

**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**

**11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Brussels**

**1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

A preliminary agenda was circulated and agreed at the beginning of the meeting. The working document to be discussed was provided in advance.

**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 two days meeting covered presentations and discussions with regard to the working document as follows:

- an overview of the links foreseen for the different existing provisions regarding aquatic animals in the different delegated acts to be prepared based on the Animal Health Law (AHL), and the drafting of those provisions that relate to surveillance, eradication programme and disease free status in the working document;
- an overview of provisions on notification, surveillance, general provisions on eradication programmes and disease free status for diseases of aquatic animals and of terrestrial animals that were updated following previous meetings;
- new provisions for the eradication programmes for diseases of aquatic animals subject to optional eradication programme (category C diseases) and the procedure foreseen for the derogation to the approval of disease free status;
- specific provisions introduced for the compulsory eradication programme and the recognition of disease free status of infection with *Brucella abortus*, *B. melitensis* and *B. suis* and of infection with rabies virus.

**4. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/OPINIONS**

The outcomes of the discussions were the following.

- 4.1. Experts were invited to express their position on the opportunity to use the optional empowerments on notification (Article 18 of AHL) to specify the circumstances where operators shall request a veterinary investigation and how it relates to the obligation of notification of a suspicion of a listed disease to the competent authority.
- 4.2. The Commission took note of the need for sufficient flexibility expressed by some experts as regards:
  - the definitions of suspect cases and confirmed cases to allow the competent authority to consider when laboratory results shall trigger suspicion or

confirmation of disease, with a specific notion in the context of infection with *B. abortus*, *B. melitensis* and *B. suis* ;

- the conditions to decide on the inclusion of wild animal populations, and in certain case of kept animals, in the surveillance and in the eradication programme;
- the types of zones relevant for the eradication programmes and the granting of disease free status for terrestrial animals, the NUTs area were not considered appropriate by some experts.

4.3 While some experts raised concerns on the limit of six years proposed for the period of application of the eradication programme, the Commission highlighted the necessity that optional eradication programmes against category C disease are limited in time to avoid prolonged trade constraints to send animals to Member States or zones that are not progressing towards the eradication.

4.4 The Commission considered that the proposal to find a solution to amend the technical Annexes on laboratory tests and diagnostic methods by means of implementing act was welcomed.

4.5 The experts and the Commission considered the reference to guidelines as an alternative to detailed legal provisions or Annexes as a possible option for different types of technical issues, but concluded it was not suitable as a systematic approach.

4.6 In relation to aquatic animals, the following topics were discussed:

- Which type of establishments must be included in an eradication programme – for instance, will "Put and Take" fisheries and other ponds which have been stocked with aquaculture animals, need to be included. The Commission responded that inclusion of establishments in an eradication programme would be risk based and this decision should be made by the competent authority taking account of the epidemiology of the situation and of Title II of Part IV of the AHL.
- The Commission took note of the following positions expressed by some experts on:
  - the need for more focus on disease classification of zones and compartments, not just on establishments. In the view of some experts, this would avoid potential issues in relation to trade where a disease free establishment located in a compartment/ zone/ MS which is undergoing an eradication programme, attempts to trade as an 'officially free' establishment, rather than as an establishment which is still subject to an eradication programme.
  - the conditions providing for derogations for disease control measures were deemed too strict and not broad enough taking into account different epidemiological units in the same establishment where animals of the same species, and not necessarily of different species, were kept. This issue crossed over into the terrestrial sphere as well.
- The Commission will consider the necessity to list the diseases in the working document or to refer to as category C diseases since the diseases are listed in another delegated act.

- The Commission considered that the provisions on derogations in relation to declarations of disease freedom was welcome by some experts, while others wanted even more simplification / deregulation.
- 4.7 The Commission took note that some experts proposed not to lay down provisions for granting disease free status based on the incapacity of the disease agent to survive.
- 4.8 The Commission indicated that the provisions for the recognition of disease free status based on historical and surveillance data will be examined on the example of infection with rabies virus, for which many Member States may wish to apply, to verify if it is feasible without having too complex procedures.
- 4.9 The Commission received views from experts on specific conditions regarding the status of kept animals, that were discussed for certain categories of establishments that are not operating as traditional "farms".
- 4.10 The Commission received views from experts on the conditions for the granting of status at the establishment, the zone and Member State level for B. abortus, B. melitensis and B. suis and for infection with rabies virus. The discussion specially focused on the choice to preserve the existing provisions or to seek for more alignment with the OIE Terrestrial Code. The Commission will consider revising certain provisions of the working document on the basis of this discussion.

## **5. NEXT STEPS**

The Commission invited experts to provide written comments on the entire document by **30 June 2018**.

The Commission invited experts to share information on national programmes on Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) in view of developing new provisions for this disease.

## **6. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for **13 July 2018 for aquatic animals** and **17 July 2018 for terrestrial animals**.