

**EVOLUTION OF THE FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE  
ERADICATION PLAN IN ARGENTINA**

Communication from Argentina

**1. Introduction**

The National Foot-and-Mouth Disease Eradication Plan was started in April 2001, the overall objectives being:

- To eradicate foot-and-mouth disease from Argentina and to secure international recognition of the situation;
- to move towards the creation of subregional blocs which, with reference to foot-and-mouth disease, are internationally recognized as equivalent health areas.

The Plan is fully operative, along with a number of policy measures, chiefly regionalization of the country, control of the movement of animals, animal by-products and like products, the Information System for Notification and Suspected Cases of Vesicular Diseases and management of the oil-based foot-and-mouth vaccine.

The strict vaccination plan, the excellent quality of the oil-based vaccine, the animal movements controls and the epidemiological surveillance, *inter alia*, were the strategies that succeeded in controlling the epidemic and then securing the clinical absence of foot-and-mouth disease from 23 January 2002 onwards.

**2. Vaccination campaigns**

As a priority measure for controlling foot-and-mouth disease, the whole of the bovine population throughout the country is systematically vaccinated, with exception of the region south of the Río Negro and the Province of Neuquen, which has been declared "Foot-and-mouth disease-free where vaccination is not practised", under Resolution No. XVII at the meeting of the OIE International Committee held on 28 May 2002.

A long lasting oil-based tetravalent vaccine (01 Campos, A24 Cruzeiro, A Argentina 2000 and A Argentina 2001 virus) is used and the vaccination is done by the local health bodies under the supervision of SENASA's local veterinary surgeons. The strategy consists of annual campaigns covering all bovine categories. Since the National Eradication Plan was started (April 2001), there have been four consecutive systematic vaccination campaigns and the campaign for this year is under way.

### **3. Seroepidemiological surveillance**

The follow-up and assessments of the strategies implemented are crucial in determining the degree of progress in the Eradication Plan, by detecting deviations so as to make the requisite corrections.

The assessments have demonstrated optimum population immunity, reflected in the absence of outbreaks since January 2002.

In view of the absence of clinical cases, the need arose to use other seroepidemiological indicators, such as the level of viral activity and studies of population immunity.

Accordingly, in the course of 2002, various seroepidemiological studies were conducted:

- Cattle, sheep and goat sampling: viral activity and immunity level (among bovines).
- Sampling of farm-bred deer (*Cervus elaphus*): viral activity.
- Sampling of wild biungulates in Patagonia – Foot-and-mouth disease-free area without vaccination (deer and boar): viral activity.
- Goat sampling in Mendoza (border with Chile): viral activity.

The first of these was the most extensive, with the highest number of samples (69,000 sera of both types) and covered the whole of the country, including the disease-free areas. The results led to the following conclusions:

A substantial reduction in the incidence of the disease over time. The secondary role of sheep and goats in maintaining and transmitting foot-and-mouth disease under the production and operating conditions in our country.

In view of the epidemiological situation regarding foot-and-mouth disease in 2000 and 2001, the levels are generally low, and in many cases within the margin of error of the laboratory analysis methods used. This indicates that the measures adopted as from the first half of 2001 to control the epidemic have led to absence of the disease and have cut viral activity down to very low levels.

The population immunity is good, even in the most vulnerable categories (animals 6 to 12 months and 12 to 24 months old).

The absence of viral activity in the free areas (Patagonia Sur and Norte B) has been confirmed.

As for the three other studies, 100 per cent tested negative, thereby confirming the absence of viral activity in the species sampled.

### **4. Developments in the health situation**

23 January 2003 marked the first year without foot-and-mouth disease.

Confidence in Argentine agri-food production has been regained and is reflected in the fact that 61 markets are open to bovine meat and \$2,071 million was earned in 2002 from exports of meat,

dairy products, raw hides and other edible products of animal origin, certified by the National Health and Foodstuff Quality Service (SENASA).

The Argentine sanitary system has been inspected on many occasions by technical experts in connection with foot-and-mouth disease, more particularly:

- Two inspections in Cuenca del Plata (CPFA – OPS), two by experts from the European Union and the United States FSIS and APHIS, to assess the sanitary situation in connection with foot-and-mouth disease.
- In 2002, experts from the sanitary services in Chile, Russia, Thailand, Philippines, Morocco, Ecuador and Venezuela monitored the foot-and-mouth disease situation in Argentina and the results were highly satisfactory, so that after the inspection the market was opened up for export of fresh boneless bovine meat.
- In October 2002, experts from Cuenca del Plata (CPFA – OPS) came on a regular inspection, with the participation of experts from Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil, and the results were satisfactory.

## **5. Results obtained**

The European Union market for fresh boned and matured bovine meat from Argentina was reopened (2002/45/EC).

At the meeting of the OIE International Committee held on 28 May 2002, the General Committee declared the region of Argentina situated south of the 42<sup>nd</sup> parallel as "Foot-and-mouth disease-free area where vaccination is not practised".

Under Decision 2002/338/EC, on 2 May 2002 the European Commission authorized imports of fresh ovine, caprine and bovine meat, with bone, from the region south of the 42<sup>nd</sup> parallel.

Sixty-one markets<sup>1</sup> were reopened for exports of bovine meat by applying the OIE recommended risk mitigation procedures.

## **6. Conclusion**

The foot-and-mouth disease situation in the Argentine Republic is under control and is stable, and this means that it is possible to comply strictly with the recommendations established by the OIE International Animal Health Code regarding Chapter 2.1.1 and the products involved.

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<sup>1</sup> European Union (15 member States), Russian Federation, Switzerland, Slovenia, Norway, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Albania, Kosovo, Poland, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Aruba, Curaçao (Dutch Antilles), Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Saint Martens, Singapore (South of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel), Thailand, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Egypt, Angola, Gabon, Republic of Congo, People's Republic of Congo, Qatar, Nigeria, Algeria, Oman, South Africa, Kuwait, Morocco, Israel, Guadeloupe (French Antilles), Slovakia, Finland, Malaysia, Martinique, Reunion, Kenya and Jordan.