

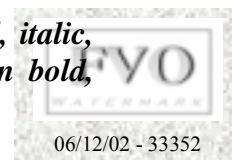


EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/8654/2002 – MR final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN UNITED KINGDOM
FROM 2 – 13 SEPTEMBER 2002
IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE OPERATION OF CONTROLS OVER THE
TRACEABILITY OF BEEF AND BEEF PRODUCTS

Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected in bold, italic, type. Clarifications provided by the UK Authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic, type, to the relevant part of the report.



06/12/02 - 33352

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. REPORT SUMMARY	4
2. LEGISLATION APPLICABLE TO THE MISSION	5
3. INTRODUCTION	7
4. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION.....	7
5. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION	8
6. MISSION OUTCOME	8
6.1. Legislation	8
6.2. Competent Authorities' controls	9
6.3. Holding registration and animal identification	12
6.4. Tracing of bovine animal movements	13
6.5. Tracing of beef and beef products within the food processing chain	15
6.6. Tracing of beef and beef products through the retail distribution, storage and sale chain	17
6.7. Labelling	17
6.8. Additional findings related to the production of beef and minced beef	18
7. FINAL MEETING.....	20
8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	20
8.1. To the competent authorities of United Kingdom	20
8.2. To the Commission Services	21
ADDENDUM	21

ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

BCMS	British Cattle Movement Service
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
CTS	Cattle Tracing System
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<i>FSA</i>	<i>Food Standards Agency</i>
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
GB	Great Britain
OVS	Official Veterinary Surgeon
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
UK	United Kingdom

1. REPORT SUMMARY

The mission was undertaken as part of a series of missions in Member States in order to evaluate the operation of official controls over the traceability of beef and beef products from the retail outlet to the farm of origin. The whole chain from farm till retail outlet was evaluated with particular attention to the following areas: production and movement of cattle, slaughtering, cutting, mincing, storage and distribution of beef and minced beef. The mission did not seek to address issues relating specifically to BSE controls, including those for establishments involved in the Date Based Export Scheme (DBES).

With regard to the specific requirements for labelling, the mission team noted that the UK authorities have taken a different position to that of the Commission in respect of certain parts of the EU legislation concerning labelling of beef and minced beef. With regard to Council Directive 94/65/EC, no improvements had taken place since the previous FVO mission carried out in January 2001.

Different authorities are involved in the controls over animal identification, traceability and labelling of beef and minced beef. In numerous cases, the levels of control and supervision, training and number of staff were not satisfactory.

No major problems were identified in cattle identification and herd registration. Dealers were not registered/approved as foreseen in Council Directive 64/432/EEC¹. In relation to movement of cattle, the team identified different weaknesses in the database (GB) as well as delays in notifications of bovine movements onto and off holdings, births and deaths (Northern Ireland and GB). This could jeopardise the reliability and accuracy of the system.

Some irregularities were found on farms and slaughterhouses in relation to the use of cattle passports.

*Traceability systems were in place in most of the establishments visited. The systems were generally satisfactory in slaughterhouses. In deboning halls, deficiencies were noted. In cutting plants, none of the systems seen were able to meet **all** the requirements of EU legislation.*

*Compulsory labelling was not always applied correctly at production and retail level. Voluntary labelling was seen, which was not approved by the competent authority, or was not approved in accordance with **all** the requirements of Article 16 of Regulation (EC) 1760/2000.*

The mission team also identified deficiencies in the application of Council Directives 64/433/EEC, 93/119/EC and 94/65/EC and, in particular, the veterinary

¹ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities stated that: “in GB, owners or a person in charge of bovine animals are required to register any holding on which bovine animals are kept with the Divisional Veterinary Officer under Regulation 4 of The Bovine Animals (Records, Identification and Movements) Order 1995 made under the Animal Health Act 1981.”, and that: “this registration of holdings and those in charge of bovine animals meets the requirements of Article 13 of 64/432 for those who deal directly in cattle.”, and that “The purchaser-by-proxy at the market does not appear to have the responsibilities for the animals envisaged by either 64/432 in animal health areas, or as by 1760/2000 in identification and registration areas.”*

supervision. Serious shortcomings were found in the veterinary supervision of one cutting plant receiving meat from establishments approved according to Article 10 of Directive 64/433/EEC, but also from establishments permanently derogated according to Article 4 of the same Directive. Urgent action was requested by the UK authorities to address these problems.

2. LEGISLATION APPLICABLE TO THE MISSION

Elements of the following Community legislation were reviewed during the mission:

- Council Directive 64/432/EEC of 26 June 1964 on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine²
- Council Directive 64/433/EEC of 26 June 1964 on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat³,
- Council Directive 77/99/EEC on health problems affecting the production and marketing of meat products and certain other products of animal origin⁴,
- Council Directive 89/662/EEC of 11 December 1989 concerning veterinary checks in intra-community trade with a view to the completion of the single market⁵,
- Council Directive 90/425/EEC of 26 June 1990 concerning veterinary and zootechnical checks applicable in intra-community trade in certain live animals and products with a view to the completion of the internal market⁶,
- Council Directive 92/102/EEC of 27 November 1992 on the identification and registration of animals⁷,
- Council Directive 93/43/EEC of 14 June 1993 on the hygiene of foodstuffs⁸,
- Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing⁹,
- Council Directive 94/65/EC of 14 December 1994 laying down the requirements for the production and placing on the market of minced meat and meat preparations¹⁰,
- Council Directive 96/93/EC of 17 December 1996 on the certification of animals and animal products¹¹,

² OJ No P 121, 29.07.1964, p. 1977-2012

³ OJ No L 121, 29/07/1964, p. 2012

⁴ OJ No L 26v. 31/01/1977, S.85

⁵ OJ No L 395, 30/12/1989, p. 13-22

⁶ OJ No L 224, 19/08/1990, p. 29-41

⁷ OJ No L 355, 05/12/1992, p. 32-36

⁸ OJ No L 175, 19/07/1993, p. 1-11

⁹ OJ L 340, 31/12/1993, p. 21

¹⁰ OJ No L 368, 31/12/1994, p. 10-31

- Council Directive 97/78/EC of 18 December 1997 laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on products entering the Community from third countries¹²,
- Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 March 2000 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs¹³,
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 2629/97 of 29 December 1997 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 as regards eartags, holding registers and passports in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals¹⁴,
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 2630/97 of 29 December 1997 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 as regards the minimum level of controls to be carried out in the framework of the system of identification and registration of bovine animals¹⁵,
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98 of 27 February 1998 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 as regards the application of minimum administrative sanctions in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals¹⁶,
- Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97¹⁷,
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 1825/2000 of 25 August 2000 laying down detailed rules for the application of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the labelling of beef and beef products¹⁸,
- Commission Decision 1999/696/EC of 11 October 1999 recognising the fully operational character of the database of Northern Ireland for bovine animals¹⁹,
- Commission Decision 98/139/EC of 4 February 1998 laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in the Member States²⁰.

¹¹ OJ No L 013, 16/01/1997, p. 28-30

¹² OJ No L 024, 30/01/1998, p. 9-30

¹³ OJ No L 109, 06/05/2000, p. 29-42

¹⁴ OJ No L 354, 30/12/1997, p. 19-22

¹⁵ OJ No L 354, 30/12/1997, p. 23-24

¹⁶ OJ No L 60, 28/02/1998, p. 78-79

¹⁷ OJ No L 204, 11/08/2000, p. 1

¹⁸ OJ No L 216, 26/08/2000, p.8

¹⁹ OJ No L 275, 26/10/1999, p 32

²⁰ OJ No L 038, 12/02/1998, p. 10

3. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in United Kingdom from 2 - 13 September 2002. The mission team comprised 4 inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO).

It formed part of a series of missions to all Member States, which had been announced in the FVO mission programme for 2002. It should be noted that the mission did not specifically address issues relating to BSE controls, including those relating to establishments involved in the Date Based Export Scheme (DBES), as these have been considered by other missions undertaken by the Food and Veterinary Office.

The inspection team, which was divided into two sub-teams, was accompanied during the mission by representatives from the central or regional competent authorities.

An opening meeting was held on 2 September 2002 with the central competent authority, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), as well as representatives from the different regional departments. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the mission were confirmed by the inspection team, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission requested.

A closing meeting was held on 13 September 2002, at which the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented to the national authorities.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The mission was undertaken in order to evaluate the operation of official controls over the traceability of beef and beef products from the retail outlet to the farm of origin. In addition, the implementation of Community legislation on the labelling of beef and beef products was evaluated. Particular attention was paid to the following areas:

- (1) Farm registration and animal identification
- (2) Animal movements
- (3) Slaughter, cutting, storage and distribution chain
- (4) Retail distribution, storage and sale chain
- (5) Labelling of beef and beef products

In pursuit of these objectives, the following sites were visited:

Competent authority visits			Comments
Competent authority	Central	1	DEFRA, (incl. BCMS)
	Regional	4	
	Local	17	
OTHER SITES VISITED			
Holdings		3	
Cattle markets		1	
Livestock dealer		1	
Slaughterhouses		4	
Cutting premises		9	8 included production of minced meat
Cold stores		1	
Distribution centres		1	
Retail outlets		9	

5. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation, and in particular, the relevant provisions of the legislation given in Section 2 of this report.

6. MISSION OUTCOME

Note to reader: Under each of the following key point headings, the conclusions (italic type) of the inspection team are given first, followed by the main findings (normal type) that led to these conclusions.

6.1. Legislation

Conclusion

The mission team identified some differences between British legislation and the EU legislation covered by this mission.

With regard to deficiencies in the operation of Council Directive 94/65/EC, no improvements had taken place since the previous FVO mission in January 2001.

Findings

Regulations (EC) 1760/2000 and 1825/2000 are directly applicable in United Kingdom law. There are 4 separate Regulations for beef labelling in respect of the United Kingdom (for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

- For England: The Beef Labelling (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2000 – Statutory Instrument 2000 No. 3047.

- For Scotland: the Beef Labelling (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 – Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 252.
- For Wales: the Beef Labelling (Enforcement) (Wales) Regulations 2001 – Statutory Instrument 2001 No. W.88.
- For Northern Ireland: the Beef Labelling (Enforcement) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2001 – Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 271.

Although delegates at the Beef Management Committee were informed of the Commission's position concerning compulsory labelling, and explanatory notes were sent by DG AGRI to the UK authorities, UK authorities have taken a different position to that of the Commission in some issues:

- use of certain abbreviations e.g. “SL” instead of slaughtered;
- use of ISO codes for names of Member States and in particular the use of “UK”;
- individual packages of pre-wrapped meat are not required to be labelled if they are grouped together and sold in a carton, which bears the compulsory information;
- *according to the Beef Labelling Guide (Section B, 10, 2), for a slaughterhouse it is possible to use a reference code which is related to the individual animal concerned or to a group of animals or carcasses or quarters;*
- use of “minced” instead of “prepared” for minced beef;
- minced beef may originate from more than one country of slaughter;

Notification of birth of bovine animals to the competent authority may be made within a period of 27 days of the event occurring, whilst Article 7 of Regulation (EC) 1760/2000 allows a maximum of 7 days.

The competent authority recognised that the requirement in Council Directive 64/433/EEC to provide special storage areas in cutting plants approved under Article 10 of the Directive, for meat produced in permanently derogated establishments, had not been transposed into national legislation.

In relation to Council Directive 94/65/EC, the mission team confirmed the findings of the mission carried out in January 2001. The report of this mission is available under reference number: DG(SANCO)/3175/2001 – MR – final on the DG (Health and Consumer Protection) internet site at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg24/>. The CA could not demonstrate that the guarantees originally offered had been put in place.

6.2. Competent Authorities' controls

Conclusion

There are different authorities involved in controls over animal identification, traceability and labelling of beef and minced beef.

Although the various authorities carried out their controls of traceability and labelling at different stages of production and sale, the whole production chain could not be considered as fully under control.

The co-ordination between the different authorities involved was found to be insufficient. Local authorities act independently from the central authorities.

***In the case of some local authorities** training was inadequate and there was a shortage of staff to carry out the required controls.*

The supervision and control of the traceability of beef and minced beef, and the use of correct labelling was insufficient.

***Not all** the requirements of Article 16 of Regulation (EC) 1760/2000 are fulfilled for approved voluntary labelling system.*

Findings

The Beef Labelling (Enforcement) Regulations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland allow enforcement of Regulations (EC) 1760/2000 and 1825/2000.

For England, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is designated as the CA for the labelling of beef and beef products. These Regulations are enforced and executed in abattoirs, cutting plants and wholesalers by the relevant enforcement authority, and by any authorised officer appointed for that purpose by the Secretary of State. In England the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is authorised by the Secretary of State in respect of abattoirs and cutting plants approved by the **Food Standards Agency (FSA)**. In non-**FSA** approved cutting plants, wholesale and catering butchers, and at retail level, Local Authorities are responsible.

There are 387 Local Authorities in England.

For Scotland, the Scottish Ministers are designated as the CA for the labelling of beef and beef products. These Regulations are enforced and executed by the Scottish Ministers as respects abattoirs, cutting plants approved by the **FSA**. At non-**FSA** approved cutting plants, wholesale and catering butchers, and at retail level, Local Authorities are responsible.

There are 32 Local Authorities in Scotland.

For Wales, the National Assembly for Wales is designated as the CA for the labelling of beef and beef products. In Wales, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is authorised by the Secretary of State for slaughterhouses and cutting plants approved by the **FSA**. At non-**FSA** approved cutting plants, wholesale and catering butchers, and at retail level, Local Authorities are responsible.

There are 22 Local Authorities in Wales.

For Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is designated as the CA for the labelling of beef and beef products. The enforcement authorities for the enforcement and execution of these Regulations are the Local Authorities, DARD or any Local Authority and DARD acting jointly.

There are 26 Local Authorities in Northern Ireland.

In a number of instances, it was evident that elements of the production chain were not under full control:

- cold stores without repacking activities; and
- EC approved cutting plants with retail outlets on the same site

It was stated by the CA in Wales that some Local Authorities will not start controls of traceability and labelling in non EC approved cutting plants and retail outlets before October 2002 due to lack of staff and training.

Each Competent Authority in the UK has issued guidance containing information about compulsory labelling, and the procedure to be followed for voluntary labelling, for all officials, local and regional authorities, establishments and the public. The guides are also available on each Department's internet website.

Beef labelling does not come within the scope of veterinary checks, so Official Veterinary Surgeons at border inspection posts have no instructions to carry out such checks. Port Health Authorities are designated enforcement authorities for labelling of beef and beef products. They are responsible for ensuring that third country imports are labelled at the point of entry in accordance with EU regulations.

Guidelines are also available to officials for controls on animal identification.

The team found a number of operational deficiencies at farm²¹, production establishment and retail level, which had mostly not been detected by the responsible authority.

Forms used for carrying out the checks in *Scotland* are not updated - a requirement for compulsory labelling, which entered into force on 1 January 2002, was not included - and nothing is foreseen for exercises to correlate incoming and outgoing meat quantities.

In several establishments, the mission team found that the result of inspections as recorded by CA did not reflect the actual situation.

Voluntary labelling must be approved and verified by each Competent Authority in the UK under the Beef Labelling Scheme. An independent verifier, recognised by the Competent Authorities, has to inspect the traceability system to ensure that the labelling information is accurate and, in case of compliance, a designated certification body grants a certificate of conformity.

The specifications for approval of the voluntary labelling did not always include:

- the measures to be taken to ensure the accuracy of the information;
- the control system which will be applied at all stages of production and sale, including the controls to be carried out an independent body;

²¹ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities accepted that they cannot detect every incidence of non-compliance at farm level at all times. But they outlined that: "they offer full guidance to keepers on cattle identification and tracing regulations." They added that: "Enforcement authorities are active in correcting non-compliance whenever it is found."*

- the measures to be taken in relation to any member of an organisation which fails to comply with the specifications.

One independent control body visited was unable to provide the specification approved by the Competent Authority. A risk analysis, which should be the basis for the on-the-spot checks laid down in Article 7 of Regulation (EC) 1825/2000, was not in place.

In relation to cattle markets, the supervision of the market operators was insufficient. *The mission team noted that the official from the local authorities in charge of the controls was not always informed of the deficiencies detected by the operator of the market, and therefore not in a position to properly enforce the legislation.*

6.3. Holding registration and animal identification

Conclusion

Two databases are used, one in Northern Ireland and one in Great Britain. All cattle holdings and bovine animals are registered and given a unique registration/identification number in the respective database. Few irregularities were found concerning holding registration and animal identification.

Findings

Complementary information on holding registration and animal identification can be found in previous FVO reports available on the DG SANCO web site, under the following reference numbers:

- Great Britain: DG(SANCO)8570/2002, DG(SANCO)3266/2001, and DG(SANCO)1126/2000.
- Northern Ireland: DG(SANCO)8575/2002, DG(SANCO)3340/2001, and DG(SANCO)1279/2000.

Commission Decision 1999/696/EC recognises the fully operational character of the database of Northern Ireland for bovine animals.

In Great Britain, the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS), part of DEFRA, is responsible for technical service, data loading and management of the national cattle identification and tracing database, the Cattle Tracing System (CTS). The British database is not yet recognised as fully operational by a Commission Decision.

The databases of Northern Ireland and Great Britain ***are not compatible***.

All cattle holdings are identified by a unique numeric code, the County/Parish/Holding number, which is allocated by the local Agricultural Office and recorded in the database. It was noted that in UK, not all dealers are registered, approved and issued with an approval number by the CA, as required by Article 13 of Council Directive 64/432/EEC²².

²² See footnote 1

Each bovine animal is identified with two eartags, bearing identification numbers made up of a code identifying the herd of birth (herd mark), and an animal number within the herd. It was explained that where animals have lost eartags they must be re-tagged with identical tags. This does not have to be recorded in the herd register or database²³.

On the holdings visited (farms, market, slaughterhouse) animals were correctly identified. At slaughterhouses, procedures were seen in place for dealing with animals arriving without correct identification. However, it was noticed that:

- at one farm, a few young steers had lost one eartag without this being noticed by the keeper,
- in one slaughterhouse there were no animal identification checks on live animals, either by the operator or by the OVS whilst carrying out ante mortem inspection.

Concerning the requirements for herd registers, some deficiencies were noted during visits:

- at one farm, the herd register was not up-to-date and the keeper still held passports of animals which were hired to other farmers,
- at another farm, the information provided in the herd register did not match the number of passports, as the farmer was still in possession of a passport for an animal that had left the holding 3 years ago,
- in several cases, the breeds recorded in the herd register differed from those on the passport,
- in several cases, the information provided on the keeper of origin/destination of animals was not recorded as laid down in Article 8 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 2629/97.

6.4. Tracing of bovine animal movements

Conclusion

The identification system does not provide the necessary information to allow the tracing of animal movements satisfactorily.

Absences of notification, or delays in the notification, of events were noted, which result in “floating animals”.

The operation of the database in Great Britain is not such as to ensure proper implementation of legal requirements nor to detect potentially illegal activities.

Findings

²³ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities noted that “While only changes of identity have to be recorded on the on-farm herd register (for animals born before 1 January 1998), the purchase of replacement ear tags for animals is always recorded as such on the Ear Tag Allocation System (ETAS).”*

Complementary information on cattle movements can be found in the FVO reports given in point 6.3.

As the database of Northern Ireland is recognised as fully operational, Northern Ireland makes use of the derogation laid down in Article 6.3 of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000. Thus, cattle passports are not used for animal movements within Northern Ireland. This is not the case in Great Britain, where passports are still required.

According to national legislation, animal movements to and from holdings have to be reported to the database within a fixed period of three days, whilst this period can be seven days for notification of deaths, and twenty-seven days for notification of births. This can be done electronically by using either the CTS online web site, or by e-mail, or in writing by using the movement cards provided in the cattle passports²⁴.

The following observations were made during the mission:

- In two farms visited in Wales, movements of animals were not always accompanied by passports, and even not notified to the database. As a result, the figures from the herd register, passports and animals present did not match.
- At the request of the mission team, the CTS provided the following statistics for notifications entered in July/August 2002:
 - about 26 % of births were reported within seven days, and 10 % were notified later than twenty-seven days;
 - about 50 % of the movements were reported later than three days and, of these, about 18 % were reported later more than seven days.
- Statistics for movement anomalies for the first half of 2002 were provided:
 - 1 % (77.866 animals) of the total “off” notifications during this period were not subsequently followed by an “on” notification. However, the number of floating animals during the period from 1999 to September 2002 was recorded as 2% of the total number of live animals in the database;
 - 0,08% (5886 animals) of cattle registering movements in this period had a gap of more than 30 days between an “off” movement and the next “on” movement.

²⁴ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities outlined that: “keepers can apply for passports for cattle born on their holding via CTS On-line or SIS email, or by using the pre-printed passport application form (PPAF). Calves that have moved from the holding of birth on the temporary calf passport (the PPAF fulfils this purpose) are issued with passports when the PPAF is sent to BCMS. Movements can be reported by using CTS On-line, SIS email or movement card, telephone or letter. Deaths must be reported using the passport, PPAF, the Certificate of CTS Registration or in the case of home-bred animals using CTS On-line.”*

- Since 1999 to the present day 0,22% (9050 animals) of “off” movements to slaughterhouses were found with no subsequent “on” movement or death reported.
- In several cases, animals which left a cattle market in April 2002 were slaughtered in August 2002 without being registered in a holding during the intervening period.
- A first analysis of cattle identification inspections for 2002 shows that 22 % of animals were not found in farm records²⁵.
- It was explained that in the database there is no automatic system in place to detect animals with an “off” notification, which is not followed by an “on” notification within the legal deadline. If there are several weeks/months between an “off” and an “on” notification, this irregularity will not be flagged. As a consequence, a significant number of “floating animals” exists in the database, and the CA cannot promptly take measures to correct deficiencies²⁶.
- A significant number of anomalies detected in the database have not been subject to further investigation by the CA. Moreover, when an anomaly is detected, an administrative procedure updates the database without further investigation at farm level²⁷.
- It is acceptable for dealers to notify movements on and off farms, rather than the keeper of the animals. Therefore, cross-checking of notifications to the database of such movements could not be performed, as both “on” and “off” notifications came from the same source²⁸.

6.5. Tracing of beef and beef products within the food processing chain

Conclusion

Most of the establishments visited had developed traceability systems.

At slaughterhouse level, no major problems in relation to traceability were detected, although identity checks were not always performed on live animals.

²⁵ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities stated that: “Only 871 inspection reports had been analysed. The inspection programme this year should cover about 13,000 holdings.”*

²⁶ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities stated that: “It would be more accurate to observe that the UK authorities do not give first priority to solving these anomalies, rather than that they cannot.”*

²⁷ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities stated that: “The inferred movements program works within strictly delineated parameters and any such movements are identified on CTS. It allows only certain movement patterns to be inferred.”*

²⁸ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities stated that: “The responsibility for reporting movements correctly to the database lies with the keeper. He may do this through a third party without reference to BCMS; that does not negate his responsibility.”*

In cutting plants, mincing plants and some deboning halls, the traceability systems developed did not ensure a correlation between incoming and outgoing carcasses and/or meat and could not guarantee traceability.

Findings

At slaughterhouse level, the identity of animals was checked at the ante mortem inspection. However, in one slaughterhouse, the identity check was only carried out after stunning, and one animal with wrong documentation had been slaughtered.

In some slaughterhouses visited, there was a significant interval between the place where the eartags were removed, and that where the reference number identifying the carcasses was added²⁹.

At cutting/minced meat plants, various traceability systems were in place. Some were very basic, and others very sophisticated. Deficiencies were noted in all the systems audited, including:

- The registration of incoming and outgoing meat, and the link between them, was often deficient. In one establishment, where registration allowed checks between incoming and outgoing meat, in two cases it was found that more meat was being produced, than was being received.
- The size of a batch frequently exceeded one day's production.
- In several cutting plants, different batches of meat produced at the same time in the same room, but on different lines, were not clearly marked with the characteristics of each individual batch.
- In some establishments, separation between batches of incoming meat was insufficient. Thus in one establishment, meat from different batches was put in one bin with only a sheet of paper and a label for separation of the batches. Moreover, in the same establishment, meat of different origin/slaughterhouses was packed in the same boxes.
- Unlabelled beef was found in different cutting plants,
- Own checks at the reception of products were mostly insufficient and incorrect labelling was often not detected.
- In some establishments producing minced meat, the minced meat came from 2 different countries of slaughter.
- In one establishment producing minced meat, it was found that minced meat production lines were not able to match with the quantities registered. ***For example, for one batch, a quantity produced, the production lines and the***

²⁹ *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities stated that: "UK legislation requires ears to be removed prior to inspection. The MHS ensures that correlated inspection is carried out in accordance with the Fresh Meat Regulations."*

duration of the process were registered. When trying to compare the capacity of production of production lines concerned during the registered period with the quantity registered, there was a significant difference (more than 200 kg). It was impossible to obtain a satisfactory explanation as to the reasons for this difference.

- Commercial documents were not always issued, or did not always contain all the required information, e.g. absence of month and year of freezing for frozen meat, absence of approval number of establishment of dispatch.

6.6. Tracing of beef and beef products through the retail distribution, storage and sale chain

Conclusion

In most cases beef and minced beef could not be traced back from the retail end of the production chain with certainty to the animal or group of animals.

Findings

The mission team requested the CCA to trace 15 samples of beef and minced beef, collected at retail outlets, back to the animal or group of animals, from which they originated, and to provide the necessary documentation to confirm the information given on the labels.

The origin could in most cases not be satisfactorily confirmed. This was mainly due to the absence of proper identification of the beef and minced beef, use of reference codes which did not allow proper trace-back, the absence of supporting documentation during transport and lack of proper registration of incoming and outgoing products and the link between them.

6.7. Labelling

Conclusion

Compulsory requirements for labelling of fresh meat (Council Directive 64/433/EEC) and minced meat (Council Directive 94/65/EC) were not always respected. Compulsory information was not always, or only partially, indicated on the labels of beef and minced beef. Voluntary labelling was applied at certain establishments and retail outlets without being approved.

Findings

Requirements for the labelling of fresh meat, as laid down in Council Directive 64/433/EEC, were not always met within the food processing chain:

- month and year of freezing was not always indicated on frozen meat.

Not all compulsory requirements for labelling of minced beef, as laid down in Council Directive 94/65/EC, were met within the food processing chain:

- the labels on minced beef ***did not always indicate*** “collagen:meat protein ratio under ...” and “percentage of fat under...”.

The following compulsory information was not always indicated on the labels of beef through the production chain, retail distribution, storage and sale chain:

- reference code: there was no proper reference code on most of the labels checked by the inspection team,
- the origin of the meat (country of birth, fattening and slaughtering),
- the Member State and approval number where animals were slaughtered,
- the Member State and approval number(s) where beef was cut.
- for imported meat, the minimum requirement of “origin non-EU” and the name of the third country of slaughtering.

Voluntary information entered on the label could not always be explained. Examples of voluntary labelling were found on beef, which had not been approved by the competent authority.

The following compulsory information was not always recorded on the labels of minced beef through the production chain, retail distribution, storage and sale chain:

- reference code: there was no proper reference code on most of the labels checked by the inspection team,
- the Member State where animals were slaughtered,
- the Member State where minced beef was prepared. If this information was recorded on the label, “minced” was often used instead of “prepared”,
- use-by-date; some examples were found with “best-before-date” instead of “use-by-date”.

Minced beef produced for the national market in EU approved cutting plants visited were, in most cases, not labelled as required by Regulation (EC) 1760/2000.

Mixed minced meat (51% beef/49% pork) was found in a shop without compulsory information on the packages. The CA stated that the guidance does not reflect the requirements for labelling of mixed minced meat.

6.8. Additional findings related to the production of beef and minced beef

6.8.1. Veterinary supervision in fresh meat establishments

Conclusion

The level of veterinary supervision, and the veterinary supervision in some approved establishments over the use of health marks, the control on incoming and outgoing products and hygiene was insufficient. Serious shortcomings in supervision were noted in one approved cutting plant.

Findings

At one cutting plant (approved under Article 10, Council Directive 64/433/EEC) visited, evidence was found that no veterinary supervision was present whilst production took place during weekends and bank holidays. The level of veterinary supervision in this cutting plant did not meet the requirements of the Directive.

Hygiene standards were not always respected in the establishments visited. Thus, in one low throughput slaughterhouse, rusty equipment and hanging rails were present in the slaughter area and chiller, uncleaned saws were present in the chiller and carcasses of sheep were in direct contact with the wall. In another cutting plant, some crates of fresh meat were placed directly on the floor.

In one cutting plant, the health marks on individual packages of vacuum meat were easy to remove and, therefore, available for re-use.

In one cutting plant, a “temporary” solution for storage of frozen products in trailers was permanently in use.

In one slaughterhouse, the inspection team noted that *some elements of the* stunning of cattle *appeared* unsatisfactory, and not carried out in accordance with the requirements of Council Directive 93/119/EC. *The corneal reflex was present in one animal checked*³⁰.

The commercial documents required in Council Directives 64/433/EC and 94/65/EC, and import documents under Council Directive 97/78/EC, were often not present.

In one EU approved cutting plant receiving meat from establishments approved according to Article 10 of Directive 64/433/EEC and also from permanently derogated establishments according to Article 4 of the same Directive, serious shortcomings in veterinary supervision were identified³¹:

- No separation in chilling room between the two types of meat described above;
- Presence of non-health marked offals in the chilling room;
- Acceptance of quarters of bovine carcasses in the deboning hall without labelling;

³⁰ *In their response to the draft report, the UK authorities questioned whether the corneal reflex detected in one animal was due to inadequate stunning.*

³¹ These issues were raised with the UK authorities in a letter, dated 18.9.02. In their reply, dated 26.9.02, the following clarifications were offered:

- Non-transposition of the relevant part of Council Directive 64/433/EEC was acknowledged. The FSA was considering the action required.
- It was confirmed that the non-health marked tongues had been traced back to the plant of origin, and had met the health marking requirements when they arrived in the premises
- The issues of the labelling, or absence thereof, was to be investigated by the Rural Payments Agency during a site visit on 30.9.02
- The official veterinarian will ensure that suitable records are kept in the future

- Presence of beef identified by voluntary labelling, which had not been approved by the competent authority;
- Absence of proper registration of incoming and outgoing meat. It could not be demonstrated that the requirements of Annex I, Chapter IX, para 44, Council Directive 64/433/EEC were fulfilled;
- Commercial documents for outgoing meat did not indicate the difference between meat produced under the EU regime, and under the national regime.

6.8.2. *Veterinary supervision over the production of minced meat*

Conclusion

*The veterinary supervision over the production of minced meat was insufficient, mainly **in respect of EU approved cutting plants**.*

Findings

When production of minced meat to be placed on the national market takes place in EU approved cutting plants, no approval is granted for its production ***and it was not always possible to demonstrate that this activity was registered.***

7. FINAL MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 13 September 2002 with the Competent Authorities. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. During the final meeting of the visit, the inspection team requested that urgent corrective action be undertaken in one cutting plant where serious shortcomings in veterinary supervision were identified. A letter confirming this request was sent by the FVO to the UK authorities on 18 September 2002.

The representatives of the CA took note of the main findings and conclusions and offered to submit their comments and information on action taken, or to be taken, to correct deficiencies identified.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. To the competent authorities of United Kingdom

- 8.1.1. To take urgent action in one EU approved cutting plant where serious failures in veterinary supervision were noted³².
- 8.1.2. To address the shortcomings found in the transposition and implementation of EU legislation, including those relating to

³² See footnote 31

Council Directive 94/65/EC which were previously identified during the FVO mission (SANCO/3175/2001) in January 2001.

- 8.1.3. To improve official supervision in approved establishments, and in particular in cutting plants approved under Article 10 of Council Directive 64/433/EEC.
- 8.1.4. To improve the control and supervision of the tracing of beef and beef products within the food processing chain and throughout the retail distribution, storage and sale chain.
- 8.1.5. To improve the operation of the central database for bovine animals and take the necessary measures to improve its reliability and accuracy.
- 8.1.6. To take the necessary action to address the remaining deficiencies identified during this mission, as given in this report.

An action plan, indicating the actions taken or planned to address the above conclusions and recommendations of this report, and including a timetable for the completion, should be submitted to the Commission services within one month of receiving the final report.

8.2. To the Commission Services

- 8.2.1. To monitor closely the actions taken by the UK competent authorities to address the above conclusions and recommendations. If their response is found to be unsatisfactory, to consider further action in order to ensure consumer information and health protection.

ADDENDUM

The UK authorities provided a detailed response to the draft report on 6 November 2002. Where appropriate, their comments have been reflected in the final report.

Their reply also indicated certain preliminary actions taken by the UK authorities in response to the mission.