Animal health requirements: non-commercial movement of pet animals

2009/0077(COD) - 16/06/2009 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to extend, until the end of 2011, transitional measures on the non-commercial movement of pet animals.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 998/2003, pet dogs, cats and ferrets travelling with their owner to another Member State must be accompanied by a passport, or when imported by a certificate, providing proof of a valid anti-rabies vaccination ("general regime"). As of 3 July 2011 electronic identification of dogs, cats and ferrets will be mandatory.

In order to take account of the particular situation of Ireland, Malta, Sweden and the United Kingdom with regard to rabies, Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 provides for a transitional period during which the entry of pet dogs and cats into those Member States is subjected to more stringent requirements.

The Regulation grants a period of five years starting from the date of its entry into force, i.e. until 3 July 2008 (extended to 30 June 2010), to Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden and the United Kingdom to make the entry of pet animals into their territory subject to compliance with certain **additional requirements** to prevent the risk of introducing rabies, echinococcus and ticks ("transitional regime").

In order to determine the regime to be applied with effect from 1 July 2010, the Commission carried out an impact assessment based on various recent consultations and on the report that was adopted on 8 October 2007 that took into account the recommendations made by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). EFSA identified that in 2005 certain Member States had a non negligible prevalence of rabies in their pet population, which is related to the rabies situation in wildlife (foxes are the main reservoir of rabies in Europe).

In view of the EFSA opinions and of the Community-supported programmes, the transitional measure provided for in Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 should be extended until 31 December 2011.

Moreover, from the opinions adopted by EFSA with regard to echinococcosis and ticks, it results that the data available did not allow EFSA to demonstrate a particular status of the five Member States applying the transitional regime with regard to certain ticks and the tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis* and to quantify the risk of pathogen introduction through the non-commercial movement of pet animals.

For reasons of consistency, it is appropriate to extend the transitional measure provided for in Article 16 of Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 until 31 December 2011.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: the Commission considers **four policy options**:

- **Option 1**: no action - this option means that after 30 June 2010, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden and the UK will no longer make the entry of pet animals into their territory subject to additional requirements regarding rabies, echinococcus and ticks.
- **Option 2**: extension of the transitional regime – this option means a further temporary extension of the transitional period until the end of 2011. This option would require a Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council extending the transitional period for the five Member

States that currently apply special rules and clarifying the regime that would apply as from 1 January 2012.
- **Option 3**: adjustment of the current rules applicable to all Member States.
- **Option 4**: continuation of the transitional regime on a permanent basis.

Following on from the impact assessment, preference has been given to options 1 and 2, which are similar in principle. Either would entail removing, sooner or later, the unjustified disparities, discrimination and burden felt by citizens including citizens from the five Member States who are affected by additional requirements when returning from abroad. At the same time, both options would maintain a high level of safety for pet movements within and into the EU, by applying the general regime, which has proved to be effective in preventing human and pet animal cases of rabies caused by lawful movement of pets between and into Member States. However, the Commission concludes that there is a slight advantage in selecting **option 2** as it lowers the public health risk.

CONTENT: the overall objectives of this Regulation are to be seen in the light of the free circulation of people and the new Animal Health Strategy.

The specific objectives are:

- to harmonise requirements to remove disproportionate obstacles to the movement of pets for non-commercial purposes across the EU or entering the EU from third countries, while properly protecting public and animal health , in particular with regard to rabies;
- to provide EU rules that are proportionate, avoid causing difficulties and give clear benefits in terms of clarity and simplification for travelling pet owners.

The proposal foresees that special science based rules could be adopted by the Commission under the comitology procedure if a Member State demonstrates that they are necessary to effectively protect itself against the introduction and spread of disease agents that do not occur in their territory.

Lastly, two new Annexes, Annex Ia and Annex Ib, the texts of which are set out in the Annex to the present Regulation, shall be inserted. Part C of Annex I, Annex Ib and parts B and C of Annex II may be amended by the Commission to take account of developments in the situation within Community territory or in third countries as regards diseases affecting the species of animals covered by this Regulation, in particular rabies.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: this proposal has no implication for the Community budget.