

## THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VETERINARY SERVICE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF ANIMALS AND ANIMALS PRODUCTS

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*ABSTRACT: International trade of animals and animals products occasionally leads to spread of infectious diseases and causes high economic losses in economies of endangered countries. That is the reason why correlation between international trade, animal health and epidemiologic situation got significant place in conclusions of Uruguay round of GATT multilateral international trade negotiations and during establishment of World Trade Organization (WTO). One of WTO establishing documents is Agreement of use of sanitary and phitosanitary measures (SPS), which sets basic rules of food safety and of animal health and animal-related products standards. The main purpose of SPS agreement is to allow free trade of agriculture products while recognizing right of each country to protect human, animal and plant health on its territory. This paper analyzes mutual relationship between animal trade and epidemiology, influence of veterinary service on animal health, risk analysis, regionalization and need for harmonization of our veterinary regulation with EC standards.*

**Key words:** veterinary service, animal trade, SPS agreement, risk analysis, harmonization

### INTRODUCTION

International trade in animals and animal products has always represented a risk of spreading of infectious diseases between countries, thus causing great economic damage for those countries. The occurrence of rinderpest in Belgium in 1920. indicated to a need for establishing, on an international level, of a certain body to coordinate the measures of disease control in the international trade in animals and animal products. By signing of the International Agreement by 28 countries, among which was our country too, in 1924. an International Office for Epizootic was founded (OIE), with its seat in Paris. Its main role was to inform the governments of member countries about the occurrence of animal diseases in the world, and about the need to take the measures of their suppression, then,

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to coordinate and control the course of animal diseases on an international level, and to coordinate law regulations in correlation with trade in animals and animal products.

The Uruguay phase of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) led to creation, in 1995, of World Trade Organization (WTO), by means of which prerequisites for liberalization of trade through reducing of customs tariffs and abolishing trade quotas for export and import of animals and animal products were created. While establishing the WTO, among the agreements, there is also an Agreement on the use of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS agreement), which sets the basic rules and technical standards for animal health care and safety of human food, which should be ensured by every member country. (WTO, 1999). Since technical regulatory rules in SPS agreement represent a kind of non-tariff barriers, in order to use the advantages of free trade and ensure the inclusion of our country into the world trade, it is necessary that we join the WTO. However, joining the WTO means that our country should sign the Agreement on stabilization and joining with EU, and to carry out harmonization of a set of law regulations in veterinary field. (Tesić et al., 2001., Pogacnik, 2001). The aim of this paper is to show the significance of veterinary service in controlling animal health and health safety of animal food, and the necessity of harmonization of existing legal acts in Serbian veterinary medicine.

### **The elements of the concept of SPS Agreement**

For many years, one of the most important ways of stopping of transmitting infectious diseases through trade, was the policy of avoiding the risk, or so called «zero-risk» policy. The essence of this policy was: «If you suspect to a disease, do not permit import». This concept was efficient when importing of a disease into the country was in question, but, at the same time, it often led to strict measures that were taken, although they didn't have a scientific ground, and they were usually used as preparation for free trade (Zepeda et al., 2001). That made veterinary experts, together with engineers, economists and statisticians search for new solutions, with a view to regulate certain standards in controlling animal health and course of the disease, which are provided by the SPS agreement. Some of the key words which are in this agreement are risk analysis, regionalization, harmonization, equivalence and transparency. Risk analysis and regionalization depend on the data acquired by systematic monitoring of epidemiologic condition. In that way, epidemiology becomes the key element, which enables meeting the requirements of WTO in regard of trade in animals and animal products, and harmonization, equivalence and transparency are the foundations of mutual trust between veterinary services in the international trade. (WTO, 1995).

Considering the fact that in correlation between epidemiology and international trade risk analysis has a significant role, it should be looked upon as on a process which consists of identifying the pathogen, risk assessment, risk elimination and reporting the risk. The process of risk analysis begins by identifying the pathogen. The first step is in preparing of a complete list of pathogens which are in correlation with «articles»\*. Identification of the pathogen can also begin with a request by the importing country to declare itself a country without a specific disease. Importing countries must define for

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\* according to OIE codex (OIE, 199), the term «article» refers to live animals, animal products, seed, embryos and pathologic material.

which diseases SPS measures can be taken, and that is done by defining of certain infectious diseases which are under the control program.

Risk assessment should be made for every cause, but in practice, the initial assessment is made for the most important diseases, and, if it is estimated that the risk is acceptable, then other cases are estimated too. In case of quantitative risk analysis, knowledge of theory of probability and statistical methods is necessary. In risk assessment, there are three correlated steps that should be analyzed separately – the analysis of releasing of pathogen, exposition analysis and outcome analysis. The SPS Agreement enabled regarding the problem of epidemiology, trade and risk analysis from the viewpoint of regionalization through certain «zones». Namely, within one state or region which is stricken by epidemic, there can be proclaimed an area free of disease, which is based upon geographic factors, veterinary infrastructure, and control of animal movement and supervision of the disease. This has created a possibility for export of «articles» from broader territory of the country, where there is no epidemic.

In order for the zones or regions to be proclaimed areas without disease, they have to meet internationally recognized criteria (OIE, 1999). One of the aims of risk analysis is to find the most appropriate measures for attaining the desired level of protection, that is, eliminating of risk. Decision analysis is a method which is very often used in these situations of risk elimination, and in that way contributes to liberalization of trade. This method integrates economic and biologic consequences, and a probability of an occurrence, and in that way helps optimize the options in decision making and risk elimination. (Leslie et al., 1999; Tesic et al., 2002).

### **The need for harmonization in Serbian veterinary medicine**

Modern experiences of developed countries have shown that harmonizing of veterinary regulations and carrying out of certain standard is necessary, so that domestic and international trade would go on as efficiently as possible, thus preserving animal health and health safety of human food. (Nedic, 2001; Pogacnik, 2001). Veterinary regulations should provide appropriate standards for animals and their well-being in breeding, production, nutrition, manipulation and transport of animals to slaughter, procedure during slaughtering and meat packing, inspection, and putting animal food into sale. European legislation in veterinary field and field of plant protection comprises around 1000 different measures, of which there are 160 main directives and measures that have to be implemented in everyday life.

Considering the abundance of work in part of harmonizing veterinary regulations with EU regulations, gradualness in their making is a guarantee that Serbian veterinary medicine finishes this very serious job as well as possible. However, having in mind the seriousness, and dispersion of certain fields of veterinary medicine, while considering them and putting them into legal framework, special attention should be paid to the following questions:

1. The system of control in veterinary medicine comprises the following data:
  - non-discriminatory veterinary examination during the transport and in the place of expiration,
  - establishing of a register of dealers in animals and animal products in domestic and international trade,

- to anticipate protective measures of other countries with all means, including trade ban from different regions, in case of occurrence of an infectious disease,
  - legal ground for urgent reaction of the veterinary service within the system of the Common European Market-Veterinary Department, ban of import, export and transit through the country, in case of occurrence and suppression of infectious diseases,
  - accepting of the ANIMO system, by means of which monitoring of shipments of live animals through the territory of EU is enabled, through global information system of border veterinary inspection and regional veterinary inspections within the EU.
2. Identification and registration of animals, with a detailed plan of measures and arrangement according to the following:
    - current condition, in correlation with registration and identification of animals-an ox, a swine, a sheep, a cow,
    - measures for providing of registration of animal movement and the registration of imported animals,
    - current procedures and drafts in correlation with health certificates for the animals,
    - precise state in correlation with organization of the information system and data base for identification and registration of animals
  3. Financing of veterinary supervision and veterinary examination-administrative taxes that are charged on the basis of veterinary law for various certificates, health certificates, licences and veterinary-sanitary inspections.
  4. Border veterinary control and international trade in live animals and animal products from the third countries while entering the country or EU-quarantine, monitoring of imported shipments, medical certificates.
  5. Additional expenses in field of veterinary medicine in cases of an outbreak of larger epidemics, providing of finances, distribution, and paying damages to the owners.
  6. Measures of supervision and notification about the occurrence of epidemic, according to the ADNS system (Animal Disease Notification System) – notification about the occurrence, or suspicion to an epidemic, that is, contagion.
  7. System of certification of medical records, within which strict organization is required, and control of printing, signing and keeping of the certificate about health condition of animals.
  8. System of public health care-harmonizing of the legal order in correlation with ensuring health safety, hygiene and quality standards in sections of animal food which are used for human nutrition:
    - supervision over animal food is performed by veterinary inspection,
    - enable production and domestic trade in animal food on the basis of HACCP system (Hazard Analysis critical control points),
    - to enable transparency about safety and quality of food for consumers,
    - control of the use of medicines, hormones and other active substances in animal nutrition and husbandry,

- providing conditions for production and trade in veterinary premises.
9. Protection of animals in production and trade, means the analysis of state of cattle production, of plans and restructuring of cattle breeding and providing finances for that, as well as providing a legal ground for animal protection in domestic trade and supervision in transit-loading, unloading and reloading.

## CONCLUSION

Epidemiologic condition has always been in close correlation with the international trade in animals and animal products, which is officially inaugurated too, in SPS agreement of the WTO. Nowadays most of the countries accept that fact, and work on perfecting the system of organization of veterinary service, risk analysis and regionalization, when formulating national strategies of control of animal health. Harmonization of veterinary regulations in Serbia With the EU regulations should be systematic, gradual and efficient. By acting in that way we will create the foundation for free trade in animals and animal products with all the countries, and, first of all, with member countries of the EU.

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