Bovine animals: system for the identification and registration

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To identify and register bovine animals in order to restore consumer confidence, this is the main aim of the report by Mr Xaver MAYER (PPE, D), adopted unanimously with 1 abstention by the committee (chairman: Mr José HAPPART (PSE, B)). The regulation proposed by the European Commission in the wake of the BSE crisis provides for the system to identify and register bovine animals to include the following: computerized data bases, earmarking to identify individual animals, animal passports and individual registers on each holding. The committee amended the Commission text and proposed that these "technical infrastructures should be of a comparable level in all Member States" and called for their harmonization to be assured by adequate funding by the European Commission. The data base should be fully operational by 31 December 1997: by that date it should contain "birth and slaughter data" and should contain all other data from 31 December 1998 at the latest. The committee also called for these data bases to be "accessible to consumer protection organizations in well-founded cases recognized by the national bodies". With regard to ear-tags, the committee proposed that they should be applied within 30 days of the birth of the animal (and not 14 days as proposed by the European Commission) and, in any case, "before the animal leaves the holding on which it was born". These ear-tags should be "of a standardized type, approved, not forgeable and legible throughout the animal's life". They should have the same single identification code. When they become illegible or if they are lost, the competent office must issue a replacement tag. The passport must be issued to each animal to which an ear-tag has been allocated and must "accompany the animals during any movement". The animal keeper "is required to activate the associated passport after attaching the ear-tag". Animals imported from third countries shall receive on entry into the Union a passport corresponding to the ear-tag. If it is guaranteed that the central data base contains all the information provided for and that all animal movements are registered in it, the Member States may dispense with the introduction of animal passports.