Animal health requirements: non commercial movement of pet animals

2000/0221(COD) - 18/09/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to harmonise the animal-health requirements applicable to non-commercial movements of pet animals. CONTENT : this proposal highlights that measures need to be adopted at Community level to ensure that rules applicable to non-commercial movement of pet animals in the Member States are consistent. To date, attempts to harmonise the animal-health requirements applicable to non-commercial movement of pet animals have come to grief over the problem of rabies, which is dealt with in widely divergent ways by the Member States. The number of cases of rabies among household pets (cats and dogs) dropped from 499 in 1991 to 5 in 1998. This highly favourable development has prompted the United Kingdom authorites to do away with the six-month quarantine they applied hitherto to cats and dogs entering the UK. An alternative to the quarantine system has been adopted by the United Kingdom on the basis of the conclusions of a group of independent experts and following a public survey that came out overwhelmingly in favour. It is only intended to cover animals from the Member States and ultimately those from certain third countries where rabies does not exist or is under control. It is now accepted that this alternative system provides an equivalent level of safety to quarantine. Briefly, it involves: - electronically identifying the animals; - vaccinating them with an inactivated vaccine; - checking their immune response to vaccination by titration of antibodies, to be carried out more than six months prior to the movement. This draft Regulation is largely based on the alternative system adopted by the United Kingdom as regards the movement to Member States "historically free of rabies". Furthermore, vaccination is only required for movement between the Member States other than those referred to in the preceding paragraph. In line with a regional approach, the same rules applies to third countries and territories, such as Switzerland, that can be treated in the same way as the Community. At a later stage, the regulations applicable to cats and dogs from third countries should be tightened up and stricter controls applied to such movement. Since the disease is under control in all Member States, the introduction of animals from regions where rabies is endemic now constitutes the major risk of propagation. As regards such movement, this regulation lays down stricter provisions than those currently applied in certain continental Member States where titration of antibodies is not required (the test is among the recommendations of the International Animal Health Code of the International Office of Epizootics from infected countries).