



3 September 2012

## BIOSECURITY ADVICE 2012/20

### **IMPORTATION OF COMMERCIAL RABBITS (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) FROM CERTAIN MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: POLICY REVIEW OF EPIZOOTIC RABBIT ENTEROPATHY**

This Biosecurity Advice notifies stakeholders of a policy review and revised biosecurity requirements for the importation of commercial rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) from certain Member States<sup>1</sup> of the European Union.

Animal Biosecurity conducted a policy review of epizootic rabbit enteropathy (ERE) for the importation of commercial rabbits from the European Union as available scientific information indicates that biosecurity measures for ERE are no longer required.

The import policy for commercial rabbits from certain Member States of the European Union<sup>1</sup> was published on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) website on 30 November 2000 (AQPM 2000/33). The conditions were developed following suspension of imports in 1997. Imports were suspended at that time because of the emergence of a new, apparently infectious, disease referred to as epizootic rabbit enterocolitis in France in 1996. Following initial research, the name of this disease was changed to epizootic rabbit enteropathy (ERE) to reflect the lack of inflammatory lesions in the intestines.

Since the initial outbreak of ERE, research has focused on identification of an infectious cause. To date no disease agent has been identified. There are no reports of ERE outside Europe, despite other countries not having import restrictions for ERE and likely to have imported rabbits from Europe.

The review of relevant scientific information on ERE is provided at Attachment 1. The revised *Biosecurity requirements for the importation of commercial rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) from certain Member States of the European Union* is provided at Attachment 2.

The revised import policy differs from the previous requirements in the following respects:

- The detailed pre-export strategy, including the use of sentinel rabbits, has been removed and replaced with a simplified 30 day pre-export quarantine strategy.
- The post-entry quarantine requirement has been reduced to 14 days and the quarantine surveillance requirement has been removed.
- Other minor changes have been made to the policy for clarity and ease of certification in line with current biosecurity policies.

<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should contact Animal Biosecurity at [animal@daff.gov.au](mailto:animal@daff.gov.au). Information on risk assessments and policy reviews being conducted by Animal Biosecurity are available on the Department's website.

Animal Biosecurity  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
GPO Box 858  
CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Telephone: +61 2 6272 4465  
Facsimile: +61 2 6272 3399  
Email: [animal@daff.gov.au](mailto:animal@daff.gov.au)



Andrew Cupit  
Assistant Secretary  
Animal Biosecurity