

Summary of Report of Meeting of the Executive Committee
held in Milan on 1 February 1966.

The Meeting was attended by all members of the Executive Committee: Professor R. Gaier, Chairman, Professor A. Ademollo, accompanied by Professor B. Ubertini and Professor L. Nardelli, Dr. E. Fritschi accompanied by Professor A. Nabholz and Dr. S. Postizzi, Dr. J.M. van den Born, Dr. Werdelin and Dr. Mihajlović. Dr. Boldrini acted as Secretary to the Meeting and was assisted by Miss Guarino.

The following main points were discussed during the Meeting: The foot-and-mouth disease situation in Europe; campaigns against exotic foot-and-mouth disease viruses in south-eastern Europe and Anatolia; report of the Executive Committee to the Session; accounts of the Commission; and future activities.

The Foot-and-Mouth Disease situation in Europe

Austria. The Chairman gave an account of the measures taken in Austria to arrest the O virus infection which penetrated into Austria from Hungary in August 1965 and from Switzerland in November 1965.

The measure adopted was stamping-out, combined with extensive ring vaccination carried out with a vaccine produced at Vienna with a Dutch O strain of virus. In spite of the difference between the strain used for the production of vaccine and the field strain, vaccination was successfully employed. In all, there were 40 outbreaks, of which 36 occurred in eastern Austria, which entailed slaughter of 520 cattle, 520 pigs and 2 goats.

With regard to the epizootic in eastern Europe, the information obtained through various sources has confirmed the serious nature of the situation created in autumn 1965 in Ukraine and other western territories of the USSR by the spread of an exotic variant of virus type A.

As far as the other countries in eastern Europe were concerned, note was taken of the generally favourable situation. The hope was expressed that Hungary will report more promptly in future the changes in her sanitary situation.

The Netherlands. In autumn 1965, C virus appeared again in this country causing a severe epizootic mainly among swine. Since 9 October 1965, when the first outbreak was recorded in the south-eastern province of Limburg, to 19 January, the disease spread to 2,374 pig farms, the most affected provinces being North Brabant, Gelderland and Limburg.

The stamping-out policy was adopted and all infected and suspect animals were destroyed, viz. 173,460 pigs and 1,988 cattle.

As an emergency measure, vaccination was used in 1,487,000 swine, with double cattle doses of monovalent C vaccine and vaccination was repeated two weeks later. Some 100,000 pigs received a concentrated vaccine containing 10 times the antigen of a normal cattle dose.

As a result of all the measures taken, the incidence of the disease was decreasing by the end of January 1966.

The cost of the stamping-out policy during the above period amounted to 24,244,408 Dutch florins.

Switzerland. In discussing the epizootic which started in Switzerland around 21 October, the aggressiveness and pathogenicity of the O type strain found in the outbreaks was pointed out. While the origin of the infection was attributed to the feeding of kitchen waste, the explosive spread of the disease was apparently due to the distribution of infected skim milk in the Canton of Berne.

Although the causal virus of the epizootic was type O, virus types C and A were found 5 and 3 times respectively; the sporadic appearance of these two types could not be explained. From October 1965 to 23 January 1966, 838 farms had been infected involving 15,302 cattle, 24,470 pigs and 280 small ruminants. When it appeared that the stamping-out method and ring vaccination alone could not master the situation, general vaccination of the entire cattle population of the country was applied.

Since not enough vaccine could be produced locally, vaccine was imported from Italy (1,100,000 doses), France (440,000 doses) and Denmark (2,000 litres). The rapid application of vaccine to all the cattle population has brought about a very satisfactory improvement in the situation.

The cost of the epizootic amounted to about 25,000,000 Swiss francs paid in compensation for the stamped-out animals and 8,000,000 Swiss francs for vaccination.

The Committee expressed concern about the spread of the O virus epizootic in southern Germany, as a consequence of the epizootic in Switzerland and also because of the insufficient supplies of vaccine available.

Italy. Northern Italy was not involved in the above-mentioned epizootic, most probably because of the general vaccination which had taken place in the Po Valley a few weeks earlier when 4,360,000 cattle had been vaccinated with trivalent O, A and C vaccine.

The type O vaccine produced in northern Italy was shown to be antigenically active against both the O strain prevalent in northern Italy and the one responsible for the epizootics in Switzerland (O Lucerne).

It is planned to extend general trivalent vaccination to the whole of Northern Italy in autumn 1966.

The delegate from Yugoslavia gave an account of the situation in his country. After a successful campaign in the spring, the disease had reappeared in autumn at the border areas with Hungary and Rumania. Vaccination had been applied in these areas and 1,400,000 doses of vaccine were used. The situation has markedly improved.

Denmark. The delegate from Denmark expressed concern because of the danger connected with the increasing incidence of foot-and-mouth disease in Germany.

When discussing the situation in general and the measures the individual countries have applied to prevent repeated introduction of the disease into their territories, the desire was expressed for more uniformity in the application of control measures, especially in countries which are infected by the same virus type.

Moreover, it was suggested that uniform and coordinated measures should be taken by the western countries with regard to importations from those countries which are directly exposed to the infection by the exotic variant of the A virus in eastern Europe. It was agreed that matters of such importance to Europe should be discussed at the XIIIth Session of the Commission.

The fact that the European Commission was able to set aside 40,000 doses of homologous A₂₂ vaccine for use by member countries in the case of an emergency was appreciated; however, the desirability was voiced to increase this amount to at least 100,000 doses. It was pointed out that the Commission could not afford to purchase this amount of vaccine from its own funds.

It was suggested that the possibility should be explored of increasing the Commission's funds which would automatically make Article V, paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Commission more operational than at present.

Activities of the Commission, budgets and accounts

The activities carried out by the Secretariat and the Commission since the last Session were reviewed. In particular, it was felt that the Secretary should receive more regular and up-to-date information from all member countries on the disease situation and on control, vaccination programs, composition and distribution of vaccines, areas covered by vaccination, stocks and possibly prices of vaccines available for export and on any other matter of importance, in view of the functions he may be called upon to carry out in application of Articles IV and V of the Constitution.

On the basis of sufficient information and documentation,

the Commission could assist in coordinating and harmonizing the action taken by member countries for the purpose of preventing introduction of the disease.

It was also agreed that the Secretary should collect all possible information with regard to trade pursued with countries affected by exotic viruses.

In reviewing the budgets for 1966/67 and accounts for 1965, the financial situation of the Commission was discussed. In particular, the current administrative expenses as well as the funds needed to carry out special functions, for instance the supply of vaccines in emergency situations, were considered.

With regard to the administrative expenses, the Committee felt that, in view of the continuous increase of the general expenses which has taken place since the establishment of the Commission up to the present time, the contributions should be increased by 20 percent. In fact, the scale of contributions has never been raised since the Commission was established.

The Committee decided that its next meeting should be held at Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia in October 1966 and that meetings should be held twice a year so long as the situation in Europe has not returned to a state of stability.



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

Report on the Meeting of the Executive Committee
Milan, 1 February 1966

The Executive Committee of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease met in Milan on 1 February 1966 to examine the foot-and-mouth disease situation in Europe, which has been seriously considered since October 1965; and also to discuss the documents prepared by the Secretariat, to be submitted to the XIIIth Session of the European Commission which will be held from 22-24 March 1966.

All members of the Executive Committee took part in this meeting: Professor Dr. R. Gaier, Chairman (Austria), Professor Dr. A. Ademollo, Vice-Chairman (Italy) accompanied by Professor B. Ubertini and Professor L. Nardelli; Dr. E. Fritschi, Vice-Chairman (Switzerland), accompanied by Professor A. Nabholz and Dr. S. Postizzi, Dr. J.M. van den Born (Netherlands), Dr. Chr. Werdelin (Denmark) and Dr. S. Mihajlovic (Yugoslavia), Dr. G.M. Boldrini, Secretary of the Commission and Miss D. Guarino.

In a brief introduction the President of the Commission reviewed the events since October 1965 which led to the convening of this meeting, and mentioned the conclusions of the informative meeting held by OIE on 14 December 1965.

The following points were on the agenda for discussion:

Position of foot-and-mouth disease in Europe; Campaigns against exotic foot-and-mouth disease viruses in south-eastern Europe and Anatolia; Report of the Executive Committee; Special problems of the Commission; Accounts of the Commission:

The Situation of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Europe

When discussing the present situation of foot-and-mouth disease in Europe, special emphasis was given to the problems connected with the epizootiology and control of the epizootic which occurred in Austria, several eastern European countries and the USSR as well as the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

Austria. The Chairman gave an account of the measures taken in Austria to block the virus O infection which penetrated in October from Hungary and caused 36 secondary outbreaks mainly in the region of Burgenland. While immediate vaccination, carried out with vaccine produced with a Dutch strain, was able to halt the virus in this region several new outbreaks occurred in the western part of Austria as an extension of the epizootic which spread through Switzerland in December. Altogether there were 40 outbreaks which brought about the slaughter of 520

cattle, 520 swine and 2 goats. 260,000 ruminants had been vaccinated. The O strain found in Austria was according to Pirbright similar to the one found earlier in Hungary and Rumania. The differences between the Austrian strain and the Dutch strain used for the preparation of the vaccine did not reflect on the positive results obtained with the said vaccine.

With regard to the epizootic in USSR, the information obtained through various sources has confirmed the serious nature of the situation created in autumn 1965 in Ukraine and in other territories west of the Ural mountains as a consequence of the spread of the new exotic variant of virus A. The fact that the vaccines used in USSR do not appear to have given satisfactory results was the subject of some serious discussion.

The danger that this exotic virus constitutes and the possibility of its further spread to the West were evaluated. In this connection the delegate of the Netherlands pointed out the importance of uniform measures to be taken by western countries with regard to importation from those countries which are directly exposed to infection. The Committee has accepted this proposal and it was decided to discuss this matter fully during the XIIIth Session.

With regard to the other countries in eastern Europe note was taken of the generally favourable situation. With regard to the position in Hungary it was hoped that this country would report the changes in its sanitary situation with more promptness.

Netherlands. The delegate of the Netherlands gave an account of the evolution of foot-and-mouth disease in his country. Since 9 October, when the C virus appeared in the south-eastern province of Limburg, to 19 January the disease occurred in 2,374 farms. The farms most affected were North Brabant with 117 outbreaks, Gelderland with 849 outbreaks and Limburg 224 outbreaks. In the rest of the country the disease was limited to sporadic outbreaks.

In the Netherlands, where since 1953 annual trivalent vaccination of all cattle is practised, foot-and-mouth disease has become mainly a disease of swine; in several cases the disease has been transmitted from swine to young cattle not yet protected by vaccination and, in part, to those which have been vaccinated only once.

Also in this epizootic the stamping-out policy was adopted and all infected and suspect animals were destroyed. The indemnity paid for the first was 75 percent and the latter 100 percent of their value.

Up to 19 January, 173,460 swine and 1,988 cattle were destroyed which cost the government 24,244,408 Dutch florins.

In the course of the epizootic 1,487,000 swine were vaccinated. Generally vaccination in swine was carried out

twice with one bovine dose at an interval of two weeks. Experiments are carried out with a vaccine containing ten times the antigen of a normal bovine dose; about 100,000 swine had been vaccinated and the results obtained seem to indicate the possibility of obtaining 90 percent protection three weeks after vaccination.

In order to meet the enormous requirements of vaccine, the collection of lingual epithelium has been extended to 4 large slaughterhouses (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht).

Switzerland. Dr. Fritschi reported on the situation in Switzerland as of 21 October 1965 at which time the epizootic spread from the west (Canton Vaud and Canton Basle) towards the north-east reaching rapidly the frontiers of Bavaria and Austria. The origin of the disease is attributed to the feeding of kitchen waste; spread of infection was due to the aggressive character of the virus, and to circumstances outside the restricted areas, such as tourist movements, and in particular the distribution of skim milk which caused the explosive spread of the infection in the Canton of Berne.

The causal virus is type O. However, in several cases also virus type C (5 times) and virus type A (3 times) were found. It has not been possible to explain the sporadic appearance of types differing from the one causing the epizootic.

Of the 25 Cantons of Switzerland only 8 remained free from the disease. The peak of the epizootic was reached around Christmas with 175 new outbreaks. Later on a remarkable decrease was noted. Since October 1965 to 23 January 1966, about 838 farms, i.e. 15,302 cattle, 24,470 pigs and 280 goats and sheep were affected.

The method used up to now in Switzerland has been immediate stamping-out, severe veterinary police measures and ring vaccination, but it was evident in December that the epizootic could be eradicated only by means of general vaccination. Since Switzerland is not in a position to produce sufficient vaccine necessary for the vaccination of 1,700,000 animals, vaccine had to be imported. 1,100,000 doses were ordered from Brescia, 440,000 from Lyon and 2,000 litres from Denmark.

The causal virus distinguished itself through a long incubation period (up to 20 days) by its virulence and an incredible contagiousness.

The clinical symptoms could first be seen on the hooves and then vesicles appeared on the udder and in the mouth. The hoof lesions were usually so serious that the animals lost their hooves after a short time.

In certain cases the disease also affected swine, of which several thousand were vaccinated with a double bovine dose. Nevertheless, after 6-8 days some of them contracted the disease.

The cattle fortunately, which had been vaccinated quite some time before, remained healthy.

The cost of this epizootic amounted to about 25,000,000 Swiss francs. General vaccination will cost about 8,000,000 Swiss francs.

The pigs could all be slaughtered; cattle, however, could not since the slaughterhouses could not deal with the great number of animals. Some of the meat is being sold in urban centres and some is canned.

The Swiss Government has expressed its appreciation of the assistance given by the Italian Government through the Institute at Brescia which has furnished great quantities of vaccine. The assistance has mainly been given, as has been emphasized, through the intervention of the European Commission.

Germany. The Committee expressed its concern about the heavy spread of the O virus epizootic in Bavaria and hoped that the vaccination campaign, now in full swing, may be able, also in Germany, to cope with this emergency situation. Also in this case it was noted that the insufficiently large stocks of vaccine available delayed immediate action, but it has been recognized that, if arrangements were made in good time, important quantities of vaccine could be made available by other European countries.

Denmark. The delegate from Denmark stated that his country has been free from foot-and-mouth disease for quite some time. He expressed, however, his concern about the situation in Germany and pointed out that sooner or later Denmark will be exposed to infection. Some vaccine was about to be prepared to meet the situation in case of need.

Italy. The Italian delegate gave an account of the situation in his country since September 1965 when he gave a report at Warsaw. During the autumn Italy vaccinated about 4,360,000 cattle with trivalent vaccine as against 2,500,000 animals vaccinated in the previous campaign. In spite of this effort it has been possible to make available to other European countries more than 1,500,000 doses.

The O vaccine was produced at Brescia with an O strain (Frauenkappel 1963); this strain was shown to be antigenically active also against the strain (O Luzern) which caused the epizootic in Switzerland.

The Po Valley where vaccination had been extended to all cattle, did not present the same heavy epizootic pattern as in Switzerland. The danger remained, however, for swine which were not protected by vaccination.

For this reason Italy has blocked importation from those countries which are heavily infected with C virus.

In central and southern Italy there were many cases of the disease but all in all the situation has been less serious than in preceding years.

In Italy, the proportion of virus types diagnosed during 1965 were virus O₂ 70 percent, virus A 10 percent and virus C 20 percent.

It is intended to vaccinate in the autumn 1966 throughout northern Italy.

Yugoslavia. The delegate from Yugoslavia stated that the primary outbreaks experienced by his country were almost always the consequence of outbreaks near the borders of neighbouring countries.

In 1965 the disease was observed in 18 communes with 118 outbreaks, all of them due to virus type O. In the major part of the outbreaks the disease affected swine. All the animals involved in the outbreaks were slaughtered and ring vaccination as well as vaccination along the frontiers with Hungary and Rumania for a depth of 20-50 km was practised. 1,400,000 doses of vaccine were used.

When discussing the situation in general and the measures the individual European countries have applied in order to prevent the entry of the virus into their territory, the desire was expressed that more uniformity should be adopted in the measures, especially in the case of countries which have the same virus or viruses.

It was stressed that the European Commission had taken certain measures in order to face an emergency situation which would arise if the Middle East variant of the A type virus appeared in European territory, i.e. 40,000 doses of vaccine have been set aside for such a situation and the desirability was voiced to increase this stock to 100,000 doses. The Secretary of the Commission pointed out that because of the restricted financial possibilities of the Commission a larger amount could not be purchased.

The Committee then discussed the report on "The Foot-and-Mouth Disease Position and Campaigns during 1965 in South-Eastern Europe and Anatolia".

Campaigns against exotic foot-and-mouth disease viruses in South-Eastern Europe and Anatolia

With regard to the situation in the countries in which the SAT1/A campaign has been carried out, the Executive Committee noted with satisfaction that no outbreaks had occurred lately in Greece, Bulgaria and Turkish Thrace. Also in Anatolia the situation can be considered favourable. The Secretary, however, pointed out in this connection that the O virus may reappear and may endanger the buffer zone in spring. The virus

can serologically be classified as O₁ which is in accordance with the experience of the last few years (behaviour of animals vaccinated in Europe and imported into the Near East - activity of the European vaccines with respect to the Turkish and Iranian strains). Its advance towards Europe could have serious consequences especially in those countries where the vaccines in use do not reach high standards.

When comparing the situation in the Near East and in Turkey with the one created by the arrival of the A₂₂ variant in the USSR, the Executive Committee agreed that while the great danger is the presence of the variant in the Ukraine and the western parts of the Soviet Union, the Bosphorus area will continue to be for many years the point of potential danger to Europe. This depends on the fact that Anatolia will continue to be exposed to invasions by exotic viruses from the Near and the Middle East and that Turkey is not yet in a position, especially in the Asian part, to adopt a system of control, including the stamping out of foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks as is possible in Europe.

This is one of the reasons which have induced FAO to support the efforts Turkey is making to build an Institute which will have adequate facilities to meet the requirements of the country. In this connection the Executive Committee felt that the slowness with which the construction at Ankara is progressing is rather worrying; the Secretary explained the administrative and technical difficulties encountered by the Turkish Government as well as by Dr. Girard, FAO expert, for the production of foot-and-mouth disease vaccine in Turkey.

The Executive Committee has taken note of the fact that, although the quantitative production of vaccine has not increased in Turkey in the last few years, the quality of the vaccine has considerably improved; furthermore, the production of exotic viruses by the Waldmann technique has been stopped, except in the case of extreme necessity.

It has been stressed that it is imperative to obtain the necessary means for the continuation of the campaign against both the SAT1 and the A₂₂ virus. The buffer zones have to be maintained with the financial concurrence of all European countries, at least until Turkey will be in a position to face the situation on her own. It was hoped that the assisted countries would do everything to supply the necessary O vaccine in order to ensure trivalent vaccination of the buffer zone.

The Secretary pointed out that TF 111 and TF 97 were almost exhausted and the Committee agreed that all steps would have to be taken both within BEC as well as elsewhere in order to ensure provision of the necessary financial means for the continuation of the campaign during 1966. The Chairman has been asked to apply to the Director-General of FAO in this regard.

The Report of the Executive Committee

The draft of the Report of the Executive Committee, as prepared by the Secretary, was discussed and approved. (In particular, discussions took place on the activities of the Commission on the basis of a note presented by the Secretary.)

The Chairman supported the need for the Member countries to regularly send information to the Secretary on every new fact which may be of interest to other members. Since the activities of the Commission do not limit themselves to the information services the Secretary must be at any time in a condition to assist the Member countries in order to apply all measures foreseen in the Constitution according to Articles IV and V of the Constitution. It is evident that the exchange of information within the Commission must not preclude or compromise the information service which is carried out through OIE.

On the basis of sufficient information with regard to the epizootiology of the disease, prophylactic and control measures, control and distribution of vaccines, the Commission could harmonize the adoption of measures directed towards preventing the spread of the disease in Europe, in particular through the trade in animals and animal products.

It was pointed out that hardship was created by measures taken to restrict trade between two countries in which the disease is caused by the same virus type. In this regard the members of the Executive Committee agreed that the work of the Commission would be greatly facilitated if other European countries joined.

It has also been approved that the Commission should collect all possible information with regard to the trade of meat and meat products in countries infected by exotic viruses. Instructions were given to the Secretary in order to carry out enquiries and visits in this connection.

The intention of the Secretary to do everything possible to induce the eastern European countries to participate in the XIIIth Session of the Commission was approved, mainly with a view to having a discussion on the measures which were taken in those countries to prevent the spread of the A₂₂ virus and of the measures which these European countries could carry out uniformly to protect themselves in turn from the introduction of this exotic virus through importations from eastern-central Europe.

Accounts

The accounts and budgets as presented were approved. In this regard the Secretary explained the difficulties which prevent the Commission from undertaking special activities as foreseen under Article V of the Constitution. The financing of the SAT1 Campaign was possible only through the two special

Trust Funds (111 and 97) set up by FAO and put at the disposal of the Campaign.

The Fund of the Commission, Trust Fund 42, which has to be used both for administrative expenses and emergency situations (cordons, sanitaires etc.) could increase considerably if (a) membership could be increased, (b) special contributions were made by Member countries or (c) if the contributions at present paid by the Member countries were increased.

With regard to the third possibility, the Executive Committee agreed to increase the contribution by 20 percent, mainly in view of the fact that the contributions have not been raised for the past 10 years.

Various business

The delegate of the Netherlands stressed the necessity that the Executive Committee, in view of the present situation, should resume the practice of having two meetings each year, until the foot-and-mouth position has become more satisfactory. This proposal was agreed upon and it was decided to hold the next meeting at Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, possibly in the second part of October.