

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003951/25
to the Commission
Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE)
(8 October 2025)**

Subject: Impact of new EU rules on cattle embryo imports

Through Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/351, the Commission has introduced a new requirement that breeding bulls used for embryo production must not be vaccinated against infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR). This requirement significantly limits the possibility of importing high-quality genetic material from third countries, particularly the US, Canada, Australia and the UK. However, embryo transfer is carried out under strict veterinary conditions in accordance with EU rules, and there has not been a single documented case of the infection being transmitted in this way.

Such a measure could have serious consequences for all European breeders and companies that depend on access to elite genetics to improve growth, feed efficiency, health resilience and meat quality, and thus for the competitiveness of the European meat sector as a whole.

In light of the above:

1. What specific scientific evidence led to the introduction of the obligation to use only unvaccinated bulls, given that current practice has not demonstrated the risk of IBR transmission through embryos?
2. How does the Commission assess the economic impact of this measure on European breeders and importers of genetic material from third countries?
3. Does the Commission plan to review or relax this legislation, for example by introducing exemptions, so that international genetic exchange can be maintained while ensuring a high standard of veterinary safety?

Submitted: 8.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(21 November 2025)**

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/351 ⁽¹⁾ has not changed any animal health requirements related to bovine semen used for embryo production. It made a more precise reference to the requirements outlined in the underlying Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 ⁽²⁾.

Furthermore, the Delegated Regulation is the result of discussions in the relevant expert group ⁽³⁾ in 2018, which, given the available science, experiences and broader policy considerations, concluded that, to maintain the Union's high animal health standards, semen should only be collected from infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) seronegative bulls, and these bulls should not be vaccinated against IBR for movements and entry of semen and embryos in the Union.

In accordance with Article 234(1)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 ⁽⁴⁾, requirements for the entry into the Union of animals and germinal products should be as stringent as the requirements for comparable movements within the Union. The Union's rules on movement and entry are fully aligned and currently compatible with this regulation.

Any significant change of the current Union policy on IBR and of the Union germinal products production system would require thorough discussion with the representatives of all concerned (e.g., the competent authorities of the Member States, experts, stakeholders, etc.) and would probably necessitate a risk assessment by the European Food Safety Authority ⁽⁵⁾ if deemed appropriate. Currently, the Commission has no new information that would warrant plans to further proceed on this issue.

Moreover, there is still an opportunity to benefit from genetic material from third countries via oocytes, as the requirements for their entry into the Union are not dependent on semen.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L, 2024/351, 9.2.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/351/oj.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 174, 3.6.2020, pp. 379-520, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/692/oj.

⁽³⁾ Expert group on Animal Health https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-health/expert-group-animal-health_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0429&qid=1760943624148>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/about/about-efsa>.