

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS AND ON THE GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

Twenty-sixth session
Geneva, 29 November-7 December 2004
Item 2 of the agenda

TEXTS ADOPTED BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE AT ITS TWENTY-THIRD, TWENTY-FOURTH AND TWENTY-FIFTH SESSIONS AND RELATED PROPOSALS

Infectious substances

Transmitted by the World Organisation for Animal Health

Background

1. At the twenty-fifth session of the Sub-Committee, a number of changes were made to the 13th revised edition of the Model Regulations regarding infectious substances. One of these changes was the deletion of Section 2.6.3.2.5 of the Model Regulations:

"Substances for which there is a low probability that infectious substances are present, or where the concentration is at a level naturally encountered, are not subject to these Regulations. Examples are: foodstuffs, water samples, living persons and substances which have been treated so that the pathogens have been neutralized or deactivated."

2. One of the intentions of this change was to require diagnostic specimens (such as blood samples) from animals, even those with no evidence of disease, to be shipped as Category B infectious substances. However, this amendment does not reflect the extremely low (almost negligible) risk posed by specimens from healthy animals.

3. For years now, such samples have been transported as non-infectious material without a single reported case of disease occurring in shippers or handlers. Millions of blood samples from randomly selected normal animals are transported every year for National and International animal health programs designed to control, eradicate and monitor disease through serological surveillance. Other samples from healthy animals are sent for testing to confirm they are free from disease prior to export, and testing is also done on many animals for non-infectious diseases such as mineral deficiencies. Many of these samples are collected from healthy animals at slaughter and they pose no greater risk than the meat derived from these animals, which is not and should not be considered to be an infectious substance.

4. This change will severely impact National and International animal health programs as well as the ability to ship animal specimens to laboratories for routine screening tests. It will make it more difficult to submit samples from locations where the available airlines or freight companies will not transport infectious substances and will also increase shipping costs. As an example, the change will have a major adverse impact on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN's world-wide rinderpest surveillance program, which is being conducted to finalize the eradication of this disease. This

and other similar programs depend on the transport and testing of blood samples collected from normal animals at abattoirs or by animal health officials in the field.

5. Given the very low probability that infectious substances are present in these samples from normal animals, the risk these samples pose to transport workers or the environment is not significant and they do not need to be transported as a Category B infectious agents.

Proposed change:

Add the following as 2.6.3.2.3.2 in Section 2.6.3.2.3 of Model Regulations as revised at the July meeting of the UN SCETDG (see #1), renumber the remaining items in this section:

“2.6.3.2.3.2 Substances from animals for which there is a low probability that infectious substances are present, or where the concentration is at a level naturally encountered, are not subject to these Regulations.”
