



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 15 February 2010

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NOTE

from : Dutch delegation
to : Council
Subject : Q fever

Delegations will find attached a note submitted by the Dutch delegation to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 22 February 2010.

Considering the international attention, the Netherlands would like to inform the Council on the Q fever situation in the Netherlands and the measures taken to control the outbreak.

Q fever is an animal disease caused by the *Coxiella burnetii* microbe. It is found all over the world. Almost all farm animals can be infected but pets, rodents and birds can also get the disease.

Q fever is a zoonosis. This means that it may spread from animals to humans. The Q stands for Query or Question mark, which means that a lot is still unknown about this disease. Most people who get Q fever will not show any signs of the illness or if they do, the symptoms are flu-like. In most cases the illness lasts less than two weeks and complications (inflammation of the lungs or chronic problems) are rare.

In 2007, 2008 and 2009 the south of the Netherlands suddenly saw a rise in Q fever outbreaks in humans. Up to 2007 an average 20 human Q fever cases were reported every year. In 2008 this number rose to 1000 and in 2009 more than 2000 people fell ill. People usually get infected by breathing in the Q fever microbe and studies showed that the disease spread around large dairy goat or dairy sheep farms with infected animals.

Q fever control measures have been in place since 2007. By the end of 2009 the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Health announced a package of additional measures, including a cull of all pregnant goats on infected farms to reduce the risk to public health. This approach has received a great deal of attention from Parliament, the media and people in society.

The Q fever situation that has occurred in the Netherlands is the first in its kind. Never before has it seen so many people infected with Q fever. Other countries are closely monitoring the situation and the Netherlands ensures Member States are kept informed through the SCOFCAH (Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health). On 25 and 26 February 2010 the Netherlands is also going to organise a symposium, together with the European Food Safety Authority, with the aim to exchange the current knowledge on Q fever and discuss the situation. International experts have been invited.