

**MEASURES IMPLEMENTED IN THE FIELD  
OF VETERINARY MEDICINE**

Communication from Cuba

The following communication, received on 20 January 2005, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Cuba.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Over the last few years, the National Directorate of the Institute of Veterinary Medicine of the Ministry of Agriculture of Cuba has been working in the area of facilitation, the aim being to implement new procedures to facilitate trade in animals, animal products and by-products while at the same time providing solutions to any disputes which might arise, and to do so without creating unnecessary obstacles and without allowing international trade in the above-mentioned products to become a pathway for introduction into the country of exotic diseases.

2. These procedures are based on elements referred to in the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and reflect the basic principles of that Agreement, that is to say: non-discrimination, harmonization, equivalence and transparency. The latest World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) thinking regarding the protection of human and animal health has also been applied, taking into account valid scientific arguments and the principles of risk analysis.

**II. MEASURES ALREADY IMPLEMENTED**

3. International trade in animals and animal products and by-products is currently uniformly regulated by Legislative Decree No. 137/93 on Veterinary Medicine and Decree No. 181/93, together with a body of resolutions, circulars and animal health import requirements.

4. An import/export application mechanism has been set up which makes it clear to companies importing animals and animal products and by-products that they must provide the information required under Circular No. 3/93 no later than 15 days prior to the arrival of the animals/products they wish to import. This mechanism enables the authorities to gather a maximum of information in order to carry out a risk assessment which will be both valid and suited to the complexity of the operation in question. Once this process has been carried out, the corresponding decision is taken, in consultation with all the interested parties.

5. In order to facilitate the work of the border veterinary services in ports and airports, a national mechanism has been set up, allowing importers to clear their goods using a photocopy of the veterinary certificate and the quality certificate, thus ensuring that products are not retained for long

periods of time in ports or airports. The products are released for transfer to the warehouses of destination where they are detained pending inspection. Importers must submit the original documents within 15 days of the date of arrival of the goods (Instruction No. 2/98 of 22 July 1998).

6. Steps have been taken to study the possibility, with respect to the authorization of imports of products of animal origin, of applying the concepts of zoning and regionalization depending on the sanitary status of each country, the infrastructure of its animal health services, its surveillance system, and the protective measures introduced to maintain its status as a disease-free region or zone, thus avoiding what constitutes a limitation on the international movement of animals and animal products.

7. Authorization to import animals or animal products depends on a process of sanitary certification of the relevant breeding facilities and food production plants in the exporting country by an expert appointed by the Directorate-General of the Institute of Veterinary Medicine.

8. A nationwide system of epidemiological surveillance of the main diseases affecting animals and which can be transmitted both by animals and animal products was established in order to detect the appearance of such diseases and control the factors leading to outbreaks, as well as a notification system for day-to-day health problems occurring across the country.

9. A nationwide surveillance system for foodstuffs destined for human consumption was introduced.

10. Electronic contacts have been maintained with the official veterinary authorities of each country with which import/export operations are carried out, in order to work towards agreements on a model certificate, its content, quarantine measures, etc., to ensure that import/export operations go ahead without any health-related difficulties.

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