

Advice 25-2019 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on the draft royal decree concerning the control of zoonotic Salmonella in poultry

Background & Terms of reference

The FASFC has for quite some time now been carrying out a monitoring and control programme for (zoonotic) Salmonella in poultry with the aim of reducing the number of human infections through the consumption of poultry meat and eggs.

The draft royal decree contains the modalities of the national Salmonella control programme in poultry and replaces the current royal decree of 27 April 2007 on the control of Salmonella in poultry. The current royal decree of 27 April 2007 is replaced because of the addition of recommendations given by the European Commission, the entry into force of the royal decree of 25 June 2018 establishing an identification and registration system for poultry, rabbits and certain backyard poultry, at the request of the budget fund for animal health and the quality of animal products and for a number of practical adjustments.

The Scientific Committee is asked to evaluate the present draft royal decree.

Method

This opinion is based on data from scientific literature and on expert opinion.

Results and conclusions

The Scientific Committee has examined the draft royal decree. It broadly endorses the provisions of the draft royal decree and makes a limited number of comments below.

The Scientific Committee agrees with the omission of the possibility of carrying out a confirmatory analysis. The isolation of Salmonella (in faeces samples as well as in swabs) is an almost irrefutable proof of the presence of the bacterium in the flock. False positive results are very unlikely.

The Committee notes that, under certain conditions, the sampling may be carried out by poultry farmers themselves. The Scientific Committee points out that this may entail risks with regard to the quality of the sampling. The Committee therefore recommends that the quality of the sampling be checked on a regular basis.

The Committee supports the obligation imposed on traders to carry out Salmonella vaccination of laying hens sold to the general public. On the other hand, the Committee notes that poultry farms with productive poultry of the species guinea fowl, ducks, geese, quails, pigeons, pheasants, partridges and ratites with 'low capacity' (maximum 4.999 poultry) fall outside the scope of this royal decree. In practice, this means that most farms with these species are not obliged to carry out a Salmonella control programme. The Committee understands that, given the limited size of these farms, the impact on public health in case of Salmonella infection will be more limited. However, from a public health perspective, it would be worth considering the possibility of carrying out a Salmonella control on these farms as well.

The Scientific Committee can also agree not to carry out monitoring of laying hens within three weeks prior to slaughter, given that these hens have already been sampled several times during the production period.

In addition the Committee has formulated some specific remarks on the draft royal decree.

The full text is available on this website in Dutch and in French.