

# **Statement of the Scientific Steering Committee on the SEAC Subgroup report on *Research and surveillance for tses in sheep*, released in April 1999. Adopted at the SSC meeting of 22-23 April 1999**

Following the release in April 1999 of the SEAC Subgroup report on Research and surveillance for TSEs in sheep, the European Commission invited the Scientific Steering Committee « *to provide the Commission with an opinion on whether or not the SEAC report is, in general, in line with the SSC opinion of 24-25 September 1998 on the Risk of infection of sheep and goats with the BSE agent . In addition, the Commission invited the SSC to provide an opinion on whether it is justified to take action as quickly as possible at Community level, and to what extent the SEAC recommendations are applicable to the entire Community*».

Recognising the different mandates that were at the basis of the SSC opinion and the SEAC Report, the SSC considers that:

1. Both documents are indeed in line with each other concerning the risk that BSE might have been introduced into sheep and goats and concerning the general recommendations that result from the recognition of this risk.
2. Whilst the SEAC report emphasises the situation in the UK, a focus should also be developed on other European countries with a population of sheep and/or goats, for example with respect to tracing the history of feeding practices with ruminant MBM.
3. Discrimination between BSE and scrapie in sheep and goats is a key-question. Surveillance and other efforts (e.g., the development of methods) to identify the presence of BSE in sheep and goats should therefore be initiated as soon as possible.
4. Along the same lines, an exercise should be conducted to assess of the possible geographical risk that BSE has been introduced into sheep. The method to assess the geographical BSE risk in cattle which has been developed by the SSC, could be adapted for that purpose.
5. The TSE/BSE ad hoc Group is invited to urgently evaluate the SSC and SEAC documents with respect to actions that need to be taken. It should report back to the SSC for an opinion at its meeting of 27-28 May 1999.

The SSC further invites the various Commission services to evaluate their ongoing research programmes in the light of the research priorities proposed in both documents, and to take appropriate action.