

September 2006

Statement on Vaccination and Epizootic Disease in the EU

Eurogroup for Animals,

Recognising that illness and disease are among the main causes of suffering and death in animals.

Sharing the concern of many European citizens about the mass slaughter of animals associated with the control of Epizootic Diseases:

- Emergency culling of livestock has shown itself to cause severe welfare problems where insufficient capacity to deliver slaughter programmes has been compounded the large number of animals involved.
- It is unjustifiable to destroy animals for commercial reasons or to maintain international trade, irrespective of cost.
- That the selection of a strategy to control an outbreak of epizootic disease should be transparent and include animal welfare as one of its fundamental criteria.

Supporting all reasonable measures to control and, where possible, eradicate animal disease.

Reminding the Commission and the Member States that the Protocol on Animal Welfare in the Amsterdam Treaty recognises that animals are sentient beings and that full regard should be paid to the welfare of animals when formulating and implementing the Community's policies.

Aware that available vaccines are increasingly purified and efficient and that serological tests increasingly enable the differentiation of vaccinated animals from naturally infected ones.

Acknowledging that there are cases where it is proper to euthanase infected animals on welfare grounds.

Considers that the use of vaccines should be a preferred option for controlling and preventing Epizootic disease, when risk assessment indicates it to be a suitable method within the specific circumstances of the outbreak in question.

Particularly in the case of animals which are not to be consumed¹, urges the EU to consider preventative vaccination as the preferred option, when it is indicated by risk assessment as a viable option, thereby avoiding killing.

Urges member states to base their decisions on the appropriate control steps to take purely on veterinary and welfare grounds, divorced from political or economic pressure.

Urges Member States, food producers, retailers and consumers to publicly recognise that products from vaccinated animals are safe for human consumption and urges Member States to negotiate with

¹ i.e. exotics, zoo animals, pets and farm animals kept as pets.

the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) to modify the current trade restrictions on vaccinated animals and their products.

Calls on the Commission and Member States to reduce the likelihood and severity of outbreaks by limiting the movement of animals. In particular, the gathering of animals in livestock markets should be re-examined and regulated in EU law. The review of EU Regulation 1/2005 should be retabled as a matter of urgency to include a maximum transport time limit of 8 hours.

Where other factors such as husbandry, trade, structure of the industry and management practices are found to predispose the advent or spread of epizootic disease, member states should direct resources to address the problem at source, paying full regard to the welfare of the animals.

Calls on Member States to establish a national emergency plan which takes into account all the potential outbreak situations, in such a way that the number of animals to be killed is kept to an absolute minimum. This plan should be operated by the government and the industry and foresee sufficient institutional capacity to manage the slaughter of animals while safeguarding their welfare at all times. Where relevant animal welfare organisations exist, they should be regarded as part of that institutional capacity.

Urges the Commission and Member States to increase the capacity of their Veterinary Inspectorates to monitor animal health and animal welfare on-farm, during transport and at staging points in the EU. These should be a part of a structured early warning system. Controls on imports from Third Countries at border inspection posts to prevent illegal imports should also be stricter.

Calls on the EU to reduce the risk of outbreaks by providing further technical and financial assistance to those Third Countries with significant trade with the EU, that are possible sources of infection, with a view to developing better control and, ultimately, the eradication of the disease.