Ovine and caprine animals: registration and identification

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The committee adopted the report by Gordon ADAM (PES, UK) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure as follows: - before implementing the regulation, the Commission should conduct extensive tests and field trials for flocks of sheep in both lowland and mountainous regions and should publish the results; - within 6 months of the regulation's entry into force, the Commission should submit a proposal on granting Community aid to farmers for the establishment of individual identification for sheep and goats. MEPs pointed out that this was a food safety and control measure affecting the whole production chain and that it was the producers (already suffering from very low incomes) who would have to put into operation and manage the system. The cost of introducing it should therefore be met through European financing; - to allow farmers more time to implement the new system, various deadlines laid down in the proposal should be amended. MEPs therefore proposed that tags bearing a unique identification code should be fitted to all sheep and goats born in the Community after 1 July 2005 (rather than 1 July 2003 as proposed by the Commission) before they are 6 months old (rather than 1 month old, as specified in the proposal). The derogation allowing Member States to fit the tags slightly later on animals reared extensively was also extended (to 9 months as opposed to 6 months). Eartags should be fitted on animals imported from non-EU countries after 1 July 2005 rather than 1 July 2003, and the requirements relating to movement documents should apply from 1 July 2005 rather than 1 July 2003; - to avoid placing an extra administrative burden on farmers, provision should be made for either individual recording or batch-recording to be used until such time as electronic identification is implemented; - whereas the proposal provided for general electronic identification (EID) to be implemented by 1 July 2006, the committee wanted the Commission to submit a report to Parliament and the Council, no later than 31 July 2006, on the experience of using EID, including a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed system and its financial and welfare implications. The Commission should then submit a new legislative proposal, no later than 31 December 2006, with a view to the general introduction of electronic identification on 1 July 2007. In other amendments, the committee said that Member States should be able to choose whether to use one or two eartags (as opposed to compulsory double-tagging) and that tattooing should also remain an option. It also felt that, in view of the substantial differences in methods of sheep-farming and goat-farming in the various Member States, the use of supplementary marking (to mark animals being transferred to second or third holdings) should be permitted.