

Urgent advice 01-2010 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC : recommendations concerning Q fever in small ruminants in Belgium.

Since the recent outbreak of Q fever in the Netherlands, the Scientific Committee is asked to give an urgent opinion on the detection of infected sheep and goat herds which are a risk for public health, and to propose measures in positive herds.

The Scientific Committee recommends (1) to realize simultaneously an RT PCR and an ELISA test on tank milk of all the Belgian milk producing sheep and goat farms, and to repeat this sampling every 4 weeks during a period of 6 months, (2) to realize an RT PCR test on aborted tissues or on vaginal mucus of aborted animals in all categories of farms (meat, milk and backyard) where abortion has occurred, and this based on a mandatory notification of abortion, and (3) to realize an annual at random serological screening at the level of all the Belgian farms based on the mandatory sampling of *Brucella melitensis*.

Positive herds are identified by a positive reactions on a RT PCR test (in milk, on aborted tissues, or on vaginal mucus). The farms which are the most at risk for public health are farms where abortion due to *Coxiella burnetii* occurs. Raw milk and milk products from infected farms are a possible source of infection of the consumer.

It is recommended to perform a longitudinal study in positive farms based on sampling of individual animals (individual milk, vaginal swab) and RT PCR analyses, to evaluate the intra-herd prevalence.

A series of recommendations are given concerning the measures to be taken in positive herds. The most important are the pasteurization of milk from the positive herds encouraging the farmer to take the necessary preventive general measures, confinement of the animals which have aborted or delivered, the appropriate decontamination of the delivered or aborted tissues and of the place where the abortion occurred, the appropriate decontamination of the manure, and the interdiction to transport animals which are the most probably to be excreting. The advantages and disadvantages of vaccination are mentioned. The Scientific Committee is of the opinion that a vaccination policy can only be implemented in the context of a global control program against Q fever.

Consumption of meat does not constitute a significant risk for the consumer.

Finally, a series of general and preventive recommendations are mentioned.

These recommendations are emitted in function of the current knowledge of the Belgian epidemiological situation, and with the aim to protect public health from the zoonotic risk. They can be reviewed in case of possible evolution of this epidemiological situation.

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