

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRADE CONTROL  
AND EXPERT SYSTEM (TRACES)**

Communication from the European Communities

The following communication, received on 12 May 2004, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of the European Communities.

1. The Trade Control and Expert System, "TRACES", is the new system the European Communities has adopted to manage animal movements and avoid the spread of animal diseases.

2. The European Commission has recently introduced TRACES, a new automated system designed to improve the management of animal movements both from outside and within the European Union. TRACES will consolidate and simplify existing systems and create better tools for managing outbreaks of animal diseases. All those concerned by animal trade, authorities and economic operators, will benefit from this modern web-based system, the first EU-wide e-government application in the field of food safety.

3. The new TRACES database will facilitate the tracking of the fifty thousand animals transported each day in the European Union. TRACES is a major innovation and will be most useful in the event of outbreak of an animal disease, such as foot and mouth disease. The new database will reduce administrative formalities both for economic operators and for the competent authorities. For example, a consignment of animals moved from Spain to Italy via France can be managed by TRACES using a single electronic form instead of the separate systems and the paperwork that would have been required previously.

4. TRACES will create a single central database to track the movement of animals and of certain types of products both within and from outside the European Union. It is expected to:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information for use in tracing animal movements;
- improve the exchange of information between national and Community authorities;
- provide a system of electronic veterinary certificates enabling trade operators to enter the relevant information on line;
- manage lists of establishments in non-European Union countries that are authorized to export products of animal origin to the European Union;
- manage rejected consignments at European Union borders;
- make it possible to target controls on public and animal health and on animal welfare, and in particular to verify that animal transport rules are fulfilled;

- centralize risk assessment of potential disease outbreaks;
- overcome language difficulties, making information from other countries more accessible;
- integrate all users by creating a workflow for the exchange of documents between economic operators and the competent authorities.

5. In the event of an outbreak of disease, it is very important to be able to trace the movement of all animals that may be affected so that measures can be taken swiftly to stop the spread of the disease. In the wake of outbreaks of classical swine fever in 1997 and foot and mouth disease in 2001, fresh impetus was given to efforts to improve computerized systems for tracing animal movements.

6. TRACES will replace a number of earlier systems (see Background below), and by substituting a single system for these separate systems will avoid duplication and make the tracing of animal movements both within and from outside the European Union more efficient. The single database created at a cost of 2.2 million euros, will also facilitate action in the event of an outbreak of animal disease.

7. TRACES is designed to be used directly by economic operators under the control of the competent veterinary authorities. Relevant information can thus be easily shared with customs authorities.

8. The TRACES system is being introduced from 1 April 2004, though member States that are not ready by then may continue to use the old system (ANIMO) until 31 December 2004. Austria, Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Finland joined the system on 1 April 2004, when it started up; the other member States will gradually join in the months to come.

#### **How does the system work in practice?**

9. Trade within the European Union: For example, a consignment of cattle being sent from Spain to Italy via France. If registered in TRACES the dealer can fill in all details of the consignment on line, and send the electronic form to the competent Spanish authority. The electronic form is checked and then validated if the animals meet the requirements. Once validation is complete, TRACES sends the information to the competent authority at the destination, to the competent central authority in France and to all staging points, so that controls can be made en route and at the final destination. In the event of a disease outbreak, it is easy to trace the consignment both upstream and downstream.

10. Imports of products from outside the European Union: For example, a consignment of products arrives in Antwerp. If registered in TRACES, the official at the border inspection post (BIP) will be able to fill up part I of the common veterinary entry document (CVED) describing the details of the consignment. After checking the products, the veterinary authority at the BIP will either give or refuse authorization. If the consignment is authorized, the CVED is sent to the competent authority at the destination. If it is refused, all BIPs within the European Union will be informed via TRACES.

## Background

11. TRACES will replace several earlier systems including ANIMO and SHIFT. ANIMO (*animal movement*) was introduced to trace the movements of live animals and to exchange information between national and Community authorities. To improve the health security of animals and products imported from outside the European Union, an information system known as SHIFT was developed. SHIFT in turn incorporated two other systems: the LMS (*List Management System*), to manage lists of establishments authorized to export to the European Union and the RCS (*Rejected Consignment Notification System*), to manage rejected consignments at European Union borders. The replacement of these separate systems with the single TRACES system will avoid duplication and make the tracing of animal movements simpler and more efficient.

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