

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1613/07

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to the Commission

Subject: Bluetongue and ban on movements of animals

Since August 2006 cases of bluetongue have been reported in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. The cases involve serotype 8, previously unknown in Europe. The effects of the disease on cattle and sheep seem to differ according to the serotype involved. In 2000, in the light of the serotypes known at the time, an EU-wide strategy to combat the disease was laid down, based primarily on bans on transporting animals out of affected areas, in particular the so-called 20-km zone.

1. Does the Commission share our view that the economic losses suffered by farmers as a result of the trading restrictions far outweigh the direct losses caused by the disease itself? Does this not suggest a need to authorise the transport of animals which have tested negative for the disease (taking account of Annex II to Decision 2005/393/EC¹) out of the 20-km zone, in keeping with the provisions applicable to the 150-km zone? If not, how can such a restriction be justified, in particular since it is at odds with the OIE code?
2. What grounds are there for retaining an additional approval requirement pursuant to Article 5 of Decision 2005/393/EC if tests on living animals carried out on the basis of EU requirements (Annex II to that decision) have produced negative results? Can this not be seen as a breach of the principle of the free movement of goods?
3. Does the Commission take the view that the spread of bluetongue is primarily the result of the dissemination of the vectors (by the wind)? Or does it have specific evidence to suggest that movements of animals which have tested negative for the disease out of restricted areas might have been a factor?
4. At present, animals which have tested negative for the disease and which have veterinary certificates consistent with the OIE code cannot be transported out of the 20-km zone to third countries even if the third country in question gives it approval. What measures does the Commission plan to take in the short term to bring an end to this serious restriction on exports?

¹ OJ L 130, 24.5.2005, p. 22.