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FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT

CARRIED OUT IN

MEXICO

FROM 24 JUNE TO 04 JULY 2014

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE OPERATION OF CONTROLS OVER THE PRODUCTION OF FRESH HORSE MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS INTENDED FOR EXPORT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION, INCLUDING MONITORING OF RESIDUES AND CONTAMINANTS AS WELL AS CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

In response to information provided by the Competent Authority, any factual error noted in the draft report has been corrected; any clarification appears in the form of a footnote.

Executive Summary

The report describes the outcome of an audit carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in Mexico from 24 June to 4 July 2014. The objective of the audit was to evaluate the measures taken by the Mexican authorities to provide adequate guarantees for food safety and public health in relation to exports of horse meat to the European Union (EU) and to follow-up the recommendations of previous FVO audit reports.

The organisation of the Competent Authority (CA), the relevant national legislation and the system of official controls remain largely unchanged since the previous audits.

The identification of horses normally takes place in an assembly centre a few days before slaughter or, for horses from the United States of America (US), immediately before their dispatch to Mexico. Currently 87% of the horses slaughtered in the establishments approved for export to the EU are imported from the US.

Official controls on live horses, holding registration and animal identification are in place but they are limited to a few authorised assembly centres. The national suppliers to these centres (horse dealers, holdings, ejidos - communal grazing grounds), even if registered in the “el Padrón Ganadero Nacional”, are not controlled by the CA .

Horses in Mexico are, by default, not considered to be food producing animals until they have been designated for this purpose. Anabolic steroids and other substances which are prohibited for administration to food producing animals during their lifetime in the EU can be legally used in Mexico. Official controls on the distribution and use of veterinary medicinal products remain very weak. There is no requirement in Mexico (or the US) to keep treatment records on horse holdings. On the positive side, the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) has been largely implemented, and there have been no relevant residue findings in recent years, no findings at EU border inspection posts and no rapid alerts.

Upon arrival at the slaughterhouse horses from Mexico and the US are accompanied by owners' declarations/ affidavits (and passports for Mexican horses only) stating the medication history and a declaration on non-use of substances which are prohibited in the EU. However, there are no official controls in place to allow the CA to verify the authenticity and reliability of these documents for Mexican horses. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) does not take responsibility for the reliability of affidavits issued for horses originating in the US, and the FVO audit team found very many affidavits which were invalid or of questionable validity, but were nonetheless accepted. Moreover, the practices for issuing affidavits for Mexican horses as observed by the FVO audit team, were such that they could not reliably support the necessary guarantees.

The slaughterhouses visited were found to be generally compliant with the legal requirements (some minor deficiencies). With regard to the official controls in slaughterhouses, some deficiencies were noted in relation to post-mortem inspections in one of them and health marks were not properly designed in all three slaughterhouses. Examinations for Trichinella were generally acceptable. Regular supervisory visits are performed and documented by the CA. However, the conclusions and recommendations were not always consistent with the observations. Deadlines were given for the correction of non-conformities noted, but with one exception, no information was provided on addressing these deficiencies.

Given the availability of veterinary medicinal products prohibited in the EU, the lack of controls on live animals, the unreliability of the food chain information and weaknesses in the traceability systems in place, the CA is not in a position to provide all the necessary guarantees specified in the export certificates.

Post-mortem inspection records in two slaughterhouses indicate serious animal welfare problems during transport and/or at arrival to the slaughterhouses.

Action plans provided following the previous FVO audits have not been adequately implemented and the overall situation remains unsatisfactory. A number of recommendations are made to the CA with a view to addressing the deficiencies identified during this audit.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
CA(s)	Competent Authority(ies)
CCA(s)	Central Competent Authority(ies)
CEE	<i>Comunita Economica Europea</i> – European Economical Community
COFEPRIS	<i>Comisión Federal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios</i> - Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risks
DG(SANCO)	Health and Consumers Directorate-General
EC	European Community(ies)
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EU	European Union
Ejido	Communal grazing ground
FBO(s)	Food Business Operator(s)
Form 10-13	An owner/shipper declaration issued in the US stating fitness to travel to a slaughter facility
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
MRL	Maximum Residue Level
OIE	<i>Office International des Epizooties</i> - World Organisation for Animal Health
OISA	<i>Oficina de Inspeccion de Sanidad Agropecuaria</i> - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Offices
OV	Official Veterinarian
RFID	Radio Frequency Identifier
RMP	(National) Residue Monitoring Plan
SAGARPA	<i>Secretaria de Agricultura, Ganaderia, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación</i> - Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food
SENASICA	<i>Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria</i> - National Service for Health, Food Safety and Food Quality
SINIIGA	<i>Sistema Nacional de Identificación Individual del Ganado</i> - Organisation for the identification of livestock)

TIF	Tipo Inspeccion Federal (Federal Inspection Type, for establishments with industrial capacity and approved for export)
US	United States of America
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
2011 FVO audit report	Report DG(SANCO)/2011-8906: To evaluate the monitoring of residues and contaminants in live animals and animal products, including controls on Veterinary Medicinal Products
2012 FVO audit report	Report DG(SANCO)/2012-6340: To evaluate the operation of controls over the production of fresh horse meat and meat products intended for export to the European Union as well as certification procedures

1 INTRODUCTION

The audit took place in Mexico from 24 June to 4 July 2014 as part of the planned audit programme of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO). The audit team comprised three auditors from the FVO.

The FVO audit team was accompanied by representatives from the Central Competent Authority (CCA), the National Service for Health, Food Safety and Food Quality (*Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria*, - SENASICA) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (*Secretaria de Agricultura, Ganaderia, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación* - SAGARPA), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Offices (*Oficinas de Inspección de Sanidad Agropecuaria* – OISA).

The opening meeting was held on 24 June 2014 with the CCA in Mexico City. At this meeting the FVO audit team confirmed the objectives of, and itinerary for the audit, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the audit was requested.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the audit was to evaluate the measures taken by the Mexican authorities to provide adequate guarantees for food safety and public health in relation to exports of horse meat and meat products to the EU and to address the recommendations of previous FVO audit reports DG(SANCO)/2011-8906 and DG(SANCO)/2012-6340 .

The audit focused in particular on the:

- Review of the public health control systems in place over the production of horse meat including animal welfare during slaughter, sampling programmes and testing for *Trichinella* intended for export to the European Union (EU);
- Review of the traceability systems in place for the production of horse meat, including controls over the registration of holdings, animal identification and the movements of animals necessary for certification in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 206/2010;
- Review of the system in place for the monitoring of residues and contaminants in horse meat and meat products, including controls on veterinary medicinal products;
- Review of the systems for certification of animals and meat in relation to the requirements of Council Directive 96/93/EC.

The original scope of the audit included the review of the public health control systems in place over meat products intended for export. However, as no commercial exports of meat products took place in 2013 – 2014, establishments listed for export of meat products to the EU were not visited.

In pursuit of these objectives, the audit itinerary included the following:

Competent Authorities			Comments
Competent Authorities	Central	1	
	Regional	3	Officials met during visits to individual establishments and livestock holdings
	Local	3	
Food production / processing / distribution – Activities			
Slaughterhouses		3	
Cutting premises		3	Integrated with the slaughterhouses
Cold stores		2	Integrated with the slaughterhouses
Meat products establishments		0	
Horse assembly centres		4	3 authorised, 1 non-authorised for supply of horses to EU export slaughterhouses
Dealer's premises		1	
Laboratories		1	In-house <i>Trichinella</i> laboratory in 1 slaughterhouse

3 LEGAL BASIS

The audit was carried out under the general provisions of EU legislation and, in particular Article 46 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.

Full legal references are provided in Annex 1. Legal acts quoted in this report refer, where applicable, to the latest amended version.

4 BACKGROUND

Information regarding the animal health situation in Mexico can be found at the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) website: <http://web.oie.int/wahis/public.php?page=home>

Further specific information regarding the animal health situation in relation to horses can be found in the FVO report DG(SANC0)/2012-6387 which is accessible at the web-site indicated below.

The table below provides statistics on exports to the EU as well as the origin of the horses slaughtered for potential export to the EU:

	Origin of live horses			Meat exported to EU (in tonnes)
	US	Mexico	Total	
2010	73 173	7 126	82 309	8 085
2011	76 087	18 910	94 997	8 072
2012	105 775	19 542	125 317	9 564
2013	94 181	14 435	108 616	9 933
2014 (until 30 06 2014)	43 969	6 430	50 399	5 081

(Data provided by the CCA based on information from the food business operators (FBOs).

During 2013-2014 no commercial export of meat products to EU took place (in total 546 kg of samples were sent in 2014, and from 1 of the 2 establishments listed for export to the EU).

The previous FVO audit concerning the safety of food of animal origin in Mexico was carried out from 29 May to 8 June 2012 (DG(SANCO)2012-6340) (hereafter referred to as the 2012 FVO audit report). The previous FVO audit relevant to monitoring of residues and contaminants including controls on veterinary medicinal products was carried out from 8 to 17 November 2011 (DG(SANCO)2011-8906), (hereafter referred to as the 2011 FVO audit report).

These reports are accessible at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/index_en.cfm.

The action plans received from the Mexican authorities provided guarantees in response to the 2012 FVO audit report's five recommendations:

1. To take further measures to ensure the validity and authenticity of the affidavits for horses of Mexican origin slaughtered for export to the EU linked to their traceability. This is in order to guarantee that equivalent standards to those provided by Commission Regulation (EC) No 504/2008 and Council Directive 96/93/EC are applied;
2. To take measures to ensure the validity and authenticity of the affidavits for horses of US origin slaughtered for export to the EU linked to their traceability. This is in order to guarantee that equivalent standards to those provided by Commission Regulation (EC) No 504/2008 and Directive 96/93/EC are applied;
3. To take measures in order to ensure that the registered data in the various databases concerning horses imported from the US for slaughter for export to the EU are correct. This is in order to be able to verify the traceability of the horses and to certify the origin of the horses correctly as foreseen in point II.2 of the certificate "EQU" in part 2 of Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 206/2010;
4. To take measures in order to ensure that the registered data in the various databases concerning Mexican horses slaughtered for export to the EU are correct. This is in order to be able to verify the traceability of the horses and to certify the origin of the horses correctly as foreseen in point II.2 of of the certificate "EQU" in part 2 of Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 206/2010;

5. To take measures in order to ensure that the post-mortem examinations are carried out in compliance with Chapter II of Section I and Chapters III and IX of Section IV of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

At desk evaluation, the responses provided by the CA were found to be satisfactory for all five recommendations.

In relation to the 2011 FVO audit report, the Mexican authorities provided guarantees to all eight recommendations:

1. To ensure that information in the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) is accurate and the scope of testing includes all relevant substances on the market and the number of samples is sufficient, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
2. To ensure that sampling for residues is carried out in such a way as to guarantee their legal validity, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
3. To ensure that the follow-up of non-compliant results is always carried out by the CA and is effective, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
4. To ensure that all analytical methods used for the NRMP are validated, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
5. To ensure that commodities exported to the EU are not derived from animals treated with hormones or beta-agonists for growth promotion, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
6. To ensure that medicines records are kept for all animal species from which products are exported to the EU, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
7. In respect for the commodities exported to the EU, to ensure that national Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are established, in line with the provisions of the relevant EU legislation;
8. To ensure that controls on the distribution and use of veterinary medicinal products are carried out throughout the distribution chain.

At desk evaluation, the responses provided by the Mexican authorities were found to be satisfactory with the exception of the responses to recommendations No 5 and No 7.

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 LEGISLATION AND COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

Legal requirements

Article 46.1 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 stipulates that official controls by Commission experts in third countries shall verify compliance or equivalence of third country legislation and systems with EU feed and food law, and EU animal health legislation. These controls shall have particular regard to points (a) to (e) of the aforementioned Article. Point (g) is covered in section 5.2 of this report as regards horses.

Findings

5.1.1 Legislation

The national legislation remains largely as described in the 2012 FVO audit report.

Observations:

- The Implementing Regulation to the Federal Law on Animal Health, which was published on 21 May 2012, has entered into force. It laid down among other things, in Articles 214 to 234, specific requirements for export establishments.
- The Implementing Regulation concerning traceability of animals and their products (based on Articles 84 to 90 of the Federal Law on Animal Health) has entered into force.

5.1.2 Competent Authorities

5.1.2.1 Organisation of Competent Authorities

The SENASICA is the CA for the issues within the scope of the audit. The 2012 FVO audit report describes its organisation.

The SINIIGA (*Sistema Nacional de Identificación Individual del Ganado*) which acts under the SAGARPA is responsible for individual identification of Mexican horses with Radio Frequency Identifiers (RFIDs) before slaughter for export to the EU, and for registering the horses already identified in the central horse database, as well as cancelling its registration after slaughter. The SINIIGA completes the horse passports by adding the bar code related to the RFIDs.

The OISA is responsible for the verification of sanitary controls, within the scope of this audit, on horses, imported from the US, at the points of entry to Mexico.

Observations:

- The organisation of the CA remains virtually unchanged since the 2012 FVO audit report. The only exception is the recent (April 2014) relocation of some 160 officials from the central level to regional delegations of the SAGARPA in order to strengthen the regional official controls.

5.1.2.2 Competent Authorities' powers, independence and authority for enforcement

As described in the 2012 FVO audit report the Federal Law on Animal Health under Articles 109 and 110 provides the CAs with the necessary powers for inspection and enforcement.

Observations:

- The CA have sufficient powers to carry out controls on authorised horse assembly centres. In relation to controls over horse dealers and holdings and assembly centres non-authorised for direct supply to export slaughterhouses, CA powers are limited and they demonstrated a reluctance to perform such controls.

- The CA demonstrated limited powers at the Mexican border in relation to controls of horses intended to be imported from the US, in the export facilities situated on US ground. The CA can only accept horses for entry or reject them and was not responsible for the animal welfare of the rejected horses.

5.1.2.3 *Supervision*

For live horses, it should be noted, that the official supervision is limited to the authorised assembly centres. As such, it does not cover the initial elements of the chain of supply, from its origin (holdings, *ejidos* - communal grazing grounds) through intermediary dealers and non-authorised assembly centres.

Verification procedures over official controls are not established.

See also “Documented Control Procedures”, section 5.1.2.7.

5.1.2.4 *Training of staff in performance of official controls*

As indicated in the 2012 FVO audit report, there is a legal requirement for official staff to have at least 40 hours of training each year, and there is an on-line training system in place. The CCA provided some information about the training provided. The FVO audit team did not further examine this issue.

5.1.2.5 *Resources*

There was no shortage of official staff noted in the establishments and regions visited.

5.1.2.6 *Organisation of control systems*

The current system for supervision in horse meat establishments has been described in the 2012 FVO audit report and remains largely unchanged.

The "Veterinary inspection manual for horses and their meat for export to the EU" adopted in June 2011 has been reviewed by the CA in January 2014.

Observations:

- This manual is based, as stated in the introduction, on national legislation and internationally accepted official standards, and covers among other things animal welfare, ante- and post-mortem inspections, pathology, health marks, *Trichinella* and *necropsies*. The manual contains little guidance on issues other than ante- and post-mortem examination, such as audits of good hygiene practice and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) systems.
- The information related to traceability issues is marginal and insufficient, in particular, in relation to the specific scope of the current audit.

5.1.2.7 Documented control procedures

The FVO audit team reviewed the CA reports for controls in EU approved establishments (slaughterhouses and meat product establishments) for 2013 and 2014.

Procedures and controls over horse assembly centres are described in section 5.2.1.

Observations:

- The regional supervisors carry out a monthly inspection and the CCA carry out an annual one.
- The reports are based on the use of a check-list and contain a description of the main observations and, in most cases, conclusions and recommendations.
- The conclusions and recommendations in four out of six establishments are of a general character and are not consistent with findings and observations. In the two remaining establishments they are partially adequate and consistent.
- The deadlines for the correction of deficiencies noted are set but, with one exception, no information was provided on addressing of these deficiencies.

Conclusions

At establishment level, notwithstanding some omissions in the procedures manuals and weaknesses in the documentation of controls, the system provides an adequate basis for achieving compliance with or equivalence to most EU requirements. However, the controls on traceability of live horses, both of Mexican and United States of America (US) origin, and controls on the use of veterinary medicinal products (see sections below) do not achieve standards comparable to those specified in EU legislation.

5.2 CONTROLS ON LIVE HORSES, HOLDING REGISTRATION, ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

Legal requirements

The veterinary certification requirements for the introduction into the EU of fresh meat are laid down in Regulation (EU) No 206/2010. Point II.2 of the relevant model certificate, "EQU" in Part 2 of Annex II to the Regulation, sets out the animal health requirements to be met for horse meat. This requires the CA to have system(s) in place for holding registration and animal identification. Sub-section II.1.7 of the certificate stipulates that only horse meat from horses covered by residue monitoring plans submitted in accordance with Council Directive 96/23/EC, in particular Article 29, are eligible for export to the EU.

According to point II.1.4 of the certificate, an ante-mortem inspection in accordance with Chapter II, Section I of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 has to be carried out before meat can be declared as fit for human consumption.

Requirements for certification conditions for the introduction into the EU of meat products

regarding animal health are laid down in point II.1 of the model certificate for meat products in Annex III to Commission Decision 2007/777/EC. This requires the CA to have a system in place for holding registration and animal identification.

Findings

5.2.1 Horse identification, registration and movement control

Controls on imported horses

The procedures for the identification and controls of imported horses from the US have not changed significantly compared to the findings of the 2012 FVO audit (and those of the FVO audits in 2011 and 2010). The text below provides an update.

Of the eligible horses slaughtered for the production of meat to be exported to the EU, the CCA informed the FVO audit team that in 2013-2014 87% of the horses were imported from the US.

Imports of horses of US origin, intended for slaughter, must enter via four designated points of entry. Export facilities authorised by the Mexican CCA are situated on US territory. One point of entry can receive horses from several export facilities. At the point visited, three privately owned export facilities are available. The authorisation for a single export facility is valid for two years.

The US horses must be accompanied by three documents:

- a health certificate issued by an accredited veterinarian, which has to be endorsed by an official (USDA) veterinarian;
- an owner/shipper Fitness to Travel Certificate to a slaughter facility, the USDA document called Form 10-13;
- an affidavit signed by the exporter and endorsed by a Public Notary. The affidavit is a declaration on the use of veterinary medicinal products and the non-use of certain substances during the last 180 days.

The horses are identified in the US with a unique RFID (compulsory requirement for imports into Mexico) and an adhesive back tag. Both means of identification are mentioned in the health certificate and on the Form 10-13. The horses intended for immediate slaughter are identified typically in the US collection centres or auctions prior to their shipment to the export facilities.

Observations:

- In response to recommendation No 2 of the 2012 audit report, the CCA stated that they would obtain a list of equine collection centres in the US in order to carry out audit visits of the equine collection centres/auction houses. The CCA held several meetings with the USDA. However, no list of collection centres was obtained and joint visits to only two assembly centres and one auction took place in the US.
- At the US export facilities, the horses are subjected to a documentary, identity and physical check.

- The identification marks (RFID and back tag) of all horses in a batch are recorded in the export certificate. Horses which are not compliant are rejected, but their identifiers are not deleted from the export certificate which remains valid for the accepted horses. A further list is issued for the rejected horses by the OISA, which is forwarded to the central office, which distributes the information about the rejected animals to the other border entry points and to the slaughterhouse of destination.
- In some cases, horses listed on the import certificate are not presented at the point of entry. While the number of such absent horses is recorded on the certificate for rejected horses, their individual identifiers are not always recorded; nor are their identifiers deleted from the export certificate. Consequently the official veterinarians (OVs) at the slaughterhouses do not receive precise information on the identification numbers of the horses which have been accepted for import at the point of entry.
- Given that most US sourced horses are not identified prior to their arrival at a collection centre or auction, usually shortly before their export to Mexico, the requirement, that they be identified and traceable for a period of at least 180 days prior to dispatch for slaughter, cannot be respected.
- The USDA do not take any responsibility for the reliability of the *affidavits* on the medical treatments of the horses or for verification that the horses have been identified for the 180 days period.
- One consignment was observed for which a certificate was issued after shipment. The date of loading of the animals as indicated on Form 10-13 pre-dated the date of certification. Despite the introduction of checks on arrival at the slaughterhouses, this discrepancy had not been identified by the CA.
- Several US certificates were observed, where the date of shipment of the US horses for EU slaughter was not declared in Form 10-13.
- The check-lists used for verification of the export facilities do not include checks on whether any contracts exist with private veterinarians in case of emergency if the animals need veterinary care. In addition, the contact details of the USDA officials were not available.
- At the export facility visited, the veterinary first aid kit was found to be dirty, to contain out-of-date veterinary medicines and to be generally unfit for purpose. This was at variance with the most recent CA control report.
- At the export facility visited, two rejected horses were present. Both horses were injured (one with open wounds above both eyes, the other lame). Both had been left in pens under full sun (there is a requirement for 10% shade to be available) and had been present in the pens without veterinary treatment for at least two days.
- Rejected horses are sent back to their place of origin, but only when a truck going in that direction becomes available.

Controls on national horses:

Horse assembly centres

Horses of Mexican origin are allowed for EU slaughter only if they pass through authorised assembly centres. The horses may be sent by dealers or directly by their owner to the assembly centres where they typically remain for a few hours or up to one month. Horses intended for EU slaughter which are sent to the assembly centres from holdings without a holding registration number are not considered to be EU eligible.

Procedures are in place to authorise assembly centres. At present 12 assembly centres are authorised and one has recently been de-listed. Since the 2012 FVO audit, authorised assembly centres were subject to an annual control in 2013 and bi-annual in 2014.

Observations:

- In the assembly centres visited by the FVO audit team, the CA control results did not reflect the situation found on the spot.
- Controls did not take into account the throughput of horses passing through the centres.
- The control procedures did not request that assembly centres have a designated private veterinary practitioner in case of emergency or when animals need medical attention; and veterinary medicine records were absent in most assembly centres despite one manager informing the FVO audit team that about 1% of the animals are considered to be unfit for EU slaughter.
- The control procedures do not include a requirement to provide an overall evaluation of the results (i.e. a conclusion on whether or not the centre is compliant), nor are the actions to be taken in case non-compliances and the follow-up procedures specified. Consequently control results were seen repeating the non-compliances from previous visits.
- No controls are carried out at dealers' premises or at the holdings of origin of the horses in order to verify the reliability of the content of the declaration and the horse passports. In addition, many regular suppliers of horses to assembly centres act as dealers but are not registered as such and are not subject to controls.
- Several horse slaughterhouses listed for export of horse meat to the EU have pens which are declared as being authorised assembly centres. This means, in practice, that Mexican horses arrive without identification or passports at the slaughterhouse facilities. On arrival and shortly before slaughter, the horses are identified with RFIDs, horse passports are issued and owners' declarations created.
- At the request of the FVO audit team, an assembly centre, not authorised by the CA to send horses to EU listed slaughterhouses, was visited. This centre was owned by an association of dealers. The dealers the FVO audit team met stated, that they sell horses to different slaughterhouses, including EU listed export slaughterhouses (directly or indirectly) and that these horses are accompanied by the official transport document (*guía de transporte*) and a sanitary certificate (for horses coming from another Federal State) but not by any other documents required for horses intended for slaughter to the EU (such as passports and

affidavits). The horses are only identified with a hot brand. This centre, handling some 200 horses per month, has never been inspected by the CA. The FVO audit team requested the CA to provide records of horses received and dispatched for a given week, including their identification, origin and destination. The CA did not provide any records. Instead, the CA provided a statement by the president of the dealers' association that no horses were sold to EU approved slaughterhouses.

Horse identification and registration

The Mexican horses are identified at the authorised assembly centres with a unique RFID. The RFID is recorded on the individual animal passport. A seller's declaration completed by the last owner (further referred to as *affidavits*) should also be available and this should contain data on the use of veterinary medicinal products. The RFIDs applied to the horses should be registered in the central horse database.

Observations:

- The vast majority of Mexican horses are not identified during their entire lifetime nor during the last 180 days prior to dispatch for slaughter. Identification typically takes place, in the authorised assembly centres, in the last two weeks (sometimes the last two days) before dispatch for slaughter.
- In the assembly centres where horses are being identified, the identity check of the horses versus the horse passports is ineffective. Most horse passports seen were incomplete (description/visual identification not provided) and some were missing signatures. A large number were rejected for EU slaughter due to discrepancies in the visual identification of the animals, but there was no consistency observed in the application of this control.

Many *affidavits* were not signed and did not refer to the horse passport and could only be linked with a general description of the horse's age, gender, and breed. In one assembly centre the majority of the *affidavits* had not been completed or signed by the previous owner but by the dealer or his employee.

Central horse database

- Horses are accepted for slaughter without verification if the animals are registered in the central horse database *Padrón Ganadero Nacional*. Moreover the CA at slaughterhouse level has no access to the central database.
- Given that most horses are identified in the last two weeks before slaughter, many are not yet registered in the central database at the time of slaughter. As a consequence, these horses are reported as being slaughtered before they are entered in the database. In these cases, where slaughter precedes registration, the horses cannot be deleted from the database.
- The identification of imported US horses is not registered in the central database even though some imported horses remain for nearly one month in the slaughterhouse pens.
- The RFIDs are retrieved after slaughter by the CA, but are not cross checked with the information in the Form 10-13 or against the FBOs' records of control on arrival. At one slaughterhouse visited, the FVO audit team checked a number of retrieved RFIDs: in one

case the RFID of a horse slaughtered for the EU did not match the documentation; in another, an extra RFID was retrieved which could not be correlated with any records (FBO, the CA or US certification).

Conclusions on live horses, holding registration and animal identification

Neither US and Mexican horses are identified for their entire lifetime, nor during the last 180 days before their dispatch for slaughter. The controls over the identification and registration system and movement of horses intended for EU slaughter are limited, do not cover the entire chain of supply and are unreliable. The central horse database is not fully operational and provides little support in the traceability of horses. This undermines the CA's guarantees regarding the origin and veterinary drug residue status of horses to be slaughtered for export to the EU.

In addition, animal welfare issues were noted in the export facilities in the US and at arrival at slaughterhouses.

5.3 VETERINARY MEDICINAL PRODUCTS AND RESIDUES

The general system of authorisation, distribution and use of veterinary medicinal products (including official controls), and the monitoring of residues, has been described in the 2008 FVO audit report and the subsequent 2011 FVO audit report. The text below provides an update and is specific to horses.

Legal requirements

The veterinary certification requirements for the introduction into the EU of fresh meat are laid down in Regulation (EU) No 206/2010, Annex II, Part II, certificate "EQU". In its Point II.1.7 the CA has to provide guarantees covering live animals and products thereof provided by the residue plan submitted in accordance with Directive 96/23/EC, and, in particular, Article 29 thereof.

5.3.1 Veterinary medicinal products

Authorisation

The SAGARPA is responsible for the marketing authorisation of veterinary medicinal products whilst the COFEPRIS (*Comisión Federal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios* - Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risks) is responsible for the authorisation of topical products for treatment against ectoparasites on animals.

Observations:

- Following the entering into force of the Regulation of the Federal Law on Animal Health of 21 May 2012, authorised or registered holders of veterinary medicinal product veterinary medicinal products were required to review and submit dossiers to the SAGARPA by 1 July 2014 at the latest, in order to ensure that these accurately reflect the current product composition and product information (labels/package-inserts). The SAGARPA will assess those dossiers representing a significant variation of the marketing authorisation.
- In the framework of the above, and in response to recommendation No 5 of the 2011 FVO

audit report, a warning “not to be administered for equines intended for human consumption” should be included in the product information of products indicated for horses and containing active substances which in the EU are banned for use in food producing animals (following Council Directive 96/22/EC), as well as certain other substances which are either prohibited or not-authorised in the absence of a MRL (Regulation (EU) No 37/2010).

- The FVO audit team noted that the SAGARPA has approved new label texts which include the warning “not to be administered for equines intended for human consumption” for products containing *inter alia* nandrolone, boldenone, doxapram and phenylbutazone indicated for use in horses.
- Nevertheless, whilst in the EU, horses are food producing animals until and unless they have been signed out of the food chain, in Mexico horses are by default not considered to be food producing animals until they have been designated for this purpose. Products with the warning “not to be administered for equines intended for human consumption” on the label can therefore be legally used from birth of the foal to the moment the owner decides that the horse is destined for slaughter. Recommendation No 5 of the 2011 FVO audit report has therefore not been adequately addressed.

Distribution and use

Veterinary clinics, veterinary pharmacies and farm supply shops are the main outlets for veterinary medicinal products for horses. These outlets must register with the local SAGARPA's Delegation office where the establishment is located within 30 days of opening their business. Outlets must also employ a SAGARPA approved veterinarian.

Veterinary medicinal products containing substances which may give rise to residues in food of animal origin are generally subject to the prescription system. Group I products can be used by veterinarians only. This group includes *inter alia* hormones and psychotropics. Group II products can be sold on prescription only and include antibiotics. Group III products are available over the counter. Retail outlets and prescribing veterinarians should retain respectively originals and copies of prescriptions for at least one year for Group I substances and for at least six months for Group II substances.

Observations:

- Of the four outlets of veterinary medicinal products visited by the FVO audit team, two were not registered with the SAGARPA and three did not employ an approved veterinarian.
- Two outlets sold group I substances. One of these outlets could not produce evidence that the compulsory logbook, electronic record keeping and copies of prescriptions were kept. At the other outlet, data recorded in the logbook and database showed various inconsistencies. Moreover, the content of the vast majority of veterinary prescriptions seen was incomplete with view to national requirements (e.g. no mention of the animal(s) which are treated). The CA confirmed that controlled products (which include hormones indicated for horses) should not have been handed out /shipped based on incomplete prescriptions.
- All four outlets sold group II substances. Three outlets could not demonstrate to be receiving or keeping copies of prescriptions. The prescriptions kept by the fourth outlet were

incomplete.

- At the outlets visited, several presentations of veterinary medicinal products for horses containing hormones and other substances which are not permitted in the EU contained the required warning “not to be administered for equines intended for human consumption”. However, a product containing boldenone, indicated *inter alia* for muscle growth in horses was for sale in an outlet with a label that showed a withdrawal period of 20 days before slaughter. The FVO audit team also found various phenylbutazone containing products for horses with labels that did not indicate the warning.
- The SAGARPA staff explained to the FVO audit team that on a case-by-case basis it could allow companies to sell out existing product stock with old labels (produced before the date the new label text has been approved). The SAGARPA indicated that this would be for a period of approximately six months rather than for several years up to the expiry date of the particular batch, but could not provide a clarification on individual cases on-the-spot¹.
- The FVO audit team noted in one case that a batch of a product for horses containing boldenone was produced with old labels (without the warning) nine month after the SAGARPA had approved a new label text (with the warning).
- Horses in the EU need to be identified from birth (Regulation (EC) No 504/2008) and treatment records shall be kept by veterinarians and keepers of horses (Article 10 of Directive 96/23/EC and Annex I, Part A, III, 8(b) to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004). In Mexico, however, there is no legal requirement on owners or keepers of horses to keep records of treatments with veterinary medicinal products, and horses are not required to be identified until the moment of dispatch from the assembly centre to the slaughterhouse. This deficiency was also noted in 2011 FVO audit report (recommendation No 6) and has not been adequately addressed.
- Treatment records should be kept at the SAGARPA authorised horse assembly centres, where horses stay for a period of one day or up to a month. Staff interviewed at the collection centres visited by the FVO audit team declared that there was zero medicine use, and thus no need for treatment records, in spite of injured animal being present on the premises.
- Upon arrival at the slaughterhouse horses for slaughter for export to the EU must be accompanied with an *affidavit* on the use of veterinary medicinal products and the non-use of certain substance during the last 180 days. The declaration is to be signed by the owner(s) of the animal during this period.
- A dealer supplying horses for slaughter for export to the EU explained to the FVO audit team that the *affidavits* would generally be filled out and signed by the dealer's assistant rather than the original owners of the horses. *Affidavits* examined at the slaughterhouses visited supported the dealer's statement.

¹ In their response to the draft report the Mexican CCA noted that: the tags of the products elaborated before the approval of the update of the LFSA's Regulation keep their validity until the expiration date, whenever the application of the legislation in Mexico is not retroactive. In case of detecting a company that infringed the law and have a sale of veterinary drugs products without updates and restriction legends without previous authorization of extension from the CA they will be subject to sanctions, which the legal area of SENASICA will evaluate.

- According to dealers, it is normal practice to give horses an anti-ectoparasite treatment shortly before shipment to the slaughterhouse. The FVO audit team noted that the products seen for treatment of ectoparasites (e.g. pyrethroids and ivermectin) have a withdrawal period indicated on the label. However, such products were seldom mentioned on affidavits as horse dealers confirmed that use of these products is generally not considered as veterinary treatment.

Controls:

The SAGARPA's State Delegation local offices are responsible for controls on retail outlets of veterinary medicinal products.

The SAGARPA conducts routine supervision visits and inspections. Inspections are normally preceded by routine visits whilst only inspections can lead to administrative measures and sanctions. The routine supervision visits are for the confirmation of the general data of the establishment as input for the register's update.

The Federal Law on Animal Health empowers the SAGARPA to enter premises, to inspect these and to take administrative measures if necessary, such as seizing goods. Breaches of the Federal Law on Animal Health can be brought to the judicial system and lead to penalties for the perpetrators.

Observations:

- One of the two non-registered outlets of veterinary medicinal products visited by the FVO audit team had, according to the SAGARPA, never been inspected because it was not marked on the front of the outlet that veterinary medicinal products were for sale. This outlet had, however, been named by the manager of an approved collection centre for horses by SAGARPA, as the place from where veterinary services would be provided in case they were needed. Although the outlet was not registered and in operation for more than 30 days, and group II substances were being sold (and no prescriptions were present), the SAGARPA staff present did not take any action on-the-spot.
- The other non-registered outlet had opened its business two months earlier. Within the first month the outlet had been visited by a SAGARPA inspector, who had advised the owners to register with the SAGARPA. At the time of the FVO audit visit, the owners had still not submitted the registration documents although the deadline had passed a month before. This had not been followed-up by the SAGARPA's State Delegation and although group II substances were being sold (and no prescriptions were present), the SAGARPA staff did not take action on-the-spot by the CA.
- A third outlet had, according to the manager, been visited regularly by the SAGARPA, but no (copies of) inspection reports could be provided by the inspector or the company. The fact that the most recent certificate of the approved veterinarian covered the period 2002-2004 and the absence of veterinary prescriptions for both group I and II substances had not triggered a corrective action. No action was taken on-the-spot.
- The fourth outlet visited had been inspected by the SAGARPA, of which evidence was presented through inspection reports. Deficiencies had been noted during the inspections, but not in relation to the shortcomings in the administration of group I substances, the

veterinary prescriptions and the labelling of a number of products.

- The SAGARPA stated that it would require corrective actions from the authorised registered product holders with regard to the sale of incorrectly labelled products outside the permitted sell-out period.
- The SAGARPA does not carry out inspections on primary holdings and non-approved collection centres of horses in relation to the storage and use of veterinary medicinal products.
- In relation to the points above, similar weaknesses were observed during the 2011 FVO audit. Recommendation No 8 of the 2011 FVO audit report has so far not been adequately addressed. The SAGARPA informed the FVO audit team, however, that the activities of SENASICA's staff located in local offices were re-organised.

Conclusions on Veterinary Medicinal Products

The rules for authorisation and use of veterinary medicinal products for horses are significantly different from those in the EU. The ineffectiveness of controls on retail outlets of veterinary medicinal products, the lack of horse identification requirements until shortly before slaughter, the lack of a requirement to keep treatment records on holdings, and the lack of enforcement at holding level undermine the CA's guarantees regarding the use of substances in horses which are not permitted to be used in the EU.

5.3.2 Monitoring of residues

The Mexican NRMP is based on various international standards, including the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC/GL 16-1993 "Codex guidelines for the establishment of a regulatory programme for control of veterinary drug residues in foods") and Directive 96/23/EC.

Observations:

- The 2014 NRMP for horses is in terms of layout and substance groups in line with the requirements of Directive 96/23/EC. The scope of testing within the substance groups includes the relevant EU banned, prohibited and unauthorised substances and generally reflects the authorised substances available on the market. Recommendation No 1 of the 2011 FVO audit report has been satisfactorily addressed.
- The FVO audit team noted during the visits to outlets of veterinary medicinal products that the following substances are sold for use in horses are not covered in the residue monitoring plan: ceftiofur, coumafos, diclofenac, gentamycin, flumethasone and metamizole. The inclusion of these substances in future residue monitoring plans could be subject to a risk assessment by the CA.
- The MRLs in the plan are largely in line with EU regulatory limits. Recommendation No 7 of the 2011 FVO audit report has been adequately addressed in this regard.
- Samples are distributed over the horse slaughterhouses according to volume production. At the three slaughterhouses visited by the FVO audit team the residue monitoring plan was largely implemented as foreseen. Samples were taken randomly and were well distributed

over the year.

- Samples were taken by official staff, kept and transported in appropriately sealed evidence bags and containers. Recommendation No 2 of the 2011 FVO audit report has been satisfactorily addressed.
- Non-compliant test results since the 2011 FVO audit were related to heavy metals (cadmium) only. The FVO audit team could therefore not evaluate the effectiveness of follow-up procedures for residue violations of banned and authorised pharmacologically active substances in horse meat. The results of the NRMP are consistent with the results of tests on Mexican horse meat upon arrival in the EU (in accordance with Commission Decision 2006/27/EC) and support the Mexican CA's and industry's view that medicine use in the horses slaughtered for export to the EU is economically not viable.

Conclusions on the monitoring of Residues

The residue monitoring plan for horse meat and its implementation are largely in line with EU requirements.

5.4 OFFICIAL CONTROLS AT ESTABLISHMENT LEVEL

Legal requirements

Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 lays down that the CA of a third country of origin has to guarantee that establishments placed on the list of establishments from which imports of specified products of animal origin to the EU are permitted, together with any establishments handling raw material of animal origin used in the manufacture of the products of animal origin concerned, complies with the relevant EU requirements, in particular those of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, or with requirements that were determined to be equivalent. It also lays down that an official inspection service supervises the establishments and has real powers to stop the establishments from exporting to the EU in the event that the establishments fail to meet the relevant requirements.

The veterinary certification requirements for the introduction into the EU of fresh horse meat for human consumption are laid down in the relevant model certificate "EQU" in part II of Annex 2 to Regulation (EU) No 206/2010.

The veterinary certification requirements for the introduction into the EU of meat products for human consumption are laid down in Commission Decision 2007/777/EC.

Findings

5.4.1 Ante-mortem inspection

Observations:

- The records from ante-mortem inspection were available in all slaughterhouses visited and followed a similar format.
- In two slaughterhouses for a randomly chosen month - May 2014 - the records showed a significant number of dead horses of US origin at arrival.

5.4.2 *Post-mortem inspection*

Observations:

- In two of the three slaughterhouses visited, the post-mortem inspection was carried out in conformity with the EU requirements.
- In the first slaughterhouse visited:
 - The heads of horses slaughtered were not opened in order to examine the nasal cavity, although required by the national legislation.
 - Intestines were not submitted to inspection.
 - Evidence was found that the health mark was applied before the final post-mortem took place. One carcass with the health mark already applied was later detained due to melanoma.
- In one slaughterhouse, for a randomly chosen 10 day period in May 2014, the records showed a significant number of livers rejected due to trauma in horses of US origin (52 of 316 condemned livers (16.5%) were due to trauma equating to 3% of the 1 732 horses slaughtered during that period – indicating injury during transport). Records in two slaughterhouses indicated that horses of US origin were regularly found dead in slaughterhouse pens due to trauma or pneumonia shortly after arrival. Horses from the US, which were unable to walk were emergency slaughtered.

5.4.3 *General and specific hygiene requirements*

Observations:

- The overall compliance with general and specific hygiene requirements was found to be acceptable in all establishments visited.
- The hygiene at slaughter and during cutting was satisfactory in all establishments visited, in particular, with emphasis on good de-hiding techniques and clean carcasses.
- Problems related to maintenance, flow of workers, separation of street and working clothing and/or cleanliness were noted in all three slaughterhouses. In two of the slaughterhouses layout of the social rooms (changing rooms, toilets) was incorrect, and in one place, working clothes, presented as clean were in fact heavily stained to a point that they appeared very dirty.
- In one slaughterhouse visited the equipment was rinsed extensively with splashing of water causing a potential risk of contamination of carcasses.
- In one slaughterhouse, several sterilisers were operating below the prescribed temperature of 82°C. The CA immediately stopped the slaughter line until the temperature was restored. The FVO audit team noted that the FBO had carried out controls of steriliser water temperature before the start and every hour during the working day, and that the records indicated that no deficiencies had been found.

5.4.4 HACCP-principles based systems

Observations:

- The systems based on the HACCP principles were in place in all establishments visited.
- In one establishment the FVO audit team checked the FBO procedures for the reception of horses for slaughter and the verification of their eligibility. The procedures for reception were described correctly but there were no procedures for action in case of non-compliance.

5.4.5 Water examination

Observations:

- All three slaughterhouses visited used water from their own wells, with intermediate storage and liquid chlorination. In all three slaughterhouses water checks were carried out according to the national legislation. Bacteriological parameters and frequency of testing were satisfactory as were the results.
- In one slaughterhouse the installations (pumps and tank) were in a poor state of maintenance. Chlorination checks were performed using a very dirty and used colorimeter. The alarm was tested and the sound was only audible inside the slaughterhouse.
- Testing for chemical and physical parameters is carried out according to national rules which do not include all physical and chemical parameters as laid down in Council Directive 98/83/EC. In one slaughterhouse, not all physical and chemical parameters were examined.

5.4.6 Microbiological testing

Only carcass sampling and results for microbiological criteria were evaluated during this audit.

Observations:

- Carcass sampling for microbiological criteria was done weekly in all slaughterhouses in line with Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 and the results seen were satisfactory.

5.4.7 Traceability in slaughterhouses

One slaughterhouse visited slaughtered imported horses only, the other two slaughtered imported as well as Mexican horses. Traceability systems were in place in the slaughterhouses visited to trace forward and trace back consignments.

Observations:

- One slaughterhouse visited did not have a system in place to guarantee the separation of meat of US and Mexican origin. Consequently all certificates issued for this slaughterhouse, for the export to the EU, stated that all meat was from horses of US origin.
- The traceability systems in two slaughterhouses did not guarantee that EU and non-EU eligible horses and their meat were produced separately throughout the entire production, in

particular, during the slaughter process.

- In one slaughterhouse, the meat of emergency slaughtered horses was not excluded from EU export.
- The FBO procedures included verification of the identification of animals arriving for slaughter and the animals slaughtered but failed to identify discrepancies identified by the FVO audit team (examples were seen of double recording of animals on arrival, mismatch of identification for live animals and slaughtered animals and discrepancies in transport documents).
- In one slaughterhouse, the registered date of arrival of some horses was before the date of identification of the horses in the assembly centre located within the slaughterhouse curtilage. The arrival date at the slaughterhouse did not match the date of dispatch recorded in the assembly centre register.

Official controls on traceability at slaughterhouses

- The check on arrival of animals carried out by accredited veterinarians failed to exclude some animals with incomplete or unsigned passports and *affidavits*.
- The OV's had insufficient knowledge of the traceability systems in place in the slaughterhouses visited and did not carry out systematic checks. The FVO audit team identified a number of non-compliant animals, whose meat should have been excluded from EU export, which had not been detected by the OV.
- The OV in one slaughterhouse had no information on the identification of US horses which had died in the slaughterhouse pens or during transport.
- The records on verification of the documentation were not completed correctly (e.g. horses were considered as being "rejected", whereas they had not been presented at the entry point). The identification of horses that had been certified by the US authorities, but which did not arrive at slaughter or had died during transport, were not reported in the verification document.
- The check-lists used during the annual controls in the establishments included verification of traceability systems in place but did not require an in-depth verification in order to ensure that the related certification requirements are met.
- A verification procedure on the identification and documentation of Mexican horses at slaughterhouse level has been introduced since the 2012 FVO audit but insufficient enforcement actions were taken in order to avoid repeated findings during successive controls.

5.4.8 Health and identity marking

Observations:

- In one slaughterhouse, two different health marks were used:

- For carcasses to be exported as quarters (chilled): an oval mark, which read: Mexico, TIF E-approval number, CEE.
 - For carcasses intended to be cut and exported as packed meat (chilled or frozen), a national rectangular mark, which read: "*inspeccionado y aprobado por S.A.G.A.R.P.A. Mexico, TIF E- approval number*". Boxes with cut meat were identified with labels bearing the oval mark as described above.
- In two other slaughterhouses oval marks as described above were used.
 - Neither of the health marks is in line with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, Annex I, Section I, Chapter III, 3.c last sentence: a rectangular mark is not permitted (should be oval) and the abbreviation CEE should not be used on meat from slaughterhouses located outside the EU.

5.4.9 *Animal welfare at the time of slaughter*

Observations:

- The stunning was in all cases seen found to be acceptable and spare equipment was readily available.
- In two slaughterhouses, the animal was already shackled, winched up and suspended by one leg when the efficiency of stunning (corneal reflex) was checked.

5.4.10 *Documentation of official controls*

Observations:

- As indicated in section 5.1.2.7 official controls are documented according to standardised procedures. The reports seen indicate that the quality of these controls is variable: not all deficiencies found by the FVO audit team were identified by the CA; not all non-conformities identified by the CA in the check-list were reflected in the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report. The deadlines for corrective actions are set, but the documents provided do not allow to conclude if the deficiencies identified during CA controls in five out of six currently listed establishments have been adequately addressed.

Conclusions

Hygiene of operations and official controls thereon were acceptable.

However, the deficiencies in the traceability systems (for live animals and for meat), the non-compliant health marking and the ineffectiveness of the official controls on the chain of production undermine the CA's guarantees regarding origin and eligibility of animals.

Post-mortem inspection and health marking were not performed in compliance with EU requirements.

Records indicate very serious animal welfare problems during transport and/or on arrival at the

slaughterhouse. Controls on the effectiveness of stunning were insufficient.

5.5 OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION

Legal requirements

Directive 96/93/EC lays down the general rules to be observed by third countries in issuing certificates required for exports to the EU, according to the specific EU veterinary legislation.

The animal and public health and veterinary certification requirements for the introduction into the EU of fresh horse meat for human consumption are laid down in the relevant model certificate "EQU" in part II of Annex 2 to Regulation (EU) 206/2010.

The animal and public health and veterinary certification requirements for the introduction into the EU of meat products for human consumption are laid down in Decision 2007/777/EC.

Findings

Observations:

- Based on the observations and conclusions of the previous chapters, in particular, the availability of veterinary medicinal products prohibited in the EU, the insufficient controls on live animals and the unreliability of the traceability systems in place, the official signing export certificates is not in a position to attest to the guarantees specified in the export certificate.

Conclusions

Currently, the Mexican authorities cannot guarantee that standards laid down in the certificate "EQU" laid down in Annex II part 2 to Commission Regulation (EU) No 206/2010, and, in particular, in its part II.1, Public Health Attestation, point II.1.7, part II.2 Animal Health Attestation, point II.2.2, and part II 3 Animal Welfare Attestation are met.

6 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In relation to controls over the production of fresh horse meat, including identification and traceability, no significant improvements have been made since the FVO audit in 2012, in particular in relation to the reliability of *affidavits* and traceability for horses of both Mexican and US origin. The official controls over identification and traceability of horses remain weak. Three out of five recommendations of the 2012 FVO audit report (recommendations No 1, No 2 and No 4) have not been properly implemented. One recommendation (No 3) has been partially implemented.

In relation to veterinary medicinal products and residues, there have been no significant improvements since the 2011 FVO audit. Although the official controls on the distribution and use of veterinary medicinal products remain very weak, the level of residue violations is low. The possibility to use anabolic steroids is, however, at odds with EU requirements. Three recommendations of the 2011 FVO audit report, which are relevant for the current audit, have not been properly implemented.

Currently, the Mexican authorities cannot guarantee that all the standards laid down in the

certificate "EQU" in Annex II part 2 to Commission Regulation (EU) No 206/2010, are met.

While EU requirements regarding Animal Welfare during transport are not applicable in third countries, the findings of this audit corroborate information received from various non-governmental organisations and confirm the very poor conditions in which horses are transported.

7 CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 4 July 2014 with the CCA, the SENASICA, in the presence of the SINIIGA, the OISA and the COFEPRIS. At this meeting the FVO audit team presented the findings and preliminary conclusions of the audit and advised the CCA of the relevant time limits for production of the report and their response.

The representatives of the CCA acknowledged the findings and conclusions presented by the FVO audit team. Information on action already taken and planned, in order to address particular findings, was provided at this meeting or shortly thereafter via e-mail.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

An action plan, describing the actions taken or planned in response to the recommendations of this report and setting out a timetable to correct the deficiencies found, should be presented to the Commission within 25 working days of receipt of the report.

Nº.	Recommendation
1.	To take measures to ensure the validity and authenticity of the affidavits for horses of Mexican origin slaughtered for export to the European Union linked to their traceability. This is in order to guarantee that equivalent standards to those provided by Commission Regulation (EC) No 504/2008 and Council Directive 96/93/EC are applied.
2.	To take measures to ensure the validity and authenticity of the affidavits for horses of US origin slaughtered for export to the European Union linked to their traceability. This is in order to guarantee that equivalent standards to those provided by Commission Regulation (EC) No 504/2008 and Council Directive 96/93/EC are applied.
3.	To ensure that substances which are banned for use in food producing animals according to Council Directive 96/22/EC are not used in horses from which meat is intended for export to the European Union.
4.	To ensure that treatment records are kept on horse holdings in line with Article 10 of Council Directive 96/23/EC and Annex I, Part A, III, 8(b) to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and that horses are adequately identified for this purpose, either individually or as a lot.
5.	To take measures in order to ensure that the registered data in the various databases concerning Mexican horses slaughtered for export to the European Union are correct.

N°.	Recommendation
	This is in order to be able to verify the traceability of the horses and to certify the origin of the horses correctly as foreseen in point 11.2 of the certificate "EQU" in part 2 of Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 206/2010.
6.	To take measures in order to ensure that the post-mortem inspections are carried out in compliance with Chapter II of Section I and Chapters III and IX of Section IV of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 in all Mexican approved slaughterhouses.
7.	To ensure that official controls are performed at all stages of production of horses and their meat intended for export to the EU and that these controls are effective in order to guarantee that horse meat exported to the EU has been produced in accordance with relevant EU requirements.

The competent authority's response to the recommendations can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/rep_details_en.cfm?rep_inspection_ref=2014-7223

ANNEX 1 - LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Reg. 178/2002	OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1-24	Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety
Reg. 852/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 3	Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs
Reg. 853/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 55, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 22	Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin
Reg. 854/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 206, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 83	Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption
Reg. 882/2004	OJ L 165, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 191, 28.5.2004, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules
Reg. 2073/2005	OJ L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 1-26	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Reg. 2074/2005	OJ L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 27-59	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2074/2005 of 5 December 2005 laying down implementing measures for certain products under Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council and for the organisation of official controls under Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council, derogating from Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council and amending Regulations (EC) No 853/2004 and (EC) No 854/2004
Reg. 2075/2005	OJ L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 60-82	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2075/2005 of 5 December 2005 laying down specific rules on official controls for Trichinella in meat
Reg. 504/2008	OJ L 149, 7.6.2008, p. 3-32	Commission Regulation (EC) No 504/2008 of 6 June 2008 implementing Council Directives 90/426/EEC and 90/427/EEC as regards methods for the identification of equidae
Reg. 1162/2009	OJ L 314, 1.12.2009, p. 10–12	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1162/2009 of 30 November 2009 laying down transitional measures for the implementation of Regulations (EC) No 853/2004, (EC) No 854/2004 and (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council
Reg. 206/2010	OJ L 73, 20.3.2010, p. 1–121	Commission Regulation (EU) No 206/2010 of 12 March 2010 laying down lists of third countries, territories or parts thereof authorised for the introduction into the European Union of certain animals and fresh meat and the veterinary certification requirements
Reg. 37/2010	OJ L 15, 20.1.2010, p. 1-72	Commission Regulation (EU) No 37/2010 of 22 December 2009 on pharmacologically active substances and their classification regarding maximum residue limits in foodstuffs of animal origin

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Dir. 93/119/EC	OJ L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 21-34	Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing
Dir. 96/22/EC	OJ L 125, 23.5.1996, p. 3-9	Council Directive 96/22/EC of 29 April 1996 concerning the prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyrostatic action and of β -agonists, and repealing Directives 81/602/EEC, 88/146/EEC and 88/299/EEC
Dir. 96/23/EC	OJ L 125, 23.5.1996, p. 10-32	Council Directive 96/23/EC of 29 April 1996 on measures to monitor certain substances and residues thereof in live animals and animal products and repealing Directives 85/358/EEC and 86/469/EEC and Decisions 89/187/EEC and 91/664/EEC
Dir. 96/93/EC	OJ L 13, 16.1.1997, p. 28-30	Council Directive 96/93/EC of 17 December 1996 on the certification of animals and animal products
Dir. 97/78/EC	OJ L 24, 30.1.1998, p. 9-30	Council Directive 97/78/EC of 18 December 1997 laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on products entering the Community from third countries
Dir. 98/83/EC	OJ L 330, 5.12.1998, p. 32-54	Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption
Dir. 2002/99/EC	OJ L 18, 23.1.2003, p. 11-20	Council Directive 2002/99/EC of 16 December 2002 laying down the animal health rules governing the production, processing, distribution and introduction of products of animal origin for human consumption
Dec. 2000/572/EC	OJ L 240, 23.9.2000, p. 19-24	2000/572/EC: Commission Decision of 8 September 2000 laying down animal and public health conditions and veterinary certification for imports of minced meat and meat preparations from third countries and repealing Decision 97/29/EC

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Dec. 2006/27/EC	OJ L 19, 24.1.2006, p. 30-31	2006/27/EC: Commission Decision of 16 January 2006 on special conditions governing meat and meat products of equidae imported from Mexico and intended for human consumption
Dec. 2007/777/EC	OJ L 312, 30.11.2007, p. 49-67	2007/777/EC: Commission Decision of 29 November 2007 laying down the animal and public health conditions and model certificates for imports of certain meat products and treated stomachs, bladders and intestines for human consumption from third countries and repealing Decision 2005/432/EC
Dec. 2011/163/EU	OJ L 70, 17.3.2011, p. 40-46	2011/163/EU: Commission Decision of 16 March 2011 on the approval of plans submitted by third countries in accordance with Article 29 of Council Directive 96/23/EC