

Opinion 22-2021 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on a draft royal decree on the control of infectious bovine rhinotracheitis

Terms of reference

The Scientific Committee is asked to give an opinion on the new draft royal decree on the control of infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR, caused by the bovine alphaherpesvirus type 1, BoHV-1). This royal decree has been drafted in order to bring the Belgian legislation in line with Regulation 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in area of animal health (Animal Health Law, AHL) as well as with the numerous related delegated and implementing regulations that bring together and adapt in one single piece of legislation almost all the basic rules of the existing European animal health regulations of the last 50 years. More specifically, the draft royal decree adapts the former Belgian IBR statutes to those established in the AHL. IBR control is mandatory in Belgium since 2012. Great progress has been made in reducing both herd and individual prevalence of BoHV-1 infection. A phased plan of measures is also established in order to aim for an IBR-free Belgium by 2027.

Method

The opinion is based on expert opinion, the results of the compulsory control plan in Belgium as presented by the animal health associations (ARSIA and DGZ) and the scientific literature.

Conclusion

The Scientific Committee issues a favourable advice on the draft royal decree and makes remarks mainly concerning animal movements and biosecurity.

Considering the risk factors identified for BoHV-1 introduction into a herd, in particular via animal movements (purchase, exhibition), the Scientific Committee stresses the importance of the traceability of health statutes and guarantees to avoid mixing of animals of different health statutes. The Scientific Committee also stresses the importance of all biosecurity measures against the risk of indirect introduction via visitors from outside the herd, testing at purchase and to comply with a true quarantine for any animal newly introduced into a herd.

Recommendations

The Scientific Committee recommends to promote all the biosecurity measures necessary to limit risk factors for (re)introduction of BoHV-1 through active communication to all operators. In the current epidemiological context, these measures will focus mainly on tests at purchase (knowledge of the animal's status before arrival in the herd), monitoring of the IBR status of animals during their movements to avoid any mixing of animals of different statuses, quarantine of newly introduced animals and the reduction of direct and indirect contacts between herds. The Scientific Committee recommends giving sufficient importance to compliance with animal quarantine in the checklists during controls of the FASFC. The Scientific Committee also recommends to regularly assess compliance with quarantine in order to counter any downward trend.

The Scientific Committee recommends the creation and follow-up of a system of indicators for the progress and compliance with the control plan, with the aim of achieving a "barometer" of IBR control in Belgium.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french.