



30.8.2017

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0133/2017 by Christa Kowerk (German) on animal welfare and the use of horse blood for the purpose of biological research and manufacturing veterinary drugs

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner is forwarding to the European Parliament a petition written on the online platform Avaaz.org bearing her own signature denouncing the practice of extracting blood from horses for pharmaceutical purposes. The petition claims that the European pharmaceutical industry is engaged in wide scale “industrial horse torture” and calls upon the European institutions to put a stop to this practice, also as regards the import of products derived from such practices (e.g. hormones).

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 16 June 2017. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 30 August 2017

The Commission received information from animal welfare organisations suggesting possible mistreatment of horses farmed for blood serum production in certain South American countries.

The Commission continues to liaise, within the remit of its competence, with the relevant services in the concerned South American countries in order to have a clear picture of the situation there, to raise awareness of the problem and to promote improvements where needed. Furthermore, the Commission has also been in contact with the relevant pharmaceutical industry to obtain more detailed information on the use of pregnant mare serum gonadotropin (PMSG) in the production of veterinary medicinal products intended for zootechnical and therapeutic uses in livestock. In addition, the Commission drew the attention

of Member States to the matter during the meeting of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed of 30 November 2016, and will continue raising awareness of this issue.

The Commission is seeking cooperation with non-EU countries to improve animal welfare globally. In this context, the Commission actively supports the adoption of international standards on animal welfare by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and their subsequent implementation by member countries. In particular, the OIE animal welfare standards “Use of animals in research and education”¹ cover mares kept for the purpose of producing a medicinal product and provide reference guidance to OIE member countries.

Conclusion

The Commission does not currently plan to ban the import of pregnant mare serum gonadotropin.

While the Commission will continue raising awareness of this issue among the stakeholders concerned and Member States, it should be noted that the EU cannot impose its animal welfare standards on non-EU countries. For imports into the EU, EU trade policy shall respect the rules of the World Trade Organization. The Commission will however continue promoting, within its remit, the development and implementation of animal welfare standards globally.

¹ http://www.oie.int/index.php?id=169&L=0&htmfile=chapitre_aw_research_education.htm