



INFO LETTER MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

There are some issues that need to be taken seriously by all those involved in the industry and addressed through concerted efforts. The current debate and the reports in the media on the use of antibiotics in livestock farming and resistant germs are challenges that concern the entire supply chain.

The QS scheme is launching its antibiotics monitoring programme on March 1, 2012. The key elements in this monitoring process are outlined in this issue of the Info Letter, which

also features an interview on this topic with Dr. Hans-Joachim Götz, President of the German Association of Practising Veterinarians (bpt) on page 3.

Over the next three years, we will be taking a pro-active stance with the "QS-live. Quality Assurance Initiative". This consumer information campaign supported by the EU was launched in February (see page 2).

We wish you informative reading,
Your QS Team

ANTIBIOTICS MONITORING IN THE QS SCHEME PRESENTING FACTS AND DEFINING FIELDS OF ACTION



The Antibiotics Monitoring Guideline comes into effect on March 1, 2012 and will pave the way for the compilation of robust and reliable data which will help to optimize the use of antibiotics in livestock farming operations. The monitoring programme will initially cover fattening poultry and will then be extended to include pig fattening in the autumn.

Diseased animals need to be treated, and antibiotics play an important role in this treatment. However, recent studies and media reports on the use of antibiotics in animal feed are more likely to increase uncertainty among consumers than to promote factual information – also due to

of antibiotics in agriculture to the absolute minimum", says QS Managing Director Dr. Hermann-Josef Nienhoff.

Last year, the advisory boards for poultry, as well as beef, veal and pork decided to document all use of antibiotics in a central database in order to allow comprehensive evaluations. The aim is to identify the need for action and advice at the farms and to gain an overview of actual antibiotic use in the production chain. Data protection always takes top priority in this process. The antibiotics database is the centrepiece of the monitoring system. It forges links with the infrastructures put in place by QS for tasks like salmonella mo-

the lack of robust cross-business data.

"The industry takes the concerns of consumers seriously when it comes to the use of antibiotics in animal feed and the emergence of resistant pathogens. The aim of antibiotics monitoring in the QS scheme is to help to reduce the use

monitoring, and this saves money that would otherwise have to be spent on cost-intensive new systems. Moreover, the use of existing interfaces reduces the documentation timeload.

Farmers and veterinarians are jointly responsible for data recording: all livestock producers register the number of livestock places per production mode, while poultry producers also register the livestock entry and exit dates. The coordinator can be tasked with the input of this data, but the final responsibility for entries remains with the farmer. The vet documents the dispensation date of the medication, the designation of the medication, the duration of medication administration, the number of animals treated and the quantity of medication dispensed. In future, vets who prescribe antibiotics for livestock production businesses in the QS scheme must be registered with the database and sign a statement of undertaking. Active data recording is scheduled to begin on April 1, 2012.

You can read more about this topic in the interview on page 3 with Dr. Hans-Joachim Götz, President of the German Association of Practising Veterinarians.

DATABASE NEW FUNCTIONALITIES ENHANCE USER-FRIENDLINESS



The last update of the QS database at the beginning of January 2012 added new search functions and customizable database queries.

Scheme participants have been able to use a number of new functionalities in the QS database since the beginning of January. They can now enter the location numbers of recipients and suppliers individually in the “Master data” menu or upload all these numbers to the database in a single action. Automatic comparison with the database shows the **eligibility to supply status** of all entered locations, rendering a manual search for current delivery eligibility unnecessary.

The database automatically reviews the delivery eligibility of these locations and informs you via e-mail whether entered recipients or suppliers have lost or obtained eligibility to supply to the

QS scheme. It is now easier for scheme participants to search for companies from the feed sector. **Premix and additive producers** can now also be found via the scheme participant search feature in the database. The hits for feed material producers additionally show the product range. The changes and adjustments were made in response to the suggestions of many users and make it easier to use the system: this saves time and money.

If you have any questions regarding the database, the team of experts at QS head office is on hand to provide advice and assistance.

INFORMATION CAMPAIGN QS-LIVE GOES LIVE

With its “QS-live. Quality Assurance Initiative”, QS is launching a three-year information campaign designed to further raise consumer awareness for the QS certification mark and explain how it can help consumers to make informed decisions when buying food products. The consumer campaign is funded by the EU to the tune of 750,000 euros and focuses on topics like quality, safety and hygiene.



The aim of the initiative is to make consumers aware of the QS scheme and inform them about the responsible production and marketing of meat, fruit and vegetables. A further goal is to emphasize how important it is to handle fresh food in the proper way, as correct handling, painstaking hygiene and proper storage are also key elements in the various stages that food passes through on

its way from the shop where it was purchased to the plate on the table. This is an area in which QS cooperates with various organizations, such as the German Association of Rural Women (Deutscher LandFrauenverband), who – like the “Quality Assurance Initiative” – are strong supporters of nutritional and consumer education. The centrepiece of the campaign is the **interactive Internet website**

“QS-live.de”, which was presented to the public at the Fruit Logistica for the first time. The website enables consumers to take a look behind the scenes at the proactive quality assurance measures that are in place throughout the entire supply chain: the members of the “Quality Assurance Initiative” will use QS-live to report on their day-to-day operations in “their” scheme stage as representatives of the over 130,000 scheme participants. Consumers will be able to find out exactly which inspections are performed where and learn how all the parties involved do everything they can to ensure food quality and safety.

QS-live.de also features a wide range of infotainment content – complete with blog, promotions, news, prize competitions, recipes and product tips for fresh food bearing the blue certification mark.

FEED SPECIFICATION OF VVVO NUMBERS FOR BULK FEED



In future, feed suppliers will have to request the VVVO number from their customers and list this number in the accompanying documents such as the delivery note. This measure will initially apply to bulk feed and has been implemented in response to last year's dioxin-related events.

The measure will further optimize traceability and crisis management in the QS scheme. The VVVO number (see info box) will match compound feed deliveries to the delivery destination, making it easier to identify specific products allocation. This procedure is not mandatory for bulk compound feed, sacked products or cash sale goods but is recommended by QS. The procedure for recording of numbers and allocation of feed consignments should be up and running at the earliest possible date. The faster the ERP systems are aligned to this new procedure, the sooner we will be able to reap the full benefits of the new process – which include saving valuable time in the event of a crisis and **fast and reliable identification of the group of farms who received the consignments in question**. All feed producers and traders who sell feed

directly to farmers must actively request the VVVO numbers as of December 31, 2012 at the latest. Farmers should therefore always have their VVVO number to hand. The farmer bears sole responsibility for ensuring that the VVVO number is correct. The provision also covers locations in other countries, where businesses have a similar number (e.g. the UBN number in the Netherlands). There are plans to review this provision in the audits from 2013 onwards.

The 15-digit VVVO number (“Livestock Transport Regulation” number) is assigned by the competent authorities. It corresponds to the “Hi-Tier” farm/livestock identification number and also forms the basis for identification of an agricultural location in the QS scheme. Farming operations with more than one location have more than one VVVO number.

ANTIBIOTICS MONITORING AN INDUSTRY INITIATIVE



Vets are important partners in the QS antibiotics monitoring programme. In the following interview, Dr. Hans-Joachim Götz, President of bpt – the German Association of Practicing Veterinarians – talks about the reasons for the use of antibiotics in livestock farming.

Dr. Götz, some accuse your colleagues of prescribing too many antibiotics. How do you respond to these accusations?

The use of antibiotics in the field of livestock management is currently the subject of heated debate, but it is simply not the case that intensive livestock farming and large numbers of animals automatically equal uncontrolled and massive use of antibiotics. This is also the finding of studies conducted in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony. The reality is that antibiotics may only be used to treat bacterial infections based on the diagnosis and instructions of a vet. The use of these medications to promote fattening or prevent infection has long been banned in Germany. For almost 10 years now, the profession has been drawing up concrete recommendations for action in the form of antibiotics guidelines in order to promote the careful use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine. These recommendations reflect the current state of scientific knowledge in the field, and – together with the strict provisions of the German Medicines Act – they serve as a model for the rest of Europe. Nevertheless, the accusations levelled at the vets show that we need to tackle

these issues head-on and improve the way we explain the interrelationships between livestock farming, animal health, veterinary care and, naturally, the use of antibiotics.

You have called for greater transparency and improved monitoring systems for the use of antibiotics in livestock farming. Could you give us some specifics?

If the broiler study in North Rhine-Westphalia showed anything, it was that full-coverage analysis of the use of antibiotics based on the documentation in the inventory books of the farm businesses is indeed possible. Regrettably, no such analysis has been performed to date, and it appears that all previous documentation efforts were merely for the filing cabinet. We need to make this data transparent so that we can answer the following questions, even in the field of primary production: what is the status of the sector in this regard and what is the position of the individual farms and vets within the overall system? Is their performance below or above average? The answers to these questions would enable us to rapidly identify the need for action at individual farms. It would be possible to recognize and remedy risks faster than we can at present. We need this kind of antibiotics monitoring in the various production areas so that we can create transparency for ourselves, and we need it as soon as possible. The details specified in the usage and dispensation receipts and the data from the farm on livestock numbers form the basis for this process. Comparable reference data for substance groups and scope of use are essential for evaluation purposes and to allow international comparisons. The only people who can provide this data rapidly and efficiently are

the involved parties themselves – namely, the farmers and the vets.

Consumers are worried about resistances. Terms like MRSA and ESBL are making the rounds in the media. What do they mean? Should we be concerned?

The occurrence of bacterial resistances to antibiotics and the selection and spread of these resistances is a serious problem in the field of human and veterinary medicine. As the GERMAP resistance atlas shows, the situation in German veterinary medicine is certainly serious in international terms but by no means out of control. All the relevant parties are aware of their responsibility and fully support Germany's DART antibiotics resistance strategy. In the media, however, and in some areas of the political debate, MRSA and ESBL are now being portrayed as absolute "killer bacteria" against which we are all helpless. Emotionalising the problem in this way is anything but helpful, as falsely pointing the finger at farmyard stalls and veterinarians makes it more difficult rather than easier to find a solution to the resistance problem. MRSA and ESBL germs occur everywhere and cannot be avoided. It is virtually impossible to establish how and where they emerged. What is certain, however, is that they are selected through the use of antibiotics in human and veterinary medicine. What we also know is that they are only dangerous as a result of infection due to lack of hygiene in the area of patient care, as they pose a particular risk to the seriously ill, the old and infants. Hospitals in the Netherlands have reduced the problem by two thirds through the implementation of systematic hygiene measures.

SPOT AUDITS IN 2012 THE POULTRY SECTOR TAKES THE FIRST STEP



Beginning in 2013, unannounced checks, so-called spot audits, will be introduced in the QS scheme for all livestock producers. The first step in this direction is already being taken this year: based on an initiative of the German poultry sector, QS is conducting around 1,200 spot audits in 2012.

The spot audits began in February and take place at locations in Germany registered in the agriculture-poultry stage of the QS scheme. The costs are borne by the poultry sector. The check list used in the spot audits was approved at the January meeting of the advisory board for poultry and attaches particular importance to the following issues:

Animal welfare: monitoring and care, husbandry requirements (climate control, lighting, emergency power and alarm systems), stocking density/inventory records, loading and unloading devices.

Hygiene: buildings and facilities, hygiene sluices, waste disposal, biosafety measures (litter and carcass storage, pest control).

Medication: storage of medications and vaccines.

Feed: safety and cleanliness of feed and water, hygiene of feed lines and drinking troughs, hygiene of feed storage.

What applies to all audits also applies to the spot audits: where requirements are not met, corrective measures have to be initiated, and the sanctions for serious violations extend all the way through to withdrawal of the eligibility to supply to the QS scheme.

Quality Assurance. From farm to shop.

INTERNATIONAL GREEN WEEK 2012 COMMUNICATING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE INDUSTRY

Over 420,000 visitors came to the International Green Week (IGW) in Berlin from January 20 to 29. The companies and associations present at the event not only served a wide range of culinary delights but also used the ErlebnisBauernhof (“Farm Experience”) format to show how safe, high-quality food is produced. QS also played a part through its involvement in the McDonald’s stand.

Using the example of a model farm – called the “Flagshipfarm” by McDonald’s – employees of

QS and McDonald’s showed how quality assurance works in the case of beef. In a setting complete with show kitchens and real livestock, consumers, politicians and experts learned about the efforts the industry makes on a daily basis to produce safe and high-quality food products. The participants at the “27th Fresh Produce Forum – Meat”, one of the supporting events at the International Green Week, agreed that the sector needs to join forces to communicate these efforts more effectively. Speaking about the communication strategy of the industry, QS



Managing Director Dr. Hermann-Josef Nienhoff emphasized that “inaction harms the sector; we need to work together to actively address important issues.”

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS LATEST FIGURES

The meat and meat products stage currently comprises 106,017 scheme participants, 7,162 (roughly 7%) of whom are based outside Germany. This figure is 737 lower year on year, mainly as a result of structural change in the agricultural sector.

There was encouraging growth in the feed (plus 150) and livestock transport (plus 188) sectors. Following the extension of GMP approval last year, an additional 1,055 businesses in the feed material production and the feed trading, transport and storage sectors have been granted eligibility to supply to the QS scheme.

In the agriculture stage, there was growth in the number of poultry producers compared to the previous year (plus 213).

Stage	Total 106,017	Of which abroad 7,162
Feed	3,264	408
- Feed material Produktion ^{1,2}	1,157	103
- Compound feed ³	1,237	256
- Trading, Transport, Storage ¹	870	49
Agriculture	76,947	6,299
- Cattle farming ⁴	30,632	6
- Pig farming ⁵	42,375	4,798
- Poultry production	3,940	1,495
Livestock transport	1,694	86
Slaughtering/deboning	398	43
Processing	264	10
Food Retail⁶	23,450	316

1. Additionally eligible on the basis of recognition of their GMP certification: 1,055 businesses
2. Includes 48 producers of additives and premixes
3. Includes 531 mobile feed milling and mixing plants
4. Additionally eligible for the supply of slaughtering cows: 29,160 businesses via QM Milk Auditing
5. Additionally eligible on the basis of scheme recognition: 7,443 businesses QSG (DK) and 2,178 businesses Certus (B)
6. Includes 142 meat wholesale businesses

+++ NEWS IN BRIEF +++



QS blog

QS is expanding its online presence in the field of social media, and users can now post comments on topical issues and articles at www.qs-blog.de. With this new feature, we would like to invite all scheme participants and interested parties to engage in factual discussion on the topic of safe food.

Additives now have to be QS certified

QS is taking further steps to ensure feed safety. As of January 1, 2012, only additives and premixes approved for the QS scheme may be used in feed production. Additives and premixes may only be supplied by producers, traders, importers or freight forwarders who possess a supply authorization for the QS scheme.



Changes at head office

Mareike Kistemaker joined the Communication/PR team at QS at the beginning of January and is the contact person for all media representatives.

Short factfile on MRSA and ESBL

QS is interested in promoting a factual discussion on the topic of antibiotic resistance and has compiled a brief factfile on MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus) and ESBL (extended-spectrum beta-lactamases). The factfile can be downloaded from the QS website.

Feed products: new supporting documents

QS has compiled supporting documents to facilitate article-based labeling of feed in the QS scheme.

These documents are available in the download centre of the QS website.

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