

DISCLAIMER

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE), after performing an administrative and technical screening of a self-declaration concerning the disease-free status of a country, a zone or a compartment ("self-declaration"), as described in the standard operating procedures for self-declarations, reserves the right to publish or not the self-declaration on its website. There shall be no right of appeal from this decision nor any recourse of any kind.

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Self-declaration of country freedom from infection with rabies virus by the Czech Republic

Self-declaration sent to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE) on 25 April 2024, by Dr Zbyněk Semerád, Delegate of Czech Republic to WOAH, Director General State Veterinary Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic.

I. Introduction

The aim of this declaration is to demonstrate that the Czech Republic fulfils the requirements of a country free from infection with rabies virus in compliance with Chapter 8.15. of the 2023 *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* and to replace the previous self-declaration published in OIE Bulletin 2005, 31. The Czech Republic has continued to maintain its active status ever since. The Czech Republic's self-declaration of disease freedom is hereby resubmitted to reflect the adopted amendments to Chapter 8.15. and evolutions in the standard operating procedure for self-declarations in the intervening period.

The self-declaration covers the territory of the whole country and the populations of both domestic and wild animals.

The Czech Republic formally requests WOAH to publish this self-declaration of freedom from infection with the rabies virus.

II. Evidence that rabies is a notifiable disease in the Czech Republic

Rabies is a notifiable disease according to EU legislation – [Regulation \(EU\) No 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of The Council \("Animal Health Law"\)](#), [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1882](#) and national legislation – [Veterinary Act, i.e. Act No 166/1999](#) (rabies is listed in Annex II "Animal diseases and diseases communicable from animals to humans considered dangerous" to that Act – Available in Czech only).

Control measures for rabies in domestic and wild animals are laid down in the following EU legislation and national legislation:

- [Regulation \(EU\) No 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of The Council \("Animal Health Law"\)](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/689](#)

¹ [Publication of self-declaration for freedom from infection with rabies virus by the Czech Republic](#)

- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/688](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/687](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692](#)
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/620](#)
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) No 577/2013](#)
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/404](#)
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/403](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 576/2013](#)
- [Veterinary Act, i.e. Act No 166/1999 \(in Czech only\)](#)

Organisational chart of the State Veterinary Administration

The State Veterinary Administration is an organisation set up on the basis of Act No 166/1999 concerning veterinary care and amending certain related laws (Veterinary Act), as amended. It is the supreme body of veterinary administration with a nationwide competence and it is subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic.

The State Veterinary Administration (SVA) consists of the Central Veterinary Administration (CVA), 13 Regional Veterinary Administrations (RVAs) executing their competences in veterinary care matters in the territories of the regions, and one Municipal Veterinary Administration in Prague (MVA) executing the competence of a Regional Veterinary Administration in the territory of Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Figure 3 provides an organisational chart of the SVA.

The Chief Veterinary Officer (Director General) appointed by the Minister of Agriculture is the head of the SVA.

The CVA has two sections, each managed by a Director:

- the Veterinary Section
- the Economic and Administrative Section.

The Veterinary Section is composed of four departments:

- The Department of Animal Health Protection and Welfare is responsible for monitoring and eradication of animal diseases, animal welfare controls and emergency preparedness. The Department consists of four divisions: the Animal Health Division, the Animal Welfare Division, and the Division of Strategy and Planning in Prague; and the Risk Analysis and Crisis Management Division in Brno, which is responsible for contingency plans and most disease eradication plans.
- The Department of Veterinary Hygiene and Public Health Protection is responsible for official control of foodstuffs of animal origin, for beef labelling and for general hygiene controls in premises where raw animal products are handled (such as butchers' shops, catering business premises and supermarket meat counters). The Department consists of two divisions: the Veterinary Hygiene Division and the Food Safety Division.
- The Department of External Affairs, Import and Export Controls is responsible for import controls and for negotiation of veterinary conditions for export of animals and animal products from the Czech Republic to third countries (i.e. countries outside of the EU). It consists of the Division of Import Controls and the Division of External Affairs and Export Controls.
- The Department of the EU Affairs (EUD) is responsible for comitology and EU legislation, and consists of two divisions: the Division for EU matters and the Division for EU law.

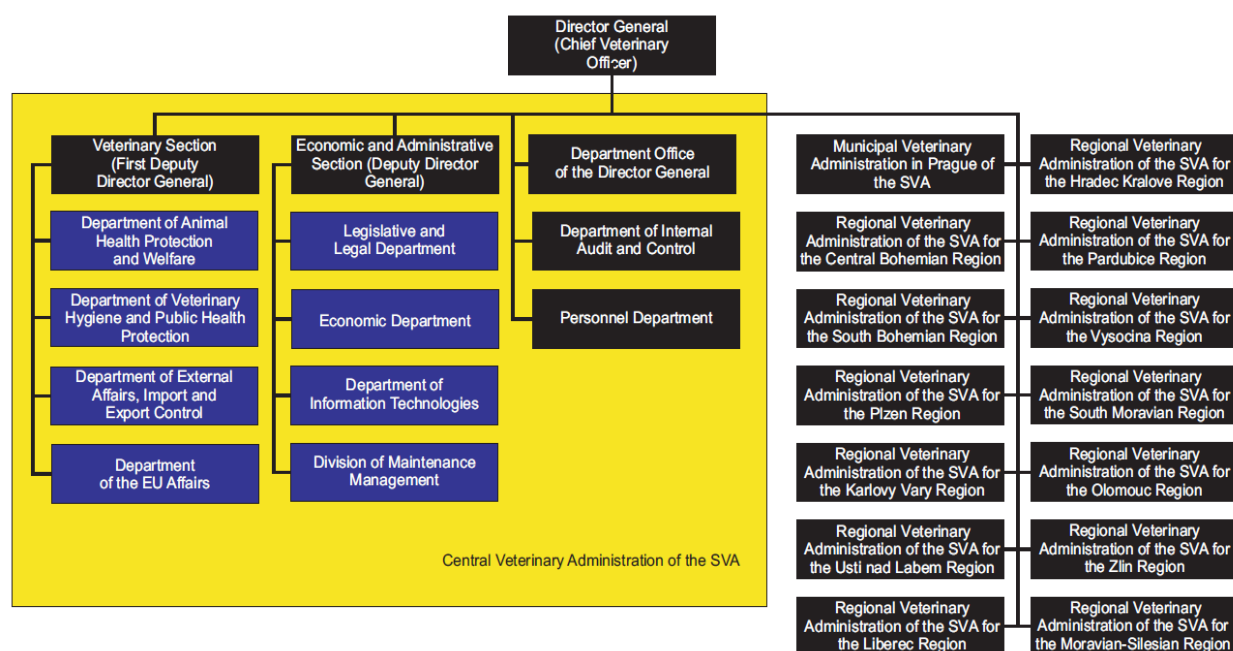
At the central level of the SVA there are three more departments that report directly to the Director General:

- The Internal Audit and Control Department,
- The Personnel Department,
- The Department of the Office of the Director General.

Within each of the 13 Regional Veterinary Administrations and the one Municipal Veterinary Administration in Prague there are separate departments for:

- animal health protection and welfare
- veterinary hygiene and public health protection

State Veterinary Administration



Control measures implemented in the case of rabies are in accordance with Chapter 8.15. of *Terrestrial Code*:

III. History of eradication of the disease in the country

Historically, rabies in domestic carnivores had been widespread in our country since before the First World War, i.e. before 1914. Each year hundreds of cases were found mainly in dogs, cats and other domestic animals.

The rabies situation changed significantly after the Second World War. Rabies in wildlife was established in our country in the 1950s, with the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) being the principal vector and reservoir. Rabies had become endemic in the border areas of West and North Bohemia and North Moravia. In the long-term, foxes accounted for about 90% of positive cases.

Much lower incidence was detected in domestic animals during the course of the years.

The highest incidence of rabies was recorded in 1984 reaching 2,232 reported cases. Since that time continual decline had been visible especially since 1992 when the positive effects of oral vaccination became evident. A programme of oral rabies vaccination focusing on foxes was in place from 1989 to 2009, and led to a successful eradication of the disease in the Czech Republic. For additional information on the history of rabies eradication in the Czech Republic, please consult the article "Rabies elimination in the Czech Republic" which is available on the [WOAH website](#).

The last case of rabies was recorded in a fox in April 2002. The Czech Republic has been officially free of rabies as from 2004, i.e. for 20 years. The self-declaration of rabies freedom was published in the OIE Bulletin "Disease information" No 30 of 23 June 2004 on [page 208](#).

Since the eradication of rabies, the Czech Republic has been using the control measures described in chapter IV below and surveillance system described in chapter V below. Vaccines are still in use to prevent future rabies outbreaks. The vaccination programme encompasses compulsory vaccination of dogs, and captive foxes and badgers. Its legal basis is provided by § 4(1) (f) of the Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll. which stipulates that: *"the keeper must ensure that dogs, as well as foxes and badgers kept in captivity, are validly vaccinated against rabies between the ages of 3 and 6 months and then re-vaccinated during the period of effectiveness of the previously used vaccine, keep proof of vaccination for the duration of the validity of the vaccination and produce it to the official veterinarian on request"*.

The vaccination programme currently does not cover wild animals.

IV Control measures for rabies outbreaks

Wildlife diseases control measures

Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

The estimated size of the red fox population in the Czech Republic is 88,000 individuals and it is distributed throughout the country. The vaccination programme currently does not cover wild animals.

Raccoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*)

Raccoon dog is currently distributed throughout the country in small numbers. Nevertheless, no accurate estimates of raccoon dog population size are available for the Czech Republic. It is reported that 3,800 raccoon dogs were hunted between April 2021 and March 2022.

Border control measures

All the neighbouring countries (Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Austria) are Member States of the European Union (EU) and are subject to the same EU legislation concerning animal health, including animal import regulations. Legal provisions are in place concerning mutual information exchange and cooperation in animal disease control and eradication. In the event of a rabies outbreak in adjacent regions of neighbouring EU countries, Article 64 (3) and Article 258 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/429](#) shall apply. Competent authorities of the EU Member States concerned will work together.

V. Surveillance and early warning system

The Czech surveillance programme and strategy for demonstrating freedom from rabies infection are in accordance with Chapter 1.4. on Animal Health Surveillance and Articles 8.15.13. on Surveillance for rabies of the *Terrestrial Code*. The active rabies surveillance scheme in wildlife and the passive rabies surveillance scheme in wildlife and domestic animals are used in the Czech Republic. None of the tested animals was positive.

Active surveillance programme in animals

The annual programme of active rabies surveillance in the Czech Republic requires laboratory testing of 4 red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) or raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) per 100 km² in all districts, throughout the Czech Republic. All animals of the two species that are found dead, killed or hunted are tested (Table 1).

Diagnostic methods (tests) to be used for active surveillance.

Direct immunofluorescence (DFA), Virus neutralisation test (FAVN), biological experiment, RT-PCR techniques for rabies virus genotyping, detection of IgG against rabies virus glycoprotein (ELISA), tetracycline determination in bone sections, vaccine virus titration at TCID₅₀.

Table 1: Number of animals tested (The basic examination method was a direct immunofluorescence test (FAT), complemented in indicated cases by real-time RT-PCR) under active rabies surveillance in wildlife (red foxes, raccoon dogs) in 2013 – 2023. All animals tested negative.

Animal species	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Red fox	3088	3044	2245	3156	3121	2950	2964	2724	2794	2556	2553
Raccoon dog	1	3	24	17	13	16	30	25	21	15	31

Passive surveillance programme in animals

Passive surveillance for rabies in the country complies with the provisions of Articles 8.14.12. of the *Terrestrial Code* 2021 and Chapter 3.1.17. of the *Terrestrial Manual* 2018.

The duty to notify a suspected occurrence of a dangerous contagious disease or a disease transmissible from animals to humans is laid down in § 11 of Veterinary Act No. 166/1999. Pursuant to §12 (2) of the Veterinary Act, reporting duty also applies to a private veterinarian. Upon notification of the suspicious event, the Regional Veterinary Administration carries out clinical examination and decides on the sampling and testing. The penalties are imposed for non-compliance with the notification obligation.

A variety of other mammalian wildlife species and domestic species are tested annually within the passive rabies surveillance scheme. All of these nonsymptomatic animals had injured humans, and were consequently chosen for testing. (Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2: Number of wildlife animals tested (The basic examination method was a direct immunofluorescence test (FAT), complemented in indicated cases by real-time RT-PCR) under passive rabies surveillance in wildlife in 2013 - 2023

Animal species	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
European badger	5	4	8	7	7	4	4	4	3	0	0
Marten	27	14	16	16	12	21	12	7	8	9	11
Wild boar	5	9	6	6	3	1	4	1	5	3	0
Roe deer	11	5	8	5	4	6	4	2	2	3	0
Bat	14	9	20	14	16	7	14	8	3	7	13
European hamster	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Eurasian otter	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Raccoon	0	2	6	0	0	0	1	5	0	1	0
Red squirrel	0	1	0	3	10	3	4	3	1	2	4
Other wild animals	24	29	21	16	18	20	20	8	6	1	12

Table 3: Number of domestic animals tested (The basic examination method was a direct immunofluorescence test (FAT), complemented in indicated cases by real-time RT-PCR) under passive rabies surveillance in domestic animals in 2013 – 2023

Animal species	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Dog	94	84	68	79	64	51	52	29	43	43	44
Cat	132	140	108	96	100	78	97	73	45	61	59
Cattle	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Ferret	5	5	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Horse	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0
Other domestic mammals	5	7	3	4	6	2	1	1	0	6	2

Specialised laboratories within the following three State Veterinary Institutes (SVIs) carry out rabies diagnostics in the Czech Republic:

Laboratory Address Website

1. State Veterinary Institute Praha, Sídlištní 136/24, 165 03 Praha 6 – Lysolaje
 - certificate of accreditation:
<https://www.svupraha.cz/en/file/e1a237c6ee9a847f2b3ac7469b979559/4029/Image061021140212.pdf>
 - list of accredited testing methods:
<https://www.svupraha.cz/en/file/3b54bc6d8a437f36a4c4474a4dc6b945/4030/Image061021140305.pdf>
<https://www.svupraha.cz/en>
2. State Veterinary Institute Jihlava, Rantířovská 93/20, Horní Kosov, 586 01 Jihlava
 - certificate of accreditation:
https://www.svujihlava.cz/data/userfiles/files/Akreditace/OA_442_21_EN.pdf
 - list of accredited testing methods:
<https://www.svujihlava.cz/data/fotogalerie/files/priloha-kosvedceni-o-akreditaci-en-oa-442-21-en-pdf.pdf>
<https://www.svujihlava.cz/>

3. State Veterinary Institute Olomouc, Jakoubka ze Střibra č.1, 779 00 Olomouc

- certificate of accreditation:
<https://svu.g6.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Osvedceni-405-anglicka-verze.pdf>
- list of accredited testing methods:
<https://svu.g6.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Priloha-405-anglicke-verze2.pdf>
<https://svuolomouc.cz/>

The State Veterinary Institute Praha hosts the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for rabies.

Early warning system

The suspected wildlife animals are euthanized and sent to the laboratory. The suspected domestic animals are moved to an effective isolation until the result of clinical and laboratory examination.

In case of confirmation of any compulsorily notifiable animal disease, the outbreak must be reported by the State Veterinary Authority (SVA) to WOAAH. At the same time the disease must be reported via Animal Disease Information System (ADIS) to the European Commission and it immediately informs all EU Member States.

- ADIS – detailed information on each outbreak of a dangerous animal contagious disease is sent to the European Commission within 24 hours after confirmation.
- WAHIS/WAHID – the WOAAH information system, where information is reported on outbreaks of dangerous animal contagious diseases in accordance with the *Terrestrial Code* and the *Aquatic Animal Health Code*.

VI. Measures implemented to maintain freedom

The Czech Republic has an identification and registration system in place. According to § 4 (3) of Veterinary Act No. 166/1999, the keeper must ensure identification of the dog by microchip complying with the requirements set out in Annex II of the [Regulation \(EU\) No 576/2013](#) (except for a dog that has been marked with clearly readable tattoo before 3 July 2011). The keeper of a newly born dog is obliged to ensure identification of the dog with a microchip before the dog is offered for sale or handed over to a new keeper, but no later than by 3 months of age. The dog keeper shall also ensure that the dog's identification number is recorded on the dog's vaccination certificate. The dog identification number means an alphanumeric code displayed by a microchip which enables to identify the respective dog. According to EU legislation (Commission Delegated [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/688](#), [Regulation \(EU\) No. 576/2013](#), Commission Delegated [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692](#)), cats must also be identified by microchip in case of traveling abroad within and outside of the EU or in case of their movement/import to the Czech Republic. The identification of animals using tattoos is recognised only when the tattoo is clearly readable and was demonstrably done before 3rd July 2011. Animals must be identified prior to their anti-rabies vaccination and issuance of the passport. The rabies revaccination is recorded either in the animal's passport or its vaccination certificate. The vaccines and boosters must have been produced and used in accordance with the *Terrestrial Manual*.

Awareness campaign and risk mitigation measures

Information on the animal health situation related to rabies and recommendations and guidance to keepers and owners of domestic animals and livestock, hunters, veterinarians and the general public are published on the official website of the State Veterinary Administration and shared *via* social media and press releases. The campaign is held every year on World Rabies Day in 28th September (e.g. in 2023: [Světový den boje proti vzteklině – Státní veterinární správa \(svscr.cz\)](#)). Any current information for foreigners is posted in English here: [Rabies in the Czech Republic – State Veterinary Administration \(svscr.cz\)](#)

Import of animals

All imports from third countries, as well as intra-community trade of animals are subject to veterinary certification and checks in accordance with the following EU legislations: [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2019/2035](#), [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/688](#) and [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/692](#) and in accordance with the requirements of Articles 8.15.5. to 8.15.10. of the *Terrestrial Code*. When the animals thereof are imported from non-EU-countries, consignments must be accompanied by an animal health certificate.

Targeted inspection actions have also been implemented. For example, one targeted inspection action taking place in 2020 -2021 was focusing on dogs imported from a non-EU country. Within this inspection action, the veterinary border inspection port Prague-Ruzyně (BIP) took blood samples from imported dogs in order to carry out serological testing for antibodies against rabies (Virus neutralisation test (FAVN)) (Table 4). For seven of twenty-five dogs the results were unsatisfactory (the titration test of protective antibodies did not reach the value of 0.5 IU/ml). For the dogs with unsatisfactory results, the applicable Regional Veterinary Administrations decided on their placement in isolation under official supervision, rabies vaccination and subsequent repeated serological testing.

Table 4: Serological testing (Virus neutralisation test (FAVN)) to determine the titer of antibodies against rabies in dogs from the Russian Federation in 2020 - 2021

Year	Total number of tested dogs	Satisfactory test results	Unsatisfactory test result
2020	5	4	1
2021	20	14	6
Total	25	18	7

In 2022, customs authorities at the Václav Havel Airport in Prague identified 13 pet animals for which import requirements were not compliant. These were dogs and cats which arrived as part of non-commercial movement. These animals were taken to the Prague-Ruzyně BIP where decisions on them were made in accordance with Article 35 of Regulation (EU) [No 576/2013](#). In five cases, the Prague-Ruzyně BIP decided that the animals should be sent back to their third country of origin and in 8 cases the animals were placed in isolation under official control.

As regards commercial consignments of animals and animal products, Table 5 shows the numbers of consignments rejected by the border veterinary inspection due to non compliance with import conditions. The border veterinary inspection always decides how the rejected consignments of animals and animal products should be handled (e. g. Isolation of animals, disposal of animal products, use as a raw material for the production of heat-treated meat products, sending the consignments back to the country of origin etc.). If the consignment is in order, a Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVED) is issued to it.

Table 5: Number of rejected consignments at the Prague-Ruzyně BIP in the period 2013-2022

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Products	37	23	14	15	37	28	21	7	65	55
Animals	3	0	2	1	14	0	11	1	2	0
Total	40	23	16	16	51	28	32	8	37	55

VII. Conclusions

Considering that:

- Rabies is a notifiable disease in the Czech Republic,
- All susceptible animals showing clinical signs suggestive of rabies are subjected to appropriate field and laboratory investigations
- There are effective regular ongoing awareness programmes in place on rabies, and now the Ministry of Health is coordinating the update of the national guideline to was encouraged prompt reporting of rabies suspicions,
- There is an ongoing system of surveillance which is implemented in accordance with Article 8.15.13 of *Terrestrial Code*, including an early warning system to ensure investigation and reporting of animals suspected of being infected.
- Regulatory measures for the prevention of infection with rabies virus are implemented in accordance with the relevant recommendations of the *Terrestrial Code*, including Articles 8.15.5 to 8.15.10.
- Ongoing rabies awareness programmes and national rules for biosecurity measures are in place.
- The last case of rabies was detected in April 2002 and no case of indigenously acquired infection with rabies virus has been confirmed since.

The WOA Delegate of the Czech Republic declares that the country complies with the requirements for a country free from infection with rabies virus, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 8.15 of the *Terrestrial Code* (2023 edition) and consistent with the information provided to WAHIS.

Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned, Zbyněk Semerád, DVM, Director General (CVO).

Delegate of the Czech Republic

to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), takes responsibility for the selfdeclaration of freedom from

RABIES (disease)

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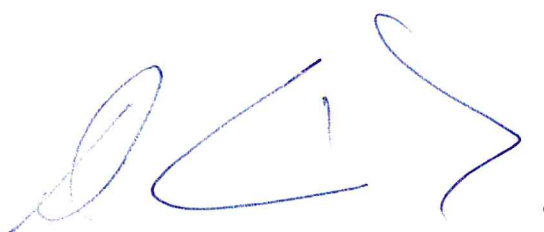
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Drawn up on 25/04/2024

Signature of the Delegate:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, followed by a period.