

Tissues and Cells Alert – Sent 10th October 2008

Dear colleagues,

Please find below a message kindly sent by Dr Alessandro Nanni Costa, the Italian Competent Authority for tissues and cells. **Please consider it carefully.**

In the past few days the Emilia-Romagna Region of Italy notified **two patients with West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in the Bologna and Ferrara districts**. Both patients developed meningoencephalitis; the first has already improved. Infections had previously been noted in horses, crows and magpies in the area (see Eurosurveillance, Volume 13, Issue 39, 25 September 2008; and Volume 13, Issue 41, 09 October 2008, www.eurosurveillance.org).

As far as control measures are concerned, **all potential donors of organs, tissues and cells from the affected areas will undergo precautionary screening** (serological and molecular tests) to exclude infection. Where there is evidence of infection, organs, tissues and cells will not be used.

In the rest of Italy and in the other Emilia-Romagna districts:

- Potential tissue donor history investigations will include enquiries regarding a possible overnight stay in the provinces of Bologna and/or Ferrara during the previous 28 days. Where there is information that a potential donor has visited one of these districts, they will not be considered eligible for donation, unless laboratory test results for WNV are negative;

- For organ donors, a case-by-case evaluation is being conducted in order to assess the infection risk, acknowledged as very low, taking into account the nature and benefits of transplantation and the health status of the patient on the waiting list.

An alert has also been circulated in the **Blood quick alert network** yesterday (9 October) and on 6 October. You will find the message sent yesterday below, for your information.

Quick alert to the Competent authorities for blood and blood components

*Please find below an update on the situation in Italy regarding West Nile Virus. **Please take note that Italy is maintaining the exceptional precautionary measure for blood collection.***

- *Animal surveillance. As to 8th October at 5 p.m., the National reference centre for exotic animal diseases (c/o Zoo-prophylactic Institute of Teramo) report: - 20 horses which have been affected by neurological disorders referable to WNV in 14 different farms; 10 of these farms are diffusely located in the province of Ferrara, 2 in the province of Bologna, 1 in the province of Mantova, and 1 in the province of Rovigo on the border with the province of Ferrara. Animal surveillance continues to be actively carried out.*
- *A second human case of WNV encephalitis has been confirmed today (9th October) in a patient living in a small town in the province of Ferrara, about 80 Km far from the place in the province of Bologna where the first diagnosed patient lives. Specific surveillance on all cases of human encephalitis has been implemented all over the Emilia Romagna region.*
- *Precautionary measures for blood donations are the same as already communicated, i.e.:*
 - 1) *WNV NAT test implemented on all donations from donors resident in the interested areas (performed in the Blood Centre of Bologna in co-operation with the Regional centre for microbiological emergencies);*
 - 2) *deferral for 28 days of donors having been for one night in the interested areas (the 28 days period start the day after the donor has left the concerned areas).*

We will keep you informed as soon as we receive further information from the Italian authorities.

Best regards

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