



ELECTRONIC CONSULTATION OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP
ON THE EVALUATION OF PESTE DES PETITS RUMINANTS STATUS OF MEMBERS¹
27 November 2018

The OIE *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of the peste des petits ruminants (PPR) status of Members (hereafter the Group) was consulted electronically on 27 November 2018.

1. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur

Dr Neo Mapitse, Head of Status Department, thanked the Group for its commitment and its extensive support towards the OIE in fulfilling the mandates given by Members. He acknowledged the amount of work before, during and after the *ad hoc* Group meeting and the efforts required in reviewing the dossiers and highlighted that the official recognition of disease status was an important activity for the OIE.

Dr Mapitse reminded the Group on the significance of confidentiality and declaration of conflict of interest for official recognition and thanked the experts for all having signed the forms for the undertaking of confidentiality and declaration of interests. No conflicts of interest were declared in this Group.

The Group and the OIE welcomed Drs Abdenacer Bakkouri and Sith Premashthira as new members of the Group. The Group was chaired by Dr Giancarlo Ferrari and Dr Henry Wamwayi was the rapporteur with the support of the OIE Secretariat. The Group adopted the proposed agenda.

The terms of reference, agenda and list of participants are presented as Appendices I, II and III, respectively.

2. Evaluation of an application from a Member for the official recognition of PPR free status

2.1 Croatia

In September 2018, Croatia submitted an application for the official recognition of its PPR free status based on historical grounds. The Group requested additional information and received clarification from Croatia.

i) Animal disease reporting

The Group acknowledged that Croatia had a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting to the OIE. From the information provided in the annexes of the dossier, the Group noted that reporting of suspicions or positive cases of any animal disease, including PPR, had been mandatory in the country as per legislation for more than ten years. The Group appreciated that financial compensation would be provided in case animals were slaughtered for PPR eradication purposes and that penalties were foreseen for failure to report PPR suspected cases.

¹ Note: This *ad hoc* Group report reflects the views of its members and may not necessarily reflect the views of the OIE. This report should be read in conjunction with the February 2019 report of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases because this report provides its considerations and comments. It is available at: <http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/specialists-commissions-groups/scientific-commission-reports/meetings-reports/>

From the dossier and the additional information provided, the Group noted that education activities for veterinarians performing sampling, either during active or passive surveillance, were conducted annually with the most recent training taking place in May 2018. In addition, farmers were regularly reminded of their obligation to report any clinical signs of disease and animal deaths to veterinarians. The Group also noted that, following the recent occurrence of the disease for the first time in an European Union country, information on PPR passive surveillance and preventive measures was provided to veterinarians and veterinary inspectors during a veterinary congress in October 2018. The Group commended Croatia for this initiative but noted that there was no specific training/awareness campaign on PPR intended for stakeholders other than veterinarians, as acknowledged by the country. Therefore, the Group recommended that Croatia develop an awareness programme dedicated to PPR and intended for all relevant stakeholders, including farmers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinary paraprofessionals, to increase the sensitivity of the passive surveillance.

ii) *Veterinary Authority*

The Group appreciated the information on demographics and geographical distribution of domestic small ruminants in Croatia presented in a map and tables by County. The Group noted that a comprehensive system was in place for the identification of susceptible animals and movement control, which would allow for traceability if PPR was introduced into Croatia. In particular, it was noted that all animal farms must be registered by the Croatian Agriculture Agency (CAA). Sheep and goats are identified at individual animal level and registered in the Unique Register of Domestic Animals (URDA) national database. A passport with the individual identification number is issued for each animal. All small ruminant movements are recorded in a database and accompanied by the animal's passport and a veterinary health certificate. The Group also noted the presence of 11 approved animal markets and five assembly centres for sheep and goats, as illustrated in relevant maps.

The Group also took note of the detailed information regarding veterinary legislation on disease prevention and control measures, outlining the responsibilities and involvement of different stakeholders in their implementation.

The Group acknowledged that the Croatian Veterinary Authority had current knowledge of, and authority over, all domestic sheep and goats in the country.

iii) *Situation of PPR in the past 24 months*

The Group noted that PPR had never been reported in Croatia. Therefore, Croatia was eligible to claim historical freedom from PPR in accordance with Article 1.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

iv) *Absence of vaccination in the past 24 months and no entry of vaccinated animals*

The Group noted that vaccination against PPR had never been conducted in Croatia and was prohibited *as per* legislation since 2007.

v) *Importation of domestic ruminants and their semen, oocytes or embryos is carried out in accordance with relevant articles of Chapter 14.7.*

From the information provided in the dossier and Croatia's response to requests for additional information, the Group noted that imports of live small ruminants and their semen, oocytes or embryos were only allowed into Croatia from countries with an official PPR free status.

With regard to imports of fresh meat and meat products from sheep and goats, the Group noted that fresh meat had been imported into Croatia from a country without an official PPR free status. The Group examined the sanitary requirements applicable to these importations, which were provided as additional information, and concluded that they were consistent with the requirements of Article 14.7.17. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The Group took note of the seven border inspection posts approved to check all consignments of live animals, products of animal origin and feed of animal and non-animal origin into the European Union.

In response to a question raised on possible illegal importations of small ruminants, Croatia clarified that no illegal imports of live animals susceptible to PPR had been detected during the past five years. The Group appreciated that Croatia had identified two different patterns for potential illegal animal movements (i.e., “intentionally” and “inadvertently”) and agreed that the procedures to be applied in case of detection of such illegal imports were satisfactory.

The Group concluded that import control procedures for animals and animal products in Croatia were in accordance with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*.

vi) *Surveillance for PPR and PPRV infection in accordance with Articles 14.7.27. to 14.7.33. and with Chapter 1.4.*

The Group acknowledged that passive surveillance for PPR had been in place for at least ten years and that all sectors of livestock production, mainly farmers, but also staff in markets, fairs, and slaughterhouses were involved in it.

Whilst PPR had never been reported in the country and, therefore, pathogen-specific surveillance was not mandatory according to Article 1.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*, the Group commended Croatia for the serological surveillance for PPR conducted in 2018. From the additional information provided, the Group took note that the serological sampling plan was based on testing 59 samples from small ruminants per county, randomly selected from samples already collected for the brucellosis surveillance programme. The Group acknowledged that 1163 small ruminants from 264 farms had all tested negative for antibodies to PPR virus.

The Group noted that PPR serological testing, using a competitive ELISA test, was performed in the Croatian Veterinary Institute, which is formally accredited to ISO 17025 by the Croatian Accreditation Agency. In case of positive or doubtful results, a second set of samples would be collected and retested from the same group of animals, using a 2% prevalence of infection with a 95% level of confidence to determine the sample size. The Group appreciated that some positive sera had been reported, as this would fall within the expected normal range of the test [1- specificity]. The Group also acknowledged that in these cases, eventually identified as false positives, control measures, such as movements restrictions on the farms and resampling had been implemented.

The Group appreciated that Croatia participated in a European proficiency test for PPR and that the final report was provided.

With regard to wildlife, the Group noted that PPR susceptible wild species were present in Croatia, but an estimation of their population was not available. The Group commented that it would be an asset if wildlife samples were included in the serological surveillance, where possible.

vii) *Regulatory measures for the early detection, prevention and control of PPR*

The Group noted that the industry, producers, farmers, keepers, veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals were involved in passive surveillance of animal diseases, including PPR and that failure to report PPR cases would attract sanctions.

The Group also took note of the regular inspections of animal holdings and adequate controls on the imports of livestock and livestock products into Croatia.

Furthermore, the Group noted that a contingency plan for specific animal diseases including PPR was in place, outlining the PPR related legislation as well as procedures to be followed and measures to be implemented in case of occurrence of the disease. The Group also appreciated that Croatia was planning to organise a simulation exercise for PPR in the near future.

Therefore, the Group agreed that the necessary regulatory measures for early detection, prevention and control of PPR were in place and compliant with the requirement of the *Terrestrial Code*.

viii) *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.12.1.*

The Group commended the well-structured dossier provided by Croatia and agreed that the submitted dossier was compliant with the format of the questionnaire in Article 1.12.1.

Conclusion

Based on the information submitted in the dossier and the answers provided by Croatia to the questions raised, the Group considered that the application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 14.7. and with the questionnaire in Article 1.12.1. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Group therefore recommended that Croatia be recognised as a PPR free country.

Recommendations to Croatia:

The Group recommended that Croatia:

- develop an awareness programme dedicated to PPR and intended for all relevant stakeholders, including farmers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinary paraprofessionals, to increase the sensitivity of the passive surveillance;
- maintain the exercise of testing samples from small ruminants randomly selected from samples collected for other purposes. It would be an asset if wildlife samples were included in this surveillance;
- finalise the simulation exercise planned for PPR;
- continue participating in proficiency tests for PPR.

3. Adoption of the report

The Group reviewed and amended the draft report provided by the rapporteur with the support of the OIE Secretariat and agreed to circulate the draft report electronically for comments before the final adoption. The Group agreed that the report captured the discussions.

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Terms of reference

The OIE *ad hoc* group on peste des petits ruminants (PPR) status of Members (the Group) is expected to evaluate an application received from a Member for the official recognition of a PPR free status.

This implies that the experts, members of this Group are expected to:

1. Sign the updated OIE Undertaking on Confidentiality of information
 2. Complete the Declaration of Interests Form and forward it to the OIE at least two weeks before the teleconference
 3. Evaluate the application for an official free PPR status
 - a) Prior to the teleconference:
 - read and study in detail the dossier provided by the OIE;
 - take into account any other information available in the public domain considered pertinent for the evaluation;
 - summarise the dossier according to the requirements of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, using the form provided by the OIE;
 - identify questions emerging as a result of the analysis of the dossier which require further clarification and to be completed by the Member;
 - send the completed form and the list of identified possible questions to the OIE, at least 10 days before the teleconference.
 - b) During the teleconference:
 - contribute to the discussion;
 - withdraw from the discussions and decision making should a conflict of interest arise;
 - provide a detailed report in order to recommend to the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases if the country should be (or not) recognised as PPR free, and to indicate any information gaps or specific areas that need to be addressed in the future by the applicant Member.
 - c) After the teleconference:
 - contribute electronically to the finalisation of the report.
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Agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur
 2. Evaluation of an application from a Member for official recognition of a PPR free status
 - Croatia
 3. Adoption of report
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