



MINISTERIET FOR FAMILIE-
OG FORBRUGERANLIGGENDER
Fødevarestyrelsen

US Mission to the EC
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Att. Dr. Dan Sheesley
Minister Counselor

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Your file no.:

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) has the following answers/comments to the questions raised by USDA in letter as of 22 October 2004.

"We noted in the description of the 2002 outbreak in Denmark that detection of Newcastle disease (ND) was delayed because ND was not initially suspected."

The above-mentioned wording from section four, page 14 in the Final Report on the ND outbreak in Denmark is a summary description connecting two events (outbreaks), which were independent of each other. There went almost three weeks (15 July - 2 August) from suspicion to positive laboratory confirmation of the first suspicion (outbreak no. 28 which was due to the slow growth of the ND virus strain in the laboratory. The eradication was initiated before the diagnosis in order to follow the precautionary principle. The confirmation of outbreak no. 1 was delayed because of unclear anamnestic information from the sender of material to the laboratory and co-infection with Marek disease virus, which blurred the suspicion of ND.

How has Denmark changed its surveillance approach to ensure rapid detection of disease in Denmark? For example, is ND testing conducted whenever there are clinical signs of gastrointestinal, respiratory, or nervous system problems?"

In Denmark all parent and grandparent herds to the layer and broiler chicken production are tested serologically for ND once a year - before they start producing hatching eggs according to Order no. 124 of 5 March 1996 on "the construction and management of hatcheries and hatching egg producing enterprises with poultry, turkeys, geese and ducks". All pullets are tested before movement according to Order no. 351 of 14 August 2002 on "the construction and management of enterprises with breeding of pullets for table egg production". Birds imported to zoos or pet shops (bird importers) are serologically tested before release from quarantine. In addition, all samples taken in connection with clinical suspicion of ND are tested. If these tests are positive, virological examinations are performed in order to try to isolate the virus and determine the virulence.

The diagnostic procedures at the laboratory have been tightened in order to prevent, in future, similar problems as experienced in connection with outbreak 1. The laboratory

shall ensure that all incoming material is accompanied by a clear anamnesis. If this is not the case the laboratory has to contact the sender to obtain sufficient information on the background for the diagnostic request. If the laboratory suspects a case of ND or AI, the laboratory contacts the local Veterinary and Food Administration for a visit to the suspect herd/flock in order to clear up the suspicion.

Following the experience from the 2002 ND outbreak most of the poultry material submitted for diagnostic investigations at the laboratory has been examined for the presence of ND.

Your report indicated that "positive serology could be used as an indicator of ND infection because Denmark applies a non-vaccinating policy," How will the ND surveillance program, including the interpretation of serological test results, be adjusted to address the recent implementation of a mandatory vaccination program? How will testing discern between vaccination titres and the presence of ND virus in the flock?

The DVFA will with the new Danish ND vaccination strategy face the same problem as all other ND vaccination countries have faced that a preliminary confirmation of a suspect ND case cannot be based on serology. At present no marker vaccines are available which might have overcome this problem. In future, suspect cases of ND can only be confirmed by PCR or virology. The above mentioned serological surveillance program will gradually be ceased when the vaccination programme is in progress.

During the transitional period (16-18 months) from the initiation of the vaccination programme to most of the Danish poultry stock are vaccinated the DFVA will have to approve all imports of poultry to ensure that the imported animals are properly vaccinated and that they do not carry field strains of ND virus which is one of the possible side-effects of vaccinating poultry. Furthermore, the poultry industry has to impose strict biosecurity measures in case of mixed stocks of vaccinated and unvaccinated poultry are kept on the premises. These procedures are conducted in order to eliminate the risk of introducing ND virus in the unvaccinated part of the poultry population.

We hope that USDA based on these clarifications will be able to recognize the Danish Newcastle disease free status in the very near future.

On behalf of CVO, Dr. Preben Willeberg

Yours faithfully


Stig Møllergaard