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Controls on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies in Ruminants

Report Categories:

Livestock and Products

FAIRS Subject Report

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

SP2 - Prevent or Resolve Barriers to Trade that Hinder U.S. Food and Agricultural Exports

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Report Highlights:

This report contains an unofficial translation of Tunisia's regulation to control transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in ruminants, including BSE and scrapie. The regulation extends to imported live ruminants and ruminant products. Tunisia imports of ruminant and ruminant products total \$10-30 million/year, with currently less than \$100,000 sourced from the United States. However, the United States and Tunisia have not yet established a health certificate to facilitate the trade of U.S. beef. This measure has not been notified to the WTO.

Order of the Minister of Agriculture of January 12, 2000, laying down the specific sanitary measures to be taken for the control of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in ruminants

OGRT #7 of January 25, 2000

The Minister of Agriculture,

Having regard to [Law No 84-27](#) of May 11, 1984 on animal diseases deemed to be contagious, and in particular Article 2 thereof,

Having regard to the [Law No 99-24](#) of March 9, 1999, relating to the veterinary sanitary control on the import and the export,

Having regard to the [Decree No 84-1225](#) of October 16, 1984, fixing the nomenclature of the animal diseases deemed to be contagious and enacting the general sanitary in common measures to these diseases, as completed by the [Decree No 98-2362](#) of November 23, 1998,

Having regard to the [Order](#) of the Minister of Agriculture of May 20, 1975, laying down sanitary measures to be taken against bovine tuberculosis,

Having regard the [Order](#) of the Ministers of Agriculture, Public Health and Trade of July 29, 1999, on the marketing of feed,

ORDER:

FIRST CHAPTER

Definitions

First article. - For the purposes of this Order, the following terms mean:

- 1) Ruminants: ovine, caprine, bovine and other ruminants provided they are kept in a herd.
- 2) Ruminant suspected of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy: Live, slaughtered, or died ruminant which has symptoms or damage to the central nervous system that cannot be certainly related to another origin.
- 3) Ruminant with transmissible spongiform encephalopathy: A ruminant which, after death or slaughter, has characteristic spongiform lesions in the brain confirming the origin of the disease. Histopathological and immunohistochemical examination, extraction and examination of fibrils associated with scrapie or SAF examination, and Western Blott examination shall be performed by a laboratory accredited by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- 4) Herd: All ruminants held in a geographical entity and forming a separate unit on the basis of the epidemiological links established by the head of the district of animal production at the Regional Commission for Agricultural Development.

The herd can only be assigned a health status for transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. The location of the flock is based on the address and coordinates of the geographical entity.

5) Status of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy: Status assigned to a herd by the veterinary services after an annual report by the veterinarian of the operation, certifying that all suspected cases have been examined.

6) Geographical Entity: any building or complex of buildings forming a unit, including attached land where ruminants are kept or are destined.

7) Responsible: The owner or keeper who usually manages the direct monitoring of ruminants.

8) Veterinarian: The veterinarian designated by the Regional Agricultural Development Commissioner to ensure the prophylactic interventions on ruminants of the herd.

9) Veterinary Services: The Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Agriculture.

CHAPTER II

Epidemiological Surveillance of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies

Art. 2. - The epidemiological surveillance of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies is based on the systematic technical control of imported ruminants at the quarantine center, which will continue throughout their lives in the different holdings that will acquire them.

This surveillance will also be applied to their offspring as well as to all bovine and ovine regardless of their race and age with neurological disorders and must cover the entire national territory.

Art. 3. - The circumstances of suspicion of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies are as follows:

1) Live ruminant with clinical signs suggestive of sudden neurological disorders such as anxiety, hypersensitivity, excitement, aggression, and pruritus persisting for more than eight days, whether or not associated with impairment of the musculoskeletal system, progressively degrading to death and cannot be definitely related to another origin.

2) Dead or slaughtered ruminant in the geographical entity following the evolution of the symptoms mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article.

Art. 4. - In the event of suspicion that an animal is suffering from transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, the veterinarian, qualified to diagnose the suspect animal, shall immediately report his observations to the head of the district of animal production at the Regional Commission for Agricultural Development who notifies the regional veterinary health doctor coordinator mentioned in Article 11 of this order.

In order to establish suspicion, the regional veterinary-sanitary coordinator has the suspect animal isolated and can be placed under observation.

Art. 5. - As soon as the suspicion of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies is established, the head of the district of animal production at the Regional Commission for Agricultural Development:

1) Informs the Directorate General of Animal Production to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Chief Operating Officer.

2) Puts under surveillance the herd of origin of the suspect ruminant as well as the herd in which the suspected ruminant(s) have / have resided since birth to establish the filiation of the suspect animal, as defined in Article 8 of this Order.

3) Informs an approved laboratory of the existence of this suspicion.

4) Organizes the slaughter of the suspected ruminant as well as the immediate removal of the head and the transport of the head to the laboratory authorized to practice the examination of the brain.

Art. 6. - The person responsible for ruminants suspected of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and slaughtered for the purposes of the encephalon examination shall be granted an indemnity equal to the value of the animal fixed by the commission which usually makes the estimate of the value of animals infected with bovine tuberculosis.

The commission immediately goes to the site in the presence of the regional veterinary-sanitary coordinator, who designates the animal(s) to be appraised and submits its expertise within twenty-four hours to the head of the district of animal production at the Regional Commission for Agricultural Development.

Art. 7. - The estimate of the slaughtered animals is done according to the procedure fixed by Article 10 of the [Order](#) of the Minister of Agriculture of May 20, 1975 referred to above.

Art. 8. - The surveillance of the herd of origin of the suspected ruminant as well as herds in which the suspected ruminant(s) has lived since birth includes:

1) The visit of the farm of the suspected animal and the control of the identification of all the ruminants of the herd.

2) The temporary prohibition to sell, move or display ruminants from the herd and to introduce them.

3) The conduct of an epidemiological survey to ascertain the presence of ascendants and descendants.

Art. 9. - If the results of the laboratory examinations referred to in paragraph 3 of Article 1 of this Order prove to be negative, the lifting of the prohibition is immediately pronounced.

Art. 10. - In the case of simultaneous suspicion of rabies and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, the rabies diagnostic sample shall be sent to the rabies diagnostic laboratory as a matter of priority, the test for the diagnosis of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies shall not be directed to the diagnostic laboratory only if the suspicion of rabies is not confirmed.

Art. 11. - In each Governorate, the Governor appoints, on the proposal of the regional commissioner for agricultural development, a veterinarian as regional coordinator of actions relating to the epidemiological surveillance of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and scrapie which are conducted by the all the veterinarians working on the territory of the Governorate. A substitute for this regional veterinary-sanitary coordinator is appointed under the same conditions.

The regional veterinary-sanitary coordinator and the head of the animal production district at the Regional Commission for Agricultural Development, meeting in a regional technical office, collect and

select all available epidemiological information and transmit it to the Directorate General of Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Art. 12. - The laboratories approved for the diagnosis of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies are:

- 1) The histopathology laboratory of the chair of histology, pathological anatomy of the national school of veterinary medicine of Sidi Thabet.
- 2) Pathology Anatomy Laboratory of the Institute of Veterinary Research of Tunisia.
- 3) The laboratory of pathological anatomy of the Pasteur Institute of Tunis.

The directors of approved laboratories shall send to the Directorate-General for Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture all the results of the histopathological examinations they carry out for the diagnosis of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies of ruminants.

CHAPTER III

Measures Applicable When Confirmed Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies

Art. 13. - When the existence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy is confirmed on a ruminant by the result of brain examinations, the head of the animal production district at the Regional Commission for Agricultural Development shall take the following measures:

- 1) Informs the Directorate General of Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture about the existence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.
- 2) Incineration and burial of the ruminant with transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.
- 3) Informs the Ministry of Public Health of reported transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.

Art. 14. - The offspring and embryos derived from the transmissible spongiform encephalopathy ruminant, born or removed within six months preceding the onset of clinical signs, shall be slaughtered and destroyed.

The recipients of these embryos are also killed and destroyed.

Art. 15. - In the case where, in a slaughterhouse, the head of the district of animal production at Regional Commission for Agricultural Development finds suspicious nervous symptoms on a ruminant, the same procedure for taking the head referred to in Article 5 of this decree must be applied.

Art. 16. - The import of ruminants and their products is subject to a systematic technical control concerning the health status of the country of origin with respect to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in the light of the following criteria:

- 1) A risk analysis identifying all the potential factors for the occurrence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and their evolution over time in particular:
 - (a) Consumption by ruminants of meat-and-bone meal;

- (b) The importation of meat-and-bone meal potentially contaminated with the transmissible spongiform encephalopathy agent, or animal feed containing it;
 - (c) The importation of animals, ova or embryos potentially infected with the transmissible spongiform encephalopathy agent;
 - (d) The epidemiological situation of the country or zone with respect to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies;
 - (e) Extent of knowledge on the structure of the bovine, ovine and caprine population in the country or zone concerned;
 - (f) The origin of animal wastes, the parameters of the processes for the treatment of such wastes and the methods of production of animal feeds;
- 2) A continuing training program for veterinarians, livestock breeders, and professionals in the transport, trade and slaughter of animals, to encourage them to report all cases of nerve outbreaks in adult bovine and small ruminants.
- (3) Mandatory reporting and examination of all bovine, ovine and caprine with clinical signs suggestive of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.
- (4) A continuous system for the surveillance and monitoring of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, the reports on the number of examinations carried out and their results must be kept for at least seven years.
- (5) An examination in an approved laboratory of brain and other tissue samples collected as part of the above-mentioned surveillance system.

Tunis, January 12, 2000

The Minister of Agriculture
Sadok Rabeh

Viewed

The Prime Minister
Mohamed Ghannouchi