

Minutes of the meeting of the expert group to discuss the delegated act on surveillance, eradication programmes and disease free status according to the Animal Health Law

1,2 October 2018, Brussels

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A preliminary agenda was circulated and agreed at the beginning of the meeting.

2. NATURE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was non-public. The Member States' and EEA countries' representatives from the competent veterinary authorities were participating in the meeting. The Chair noted that the Council and the European Parliament were not represented in the meeting.

3. INTRODUCTION

The Commission gave a detailed presentation of the drafts on the eradication programmes for infection with *Brucella abortus*, *B. melitensis* and *B. suis*, infection with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex, Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis/infectious pustular vulvovaginitis (IBR/IPV), infection with Aujeszky's disease virus (ADV), Enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL), rabies and infestation with *varroa spp* disease. Also, the Commission gave an overview of the approaches still under discussion of the drafts on the eradication programmes for infection with Bluetongue virus (BTV) and Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD).

4. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/OPINIONS

The outcomes of the discussions were the following.

4.1. The Commission presented the specific provision for eradication programmes for infection with *Brucella abortus*, *B. melitensis*, *B. suis* and infection with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex.

- Some experts were in favour to restrict the listed methods to those fit for granting disease free status or for certification, while some experts were more in favour of listing also methods used in other circumstances.
- Some experts welcomed the derogations to allow accelerated restoration of status free from infection with MTBC, while others considered short period for restoration should continue to be the rule as it is now. The Commission explained that, for the sake of consistency, the approach was to align the future provisions with the OIE chapters of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code that were recently adopted with the support of the Member States and to provide, when justified, for derogations.
- The Commission provided clarifications on the interpretation of certain provisions, and welcomed proposals for improved wording.

4.2 The Commission presented changes to the specific requirements related to IBR/IPV eradication and free status.

- Member States currently running a national IBR/IPV eradication programme expressed their concerns regarding the transition into approved eradication programmes.
 - In this context, the testing regimes for granting and maintenance of the disease-free status comprising of the test regimes with the age limit for testing were challenged.
 - Regarding the laboratory methods to be used in the context of disease eradication, some delegations were in favour of placing the responsibility for it on the National reference laboratories instead of referring to the OIE reference laboratory.
 - Furthermore, the ongoing use of DIVA vaccination in disease-free Member States/zones same was requested by some delegations.
 - In reply, the Commission referred to the current legislation from which the respective requirements were transferred into the draft without major changes. The Commission reminded that compulsory testing of individual animals to qualify for disease-freedom had once been agreed by the Member States. The Commission is of the opinion that vaccination is not compatible with the disease-free status.
- 4.3 The Commission presented changes to the specific requirements related to ADV eradication and free status.
- The requirements for maintaining the disease-free status, particularly the choice of the design prevalence were criticised by several delegations. For Member States with a long history of disease freedom the requirements for maintaining the status were considered disproportionate.
 - The Commission expressed the intention to further revise and adapt the respective subjects.
- 4.4 The Commission presented changes to the specific requirements related to EBL eradication and free status.
- In this context, the Member States were asked for their opinion regarding the introduction of animals into establishments, derogation from and maintenance of the disease-free status.
 - Regarding the maintenance of the disease-free status at the Member State/zone level, a number of delegations expressed their preference to stick to the current rules.
- 4.5 The Commission presented the specific provision for rabies eradication programmes.
- Several delegations proposed detailed technical comments that will be considered in future drafting and will improve the current text.
 - One delegation argued about the possibility of suspending the rabies free status when a case not acquired in the rabies Member State is detected. The Commission explained that as no trade rules are linked to the rabies free status of a Member State or zone, the suspension of the status will not have practical consequences and therefore, there is no value to add this suspension in the draft.
 - One delegation questioned the current system of monitoring the effectiveness of the oral rabies vaccination campaigns in wildlife. The Commission replied that

oral rabies vaccination campaigns are working well with the current monitoring system.

4.6 The Commission presented the specific criteria for areas to become and remain free of *Varroa spp.* and the specific provisions to diagnose it:

- Concerning the granting and maintenance of the status, two delegations supported it with both asking smaller clarifications (on geographical definition and supporting trade/import rules respectively), which were given. The Chair concluded broad tacit agreement of the Member States on these provisions.
- Concerning diagnosis, one delegation indicated written comments to come to clarify difference and complementarity of detection and identification aspects for these pathogens, while agreed with the general thrust of the provisions. The Commission concluded that these seem to be editorial changes and expressed its willingness to consider those and accommodate for them, while the core substance of the text remains as it is.

4.7 The Commission presented an overview of the approaches on the eradication programmes for infection with BTV.

- Several delegations highlighted the need to continue with the regime of bilateral agreements currently used by Member States as it has proven to be useful and safe.
- Several delegations asked for the possibility to use the seasonally free vector period even in member States without an eradication programme.
- One delegation questioned the feasibility of eradicating BTV in the 6 years period foreseen in the draft in Member States neighbouring third countries that are endemically infected.

4.8 The Commission presented the outlines of a two-step approach for the eradication of BVD including the envisaged requirements for granting and maintenance of the disease-free status at establishment and Member State/zone level.

- Member States generally endorsed the envisaged two-step approach whereat the elimination of persistently infected animals marks the first step.
- Remarks and questions raised by several delegates concerned the surveillance requirements for already BVD-free Member States, the use of vaccines and the eligibility of laboratories.

5. NEXT STEPS

The Commission invited experts to provide written comments by 22 October 2018.

6. NEXT MEETING

Request has been made for additional meetings in November or beginning of December 2018.