

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL  
on Community rules in the veterinary, zootechnical and animal welfare  
fields

---

COM(81) 502 final



COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

on Community rules in the veterinary, zootechnical and animal-welfare fields

---

- I. The Commission has been working in the veterinary, zootechnical and animal protection fields for many years with the aim of liberalizing trade and at the same time ensuring the high degree of hygiene necessary for protection of the health of consumers, the improvement in health and breeding standards indispensable for higher productivity in farming and implementation of the measures required for the protection of animals in modern stock-farming systems.
- II. Full attainment of these objectives requires the consolidation of and additions to existing Community legislation, as indicated in the work-programme adopted by the Council in 1978 and its Resolution of 29 July 1981. To this end, as announced in its priority programme for 1981, the Commission has transmitted or shall transmit 10 proposals as follows:

1. Revision of Directive 64/433/EEC on intra-Community trade in fresh meat

This Directive was adopted nearly 20 years ago. It needs many technical adjustments in the light of advances in scientific knowledge and production techniques and of experience of its application. Its requirements will become less rigid (alternative methods of meeting certain slaughterhouse requirements) but there will be no relaxation in the hygiene standards indispensable for consumer protection.

Four important new provisions will also be introduced :

- the principle of meat control at the point of production, in order that all controls later on are made under the same conditions as those carried out on meat of national origin.
- the principle that the cost of control must be met from the price of the product (this principle has already been adopted by the Commission in the proposal on hormones and it should permit effective control and at the same time prevent distortions of competition).

- inspection of slaughterhouses by Community officials. This is already done in Third Countries and the basis for such control already exists in the Community for poultry slaughterhouses. It is necessary to extend it to the slaughterhouses covered by the Directive, as Parliament has requested, in order to create the conditions for better application of the Directive throughout the Community.
- the introduction of microbiological control methods in order to guarantee the quality of hygiene of the production.

## 2. Revision of Directive 72/462/EEC on trade with Third countries

This Directive is of great importance as it contains the common import rules necessary for free movement in the Community and at the same time ensures the level of hygiene indispensable for consumer protection and sets the health standards required for proper protection of livestock. As with Directive 64/433/EEC, technical adjustments are required, but also to reflect the experience acquired in the Community inspections that have already been made.

## 3. Personnel responsible for health inspection, control and surveillance.

In Community legislation this responsibility is given to veterinarians who are specially qualified by virtue of their scientific and technical training. All the Member States adhere to this principle except the United Kingdom, where certain work is carried out by specific non-veterinarian personnel (Environmental Health Officers), which is, however, covered by temporary provisions. On the basis of a report from a panel of independent experts two proposals have been drawn up allowing these officers to continue to be used for certain work and at the same time reaffirming the need for veterinary surveillance. They involve changes to this effect in Directives 71/118/EEC (poultrymeat) and 77/99/EEC (meatproducts).

## 4. Microbiology

Prevention of microbial contamination of foods of animal origin, in particular meat, is essential to ensure protection of consumer health. Microbiological factors are at the root of numerous health difficulties, which can effect trade (salmonellae problem).

There are two proposals. One defines in a Council Decision general principles for establishing Community microbiological standards. The other, amending Directive 71/118/EEC, deals with the special problem of poultry slaughterhouses by defining control methods to be used to ensure that poultrymeat meets quality health standards. The most important area covered is chilling of carcasses by immersion in a counter-flaw of.

5. Notification of animal diseases

The principle of notification of certain contagious diseases is already established in the Community Directives covering trade. The rules now proposed are required to institute a rapid and reliable harmonized system of close cooperation between the Commission and the administrations of the Member States.

Such a system is important if free movement is to be combined with a lower risk of propagation of disease, and a Directive is proposed for this purpose.

6. Council Directive on the control of antibiotic residues in fresh meat.

The European Parliament has stressed the importance of the problem concerning antibiotics in meat.

The present proposal ensures the principle for control of the absence of all detectable antibiotic residues in meat and especially the financing of this control which will be supported in the slaughterhouse by the product and the introduction of community on-the-spot inspection, in order to ensure uniform application within the Community.

7. Extension for two years of the accelerated programme for eradication of tuberculosis, brucellosis and leukosis in cattle.

The success of the initial programmes necessitates an extension to achieve complete elimination of these diseases, an essential objective for the protection of human health and for the achievement of trade fluidity. The cost to the Community of this two-year extension can be estimated at 35 million ECU whilst remaining within the previously approved estimates.

8. Protection of laying hens in cages

In accordance with the Council Resolution of 22 July 1980, a report has been elaborated on the present state of knowledge available, and on this basis a proposal for a Directive to establish the minimal criteria to protect laying hens in battery cages has been prepared.

III. Adoption of these proposals will constitute a major step towards consolidation of the Community's provisions. A number of additions to the provisions will still be required, however. The Commission is working on these at present and will be making proposals for Council Directives as follows :

- additions to rules on residues of antibiotics ;
- a proposal on medicated feedingstuffs complementing the proposed Directive on veterinary medicines ;
- animal health protection measures to be taken when live sheep and goats and game meat are imported into the Community in order to prevent the transmission of a number of diseases against which safeguards already existing in the Community's rules are not legally applicable in the case of such animals and meat ;
- intra-Community trade and imports of cattle and pig semen and fertilized ova to offset the health difficulties of importing live breeding animals from certain countries and safeguard the Community livestock ;
- Community measures to combat foot-and-mouth disease ;
- safeguards against Aujeszky's disease in intra-Community trade in live pigs.

IV. The Commission reminds the Council that a number of proposals already presented require rapid adoption, particularly those on milk and on changes in Directive 71/118/EEC (trade in poultrymeat).

V. An urgent increase in the numbers of staff responsible for preparing and supervising Community legislation is indispensable if all the work of preparation and application involved in the Commission's proposed action in the veterinary, zootechnical and animal welfare areas is to go ahead.

In its communication to the Council on 6 March 1978<sup>1)</sup> on the action programme in the veterinary, zootechnical and animal welfare fields and on the staff numbers required for this work, the Commission estimated its requirements at 12 permanent and 17 temporary grade A posts (plus a number of B and C posts).

The Commission's budget proposals for 1979 included an initial request for 9 permanent and 12 temporary grade A posts. The Council granted 12 temporary posts, which have been filled. Out of the 32 posts granted by the Council in response to the Commission's general application, three were made available to the veterinary services by the Commission.

Thus of the 29 grade A (permanent and temporary) posts considered necessary to the work approved of by the Council the Commission's veterinary services have received 15 posts (3 permanent and 12 temporary). This explains the delay in administering the texts adopted and the difficulties in implementing the Council's requests in the fields of animal protection and zootechnics. Aware of the difficulties that this is causing with regard to the necessary work of harmonization, the Commission will, as part of the budgetary procedure, be presenting an urgent request to the Council for a second addition to staff numbers to cover the requirements set out in the 1978 Communication that have not yet been met and in addition to provide it with staff numbers required if it is to cope with the new obligations that have been imposed on it in the meantime. In particular, an A grade post is required to cover scientific research work on animal protection.

---

1) Doc. R/567/78 (AGRI 173) (FIN 154), 13 March 1978.