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Euro Commission Retreats from Cloning Technology

EU Report on Cloning Ignores Science and Places Future of Technology at Risk

Austin, TX--The European Commission, in releasing its October 19 report on the uses and applications of Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT or cloning) in livestock reproduction, demonstrated yet again complete disregard for science and the value of the technology in achieving global food security, further isolating European food producers and consumers from technology embraced around the world. The Commission report proposes interim measures to ban cloning technology and products from clones, as well as restricting genetics from entering Europe while the Commission considers new legislation.

“Today’s report from the European Commission is disheartening to those who understand and realize the true value and potential of this very powerful technology,” said Mark Walton, Ph.D., president of ViaGen. “Nowhere in the report does it mention that animal cloning can actually improve animal health. This technology has important application in today’s livestock industry, and this proposed ban on livestock cloning in Europe further limits the ability of European animal breeders to compete in the global market, and could even impact its use worldwide.”

Livestock cloning using SCNT has been practiced commercially in the United States since 1998, and has been adopted widely by livestock breeders and producers since the U.S. Food and Drug Administration released its 2008 scientific risk assessment. That assessment concluded food products from cloned cattle, pigs and goats and the products from all offspring of any cloned food species, are as safe as products from conventionally bred animals.

In the United States, products from the offspring of clones are in no way restricted from the marketplace, but recognizing trading partners may need time to consider their own regulatory approaches, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) asked U.S. producers to continue to refrain from sending products derived from cloned animals to the commercial marketplace. Cloning technology providers and the U.S. industry continue to abide by the USDA request using the industry-developed supply chain management program to meet these market demands.

“All governments must be careful so that one nation is not making de facto short-term political decisions that hinder the ability of the world’s farmers and ranchers to access this safe technology. Cloning has the potential to improve global livestock production and increase farmer competitiveness,” Walton said.

“Government and private food safety authorities around the world agree the products from cloned animals and their offspring are safe, an opinion echoed three different times by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA),” commented David Faber, DVM, president of Trans Ova Genetics. “To blatantly

disregard the science further politicizes this issue and is a disservice to consumers and livestock producers around the world.”

Livestock cloning has proven an effective means of improving animal health and overall livestock production in an efficient and sustainable manner. With the World Health Organization predicting a doubling of the world’s population by 2050, this technology and others like it should be made available to all producers as the global demand for animal products increases.

“Producers in the United States recognize the value in using this technology as another form of an assisted reproductive technology on their farms and ranches,” according to Diane Broek, general manager of Bovance. “U.S. farmers and ranchers, livestock genetics exporters and the food industry should know we will continue to work with the U.S. government to ensure it defends our ability to use this technology as Europe contemplates these restrictive measures.”

About Bovance (www.bovance.com): Bovance is a joint-venture between Trans Ova Genetics of Sioux Center, Iowa and ViaGen of Austin, Texas. Bovance provides bovine cloning services and genetic opportunities to cattle producers across North America as an exclusive product offering from Trans Ova Genetics.

About Trans Ova Genetics (www.transova.com): Founded in 1980, Trans Ova Genetics offers advanced reproductive technologies to help breeders multiply the success of their elite cattle. These technologies include embryo transfer, in vitro fertilization, sex-sorted semen, genetic preservation and cloning. Trans Ova Genetics also offers several recipient options, including health-certified recipients, Multiplier Herd Program and a Live Calf Program. Headquartered in Sioux Center, Iowa, Trans Ova Genetics has regional centers in Missouri and Texas, as well as several satellite stations throughout the United States.

About ViaGen, Inc. (www.viagen.com): Based in Austin, Texas, ViaGen is a global provider of advanced livestock genetic technologies, including animal cloning. ViaGen enables the owners of cattle, horses and pigs to preserve and multiply their best genetics through gene banking and cloning services, and to protect their brands through genomic services.

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