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NORDISKE ARBEJDSPAPIRER

N O R D I C W O R K I N G P A P E R S

Operational Expert Groups for Animal Diseases

Report on Ad-Hoc meeting on the operational expert groups for animal diseases: How to maintain expertise? Copenhagen, 3–4 December 2012

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Copenhagen, 3 – 4 December 2012



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Introduction

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry adopted in 2005 a Resolution on Nordic veterinary contingency planning. The resolution called for the urgent development of proposals in the Nordic countries for the establishment of various forms of close cooperation in veterinary contingency planning between the competent authorities, and that this was followed up with appropriate initiatives in relevant areas. It is envisioned that this cooperation could be established in a variety of different areas, including the development of a strategic plan for the joint Nordic contingency co-operation and the holding of emergency exercises, training of emergency personnel, loan of experts and equipment, vaccination contingency, policy wording etc.

In 2006 the Nordic Council of Ministers adopted a resolution which extended the cooperation to veterinary contingency planning in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

A Nordic Baltic veterinary Contingency Group (N-B CVG) has been established and the group has organized a number of seminars, workshops and animal disease simulation exercise

The Nordic Baltic Veterinary Contingency Group has with reference to the Resolution on Nordic veterinary contingency planning and in particular to “training of emergency personnel, loan of experts” decided to organize an AD-Hoc meeting with participation of experts appointed as members of National operational expert groups.

The objectives of the Ad-Hoc meeting within the context of contingency planning were:

- To obtain information on the existing expert groups with regard to composition and activities
- To review legislative aspects related to the creation and activities of expert groups
- To exchange views on inputs of importance for improvements of contingency planning in the Nordic Baltic region.
- To determine the potential need for training of members in the expert groups
- To make recommendation concerning the use of expert groups in the Nordic-Baltic countries

The target group for the Ad-Hoc meeting should be Members of the operational expert groups, which have been created to maintain expertise in order to assist the national veterinary administrations in ensuring preparedness against outbreak of exotic diseases such as avian influenza, classical swine fever and foot and mouth disease

The importance of the operational expert groups in relation to disease preparedness, control and eradication has been recognized for a number of years and at EU level the creation and function of the expert groups is laid down in the veterinary legislation

Opening and welcome session

Dr. Camilla Brash Andersen welcomed on behalf of the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration the participants to the Ad-Hoc meeting on the operational expert groups for animal diseases: How to maintain expertise?

The objectives of the meeting were highlighted and all participants were given an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Session I: The expert groups and the control of animal diseases

Chair: Professor Jens Peter Nielsen, Denmark

The creation and role of expert groups in the control of animal diseases within the context of contingency planning

Speaker: Dr. Laszlo Kuster, DG SANCO, European Commission

The European Commission is now preparing a legislative proposal for an EU Animal Health Law that is meant to be the legal framework to support the EU Animal Health Strategy (1). It also reflects the priorities of Smart Regulation (2) by aiming to simplify the existing legal framework while reflecting stakeholders' expectations in reducing administrative burdens (3). And finally, it reflects Commission priorities such as the smart growth objective of the Europe 2020 strategy by helping the sector to become more resilient due to active prevention measures and more flexible risk management.

Some of the specific objectives of this proposal are:

- to establish a single, simplified, transparent and clear regulatory framework repealing over 35 current directives, regulations. It will set out systematically the objectives, scope and principles of the regulatory intervention; based on good governance and compliant with international (e.g. OIE) standards; focusing on long-term preventative measures and working together with all relevant stakeholders
- to introduce overarching general principles in order to be prepared for the new challenges, i.e. to enable quick reaction in case of emerging diseases; whilst ensuring the same quality of reaction as provided for in current legislation
- to reduce the impact of animal diseases on animal and public health, animal welfare, economy and society as far as possible by enhancing disease awareness, preparedness, surveillance and emergency response systems at national and EU level

Some of the operational objectives of this Animal Health Law are:

- to integrate the new prevention-driven and incentive-oriented approach into the core of animal health policy;
- to provide for a clear and balanced distribution of roles and responsibilities between competent authorities, EU institutions, the farming sector, animal owners and others

- to provide for effective mechanisms for rapid response to disease events, including new challenges, such as emerging diseases
- to ensure effective emergency preparedness and early response to animal diseases and zoonoses, including use of vaccines as appropriate
- to ensure that the new legal framework provides enough flexibility to adapt smoothly to future scientific and technological developments.

Good animal health generates not only private benefits but is a public good with wider social benefits. The transmissible nature of many animal diseases means that often a common approach will have the greatest overall benefit. While the value of the harmonised EU approach is widely accepted and the benefits have been demonstrated many times over, the Commission must constantly re-examine all issues in light of the principle of subsidiarity. Also, in line with the principle of proportionality the Animal Health Law will establish a general framework built on outcome-based rules, avoiding over-prescriptiveness, and leaving room for Member States to regulate or set more detailed legislation when necessary, so providing for the flexibility to adapt the rules to national, regional or local circumstances.

The Commission also did an evaluation in 2011 - 2012 of the EU rapid response network, crisis management and communication capacity regarding certain transmissible animal diseases. Its outcomes have been presented to the Chief Veterinary Officers and also will be presented in the near future to SCOFCAH and the Animal Health Advisory Committee. The action plan to address the retained recommendations will also be taken into account within the framework of the proposal for a new Animal Health Law and by the following implementing and delegated acts.

The full report of the evaluation is available online:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/pillars/docs/23_final_report_eu_rapid_response.pdf

Expert groups in Denmark with special reference to Classical and African swine fever

Speaker: Professor Åse Uttenthal, DTU, Denmark

Abstract

The Danish National Veterinary Expert group for Classical and African swine fever has been active during the last 10 years. The group is composed of experts in EU-legislation, in Danish pig production, in pig diseases and in virology. The group has participated in a national workshop on CSFV surveillance, in Contingency planning exercises and many efforts is done to keep the group updated on the current international situation for swine fevers.

The group has been very stable and especially the participation in a TAIEX workshop in 2005 in Romania was a very good basis for fruitful collaboration. The experiences gained from the workshop had been found very valuable during discussion of different epidemiological situations.

The obligations of the expert group are both to follow the progress of eradication but definitely also to take care of some of the more time consuming discussions that could otherwise burden the Veterinary

Authorities. Questions like “Could we be allowed to vaccinate the pigs in a Zoo if there is an outbreak?” and other veterinary issues that may have a high interest in the press; but which do not matter that much in the gross picture of the disease eradication could be handed over to the expert group.

Slide presentation and discussions

The presentation gave examples of activities carried out by the Classical swine fever and African swine fever expert group during the last 10 years and how the expert group was kept alive. It was highlighted that a “good chemistry” between the members of the expert group was considered to be important for the success in “peacetime” and in a “war-time.”

The importance of the annual meetings of National Reference Laboratories organized by the EU Community Reference Laboratory for classical swine fever, Hannover was emphasized, as the meetings did not only cover diagnostic laboratory methods, but also valuable information on disease transmission and current epidemiological situations.

The issue of independence was discussed. It was agreed that an expert should work as an independent person. He/she is deemed to work in a personal capacity and, in performing the work, does not represent any organization. The use of a declaration or statement of no conflict of interest was used in many evaluation projects and could also be applied for work in expert groups. A potential conflict of interest could occur, if an expert:

- Was employed by a private company involved in production and sales of vaccine or reagents used in disease diagnostics
- Was employed by the livestock sector and involved in the determination of animal movement restrictions
- Is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his or her ability to evaluate disease control measures impartially.

The meeting was also informed about an article describing the activities of the Danish National Veterinary Expert group for Classical and African swine fever published in the journal of the Danish Veterinary Medical Association (4).

Expert groups in Sweden and information on handling avian disease surveillance and handling avian influenza outbreaks

Speaker: Dr. Siamak Zohari, Sweden

Abstract

Expert role: The National Veterinary Institute, SVA, is an expert authority involved in prevention, diagnosis and the control of infectious diseases. To be well-prepared in dealing with these diseases by early detection and rapid and proper response to prevent outbreaks and spread, SVA works closely with other national authorities such as the Board of Agriculture, The National Food Administration, the Swedish Institute for Communicable Disease Control (SMI) and the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), but

also with several of the best national research environments for veterinary and human medicine, as well as for ecology, immunology and bioinformatics. Today, there is a strong movement in veterinary and human medicine for a 'One health' perspective on infectious diseases, and SVA actively contributed to the building of a network for facilitating interactions among these disciplines. At the international level, SVA has a broad network in veterinary medicine, primarily within the EU, but also outside the EU with colleagues in the United States, Brazil, Uganda and Mozambique.

Avian influenza: Host-pathogen dynamics are driven by infection rates, recovery rates and the virulence of the pathogen. Estimating these parameters and their temporal and spatial variation in wild animal populations allows addressing the mechanisms underlying the persistence of endemic pathogens, as well as the mechanisms behind the dynamics of epidemics. Therefore we have established a long-term study of avian influenza in Mallards at Ottenby Bird Observatory, Southern Öland. The Ottenby Nature Reserve consists of open shore meadows, shallow lagoons and open brackish waters that hold a large number of waterfowl during migration times, especially in autumn. It is situated strategically in the flyway of Mallards migrating from the Eastern Baltic (Eastern Sweden, Southern Finland, the Baltic States and Western Russia) in autumn to wintering grounds primarily in Denmark and Northern Germany. The project has generated a large number of publications, and we have been able to describe temporal variation in influenza A virus prevalence in European mallard population.

Slide presentation and discussions

The slide presentation gave an excellent picture of the measures taken in Sweden with regard to avian influenza. The presentation provided information on:

- migrating routes of importance for transmission of avian influenza
- surveillance in wildlife and in poultry
- measures related to High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI)
- cooperation between the National Reference Laboratory and the Central Veterinary Administration, and
- cooperation between the authorities dealing with animal health and public health

It was outlined that a specific expert group had not been established for diseases such as avian influenza, classical swine fever and for foot and mouth disease.

When needed a group would be established and the group would consist of experts from the appropriate areas of virology, serology, epidemiology, ornithology etc.

The creation of GISAID – Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data-was discussed. It was appreciated that GISAID actively promotes the sharing of all influenza type virus sequences, related clinical and epidemiological data associated with human isolates and geographic and species-specific data associated with avian and other animal isolates.

Admission to GISAID's publicly accessible platform is free-of-charge at: <http://platform.gisaid.org>

Expert groups in Finland and information on educational and training activities covering exotic animal diseases

Speaker: Dr. Taina Aaltonen, Evira, Finland

Abstract

The Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira is responsible for the contingency planning and preparedness for animal diseases in Finland. Evira has established six expert groups to support the preparedness. The composition of the groups is designed to cover the needed expertise sufficiently. In these groups there are experts from the following fields: epidemiology, diagnostics, national and regional disease control, meat inspection, animal welfare, animal health care, entomology, legislation, risk assessment and research. They represent different organisations such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), the Central and Regional Authorities, Helsinki University and the Industry.

The role of the expert groups in Finland is more related to giving advice and support when designing the animal disease strategies and developing the contingency plans rather than giving support in a crisis situation. The expert groups meet regularly depending on the current situation.

The role of the expert groups during a crisis situation should be discussed further taking into account that many of members would be controlling the disease in the National or Local Crisis Control Centre (NDCC) during an epidemic. Consequently, the expert group cannot be considered a genuine additional resource for delivering support to the NDCC. On the other hand, the personnel resources having expertise on exotic diseases are limited in a small country. When using experts outside the official bodies, the confidentiality of the discussions must also be ensured.

Concerning training in Finland, a seminar on contingency planning has been arranged annually since 1996 and it has been destined specially for regional veterinary officers, contingency veterinarians, Evira and MAF experts. Also, a seminar on contagious diseases has been arranged annually for all veterinarians, focusing on current diseases in Finland and elsewhere. Regional veterinary officers and members of the expert groups give further training in their areas.

Slide presentation and discussions

The slide presentation showed that the established six expert groups were covering activities related to:

- foot and mouth disease
- African swine fever and classical swine fever
- Avian influenza and Newcastle disease
- Bluetongue
- Fish diseases
- Disinfection

The expert groups had each 10 – 13 members and substitutes and there would be meetings once a year on an average depending on the needs.

Some of the questions raised during the discussions dealt with:

How to guarantee the confidentiality of work carried out by experts groups?

How to activate and engage members?

How to use the expert groups to support the National Disease Control Center in a crisis?

Where to acquire practical experience for the Members of the groups?

With regard to confidentiality it was agreed that certain rules should be in place as unauthorized disclosure of certain information discussed in the group could be prejudicial to an effective implementation of disease eradication measures. The task of an expert should be to participate in a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation of issues put in front of the expert group. He/she must use his/her best endeavours to achieve this and deliver a constant and high quality of work. A Statement of confidentiality could be a tool to enhance the importance of confidentiality.

Expert groups in Norway and information on disease preventive measures and disease preparedness with regard to foot and mouth disease

Speaker: Dr. Siri Løtved, Norway

Abstract

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA) was established in 2003 and as a consequence the political, operative and scientific level of the food hygiene and veterinary service was split. Three ministries are involved in the service although the Ministry of Agriculture and food is the responsible ministry. The scientific level consists of independent advisory institutes headed by different ministries, and the Norwegian Veterinary Institute is a member of this scientific family.

The main mission of the Norwegian Veterinary Institute is to give scientific decision support to the NFSA and to develop science-based knowledge. The institute produces analyses, diagnostics, tracing, risk assessments, digital maps and simulations, scientific advice and reports with special focus on preparedness, and the institute holds nearly 30 national reference functions awarded by the NFSA. In crisis the institute collaborates very close with the NFSA.

The last outbreak of foot and mouth disease and of classical swine fever in Norway was recorded in 1952 and 1963, respectively. According to the relevant EU-directives an expert group has been established for classical swine fever and one for foot and mouth disease. The fields of expertise represented in the groups are pathology, virology, clinical medicine, immunology, vaccinology and epidemiology. The experience gained from the recent exercise on foot and mouth disease performed in collaboration with the NFSA will be important during the evaluation of the functionality of the expert groups.

The experience related to the organization of the Norwegian expert groups will be presented and discussed at the seminar.

Presentation and Discussion

During the discussions of the role of the expert groups, the meeting was informed about a huge FMD simulation exercise conducted in Norway in 2012 and about participation of Norwegian experts in the FMD training sessions organized by EUFMD, FAO in cooperation with the veterinary administrations in Turkey, Kenya and Nepal.

Furthermore the meeting was informed about the issues discussed at the EUFMD open scientific session held in October 2012 in Jerez, Spain. Over 120 abstracts had been received for oral and poster presentations and about 50% had been on aspects of FMD epidemiology and FMD management. The session was considered very valuable for up-dating of knowledge on FMD.

A decision has recently been taken to transfer the activities of the diagnostic team placed at the Norwegian Veterinary Institute to diagnostic teams operated by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority.

Tasks of expert groups in Estonia

Speaker: Professors Arvo Viltrop, Estonian University of Life Sciences

Abstract

The expert groups (EGs) are to be nominated by the Director General of the Veterinary and Food Board according to the rules enacted by EU legislation and reflected in Estonian legislation. The tasks of the EGs are listed in Estonian laws regulating the disease control and in contingency plans. The general tasks of the EG is to advise the Director General of Veterinary and Food Board in decision making and to advise veterinary service in contingency planning. The specific tasks are defined for peace time and disease outbreak situation. In peace time the expert groups should assist the veterinary service in preparation for outbreaks - to advise the preparation of action plans and codes of practice, to develop data collection and processing systems for handling epidemiological information, geographical and meteorological information and risk analysis, to assist in organising staff training and keeping up the disease awareness. In outbreak situation the expert groups should conduct epidemiological investigation, prepare the reports on the epidemiological situation and complement epidemiological information with geographical, meteorological, hydrological etc. information and to advise the disease control centre on the monitoring strategies.

Slide presentation and discussion

The exchange of views dealt with the need for expert groups in small countries and the difficulties concerning the establishment of groups covering different diseases, when the availability of experts within the areas of virology, immunology, epidemiology, etc was limited. Based on the exchange of views it was clear that attempts should be made to have a legislation which provides the framework for the expert groups, but without listing the very specific tasks to be performed. The competent authority shall, depending on national needs, be responsible for defining objectives of expert groups and the appointment of members of the groups.

The rules for payment or reimbursement of expenses to experts were discussed and it was learned that the rules varied from country to country. In general no payments were made for the time used by experts on contingency planning and during simulation exercises, but travel costs were reimbursed.

Report from Nordic-Baltic expert seminar on “Strengthening and Adaptation of the Preventive Measures to Existing Risks of African Swine Fever introduction from Eastern Neighboring Countries to the Nordic-Baltic region” held in Latvia, October 2012.

Speaker: Dr. Camilla Brasch Andersen, Denmark

The objectives of the seminar held in Latvia were to evaluate the current surveillance and control activities put in place by the competent authorities to protect the Nordic-Baltic region from ASF introduction from neighbouring countries and to prepare recommendations to improve preventive measures. Denmark and Finland had during the preparatory work and implementation of the seminar been involved as partners.

Speakers from Russia had given presentations with valuable information on the ASF situation. An epidemic was recognized between Moscow and Sct. Petersburg and the epidemiological situation was highlighted. It appeared that the ASF will not be able to sustain in the wild boar population and that the infection is moving north and west. Within infected herds there is a very fast development of disease, no signs until day 10 and then death in 2 days. Most of the recorded cases have occurred in small family farms where no biosecurity measures are put in place. The threat from the infection in Russia was discussed in working groups and while veterinarians in the Baltic countries were very worried about the movements of wild boar and illegal meat import the Danish veterinarians had great worries about contaminated trucks involved in transport of live animals.

A number of recommendations had been adopted covering aspects of:

- monitoring of wild boar populations
- surveillance for African swine fever
- biosecurity at pig holdings
- facilities for cleaning and disinfection of animal transport trucks close to Border Inspection Posts.

Session II: Expert groups at Nordic-Baltic level and contingency planning

Chair: Dr. Audur Arnthorsdottir, Iceland

Demonstration of e-learning program concerning animal disease diagnostic in the field

Speaker: Professor Jens Peter Nielsen, Denmark

Presentation and discussion

Information was provided on the use of E-learning at the Faculty of Life Sciences at Copenhagen University. Computer-aided learning (CAL) packages are being integrated into undergraduate courses and a special CAL package has been developed concerning disease investigation at livestock production units. The CAL package was presented as a “game” and students could work at any time and answers (yes or no) would be provided immediately upon the steps taken by the students during a disease investigation for classical swine fever at a farm.

It was agreed that the e-learning package was very valuable; in particular with classes having many students and when access to farms were limited. The preparation of CAL- packages is rather expensive and the modification of a package dealing with f.ex. Aujeszky’s disease (module) to classical swine fever could cost about 40.000 Euro.

The possibility of obtaining funding from the EU was briefly discussed. It was noted that in the past e-learning activities had been funded under the ERASMUS-FEXI, which later became VetVIP.

Working groups

The participants were divided into 2 groups – A and B - for exchange of views on the topics:

- The ideal expert group- objectives and functions
- How can a multidisciplinary group maintain expertise?

The issues discussed are shown below.

Working Group A: The ideal expert group- objectives and functions.

The members of the group exchanged views on a number of issues including:

Who defines objectives of the expert groups?

Which mandates/members should be represented? And who should appoint the members.

How is the group informed during peacetime, and what about confidentiality?

Which activities should they have in peacetime? Who should pay for their activities?

Determine the potential need for training of members of expert groups.

How would their activities be during an outbreak? Who should prioritize their activities?

How to divide efforts between Expert group and Employers demands?

How do we keep the group alive in peace time?

Working group B: How can a multidisciplinary expert group maintain expertise?

The members of the group exchanged views on a number of issues including:

Is it possible to find members who could cover several diseases?

Could we have one big national group and then only part of the group take action during an outbreak?

Would there be benefits from having a “backing group” of experts in ASFV to assist the busy AI expert group during an outbreak?

How can a group maintain expertise?

How do we keep the group alive in peace time?

Determine the potential need for training of members in the expert group.

Suggest the composition of an ideal expert group to support the prevention, control and eradication of avian influenza.

Observations from exchange of views in working groups

The legal framework for contingency planning includes that expert groups shall be established with the aim to assist the competent authority (CA) in ensuring disease preparedness and to assist in the event of disease outbreaks. The outcome of the discussions in the groups was that:

- The objectives should be defined by the CA and they should specify the objectives for periods without disease outbreaks (peace time) and objectives for periods with disease outbreaks (war time).

In this context it should be taken into account that contingency planning in the area of animal health covers:

- A pre-epidemic period (“Peace time”)
- The epidemic period (“War time”)
- The post-epidemic period (Time of rehabilitation)

and that the activities to be carried out during the three different periods are closely related but nevertheless call for different actions, skills and training programmes for the personnel involved.

The appointment of expert groups should be the responsibility of the CA; usually the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO).

It was evident from the exchange of views that the objectives for an expert group would depend on the needs for assistance by the CA and that such needs could vary from country to country. The objectives could have focus on tasks related to the prevention, control and eradication of a named disease or to several diseases. The objectives drawn up for a group would also reflect the functions anticipated to be carried out by the expert group, such as:

- provide assistance or a perhaps a second opinion in relation to disease investigation during a disease suspicion
- assist during the performance of risk assessments

- provide guidelines for movements of persons, animals and products in risk areas where legislation is absent or inadequate
- act as an independent sparring partner during discussions of possible control strategies
- perform certain activities to relief administrative staff
- give advice on contingency planning and act as an independent part during dialogues between the CA and stakeholders.

The professional qualifications of persons selected and appointed to an expert group should ensure a match with the defined objectives of the group and functions to be performed. In certain situations confidentiality may be important for the work to be carried out and it was proposed during the deliberations in the working groups that the CA should request all members of an expert group to sign a declaration of confidentiality prior to the appointment.

At the time of appointment it would be appropriate to outline to what extend it is anticipated that experts shall work con amore or to what extend funding should be made available for the functions to be carried out. It appeared from the discussions that in most cases the work carried out was con amore, but expenses related to travel were covered by the competent authority.

Persons appointed to expert groups are recognized for their expertise within certain specific areas related to the prevention, control and eradication of infectious animal diseases and it was anticipated that updating of knowledge within a given area would be the responsibility of the individual expert. A training programme for experts groups should therefore have focus on disease control strategies, administrative and legislative developments.

Closing session

A brief “wrap-up” of the activities carried out was made at the closing session.

Based on information made available and obtained from abstracts, presentations and discussions during the Ad-Hoc meeting, it has been possible to prepare conclusions and recommendations as shown below.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Veterinary Administration in most of the Nordic and Baltic countries have within the context of contingency planning established expert groups with the aim to assist the competent authority in ensuring disease preparedness and to assist during disease outbreaks. The appointment of expert groups and the tasks performed by the groups however has varied from country to country.

One of the areas of work of the Nordic-Baltic Veterinary Contingency Group (N-B VCG) is to identify areas of improvement in veterinary contingency planning and build bridges between veterinary administrations in the Nordic-Baltic countries and the N-B VCG has by this Ad-Meeting consulted a number of experts on issues listed in the objectives of the meeting and which were:

1. To obtain information on the existing expert groups with regard to composition and activities
2. To review legislative aspects related to the creation and activities of expert groups

3. To exchange views on inputs of importance for improvements of contingency planning in the Nordic Baltic region.
4. To determine the potential need for training of members in the expert groups
5. To make recommendation concerning the use of expert groups in the Nordic-Baltic countries

In brief the consultation showed:

1. The composition and activities varied greatly from country to country. The reporting revealed that the approach by the CA did vary from having the legislative aspects in place but no appointed groups to the full application of legislation with several experts groups working in peacetime and ready for wartime
2. The objectives of having expert groups are to assist the CA in disease preparedness and during outbreaks. It was concluded that the legislation should provide the frame for the establishment and tasks to be performed by the expert groups; but the CA should define the objectives for the expert group(s) and the appointments
3. The CA has the responsibility for the preparation and up-dating of contingency plans. The expert groups should be involved in or given the opportunity to assist in the development and up-dating of plans
4. A training programme for experts groups should have focus on disease control strategies, administrative and legislative developments. Individual experts should be responsibility for being up-dated within their own area of expertise.

With regard to recommendations the outcome of the consultation can focus on the following:

It is recommended that expert groups shall be maintained as a valuable element in contingency planning; the legislation shall provide the framework for the expert groups and the competent authority shall be responsible for defining objectives of expert groups and the appointment of members of the groups

Acknowledgements

The organizers of the Ad-Hoc meeting On The operational expert groups for animal diseases: How to maintain expertise? would like to express their thanks to the Nordic Council of Ministers for the political support and the financial support made available for the preparation and implementation of the event.

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Annexes

Annex 1– Agenda of Ad-Hoc meeting

NORDIC-BALTIC VETERINARY CONTINGENCY GROUP

Ad-Hoc meeting

On

The operational expert groups for animal diseases: How to maintain expertise?

Copenhagen, 3rd – 4th December 2012

Place

DGI-byen

Tietgensgade 65

1704 Copenhagen V

http://www.dgi-byen.com/about_dgi-byen/find_us/

Denmark

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The objectives

The objectives of the Ad-Hoc meeting within the context of contingency planning are:

- To obtain information on the existing expert groups with regard to composition and activities
- To review legislative aspects related to the creation and activities of expert groups
- To exchange views on inputs of importance for improvements of contingency planning in the Nordic Baltic region.
- To determine the potential need for training of members in the expert groups
- To make recommendation concerning the use of expert groups in the Nordic-Baltic countries

Target group

Members of the operational expert groups created to maintain expertise in order to assist the national veterinary administrations in ensuring preparedness against outbreak of exotic diseases such as avian influenza, classical swine fever and foot and mouth disease.

Agenda

December 3 – Meeting starting at 12:00 hours

Day 1

12:00 Registration of participants and light lunch

13:00 Welcome and Opening Session:

Approval of the agenda

13:15 Session I: The expert groups and the control of animal diseases

Chair: Professor Jens Peter Nielsen, Denmark

13:15 The creation and role of expert groups in the control of animal diseases within the context of contingency planning

Speaker: Laszlo Kuster, the European Commission

14:00 Expert groups in Denmark with special reference to Classical and African swine fever

Speaker: Professor Åse Uttenthal

14:30 Expert groups in Lithuania and information on recent outbreaks of Classical swine fever

Speaker:

15:00 Coffee break

15:15 Expert groups in Sweden and information on handling avian disease surveillance and handling avian influenza outbreaks

Speaker: Siamak Zohari

15:45 Expert groups in Finland and information on educational and training activities covering exotic animal diseases

Speaker: Taina Aaltonen

16:15 Expert groups in Norway and information on disease preventive measures and disease preparedness with regard to foot and mouth disease

Speaker: Jorunn Jarp

16:45 Tasks of expert group in Estonia

Speaker: Professor Arvo Viltrop

17:15 Report from Nordic-Baltic expert seminar on “Strengthening and Adaptation of the Preventive Measures to Existing Risks of African Swine Fever. Introduction from Eastern Neighboring Countries to the Nordic-Baltic region” held in Latvia October 2012.

Speaker: Camilla Brasch Andersen, Denmark

17:45 Discussions of session I issues.

19:30 Dinner

December 4

09:00 Session II: Expert groups at Nordic-Baltic level and contingency planning

Chair: Dr. Audur Arnthorsdottir, Iceland

09:00 Demonstration of e-learning program concerning animal disease diagnostic in the field

Speaker: Professor Jens Peter Nielsen, Denmark

09:45 Establishment of Working Groups

Group A: The ideal expert group – objectives and functions

Group B: How can a multidisciplinary expert group maintain expertise?

Coffee available during group work

10:45: Presentation of group work

11:30 Closing session

Annex 2 – List of participants

Participants in Ad Hoc Expert group meeting Copenhagen 3-4 December 2012

Country	Name	Institution	Expert group	Email
Commission	Laszlo Kuster	Unit G2		Laszlo.kuster@ec.europa.eu
Estonia	Imbi Nurmoja	Estonian Veterinary and Food Laboratory		imbi.nurmoja@vetlab.ee
	Arvo Viltrop	Estonian University of Life Sciences		arvo.viltrop@emu.ee
Finland	Taina Aaltonen	Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira	all	taina.aaltonen@evira.fi
Iceland	Vilhjalmur Svansson	Institute for Experimental Pathology, University of Iceland		vsvanss@hi.is
	Auður L. Arnþórsdóttir			audur.arnthorsdottir@mast.is
Norway	Ole-Herman Tronerud	Mattilsynet	Foot and mouth disease	Ole-Herman.Tronerud@mattilsynet.no
	Jorunn Jarp	National Veterinary Institute		jorun.jarp@vetinst.no
	Siri Løtvedt	Mattilsynet		Siri.Margrete.Lotvedt@mattilsynet.no
Sweden	Karl Ståhl	National Veterinary Institute, SVA		Karl.stahl@sva.se
	Siamak Zohari	National Veterinary Institute, SVA	Avian influenza	Siamak.zohari@sva.se

Denmark	Åse Uttenthal	Danish National Veterinary Institute	Swine fever	asut@vet.dtu.dk
	Jens Peter Nielsen	University of Copenhagen	Swine fever	jpni@life.ku.dk
	Jørgen Westergaard	Adc-consult	Swine fever	adc-consult@youmail.dk
	Charlotte Kristiane Hjulsager	Danish National Veterinary Institute	Avian influenza	ckhj@vet.dtu.dk
	Camilla Brasch Andersen	Danish Veterinary and Food Administration	Meeting organizer	cban@fvst.dk

Annex 3 - Legislation concerning the establishment of expert groups

Information on tasks listed in the EU legislation for Expert groups established in relation to animal disease preparedness, control and eradication

The EU legislation adopted since the early 1980s has included the use of experts groups in relation to disease preparedness, control and eradication. The tasks listed have varied during the years. Information on legislation adopted and on legislation in preparation is given below.

I Legislation adopted

The EU legislation adopted and covering the control and eradication of animal diseases and where a reference is made to expert groups is:

- Council Directive 2002/60/EC on Community measures for the control of African swine fever
- Council Directive 2005/94/EC on Community measures for the control of avian influenza
- Council Directive 2001/89/EC on Community measures for the control of classical swine fever
- Council Directive 2003/85/EC on Community measures for the control of foot-and-mouth disease

African swine fever - Council Directive 2002/60/EC

Article 22(5)

Member States shall create a permanently operational expert group to maintain the expertise needed to assist the competent authority in ensuring disease preparedness.

In the event of an outbreak the expert group shall assist the competent authority at least in:

- (a) The epidemiological enquiry
- (b) Sampling, testing and interpretation of results of laboratory tests;
- (c) Establishment of disease control measures

Article 22(6)

Member States shall ensure that the national and local disease control centres and the expert group have staff, facilities and equipment including communication systems as necessary, and a clear and effective chain of command and management to ensure the prompt implementation of the disease control measures laid down in this Directive.

Details regarding staff, facilities, equipment, chain of command and management of the national and local disease control centres shall be laid down in the contingency plans referred to in Article 21.

Avian influenza – Council Directive 2005/94/EC

Article 62: Contingency plan

Article 62(6)

In addition to the measures provided for paragraphs 1 to 4, further rules to ensure rapid and efficient eradication of avian influenza, including provisions on disease control centres, expert groups and real-time alert exercises, may be adopted in accordance with the procedures referred to in article 64(2)

Classical swine fever – Council Directive 2001/89/EC

Art. 23(5)

Member States shall create a permanently operational expert group to maintain the expertise needed to assist the competent authority in ensuring disease preparedness.

In the event of an outbreak the expert group shall assist the competent authority at least in:

- (a) The epidemiological enquiry
- (b) Sampling, testing and interpretation of results of laboratory tests;
- (c) Establishment of disease control measures

Article 23(6)

Member States shall ensure that the national and local disease control centres and the expert group have staff, facilities and equipment including communication systems as necessary, and a clear and effective chain of command and management to ensure the prompt implementation of the disease control measures laid down in this Directive.

Details regarding staff, facilities, equipment, chain of command and management of the national and local disease control centres shall be laid down in the contingency plans referred to in Article 22.

Foot and Mouth Disease - Council Directive 2003/85/EC

Article 78: Expert Group

1. Member States shall create a permanently operational expert group, which is composed of epidemiologists, veterinary scientists and virologists in a balanced way, to maintain expertise in order to assist the competent authority in ensuring preparedness against an outbreak of foot- and- mouth disease.

By way of derogation from the first subparagraph, Member States with a limited number of animals of susceptible species may arrange a formalized agreement with other Member States on mutual assistance in regard of the expert group. These arrangements shall be detailed in the contingency plans referred to in article 72.

2. In case of a suspicion of an outbreak of foot-and –mouth disease the expert group shall at least:

- (a) Evaluate the clinical picture and the epidemiological situation
- (b) Give advice regarding the sampling and analysis needed for diagnosing the foot-and-mouth disease together with the additional actions and measures to be taken.

3. In case of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease the expert group shall at least:

- (a) Conduct at least in the index case and if necessary on the spot, an evaluation of the clinical picture and analysis of the epidemiological inquiry in order to collect the necessary data for determining: (i) the origin of infection; (ii) the date of introduction of the infectious agent; (iii) the possible spread of the disease.
- (b) Report to the Chief Veterinary Officer and the national disease control centre;
- (c) Give advice on screening, sampling, test procedures, control and the other measures to be applied and on the strategy to be implemented, including advice on biosecurity measures on holdings or on premises referred to in Article 16, and in relation to emergency vaccination
- (d) Follow up and guide the epidemiological enquiry
- (e) Supplement the epidemiological data with geographical, meteorological and other necessary information
- (f) Analyse the epidemiological data and perform risk assessments at regular intervals
- (g) Assist in ensuring that the processing of animal carcasses and animal waste is done with the minimum of detrimental effect on the environment.

II Legislation in preparation

The European Commission has in May 2013 presented a proposal for a “New animal health law”. The proposal is a streamlined single text replacing many current EU rules, among those the Directives on disease control and eradication.

It has been presented as “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on Animal health” COM (2013) 260 final.

The text of the proposal and several supporting and background documents is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/animal-health-proposal-2013_en.htm