The 12th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe was held in Berlin, capital of the GDR, from 16 to 19 September 1986 at the invitation of the Government of the German Democratic Republic.

The Conference was attended by fifty-three participants from twenty-three OIE Member Countries and two International Organisations as well as twenty-two observers from the GDR and one from Australia. Dr J.P. Tillon and Professor Dr F. Horsch, Rapporteurs on Items I and II, also participated in the proceedings of the Conference.

16 September 1986

OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

In his opening address, Professor Dr H. Schwedler, Director of Veterinary Services of the GDR, welcomed the participants to the Conference. He gave a particularly warm welcome to Herr B. Lietz, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the GDR, Dr E.J. Gimeno, President of the International Committee of the OIE, Dr L. Blajan, Director General of the OIE, Dr F. Walla, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, Dr N. Belev and Dr E. Stougaard, Vice Presidents and Dr P. Gafner, Secretary General.

Dr Walla also welcomed the participants and thanked the Minister for honouring the Conference by his presence. He reminded Delegates that the first OIE Regional Conference for Europe was held twenty-five years ago and that all the Conferences had dealt with important issues relating to epizootic disease control.

Dr Blajan expressed his gratitude to the Government of the GDR for hosting and organising the Conference. He also thanked Professor Dr Schwedler for the work done under his direction in the preparatory stages of the Conference.

He then presented the Agenda Items of this Conference, stressing the particular importance to European countries of problems arising from increasingly intensive livestock production.

In this context, Dr Blajan thanked the Rapporteurs, Dr Tillon and Professor Horsch, and congratulated them on the quality of the reports they had prepared.
In regard to Item IV, he expressed the wish that in the future all countries prepare a report on the implementation of recommendations adopted by the previous Regional Conference.

Dr Gimeno, President of the International Committee of the OIE, noted that the activities of the Regional Commission for Europe were of great importance to the OIE. This was also true of the items dealt with in Berlin.

He recalled the conclusions of the last General Session and the Resolutions adopted with a view to developing Veterinary Services, and in regard to the use of veterinary drugs. Dr Gimeno suggested that views on both items be exchanged during this Conference.

Finally, Dr Gimeno expressed his firm belief that this Conference would produce valuable results for the future activities of the OIE.

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Herr Lietz, extended a warm welcome to the Conference participants on behalf of the Government of the German Democratic Republic.

He underlined the extraordinary importance which the host country attaches to the activities of the OIE and expressed his satisfaction that the GDR had been invited to organise the Conference. He saw this as a token of appreciation of the Veterinary Services of the GDR and thanked the OIE.

The Minister paid tribute to the achievements of the OIE in preventing and combating epizootics, in promoting exchanges of veterinary knowledge as well as in the area of international trade in animals and animal products.

These issues will remain important as agricultural production increases and new problems are experienced throughout the world.

The Minister invited participants to make use of the opportunities provided by the Conference to familiarise themselves with the development of agriculture in the GDR and to see for themselves the excellent contribution made by the Veterinary Services to the further development of animal husbandry.

The recent XIth Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) reported the successful development of all sectors of the economy in the GDR, including agriculture which achieved high yields particularly in the areas of meat, milk and egg production, which increased significantly. The Veterinary Services of the GDR played an important role in obtaining these encouraging results.

The major objective of the GDR is to preserve peace. The GDR made a valuable contribution to the International Year of Peace proclaimed by the UNO, by supporting the new proposals tabled by the Soviet Union and the other countries of the Warsaw Pact. Wishing every success to participants, the Minister declared the Conference open.

**Election of the Chairman and appointment of the Rapporteurs**

The participants elected Professor Dr Schwedler as Chairman of the Conference. Dr K.C. Meldrum (United Kingdom) and Dr C. Meurier (France) were nominated to draft the Final Report.
Adoption of the provisional Agenda and Timetable

The provisional Agenda and Timetable were adopted.

Item I:

HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK UNITS

Professor Dr Schwedler introduced the Rapporteur for Item I, Dr J.P. Tillon, and invited him to present his report.

Dr Tillon informed participants that nineteen papers had been received from eleven countries on Item I. Papers were presented by: Belgium, Denmark, France, FRG, GDR, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USSR.

Dr Tillon recalled the considerable progress made in animal production over the past forty years, and the economic importance of this sector. The ability to control major animal diseases has made it possible to develop animal husbandry further. Consequently, economic factors are now of ever-increasing importance. Under these changing conditions, Veterinary Services will have to reassess their role within the framework of intensive animal production.

Animal health objectives have to be geared to advanced intensive methods of animal production. As this type of production follows the same principles as industrial production, the reduction of production costs has become a particularly important objective. Disease occurrence governs profitability: the average cost of disease occurrence represents some 15% of production output. Three per cent of financial losses are due to animal deaths and 2% to the cost of medicines and veterinary intervention.

It was found that the demands concerning product quality are constantly rising. It is therefore necessary to:
- know the market and meet the demands of the consumer,
- meet the required level of hygiene standards for the products,
- meet the required rearing conditions,
- create acceptable working conditions for farmers, and
- avoid environmental hazards.

Measures should be taken to adapt animal health systems to present-day requirements, especially with regard to the production and consumption of food of animal origin. Past experience and tested systems should be used to develop advanced concepts, with personnel, technology, information and training as well as budgetary resources playing a decisive role.

Veterinary Services are of immense importance. They should provide an information network and should be consulted increasingly by producers. Adjustment is also necessary on the part of laboratories which could meet this challenge by specialisation and by studying environmental problems.

In the future, the complex hygiene problems of intensive livestock farming should be solved by adopting a comprehensive approach to health programmes. Risk factors have to be identified and then controlled or eliminated.
Health centres can be used in this field. It is advisable that contracts be drawn up to include a continuous health monitoring programme with the aim of improving animal health and product quality. Such contracts and periodic checks could lead to the establishment of an epidemiological network.

DISCUSSION

The discussion on the intensification of animal production confirmed the viewpoint that this type of production is complex and should be dealt with in its entirety. The degree of intensification also depends on how well problems are dealt with in regard to drugs, drug residues, animal protection and environmental pollution.

The veterinary and medical professions were called upon to enhance mutual cooperation, in particular for salmonellosis control.

The links between hygiene and animal resistance were considered important. Studies are necessary to determine whether increased resistance can reduce the use of vaccines and how an organism can be better adapted to the environment.

The intensification of animal production is an unavoidable process designed to meet the growing demand for inexpensive foodstuffs. It was suggested that the veterinary training should not only focus on individual animals, but also take into account problems of intensive livestock farming.

Participants made a number of suggestions on veterinary training. The majority preferred that comprehensive basic training be provided by universities and supplemented by post-graduate training or specialisation. This should place veterinarians in a position whereby they become more involved in the management of large-scale animal production units, and in particular participate in decision-making, in addition to their advisory role, as has been demonstrated by the GDR. It would be regrettable to isolate veterinarians in their task and not to associate them with decision-making.

From the veterinary viewpoint, there is no need to curb intensive livestock development; however, productivity, animal protection and public health should be treated with equal importance. Contracts between animal owners and veterinarians were viewed as being helpful in this respect.

Multifactorial disease monitoring and the establishment of health programmes were considered essential to intensive livestock farming.

17 September 1986

Item II:

MODERN DIAGNOSTIC AND CONTROL METHODS FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN INTENSIVE HUSBANDRY SYSTEMS

Professor Dr Schwedler introduced the Rapporteur, Professor Dr F. Horsch, and invited him to present his report.
Professor Dr Horsch stated that currently all countries which have developed intensive animal production systems are confronted with the health problems associated with large herds of animals.

For this husbandry method to be profitable, infectious diseases must be prevented and, should they occur, be rapidly and efficiently controlled.

On the one hand, advanced intensive livestock farming provides greater protection against disease; on the other hand, it calls for greater efforts to be made in terms of diagnostic and control methods. New methods should be developed and existing ones should be standardised through international cooperation.

In intensive husbandry systems, diagnosis and control of infectious diseases call for increased governmental decision-making authority and a regulatory basis which ensures the implementation of all measures required to control disease outbreaks.

The use of modern diagnostic techniques is a key component of disease control strategies. Depending on the type of infectious disease concerned, modern methods, such as enzyme immunoassays and radioimmunoassays, as well as conventional testing methods, should be used.

More than ever before, the standard and performance of veterinarians will be judged by the quality of their diagnosis.

In the GDR, seventy-nine technical instructions have so far been issued by the competent national authority to ensure that all laboratories have comparable technical conditions.

The future success of veterinary measures in intensive livestock farming will largely depend on the further development of these methods, the aim being to set up an internationally agreed system of prophylactic diagnosis.

Warding off the classical infectious diseases is fundamental to intensive livestock farming.

Inadequate observance of veterinary hygiene requirements and standards, when dealing with animal housing, reproduction, feeding and watering, the insulation of farm buildings, the removal and disposal of semi-liquid manure and the protection of the natural environment, are conditions conducive to an outbreak of infectious disease.

The morbidity pattern which has emerged in intensive livestock farming is increasingly the result of infectious diseases caused by opportunist germs. The risk of such infection patterns appears to grow as herds increase.

Morbidity is predominantly related to multifactorial infectious diseases of the gastrointestinal tract and the respiratory system.

Recent techniques, in particular genetic engineering, cell and enzyme-related techniques and immunogenetics, have extended knowledge of the main factors contributing to the development of epizootic and infectious diseases, especially in large herds of intensive livestock units, and they play an important role when selecting the appropriate method of control.

The classification of infectious diseases according to their control strategies, as follows, appears to be an appropriate means of facilitating disease control on a national and international scale:

1. Exotic infectious diseases which occur in epizootic form.
2. Other epizootic infectious diseases.
3. Chronic infectious diseases.

The training of junior veterinary personnel should be geared, to a far greater extent, to familiarising them with the clinical symptoms of exotic epizootics.

The range of control measures in intensive livestock units includes:
- **eradication**, requiring reliable diagnosis and sustained efforts;
- **vaccination**, used where eradication is impossible or unjustified, and supported by disease control measures;
- **non-specific control measures**, applied to multifactorial diseases, in the case of vaccine shortages or insufficiently clear aetio-pathogenesis, including, in particular, the use of chemotherapy.

**DISCUSSION**

The discussion confirmed the importance of diagnosis and control measures in industrial-type livestock units. Participants thanked the OIE for including this subject on the Agenda of the Conference.

The efficiency of disease control is dependent on the immediate dispatch of samples to the laboratory and rapid and reliable diagnosis. This requires extensive knowledge and a correct approach by animal owners to the occurrence of diseases in both large and small-scale livestock units.

In view of their competence, veterinarians play an essential role in preventing and controlling animal diseases in modern large-scale livestock units.

Participants especially underlined the need to familiarise veterinary undergraduates with the characteristics and course of major epizootics.

The exclusive use of the ELISA method entails certain problems. It should therefore be supplemented by conventional methods. Further scientific groundwork is regarded as necessary to standardise the ELISA technique on an international level.

Several speakers demanded that diagnostic norms be drawn up and included in binding national and international standards.

The FAO has prepared standard diagnostic kits for ASF; these are still available free of charge to countries on request from INIA (Instituto de Investigaciones Agrarias) in Madrid. Requests should be made to the FAO.

The AGA and the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Isotope and Radiation Applications of Atomic Energy for Food and Agricultural Development are trying to develop standards for ELISA techniques for rinderpest, with financial and expert support from the Netherlands.

It is proposed to develop ELISA techniques for other animal diseases.

An Expert Consultation will be held in Rome at the FAO Headquarters from 6 to 10 October 1986 on Biotechnology in Livestock Production and Health. The possibility of transferring and applying such technology to other countries will be discussed.
In the GDR, a State-organised, planned prophylactic diagnostic service is a mandatory part of the Veterinary Services in industrial-type livestock units. The service only uses standard diagnostic methods which are controlled by the State.

In all countries, only Government-approved methods and products should be used for the diagnosis of infectious and contagious diseases. In principle, animal owners should not be allowed to use rapid diagnostic kits.

Intensive diagnostic tests are imperative for the assessment of the health status of animals in large-scale livestock units.

Some participants requested that multifactorial infectious diseases be included in OIE List A.

Experience shows that close cooperation between the Veterinary Services of the countries involved is an essential factor in reducing animal health risks in international animal trade.

**Item III:**

**ANIMAL HEALTH STATUS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES**

Professor Dr Schwedler thanked all Member Countries who had submitted a paper and invited Delegates to take the floor.

The recent outbreak of African swine fever in the Netherlands has been eradicated. According to OIE norms, the country has been free from ASF for the past six months.

Rabies was detected in bats in Denmark. In eighty-two cases a virus was identified which is not identical to the classical virus in mammals. Finland reported one rabies-related death in man caused by the bite of a bat. Large-scale experiments have been conducted in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Austria to immunise foxes against rabies.

A porcine coronavirus (PCV) was detected in pigs in Denmark. It was not possible to differentiate between the antibodies of this virus and those of the classical TGE virus.

Norway and the United Kingdom reported findings on radioactivity.

The Delegates of France, Austria, the United Kingdom and the GDR reported on measures taken recently against classical swine fever (hog cholera).

All speakers agreed that measures against CSF must be subject to strict State control.

The foot and mouth disease situation in Italy was considered of concern by participants. Since 1 January 1986, 111 outbreaks have been recorded. Since 25 July 1986, vaccinations have been increased and the Government has imposed restrictions on animal movements. Special attention has been paid to compliance with hygiene standards in regard to means of transport and abattoirs, as well as to cleansing and disinfection.

The USSR uses FMD vaccine types A$_{22}$, O$_{194}$ and C along the European border.

Other information communicated by participants included the occurrence of scrapie and IBR in Sweden and ten outbreaks of ASF in Sardinia in 1986.

The eradication of AD and TGE was completed in the GDR in 1985. In the United Kingdom results of AD control measures were encouraging.
For most of the epizootic diseases with an economic impact, the situation in Member Countries of the Region was considered satisfactory.

**Item IV:**

**REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 11th CONFERENCE IN VIENNA**

The following fourteen countries reported on the implementation of the Vienna recommendations: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, FRG, GDR, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the USSR.

**Aujeszky's disease**

In France AD outbreaks are not controlled by stamping-out, whilst the FRG uses the stamping-out method on a selective basis. The Netherlands have developed a method of differentiating between antibodies due to field virus strains and vaccines.

**Bovine genital diseases**

Switzerland has been declared free of IBR, except in twelve fattening herds, due to the strict implementation of restrictions. Routine testing of milk samples was carried out using the ELISA method. The final decision was, however, based on serological tests.

The Chairman of the Conference stated that the OIE recommendations were very helpful for effective coordination of disease control measures in Europe.

Favourable conditions had been created for the intensification of animal production and for the implementation of veterinary measures which enhance the performance of large-scale livestock units.

**Item V:**

**OTHER MATTERS**

Professor Dr Schwedler invited participants to discuss the problem of the handling of exotic FMD virus strains in Europe.

Dr P. Stouraitis, Secretary of the FAO European Commission for the Control of FMD, described the current status of international production of FMD vaccines and proposed that criteria for handling exotic strains of the FMD virus in those European countries where such strains do not occur should be reappraised.

Dr J. Leunen, President of the OIE FMD Commission, also considered that the 1965 Recommendation should be up-dated. The FRG, France and the United Kingdom shared this view.

Professor Dr Schwedler thanked all participants and adjourned discussion until 19 September, thereby enabling them to familiarise themselves with the discussion papers.
18 September 1986

FIELD TRIP

The participants formed two groups and visited fish farms and pig and milk production units.

Later, they visited the Veterinary Institute of Potsdam county and the Castle and Gardens of Sanssouci.

19 September 1986

Item V (continued)

Professor Dr Schwedler invited participants to continue discussion on the handling of exotic FMD virus strains.

Representatives of Austria, FRG, GDR, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the FAO participated in the discussion.

The majority of speakers were in favour of revising the 1965 Recommendation of the OIE. The Chairman requested Professor A. Rojahn to draft a recommendation taking account of the need for a harmless and efficient vaccine for the south-east European buffer zone.

INFORMATION ON RESOLUTIONS XI AND XIII
ADOPTED BY THE OIE COMMITTEE IN MAY 1986

The Director General reported on the follow-up he had given to Resolution No. XI concerning the control of veterinary drugs.

He also noted the arrangements made by the working group designated by Resolution No. XIII on the organisation of Veterinary Services, with a view to preparing a report on management methods to be applied in Veterinary Service Departments.

Adoption of the proposed Recommendations on Items I and II

The Recommendations on Items I and II were adopted following amendments proposed by participants.

Adoption of Recommendation No. III “Use of vaccine containing exotic FMD virus types in the buffer zone in south-east Europe”

Following amendment, the proposed text prepared by Professor Rojahn was adopted by a majority of participants (2 votes against: Belgium and Italy).
CLOSING CEREMONY

On behalf of all participants, Dr Walla expressed his gratitude to Herr B. Lietz, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the German Democratic Republic, and to Professor Dr H. Schwedler and his assistants for the warm welcome they had given to participants. Dr Walla congratulated the Organising Committee on the success of arrangements made for the Conference. In addition, he complimented the Rapporteurs for Items I and II. Both speakers had succeeded in stimulating rich and fruitful discussion on these topical items; this had led to the adoption of Recommendations which, once applied, will prove very useful. Dr Walla emphasised the importance of the discussion on the Recommendation on exotic FMD virus strains. He also extended thanks to members of the Conference Secretariat who had contributed to the success of the Conference and to Dr Blajan and the personnel of the OIE Central Bureau. Finally, Dr Walla stated that he was sure that all participants would return to their countries with the recollection of a memorable stay in East Berlin.

Professor Dr H. Schwedler, Chairman of the Conference, expressed satisfaction with the success of the Conference and thanked all Delegates for their active participation in discussions. He warmly thanked Dr Meldrum and Dr Meurier, the English and French rapporteurs of the Final Report. After wishing participants a safe journey to their home countries, Professor Schwedler declared closed the 12th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

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Appendix

RECOMMENDATIONS

I

HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK UNITS

Considering that

Intensive livestock units supply a high proportion of food of animal origin through a system of intensive breeding and tend to organise themselves to meet the demands of consumers and processing industries;

The intensification of animal husbandry is generally accompanied by health risks, the consequences of which can be felt not only at the level of the production unit itself but throughout the processing and distribution chain;
In accordance with the role assigned to them and in spite of budgetary constraints, Veterinary Services should carry out their activities in the areas of surveillance, advice and control to the best of their ability, in recognition of the need to protect animal health and the health of consumers,

The OIE Regional Commission for Europe

Recommends that

1. Health management in intensive livestock units, which is an integral part of modern production control for the protection of public health, be considered as an objective of prime importance by Government Authorities.

2. Research on problems of intensive systems include all aspects of diagnosis, prophylaxis, monitoring and control methodology.

3. Education of veterinarians emphasise the basic achievements of biological sciences, and that post-graduate training of veterinarians be designed to take account of rapid changes in animal production techniques, with particular reference to public health, environment and animal welfare.

4. Diagnosis, the essential element in understanding the health situation and in the choice of prevention programmes, be the permanent concern of Veterinary Services and that, to this end, surveillance programmes be set up at all stages in the production chain.

5. The use of veterinary drugs be limited and that disease control be primarily based on health evaluation and correction of the principal deficiencies recorded in production systems.

6. Data obtained from commercial intensive livestock units be the subject of discussion at a future meeting of the Regional Commission.

II

MODERN DIAGNOSTIC AND CONTROL METHODS FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN INTENSIVE HUSBANDRY SYSTEMS

Considering that

In many countries there is a general trend towards intensive animal production in specialised intensive husbandry systems;

The technology of intensive animal husbandry units tends not only to boost productivity and profitability, but also to improve the working and living conditions of employees and can be beneficial to animal health;

Under the conditions of intensive animal production, a morbidity pattern has emerged which is caused by new animal health factors, with infectious diseases playing a dominant role;

Economic losses caused by animal diseases in such animal husbandry units can only be prevented through effective preventive and prophylactic measures;
The effective prevention and control of animal diseases in such units calls for highly sensitive and highly specific diagnostic techniques.

The OIE Regional Commission for Europe

Recommends that

1. The diagnosis of disease, of environment-associated disorders and of physiological conditions of animals be organised and improved on the basis of the latest findings in science and technology.

2. Maximum use be made of modern techniques such as enzyme immunoassay, radioimmunoassay, immunofluorescence, immunoelectrophoresis and electron microscopy, in the development of rapid, automated are computerised diagnosis of infectious disease. The diagnosis should provide maximum sensitivity and specificity in relation to establish reference methods.

3. Standardised methods for the above diagnostic techniques be established by the OIE Norms Commission.

4. The spread of infectious diseases from and within intensive livestock units be controlled by the principles of protective zoning, quarantine and all-in all-out systems.

III

USE OF VACCINE CONTAINING EXOTIC FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE VIRUS TYPES IN THE BUFFER ZONE IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

Considering that

Exotic foot and mouth disease poses a threat to Europe, particularly to south-east Europe;

Experience proves the need for innocuous and effective vaccines to be available in Europe,

The OIE Regional Commission for Europe

Recommends that

1. The necessary precautions be taken to ensure that Europe is protected against exotic FMD viruses, by vaccination in particular.

2. Vaccines used for this purpose in the south-east European buffer zone be produced in appropriate conditions of safety but that under no circumstances should “exotic” FMDV strains be handled on the European mainland.

3. Discussion on the possible amendment to or replacement of the Resolution adopted by the OIE in 1965 concerning the handling of exotic FMDV strains be concluded as soon as possible, thereby providing new and widely-accepted regulations.