

Advice 19-2021 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on the draft royal decree amending the royal decree of 22 December 2005 laying down additional measures for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption

Background & Terms of reference

The Scientific Committee is requested to give an opinion on the draft royal decree amending the royal decree of 22 December 2005 laying down additional measures for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption.

Two additional questions are also asked:

- Is it still appropriate from the point of view of public health risk to cleave the head, larynx and trachea of solipeds longitudinally during meat inspection in the slaughterhouse?
- From the point of view of public health risk, is it still appropriate to cleave the head of pigs longitudinally at slaughter?

The systematic splitting of heads, larynxes and tracheas is not required by European legislation. The Scientific Committee is therefore asked whether, on the basis of the Belgian (and European) epidemiological situation, national inspection rules imposing the splitting of heads, larynxes and tracheas should be retained or could be abolished.

Method

This risk assessment was carried out on the basis of expert opinion and available data in the scientific literature.

Conclusions

The Scientific Committee has examined the draft royal decree and has formulated a number of remarks.

The cleavage of the head, larynx and trachea of solipeds was in the past especially important for the detection of glanders (*Burkholderia mallei*). However, the disease is currently eradicated in Europe. Given this epidemiological situation, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that discontinuing the systematic dissection of the head, larynx and trachea of solipeds will not result in a significant increase in risk for consumers.

The Scientific Committee also recommends that the head of pigs should no longer be longitudinally cleaved during the slaughter process. Scientific literature shows that human pathogenic bacteria are frequently present in the oral cavity and in the tonsils of pigs. Therefore, it is not recommended to cleave the heads of pigs. When heads are cleaved, this inevitably leads to cross-contamination between different carcasses. In order to prevent this cross-contamination when parts of the cleaving machine come into contact with the head, it is even advisable to separate the heads partly from the carcasses before cleavage of the carcasses.

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