Animal I&R in Finland

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Summary

Since 1995, the identification and registration system of animals has been developed by an intensive way in Finland. The bovine database, build on the milk recording system run by Agricultural Data Processing Centre Ltd (ADC) has been expanded to cover all the bovines in Finland and was recognised fully operational in EU in May 1999. All main operations such as ordering new ear tags for tagging the newborn calves and notifications of animal births, deaths, movements and need for retagging of the animal, are centralized to ADC. The system can now provide benefits for operators in assuring that animals only with known origin and lifecycle can enter to the food chain. Furthermore, the database can be used for tracing back the animals in the animal disease outbreak as well as identifying the possible contacts of infected animals. The data itself is also valuable information for statistics and scientific use. In future, the present bovine database has to be developed further and scope of the data collection has to be enlarged from solely bovines to other animal species such as sheep, goats, pigs and poultry. In Finland, the reconstruction work has already started by making a plan to introduce all sheep and goat individuals to the database within one and a half years. For pigs there is at present a separate batch movement database system but in the future also pig batches as well as poultry flocks are foreseen to be part of the new collective animal database.

Background

The identification system concerning all the bovine animals in Finland was designed and realized at the end of 1994 and in the beginning of 1995. Directive 92/102/EEC outlined the system requirements at that time. Design of the bovine database was based on the milk recording system which had been run by Agricultural Data Processing Centre Ltd (ADC). This milk recording data consisted of almost 50 percent of all bovine herds and approximately 70 percent of all cows which eased the pressure of the cost-efficiency in building the new database. Therefore, the main task was to introduce the remaining half of the bovine herds into the database and identify all bovines with ear tags. The total number

of farmers keeping bovines in 1995 was ca. 42 000 and they had ca. 1 350 000 bovines. There was a strong economic impact for farmers to get all animals properly identified because all bovine premium schemes in EU were based on identification of the animals.

I&R System

After the great BSE- crisis in EU, a new legislation outlining the bovine identification was introduced. Series of new regulations were drafted. This created more functional requirements for the database itself and for the information flow into the database. Finnish bovine database was the first database which was recognised fully operational in EU in May 1999.

The identification system of bovine animals in Finland is operated by ADC in the close supervision of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). In 2003 an upgraded database was introduced. All main operations such as ordering new ear tags for tagging the newborn calves and notifications of animal births, deaths, movements and need for retagging of the animal are centralized to ADC. All bovine keepers, slaughterhouses and dealers, have to notify the database.

The major part of the information notified by the keepers comes into the database via electronic communications, PC-program, internet-program and voice response telephone. Paper based notification or notification through customer service has been diminishing during the past years.

Benefits of the system

Operators have to confirm the eligibility and origin of an animal before purchasing it. By doing so the consumers can be assured that animals only with known origin and lifecycle can enter to the food chain. Futhermore, the database can be used for tracing back the animals in the animal disease outbreak as well as identifying the possible contacts of infected animals. The data itself is valuable information for statistics and scientific use and e.g. swine movement register has been used for the quantitative risk assessment of classical swine fever.

To obtain a reliable and solid information to the database, it is necessary to give feedback and practical benefits to the bovine keepers to cover the burden of the requirements. In Finland, the farmers have received an information letter every other month to verify the status of their animals. In addition they do not have to keep a manual holding register of their animals since this letter includes a list of animals, designed to serve the purpose. The PC-program gives an easy access to the database and e.g. a tool for the farmers to make premium applications easily.

Future prospects

Legislation creates more information requirements for the primary production of animal origin. To provide this information centralised and as easily as possible the present bovine database has to be developed further and scope of the data collection has to be enlarged from solely

bovines to other animal species such as sheep, goats, pigs and poultry. In Finland, the reconstruction work has already started by making a plan to introduce all sheep and goat individuals to the database within one and a half years. For pigs there is at present a separate batch movement database system but in the future also pig batches as well as poultry flocks are foreseen to be part of the new collective animal database.