

# Summary record of the meeting of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare held on 27 June 2000 in Brussels adopted 25 October 2000

## List of Participants

### MEMBERS

Dr. R. Ahl, Dr. D. Alexander, Prof. D. Broom, Dr. R. Dantzer, Dr. F. Garrido-Abellan (Chairman), Prof. Dr. J. Hartung, Prof. P. Jensen, Prof. Dr. V. Moennig, Prof. G. Panina, Prof. A-L. Parodi, Prof. Dr. J. van Oirschot, Dr. E. Vanopdenbosch, Prof. M. Verga

### COMMISSION

Dr. J. Moynagh, Dr. G. Morosetti, Dr. I. Minguez, Dr L. Pena

### APOLOGIES

Prof. S. Alexandersen, Prof. J. Badiola Diez, Dr. M. Gunn, Dr. P. Le Neindre, Dr. D. B. Morton, Prof. J. Noordhuizen

## 1. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

## 2. Adoption of the record of the meeting of 21 March 2000

The minutes of the meeting were adopted with a few minor amendments.

## 3. Declarations of interest

No member reported any conflicts of interest relating to the items under discussion.

## 4. Report from the Subcommittee on Animal Welfare (Prof. Broom)

Prof. Broom reported on the activities of the Subcommittee on Animal Welfare. The subcommittee did not meet since the last meeting of the Committee and its work has concentrated on two reports which are being drawn up by specific working groups.

The first working group, which deals with the welfare of animals used for fur production and is chaired by Dr Dantzer, held its second meeting on 14 and 15 June. This meeting was held in Finland and involved a visit to the experimental fur animal facility of the University of Kuopio. This is one of the few facilities in Europe which houses most of the several animal species (artic/blue fox *Alopex lagopus*, red/silver fox *Vulpes vulpes*, raccoon dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides*, american mink *Mustela vison*, ferret *Mustela putorius furo*) involved in fur farming. This facility is also the only research facility outside Russia to possess the 'tame' foxes bred by the geneticist Prof Belayev for over 40 years in Novosibirsk, Siberia which appear to be more domesticated than the conventional breeds. The field visit was followed by a meeting of the working group where the current draft of the report was fully discussed and expanded. A further meeting of the expert group is planned for September in Brussels. The report is already quite advanced and good progress is being made.

The second group, chaired by Dr Le Neindre, deals with the welfare of cattle used for beef production and held its second meeting on 19 June in Brussels. Good progress is being made, the report framework has been agreed, the introductory chapters have been drafted and the discussion is now focussing on the core issues. The group will meet again in early September.

## **5. Report from the Subcommittee on Animal Health (Dr. Ahl)**

Dr Ahl reported that a meeting of the Subcommittee on Animal Health was held on 24 May. Three reports were discussed, all of which were on today's agenda for discussion and possible adoption. At the subcommittee meeting reports were adopted on avian influenza and on whether there was a zoonotic risk from infectious Salmon Anaemia virus. The third report, dealing with bluetongue was not adopted at the subcommittee meeting because of pressure of time. Work continued on the report by circulation and a meeting of the subcommittee was held just prior to the plenary at which it was possible to approve the draft. The changes from the draft circulated to all members of the Committee prior to today's meeting were minor.

A new working group on the use of marker vaccines against Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (BHV1), Chaired by Dr Vanopdenbosch held its first meeting on 21 June. Considerable agreement was reached on the direction and content of the report. It is hoped that this report will be ready for the meeting of the animal health subcommittee in September. Another new group dealing with the effect of composting fish waste on viruses from fish, chaired by Dr. Gunn was scheduled to meet for the first time on 13 July.

### **6.1 Discussion and possible adoption by the Committee of a report on the use of vaccination against Avian Influenza (Rapporteur Dr D. Alexander)**

This question had arisen because of the current outbreaks of the disease in Italy but has wider application. There, outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) were now occurring in areas where an ongoing outbreak of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) was occurring, probably as a result of the mutation of LPAI to HPAI. This scenario had been seen in three of the five serious extensive epizootics ie Pennsylvania, Mexico and Italy. The Committee was also requested to review the current definition of Avian Influenza contained in EU legislation (Council Directive 92/40/EEC).

The report advocated that the definition be broadened so that any influenza virus in birds of the H5 or H7 subtype would be treated as HPAI. The report also recommended that vaccination against HPAI be not normally permitted and emphasised the need for surveillance for the virus. The development of new marker vaccines was recommended as was an invitro replacement for the current pathogenicity test for AI viruses. The report also noted the potential zoonotic risk arising from resortment of AI viruses and advised that this be kept under review.

Following discussion and minor amendments the report was adopted unanimously by the Committee.

### **6.2 Discussion and possible adoption by the Committee of a report on the Possible use of Vaccination against Bluetongue (Rapporteur Prof. V. Moennig)**

This report had been stimulated by the recent outbreaks of bluetongue in Greece and in North Africa. The disease poses a considerable threat to the sheep and goat populations in affected areas. The only vaccine readily available was that used in South Africa which was a live vaccine containing strains from that area. Newer sub unit vaccines had been developed which could have several advantages but which were not yet available. The report recommended that the currently available vaccines could be used as an emergency action depending on cost/risk benefit analysis and the epidemiological situation. However, in the longer term, new efficacious and safe vaccines with marker properties, either based on DNA recombinant techniques or inactivated preparations, which exist but which are not commercially available should be developed for registration and commercial distribution. Prof. Moennig described the text in detail and in particular the minor changes that had been introduced as a result of the meeting of the animal health subcommittee that preceded the meeting. Following discussion and minor amendments the report was adopted unanimously by the Committee.

### **6.3 Discussion and possible adoption by the Committee of a report on the zoonotic risk from Infectious Salmon Anaemia. (Rapporteur Prof. J. Van Oirschot)**

The Committee was asked whether Infectious Salmon Anaemia should be regarded as a zoonosis and whether it posed any risks to man. Following a review of the evidence the report concluded that there was no reason to regard ISA as a zoonosis, and there was no evidence for risk to man. Following discussion, the report was adopted unanimously by the Committee.

## **7. Miscellaneous**

### **7.1 Transport of exotic animals**

This matter had been raised in the previous meeting of the committee. The Commission responded that the issue of animal transportation was being reviewed within the Commission and scientific advice would be required. It would therefore be the subject of a question to the Committee in the near future. It was anticipated that this could be discussed at the next meeting of the Animal Welfare subcommittee.

**The meeting closed at 17.00h**