



# International Embryo Transfer Society

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Ref. Ares(2015)2942084 - 13/07/2015

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February, 09, 2012

To

Commissaire, Monsieur J. DALLI

Commissaire européen charge de la santé et de la protection des consommateurs

Commission européenne

B-1049 Bruxelles, Belgique

The International Embryo Transfer Society (IETS, [www.iets.org](http://www.iets.org)) is a group of approx. 900 scientists from approx. 35 countries around the world. As described in the IETS By-Laws (enclosed), the society's main purposes are to "further the science of embryo production, development and transfer by: (1) promoting more effective research; (2) disseminating scientific and educational information; (3) fostering high standards of education; (4) maintaining high standards of ethics; (5) enhancing the international movement of animal genetics with embryos; (6) coordinating standardization of embryo handling and record procedures internationally; (7) cooperating with other organizations having similar objectives".

These purposes are achieved first of all through an IETS annual conference that is held in January each year since 1976, and where generally 400 to 500 participants attend, from academia, farm animal industry and other interested groups. To focus the IETS activities in areas of particular importance, a number of Standing Committees have been appointed - one of which being called HASAC (Health And Safety Committee), which maintains a strong link between the IETS and e.g. the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health).

Over the last decade, an increasing portion of the scientific communications presented at the IETS annual conferences (as main speakers, short presentations and poster presentations) has been related to the technique of nuclear transfer ("cloning") in various animal species. This trend illustrates not only scientific interest in this biologically, technologically and ethically challenging area, but also growing interest in this field from people in a variety of industry and other groups.

One result of these activities has been a growing body of knowledge based on scientific reports from the conferences and from the scientific literature in general. These data are compiled through HASAC, and the IETS contribution to this field that has been recognized by international food safety agencies such as the US Food and Drug Administration when working on the risk assessment for products derived from clones. Members of IETS have also been involved as experts to advise the European Food Safety Agency. Indeed, a considerable body of evidence has been gathered through scientific studies that indicates that the chemical composition of the edible parts and products derived from clones and the offspring of clones falls within limits considered to be normal and are therefore safe for human consumption (Chapter 12 of IETS manual).

To make a clear standpoint on the issue of safety of products from clones and offspring of clones, the Board of Governors of the IETS acted in January 2012 to present their view on this topic by issuing a Position Statement posted on the IETS website. The statement, which contains a scientific conclusion and the basis for that conclusion, is as follows: "Based on the scientific evidence, and based on the conclusion of the European Food Safety Agency and the US FDA that there is no scientifically proven safety concern for food derived from clones and offspring of clones and their products, there is no necessity to label products from clones or offspring of clones".

However, some concerns have been raised regarding the welfare of the animals with regard to physical abnormalities resulting from the technologies used to produce cloned animals. The IETS Manual has recommended a set of guidelines based on the experience and scientific knowledge of the research teams producing and raising cloned animals which can lower the incidence of neonatal concerns and addresses the welfare concerns to a significant extent (Chapter 10. Health care and well being of animal clones, IETS Manual 4th edition).

Moreover, recent research indicates that important elements affecting the incidence of abortions, neonatal and early deaths appear to be the selection and treatment of donor cells and ooplasm at the time of reconstruction.

In order to bring the incidence of pathological events down to closer to that experienced during normal animal reproduction, more research and experience both in the cloning process and in the veterinary care is to be encouraged. This research is performed throughout the world and can be pursued in Europe only if the cloning procedure continues to be allowed in the European community.

IETS Board of Governors

and

IETS Hasac chair