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FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE SITUATION AND CONTROL STRATEGIES IN SOUTH AMERICA – THE CURRENT SITUATION

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The Hemispheric Foot-and-Mouth Disease Eradication Plan – PHEFA is scheduled to end in 2009 reaching the elimination of the disease in the Americas. Nevertheless, 34% of the geographical area, 32% of the herds and 15% of the cattle, in South America, are not yet recognized as FMD free with or without vaccination. Foot-and-Mouth Disease spread in South America is linked to the trade of animals, especially bovines, changing the levels of vulnerability and susceptibility of the areas where they are raised and fattened. The threat that existing FMD free areas may be infected again due to the intense trade existing between countries of different health status still exists. Historically, only FMDV types A, O and C have been registered in South America, and C type has never been diagnosed in the Andean region. National FMD eradication programs rely on the triad: vaccination, transit control and outbreak control, based on active/passive surveillance systems to monitor their progress. Since 1988 control and eradication strategies have been based on the ecosystems approach. That and the widespread use of an oil adjuvant vaccine has brought down prevalence of FMD from 825 in 1988 to 70 outbreaks in 2008, registered only in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. In several countries a well operated public/private partnership has been instrumental to achieve PHEFA goals and more recently the creation and further development of a High Surveillance Zone between countries in the MERCOSUR zone has brought new visions as to FMD control based on “across the border” cooperation. Future developments must concentrate on the improvement of disease surveillance based on a wider source of information units and strengthening of regional cooperation schemes to help countries reaching PHEFA goals.