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Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/3456/2001 – MR final

**FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN URUGUAY
FROM 1 TO 4 OCTOBER 2001
IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE CONTROLS IN PLACE
OVER FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**



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ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

BIP	Border Inspection Post
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DC	Departamento de Campo (Field Veterinary Services)
DCI	Departamento de Control de Comercio Internacional (Department of Control of International Trade)
DGSG	Dirección General de Servicios Ganaderos (General Directorate of Stock-farming)
DICOSE	División de Contraor de Semovientes (Division of Movement Controls)
DILAVE	División de Laboratorios Veterinarios (Division of Veterinary Laboratories)
DPS	Departamento de Programas Sanitarios (Department of Sanitary Programmes)
ELISA	Enzyme linked immunosorbent assay test
FMD	Foot and mouth disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
GIS	Geographic Information System
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
MS	Member State
MGAP	Ministerio de Ganadería Agricultura y Pesca (Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries)
PRENADER	Programa de Manejo de Recursos Naturales y Desarrollo del Riego (Programme of Natural Resources Management and Development of Irrigation Systems)
OIE	Office International des Epizooties (World Organisation for Animal health)
OMS	Organización Mundial de la Salud (World Health Organisation)
OPS	Organización Panamericana de la Salud (Panamerican Health Organisation)
PANAFTOSA	Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Centre
VIAA	Virus Infection Associated Antigen
SINEASA	Sistema Nacional de Emergencia Sanitaria Animal (National System for Animal Health Emergencies)
UBI	NS ELISA 3 ABC test, under licence from Plum Island

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Uruguay from 1 to 4 October 2001. The mission team comprised two inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO).

The mission was undertaken in order to follow up the action by the Uruguayan authorities in response to the report of the earlier FVO mission to this country DG(SANCO)/3342/2001, 25 - 29 June 2001, which evaluated the situation with regard to outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease. The report of this mission is available on the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General web-site:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/index_en.html

The inspection team was accompanied throughout the mission by representatives from the CCA, the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fishery (MGAP).

An opening meeting was held on 1 October 2001 with the CCA (MGAP). At this meeting, the inspection team confirmed the objectives of, and itinerary for, the mission, and additional information required for its satisfactory completion was requested.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

To evaluate the measures taken by the Uruguayan authorities to address the conclusions and recommendations of FVO mission report, DG(SANCO)/3342/2001, in the framework of Council Directive 72/462/EEC¹, Council Directive 96/93/EC² and Commission Decision 93/402/EEC³ and, in particular:

- (1) to review the action taken by the competent authorities to control the FMD outbreaks, including the operation of the vaccination programme and the outcome of the planned serological testing programme
- (2) to clarify the basis for the Uruguayan authority's view that sheep and goats do not present a FMD risk
- (3) to confirm that the programmes intended by the Uruguayan authorities:
 - (a) to confirm FMD-free status of holdings and areas of origin,
 - (b) to register holdings and identify animals, and
 - (c) to control movements for slaughter of animals

¹ O.J. L 302, 31/12/1972, p. 28

² O. J. L 13, 16/01/1997, p. 97

³ O. J. L 179, 22/7/1993, p. 11

are fully operational, provide acceptable levels of traceability, respect EU certification rules and ensure that only eligible animals are used in the production of meat intended for export to the EU

- (4) to review the operation of cleaning and disinfection procedures for livestock and meat vehicles
- (5) to review the operation of controls over meat considered to be eligible for export to the EU, with particular attention to:
 - (a) checks on eligibility of animals on arrival at slaughterhouses
 - (b) separation of EU-eligible from non EU-eligible activities
 - (c) action if FMD detected in the slaughterhouse
 - (d) performance and results of ante-mortem checks
 - (e) performance and results of post-mortem checks
 - (f) performance and supervision of the pH and maturation controls applicable to meat eligible for export to the EU
 - (g) storage of EU-eligible meat, and avoidance of cross-contamination with non-eligible meat
 - (h) dispatch and transport procedures for EU-eligible meat
 - (i) certification procedures for EU-eligible meat
 - (j) traceability of meat to farms of origin
- (6) to review the national FMD contingency plan, and the provision of guidelines and information to staff involved in the current control programme
- (7) to review the intentions of the Uruguayan authorities regarding the future use of vaccination as a means of FMD control
- (8) to review the operation of import control systems, to confirm that the inconsistencies between import licences and health certificates have been resolved

In pursuit of these objectives, the following sites were visited:

Competent authority visits			Comments
Competent authority	Central	1	
	Zonal office	2	
OTHER SITES VISITED			Comments
Holdings		2	
Slaughterhouses		2	

3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular:

Council Directive 72/462/EEC of 12 December 1972 on health and veterinary inspection problems upon importation of bovine, ovine and caprine animals and swine, fresh meat or meat products from third countries, in particular Article 5.

Council Directive 96/93/EC of 17 December 1996 on the certification of animals and animal products.

Commission Decision 86/474/EEC of 11 September 1986 on the implementation of the on-the-spot inspections to be carried out in respect of the importation of bovine animals and swine and fresh meat from non-member countries⁴

Commission Decision 98/140/EC of 4 February 1998 laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in third countries⁵

4. BACKGROUND

A detailed background to recent FVO inspections in Uruguay, and the development of the current FMD epidemic, is provided in mission report, DG(SANCO)/3342/2001.

Information on the evolution of the disease, maps and data can be found on the PANAFTOSA Web site: www.panaftosa.org.br and on the MGAP web site: www.mgap.gub.uy

Restrictions on imports into the EU were imposed by Commission Decision 2001/388/EC⁶, amended by Commission Decision 2001/410/EC⁷, and remain in place. These allow Member States to authorise imports of:

- (1) any fresh meat from FMD susceptible animal from Uruguay produced on or before 23 March 2001 and certified in accordance with the conditions laid down in Decision 93/402/EEC
- (2) boned fresh meat and offal from FMD susceptible animals canalised for treatment, produced after 23 March 2001 up to 23 April 2001 and certified in accordance with the conditions laid down in Decision 93/402/EEC.

Imports into the Community of bone-in fresh meat and offal for human consumption other than that referred to in paragraph 2 above, produced after 23 March 2001, were prohibited.

As of 28 September 2001, 2057 outbreaks had been recorded, of which 2056 were considered extinguished. The last active outbreak, visited during the mission, was considered extinguished on 3 October 2001.

During this mission the following information was provided on the development of the disease situation:

⁴ Official Journal L 279, 30/09/1986 p. 0055 - 0056

⁵ Official Journal L 038, 12/02/1998 p. 0014 - 0016

⁶ Official Journal L 137, 19/05/2001 p. 0033 - 0035

⁷ Official Journal L 145, 31/05/2001 p. 0049 - 0051

Number, type of holdings and number of animals in Uruguay

	Bovine	Sheep & goats	Pigs	Mixed populations
Total number of holdings in Uruguay	18,951	1,251	4,350	25,356
Total number of animals in Uruguay	2,072,113	233,237 sheep 1,423 goats	189,927	8,295,888 bovine 12,972,135 sheep 24,574 pigs 7,745 goats

Animals vaccinated

	No. and type of holdings vaccinated	No. of animals vaccinated	No. of animals tested serologically	Results of serological testing programme
First vaccination round	4,959 dairy 39,348 beef	Bov. 11,773,840 Pig Sheep/goats		
Second vaccination round	4,959 dairy 39,348 beef	Bov. 12,153,988	Bov. 2,170 (7000 sera collected from 210 farms, 2100 due to be collected)	Bov. 2,162 positive (99.6% protection rate)

5. MAIN FINDINGS

5.1. Competent authority performance

A detailed account of the structure and performance of MGAP in responding to the FMD epidemic is provided in FVO report, DG(SANCO)/3342/2001.

After the previous mission, the CA acted promptly to establish the legal instruments, instructions and procedures necessary to correct deficiencies noted and to facilitate certification.

The operation of the control programme may have been positively affected by the introduction of mandatory official controls prior to movements. Animal movements were resumed on 5 July 2001.

Service Order N° 059 N° 03050701, adopted 5 July 2001, required the obligatory inspection of animals at the farm of origin before shipment to export slaughterhouses by accredited private veterinarians and their health/identify documents (properly recorded) to be checked. Resolution DGSG/RG N° 36/001 adopted 24 July 2001 required the official control of animals at the farm of origin prior to any other movements. These controls are carried out either by officially registered private veterinarians or by

DGSG personnel. Certification for movements to export slaughterhouses is, however, not required (only "DICOSE", a movement record document, as described in mission report SANCO/1016/2000).

During the period January 1996 to April 2001 the total of official veterinarians employed by the animal health services of DGSG decreased from 93 to 83, and the total of official veterinary auxiliaries from 197 (1996) to 156 (2001). The number of accredited private veterinarians increased from 3930 (1999) to 4087 (2001).

No shortfalls in the funding of the control and vaccination programme were noted.

The only personnel change with the service (DGSG) since the previous visit was the substitution of the General Director.

5.2. Role of sheep & goats in the maintenance and spread of FMD in Uruguay

Vaccination of sheep against FMD ceased in 1988.

Results of seroepidemiological studies, carried out in 1992 and 1994 gave negative results in both adult, and sheep younger than two years old, and in those animals on farms where FMD had been diagnosed in cattle.

A seroepidemiological survey in FMD-affected areas carried out in August 2001 indicated that infection in sheep was lower than originally expected (7,684 samples were processed, with 206 VIAA positives, a prevalence of 2,7%). Results of ELISA tests were not available to the inspection team.

- These results indicate that the animals had been exposed to infection but the Uruguayan authorities considered that the low prevalence demonstrated that sheep did not play a role in the epidemic.
- A complementary sero-epidemiological study carried out in September 2001 in areas neighbouring FMD outbreaks, concluded that sheep did not play an important role in the maintenance and the spread of FMD, due to the low seroprevalence found (7,677 samples processed, of which 58 were VIA positive; prevalence 0,76%). Results of ELISA tests were not available to the inspection team

5.3. Vaccination and bovine serological testing programme

The legal basis for the vaccination programme was established on 16 July 2001 by RG/DGSG N° 34A/01.

The first vaccination round was completed on 7 June, covering the whole cattle population. The second vaccination round started on 16 June and was finished on 22 July 2001, covering 100% of the cattle population.

The vaccine used, manufactured and tested by PANAFTOSA provides for 60-70% Expected Effective Protection (EEP) on the first, and >90% EEP on the second, vaccination.

- Since the whole cattle population was intended to be included in the campaign, vaccinated animals were not identified.

Vaccination is usually carried out by farmers. The distribution of vaccine to farmers, including data on number of doses distributed, correlated to the numbers of animals of each holding, are documented in records and databases of distribution centres and veterinary field offices.

- The databases were, however, not always up-to-date, and backyard holdings were not always covered.
- There was no documented evidence of any direct official controls of the application of the vaccination, apart from vaccination protocols issued and signed by the owner responsible for the holding. "Risk holdings" are not officially vaccinated in all departments.
- The protocol was issued on an official paper (heading: MGAP and sometimes with official stamp), but none of those protocols seen were signed by an official veterinarian, a registered private veterinarian or an official auxiliary.

5.3.1. Sample design

It is intended to test approximately 7000 sera from 210 farms, actually stored at the sera bank. The samples were taken between 30 days (minimum) post revaccination, and 112 days post revaccination, in order to ensure that the animals had a maximum antibody response. 10 sera from each farm will be processed. It has been assumed that farms with 9 or more animals with protective antibody levels will have more than 60% herd protection at a confidence level of 95%.

On farms with more than 1 non-protected animal, a further 5 sera will be processed. If there are more than 3 non-protected animals, all the available sera from that farm will be checked.

- The Liquid Phase Blocking ELISA provided by PANAFTOSA is used as standard test. This test does not discriminate between antibodies due to FMD infection, and those due to vaccination.
- Virus type 0 from the October 2000 outbreak was successfully eradicated in December. It has, therefore, been assumed that all antibodies to the O type virus would be due to vaccination. On this assumption, the tests carried out assessed O type antibody level, as the best means to measure the number of successfully vaccinated animals.

5.3.2. Preliminary results

So far 2100 sera have been analysed. The results suggest that an estimated protection level of 99,6% has been achieved.

5.4. FMD-free status of holdings and areas

5.4.1. General controls

An informatics system was developed during the outbreak in June/July 2001, and is said to be in place at all regional veterinary offices in those areas where outbreaks had occurred (it was operational in the two regional offices visited). This system was implemented to assure compliance with the requirements of Council Decision 93/402/EEC.

PRENADER (Programa de Manejo de Recursos Naturales y Desarrollo del Riego - Programme of Natural Resources Management and Development of Irrigation Systems) have submitted detailed maps to departmental and local MGPA veterinary offices.

These maps include all holdings, which are provided with a DICOSE number.

On the maps provided by PRENADER, the distances around the restricted farms are indicated with circles of 25 kms radius.

If the holding of origin is located within the 25 km radius, but is within a neighbouring department, there is communication between the departmental zonal veterinary offices, in order to update the database.

Regional Veterinary Offices in FMD affected areas are informed by e-mail from the Geographic Information System (GIS), with all DICOSE numbers indicated within a 25 kms radius of an active outbreak.

- One of the farms visited was the last active outbreak. The farmer had vaccinated his 580 animals (1 May - first round, 17 June - second round), as well as 20 cattle in small, neighbouring, holdings. (1760 vaccine doses received for 2 vaccinations). On 23 August 2001 the first of a total of 4 animals was found and confirmed with clinical symptoms (last animals with clinical symptoms on 31 August 2001). Epithelium samples were sent to PANAFTOSA, but not to the central Uruguayan laboratory. Results are still pending. No animals in neighbouring farms showed signs of clinical disease, and no further action (eg. slaughter or extra vaccination) was taken in respect of these animals.

5.5. Holding registration and animal identification procedures

5.5.1. Holding Registration

The registration procedures for holdings are unchanged from those described in report DG(SANCO)/1016/2000 MR Final. The obligation to register holdings is laid down in the Law 14.165 of 7.03.74.

In principle everybody who keeps livestock on a farm is obliged to be registered in DICOSE. Farms with less than 10 bovine or less than 20 ovine animals are derogated from this requirement, provided no animal movements take place.

- The mission team identified (at least) 1 affected farm in one of the zonal veterinary offices visited, which was not registered in DICOSE although it had 24 animals on the holding. On this farm, in addition, movements appeared to have taken place, due to different animal figures noted during the epidemiological follow-up.

5.5.2. *Animal movements*

The DICOSE system comprises a DICOSE number, a hot brand and a waybill.

The DICOSE number consists of 9 digits: the first 2 correspond to the department, the second 2 to the police district, the last 5 digits are farm specific.

The waybill must accompany all animals on any kind of movement or transport. It includes the name of the owner, the farm of origin, the dealer (if applicable), the place of destination, the number of animals (cattle and/or sheep) and details of the hot brand and its registration. It is prepared by the owner.

Vaccination dates and vaccine batches were not indicated on DICOSE documents seen from July 2001, but were included from August 2001.

The waybill is validated (stamped and signed) by the animal health division (departmental/zonal veterinary office) and by the police, which authorises the movement.

5.5.3. *Animal Identification*

The hot branding of cattle is mandatory, and identifies the owner. It is of a unique design, non-repetitive and registered. DICOSE keeps the National Register of Brands and Marks, and a number is assigned to each individual brand.

- Owners are now aware that particular attention is paid to the legibility of hot brands. Therefore, the animals are re-branded, in case the brands cannot be recognised or are not easily legible, shortly before movement. The registered private veterinarian checks the legibility of the brand and, whether the brands correspond to that described on the DICOSE waybill.

The mandatory identification (ear tagging) of animals to be shipped for slaughter to an export approved slaughterhouse was established by Service Order N° 0305071 and Resolution DGSG N° 42/001, adopted on the 14 August 2001 by DGSG. The ear tags are sold only by the official services to accredited private veterinarians. The tags bear a series of three letters and four digits in order to prevent duplication.

A private veterinarian, registered at DGSG, carries out the individual identification (ear tag) after he is satisfied that the animals are properly identified with a legible brand, corresponding to that on the DICOSE waybill.

There is a computer-based system in the regional veterinary offices to register the purchase of ear tags by the accredited private veterinarians.

The suppliers of the ear tags have provided a written commitment to DGSG that such tags are exclusively sold to DGSG and not to private persons. A particular statement on this condition is intended to be included in the "purchase agreement" with the providers.

The official veterinarians (in department/zonal offices) have been given instructions to follow-up and control use of ear tags, whenever deemed necessary. Records of these controls are kept.

At slaughterhouse level, there is a written procedure on the destruction of ear tags and the documentation there of records are kept on file in the establishments.

- However, there is no feedback from the slaughterhouse to the veterinary field offices on the destruction of tags.

Sheep are identified by registered notches in the ear; control procedures as to whether notches can be identified and as regards permanence and health status of sheep are supposed to be identical as for cattle (OSG N° 0605701 of 5 July 2001).

Mandatory official identification by ear tags (possibly unique, life long identifiers) will be introduced in calves during the next vaccination campaign in November 2001 (Service Order OSG N° 06050701).

5.6. Controls over animal movements for slaughter for export

Service Order N° 03050701 of 5 July 2001 on sanitary conditions for livestock (cattle and sheep) slaughtered at plants approved for the European Union was available on the spot.

It lays down the control and certification steps required to ensure that all animal health data required by Commission Decision 93/402/EEC are ascertained and properly certified.

Since Uruguay does not import live animals for slaughter, the regional residency requirement in Community legislation does not pose any particular problem of certification.

The registered private veterinarian should, before inspecting the cattle to be moved from a specific holding for export slaughter, consult the regional Animal Health Office

On farm, the veterinarian is obliged to check the health of all the animals in the export lot, in particular for signs of FMD.

The 40 days "stay-on-farm" requirement of Commission Decision 93/402/EEC is checked through examination of the DICOSE waybills on file at the farms. It is mandatory to file these waybills on the farm.

- It is not mandatory to keep herd books on the farm, in which all movements, births, deaths, vaccinations, treatments, etc. are recorded. The registered veterinarian thus must rely on the DICOSE files presented on premises as being complete.

If the veterinarian is satisfied, he applies individual ear tags and issues a certificate. This certificate, of which the original is handed over to the cattle owner (the registered veterinarian keeps a copy), is the basis for the official movement permit, which is issued by an official veterinarian in the departmental/zonal veterinary office (where validation of the waybills (DICOSE) is also carried out).

The registered veterinarian has to purchase the blank certificates and ear tags to be applied, from DGSG (departmental/or zonal office).

On the farm visited the veterinarian claimed that he would need a full working day to carry out this duty (70 animals/2 truckloads/2 certificates).

The official veterinarian from the departmental/local veterinary office, issuing the movement permit does not carry out direct health and identity checks on animals prior loading.

The movement permit provides all necessary animal health information to the official veterinarian in the slaughterhouse in order to certify meat as eligible for export to the EU.

Before transport of the animals, the owner has to present the "animal health certificate", issued by the registered private veterinarian, the truck cleaning certificate, if the truck is already on the farm, otherwise the farmer is obliged to ascertain that this certificate is available, together with the waybill to the regional veterinary office.

In the regional veterinary office, checks are carried out on the waybill for vaccination details, documents or statements as regards vehicle disinfection (affidavit), and whether the farm complies with the requirements as to time and distance regarding FMD focal areas, before the DICOSE is validated and the movement certificate issued.

EU-eligible and non EU-eligible animals are never transported together.

5.7. Cleaning and disinfection procedures for livestock and meat vehicles

Since the last visit, a number of new procedures and instructions have been established.

- 3 July 2001 Resolution on the obligation to clean and/disinfect livestock vehicles in order to prevent dissemination of FMD virus.
- 4 July 2001 Circular 4/2001, establishing the list of chemical compounds used to inactivate FMD virus.
- The latter circular was updated at the final meeting, and in the future only reference to the chemical compound used will be made on the certificate (circular 4/2001 was modified at the final meeting).

- 5 July 2001, OSG N° 04050701; Instruction for the approval of cleaning and disinfection plants, laying down the minimal conditions for registration and the "washing" conditions for cleaning/disinfection premises outside slaughterhouses.
- 17 August 2001, Regulation DGSG/RG/43/001 on the obligation to seal transport vehicles after cleaning and disinfection. The seal is to be broken by the owner/responsible of the animals, prior to loading and to be documented on the waybill ("controlled truck").
- The seal applied is a generic kind of tape, indicating, "disinfected". It is applied to the door of the vehicle, but is not tamper-proof.
- 24 September 2001, Procedure for cleaning and disinfection of trucks and or related record keeping in slaughter plants.
- On some disinfectant certificates, reference was made to a disinfectant which was not included in the list of officially approved ones. The consignments were, however, accepted, and there was no documented evidence of any action taken.

5.8. Controls at slaughter

5.8.1. Checks on EU-eligibility of animals on arrival at slaughterhouses

Since the last mission a number of official instructions and procedures have been established as to the checks to be carried out on arrival and at ante mortem inspection.

- 9 July 2001: General procedure 2001/3 on checks on arrival and at ante mortem
- 17 August 2001: Instruction to the official veterinary services on measures to be taken in case of deficiencies detected at arrival and at ante mortem inspection, including the document to be used for return of consignment.

Checks upon arrival are usually carried out by an official auxiliary and establishment personnel.

These checks include control of the DICOSE waybill, the movement permit issued by regional veterinary office and the cleaning/disinfection certificate of the livestock vehicle. They also include checks on the legibility and correspondence of hot brands and the presence of ear tags. Preliminary controls for signs of clinical FMD are carried out.

If there are no problems on arrival, the detailed information on the lot of the animals is entered in a livestock reception form, and the lot is released for slaughter by the OV.

If any deficiencies are detected, the animals are not authorised to be unloaded and should be returned to origin (respective forms are on file).

The controls at arrival are predominantly documentation checks.

The official veterinarian keeps copies on file of the DICOSE waybill, the animal health certificate, the truck wash certificate, the pen and the suspect card.

- In the premises visited, it was almost impossible to check systematically as to whether series numbers and digits of ear tags correspond to the ones indicated on the animal health certificate during routine inspections.

5.8.2. *Separation of EU-eligible from non EU-eligible activities*

All livestock slaughtered in an EC-approved establishment must comply with EC animal health requirements, otherwise they must not be unloaded.

All export approved establishments were said to apply ante-mortem and post mortem inspection, maturation and pH controls to EU standards on all animals and meat.

- The Uruguayan authorities claim that only a single standard is applied in all slaughterhouses to maturation and pH controls, but this is not based upon any written instruction (Procedure 2001/2 addresses only maturation and pH control in EC-approved establishments).
- An "EU cutting" run list is in place (carcasses for EU are always cut and boned at the beginning of the working day), but there are no records of action taken regarding carcasses which have been segregated due to high pH.

5.8.3. *Action taken if FMD detected in the slaughterhouse*

Procedure 2001/1 of 6 July 2001 was adopted to determine the procedures to be followed in order to facilitate compliance with Commission Decision 93/402/EEC.

- This procedure, however, did not satisfy the EU certificate requirements. As a result, it was amended and the new version was presented during the final meeting (procedure 2001/1 of 6 July was replaced on 4 October 2001 by Procedure 2001/4).
- This new procedure provides all the required guarantees, except that no reference is made to the requirement in the certificate annexed to Commission Decision 93/402/EEC that "... further preparation of meat for export to EC is only authorised (*after*), removal of all meat ..".

5.8.4. *Performance and results of ante-mortem checks*

Ante-mortem inspection is carried out by the OV when animals pass from the reception to the holding pens. Pen cards are attributed to the lots at this point. (Inspection is carried out according to new procedure 2001/3 adopted on 9 July 2001).

Particular attention is paid to any kind of clinical symptoms of FMD, and suspect animals are inspected in more detail.

Any observations are noted on the pen card. If animals are segregated after ante-mortem inspection, a "suspect card" is issued. Both are kept on file.

No evidence of FMD has been detected and recorded in the slaughterhouses during this epidemic.

5.8.5. Performance and results of post-mortem checks

The procedure 2001/3 of 9 July 2001 also applies to post-mortem checks. It now gives unequivocal instructions, which are correctly followed.

As reported previously (DG(SANCO)/3342/2001 MR Final), specific FMD controls are carried out during post-mortem inspection.

Feet and muzzle (including lips) of the carcass are separated, and placed onto a specific inspection table, equipped with spray and a light. The tongue is inspected at a later stage during post-mortem inspection of the head.

Clear instructions are now provided that special attention is paid to inspect:

- the coronary band and the interdigital space,
- the mouth, tongue, mucus membrane (mouth and nose).

Where suspicion of FMD exists, procedure 2001/4, which replaced 2001/1, applies.

- No code(s) on the on the post-mortem record sheet are provided for the event of detection of FMD lesions during post mortem inspection, as for other diseases.

5.8.6. Performance and supervision of meat maturation and pH controls

Procedure 2001/2 from 6 July 2001 provides for the general procedures for maturation and pH control in plants producing for the European Union. It is controlled by the veterinary service.

According to the procedure, a label is attached at each door of a chiller. This records the room number, date/time/temperature when the first, and the last carcasses enter, date/time/temperature after completion of maturation (24 hours after last carcass entering), as well as lot numbers, corresponding to the carcasses matured.

- In one establishment, old maturation cards were still in use, on which the time/temperature of the first carcass entering the chiller was not identified (only time/temperature of empty room). The authorities undertook to correct the problem with immediate effect.

Thermographs sensors were located in all the plants visited at the coldest part of each chiller. According to thermographs printouts the temperatures corresponded to those indicated on maturation cards, and were well above 2°C during the maturation periods.

After completion of maturation, but before cutting, carcasses (bovine and ovine) are checked for pH (at middle of Longissimus dorsi (beef) or psoas muscles (sheep)).

Carcasses with a pH <6 are stamped with an "UE" mark; carcasses with a pH > 5,9 are identified with "RPH" (rechazado pH) and stored separately.

- In one establishment pistola cuts were seen stamped with "RPH" but stored together with flanks, identified with "UE" (i.e. EU eligible). The Uruguayan authorities claimed that flanks would never be destined for the European market, but the presence of other meat cuts, bearing the "UE" brand in the same chiller as pH rejected meat, gives rise to doubts as to whether the whole carcass is indeed identified as "RPH" or only those parts which are generally exported to EU (high quality parts of hindquarter).

Offal are matured in application of the Procedure 2001/2 (room temperature of more than 2°C, with maturation for at least 3 hours as regards tongue, heart and liver, and for at least 24 hours for masseters).

Diaphragms are said to remain on the carcass during maturation.

- Trays in carcass maturation chillers of one plant, containing cheek meat were neither identified with date nor with slaughter lots.
- Trays containing offal (hearts, tongues, livers) in the offal maturation room were only identified by slaughter date, but not by slaughter lot number.
- There is a typing error in Procedure 2001/2 of 6 July 2001 where it is stated that "cheek muscles shall be matured for at least 2 hours" (instead of 24); it must, however, be stated that maturation is carried out for 24 hours where masseters and thin skirts are concerned.
- The costal part of the diaphragm (thin skirts) remains on the carcass for maturation, but not the thick skirt (central pillar of diaphragm). No maturation procedures are yet established for thick skirts.
- By fax/DGSG 001 from 10.08.2001 to the Director of FVO, DG SANCO, the Uruguayan authorities guaranteed, in reply to the "recommendation to the competent authorities of Uruguay" detailed in report DG SANCO/(3342)/2001 MR DRAFT, that "a system for offal traceability is being implemented, through identification of trays and racks based on the number of the herd slaughtered" (lot number). This has neither been implemented by procedures or instructions, nor is it applied.
- Back tracing is thus only possible through the recorded slaughter date. It must also be noted that offal from carcasses separated due to high pH, cannot be identified and batch control is not carried out.

5.8.7. *Storage of EU-eligible meat*

Carcasses, after maturation and pH measuring, are identified with an "UE" stamp, before quartering and further chilling.

"EU compliant" quarters are deboned and cut in specific "cutting runs".

Carton boxes, after completion, are identified (apart from the identification described in 5.8.2 with an "UE" stamp, frozen in specific freezing tunnels and stored at separate places in cold storage rooms (pallets, piles etc.), segregated from non "UE" identified products. Boxes are marked with slaughter date, production (packing), freezing date, contents, description and weight.

Stock records (inventories) are kept in order to identify the location and the eligibility of meat in coldstores.

5.8.8. Dispatch and transport procedures for EU-eligible meat

Meat for export is loaded in slaughterhouses either directly into containers for immediate export through the port of Montevideo, or into refrigerated trucks for further storage in outside coldstores or for loading for final dispatch in the port.

Both containers and trucks are sealed with numbered official seals, and, if leaving from a slaughterhouse/cutting plant, are accompanied by two internal transfer certificates, issued and signed by the veterinary service of the establishment.

The "Pase Sanitario" is issued as an "internal" movement document. It indicates the approval number of the establishment of origin, type of meat, number of packages, weight, registration number of truck, meat temperature at loading and the seal number. It may indicate in general terms whether the meat complies with the import conditions of the country of destination.

The "Documento Unico de Embarque" constitutes the basis for final certification. It makes specific reference to the FMD freedom of the holding area, deboning, maturation, pH requirements, the seal number applied to means of transport etc.

Another document is issued if a consignment is transported from an outside coldstore to the harbour for final loading, the "Boleta de Embarque".

The final export certificate is issued on the basis of the above documents by the veterinary service in the port of Montevideo.

5.8.9. Traceability and certification of EU-eligible meat

In slaughterhouses/cutting plants, all certificates, records and documents are on file to allow back-tracing. These documents/records must be kept on file for at least one year (official instruction). The document trail is not kept separately for each consignment, since production dates for a particular consignment can stretch over a considerable period, depending on the commodity.

5.9. National FMD contingency plan

5.9.1. Contents

The Contingency Plan contains:

- The "General Manual for FMD Emergency in Uruguay"
- Guides of Standing Procedures for Sanitary Emergency Operations
- The Manual of Procedures for the Eradication of an Outbreak of FMD (PANAFTOSA).
- Annexes with instructions, guidelines and information to staff.

The individual elements need to be further consolidated, and the Uruguayan authorities stated that they intend to revise completely the contingency plan this year.

5.9.2. Implementation

Although the entire cattle population has now been vaccinated twice, the contingency plan remains in force. This is due to the fact that the law for FMD (LEI 16082) of 1989, last updated in 1994 by Presidential Decree, prohibits the keeping of vaccine stock in Uruguay.

- It was observed that the contingency plan was not strictly applied in a number of aspects:
 - There were neither restriction signs at nor around the restricted farm visited ("Entry forbidden" or Closed Road"), nor were there any roadblocks seen.
 - Records seen suggest that the epidemiological surveillance was not carried out according to the contingency plan, e.g.
 - no daily inspection of all susceptible animals within perifocal area for at least 30 days after elimination of outbreak;
 - no records seen of whether all farms visited for epidemiological surveillance;
 - possible movements of products were not fully recorded;
 - few or no records seen of tracebacks in infected zones.

The contingency plan appears not to contain any particular conditions for milk collection other than "tracing back shall be carried out from dairy plants". Milk continued to be collected from the infected farm visited in specific containers and special trucks ("FMD milk containers").

5.10. Future vaccination programmes

The CA has designed future vaccination plans for 2001, 2002 and 2003. This schedule is outlined in the "General Manual for FMD - Emergency of the Contingency Plan.

YEAR	PERIOD	SCHEME
2001	Special vaccination from 1 to 30 November, with special controls and application of ear tags	All calves born during 2000 and those born during the autumn of 2001
2002	15 to 28 February 1 to 15 May 1 to 30 November	General vaccination of cattle General re-vaccination of cattle All calves born during 2001
2003	If needed, according to the regional evolution of the disease: 15 to 28 February 1 to 15 May	General vaccination of cattle Re-vaccination of cattle under two years. Vaccination is discontinued as and from 16 May
2004	Aim for recognition as to FMD-free status	The whole national herd

5.11. Import control systems

By Service Order N° 07160701 of 16 July 2001 (Procedure for Importation of Animals and Animal Products) the legal instrument has been adapted to correct the inconsistencies identified between import licences and health certificates, accompanying consignments at border entry controls.

At border controls consignments of animals or animal products are subject to documentary and identity checks.

Import conditions are established by DGSG in a form of Resolutions. Models of sanitary certificates and import conditions are to be published on the website of the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries.

The correct implementation of new procedures has, however, not been verified on the spot.

6. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held in Montevideo on 4 October 2001 with the competent authority. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team to representatives from MGAP.

During the closing meeting an updated and consolidated version of the contingency plan, a new version of the seroepidemiological survey, an updated version of approved disinfectants for truck wash facilities and a modified version of procedures to be followed should FMD be detected in slaughterhouses, were presented.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Competent authority performance

The CA has made a major effort to overcome deficiencies noted during the previous mission, and to address the recommendations made in report DG (SANCO)/3342/2001 - MR Final.

Some of the legal instruments adopted are still in need of updating, clarification or consolidation to provide for unequivocal guidance. Some of the procedures/guidelines still need to be fully implemented and enforced.

Whilst the number of official staff has decreased throughout the last years, the number of accredited private veterinarians has increased, in particular, during 2001. The recently established on-farm certification appears to be a valid instrument to enable certification and to prevent spread of disease.

7.2. Role of sheep & goats in the maintenance and spread of FMD in Uruguay

The results of sero-epidemiological surveys undertaken in 2001 would appear to support the contention that sheep have not played a significant role in the FMD epidemic in Uruguay

7.3. Vaccination and serological testing programme

Susceptible animals, other than cattle, are not vaccinated. Official vaccinations on "risk farms", and/or direct vaccination controls, if carried out, are not adequately documented.

Initial results of the study undertaken on the bovine herd protection rate after the second round of vaccination would appear to suggest that an acceptable level was achieved.

However, it must be noted that the last outbreak occurred approximately 35 days after the second vaccination on the holding, at a time when maximum protection should have been achieved.

7.4. FMD-free status of holdings and areas

A report of the disease status of susceptible species has been transmitted to the Commission by the CA and latest updates were received on the spot.

The last outbreak was notified on 23 August 2001, and the holding was released from restrictions on 3 October, 30 days after the last clinical case had been diagnosed within the herd. From this date Uruguay claims to be free of any active outbreak.

Cattle livestock markets have been reopened since 6 September 2001 (about 100 markets have operated), and the National Livestock Exhibition (15 September 2001) has taken place, where animals (except pigs) from throughout the country were exhibited. No new outbreaks have been notified.

Further information was received after the mission that no new cases have been associated with any of the officially controlled movements since 5 July 2001 (from 14,000 holdings, comprising 418,470 cattle, representing 4% of cattle population and more than 28% of total number of holdings).

7.5. Holding registration and animal identification procedures

Procedures put in place regarding holding registration appear to be effective and are, in general, adequately controlled.

Deficiencies, however, still remain as regards small holdings with less than 10 bovine/20 ovine animals, which are not subject to the same controls and enforcement practices as larger holdings.

The animal identification system, still based on farm-specific brands has been reinforced. When coupled with the introduction of pre-movement inspections by accredited private veterinarians, it is possible to feel confident that all animals covered by a movement permit originate from an identifiable area or holding.

The new on-farm certification appears to be a valid instrument to enable certification of compliance with the relevant parts of Commission Decision 93/402/EEC, but this should be supported by the introduction of a herd book in order to confirm data received by the farmer.

7.6. Controls over animal movements for slaughter

The information certified by the accredited private veterinarian and the owner, together with the information available in the regional veterinary offices provided sufficient guarantees to issue the movement permit (waybill) and the animal health certificate. These formed an acceptable basis for the issuing of the health certification required in Community legislation.

7.7. Cleaning and disinfection procedures for livestock and meat vehicles

The procedures, still being modified during the mission but now in place, would provide for sufficient guarantees to enable certification and to prevent the spread of disease.

The new procedures were not always strictly applied and enforced.

7.8. Controls at slaughter

A comprehensive control system has been set up in slaughterhouses. This covers truck cleaning, controls on arrival, traceability, measures to be taken in cases of FMD suspicion (ante- and post-mortem inspection), maturation, pH control and certification.

The system was generally seen to be working effectively. However, it was noted that the promised system for offal traceability had not been implemented.

The procedures in place in case FMD is detected in establishments are not yet completely in line with Commission Decision 93/402/EEC. Some of the procedures/instructions recently adopted still need to be adequately implemented and enforced (eg. separation of EU eligible from non EU-eligible meat).

At present offal is not identified so as to prevent cominglement.

7.9. National FMD contingency plan

Major parts of the plan are not adapted to the specific situation in Uruguay, whilst resource availability is not taken fully into account. It needs to be updated to allow for the storage of FMD vaccines in Uruguay. A number of operational shortcomings were noted. Controls over milk collection and processing should be included.

7.10. Future vaccination programmes

Different vaccination policies to be applied as from November 2001 are now integrated into the Contingency Plan.

Future vaccination plans for 2001 to 2003 have been designed. It is planned to discontinue vaccination in 2004 in order to regain FMD-free status.

7.11. Import control systems

The inconsistencies identified between import licences and import health certificates in the import control system have been corrected by a "service order". Its correct implementation, however, could not be verified on the spot.

8. OVERVIEW

No new outbreaks have been reported since 21 August 2001 and the last active outbreak was closed on 3 October 2001.

The Uruguayan authorities have made considerable efforts to control the recent FMD epidemic. The evidence provided suggests that the clinical manifestations of the disease have been effectively controlled. They have responded positively to the recommendations made after the previous FVO mission. A number of relatively

minor operational issues still require attention, and it is important that these are resolved without delay, so that fully effective control systems are in place.

The contingency plan needs to be updated to take account of the need to store vaccine within Uruguay, to cover all aspects of FMD controls and to ensure effective epidemiological surveillance of outbreaks.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. To the competent authorities of Uruguay

The CCA should take the necessary steps to:

- 9.1.1 Clarify, implement and enforce where necessary, the legal instruments, procedures and guidelines required to ensure effective FMD controls.
- 9.1.2 Complete the seroepidemiological surveys where necessary and submit a final and detailed report to the Commission.
- 9.1.3 Implement and enforce holding registration procedures, in particular in respect of small holdings.
- 9.1.4 Apply and enforce the new procedures in force regarding truck disinfection and slaughterhouse controls, including the establishment of systems to ensure the identification and tracing of offals.
- 9.1.5 Review or consolidate the national contingency plan and implement it in the field.

The Uruguayan authorities should, within one month of receiving the draft report, forward to the Commission services an action plan with a timetable, addressing the above recommendations.

9.2. To the Commission Services

- 9.2.1 Review the legislation governing imports of fresh meat and offals from Uruguay in light of the national authority's response to the recommendations in paragraph 9.1.

10. ADDENDUM

Competent Authority response to the recommendations in the report:

No action plan with timetables, as requested in the recommendations has been received.

The following is a summary of the CA comments on the recommendations made in the report:

Recommendation 9.1.1

The CA acknowledges the need for consolidation of recently introduced measures and states that small adjustments have been made as the need has arisen. These adjustments are not described.

Recommendation 9.1.2

The CA states that it is planning seroepidemiological surveys of bovines and ovines in the year 2002. These surveys will be used to determine the level of any possible viral activity and to assess the efficacy and coverage of vaccination.

The timing of the surveys has not yet been decided. However, May and November 2002 are mentioned as possible timeframes. An undertaking is given to inform the Commission services of the results of these surveys.

No information is given on the level of sampling to be undertaken, the tests to be used or the sampling strategy.

Recommendation 9.1.3

The CA states that a process of identifying unregistered holdings has begun. However, a possible problem is mentioned: social assistance, including free medical care, is normally withheld from the owners of registered holdings who are assumed to be well off. Discussions are underway with the relevant authorities to solve this difficulty.

Recommendation 9.1.4

The CA states that most problems with the disinfection of livestock transport vehicles were solved during the mission and that they have taken action with regard to any outstanding issues. No details are given on the actions taken.

In relation to the identification and traceability of offals, the CA states that the necessary procedures exist and will be implemented when export of offal to the EU is authorised.

Recommendation 9.1.5

The CA states that FMD contingency planning is co-ordinated with other countries in the region. A meeting of the Proyecto Cuenca del Plata – PANAFTOSA is scheduled for December 2001, after which the Uruguayan plan will be updated and submitted to the Commission services.