

IDENTIFICATION AND TRACEABILITY- THE EU'S PERSPECTIVE

Kai-Uwe Sprenger

European Commission, Brussels, Belgium

Farmers from all over the world and not just from Europe have, for centuries, been identifying their animals for different purposes, with their available tools in the best possible manner. However, the increase in trade on live animals in the context with the establishment of the EU common market required harmonised rules for the identification of animals and the registration of their holdings. The increasing integration between agriculture, food processing and wholesale/retail chain requires an integrated approach to food safety. Animal identification and traceability are therefore key elements of the EU's strategy "from stable to table" and also the OIE has given priority to animal identification systems in Chapter 4.2 of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code 2008*.

The basic operational objectives for community rules on the identification of live animals are the registration of holdings, tracing of animal movements and linking animals with their sanitary/health status, all of which are of crucial importance for control of infectious diseases.

Identification and traceability systems became an essential part of the EU's "basic infrastructure" to manage animal health. In addition to the aspect of disease control, the European Union has paid particular attention to the compatibility the different systems with the newborn electronic certification (TRACES) program, disease eradication programmes and also with other fields like animal breeding or livestock support schemes.

For the various animal species, different rules have been adopted for bovine animals (Regulation 1760/2000), sheep and goats (Regulation 21/2004), pigs (Directive 2008/71), equidae (Regulation 504/2008) and pet animals (Regulation 998/2003) sharing some key principles. The systems include several elements differentiated by species notably identifiers, databases, holding registers, passports or movement documents. Community rules foresee individual traceability for ruminants and group traceability for pigs. Equidae and pets are identified by individual passports without obligatory movement recording.

The introduction of electronic identification (EID) became a very important – and in some cases compulsory – new element of the respective legal framework. Also here attention is paid to the compatibility of the official electronic identification with farm management systems in order to allow additional benefits for animal keepers

Key words: EU-legislation – Identification of animals – Traceability – Electronic identification.
