

10 Sept. Suceava Romania

Report of the Foot and Mouth Disease Seminar and Simulation Exercise held in Suceava, Romania, 7 – 10 September 2009.

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Introduction

The foot and mouth disease (FMD) seminar and simulation exercise organized by the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA), Romania had the aim:

To test the contingency plan (CP) and the operational manual on local level mainly involving field and Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) activities
To test the response capacity of the County CSVFSD to an outbreak of FMD
To test the capacity of working together of the NSVFSA and County Inspectorate for Emergency Situation within LDCC

The County of Suceava has a large population of cattle and the place was well chosen for the simulation exercise.

The event was supported by TAIEX

Participants

The Seminar and simulation exercise was attended by a total of more than 120 participants. The participants were representing the NSVFSA at Central and County level, the Institute for Diagnosis and Animal health, Suceava County and the County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations.

From abroad there were veterinarians coming from Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Moldova and the United Kingdom

Place of event

Gura Humorului, Suceava, Romania

General Observations

Information on the different sessions of the event is given below

The Seminar on Foot and Mouth Diseases – 7 September

The presentations announced in the program were all delivered by well developed and illustrative PowerPoint presentations. The presentations covered the topics of:

- FMD virology and epidemiology
- Clinical signs and diagnostic methods
- The EU FMD legislation
- The Romanian FMD contingency Plan and Operational Manual
- The availability of maps in Romania useful for the implementation of control measures
- Experience obtained from FMD outbreaks in the UK
- A risk analysis regarding the appearance of FMD in Romania
- Conditions for trade in livestock
- Vaccination against FMD

A number of issues highlighted by the speakers were subjects for exchange of views and discussions in the intervals between presentations.

The FMD simulation exercise

The FMD simulation exercise consisted of 3 different phases. These phases were:

Phase I covering the demonstration of the actions and measures taken in relation to a primary outbreak.

Phase II involved the participants in analytical work and decision making with regard to actions and measures to be taken in relation to the suspicion and confirmation of FMD outbreaks.

Phase III involved the participants in analytical work and decision making with regard to actions and measures to be applied for regaining FMD free status

The FMD simulation exercise – 8 September

Phase I of the simulation exercise was introduced in the morning session to the participants with regard to the measures to be taken in relation to a FMD suspicion and a FMD primary outbreak in the Commune of Manastiera Humorului located in the County of Suceava.

The introductory part was based on a number of videos covering, respectively:

- The activities carried out in Manastiera Humorului in relation to a FMD suspicion
- The laboratory diagnostic procedures for samples coming from the field
- The activities carried out in Manastiera Humorului in relation to a FMD outbreak
- The clinical signs of FMD in animals infected under experimental conditions
- Different methods of killing animals at infected premises

The intervals between the presentations of the videos were used for constructive discussion of the different technical issues highlighted in the videos. The excellent videos prepared by NSVFSA concerning the activities carried out and FMD control measures

applied in Manastiera Humoruli were in particular subjected to lively and valuable discussions.

The afternoon session included a visit to the Centre for Intervention in the Field established within the LDCC of Suceava County. A guided tour was made of the facilities. The facilities have been prepared for during disease outbreaks:

- to receive field samples,
- to label and send specimens to the laboratory,
- to handle epidemiological data,
- to handle data related to payments for compensations to farmers

The Centre has facilities for field staff to take showers, move from “dirty area” to “clean area” and furthermore accommodation facilities for field veterinarians. The accommodation facilities shown during the tour were all located at the ground floor and prepared for up to 5 field veterinarians, but space at the first, second and third floor may in the future be used if deemed necessary.

The FMD simulation exercise – 9 September

Morning session

The scenario for the simulated disease situation related to secondary FMD outbreaks in Suceava County (Phase II) was presented in plenum. The participants could after the presentation immediately start the analytical work and decision making related to the tasks given to the different working groups. The tasks given to the 6 groups were in particular related to:

- The establishment of protection and surveillance zones
- Killing of animals and disposal of carcasses
- Vaccination against FMD
- Epidemiological investigations
- Communication during FMD outbreaks
- Movement controls

The results from the work carried out in the different working groups were presented in plenum at the end of the morning session. The presentations made by the different groups reflected the active discussions and constructive work performed in the groups. It was in particular highlighted that the participants were able to take decisions at the time of crisis

Afternoon session

The afternoon session dealt with Phase III of the simulation exercise. The group work had focus on:

- Cleansing and disinfection methods
- Lifting of restrictions established due to FMD outbreaks – Technical and administrative aspects
- Regaining of FMD free status after disease eradication by use of emergency vaccination

- Restocking of depopulated farms due to FMD outbreaks
- Lifting of restrictions established in the protection and surveillance zone
- Movement controls in protection and surveillance zones

The outcome of the activities performed in the working groups were presented in plenum. It was evident from the presentations that a close cooperation between the CSVFSD and the County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations during outbreaks was desirable and very important.

The FMD simulation exercise – 10 September

The session on 10 September were designated to a thorough discussion of the 3 Phases of the FMD simulation exercise and to the preparation of conclusions and recommendations. The participants were invited to present their views on:

- What went well
- What went wrong
- What should be included in future simulation exercises.

Based on the views expressed by the participants it was possible to draw certain general observations, conclusions and recommendations listed below.

General observations

The simulation exercise was well prepared, well planned and it had clear objectives.

The simulation exercise was during the implementation very well guided and controlled by the supervisory team.

It was a challenge for the participants to be exposed to the importance of a good understanding of the duties to be handled by the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Sanitary Authority at central and county level and the County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, respectively in the event that FMD should enter Romania.

The participants were made familiar with the application of the FMD legislation and the control measures described in the Romania FMD Contingency Plan and Operational manual.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion

The FMD simulation exercise was successful. It highlighted the complexity of the issues associated with the application of control and eradication measures in the field in the event of FMD suspicions and outbreaks. It provided valuable training for veterinarians and others designated to be involved in the control and eradication of FMD.

Recommendations

It is generally agreed that simulation exercises are a practical, efficient and cost-effective way for organizations in the government and private sectors to prepare for emergency response and recovery. The exercises to be performed may include tabletop exercises, functional exercises and full scale exercises.

It is recommended that the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority make arrangements for simulation exercises at regular intervals which may include:

- (a) tabletop exercises* at central and at county level on selected topics such as the establishment of protection and surveillance zones, payment of compensation to farmers and the prediction of welfare problems at farms situated in restricted zones
- (b) functional exercises** which involves one or several counties. The exercises could relate to one or a few FMD outbreaks and include the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and an exercise could also be implemented with the focus on communication between different and within different authorities.
- (c) full-scale exercises***. Such exercises should simulate disease outbreaks as closely as possible.

It is evident that a good cooperation between the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority and the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations is essential in the fight against an exotic disease such as foot and mouth disease. **It is recommended** that the two organizations in the future jointly prepare and implement simulation exercises in particular functional exercises and full-scale exercises

***A tabletop exercise** simulates an emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment. The participants gather around a table to discuss general problems and procedures in the context of an emergency scenario. The focus is on training and familiarization with roles, procedures, or responsibilities.

****A functional exercise** is an exercise that tests the capability of an organization to respond to an event. It tests multiple functions of the organizations operational plan and focuses on the coordination and interaction of an organization's procedures during an event.

*****A full-scale exercise** simulates a real event as closely as possible. It is designed to evaluate the operational capability of emergency response and requires the mobilization and actual movement of emergency personnel, equipment and resources. It tests most functions of the contingency plan.