

**GENERAL GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERPRETATION  
OF ARTICLE 24 OF COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 97/78/EC –  
RE-ENFORCED CHECKS**

Communication from the European Union

The following communication, received on 4 July 2012, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the European Union.

This communication is related to the publication of a guidance document detailing an automated procedure for the management of re-enforced border controls on consignments of animal origin from third countries intended for import into the European Union.

1. The European Union would like to inform trading partners that it has harmonised the approach on the implementation of the re-enforced checks requirements at the Border Inspections Posts (BIPs) in the European Union as laid down in Article 24 of Council Directive 97/78/EC<sup>1</sup>, to deliver a level playing field for business to ensure that all such consignments are dealt with in a harmonised way across the European Union.
2. The creation of an automated procedure for the management of re-enforced border controls brings more clarity and ensures a harmonized approach across the European Union, in particular on the follow-up actions on imported non-compliant consignments of products of animal origin. This improvement has been established in reply to requests received from various importers in the European Union and third country authorities.
3. This harmonized system makes use of the European Commission's IT Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES), which was introduced to record all veterinary border controls on consignments of animal origin and live animals. A specific section of TRACES has been developed to monitor the controls carried out under re-enforced checks requirements. That section in TRACES is linked with the Rapid Alert System of Feed and Food (RASFF) of the European Commission. The re-enforced check system is triggered when a member State of the European Union notifies the European Commission of a consignment of third country origin which has been controlled and a serious or repeated non-compliance with European Union legislation was detected and which they consider requires a programme of re-enforced checks. Such a programme concerns the need to carry out

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<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 97/78/EC of 18 December 1997 laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on products entering the European Community from third countries (OJ L 24, 30.01.1998, p. 9-30)  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1998:024:0009:0030:EN:PDF>.

increased border controls across the European Union for a specified number of consignments of the same product, from the same country and establishment of origin, and for the same hazard.

4. In notifying all European Union member States and the third country authority of origin with a RASFF notification, the European Commission validates such re-enforced checks system when appropriate.

5. A General Guidance document has been developed, which sets out the detailed procedures of the re-enforced checks (REC) system and how it has been incorporated into TRACES and linked to the relevant RASFF notifications. This system has been "on-line" since January 2012 during which time it has been adapted to address any shortcomings or problems identified. These have been addressed and delivered in an updated TRACES-version in May this year and in the General Guidance document itself, which was formally agreed by all the European Union member States at the Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health in June 2012.

6. It should be clarified that this system is not a result of new legislation or new requirements, but has been developed to harmonise the approach across the European Union to the implementation of Article 24 of Directive 97/78/EC.

Please find attached for your information a link to the Guidance Document, available on the European Commissions' website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/animalbyproducts/guidance\\_article\\_24\\_1125\\_5\\_2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/animalbyproducts/guidance_article_24_1125_5_2012_en.pdf).

For more information on "Veterinary border control", please see the dedicated webpage:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/index_en.htm).

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