

CC(08)284:1

Brussels, 21 January 2008

Mr Bernard VAN GOETHEM
Director
European Commission
DG SANCO – Directorate D
101, rue Froissart
B-1040 BRUSSELS

Conference on bluetongue vaccination

Dear Sir,

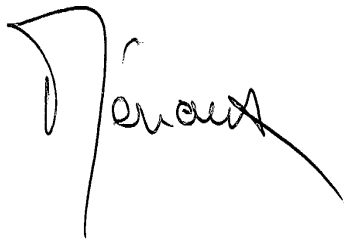
On behalf of our three organisations, we would firstly like to cordially thank you for the organisation of the Conference on bluetongue vaccination which was held on 16th January 2008 and the opportunities given to us to take an active part in this event. We believe that by organising such a Conference, the Commission has shown how important this disease is not only to the EU farming sector and other related business operators because of the huge economic losses they face, but also from an animal health and welfare point of view.

Please find below a joint COPA-COGECA, UECBV and FESASS statement regarding bluetongue vaccination and adopted following the conference held on 16th January.

We are convinced that this statement can be helpful in your further work.

Given the challenges we all are to face in 2008 and beyond, be ensured of our willingness to further cooperate with your services in order to tackle the disease to the best interest of all.

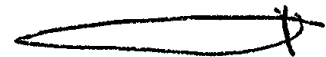
Yours faithfully,



Jean-Luc MERIAUX
Secretary General
UECBV



Pekka PESONEN
Secretary General
COPA-COGECA



Bernard TERRAND
President
FESASS

Copy to: Mr. Laddomada, Mr. Reviriego-Gordejo
Annex: Joint COPA-COGECA, UECBV and FESASS statement

BLUETONGUE VACCINATION

Joint COPA-COGECA, UECBV and FESASS statement following the Commission Conference on bluetongue vaccination which took place on 16 January 2007

Considering that:

- Bluetongue is an animal disease that presents no risk for human health. However, the disease causes suffering to animals and brings about huge economic losses to farmers and other relevant business operators.
 - The disease proved to be fairly difficult to manage with most traditional veterinary measures. The seriousness of bluetongue requires adoption of a Community strategy that would be well defined, widely accepted and science-based. Such a strategy needs also to provide clarity and predictability on medium and long-term perspectives.
 - The EU recognises in its new Animal Health Strategy that prevention is better than cure. Vaccination is seen as a powerful and effective prevention tool. It presents no consumer risks, preserves animal health and prevents animals from suffering.
 - Bluetongue vaccination, if properly implemented, is largely recognised to be the most suitable tool to cope with the disease.
1. COPA-COGECA, UECBV and FESASS express their satisfaction with the engagement of both European and national authorities to carry out a rapid mass vaccination campaign against bluetongue in 2008. The above organisations welcome the financial involvement of the Community and Member States.
 2. The above three organisations agree with the Commission that the goal of the vaccination is, in the short-term, to minimize both the clinical and the economic impacts of bluetongue for farmers and for other business operators, to prevent the spread of the disease within the Community and to facilitate safe animal movements.
 3. There is urgency in the coming weeks to coordinate national vaccination plans. Farmers and other relevant business operators request from all national authorities a unanimous acceptance and a common understanding as regards the implementation of vaccination policy. This is crucial in order to prevent Community trade disruptions and to avoid cumbersome certification procedure. Commission should engage itself and guarantee that national vaccination strategies are complementary, serve common goals and the vaccination is efficient.
 4. All EU farmers should be allowed to have access to safe and effective vaccines. The endemic nature of this disease in Europe requires a long-term planning and risk management. Therefore, Community vaccine bank for bluetongue could be very useful for emergency.
 5. Vaccination should be the cornerstone of a long-term approach to the disease in order to reduce the number of infected areas. Vaccination against bluetongue has to be accompanied by a more global approach to fight the disease. A reinforced surveillance system and a more robust research need to be a part of the global approach. The European Commission must play a leading and coordination role in these fields.
 6. Based on scientific data, any vaccination strategy should also take into account, if appropriate, the status of naturally immunised animals including new born animals.

7. Bluetongue epidemic should be considered as a test evaluating the capacity of the Community and all parties involved in Animal Health to resolve new sanitary crises. For this reason, COPA-COGECA, UECBV and FESASS are ready to actively participate in partnership with the authorities in both the elaboration and the implementation of control measures, vaccination in particular.
8. COPA-COGECA, UECBV and FESASS are conscious of the fact that for a rapid and coordinated response to the disease threat in 2008, important human resources will be needed. The farming community would like to stress that they are ready to fully act as partners of veterinarians. Where human resources prove to be insufficient, the farmers should have the possibility to apply vaccines themselves in time in order to protect their animals, avoid unnecessary suffering and bring down costs.
9. The above organisations agree on the idea to make both quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the vaccination campaign at the end of 2008 and to learn from experiences gained.