



## Opinion 11-2023 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on the draft Royal Decree on general rules for the prevention and control of certain animal diseases (horizontal Royal Decree)

### Background & Terms of reference

The Scientific Committee was asked to give an opinion on the draft Royal Decree on general rules for the prevention and control of certain animal diseases, also known as the “horizontal” Royal Decree.

The Belgian legislation on general rules for the prevention and control of certain animal diseases needs to be adapted to combine the provisions common to several diseases in a single horizontal legal act. This draft Royal Decree also takes into account the adaptations related to the provisions contained in the Animal Health Law ((AHL), Regulation (EU) 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 the area of animal health) and its Delegated Regulations.

### Method

This opinion was carried out on the basis of expert opinion and available and relevant data in the scientific literature. It is based on version 11 of the draft Royal Decree. This version received two amendments to Articles 8 and 9 from the opinion requestor, which were also assessed.

### Conclusions

The Scientific Committee makes a number of general and specific comments on the draft Royal Decree on general rules for the prevention and control of certain animal diseases.

In particular, the Scientific Committee :

- reminds the essential elements for effective cleaning and disinfection, and the parameters that could be used to assess this effectiveness;
- suggests that the general readability of the annex I listing notifiable diseases in Belgium should be improved;
- points out the need to use terminology that is consistent with existing Belgian and European legislation and with certain previously issued opinions;
- points out that the risk associated with contact between animals of different status is potentially already present during transport, prior to their introduction into an establishment.

### Recommendations

The Scientific Committee recommends :

- to implement adequate communication and awareness-raising on appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures;
- to improve the readability of Appendix I;

- to carry out an information and awareness campaign, aimed at veterinarians (who are obliged to notify) and the entire livestock sector, after publication of the Royal Decree in order to avoid any confusion or misinterpretation, given that this Royal Decree supplements European legislation and therefore does not always include all the relevant regulatory data *in extenso*;
- to ensure consistency between the terms and provisions in this Royal Decree and other legal texts in force in Belgium, for example concerning the terms "isolation" (instead of "quarantine"), "exploitant" (instead of "operator"), as well as "veterinarian", "approved veterinarian" and "official veterinarian" throughout the Royal Decree. With regard to the latter term, the Scientific Committee points out that all measures relating to regulated diseases are taken by an approved veterinarian, with the exception of notification, which may also be carried out by a non-approved veterinarian;
- not to require the countersigning of the notification form by the keeper and the veterinarian in order to facilitate and speed up disease notification;
- to pay particular attention to measures to prevent possible contact between animals of different status during animal movements and gatherings, and not just when an animal is introduced into an establishment. In this respect, the Scientific Committee also refers to its opinion 21-2021 : « Draft Royal Decree on the transport, assembly and trade of certain land animals and Draft Royal Decree on the identification and registration of certain ungulates, poultry, rabbits and certain birds ».

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