



Brussels 10. 12. 2012
SANCO G2/FR/lp (2012) 1640534

Anes (2012) 1465518

Dear Mr Davies,

Subject: Badger cull in the UK and cattle vaccination against TB in the EU

Thank you for your letter of 9 November 2012 on the above mentioned subject, addressed to Mr Silva Rodriguez, who has passed it to me as the issue falls under the competences of the Health and Consumers Directorate-General.

I understand your concerns as regards bovine tuberculosis in badgers. On this issue, the Commission supports a comprehensive holistic policy on bovine Tuberculosis (TB) eradication that addresses also the possible problem posed by TB infected badgers, that is considered by the UK a key epidemiological point to combat the disease in cattle. However, it is up to the UK to assess which is the most effective and suitable policy to deal with TB in badgers. Several options including culling and vaccination of badgers appear to be possible.

As regards vaccination, there are detailed Union rules on eradication of TB in cattle and cattle intra-EU trade that, inter alia, prohibits explicitly vaccination against TB in bovine animals as laid down in Article 13 of Council Directive 78/52/EEC and stringent requirements for testing that are not compatible with vaccination in Council Directive 64/432/EEC. Amendments to these and other relevant pieces of EU legislation would require the EU co-legislators action. In this regard, major changes in EU rules on Animal Health should be seen in the context of the proposal for a new EU Animal Health Law that the Commission currently plans to adopt in the first half of 2013.

Bovine TB is a serious disease of humans and the main transmission routes are through contaminated food (especially raw milk and raw milk products) or through direct contact with infected animals. Detailed rules are in place in EU legislation, in particular Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 with specific provisions, to ensure that milk or meat from infected cattle do not pose any risk for food safety.

Mr David T.C. Davies, MP
16 Maryport Street
Usk
Monmouthshire
NP15 1AB
United Kingdom

In addition to the above issues related to public health and food security, bovine TB is a serious notifiable disease of animals that may cause severe production losses if not controlled and it is also one of the diseases of concern in international trade of bovine animals.

Eradication of TB, based on the principles and rules established in the EU legislation, including culling of infected cattle, has been successfully accomplished by many countries in the EU. Member States and regions thereof declared officially free of bovine TB are listed in Commission Decision 2003/467/EC of 23 June 2003. Those principles and rules also take into account the standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health. Currently, around 80% of the regions of the EU, including Scotland in the UK, are officially free from bovine TB.

In accordance with the same principles of the EU legislation, many third countries worldwide, including Australia, Norway, Japan, Zimbabwe, have achieved the TB-free status.

Yours sincerely,



Paola Testori Coggi