



9 April 2008

Agricultural Council,  
Rue de la Loi 175/Wetstraat 175, B-1048 Bruxelles/Brussel

Commissioner Mrs Androulla Vassiliou,  
DG Health and Consumer Protection  
B-1049 BRUSSELS

CC: Members of Parliament

REF BTV8

Dear members of the Council, and Mrs Androulla Vassiliou,

The European Livestock Association (ELA) would like to register its great concern with regard to those regions and/or countries that are still 'free' zones because bluetongue has not been identified - but for whom vaccination against BTV8 is not yet seen as a permitted option.

To protect these areas from disease they must be able to utilise preventative vaccination without restrictions of all susceptible ruminants. According to the revised EC ruling they may vaccinate, but a free zone with vaccination automatically becomes a so-called protection zone. This change of disease status implies important import/export restrictions, which will be the main deterrent to the use of vaccine for the control of BTV8 in a free zone. In addition, these zones will then be open to receive ruminants from other 'protection zones' in which the disease is present. Since vaccination will take about six weeks before providing full immunity/protection, there is a risk of introducing BT via such potentially infected animals during that period.

For these reasons, veterinary authorities will be very reluctant to accept vaccination as a viable option to prevent the spread of BTV8 to 'BT free' regions or countries, even though it is the most effective way to control the disease.

At the conference in Brussels on 16 January 2008, all speakers made it very clear that the **only** way to cope with the current situation of expanding cases of BTV 8 in North Western Europe is to carry out vaccination of all susceptible animals for at least three years.

The southern Member States, with their experience of other BT-serotypes, explicitly stressed the importance of such a strategy. They themselves had coped with the other serotypes in the exactly same way. They started at a very early stage before significant spread, thus minimising the risks, not only for their own countries, but for the rest of Europe as well. They should be highly commended for this.

We therefore strongly urge the Council and the Commission to review the legislation concerning vaccination in order to ensure an adequate and effective response.

We feel that the situation with bluetongue offers a real opportunity for the Commission to demonstrate its leadership and undoubted expertise by adopting a pan European approach to the control of this latest extremely serious threat to our livestock industry. We feel that a critical part of this policy is the option for member states to vaccinate all susceptible animals without the immediate consequences of limiting vaccination to a protection zone.

Furthermore, by adopting preventive vaccination, as was recently advocated by the European Parliament, we will surely be moving towards the very laudable objectives/ideals expressed in the document "Towards a durable animal health policy in a global world".

Yours sincerely,



Peter King, Chair