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(via British Embassy in Beijing)

[redacted]
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18 May. 11

Dear [redacted]

EXPORT OF PIGS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

I hope you are well. I am writing regarding some points relating to the existing protocol for the export of pigs from the UK to the People's Republic of China that I would like to discuss with you when I next visit Beijing.

Firstly I would like to express my thanks to you, [redacted] and [redacted] for your help with the recent exports. While these exports revealed a number of issues to be resolved, the exports were completed successfully and we are well aware that this would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of you and your colleagues. I hope that the post-import checks on these recent consignments are proving satisfactory and that the importers are content with the pigs.

The issues that the recent exports have revealed include several procedural matters for the UK side to address. In particular we have reminded exporters that they must keep the supervising Chinese Veterinarian informed at all stages and also that actions (such as movements of pigs to other premises or transhipment of pigs at an airport in another country) must not be carried out without the approval of the supervising Chinese Veterinarian. We have also emphasised to the testing laboratories that reports of laboratory tests need to clearly indicate that the test results are negative, and also that supplementary reports must not be issued once the final report has been provided.

There are also several issues that I would like to discuss with you. In due course these matters may require some changes to the import protocol but I hope that in the interim we can agree these as amendments with the wording of the existing protocol.

1. **Pre-isolation on the farm of origin:** Due to the numbers of pigs involved it is sometimes very difficult, indeed sometimes impossible to carry out the pre-isolation on the farm of origin and for this reason, movement of the pigs to separate premises for pre-isolation is needed. While it is accepted that any movement of pigs entails some risk to their health status, the exporters and their Veterinarians are well aware of this and where such movement has been required, they have planned and carried out this very carefully to minimise the risks involved. Accordingly where the exporter requests this and providing the supervising Chinese veterinarian agrees, I request that this action should be permitted as a normal procedure in the import protocol. I have emphasised the risks involved to the exporters if pre-isolation of pigs from separate premises are housed together and that wherever possible separate premises should be provided for pre-isolation.

2. **Freedom from outbreaks of pH1N1 within 50km:** As you know, in one instance an outbreak of pandemic influenza A/H1N1 (pH1N1) was identified on a farm within 47.5km of one of the premises involved. However, with your kind agreement, the export of the pigs involved was permitted after the pigs were re-tested by PCR. Despite this, I would be grateful if this condition could be removed because, although influenza virus can be spread by droplet infection to pigs in close confinement, there is no evidence that this infection can be spread by wind over short distances, never mind over 50km. As you know, this condition is not mentioned in the import protocol so removing this requirement would not necessitate a change to the protocol.

3. **Vaccination of pigs:** the current protocol requires that pigs are vaccinated against porcine parvovirus (PPV) but that they are not vaccinated against any other diseases before movement to the quarantine premises. This is problematical for several reasons:

   (a) The pigs for export will be derived from pig herds in which vaccination for other diseases[1] is carried out and this must therefore not be considered to be a disease risk for the pigs for export. Accordingly why cannot the pigs for export receive vaccination for these other diseases?

   (b) Administration of PPV vaccine in all pigs irrespective of their age is sometimes inappropriate because of the persistence of maternally derived antibody and vaccination of pigs against PPV is not normally recommended in pigs until 6 months of age. For this reason administration of PPV vaccine to pigs less than 6 months of age is unlikely to provide immunity to PPV infection. This requirement also creates problems with

[1] A disease risk from vaccination only occurs when live vaccines are used. In the UK the only live vaccine that is licensed for use is against porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus infection. As the herds involved in the export of pigs must be free of PRRS, the use of this vaccine is not permitted.

respect to Article 3 paragraph 1.4 of the import protocol which specifically mentions the 'valid period when vaccination is allowed'.

(c) Limiting the vaccine usage to PPV alone means that protection against other diseases such as Swine Erysipelas and Porcine Multi-systemic wasting Syndrome (PMWS) is not permitted and this means that the health of the pigs in respect of these diseases is being put at risk.

(d) In the UK while a dedicated vaccine against PPV is currently available, it is possible that this will this will soon be withdrawn for commercial reasons and then only a combined vaccine against PPV and SE will be available. If this occurs, this would mean that it would not be possible to comply with the requirement to only vaccinate against PPV.

For these reasons I would be grateful if vaccination of pigs for export could also be permitted at least for Swine Erysipelas and the preferred option would be to permit use of any other vaccines provided the use of all live vaccines is not allowed. Such additional vaccines could be administered before the start of the pre-isolation phase. Clearly the use of vaccines such as for FMD and CSF is prohibited due to other clauses in the protocol.

4. **Non-negative test results**: These are not uncommon due to limited test specificity for example for Brucella. The recent exports have also revealed that the blocking ELISA for TGE suffers from this problem; it is considered that this occurred due to increased levels of acute phase proteins associated with previous restraint and blood sampling. In the recent exports such problems have been resolved by testing the pigs again. This has meant that further sheets of laboratory results have been provided, but this has created problems regarding entering the final date on the laboratory report and also the dates of testing on the export health certificate (EHC). In future exports we will ensure that this problem is avoided by ensuring that the laboratory reports have a final date before the pigs move to the next stage.

5. **Deleting words in the export health certificate:** Due to changing circumstances, it is not uncommon for deletions to be needed in EHCs and this is actually essential if correct certification is to be provided for the importing country. This is also essential for the UK Official Veterinarian to be able to comply with the certification rules of the UK Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Our experience in completing the EHCs for the recent consignments has been very difficult for this reason – the question of deletion of words regarding freedom from pH1N1 within 50km from one of the JSR farms was an example. I would therefore be grateful if this could be reviewed urgently. I must emphasise that if deletions are permitted, they would all be signed and stamped by the certifying OV involved.

6. **Reporting outbreaks of PRRS in the UK (Article 5 paragraph 5):** As we have discussed before, this is something that we should correct when the protocol is amended in the future.

7. **Certification of cleansing and disinfection of the aircraft:** As you will know, an additional certificate for the disinfection of the aircraft was requested by [redacted]. The English wording of this certificate was agreed by [redacted]

where he was in the UK. I have enclosed a bilingual version of this supplementary certificate (number 200SUPPAIR) for your information.

I hope that I will be able to meet with you to discuss these matters in early June and I look forward to seeing you again then.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,