

MINISTERU GHALL-AMBJENT, L IZVILUPP SOSTENIBBLI, U TIBDIL
FIL-KLIMA

SEGRETARJAT PARLAMENTARI GHALL-BIEDJA, SAJD U DRITTIJET TAL-
ANNIMALI

*Divizioni għar-Regolazzjoni
Veterinarja u Saħħa tal-Pjanti*
Direttorat tar-Regolazzjoni Veterinarja



MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
CLIMATE CHANGE

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND ANIMAL
RIGHTS

*Veterinary and Phytosanitary
Regulation Division*
Veterinary Regulation Directorate

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE SINGLE INTEGRATED MULTIANNUAL NATIONAL CONTROL PLAN

Executive Summary 2017

1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS

- RESULTS OF MAIN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Directorate has set high level strategic objectives, in particular to ensure that there is a comprehensive and integrated system of official controls from 'farm to fork' which contributes to protecting public and animal health and safeguarding consumer interests, to promote the welfare of animals and protect the interests of the wider economy environment and society by preventing, controlling and eradicating disease, and to encourage international trade.

The Directorate moved towards achieving these high level strategic objectives **by setting operational objectives**

- **Strategic:**

1) Reduction of food borne illness by monitoring and reduction the incidence of *Salmonella* sp in Poultry flocks.

- **Broiler Flocks**

The prevalence of targeted serovars in broiler flocks is 1.2 %. The prevalence for 2016 is just above the EU target. The competent authority has issued a number of warning letters including the corrective action required by the FBO following biosecurity inspections.

- **Layer Flocks**

The prevalence of targeted serovars in layer flocks is 1.6 %. Malta has achieved the EU target which is to have an annual percentage of flocks of layer flocks.

These high strategic targets have been partially met

2) Prevention, Controls and disease eradication

Laboratory analyses of samples have been carried out according to the exigencies of the monitoring/control and eradication for a number of animal diseases as required by the Animal Health Unit. In 2017 TBC status was suspended in a Farm as in November cultural analysis confirmed presence of Mycobacterium Bovis in samples slaughtered after positivity was detected at skin test. No new diseases have been detected; some have shown that there is a reduction in the number of positive findings. . There has been a revision in the frequency and sampling protocol of the EBL programme since the vast majority of the herds are now acquired EBL – free status. Most farms will be tested three times a year through bulk milk testing and once a year individual sera ELISA testing

This high strategic target has been partially met

Operational

1) To set up official control programmes on establishments requiring approval from the Veterinary Regulation Directorate, based on a risk categorisation of these establishments and with appropriate frequency.

The risk assessment has been followed up and it reduced burden on all stakeholders involved

The administrative objective target has been met.

2) To improve controls at border and in particular on transit and transshipments

A total of 640 consignments for total of 2231 containers were in transshipments and were checked by the Section

The administrative objective target has been met.

3) Reduction of FBO non compliances

In general and from the tables present in the dedicated section of the report it is evident that the number of enforcement actions have diminished. The efforts of providing good examples to the operators have given good results

The objective has been met

4) To verify that Official Controls are consistent and meet the target of 882/2004

Internal audits have been performed on the basis of a risk assessment and the results have been used to highlight the good functioning of the system and to improve any shortcoming that have been detected; furthermore, Directorate F carried out a mission to evaluate the status of internal audits and no major shortcoming was detected

The objective has been met

5) To improve further collaboration with other competent authorities and especially with the Environmental Health Directorate.

Joint inspections has been performed to prevent fraudulent or illegal activities including monitoring of illegally imported/traded food and feed. A number of enforcement actions have been carried out. A specific taskforce has been created and a memorandum of understanding has been drafted with the various competent authorities in order to further improve the controls

The objective has been met

6) To improve the welfare of the animal on farm

The emergency on farm system has worked on 24/7 basis throughout the year providing a very effective tool for the farmers who have managed to reduce distress to animals that in the past had to be put down on farm

The objective has been met

7) To monitor and control, in line with EU AW legislation efficacy of slat system

The Directorate has started monitoring at farm level as well as during ante-mortem podal lesions Official veterinarians have monitored podal lesions at ante mortem as part of the department key performance indicators. This program started in 2012 and become fully operation in 2013; it helps providing information to officials monitoring animal health and welfare at pigs' farm level.

When we look at the table another decrease in number of animals affected is evident

| | | 2016 | 2016 | 2015 | 2015 | 2014 | 2014 | 2013 | 2013 |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | | <i>Sows & Boars</i> | <i>Fatteners</i> | <i>Sows & Boars</i> | <i>Fatteners</i> | <i>Sows & Boars</i> | <i>Fatteners</i> | <i>Sows & Boars</i> | <i>Fatteners</i> |
| Total lesions | | 19 | 19 | 33 | 18 | 19 | 64 | 58 | 38 |
| Number of affected farms | | 15 | 17 | 12 | 24 | 15 | 34 | 28 | 22 |
| % of farms | | 13.9 | 17.3 | 11.8 | 23.8 | 13,9 | 31,5 | 23.9 | 18.8 |

There has been a slight increase in the percentage of farms having problems in the sow population and and a decrease in the farms having problems in the fattening population

The objective has been met

8): To continue the monitoring program based on Commission Delegated Regulation 1152/2011 for Echinococcus multilocularis in collaboration with EFSA

The program foresaw sampling and testing over 335 dog faecal samples. No positivity was detected of dog.

The Target has been met

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2. KEY DATA ON CONTROLS

• SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN RELATION TO

i. MAIN PRIORITIES:

1) the main priority was the preparation of the incoming Presidency of the EU Council

2) During 2017, VRD conducted a constant monitoring of the importation of food and feed from third countries strengthening the efficiency of the 3 BIPs and by setting up controls of the nationally and EU traded food, feed and animals by introducing the Local Veterinary Units

3) Reduction of salmonella positivity; in 2017 The prevalence of targeted serovars in broiler flocks is 1.2% .. *In the* layers population, in 2016, the flock prevalence The prevalence of targeted serovars in layer flocks is 1.6% ,

4) Development of the National Livestock database: Several the major developments done within the National Livestock Database (NLD) structure were mainly focused to further enhance the existing projects initiated during the previous years. As in previous years, these developments continued to broaden the horizons and to consolidate the database as the main IT tool to help the Department reach various legal obligations related to regulatory matters, traceability and food safety issues

5) Several Investigative Official Controls took place during this year, most notably that of a *Salmonella give* outbreak. This was undertaken in collaboration with Ministry for Health

ii. RISK ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

No Changes compared to 2015

- » MAIN TRENDS IN INTENSITY AND TYPE OF CONTROLS

Safety of the food chain Unit

ABP

| Section | ABP |
|-------------|-----|
| Visits | 7 |
| Audits | 6 |
| Inspections | 70 |

Food establishments

| Category of Establishment | Audits | Audits for Approval | Inspection Un/Announced | Follow Up | Generic Visit | Preliminary discussions with New Applicants | Sampling | Enforcement | Other | Total Official Controls |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------|---|----------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Cold Stores (Section 0) | 9 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 27 |
| Cutting/Deboning (Section 1) | 6 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 22 |
| Poultry/Lagomorphs (Section 2) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Mince Meat/Meat Preps (Section 5) | 8 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 32 |
| Meat Products (Section 6) | 7 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 28 |
| Fishery Products (Section 8) | 0 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 28 |
| Raw Milk & Dairy (Section 9) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 20 |
| Exclusive Re-Wrapping/Re-Packing | 11 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 17 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 53 | 57 |
| Total | 42 | 13 | 39 | 19 | 1 | 27 | 5 | 23 | 65 | 234 |

Cheeselets:

Number of holdings inspected per month during 2016

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOT |
|--------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Malta | 3 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 15 | 12 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 86 |
| Gozo | | | 6 | | | | | | | | 8 | | 14 |
| Total | 3 | 13 | 14 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 15 | 12 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 3 | 100 |

Vet Med

| Operator | No. of Inspections |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Vet Wholesale dealers | 4 |
| Vet Pharmacies | 6 |
| Research Facilities | 1 |
| Farms | 3 |

FEED

| Type of FBO | Month | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| Feed Traders | 1 | | | 2 | 3 | | | 2 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Feed Material Producers | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Feed Mills | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | |
| Feed Stores | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Home mixers | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | |
| Feed Importers | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| TMRs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Feed Hauliers | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Animal Welfare

| Event | Consultations | Inspections | Meetings | Other action |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Pet welfare related | | 2 | | |
| Horse welfare related | | 1 | | |
| Strategy/draft laws related to welfare | | | | 24 |
| Livestock welfare related | | 20 | | |
| Farm capacity | | 104 | | |
| Zoos/ exotic collections | | 15 | 12 | |
| Pet shops/kennels | | 26 | | |
| MEPA related | 124 | | | |

Animal Identification:

| Controls | Bovine | Small Ruminats |
|--|---------------|--|
| Total number of holdings registered in Member State territory as registered at the beginning of the reporting period | 266 | 1712 |
| Total number of holdings checked during the reporting period | 249 | 1788 * Some of the farms were inspected twice |
| Total number of animals registered at the beginning of the reporting period | 14,286 | 16121 |
| Total number of bovines checked in holdings during the reporting period | 10,335 | 17852 * Some of the animals were inspected twice |

Animal Health

| Activity | TB Dairy | Brucella | BRUCELLA In N/MDP | EBL | Layer farms | Broiler farms | Broiler/ Layer Farms. | Bees | Rabbit farms |
|-------------|----------|----------|-------------------|-----|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|------|--------------|
| Visits | 97 | 216 | 171 | 216 | 65 | 180 | 13 | | |
| Audits | | | | | | | 13 | | |
| Inspections | | | | | | 84 | | 93 | 50 |

NB: for laboratory analysis see Annual Report

3. TREND ANALYSIS OF NON-COMPLIANCE

- **STATEMENT OF OVERALL TRENDS IN COMPLIANCE:** FBO in the food sector are generally compliant with regards to the application of traceability and structural requirement vis a vis regulation 852 and 853/2004
- **MAIN TYPES OF NON-COMPLIANCE:**
Based on the reports gathered during 2016 when performing official controls in the food, feed and in the primary production sectors the most typical noncompliance continues to be failure to comply with adequate maintenance programs.
Not adequate record keeping, also considering the nature of the business is a very common non-compliance too.
Another typical non-compliance is the failure to implement effective cleaning schedules.
Two very specific non compliances commonly reported are the incorrect implementation of microbiological sampling plans and higher than normal microbiological counts to verify process hygiene criteria.
A very sectorial shortcoming has been inadequate pre notification time; however, following the last FVO missions this non-compliance has reduced dramatically and the issue now relates minimally to transit and transshipments
- **UNDERLYING CAUSES:** limited business opportunities and high production costs give little money to FBO to invest in appropriate testing and maintenance programs.
- In farms problems are related to the very low FBO schooling level
- Difficulties of using TRACES; rejection of containers was due to failure of physical checks, documental checks and temperature

4. ENFORCEMENT TRENDS: ACTIONS TAKEN IN CASES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Red meat section:

5 warning letters were issued to the farmers: one related to the use of a banned substance; one related to the use of authorized substance above the maximum residual limits; one was issued due to presence of residues of antibiotics; two warning letters related to animal welfare issues during transport.

A corrective action request was sent to the FBO for inadequate hygiene during slaughter operations. The same was fulfilled by the operator in a satisfactory manner within the deadline.

Establishments:

There were 23 enforcement actions, mostly ranging from written reports to Corrective Action Requests (CAR). Non-compliances were mainly related to Cold Chain recording deficiencies; general structural maintenance; and HACCP related records.

White Meat Plants:

2 corrective actions were issued

ABP Section:

124 warning letters were served to those farmers who brought the animals to the thermal facility without accompanying documentation

NVL Unit (Medicine/feeding stuff)

4 warning letters were sent to stakeholders.

Trade Unit BIP

A total 2407,33 kg of products sized between POAO brought by passengers at airport and POAO found on parcels. Personal imports through MIA were 1180kg, personal imports through Ferry service were 1170kg, and through post parcels were 57,33kg. All POAO sized were disposed for incineration.

Animal Welfare Section:

4 court proceedings were initiated and 3 warning letters were sent compliance with the zoo regulation

Animal Identification

Enforcement actions drastically decreased; a full breakdown is contained in the MANCP annual report

5• NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF AUDITS:

- «NUMBER OF AUDITS AND SECTORS COVERED:

During 2016 the VRD Internal Audit System has been audited by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission as part of the published Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety audit programme.

The FVO assessed that the VRD internal audit system in place covers the official controls under the scope of the Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 in a systematic and transparent manner, that the audit arrangements focus on compliance with planned arrangements and legal requirements, the audit planning is based on risk prioritisation and audits are generally performed in accordance with planned arrangements. The FVO stated that the internal audits contribute to

the improvement of the official controls as regards compliance with relevant requirements in Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 and specific sectoral legislation and, on an ad-hoc basis, as regards the suitability of planned arrangements.

Further developments of planned arrangements with a view to improvement of the audit systems are still ongoing, especially with regards to the shortcomings identified by the FVO and related to: • independent scrutiny, • sourcing/use of specific sectoral technical expertise in audits, • dissemination of good practices in official controls, • enforcement/follow-up of recommendations, • systematically review the audit process in order to ensure that the audit programme's objectives have been met and to identify opportunities for improvement.

The audits implemented in 2016 were aimed to verify the activity performed and the connected results, the effectiveness of the controls and the provisions adopted to reach the targets.

The following internal audits have been carried out:

- A) On Animal Health Unit: 1-Follow up audit on Salmonellosis control programme, 2-Follow up audit on Brucellosis control programme; 3-Audit on bee diseases surveillance;
- B) Safety of the Food Chain Unit: -Follow up audit on red meat slaughterhouses

As general outcome of the audits carried out, it was identified that most of the recommendations issued before were addressed. The internal audits identified a continuous improvement of the capacity of the VRD to reach the targets defined in the Annual National Control Plan with a good organization of the activity and a definition of more detailed standard operational procedures.

Weaknesses were still documented in the implementation of the requested functions within the Veterinary Information System, the awareness campaigns on animal diseases and the collaboration and information sharing between different Sections of the VRD.

The National Veterinary Laboratory conducted the following audits:

4 technical audits method witnessing on the accredited tests in the methods that are in its accreditation scope:

19 audits for quality management

6. RESOURCES

- «SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ALLOCATION OF
i. **FUNDING FOR PROGRAMMES:**

The programmes approved for co-financing for 2016 are:

1. Salmonellosis(zoonotic salmonella)in laying and broiler flocks of *Gallus gallus*
2. Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and Scrapie
3. AMR- Anti Microbial Resistance

ii. STAFF:

5 official veterinarians were recruited; furthermore, a pharmacist was engaged for the incoming presidency
2 more vets and the Assistant Director were recruited in order to start in January 2017

7. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF CONTROL AUTHORITIES

PROPOSED CHANGES TO MANCP

- 1) New risk assessments for internal audit and for animal health diseases in relation to contingency plan
- 2) New modules for the National Livestock Database for the benefit of the Safety of the Food Chain, Trade and Animal units
- 3) All units have new ad hoc checklists and standard operating procedures
- 4) A Memorandum of Understanding on how to manage the shared use of the BIPs facilities between Veterinary Regulation Directorate, Plant Health, Customs and Port Health has been developed. Several meetings have held with the different authorities involved

LEGISLATION

A Legal Notices was introduced under the Animal Welfare Act (CAP 439). Legal Notice 46 of 2016, owning and keeping of dangerous animal's regulations

- **ORGANISATION**

The Animal Welfare and Enforcement Units were created

PROCEDURES

Development of several procedures in all the units/sections have taken place

- **INFORMATION SYSTEMS:**

During the year 2016 there were major developments done within the National Livestock Database (NLD) structure which were mainly focused to further enhance the existing projects initiated during the previous years. The main focus of further developing the database is

now to introduce new modules that will simplify the existing procedures and so act as part of the simplification measures in line with the government electoral manifesto. Specific modules to address issues related to transit and transshipments were created

- **TRAINING**

1) VRD focused on a series of trainings aimed at disseminating information after BTSF training was carried out.

2) In line with ISO17025 the National Veterinary Laboratory carried out the following trainings:

| Test | No of officers trained | Number of training sessions |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Trichinella | 4 | 4 |
| Sulphonamides | 2 | 1 |
| Salmonella isolation | 1 | 1 |
| Use of Quality intranet / Process Instructions | 12 | 3 |
| Induction training | 2 | 2 |

3) Several Officials attended all training organised by SANCO under the BTSF initiative .Staff of the National Veterinary Laboratory (NVL) attended several workshops and training organised by EU reference laboratories in relation to NVL duties as National Reference Laboratory.

8. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

TRAINING PROGRAMMES:

- A lecture on Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) was delivered by a member of the section to AquaBioTech Ltd to explain the significance of the GMP certificate granted in December 2015 to this enterprise by the VPRD.
- A consultation session within the structures of MEUSAC was held with veterinary wholesalers and owners of veterinary pharmacies concerning the new EU commission Regulation on veterinary medicinal product

Circulars

3 official circulars were issued in 2016 as follows.

| Circular Number | Circular title | Date |
|------------------------|---|-------------|
| VMANS-VPRD 01/2016 | Veterinary Medicinal Products containing Lincomycin and spectinomycin for use in pigs and/or chickens | 31/08 |
| VMANS-VPRD 02/2016 | Banned substances for racing pigeons as decided by the Malta Federation of Racing Pigeons | 30/09 |
| VMANS-VPRD 03/2016 | Returned Veterinary Medicinal Products to the Veterinary Pharmacy (English and Maltese versions) | 16/12 |