Commission considers that the preventive vaccination plan complies with Community legislation and that it should therefore be approved.

The document "Preventive vaccination plan in Portugal" has been distributed however as it was presented during the previous meeting of this Committee held on 30 June and 1 July 2008 (see item 6 of that agenda), it was not presented again. During that meeting, the vote on this draft Decision was postponed due to the fact that the Portuguese authority still had not received confirmation from the vaccine supplier on the delivery of vaccine (see item 15 of that agenda). Since then, thanks to the efforts made by France, the United Kingdom and the Commission, the necessary vaccine doses are available. Small changes have been introduced into the vaccination plan and the Portuguese authorities could start implementing it.
Vote: unanimous in favour.

Miscellaneous

Issues raised by the Member States:

- The Italian representative informed about a case of West Nile fever in a horse in the Ferrara region, Northern Italy. Blood samples were taken from the horse on September 8 and the positive results confirmed the infection on September 10. Samples were also taken on September 15 from horses showing clinical symptoms in the Emilia Romagna region. The results are not known yet. The holdings are under restrictions. On the same day, a meeting has been organised with the participation of the public health services and it was decided to have extensive checks for that disease in the Emilia Romagna region. An information campaign is in place, veterinarians' awareness was raised, the necessary measures are taken in order to realise the length of the outbreak and a future strategy is already launched. Entomological investigation is ongoing. The reference center for exotic diseases has so far not confirmed the presence of the infection in wild birds.

The Commission representative informed that there is a vaccine available for West Nile fever and Italy should consider applying vaccination in horses.

- The Austrian representative informed that as of 28 September, Austria declares itself free from rabies. A report was distributed during the meeting, which demonstrates that Austria complies with the requirements of rabies freedom according to the Terrestrial Animal Health Code 2007. A brief description of the Austrian national wide rabies control and monitoring programme is given in that report. Austria has informed the Commission, the OIE and WHO about its rabies free status, on 10 September 2008.

Issues raised by the Commission:

- The Commission representative informed that bivalve molluscs imported from Peru into Spain were found positive to hepatitis A. Information on all the consignments containing such products imported from that third country was sent to the Member States via the Rapid Alert Notification System. Spain recommended that those molluscs are returned to the importers and not to be consumed. The Peruvian authorities have already informed the Commission and all the importing countries of such products, that the exporting establishments have ceased operations. The importing countries should check those products and withdraw them from the market. The Commission services will prepare a draft decision proposing an import ban on those products and will inform the Member States and the Peruvian authorities accordingly.

- During the last meeting of this Committee held on 2 and 3 September, the Commission informed the Member States on imports of pig meat from Chile contaminated with dioxins. On September 9 a recommendation by the Commission was sent to the Member States to strengthen the normal controls already carried out for such pig meat from Chile. Following such controls, two cases of contamination were reported from Greece and Italy.
According to further information from the Chilean authorities, the contamination goes back to the end of 2007. Four out of the six slaughterhouses authorised for exports into the EU are involved. Those slaughterhouses represent 22% of the pig meat exports in Chile.

Member States expressed their concerns as to whether the information from the Chilean authorities is correct. Furthermore, they asked the Commission to give clear instructions on what kind of checks should be performed on those consignments. The Commission representative explained that according to the recommendation sent to them on the 9th of September, pig meat imported from Chile must be checked and the relevant costs will be undertaken by the importers.

- The Commission representative informed about milk and milk products contaminated with melamine in China. Many infants and young children got ill in China after having consumed infant milk contaminated with melamine. The import into the EU of milk and milk products from China is not allowed. However, composite products containing milk and milk products are imported in significant quantities from China. Member States were asked to be particularly vigilant as regards these products and to check the presence of melamine. The importing companies should be reminded and advised to check for the presence of melamine on the above mentioned products already imported from China.

All relevant information was sent to the Member States by the Commission through the Rapid Alert System for Feed and Food (RASFF) on 15 September 2008.

- Following a Food and Veterinary Office mission to Australia in May 2008, the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry asked the Commission for a clarification on the control of antibiotic residues in milk, calculation method of the Somatic Cell Count. The reply of the Commission to the request of the Australian authorities was distributed to the Member States for information.

- The Commission representative informed about a confirmed case of glanders in the city of Sao Paolo, Brazil. The Brazilian authorities have notified the OIE about this case on September 5. Following this notification to the OIE, export of equidae, semen or embryos from the entire export area of Brazil are blocked for a period of six months as export certificates cannot be signed, what also affects transit from Brazil via the EU to third countries.

The disease is endemic in the north-eastern part of Brazil. It appears that despite the regionalisation, infected animals were moved from the endemic areas into the disease free areas. The Brazilian authorities will provide the Commission with further information in order to modify the regionalisation. The intention of the Commission is to prepare a draft Decision according to which Sao Paolo will be excluded from the list of countries authorised to import equidae, semen or embryos into the EU.

- Information will be sent by the Commission to the Member States concerning imports of horses into the United Arab Emirates. The United Arab Emirates are not free from equine influenza but they have strengthened their import conditions. Member States' national equestrian federations and racing authorities should be made aware of this. A report on this issue was sent by the United Arab Emirates to the OIE.