FINAL REPORT
OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (GREAT BRITAIN)
FROM 17 TO 25 OCTOBER CONCERNING
PROTECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST
TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (TSEs)
IN SHEEP AND GOATS

Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected. Clarifications provided by the UK Authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic type, to the relevant part of the report.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This report describes the outcome of a mission carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in the United Kingdom (UK) on the territory of Great Britain, from 17 to 25 October 2005.

The overall objective of the mission was to evaluate the implementation of certain EU rules with respect to the control of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) in sheep and goats. In terms of scope, the mission concentrated on TSEs epidemi-surveillance, eradication and control measures, Specified Risk Materials, breeding programmes, and intracommunitory trade and imports of live ovine and caprine animals and their semen, embryos and ova. The evaluation focused on the measures taken in response to the recommendations made in a previous FVO mission regarding some of the afore-mentioned issues.

Overall, the report concludes that there is a satisfactory level of compliance with EU requirements on control of TSE in small ruminants although there is room for improvement in certain areas with minor shortcomings to be addressed.

The report makes a number of recommendations addressed to the UK competent authorities, aimed at rectifying the shortcomings identified and further enhancing the implementing and control measures in place.
### ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action plan</td>
<td>Actions announced/undertaken as submitted to the Commission services by the CCA in response to the recommendations made in report 8570/2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHDO</td>
<td>Animal health Divisional Offices</td>
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<td>AMLS</td>
<td>Animal Movement Licensing System</td>
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<td>BSESS</td>
<td>BSE Surveillance Database</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Competent authorities</td>
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<td>CCA</td>
<td>Central competent authority, Defra</td>
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<td>CPH</td>
<td>County Parish Holding</td>
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<td>CRL</td>
<td>Community Reference Laboratory</td>
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<td>CSFS</td>
<td>Compulsory Scrapie Flock Scheme</td>
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<td>Defra</td>
<td>Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, the CCA</td>
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<td>FVO</td>
<td>Food and Veterinary Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genetic material</td>
<td>Semen, embryos and ova</td>
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<td>GB</td>
<td>Great Britain (England, Wales &amp; Scotland)</td>
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<td>IHC</td>
<td>Immunohistochemistry</td>
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<td>MHS</td>
<td>Meat Hygiene Service</td>
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<td>National Fallen Stock Company</td>
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<td>National Scrapie Plan Administration Centre</td>
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<td>Official veterinarian</td>
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<td>Scottish Animal Movement System</td>
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<td>Scrapie Monitoring System</td>
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<td>Specified Risk Materials</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Veterinary Adviser in TSE Division at Defra</td>
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<td>VLA</td>
<td>Veterinary Laboratories Agency</td>
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<td>VSFS</td>
<td>Voluntary Scrapie Flock Scheme</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>Western Blot</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in the United Kingdom (UK) on the territory of Great Britain (GB) from 17 to 25 October 2005.

The inspection team, which comprised two inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), was accompanied throughout the mission by a representative from the central competent authority (CCA), the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

An opening meeting was held on 17 October 2005 with the CCA, during which the mission objectives, itinerary, and the standard reporting and follow-up procedures were confirmed, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission was requested.

2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE MISSION

The overall objective of the mission was to evaluate the implementation of certain protective measures against transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) in sheep and goats, as set out in Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 (1,2).

In terms of scope, the mission focused on TSEs epidemiological surveillance, measures taken following suspicion/confirmation of TSEs, removal and handling of Specified Risk Materials (SRM), breeding programmes for resistance to TSEs, and intracommunity trade and imports of live ovine and caprine animals and semen, embryos and ova (hereafter: genetic material).

In this context, the evaluation followed up on the actions taken and planned by the CCA in response to recommendations made in a previous FVO mission, which addressed some of the above issues. In pursuit of the above objectives, the following were visited/meetings were held with:

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(1) Legal acts quoted refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.
3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION AND OTHER RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular:

2. Commission Decision 98/139/EC laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in the Member States (3).

Other legislation, including implementing measures, was considered during the mission, in particular, Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 (4), Decision 2003/100/EC (5), Regulation (EC) No 21/2004 (6) and Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 (7).

Harmonised rules with regards to intracommunity trade and imports into the territory of the Community of live ovine and caprine animals and their genetic material were also considered insofar as they might have an impact on control measures on TSEs in sheep and goats.

4. BACKGROUND

1. The previous mission assessing control measures on TSEs in sheep and goats in Great Britain was carried out in from 23 to 31 March 2002, the results of which are described in report DG(SANCO)/8570/2002 – MR Final (hereafter: report 8570/2002). This report is accessible at http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fvo/ir_search_en.cfm

   The report made a number of recommendations to the CCA, which subsequently informed the Commission of actions that had been/would be taken aimed at addressing the recommendations made (hereafter: action plan). Where appropriate, both the relevant recommendations and the action plan are outlined under the relevant parts of Section 5.

2. Since the previous mission, the relevant EU legislation has been modified, namely, breeding programmes for resistance of sheep to TSE (5) and a system for the identification and registration of small ruminants have been introduced (6),

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and the provisions on monitoring of TSEs in sheep and goats have been further amended earlier in 2005 (8).

5. MAIN FINDINGS

5.1. COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

Although there are devolved Competent Authorities (CA) for England, Scotland and Wales, all decisions regarding measures to be taken for positive TSE cases in sheep and goats in Great Britain are taken by Defra, which has the overall responsibility for implementation of Regulation 999/2001. It is the Veterinary Advisor (VA), in the Sheep TSE Division who makes the final decision on measures to be taken.

The mission team noted that the enforcement of Annex VII to Regulation 999/2001 regarding restrictions on TSE infected flocks did not come into force until 20 July 2004 in England and Scotland and 1 November 2004 in Wales.

5.2. SCRAPIE EPIDEMIO-SURVEILLANCE

5.2.1. Animal identification and registration

The relevant recommendation of report 8570/2002 concerned the enforcement of national legislation for identification and registration of small ruminants in order to enable better traceability of animals.

In response to the above recommendations, the CA undertook to set up risk based local inspection programmes to check compliance with the national legislation.

With respect to identification of sheep, Great Britain has been granted a temporary derogation for double tagging until 30 April 2006 (Article 4, 2 c) of Regulation 21/2004.

Movements of sheep and goats are carried out under the provisions of the Animal Movement Licensing System (AMLS), in England and Wales, and under the Scottish Animal Movement System (SAMS) in Scotland. In general, all movements of sheep are done in “batches” and recorded as such, always including the flock number and very rarely individual numbers.

All registered common grazing land in England and Wales is recorded in AMLS with a County-Parish Holding (CPH) number. On 24 October 2005 English keepers have been advised to complete a movement document for all movements to and from common land and Welsh keepers will shortly receive the same advice. All English and Welsh keepers have been advised that outlying land further than 5 miles from their main holding must be separately registered with a CPH number for movement purposes.

(8) Last relevant amendments:
The mission team noted that:

- The derogation for double tagging is in place. According to the CCA it will be very difficult to meet double tagging requirements for the whole sheep industry after April 2006 due to the specific geographic distribution of sheep from lowland to mountain areas and the specific climate conditions for different parts of the country (9).

- There is no means of tracing offspring or parents of a TSE positive sheep (10), with the exception of pedigree flocks, provided they keep proper recording of offspring in accordance with Article 2 of Directive 89/361/EEC (11).

- There is a limited possibility to trace a Scrapie positive animal found at slaughter if it has moved through more than three holdings, i.e. a market, the holding of dispatch and the holding of birth in England and Wales. In Scotland the system of retagging sheep moving off a premise enables a slightly better traceability in SAMS (12).

- The notification of a movement to the CA and their registration into the AMLS only takes place after the animal has reached its final destination. This requires the receiving farmer to complete the movement documents, ensuring details of both off and on movement, and send this form to the CA. If a farmer fails to submit movement documents, there is no official recording of the movement. Breaches can only be revealed at farm inspection by the Local Authority. Such inspections are not done more often than every third year (13).

- The AMLS system does not recognize and flag if unauthorized movements take place, i.e. if sheep not eligible for movement from a holding restricted under the Compulsory Scrapie Flock Scheme (CSFS) go for slaughter.

- Checks on movements in AMLS for the period January-October 2005, showed 692 cases of non-compliance (4% of total number of checked movement forms) of which 38% were non returns or missing documents.

- The different holdings within a common grazing area will have unique CPH numbers, but will not be recorded as linked or with reference to each other.

- It is not uncommon that a holding can have several flocks on the same premises but with different flock numbers (14).

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(9) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that if the permanent derogation is not granted it would take at least 12 – 18 months to put in place legislation to enforce double tagging in the UK because of their lengthy Parliamentary process for new legislation.

(10) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that Regulation (EC) No 21/2004 does not require traceability at individual level until 2008 when electronic identification is proposed. Even then there is no requirement for a dam – lamb link to be recorded.


(12) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that their central movement database already supports traceability arrangements which are in anticipation of EU requirement of three years.

(13) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that a risk based approach is taken to sheep inspections at all stages of the sheep production process. On average local authorities inspect annually around 10% of holdings where sheep are kept. If it is warranted (on a risk basis) farm inspections by Local Authorities may be more frequent than one every 3 years.

(14) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the flock number uniquely identifies the flock within the holding.
5.2.2. Passive surveillance

The relevant recommendations of report 8570/2002 concerned measures to be taken to increase the level of passive surveillance.

In response to the above recommendations, the CA undertook to offer free genotyping to facilitate breeding from resistant rams in historically Scrapie infected flocks and increase the level of compensation for culling TSE suspects.

Awareness campaigns for Scrapie have been carried out continuously since 2001, with different booklets and a video and DVD detailing clinical symptoms. A brochure with advisory notes for farmers (including differential diagnosis) was distributed in 2004. Furthermore, the Defra web site, [http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalhl/bse/bse-science/level-4-Scrapie.html](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalhl/bse/bse-science/level-4-Scrapie.html), provides updated information on all relevant TSE issues.

The mission team noted that:

- A compensation system for animals affected with Scrapie is in place. A general payment of £90 for a sheep and £50 for a lamb is used, but the farmer can apply for a higher compensation based on a third party evaluation for animals that have to be culled. The value set following a valuation by an independent third party has to be respected by the CA and the owner. There is no appeal.
- The majority of clinical cases (90%) are reported by the farmer and private practitioners, the rest by regional laboratories and abattoirs.
- The compensation for sheep and lamb may be above the market value for culled animals, which should give the farmers an incentive for reporting.
- The highest number of clinically reported cases was in 1991 when ongoing research programmes included good economical compensation for reported cases. After being notifiable in 1993 there was a significant fall in reported cases. Since 1999, the number of suspect cases has continued to fall, but in 2005 the trend to report seems to be increasing slightly.
- There is limited monitoring of sheep in the hill breeds that graze the rough terrain of Great Britain’s uplands (approximately 50% of sheep population of 35 million heads) to ensure that clinical cases of TSE are recognised due to logistical impracticalities (15).

5.2.3. Active surveillance

The relevant recommendations of report 8570/2002 concerned the monitoring of the surveillance programme to ensure that the allocated number of samples is achieved and to take action in order to improve the quality of samples from fallen stock.

In response to the above recommendations, the CA undertook to ensure a continuous monitoring of sample numbers and quality, and to adjust the quota for the selected slaughterhouses on a quarterly basis.

(15) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that Scrapie is regularly confirmed in flocks with hill breeds of sheep.
5.2.3.1. *Animals fit for human consumption*

The active sheep surveillance is carried out at 12 dedicated slaughterhouses with the highest throughput of slaughtered sheep over 18 months of age. According to the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), the sampling fulfils the geographical criteria set out in Regulation 999/2001 since all big slaughterhouses are represented and older sheep from Scotland and the Borders are transported to the Midland area where the slaughterhouses for this age group of animals are to be found. The UK began sampling goats at survey plants sampling sheep on 16 November 2004. Since May 2005, sampling of all goats slaughtered at 22 designated slaughterhouses covering 80% of healthy slaughtered goats has been in place. The delay was needed to train the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) staff in brain stem and cerebellum sampling.

All designated slaughterhouses sampling sheep have a given quota how many sheep they are to sample. In the instructions given by MHS the selection has to be done in the pens and ensuring that the selection criteria in Regulation 999/2001 is respected. Sampling should be carried out Mondays to Thursdays and preferably all those days.

The mission team noted that:

- At present 0.5% of the weekly throughput of sheep slaughtered is sampled since the quota of 10,000 samples is near to be met (16).
- The selection at slaughter is not totally representative since the official veterinarian (OV), excludes animals with non-UK tags or no ear tags. Furthermore, the selection often takes place before all sheep to be slaughtered that day has arrived. The sampling takes place on one, or maximum two days per week, and on set days which can also limit the proper selection (17).
- At one slaughterhouse visited, animals from markets are the target group, and are sampled one day a week. The six animals selected on the day of the visit came from two holdings and had three different flock numbers.
- Instruction how to sample cerebellum has been provided from MHS and the slaughterhouses visited did a satisfactorily sampling.
- Dentition checks were performed correctly in all slaughterhouses visited.
- Since it cannot be ensured that all healthy slaughtered goats are available for sampling (they may be diverted to small slaughterhouses not designated for sampling or be subject to farm slaughter (18)) the CA has decided to add all tested fallen goats above the 1,000 required in the fallen stock survey to the slaughterhouse survey.
- The 600 randomly selected sheep to be genotyped in accordance with Annex III to Regulation 999/2001 are collected within the active surveillance by holding back negative samples at random. They will be tested by the NRL in November.

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(16) *In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the quota was exceeded, although sampling had been continued at 0.5% until the end of the year.*

(17) *In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the OV rotates sample days, if necessary, to ensure a random selection.*

(18) *In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the majority of dairy goats are killed on farm and do not enter abattoir. They are making use of the provision in Regulation 999/2001 to substitute some fallen goats for abattoir goats.*
5.2.3.2. Animals not fit for human consumption

Sheep over 18 months of age, dead on farm, reported by the farmer to the Animal Health Divisional Office (AHDO) within 24 hours of death are eligible to enter into the fallen stock survey. The reporting and collection of carcases is only available between Mondays to Thursdays and is free of charge (19). Other officially approved routes of disposal are by the National Fallen Stock Company (NFSCo) instituted to fulfil the requirements of Regulation 1774/2002, serving farmers on a contract basis (including fees) six days a week. A third route of disposal is through own delivery to hunt kennels and knackers yards (often free of charge).

By law, goats dead on farm have to be reported to the Bovine Cattle Movement Service helpline and are collected free of charge seven days a week.

The mission team noted that:

- The number of sheep tested in the fallen stock survey will most likely not meet its target of 10,000 for 2005 (20).
- The sampling in the fallen sheep survey is only carried out in one of the three possible routes of disposal of sheep and not all farmers use the possibility to report to the AHDO for the free collection and testing (21).
- A control of animals reported to the AHDO and selected for the fallen stock survey in one of the region visited, showed that the selection was biased since a limited group of farmers submit several animals each (average for 2005 was 3,8 animals) with an unknown number of farmers never reporting.
- Approximately 14% of collected brain stems from fallen sheep were unsuitable for sampling due to autolysis. Furthermore, 7% of sheep heads submitted for rapid testing were rejected because the quota for the Region was exceeded and another 6% was rejected for other reasons.
- There has been no action taken to increase the number of samples in the fallen sheep survey as a result of the high number of unsuitable samples. The CA stated that they aim at improving the conditions at the point of sampling (chillers) to improve sample quality rather than raise numbers (22).
- A farmer visited had no knowledge of the possibility to submit animals free of charge in the fallen stock survey.
- The fallen goat survey will most likely exceed the target of 1,000 and the surplus will be included in the slaughterhouse numbers (23).

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(19) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the extension to a full 7-day coverage of the reporting and collection of carcasses for fallen sheep is under consideration.

(20) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that action were ongoing to increase numbers of fallen stock samples. The UK expects to get very close to its survey quota of 10,000 fallen sheep.

(21) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the CCA is working with the NFSCo to raise wider awareness of the collection service.

(22) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that action were ongoing to improve the quality of fallen stock samples.

(23) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that they had exceeded their fallen stock quota of 1,000 goats and the additional samples will supplement the abattoir survey.
5.2.4. Laboratory network

5.2.4.1. National laboratories

The NRL is carrying out all diagnostics for clinically suspect cases, as well as confirmatory and discriminatory testing and genotyping of all TSE positive sheep and goats. The NRL is also responsible for regular proficiency testing of diagnostic methods including rapid and discriminatory testing, histopathology and immunohistochemistry (IHC) and genotyping performance as well as laboratory inspections and advisory service. All rapid testing for sheep and goats in Great Britain is performed at one regional laboratory of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) in Shrewsbury. TSE diagnostics in Northern Ireland (NI) is done at the Government laboratory in Belfast but supervised by NRL. Preparatory work for histopathology and IHC on rapid test positives is done by the regional VLA in Thirsk. Genotyping for breeding purposes is done at two private laboratories. The tasks of the NRL are carried out in project form.

All results from active and passive surveillance as well as confirmatory and discriminatory testing are entered into the BSE surveillance database (BSESS) by the NRL. All positive cases of TSE in small ruminants are also registered in the National Scrapie Database (NSD), which also holds information on key epidemiological data, farm and individual animal details and genotyping results. Defra has immediate access to both databases and use the information to decide on further actions to be taken in TSE positives cases.

The mission team noted that:

- There is a system in place for supervision of the relevant laboratories, including NI, with yearly inspections and quality assurance (QA), exercises for all official methods used. For some tests this also included Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) exercises.
- During 2004 three ovine Scrapie rapid test QA rounds, one ovine Scrapie histopathology QA exercise and two QA genotyping exercises for blood and brain materials were carried out by NRL. Laboratory inspections and workshops on TSE matters were also performed.
- The rapid test laboratory, VLA in Shrewsbury, is ISO 17025 accredited for the Biorad TeSeE ELISA test since 2005, and the Government laboratory in Belfast is soon to be accredited.
- The Shrewsbury rapid test laboratory had a daily notification system with designated slaughterhouses to acknowledge if samples had been received or not. The test results were delivered within 24 hours.
- All samples submitted for confirmatory testing at NRL are discriminatory tested in parallel, giving these results in 10 days.
- During 2005 no rapid tests have been inconclusive; should this occur, they are handled by the same routines as positives, i.e. further tested by the NRL.
- Two cases where BSE was indicative on Western Blot but not by IHC, were referred to ring trial and upon still being inconclusive is now further investigated by mouse bio assay. The results are to be finalised earliest mid 2006.
5.2.4.2. **CRL**

The community reference function is carried by the NRL staff but outlined as separate projects. The tasks includes coordination of methods used in Member states (MS) by supplying tissues and reference materials to MS-NRL, organising periodic comparative tests, collecting and collating data on tests used and results thereof, characterisation of isolates and to assist MS in matters of diagnosis, surveillance and epidemiology and provide for proficiency testing \(^{(24)}\) and approval of methods for discriminatory testing. The CRL is also involved in the evaluation and approval process for the introduction of new rapid tests.

The mission team noted that

- Confirmatory testing of positive cases is done on request from MS, as well as discriminatory testing for the MS that has signed contracts with the CRL for this service.
- No test for the confirmation of the WB glycoprofile for the Nor-98 variant of atypical Scrapie is yet available at the CRL. The Biorad WB has not been incorporated in the CRL panel of confirmatory tests \(^{(25)}\), although it is suitable for this purpose, according to EFSA Scientific Report 49 of 2005 \(^{(26)}\).
- The CRL has to date approved 16 MS for carrying out discriminatory tests after the completion of successful ring trials; three MS are pending and six MS have signed contracts with the CRL.
- The inter laboratory comparison has so far shown improvements, but also a drift in performances in some MS. Also the UK NRL has been subjected to improvements following comparison with other MS in the international inter-laboratory testing. At the end of 2005 a proficiency test will be sent out to all MS performing discriminatory testing, including the UK NRL.

5.3. **MEASURES FOLLOWING SUSPICION/CONFIRMATION OF TSEs**

At present there are two control schemes in Great Britain for Scrapie positive flocks. A Voluntary Scrapie Flock Scheme (VSFS) has been in place since 5 April 2004, open to all herds with a case of Scrapie between July 1998 and July 2004. This scheme was closed for applications 31 March 2005. A Compulsory Scrapie Flock Scheme (CSFS) is in place in accordance with Annex VII to Regulation 999/2001, since 20 July 2004 for England and Scotland, and 1 November 2004 for Wales. Both the CSFS and the VSFC are monitored by the National Scrapie Plan Administration Centre (NSPAC) and encompasses approximately 1% of the 16 million sheep in the national flock over 18 months of age. Full details of both VSFS and CSFS can be found on http://www.defra.gov.uk/nsp.

\(^{(24)}\) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the CRL does not possess sufficient test material to be able to conduct proficiency testing of rapid testing in all MS testing laboratories, or to supply MS-NRLS with material for national use.

\(^{(25)}\) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that there are alternative tests to characterising and isolate as being atypical, or Nor-98 like, and these are available at the VLA.

For active surveillance all positive rapid test results are directly communicated to Defra through the BSESS database. When Scrapie is confirmed, the VA, at Defra instructs the concerned AHDO to serve restrictions on the flock and to carry out an investigation within 10 days. The investigation shall encompass all likely holdings to be involved. If the place of origin cannot be identified, this has to be reported to the VA including the reasons why traceability was not possible. If the herd is identified it will enter into the CSFS, as decided by the VA.

Clinically suspect animals in passive surveillance are reported either by the farmer, private practitioners or by regional laboratories to the local AHDO who will investigate the case. If Scrapie cannot be ruled out, restrictions are served on all sheep and goats on the holding and in the case another holding is the likely origin it will also be restricted (in addition or instead of). The clinically suspect animal will be euthanised and submitted to a local VLA for the removal of the brain to be tested and genotyped by at the NRL. If TSE is confirmed the results are entered into both the BSESS and NSD databases and by decision of the VA, the flock will be subjected to the CSFS.

The mission team noted that

- Since 2002, 101 atypical cases of Scrapie have been found in active surveillance. Fifteen of those have been of the ARR/ARR genotype and 25 with one ARR allele.
- In none of the atypical cases found has actions been taken on the holdings. The cases are still regarded as under investigation (27).
- For flocks under restriction in the CSFS, all measures to be taken are coordinated by NSPAC, who organise for the removal collection and destruction of sheep with not eligible genotypes by engaging five recognised contractors throughout Great Britain. NSPAC also issue instructions to the collector on the number of animals to be sampled for rapid testing. The random selection of these animals is done by the collector. Sampled animals will not enter into the fallen stock surveillance.
- Flocks in the VSFS with confirmed cases of Scrapie after 20 July 2004, are automatically transferred to the CSFS. Approximately 68% of the 128 farm holdings where Scrapie had been confirmed since 1 October 2003 had either joined the VSFS, complied voluntarily under NSPAC contract with the EU measures or were registered automatically in the CSFS. The VSFS is similar to CSFS in most respects apart from the three years restriction period and the requirements for random sampling of animals killed for destruction.
- Prior to the introduction of the CSFS, only where flock owners contracted voluntarily with NSPAC movement restrictions were served for Scrapie positive flocks, in accordance with Annex VII to Regulation 999/2001. This amounted to 12 holdings out of 128 where Scrapie had been confirmed.

(27) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that atypical’ Scrapie often occurs in sheep with genotypes known to be resistant to ‘classical’ Scrapie. A proposal for carrying out a case control study on holdings where atypical cases are confirmed was submitted to the Commission.
The epidemiological enquiry following the detection of TSE in small ruminants can in a number of cases not identify the holding of origin and subsequently no restrictions can be served (28).

Random testing of samples from animals killed for destruction in positive flocks, as required by Annex III to Regulation 999/2001 since 1 October 2003, was not in place before the CSFS came into force.

Total herd cull has not yet been applied in TSE positive goat herds, identified after 20 July 2004.

5.4. BREEDING PROGRAMMES FOR RESISTANCE TO TSEs

The National Scrapie Plan, NSP is a long term plan which consists of a number of genotyping schemes and initiatives aimed at increasing the genetic resistance to Scrapie in the national flock. The voluntary Ram Genotyping Scheme is the biggest and has been in place since 2001 (29), NSPAC is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the NSP. Further details can be found on http://www.defra.gov.uk/nsp.

The mission team noted that:

- The voluntary breeding programme in place since 2001 covers approximately 33% of all purebred flocks in GB.
- The establishment of a compulsory breeding programme for flocks of ‘high genetic merit’ from 1 April 2005 as required by Article 2.2. of Commission Decision 2003/100/EC will not be in place until 2006.
- The progress report for 2005 for the breeding programme has not been submitted to the Commission yet (30).

5.5. SRM

The relevant recommendations of report 8570/2002 concerned the risk of cross contamination of sheep carcasses while removing SRM and to ensure safe disposal.

In response to the above recommendations, the CA undertook to issue new instructions and introduce uniformly applied SRM controls.

The mission team noted:

- At slaughterhouses visited the system for removal and handling of SRM was in line with community legislation.

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(28) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the epidemiological enquiry can, in a number of cases, not identify the possible origin of the disease.

(29) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the Ram Genotyping Scheme fulfils the requirement of Article 2.1. of Commission Decision 2003/100/EC to introduce voluntary breeding programmes for resistance to TSEs from 1 January 2004.

(30) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the report has been submitted to the Commission on 29 November 2005.
There is a system in place for the OV to report quantities of SRM to MHS on a weekly basis.

According to the CA no carcasses with vertebral columns are dispatched to other MS.

Accurate instructions has been provided by the MHS for the removal, staining, disposal and cross checks of SRM produced.

The carcass and hide is detained from all animals tested until result is received. All other parts are considered as SRM and disposed as such.

5.6. INTRA COMMUNITY TRADE AND IMPORTS OF LIVE ANIMALS AND GENETIC MATERIAL

A voluntary Scrapie Monitoring System (SMS) operates in GB to enable farmers to export or trade animals for breeding in accordance with council Directive 91/68/EEC (31) and Annex VIII to Regulation 999/2001. Membership of SMS is not compulsory and some farmers comply with Annex VIII without being members of SMS.

The mission team noted:

- Some farmers in GB now export or trade ARR/ARR animals for breeding. As such there is no need for these farmers to comply with the other provisions of Council Directive 91/68/EEC and Annex VIII to Regulation 999/2001 in relation to the trade of animals for breeding. Accordingly these farmers no longer have to apply for membership of the SMS.

- Goat kids imported from the Netherlands were accompanied with a certificate stating that the herd of origin had been free of Scrapie for two years which is not in compliance with the health certificate included in Annex VII to Regulation 999/2001 (32).

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. TSEs EPIDEMIO-SURVEILLANCE

1. The system of identification and registration of sheep flocks is able to support epidemi-surveillance and controls in TSE infected flocks apart from tracing of individual animals or progeny (33).

2. There is a risk of underreporting cases of TSE in sheep due to low monitoring of extensive hill farming.

3. The epidemi-surveillance in sheep works well for animals slaughtered for human consumption. However, the target for animals not slaughtered for human consumption was not met in 2004 and will likely not be fully met in 2005. The present system cannot exclude overrepresentation of certain farms and multiple

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(32) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that this relates to an error on a Dutch Export Certificate.

(33) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that tracing of individual animals and progeny is possible if individual identification is recorded.
sampling in the same flock. Eligible sheep for testing may be diverted by selecting alternative routes of disposal (34).

4. The epidemi-surveillance for goats works well for the fallen goats, and will exceed the set target for 2005. However, the sampling of all eligible goats for slaughter only covers approximately 80% of adult goats.

5. The NRL and CRL work satisfactorily. Regarding confirmatory testing of samples submitted from MS, the CRL is not in the position to ensure the full range of confirmatory testing as required by Regulation 882/2004.

6.2. MEASURES FOLLOWING SUSPICION/CONFIRMATION OF TSEs

6. The control measures taken in sheep flocks on suspicion and confirmation of classical Scrapie are in line with the requirements of Regulation 999/2001. In goat flocks with confirmed Scrapie no whole herd cull has been exercised. For cases of atypical Scrapie, no measures have been taken so far.

6.3. BREEDING PROGRAMMES FOR RESISTANCE TO TSEs

7. Voluntary programmes for breeding for TSE resistance in sheep have been in place since 2001. The compulsory programme for sheep with high genetic merit as required by Decision 2003/100/EC, will be in place during 2006.

6.4. SRM

8. The recommendations with respect to SRM in report 8570/2002 have been sufficiently addressed.

6.5. INTRA COMMUNITY TRADE AND IMPORTS OF LIVE ANIMALS AND GENETIC MATERIAL

9. The systems for supporting this trade are in line with EU requirements.

6.6. OVERALL CONCLUSION

There is a satisfactory level of compliance with EU requirements on control of TSE in small ruminants although there is room for improvement in certain areas with minor shortcomings to be addressed

7. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 25 October 2005 with the representatives of the CCA. At this meeting, main findings and preliminary conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The CCA did not indicate any major disagreement with these. During the meeting, additional information as requested by the mission team was provided by the CCA.

(34) In their response to the draft report the UK authorities noted that the recent publicity campaign will widen the survey coverage and reduce the chance of over-representation from certain farms.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the competent authorities of the United Kingdom

The CA are invited to provide details of the actions taken and planned, including deadline for their completion within 20 working days following the receipt of the final report.

With regard to epidemi-surveillance of TSEs in sheep and goats

1. To ensure that the sampling of fallen sheep meet target and is representative as laid out in Annex III to Regulation 999/2001.

2. To ensure that the sampling of goats for slaughter is in line with the requirements of Annex III to Regulation 999/2001.

3. To further encourage clinical monitoring of sheep kept on extensive hill farming in order to ensure the reporting of suspect cases of TSE in small ruminants.

With regard to measures following suspicion/confirmation of TSEs

4. To take appropriate measures regarding flocks with atypical Scrapie in accordance with the latest scientific recommendations.

5. To take appropriate measures in line with Annex VII to Regulation 999/2001 in goat flocks with confirmed TSE in small ruminants.

6. To ensure that an appropriate panel of validated tests is available at the CRL to meet specific requests of confirmation of TSE in small ruminants in line with Regulation 882/2004.

With regard to breeding programmes for resistance to TSEs

7. To pursue with the introduction of the compulsory breeding programme for flocks with high genetic merit as required by Decision 2003/199/EC.
ADDENDUM

RESPONSE OF THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Comments from the UK CCA on the draft report were received on 11 January 2006, and included an outline of the actions planned and/or undertaken to address certain recommendations contained in the report. These may be summarised as follows:

With regard to epidemic-surveillance of TSEs in sheep and goats

1. The necessary measures to meet legal obligations as laid out in Annex III to Regulation 999/2001 are being taken.

With regard to measures following suspicion/confirmation of TSEs

4. It is proposed to carry out a case control study on holdings where a case of ‘atypical’ Scrapie is confirmed rather than apply the controls set out in Annex VII to Regulation 999/2001. The UK CCA have written to the Commission setting out the course of action they propose to take in flocks where ‘atypical’ Scrapie is confirmed.

5. Rather than a whole herd cull where a goat herd has a confirmed case of Scrapie, it is proposed to monitor the herd for up to three years, to test all fallen stock over 18 months of age and to test any goats over 18 months of age sold into the food chain. No goats from the herd would be allowed to be sold for breeding.

6. The BioRad WB test is being incorporated into the armoury of tests used at the CRL.

With regard to breeding programmes for resistance to TSEs

7. Plans are in place to introduce in 2006 a compulsory breeding programme for flocks with high genetic merit as required by Decision 2003/199/EC.