



Tracking and identifying system to control livestock

Evaluation of the benefit and the implementation of the legislative guidelines

Key facts

A comprehensive tracking and registration system to control livestock movement is in place, which enables cloven-hoofed animals to be identified simply and their origin and whereabouts (traceability) to be established. The animal movement database is the key element in controlling livestock movement. This currently covers all cloven-hoofed animal holdings and all movement of cattle on the holdings. Of the 3.6 million cloven-hoofed animal herd (cattle, pigs, sheep and goats), initially only cattle (1.6 million) will be covered in the database.

The introduction of controlling livestock movement was difficult and the problems were underestimated. The evaluation showed that the current situation, especially concerning data completeness, did not as yet fully come up to expectations. This year the annual operating costs of the animal movement database amounting to approximately CHF 9 million should for the first time be fully covered by fees from the keepers of the animals and abattoirs. On the part of the Confederation, in future the annual investment costs amounting to approximately CHF 2 million will still have to be financed.

Controlling livestock movement was set up with the aim of being better prepared should there be an outbreak of an epidemic, of generally better combating epidemics and of being able to implement preventive measures in a more targeted way. In addition, the safety of animal derived foods and, in general terms, economic considerations, in particular ensuring the exportability of cattle was crucial.

The evaluation focussed on the implementation of the legal guidelines, completeness of the data in the animal movement database, use of information from controlling livestock movement and the effects of controlling livestock movement on preventing and combating epidemics.

The most important observations are as follows

- The provisions designated in the Animal Epidemic Act for controlling livestock movement have today to a large extent been fulfilled. What has not been achieved are records in a central database on the number and movement of the cloven-hoofed animal population which does not come under the category relating to cattle.
- Overall the different measures implemented have, to varying degrees, lead to an improvement in the implementation of controlling livestock movement and thereby in the data quality of the animal movement database. In spite of these successes, there is still room for improvement concerning the implementation of controlling livestock movement, especially in terms of data completeness in the animal movement database.
- The value of and the advantages of controlling livestock movement relating to transparent animal management, unbroken traceability, combating epidemics successfully and access for animals and products derived from animals to the European market are beyond dispute. However, the study also showed that the data completeness of the animal movement database was overall considered by those interviewed to be poor. In this regard, for the majority of those interviewed, action is called for.
- In the case of an epidemic, controlling livestock movement with its component parts (national holding registers, animal identification, accompanying documents, livestock register and animal movement database) turns out to be fundamentally helpful. However, the animal movement database does not fully meet expectations, due to the fact that in the case of cattle not all movement data are covered yet and movements of the other cloven-hoofed animals are not covered by it at all. Additional, on-site, epidemiological investigations consulting the holdings' livestock registers and accompanying documents will, however, in the case of an epidemic always be necessary.
- Recently the National Audit Office in London also examined the system of identifying and tracking livestock in England. In contrast to Switzerland and since the outbreak of the foot and mouth disease in 2003, sheep are also individually recorded. As far as data completeness is concerned, to some extent similar problems to those in Switzerland exist. The UK is now planning to modernise controlling livestock movement.

The most important recommendations are

In the interests of all the relevant stakeholders, it is now a question of consolidating that which has been achieved with regard to further expanding possible synergies and in general to better communicate the advantages of controlling livestock movement. The statements within the scope of this evaluation have lead to 14 recommendations. In particular these concern legal guidelines, data completeness and the use of the animal movement database.

Legal guidelines

Various data provided for in the Ordinance on the Animal Movement Database are not gathered today and are not defined as data which must be reported in the pertinent technical instructions. (amongst others health status and meat checks). As a result the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) recommends that the Ordinance on the Animal Movement Database should be amended in keeping with the current situation. In addition it has to be

clarified whether or not in the medium term the remaining cloven-hoofed animals should be covered individually.

Data completeness in the animal movement database

Data completeness in the animal movement database can be further improved using specific measures. The SFAO thus recommends testing the general free distribution of replacement ear tags, the introduction of price differentiation between internet and postal reports and to further extend the promotion of an advisory service within the scope of official veterinary controls. Furthermore, the rule that livestock movements occurring within a 24 hour time span not having to be reported should be abolished and seasonal stock movement reports should be introduced.

Using the animal movement database

Using the data in the animal movement database could be of interest to other services. However, the prerequisite for this is that data completeness can be guaranteed but this will only be possible if the agricultural terms in epizootic and agricultural legislation are defined and implemented uniformly. The harmonisation of terms used with regard to the coordination of holding registers, as well as other synergy possibilities is in progress by modifying the legal provisions (Ordinance on Agricultural Terminology and Ordinance on Animal Epidemics). The SFAO thus recommends that the cooperation between the Animal Movement Database and third parties for the purpose of implementing further projects, e.g. marking programmes in terms of having a broad effect, be further promoted and the reinstatement of the decommissioned project "Coordinated Animal Data Gathering", amongst other things with regard to the possibilities of using the animal data for a direct payment system and for statistical purposes.

The project team, made up of representatives from the Federal Office for Agriculture and the Federal Veterinary Office, will follow up the results of this evaluation within the scope of the strategy development Animal Movement Database 2006+ and the project team will, if necessary, implement the required adaptations.

The comment of the two affected Offices (the Federal Office for Agriculture and the Federal Veterinary Office) of Mai 18th 2004 is integrated in Chapter 6, Assessment and Recommendations, *written in italics*.