

Statement on the Schmallenberg Virus Situation issued by the European Commission together with the EU Member States following the working group held on 17 February 2012.

The European Commission and the EU Member States:

- acknowledge that the OIE Technical factsheet¹ largely reproduces information on the Schmallenberg virus that is already publicly available in the Commission guidance documents, in the EFSA preliminary analysis and in the websites of the Member States;
- emphasise that the OIE factsheet on Schmallenberg virus does not differ from the EU understanding: the Schmallenberg virus does not deserve a treatment different to the one applied to Akabane virus including for trade, a virus that is not an OIE listed disease nor notifiable in the EU nor subject to specific OIE standards or restrictions despite it being endemic in many areas of the world;
- take note of the Recommendations of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (SCAD) for safe trade², in which essential concepts generally accepted and applied for other vector borne diseases have not been considered: vector free season, vector protection, etc.;
- understand that the recommendations for safe trade are just extrapolated from bluetongue standards. However, the only characteristics that bluetongue shares with Akabane and Schmallenberg viruses is its transmission by vectors and its seasonality;
- emphasise that the knowledge available on the Schmallenberg virus shows that its impact on animal health is much less than the one caused by bluetongue;
- ask OIE to regularly review the above referred documents, taking into account new evidence and knowledge that the European Union and its scientists, in particular EFSA, will gather and make available to the international community.
- take note that the documents published by the OIE confirm the position of EFSA and ECDC that the risk for human health posed by the Schmallenberg virus is negligible and that animal products such as milk and meat do not pose any risk of disease transmission;
- note that the SCAD recommendations do not constitute an OIE international standard for trade;
- reiterate that taking into account the limited impact of the disease on animal health and according to available knowledge, consider trade restrictions due to the occurrence of Schmallenberg virus in the EU as disproportionate and scientifically unjustified;
- stress that under EU rules, only movement of healthy animals as well as the collection of their semen, embryos and the marketing of their products (meat, milk, etc.) are allowed; accordingly, diseased animals and their products are not traded;
- emphasise the importance of surveillance and transparency as essential elements of the EU prevention and safe trade strategy and maintain the commitment to continue informing the international community of any new development on this infection.

¹ http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/Schmallenberg_virus.pdf

² http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/Recommendations_for_safe_trade_Schmallenberg_virus.pdf