

Advice 13-2009 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on the control of infectious anaemia and viral encephalitis in equidae

The Scientific Committee is asked to evaluate a project of Royal Decree concerning the control of equine infectious anaemia and equine viral encephalitis.

The Scientific Committee recommends to subdivide the project of Royal Decree in two separate documents: one concerning equine infectious anaemia, and one concerning equine viral encephalitis. As a matter of fact, the particular features of these diseases result in different measures to be taken in case of suspicion and/or confirmation of these diseases.

The Scientific Committee makes several comments, of which the most important refer to:

- the suppression, in the case of equine viral encephalitis, of
 - the killing of the animals,
 - the restrictions of the movements,
 - the prohibition to enter suspected exploitations, taking into account that the population has to be informed by the mayor, and
 - the restricted zones, however with preservation of a zone for epidemiological investigation;
- the different defining of the movement restrictions in case of an outbreak of equine infectious anaemia, and the different defining of the suspension of the measures in the restricted zones for this disease;
- the different defining of the composition, the tasks and the convening modalities of the group of experts.

The Scientific Committee also makes recommendations out of the scope of the Royal decree and in relation to West Nile fever. The most important are:

- the stimulation or the early detection and of the declaration of this disease;
- the epidemiosurveillance targeted on susceptible bird populations, and
- an exchange of information between the Agency and the sanitary authorities competent for public health.

The Scientific Committee asks to resubmit the two new projects of Royal decree in view of final approval.

This advice concerns the evaluation of the 2009 analysis program of the Belgian FASFC with respect to the chemical parameters in food, feed, raw materials and plants. The Scientific Committee is asked to evaluate the following aspects of the program: (i) the relevance of the chosen combinations of matrix and hazard (parameter) and the programmed number of analyses, (ii) the relevance of the chosen sampling sites, (iii) the relative intensity of the controls for the programmed analyses in the food chain, and (iv) the approach that was applied by the experts of the DG Control Policy for taken the existing sectoral sampling plans into account.

The Scientific Committee appreciates the structured approach that is applied for the development of the control program. However, the risk-based methodology for programming the number of analyses has some limitations, such as the lack of uniformity in the application of the general methodology, the influence of the number of analyses by other (more subjective) factors, and the difficulty to apply the methodology to certain hazards or parameters.

In general, the Committee agrees with the choice of selected parameter-matrix combinations and the choice of sampling sites, but provided a number of specific comments. It is e.g. noted that certain parameter-matrix combinations require further specification of the matrix (e.g. food supplements, spices).

The Scientific Committee is of the opinion that certain parameters or hazards need a more fundamental approach. Likewise, it is noted that the analysis program could be more pro-active. The Committee proposes that next to the "punctual" analyses, attention is also paid to a more exploratory approach enabling, during a limited timeframe, to perform analyses of specific risk-matrix combinations (amongst others to screen or to estimate the risk for public health by means of an exposure assessment).

The Scientific Committee has no pertinent remarks regarding the approach applied to take the sectoral sampling plans into account.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section “Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen” and “Comité scientifique/Avis”.