



CHANNEL RACING UPDATE 10th SEPTEMBER 2021

by Ian Evans

Further to my update of 19th July 2021 I am now in a position to provide members with a detailed update in relation to the proposed amendments to the EU Regulation 2020/692.

The amendments have now been adopted by the EU Commission but are subject to scrutiny by the EU Parliament/Council. My understanding is that if there are no objections from the Parliament/Council that the revised regulations will appear in the official journal of the EU and are therefore agreed. Timescales seem to suggest that this could happen by the end of September 2021, but this is not guaranteed.

At this point it will be helpful to summarise the original requirements of EU regulation 2020/692 that have made racing from the Continent for organisations impossible.

1. A test at an approved laboratory for Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza would have to be taken by each loft/establishment 7-14 days in advance of each race.
2. Each Loft/Establishment would be required to obtain a Health Certificate signed by an approved Veterinary officer prior to each race.
3. Pigeons would have to be quarantined within the lofts for a set period, meaning no mixing with pigeons from other lofts (so no races, group training etc.)
4. The Pigeons would then be required to be quarantined at the country of destination
5. Each loft/Establishment has to be registered with the competent authority. In the UK this is DEFRA/APHA

What are the Adopted amendments?

The adopted amendments have now been published and can be obtained here

<http://europeanmemoranda.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/memorandum/commission-delegated-regulation-eu-of-14-7-2021-amending-delegated-regulation-eu-2020-692-supplementing>

What I consider to be the relevant points have been extracted, copied and pasted in italics below;

Extracts the amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards rules for entry into the Union, and the movement and handling after entry of consignments of certain animals, germinal products and products of animal origin

(14) Racing pigeons fall within the definition of 'captive birds' laid down in Article 4, point (10), of Regulation (EU) 2016/429. Therefore, the specific animal health requirements for captive birds laid down in Part II, Title 3, Chapter 2, of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 apply also to those animals. However, those requirements limit the possibility for the entry into the Union of racing pigeons from a third country or territory or zone thereof with the intention that they will fly back to

that third country or territory or zone. Moreover, racing pigeons introduced into the Union with the intention to fly back to the third country or territory of origin or zone thereof do not pose the same animal health risk as other captive birds. Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 should therefore be amended to provide for a derogation from the specific animal health requirements for captive birds for the entry into the Union of racing pigeons from a third country or territory or zone thereof where they are normally kept, with the intention to be immediately released with the expectation that they will fly back to that third country or territory or zone thereof.

'Article 62 Derogations from the animal health requirements for the entry into the Union of captive birds

2. By way of derogation from the requirements laid down in Article 11 and Articles 54 to 58, consignments of racing pigeons which enter the Union from a third country or territory or zone thereof where they are normally kept, with the intention to be immediately released with the expectation that they will fly back to that third country or territory or zone thereof and which do not comply with those requirements, shall be permitted to enter the Union if they comply with the following requirements:

(a) the Member State of destination has determined that the racing pigeons may enter into its territory from that third country or territory or zone thereof in accordance with Article 230(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/429;

(b) they come from a registered establishment, within a 10 km radius of which, including, where appropriate, the territory of any neighbouring country, there has been no outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza EN 12 EN or infection with Newcastle disease virus for a period of at least the preceding 30 days prior to the date of loading for dispatch to the Union;

(c) they have not been vaccinated against highly pathogenic avian influenza;

(d) they have been vaccinated against infection with Newcastle disease virus and the competent authority of the third country or territory of origin has provided guarantees that the vaccines used comply with the general and specific criteria for vaccines against infection with Newcastle disease virus set out in point 1 of Annex XV;

(d) they come from an establishment where vaccination against infection with Newcastle disease virus is carried out.

3. By way of derogation from the requirements laid down in Articles 59, 60 and 61, the competent authority of the Member State of entry into the Union may authorise the entry into the Union of racing pigeons which will not be transported directly to a quarantine establishment approved in accordance with Article 14 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2035 if they are: (a) racing pigeons which have entered into the Union from a third country or territory or zone thereof where they are normally kept in accordance with paragraph 2; (b) released immediately, under the control of the competent authority, with the expectation that they will fly back to the third country or territory of origin or zone thereof.;

What does this mean?

The content of the adopted regulation has been discussed at a meeting with myself and DEFRA officials. DEFRA have a number of actions points, to obtain clarity from the EU in relation to these

requirements; once clarity has been obtained we will publish an update. Please note that this could take a number of weeks or months but we hope to be in a position to provide a clear position by the end of this calendar year.

In summary the adopted amendments remove the requirement for

1. Laboratory tests
2. Quarantine – both in the UK prior to racing and within the EU
3. The Health certificate

These following requirements will remain;

1. The country of destination allows the entry of racing pigeons in accordance with article 230 of regulation 2016/429.
2. The loft/establishment/premises has to be registered with the UK competent authority.
3. The Pigeons will be required to be vaccinated against Paramyxo/Newcastle Disease.
4. The liberation of the pigeons has to be controlled by the competent authority in the country of destination.

We are seeking clarification in relation to the requirements of article 230 (point 1 above). However, we must consider that racing pigeons and captive birds are currently allowed entry in EU countries from the UK; it is the existing requirements of such permission, which has stopped continental racing in 2021.

With regards to the liberations; the liberation of pigeons on French territory is already written into French law and is controlled by the FCF who provide permits through the RPRA for each liberation. Therefore, DEFRA will be establishing whether this covers the requirement of control by the French Competent Authority. DEFRA will also be approaching other EU countries such as Spain to establish their position/controls in this respect.

The RPRA has already opened up discussions with DEFRA in relation to the process for registering premises and how this, while considering GDPR, could be facilitated through the RPRA membership database.

The process required to evidence vaccination is also being discussed in terms of establishing whether any changes to the current process are required.

Finally

There is still much to be clarified but clearly the fact that these amendments have been adopted by the commission and have therefore cleared the first hurdle, is very promising.

By the end of September we hope that the adopted amendments have been 'approved' by the EU Council/Parliament.

Then by the end of the calendar year we hope to be in a position to clearly communicate the processes required to enter the EU with pigeons, for the purpose of racing. Then start working with organisations to communicate these requirements and put in place whatever infrastructure is required.