



FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE SITUATION AND CONTROL STRATEGIES IN PARAGUAY – IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OIE/CVP STRATEGY

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The Republic of Paraguay is a landlocked country with an area of 406,752 km², divided into two major regions – Eastern and Western or Chaco – by the Paraguay River. It shares a 3,484 km long border with Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia.

The livestock sector is one of Paraguay's oldest and most important economic activities, and has substantial potential for growth and development. Its origin goes back to the discovery of the Americas in the early 16th century; beef cattle are the main source of meat production, with the availability of vast natural and cultivated prairies for grazing.

The Servicio Nacional de Lucha contra la Fiebre Aftosa (SENALFA – National FMD Control Service) was founded in 1967 and given the task of controlling FMD. In the period 1967-1981 the incidence of FMD was reduced. From 1982 to 1991, an epidemiological study of the pathogen was carried out and more effective vaccination methods were implemented, leading to the creation of a compulsory National Eradication Program in 1996, still in force today, by virtue of Law N° 808. That law also established an Inter-institutional Commission, with participation from private breeders and industry, as a support body for the Program. The active participation of these sectors in the FMD Eradication Program has been fundamental to achieving the Program's assigned goals.

The need to bring together both animal and public health activities in a single agency, in order to cover the entire food chain and improve the efficiency, reliability and coverage of public service, led to the promulgation of Law N° 2426 on July 28 2004. That law created the Servicio Nacional de Calidad y Salud Animal (SENACSA – National Animal Heath and Quality Service), an autonomous and independent agency that unified the Official Veterinary Service of Paraguay whilst integrating Public Health, the Registry of Veterinary Products and other services.

The reorganisation and upgrading of the Veterinary Service, as well as strict enforcement of the international standards laid down by the OIE and by regional agreements, in particular those of the Permanent Veterinary Committee (CVP) and Mercosur, earned the OIE's recognition of the Republic of Paraguay as an 'FMD-free zone with vaccination' in 2007. That recognition fostered confidence in international markets, and helped increase exports of animal products and by-products from 75 million dollars in 2004 to over 750 million in 2008, making the sector Paraguay's second largest in terms of exports. As a result, the veterinary service was reinforced, and living conditions, as well as food security, for Paraguayans were improved.

The measures carried out by the Veterinary Service, and its alliance with the private sector, provide Paraguay with the institutional, operational and legal resources it needs to effectively prevent, control and eradicate Foot and Mouth Disease throughout its national territory.