

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# Working Documents

1979 - 1980

2 May 1979

DOCUMENT 105/79

## Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture

**on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 510/78) for a Directive amending Directive 64/432/CEE in respect of ~~of~~enzootic leucosis among cattle**

**Rapporteur : Mr M. HUGHES**

1.2.7



By letter of 7 December 1978 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Articles 43 and 100 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a directive amending Directive 64/432/EEC in respect of enzootic leucosis among cattle.

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Agriculture as the committee responsible with a request that the committee follow the procedure without report.

It considered this proposal at its meetings of 25 and 26 January and 1 and 2 February 1979 and decided that the procedure without report should not be adopted. The committee appointed Mr Hughes rapporteur).

At its meeting of 4 and 5 April 1979 the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement.

Present : Mr Liogier, vice-chairman and acting chairman; Mr Ligios, vice-chairman; Mr Albertini (deputizing for Mr Hughes, rapporteur), Mrs Dunwoody, Mr L'Estrange, Mr Fuchs (deputizing for Mr Früh), Mr Hansen, Mr Klinker, Mr Müller W., Mr Nielsen, Mr Pisoni and Mr Tolman.

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The Committee on Agriculture hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement :

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a directive amending Directive 64/432/EEC in respect of enzootic leucosis among cattle

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council<sup>1</sup>,
- having been consulted by the Council, pursuant to Articles 43 and 100 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 510/78),
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 105/79),
- whereas the Community should improve the health state of livestock in order to make livestock rearing more profitable,
- whereas adequate protective measures against infectious diseases should be introduced,
- whereas the outbreaks of enzootic leucosis among cattle have been increasing in all Member States,

1. Expresses the greatest concern at the continued development of Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL), a highly infectious and slow-developing blood cancer of cattle which appears to attack the most advanced herds and breeds; and warns producers and responsible authorities against ignorance and complacency ;
2. Approves the Commission's proposal, as the first step towards a more comprehensive scheme for the eradication of EBL based on a register of EBL-free herds ;
3. Urges the Member States to establish immediately an EBL-free herd recording and eradication scheme ;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ No. C 86, 2.4.1979, p. 1

4. Considers that the serological testing of all bovine herds should be encouraged, with Community financial aid where necessary ;
5. Requests the Commission to study the cost effectiveness of testing and eradication schemes, taking into account the significant losses caused by EBL ;
6. Requests the Commission to undertake an examination of the serological tests employed by Member States, in order to ensure their utmost effectiveness and the comparability of results.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTIntroduction

1. The Commission proposed that Council Directive 64/432/EEC on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine<sup>1</sup> should be amended so as, by means of Community rules, to facilitate trade in bovine animals for breeding and to provide greater protection to herds free of Enzootic Bovine Leucosis.

Animals for meat production are to be granted a derogation from the rules applied to breeding animals, but are to be supervised where traded within the Community.

This proposal is to be the first step towards more elaborate control measures for the eradication of EBL within the Community.

Enzootic Bovine Leucosis

2. Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL) is a form of leukaemia with the causative agent a tumour-forming slow virus. The infection can take ten or more years to reach the clinical stage when tumours form internally. Once the clinical stage is reached death almost invariably follows. Animals are often slaughtered before this stage is reached.

Extent of the disease

3. An average of one to two per cent of adult cattle are lost annually through EBL. Precise information on the extent of the disease on a Community-wide basis is difficult to obtain since statistics are available only where national control legislation is in force. In Germany, for example, an incidence of one to two per cent is recorded, but this may reach ten per cent in particular regions.

Transmission and development of the disease

4. There are two routes for the transmission of EBL :

- (a) vertical from mother to calf, through the placenta or via the mother's milk, or
- (b) horizontal between animals in contact, when blood from an infected animal is introduced into a healthy one, as a result of injection needles, cuts or biting insects.

5. EBL is different from many other major diseases, such as foot and mouth, in that the virus does not survive long away from the host.

<sup>1</sup> OJ No 121, 29.7.64, p.3 1977/64

6. The principal problems with controlling EBL is that it is caused by a slow virus. The disease may be dormant for long periods, during which time it will not normally be detected. Infected animals, sold as breeding stock, will transmit the disease from region to region and country to country.

7. This is particularly dangerous since it appears that the disease is most prevalent in the more advanced breeds, Holsteins and Charolais for example, which are commonly imported for breeding purposes.

#### Existing national and Community measures

8. Denmark is the only Member State to carry out a full-scale eradication programme. Owners of infected herds are forbidden to sell animals for breeding. A subsidy is paid for animals slaughtered within two years.

Germany is the only other Member State to go as far as Denmark but not on a national scale: policies vary from Lander to Lander.

9. Article 8 of Directive 64/432/EEC on Community financial aid provided to aid countries to set up control programmes in order to obtain health guarantees when breeding cattle are traded, five Member States now apply parity rules for trading in breeding cattle.

#### Commission proposal

10. The Commission propose to amend Directive 64/432/EEC in order to introduce Community rules for trade in breeding cattle so as to reduce barriers to trade caused by differing health rules and to protect EBL-free herds.

11. A distinction is to be made between animals for breeding and animals for meat production.

12. Animals for slaughter and under thirty-months of age are not to be subject to the import rules for breeding animals, but are to be given a special identification mark when loaded for transport, to be kept apart from EBL-free herds and specially supervised in the country of destination.

13. Animals for breeding shall be given import authorization provided that they come from an EBL-free herd, defined as:

- (a) no signs of EBL detected within previous three years,
- (b) all animals over 12 months have reacted negatively to two serological tests, and
- (c) only animals from EBL-free herds have been introduced between the two tests.

Similar provisions apply for a herd to continue to be considered as EBL-free.

14. In order to facilitate the introduction of the protective system, temporary derogations are provided.

15. Until 31 March 1980, a herd shall also be considered EBL-free, if:

- (a) No signs of EBL have been detected within the previous three years;
- (b) Before 1 January 1979, every animal over two years old has had at least two blood tests at intervals of at least 12 months;
- (c) The herd is deemed under national rules to be free of EBL on 31 December 1978.

16. Until 31 December 1981, animals shall be imported, even if not from an EBL-free herd, on condition that they come from a herd all of whose animals reacted negatively to a serological test carried out 30 days before loading.

#### Costs of testing for EBL

17. Losses due to EBL are important, including the loss of animals and damage to meat. Clearly control and the eventual eradication of EBL would increase the profitability of livestock production. These losses must be taken into account when considering the costs of testing herds.

These costs include the cost per animal of the transport and time required for veterinary examinations of the herd and the sending of the blood to laboratories for testing. These costs may or may not be charged directly to the farmer.

Costs vary, since in some countries tests for EBL are combined with tests for brucellosis; certain countries purchase the agent from the US while others adopt the cheaper course of producing the agent themselves.

	<u>cost of collection (EUA)</u>	<u>laboratory cost (EUA)</u>
Denmark	1.52	1.57
Germany	1.12	1.49
France	0.71	n.a.
Italy	0.51	n.a.
United Kingdom	1.50	1.93
Sweden	1.53	

#### Conclusions

18. Ignorance or complacency should not be allowed to impede the introduction of effective measures for a register of EBL-free herds and eradication schemes.

The Commission's proposal can be approved by the Committee on Agriculture but only as a first step towards a more comprehensive scheme to control this highly-infectious disease which causes significant losses, particularly amongst the more advanced breeds.

19. Towards this end the Commission should undertake a detailed cost-effective analysis of different measures possible and the costs to producers of inaction, particularly if EBL were allowed to become as serious a problem as brucellosis or foot and mouth disease is today.