

European Union policy for the control and eradication of bluetongue

J. Février

DG SANCO, Unit E2, F 101/37, Rue Froissard 101, 1049 Brussels, Belgium

Summary

When bluetongue (BT) reappeared in Europe in 1998, the rules that applied to the control of this vector-borne disease had to be reassessed. Accordingly, a draft directive submitted to the European Council as early as 1999 was adopted in 2000, just in time to face the unprecedented situation which occurred in the late summer of that year. Although based on the existing rules applicable to African horse sickness, there is greater flexibility in the establishment of restricted BT zones and in the movement of livestock in order to deal more adequately with specific local situations. Later, as the outbreak evolved, a number of provisions were adopted within the framework of this new directive in regard to both the protection and surveillance zones and to the movement of animals into and out of these zones. Based upon a risk assessment conducted by the scientific committee, the European Commission (EC) also considered the option of a vaccination policy using the live-attenuated vaccine available. On request from the EC, studies were conducted to test the safety and the efficacy of this vaccine in sheep, cattle and goats. By July 2000, a vaccine bank had been established which facilitated rapid and successful intervention in the Balearic islands. The EC later supported the vaccination option whenever national authorities wished to adopt this policy. In addition, the EC modified the rules regarding financial contributions by the Community to cover not only emergency situations but also the long-term surveillance of BT and control actions.

Keywords

Bluetongue – Control – Eradication – European Union – Trade – Vaccination.