

Advice 01-2016 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on a draft royal decree in regard to the control of bovine infectious rhinotracheitis

The Scientific Committee is asked to evaluate a draft royal decree on the control of bovine infectious rhinotracheitis (IBR).

IBR is a viral disease of cattle associated with upper respiratory tract infection with fever and optionally abortion. IBR is associated with heavy economic losses and trade restrictions. The virus is widespread in the Belgian cattle population. The control of IBR is a priority for the bovine sector for quite a number of years. The authorities provide the legal basis. The IBR control is based on achieving herd health certification (I1, I2, I3, I4) and on encouraging the adoption of preventive biosecurity measures.

The draft royal decree aims to take further steps in the IBR control by prohibiting the I1 herd status and encouraging holders of I2 herds to acquire the conditions for obtaining a I3 or I4 status. The ultimate purpose is to eradicate the disease in Belgium to obtain a "officially free of IBR" status.

The Scientific Committee recommends to explicitly motivate holders of I2 herds with a low within-herd prevalence of IBR to acquire an I3 or I4 status.

In order to determine the sample size for the maintenance of I2 and I3 status, the Scientific Committee recommends to use a prevalence threshold corresponding with the actual within-herd seroprevalence established during the winterscreening. This prevalence is 4% in 2015 and should evolve with the evolution of the control and the epidemiological situation regarding IBR. The Committee also draws the attention to the fact that the Decision 2004/558/EC advocates a complete serological balance as a condition of maintaining these statutes. This will increase the efficiency of the control and the passage of herds to higher statuses without greatly increasing sample sizes.

The Scientific Committee recommends, in case of restocking of herds, to encourage holders to realize this repopulation only with cattle from I3 or I4 certified herds.

In regard to dairy farms, the Committee draws the attention to the fact that Decision 2004/558/EC advocates to test dairy cows via the tank milk and to test all other categories of cattle of the exploitation, which cannot be controlled via the tank milk, by individual serology.

Finally, the Committee draws the attention to the epidemiological risk for cattle from I3 or I4 herds when participating at annual markets to which also cattle from I2 herds participate.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section "Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen" and "Comité scientifique/Avis".