

Animal Health: EU experts further assess the state of play on “Schmallenberg Virus”

European Commission and Member States experts discussed the latest developments on the Schmallenberg virus (SBV) situation in the EU at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health held on 8 and 9 March in Brussels. This virus has been detected in **seven Member States**: 205 cases in Belgium, 879 in Germany, 486 in France 1 in Italy, 7 in Luxembourg, 143 in the Netherlands and 121 in the UK. The [European Food Safety Authority](#) (EFSA) report of 6 February, predicted a significant decline in the number of cases detected in small ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) and a slight increase in the number of malformed calves due to SBV. Developments over the last few weeks confirmed this assessment. Information presented by Member States also confirmed that SBV is behaving like other viruses belonging to the Simbu serogroup of the Bunyaviridae family to which SBV belongs. In fact, data recently gathered by Member States (in particular Belgium and the Netherlands) indicated that the impact of SBV is limited also in cattle (few calves were lost compared with the number of cows that delivered) despite the preliminary data suggesting that a very high percentage of farms (seroprevalence) that have been infected, probably during summer and autumn 2011 with SBV. Based on the technical discussions, both Member States and the Commission re-affirmed that there is no reason to deal with this virus with measures different to those applied to similar viruses (e.g. Akabane virus present in Japan or Australia) and therefore no EU veterinary measure is being envisaged. Trade import restrictions by third countries were also discussed. The Commission and the Member States exchanged information on the state of play of the trade restrictions imposed and requests of information by trade partners from third countries. The Committee maintained the firm position that any trade restriction or request for additional certification on live animals or their products due to the occurrence of SBV in the EU are considered as **disproportionate and scientifically unjustified**. The EU remains united and strong on this issue and further steps are being undertaken by the Member States to keep the situation under constant assessment and to fill the knowledge gaps by means of targeted scientific studies that will be co-financed by the EU. For more information: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/schmallenberg_virus/index_en.htm