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Health and Food Safety Directorate General

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Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed
Section *Animal Health and Welfare*
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SUMMARY REPORT

A.01 General information by Member States.

No item raised.

A.02 Information from Germany on infection with bluetongue virus situation.

Germany provided an update of the Bluetongue virus situation since the detection of serotype 3 that was first detected in October 2023 in North Rhine-Westphalia and spread to Lower Saxony. 32 outbreaks have been confirmed. This situation has led to the withdrawal of BTV free status from three landers: North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Bremen.

A.03 Information from the Commission of the new system for the designation of labs that can issue valid rabies titration tests.

The Commission presented the new system that changes partially the current approach. Following the new approach, valid test results can be issued by labs designated by the competent authorities (in Member States or listed third countries). To ensure a smooth transition between the current regime and the new one, the Commission requested Member States to confirm that labs that are currently approved for this purpose will be designated under the new regime. Also, the Commission has contacted relevant third countries to inform them about the new regime and requesting competent authorities to designate labs, if interested.

Several Member States took the floor asking whether a risk assessment has been conducted before changing the approach, how third countries will ensure that designated labs will perform well and if audits are envisaged to verify their performance.

The Commission replied that no formal risk assessment has been conducted but there is no reason to deal with rabies tests in a different manner as for other important diseases. Competent authorities of third countries will need to ensure that the conditions to designate a lab are met. Also, audits are not envisaged at this stage but can be performed if necessary.

A.04 Information from the Member States on African swine fever.

Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece and Hungary gave an update of the ASF epidemiological situation on their territories and on the control measures undertaken to prevent, control and eradicate the disease.

A.05 Update on the FMD risks for the EU.

EuFMD was invited to highlight the risks for the EU in terms of FMD, notably those coming from circulation in the Near East and in North Africa. While several FMD serotypes are present in the EU neighborhood, the rapid spread of FMD SAT2 serotype was noted. EuFMD also highlighted the support provided in terms of advice and training to the veterinary services in the affected countries, facilitating sample shipment, providing diagnostic test kits to national laboratories and support in epidemiological assessment with the countries involved. The Commission highlighted that it had renewed a four-year contribution agreement with EuFMD for its actions on preparedness and disease control. At the same time the Commission informed that a new antigen bank covering all FMD strains has been signed in 2023. The Committee highlighted different patterns that need to be closely monitored (e.g., empty trucks that re-enter the Union).

A.06 State of play of the signature of the grant agreements for the veterinary programmes submitted by Member States and third countries for 2024.

HaDEA reminded that the grants for veterinary programmes 2024 must be signed in the IT tool EGRANT by the legal representative of each Member State as soon as possible to ensure that all grants are signed before the legal deadline of 31/01/2024. It was also explained that the final reports for the payment of the 2023 veterinary programmes activities must be submitted by 30/04/2024 and that further guidance will be sent to Member States during the month of February 2024 to explain how to submit these final reports in EGRANT.

A.07 Information from Member States on sheep pox and goat pox.

Bulgaria and Greece informed the Commission and Member States about the epidemiological situation of Sheep and Goat Pox (SGP) in their territories. In Bulgaria no new outbreaks of SGP were recorded since the one outbreak detected in the Burgas region, in September 2023. All measures have been lifted and surveillance remains in the framework of TADs and THRACE programmes. In Greece, following the detection of an SGP outbreak in the island of Lesbos in October 2023, the disease unexpectedly occurred in the Phthiotis regional unit, in mainland Greece (region of Central Greece) in December. To date there are 6 outbreaks in mainland Greece (2 of those detected in 2024) all within the same municipality (Lokron). Protection and surveillance zones around these outbreaks have been extended accordingly, surrounded by a further restricted zone, due to last until the end of March 2024, along with the further restricted zone of Lesbos, for preventive reasons. Occurrences of SGP in the mainland could be connected to the movement of slaughter animals from Lesbos Island to Central Greece. Technical assistance was provided by an expert EUVET mission (20-21 December 2023).

A.08 Report on the sheep pox and goat pox EUVET mission to Greece.

A Member of the expert team presented the main findings and recommendations of an EUVET mission on Sheep and Goat Pox (SGP) in Greece that took place on 20-21 December 2023. The visit focused on the outbreaks in Central Greece (regional unit of Phthiotis). Recommendations emphasize, among others, on the continuation of the current zoning, biosecurity measures, and disease awareness. The movement of slaughter animals from Lesbos was identified as a possible source of the disease spill-over in Central Greece.

A.09 Presentation from EFSA on the latest overview report on the epidemiological situation with avian influenza in Europe and worldwide.

EFSA presented the main conclusions and options for response following assessment of the epidemiological situation with HPAI in EU and worldwide in September - December 2023. Compared to previous years, the increase in the number of HPAI virus detections in waterfowl has been delayed, possibly due to a later start of the autumn migration of several wild bird species. Common cranes were the most frequently affected species during the reporting period with mortality events being described in several European countries. HPAI viruses identified in Europe within the reported period belonged to eleven different genotypes, seven of which were new.

A.10 Information from Member States on highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Bulgaria, Germany, France, Hungary, Poland and Sweden presented updates of the epidemiological situation with HPAI and measures taken to control the disease. Compared with the same period in the previous years, less number of wild birds were found infected with HPAI virus and consequently less number of poultry establishments were affected by the disease. The situation in Hungary improved, with only few outbreaks confirmed in the last weeks.

A.11 Information from the Commission on the Opinion of the Health Security Committee on zoonotic avian influenza.

In December 2023 the Health Security Committee adopted the opinion on zoonotic avian influenza. The opinion is a call to action to promote prevention and preparedness in the light of the risks associated with the large circulation of H5N1 virus in the last seasons and the upcoming seasonal human influenza period. Link to the opinion text: [security_20231219_op_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#).

A.12 Grants: Period for submission of information according Article 2 of Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/144.

Based on the request of a Member State as regards the submission of the update of the two-monthly information as regards animal disease outbreaks, the Commission agreed to have the information submitted per disease and per calendar year.

B.01 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision on the evolution of animal diseases in the Union.

No item raised.

B.02 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Regulation amending Annexes I and II to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/594 laying down special control measures for African swine fever.

The Commission presented a draft Implementing Regulation to propose a revision of certain ASF restricted zones in Italy and Greece, and to prolong the date of validity of the infected zone in Croatia.

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.

B.03 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Regulation amending Annex VIII to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/620 as regards the approval or withdrawal of the disease-free status of certain zones of Germany and Spain as regards infection with bluetongue virus (serotypes 1-24) and the approval of the extension of an eradication programme for infection with that virus.

The Commission presented to Member States the Draft Commission Implementing Regulation withdrawing the BTV free status from certain landers of Germany and from certain areas of Spain, approving a new BTV eradication programme for Spain including those areas that have the status withdrawn and granting the BTV free status to an autonomous community in Spain.

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.

B.04 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision amending the Annex to Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2447 concerning emergency measures in relation to outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in certain Member States.

The EU regionalization for outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza has been updated to take into account the development of the epidemiological situation in Bulgaria, Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden.

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.