

Ovine and caprine animals: registration and identification

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PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a Regulation on the identification and registration of sheep and goats. **CONTENT** : the European Commission has adopted a proposal for a Regulation on the identification and registration of sheep and goats, as part of its ongoing efforts to prevent the spread of animal diseases. Stopping animal disease epidemics requires quick action. To do this it must be possible to determine easily the place of origin of an animal as well as its movements throughout the EU. The proposed Regulation will reinforce current measures, specifically by introducing gradually in all Member States an identification system to mark each animal, making it possible to trace the individual movements of sheep and goats. To recall, Council Directive 92/102/EEC on the identification and registration of animals, introduces arrangements to identify and register bovine, ovine, caprine and porcine animals. One of the basic objectives of this Directive is the tracing of animals for veterinary purposes, which is of crucial importance for the control of contagious diseases. It must be possible to determine rapidly and conveniently the place of origin of an animal or carcass and its movements throughout the Community. The purpose of this is to prevent the further spread of diseases. In the interest of control of contagious diseases and the rapid tracing of animals in the event of an outbreak of a contagious disease, productive livestock must be adequately identified and registered according to the same requirements in all Member States. Experience and in particular the foot and mouth disease crisis has shown that the implementation of this Directive with regard to ovine and caprine animals has not been satisfactory. Therefore, it is proposed to introduce a Regulation for the identification and registration of ovine and caprine animals which will reinforce the provisions of the current Directive, in particular, with regard to the introduction in each Member State of an identification system that ensures that animals bear an identification mark and all movements are recorded, with the aim of tracing animals for health reasons. Furthermore, the system provides for the establishment of a computer database, which will include as a first step the central register of holdings and as a second step records of each separate movement of animals. For reasons of rapid and accurate tracing ovine and caprine animals must, throughout any movement, be identified and accompanied by a movement document. This proposal implies also an improvement of the information tools for sheep policy formulation and evaluation and this aspect has also been taken into account.