

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In presenting the Report of the Executive Committee, the Chairman stated that the Committee met on the morning of 29 March 1965 in Rome and approved the Report (Appendix - IX) for presentation at this Session.

The Chairman gave a short summary of the main items in the Report. He emphasised the contact between the Secretariat of the Commission and senior members of the staff of FAO who give so much valuable help. He referred to the visits made by the Secretary to different countries and the helpful results from them, and drew attention to the forthcoming visit to Bulgaria, to attend a regional meeting at which it is understood that Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece will also be represented.

He referred to "Vaccination against foot-and-mouth disease of livestock intended for export from European countries" which was referred by the Commission for discussion by the Research Group of the Commission's Standing Technical Committee. In the suggestion made by the Group, no mention was made of the isolation of livestock following vaccination with vaccine prepared with local strains of the virus on arrival in an importing country or on board ship before they were permitted to enter freely into the importing country. It was agreed that the Research Group's suggestion should be accepted with the addition that the animals should be retained in quarantine in the importing country sufficiently long to ensure that protection from the vaccination was attained.

It was pointed out that it may not always be possible to procure vaccine from a type or sub-type of the virus which existed in the importing country. It was felt, however, that this recommendation should be accepted as a general principle for guidance of the exporting and importing countries.

Some concern was expressed on the lack of more definite information which the Commission seemed to have on the position of foot-and-mouth disease in the Federal Republic of Germany and it was agreed that efforts should be made to arrange a visit when it would be possible to discuss the position and the control methods in practice, particularly with reference to the disease in pigs in which the Commission's experiences might be of considerable help.

In connection with the agenda for the next meeting of the Research Group of the Commission's Standing Technical Committee, it was agreed that a further subject for discussion should be the effect produced on the serum-neutralization test on offspring following vaccination of the dam.

The future activities of the Commission as outlined in Appendix IX were approved.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE CONTROL OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The activities of the Commission since the Eleventh Session, in March 1964, have been concerned mainly with the assistance to countries engaged in the campaign against the SAT1 virus.

As in the previous year, close contact has been maintained with FAO, in particular with the Chief of the Animal Health Branch, with the veterinary authorities of Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria and also with other international agencies interested in the campaign.

The supply of equipment and vaccines involved much work at Headquarters since, as in 1963, not only the needs of the assisted countries or laboratories had to be taken into account, but also the competitive market prices.

These activities were carried out in line with the decisions taken by the FAO/EEC/OIE Consultative Committee which was set up in 1963 to advise on ways and means of utilising the EEC contributions to the campaign. The Committee met in July 1963, in January 1964 (see Report of the Eleventh Session of the Commission) and again on 13 October 1964 when the second EEC contribution (\$525,000) to the campaign was deposited with FAO. The Chairman and the Secretary of the Commission participated in all these meetings (the report of the meeting in Berne is attached to Appendix II).

While the supply of equipment for the laboratories in Athens and Ankara required intensive work by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Purchasing and Control Section of FAO, the supply of vaccines involved a number of contacts with the producers of the SAT1 vaccine. The result of these negotiations was that vaccines were delivered at a reasonable price, at the proper time and under optimal conditions, with regard to packing, transport and storage.

In Turkey, the evolution of the sanitary position of the country and the development of the new Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute were closely followed; there was a continuous exchange of information and advice, mainly with the assistance of Mr. A. Stubbins, who acted through-out the year as liaison officer between Headquarters and the local veterinary authorities.

The activities in 1964 also included action taken to prevent the introduction into Europe of foot-and-mouth disease through trade of animals and animal products. Information and documentation on this subject were given to those countries in need of this information; in particular, the Greek Government was advised to give full consideration to the resolutions passed at a meeting in Brussels held in June 1960 and attended by officers of OIE and the European Commission.

The steadily increasing demand for products of animal origin, both in southern Europe and the Near East in general, and the offer of meat at favourable conditions and prices from countries normally excluded from European markets, determine movements of trade which constitute a serious danger for the whole of Europe.

This problem was the object of studies of the Secretary of the Commission who had contacts with veterinary authorities and international agencies operating in the region on the matter.

Visits to countries.

From 13 to 25 April 1964 the Secretary visited Greece, Turkey and Lebanon.

The object of the visit to Greece was to obtain first-hand information on the foot-and-mouth disease situation in the country, to advise on the organization of the spring vaccination campaign against SAT1 in the Greek buffer zone, and to discuss the arrangements already made for the expansion of the vaccine-producing facilities in the Institute of Athens.

Note was taken of the improved sanitary situation (with only seven outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in the country) which has permitted the application of the stamping-out policy in the province of Larissa.

At the time of the visit, the fourth vaccination campaign against SAT1 was in full operation. The campaign was proceeding smoothly, without any serious opposition on the part of the population. Marking of vaccinated animals had been stopped, however, because the experience with plastic tags had not been very satisfactory, especially under range conditions.

At the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute, the full list of equipment required by the Institute for its research work was revised and a decision was reached on which apparatus could be supplied by local firms under more favourable conditions than by their importation.

The protocols of the locally produced vaccine (O) were examined; it was noted that there was improvement in quality of the vaccine.

In Athens, the Secretary discussed with the Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, the problems of importation of meat and slaughter animals into Greece. A review was made of possible and safer sources for future importations.

In Turkey, the Secretary examined the sanitary position of the country and discussed the many problems related to the plans of maintaining Thrace permanently free from SAT1 virus and making this important region also possibly free from O virus. This project is, in turn, connected with the plans which have been made in Turkey for export of animals and meat to European countries. The Secretary insisted, with the Director of Veterinary Services, Dr. Bester, on the necessity of improving the sanitary control of all animals moved across the Bosphorus, as a prerequisite of any other action or plan.

At the time of the visit, the spring vaccination campaign in the buffer zone had commenced; it was gratifying to note that the Government was prepared to carry out the campaign throughout the entire region of Thrace.

Another important matter discussed in Turkey was the organization of, and equipment for, the new Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute, now under construction. In particular, decisions were taken on the supply of autoclaves, a steam generator, deep freezers and various kinds of glassware and chemicals.

In Lebanon, the Secretary visited the Near East Animal Health Institute and discussed with Dr. Moulton, Project Manager of the Institute, the purposes, program missions and surveys to be carried out in the Near East by Mr. Olvey, an epizootiologist recently appointed to the Institute.

Mr. Childs, the instrument technician of the Institute, was also contacted and, with the approval of the Project Manager, it was decided that Mr. Childs should visit Turkey and advise the Turkish authorities concerned in the installation of equipment in the new Institute of Ankara.

Second Visit to Greece, Turkey and Lebanon(4-17 November 1964).

While the general purpose of this trip was more or less the same as that of the previous one made in April, the autumn vaccination campaign in the buffer zones, the organization of work, the supply of additional equipment to the developing laboratories, in Athens and Ankara, as well as problems concerning exports were the more specific subjects which received particular attention.

In Greece, it was gratifying to note the remarkable improvement obtained in the sanitary situation, with no foot-and-mouth disease being reported in the country since August 1964.

The future activities of the Veterinary Service which is to be strengthened by the appointment of 300 additional veterinarians as full-time governmental officers, were discussed, as well as the maintenance of the buffer zones and the importation of meat and animals to meet the steadily increasing demand of the country; and together with the Director of Veterinary Services a visit was paid to the Under-Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Athens, with a view to action being taken to prevent further importation of animals directly from this part of Turkey into Greece, so long as infection prevailed in Western Anatolia.

While the autumn vaccination campaign against SAT1 was about to be concluded and a notable increase in type O vaccine production had already been obtained following the installation of part of the new equipment supplied by FAO, no definite decision has been taken on the beginning of the construction of a new section of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute. The Secretary expressed once again the concern of FAO and of the Commission on this regrettable delay.

In Turkey, the Secretary met the new Director of Veterinary Services, Dr. Ozdural, and had long discussions with him on the further development and the objectives of the SAT1 campaign. In addition, the Secretary assisted the FAO expert, Dr. Girard, with his first contacts with the various authorities in relation to his assignment as technical adviser to the Director of the new Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute.

The progress of the SAT1 operations during 1964 was reviewed, particularly on the vaccination of the whole of the susceptible animal population of Thrace, which was concluded before the end of August. While the efforts made thus far in keeping this important region free from SAT1 virus for more than one year were appreciated, it was agreed that further action should be taken to ensure the maintenance of this favourable situation through further improvement of the sanitary control of all animal movements across the Bosphorus. Together with both the Turkish and US AID authorities stationed in the country, plans were discussed for the delimitation in European Turkey of a large protected area, where animals could eventually be assembled and kept in quarantine before slaughter for export.

The organization of the new Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute was discussed with Dr. Girard and the Turkish experts; it was agreed that some additional laboratory apparatus should be purchased, that the Frenkel technique of vaccine production should receive first priority and that consideration should be given to this method in the arrangements for production of foot-and-mouth disease virus.

In Lebanon, the Secretary had contacts with Mr. Childs, the FAO instrument technician at NEAHI, who undertook to continue giving assistance to the Director of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Institute in the installation of special apparatus, e.g. air-conditioning. The Secretary also had discussions with Dr. Olvey who reported on the sanitary situation in the Near East and on action taken in the field in teaching Iranian veterinarians of the Persian Gulf district in diagnostic techniques for infectious diseases, including foot-and-mouth disease. Future activities were also discussed with a view to improving diagnosis and early reporting of the presence of foot-and-mouth disease, at least in places or areas where the disease may have easier access to the Near East and so constitute a danger of future spread to Anatolia and the European continent.

Visit to the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale, Brescia, Italy.

The main purpose of the visit to Brescia was to obtain information on, and to enquire into, the installations which would be required, so that the technique of virus production, as carried out at the Istituto Zooprofilattico, could be adopted at the Greek and Turkish laboratories. Contacts were made

with the manufacturers of rolling drum equipment, industrial trypsinizer apparatus and other items : orders were placed later for the necessary equipment etc., to be supplied to both Greece and Turkey.

At Brescia, the Secretary was able to verify the favourable results obtained by the vaccination of pigs, with vaccine containing four times the amount of antigen used for the protection of cattle. At that time, virus type C was extensively present in the Po valley, affecting swine exclusively.

Arrangements were made for the collection of information and the preparation of a report on this vaccination work for presentation and discussion at the Amsterdam meeting of the Research Group of the Commission's Standing Technical Committee (October 1964).

Participation in Meetings

(A) Meeting of the Research Group of the Commission's Standing Technical Committee, in Amsterdam on 29 September - 1 October 1964.

Several papers were presented on the two main items of the agenda, viz. "Development in the large-scale production of inactivated foot-and-mouth disease vaccines" and "Vaccination of pigs". An interesting report was given by the observer from Plum Island Laboratory on "Pure foot-and-mouth disease virus and the mechanism of its reaction with formaldehyde".

In discussing the item "Vaccination against foot-and-mouth disease of livestock intended for export from European countries", which had been referred to the Group by the Commission, it was felt that the principle of protecting animals intended for export against foot-and-mouth disease by vaccination in the country of origin only, should be revised. The difference in immunological properties often observed among strains of the same virus type make it advisable to revaccinate the animals, using vaccines prepared with the strains prevailing in the imported country, either immediately after their arrival or, if the voyage is lengthy, on board the ship in which they are being conveyed. A summarised report on this meeting is given in ~~the~~ Appendix, in which revaccination of exported animals is dealt with more fully.

At the same meeting, the location and agenda of the next meeting of the Research Group was discussed. It was agreed that the draft agenda should include innocuity and potency tests of inactivated foot-and-mouth disease vaccines and dosage of inactivated vaccines for small ruminants. The invitation of IFFA, Lyons, to be the host institute of the meeting in 1965 was favourably considered and it was decided to submit the proposal to the Executive Committee for approval; the suggested date of the meeting is 28 September - 1 October 1965.

(B) Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Commission in Berne on 17 October.

The main items on the agenda were problems connected with (a) the SAT1 campaign, (b) the position of foot-and-mouth disease in the Near East and North Africa, (c) the present position of foot-and-mouth disease in Europe and (d) other activities of the Commission.

(a) The activities of the Secretariat with regard to the SAT1 campaign.

A report was submitted to the Executive Committee by the Secretary on the activities connected with the SAT1 campaign. Good progress had been made during last year in procuring equipment for the laboratories at Athens and Ankara. The ultimate aim is to increase vaccine production to a level that will permit, in the future, the exchange of O and SAT1 vaccines with a view to the maintenance of the buffer zones between Greece and Turkey.

It was generally felt that favourable results had been obtained in keeping south-east Europe free from SAT1 infection throughout 1964 and that this was due to the application of sanitary control measures and, in particular, to the extensive vaccination campaigns carried out in Thrace, using vaccine supplied through the contributions of the European Governments to the SAT1 campaign.

The participants expressed their concern about the sale of animals (several hundreds) which took place in summer 1964 from western Anatolia into Greece and took note of the decision of the Greek Government to suspend these negotiations until such time as conditions in Turkey could give enough guarantee to justify such trade.

(b) Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the Near East and in Northern Africa.

The Secretary gave a short account of the disease situation in the Near East and in Northern Africa. Four types of virus, O, A, SAT1 and ASIA I, had been demonstrated in Iran. While ASIA I was still confined to the eastern part of the country, there still existed the danger of its spread to the West at some time. In Iraq most of the outbreaks were attributed to virus O, while little or no information could be obtained from the Syrian Arab Republic and other countries. In Israel, a vaccination program against SAT1 and ASIA I was under way. Vaccination campaigns are in progress in Israel and preference is given to the use of inactivated vaccines.

(c) Foot-and-Mouth Disease Position in Europe.

The foot-and-mouth disease position in Europe, as shown in the statistical data compiled by the Secretary, seemed to be satisfactory. Only in three countries, Spain, Germany and Italy, were there still a great number of outbreaks being recorded and the disease was confined mostly to swine. It was stressed that the large number of outbreaks among pigs required continuation of study by the Commission's Standing Technical Committee and much research in the laboratories of the interested countries.

(d) Other activities of the Commission.

It was suggested that the Chairman and the Secretary of the Commission should attend the IXth Conference of the OIE Commission on Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Paris in October 1964.

It was also felt that the invitation from Dr. Popov, Director of Veterinary Services, Bulgaria, to hold a regional meeting in his country, with the participation of the Directors of Veterinary Services and Chiefs of Foot-and-Mouth Disease Laboratories of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia, should be accepted. The main object of the meeting would be to increase collaboration in the application of measures to control foot-and-mouth disease and, in particular, to discuss ways and means to protect south-eastern Europe from exotic types of virus.

The Executive Committee also endorsed the proposal that the next meeting of the Research Group should be at Lyons in September 1965.

(C) Meeting of the SAT1 Consultative Committee.

The Third Meeting of the FAO/EEC/OIE Consultative Committee for the SAT1 Campaign was held in Berne on 13 October 1964 and was attended by the Chairman and the Secretary of the European Commission. The results of the campaign were discussed in detail and plans for future action were established. The way in which the campaign funds have been administered with regard to purchase of vaccines and equipment was appreciated. It was also recognised that further funds will be needed to continue the campaign during winter 1965-66 and to meet any emergency situation which might arise before then.

(D) XXXIInd General Session of the OIE Committee

The XXXIInd General Session of OIE was held from 18-23 May 1964 and was attended by the Chairman and the Secretary of the Commission. Among other matters of general interest, reports were presented from 30 countries on the organization of their quarantine measures for the sanitary control of the import and export of livestock and products of animal origin, in which prevention of the dissemination of foot-and-mouth disease played an important role. The evolution of foot-and-mouth disease was discussed on a world-wide basis and contacts were established with specialists and agencies interested in disease control on a regional level.

(E) The FAO/OIE/WHO Meeting on Basic Principles for the Control of International Traffic of Animals and Animal Products was held in Berne, Switzerland on 12-17 October 1964. The Chairman and the Secretary of the Commission attended the Meeting. The role of primary importance played by foot-and-mouth disease in all matters concerning importation of livestock and products of animal origin was clearly emphasized by the delegates. It is significant that various representatives of exporting countries repeatedly voiced their desire for more flexibility on the part of the importing countries in taking safeguards.

(F) IXth Conference of the OIE Permanent Commission on Foot-and-Mouth Disease.

The Chairman and the Secretary of the European Commission attended the IXth Conference of the OIE Permanent Commission on Foot-and-Mouth Disease, held on 27 - 30 October 1964 in Paris.

Representatives of 23 countries took part and 60 papers were presented. Papers on modified live virus-vaccines on the possibility of employing cultures of special cell lines in the production of foot-and-mouth disease virus, and on vaccination of pigs were of considerable interest. Other matters discussed were the control campaign carried out in South West-Africa, South African Union and Bechuanaland and the role of wild life in transmitting the disease, in relation to their susceptibility to natural and modified virus.

Future Activities

The Commission will continue to promote and encourage national and international action for the control of foot-and-mouth disease in Europe. To this end, close contacts will continue to be kept with Government authorities, OIE and other specialized agencies and institutes. The Secretary will visit European veterinary institutes and collect information on the progress of vaccine production techniques and on immunogenicity of new vaccines as well as other research work carried out in these institutes.

The prevention of the introduction of exotic types or strains of foot-and-mouth disease into Europe will receive much attention.

As far as the SAT1 campaign is concerned, the activities of the Secretariat will be much along lines similar to those in the previous two years; visits will be made to the countries engaged in the maintenance of the buffer zones and assistance will continue to be given to the developing laboratories in Greece and Turkey in conformity with the decisions of the FAO/EEC/OIE Consultative Committee on the use of the available funds of the campaign.

The evolution of foot-and-mouth disease will be closely followed; in particular everything possible should be done to assist the countries directly exposed by new strains or variants of the foot-and-mouth disease virus, as for instance, the Near East strain of virus type A.

In this connection, contacts with specialized agencies or laboratories will possibly be extended and, if circumstances permit, a regional meeting in south-eastern Europe will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria in spring this year. An invitation to this effect has been received in autumn 1964 from the Director of Veterinary Services, Bulgaria and the veterinary authorities of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia in principle have agreed with this idea. The purpose of this meeting will be to improve the already existing collaboration between the four countries in the control of foot-and-mouth disease and, particularly, to attempt to coordinate natural resources in such a way that the buffer zone system can be maintained, after international assistance will have been discontinued.