

WRITTEN QUESTION E-6661/08
by Neil Parish (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: EU bluetongue vaccine bank

According to document 'SANCO/2367/2008 - Rev 1' – Draft Commission Decision establishing Community reserves of vaccines against African horse sickness (Memorandum from Mrs A Vassiliou), recital 3 of the draft states the following:

'(3) The persistent circulation of bluetongue virus in certain Member States is sufficient proof for the almost uninterrupted presence of competent vectors in the affected areas. The AHS-virus and bluetongue virus are transmitted by the same vector *Culicoides* and therefore the risk of virus introduction into Member States is higher than negligible. The bluetongue affected parts of the Community are also core breeding grounds for valuable horse populations that are thus particularly threatened by AHS.'

Of the 24 known serotypes of the bluetongue virus (BTV), six are already prevalent in the EU, causing great distress to both animals and farmers in the affected Member States. Given the urgent economic and animal welfare need to counter BTV outbreaks in the EU, the development of an EU vaccine bank for BTV is of the utmost importance.

Can the Commission therefore explain why it is planning a vaccine bank for African horse sickness but not for bluetongue virus?