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Delegations will find attached the Annex to a draft Commission Regulation on the subject mentioned above.

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ANNEX

RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS OF THE EU REFERENCE LABORATORY FOR PESTE DES PETITS RUMINANTS

In addition to the general functions and duties of EU reference laboratories in the animal health sector laid down in Article 32(2) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 the EU reference laboratory for peste des petits ruminants shall have the following responsibilities and tasks:

1. to ensure liaison between the national reference laboratories of the Member States and to provide optimal methods for the diagnosis of peste des petits ruminants in livestock, specifically by:
 - (a) typing and full antigenic and genomic characterization, phylogenetic analysis (relationship with other strains of the same virus) of viruses and storing strains of peste des petits ruminants viruses to facilitate diagnosis services in the Union and, where relevant and necessary, for example, for epidemiological follow-ups or verification of diagnosis;
 - (b) building up and maintaining an up-to-date collection of strains and isolates of peste des petits ruminants viruses and specific sera and other reagents against the disease when or if available;
 - (c) harmonising the diagnosis and ensuring proficiency of testing within the Union by organising and operating periodic inter-laboratory comparative trials and external quality assurance exercises on the diagnosis of this disease at Union level and by the periodic transmission of the results of such trials to the Commission, the Member States, and the national reference laboratories concerned;
 - (d) retaining expertise on this disease to enable rapid differential diagnosis, in particular, with other relevant viral diseases;
 - (e) carrying out research studies with the objective of developing improved methods of disease control, in collaboration with national reference laboratories designated for this disease, and as agreed by the Commission;
 - (f) advising the Commission on scientific aspects related to peste des petits ruminants and, in particular, on the selection and use of peste des petits ruminants virus vaccine strains.
2. to support the functions of national reference laboratories of the Member States designated for the diagnosis of peste des petits ruminants, in particular by:
 - (a) storing and supplying standard sera and other reference reagents, such as viruses, inactivated antigens or cell lines, to these laboratories in order to standardise the diagnostic tests and the reagents used in each Member State, where identification of the agent and/or the use of serological tests are required;
 - (b) assisting actively in the diagnosis of diseases in connection with the suspicion and confirmation of outbreaks in Member States by receiving isolates of peste

des petits ruminants viruses for the purposes of confirmatory diagnosis, virus characterization and contributing to epidemiological investigations and studies. Communicating the results of these activities without delay to the Commission, as well as to the Member States and the national reference laboratories concerned.

3. to provide information and carry out further training, in particular by:
- (a) facilitating the provision of training, refresher courses and workshops for the benefit of national reference laboratories designated for the diagnosis of peste des petits ruminants and experts in laboratory diagnostics with a view to harmonising diagnostic techniques for this disease throughout the Union;
 - (b) participating in international forums concerning, in particular, the standardisation of analytical methods for this disease and their implementation;
 - (c) collaborating with the relevant competent laboratories in non-EU countries where this disease is prevalent as regards diagnosis methods for peste des petits ruminants;
 - (d) reviewing at the annual meeting of national reference laboratories designated for the diagnosis of peste des petits ruminants the relevant recommendations for testing laid down by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and in the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals;
 - (e) assisting the Commission in reviewing the OIE's recommendations laid down in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and in the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals;
 - (f) keeping abreast of developments in the epidemiology of peste des petits ruminants.