

EU Animal Health Law: Listing and categorisation of diseases

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In 2016, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Regulation on transmissible animal diseases, the “Animal Health Law” (AHL) to replace approximately 33 Directives, 2 Regulations and 3 Decisions (AHL, 2016). The AHL should be implemented gradually with the main aspects enforced in EU Member States (MS) by 2021, following the adoption of a number of delegating and implementing acts by the EU Commission before 2019. The AHL already include foot-and-mouth disease, classical swine fever, African swine fever, highly pathogenic avian influenza and African horse sickness. Additionally, a review of listed diseases (for cattle diseases such as rinderpest, bluetongue, Rift Valley fever, lumpy skin disease, vesicular stomatitis, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, bovine tuberculosis, bovine brucellosis, anthrax, TSE, zoonotic salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis, listeriosis are mentioned) must be carried out by March 2019 to update the disease list. As part of this process, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has been consulted to assess 29 diseases (EFSA AHAW Panel, 2017), 18 to which cattle were deemed susceptible.

Article 5 of the AHL stipulates that a disease should be considered eligible for listing if it fulfils a number of criteria, e.g. be transmissible and cause negative effects on animal health or have a zoonotic potential, susceptible animals should be present in the Union, diagnostic tools should be available, and risk mitigating measures should be effective and proportionate. If a disease is listed, then it should be subject to Union intervention as laid down in the disease and prevention rules given in Article 9 of the AHL. However, the characteristics differ between diseases, and consequently different measures are required for different diseases. These measures could be: A) immediate eradication of exotic diseases if detected; B) control of diseases with an aim to eradicate; C) prevention of spread to MS officially free of diseases present in some EU MS only; D) movement control to prevent introduction to EU or spread between MS; and E) surveillance incl. notification and reporting.

Twelve of the diseases assessed by EFSA were deemed eligible for listing with listing of cattle as susceptible species (brucellosis, tuberculosis, paratuberculosis, border disease, borna disease, trichomonosis, bluetongue, BVD, IBR, campylobacteriosis, anthrax, equine encephalomyelitis (Eastern and Western)), while consensus could not be reached for three: enzootic bovine leukosis, Venezulean equine encephalitis, and *Trypanosoma evansi*. Measures B, C and D (see above) were deemed relevant to one or more diseases, while measure E (surveillance) was a required measure for all diseases.

The final decisions by the European Commission regarding listing and intervention are pending. The assessment steps including EFSA have been transparent and consistent across diseases, while the criteria laid down in the AHL assist in putting disease listing into a stringent framework.

References

EFSA AHAW Panel, 2017. EFSA Journal 15:4783. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2017.4783>

AHL, 2016. Regulation (EU) 2016/429. [Official Journal of the European Union, L 84, 31-03 2016.](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/429/oj)