



**WBFSH meeting with EU Commission
23rd August 2018 in Brussels**

Time schedule: 14h30-15h30 (CEST)

Attendants:

Dr A. Fuessel (EU Commissioner)
Ms Ewa Camara (EU Commission)
Dr Klaus Miesner (WBFSH)
Nadine Brandtner (WBFSH)
Bérengère Lacroix (ANSF)

Background:

With advances in reproductive techniques and increasing difficulties with tracing semen sold and foals produced (i.e. were coverings paid per pregnancy or not – economic impact of new techniques), a working group was formed to try and develop a global tool for the harmonisation of covering certificates and semen sales

After an initial meeting of this working group in Schiphol on Thursday 28th June 2018 concluded with three aspects to investigate further:

1. Can EU legislation be applied to help develop a harmonised covering certificate?
2. Drafting a harmonised semen sales contract that should be used by all stallion owners and semen agents when semen is sold to ensure strict terms and conditions
3. A WBFSH central database to relate doses of semen sold to the number of foals registered in the WBFSH studbooks.

At this meeting it was suggested whether the model form for trade of semen could be suggested for inclusion in a harmonised covering certificate.

The current legislation lays down that the zootechnical certificate for trade of semen in purebred breeding animals consists of two parts:

- Part A – refers to the donor stallion
- Part B – refers to the semen itself

Discussion:

Historically studbooks issued covering certificates at the time of the mare being covered by a stallion registered in their studbook, to ensure that the foal would be registered with them once born. The covering certificate therefore served as a proof of covering and pedigree verification. Since the onset of DNA-testing, covering certificates are no longer the only form of pedigree verification.

Studbooks are not able to issue covering certificates for stallions that are not licensed and/or in their register. Although one would want to discourage breeding with an unlicensed stallion, these days mare owners more commonly make their own breeding decisions, for example using an unlicensed stallion that excels in sport. And these foals must still be eligible for registration in a studbook. The EU legislation caters for this (provided the foal's pedigree can be verified) and the "Körzwang" (obligation to license a stallion) has been removed. Therefore, it is not necessary anymore to present or license a stallion according to the "usual" procedure. But studbooks may award licensing status later in life, for example based on performance in sport.

A system with covering cards exists in France, where the central authority (IFCE) issues blank covering cards (now online) to stallion owners or keepers for recognised stallions. The system is such that mare owners will only receive a birth notification for their foal (or be able to register it), if they have produced a covering certificate that they received from the stallion owner/keeper. On the one hand this system favours the stallion owners, as they are protected from unpaid coverings. On the other hand, the system can be considered as a form of regulation of breeding (or "discrimination"), because only stallions recognised by the central authority will be issued covering cards and be allowed to breed. In essence this goes against the legislation, which states that the pedigree needs to be verified (but method of verification is not stipulated). However, the EU Commissioner recognises the merit of this system in a structured breeding program and admitted that this system does function well.

Covering certificate or not, Dr Füssel pointed out that tracking semen doses sold and cross-referencing these with foals produced/registered in studbooks (for example in a potential database) is not a fool-proof method either. The fertility rate is not 100%, therefore in the hypothetical, ideal scenario of 100 doses sold of a stallion, all those doses being inseminated in that year and leading to 100 foals is highly unlikely. It is not easy to draw simple conclusions by comparing doses sold to foals produced. Nadine Brandtner added that frozen semen is also often not used in the same year, or embryos produced might be frozen and stored, therefore will not register as foals in a database until much later.

Conclusion:

The EU legislation is designed to ensure that semen traded is free of disease and it was not designed to cater for the use of semen with different reproductive techniques.

Furthermore, EU legislation requires that foals have a verified pedigree at registration, e.g. by DNA verification, or by covering certificate – the covering certificate not being mandatory though. To use the legislation to introduce

covering certificates, by basing them on the zootechnical certificate for the trade of semen of purebred animals, is therefore not a possibility.

It was suggested that more attention should be placed in a solid contract between the seller and the buyer, stipulating strict conditions of use of the semen sold. The issue of how to track whether these sales contracts are adhered to is beyond the scope of the discussion that took place in Brussels with the EU Commissioner.