Foot and mouth disease: lessons from the 2001 crisis, proposals for the future

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The Belgian delegation, supported by the Netherlands, drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the latest scientific development concerning the existence of serological tests. It is now likely possible to distinguish between the antibodies in vaccinated animals and in animals contaminated by the FMD wild virus following the latest state of research presented at the Office International des Epizooties (OIE). The use of these tests at Community level could avoid the mass slaughtering of healthy animals and enable to reduce the minimum waiting period (12 months) before re-entering trade flows currently provided for by international legislation. This waiting period could be reduced to six months. The Belgian delegation called on the Commission to take account of this new development in its future proposal for a Directive on FMD. The Danish delegation recalled that any change in the existing legislation should be compatible with the OIE standards and should not put at stake the position of the Community in that field.