

**STATUS OF THE PROGRAMME TO ERADICATE  
FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE**

Communication from Paraguay

*Meeting of 22-23 June 2004*

**Background**

1. In Paraguay, an agricultural country par excellence, exports of meat products and by-products have historically represented a significant percentage of the country's foreign trade. In this context, the control of animal diseases, and in particular foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), is a national priority.
2. The long struggle against FMD began in 1966 with the launching of an official control programme.

**The eradication programme**

3. The implementation of the programme to eradicate FMD at the national level began in 1992, leading to the eradication of outbreaks in 1994.
4. In May 1997, Paraguay received international certification from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) as a "country free of foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination". This sanitary status was successively renewed until 2002, when the country lost its status following an outbreak on the border with Brazil.
5. Subsequently, the implementation of preventive measures to maintain the sanitary situation led to the termination of vaccination on 1 August 1999, with a view to achieving certification as a "country free of foot-and-mouth disease without vaccination".
6. However, in August 2000, following several FMD outbreaks in the region, in areas located both in Brazil (Río Grande do Sul) and in Argentina (Northern and Central Provinces) that share borders with Paraguay, and in view of the very high risk of the reintroduction of the virus into the country, the vaccination of cattle was resumed for technical reasons, since it was considered to be the most practical and appropriate technical way of maintaining the sanitary status that had been achieved.
7. Accordingly, a programme of strategic vaccination of all the affected cattle in the areas bordering Brazil and Argentina was initially launched in August and September 2000 by Decree No. 10.009/2000. This was followed by Decree No. 10.863 of 23 October 2000, providing for compulsory vaccination against foot-and-mouth disease throughout the national territory. These measures enabled the country to be recertified in 2000 and 2001 as being free of foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination.
8. In addition to the eradication programme's vaccination plan, a seroepidemiological surveillance plan was introduced in 2001 throughout the national territory, with emphasis on the areas considered to be most at risk, to supplement the routine inspection activities carried out at

refrigeration plants, livestock markets and shows and at the fixed and mobile control posts established by the official veterinary service (SENACSA).

9. In April 2002, SENACSA introduced a system based on sworn statements for the registration and accreditation of veterinary professionals practising in the private sector and responsible for issuing health certificates for animals intended for export-accredited refrigeration plants.

10. Likewise, a system was introduced, also based on sworn statements, for the registration of cattle ranches accredited to supply animals to the refrigeration plants that process meat for export. This system, together with the one outlined above, makes it possible to control the health and hygiene conditions of animals more thoroughly at the source.

11. Towards the end of 2002 and in mid 2003, the eradication programme's progress was affected by two occurrences of foot-and-mouth disease in the country, leading to the loss of status as an "FMD free country with vaccination" and causing the country enormous economic losses. The first case occurred on 31 October 2002 at a cattle ranch in the Department of Canindeyu, on the Brazilian border. The second case occurred on 12 July 2003 in an indigenous settlement in the locality of Pozo Hondo in the Department of Boquerón, very close to the borders with Argentina and Bolivia. Both cases were communicated to the OIE and other relevant bodies, as well as to major trading partners, and were duly discussed with the members of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures at its twenty-fifth and twenty-eighth meetings.

12. Since then, Paraguay has made it a priority to recover its health status as a "country free of foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination", and has therefore introduced various measures, including:

- Obtaining sworn statements of animals held;
- Supervised vaccination of all bovine animals twice a year;
- Serological sampling at the national level;
- Carrying out joint activities at the bilateral and regional levels;
- Forming animal health commissions at the national level, made up of representatives of public and private organizations;
- Introducing a computer system for health control posts;
- Measures to harmonize and strengthen the country's veterinary services.

As part of the "annual supervised vaccination" efforts, the first vaccination of the bovine population took place from 1 to 30 June 2003 and the second took place in the period from November to December 2003. Both had a high coverage rate.

### **Current situation**

13. The first stage of the general vaccination of bovine animals for 2004 took place from 15 May to 30 June 2004.

14. The favourable results of the national serological survey designed in collaboration with PANAFTOSA have now made it possible to prepare the relevant documentation for submission to the OIE.

15. As of the date of this report, there have been no outbreaks of the disease, nor has the FMD virus been detected in the country. In the coming months, a report will be submitted to the OIE, and at the OIE meeting that is due to take place in early 2005, Paraguay expects to be able to regain its certification as "free of foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination".

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