



NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2009

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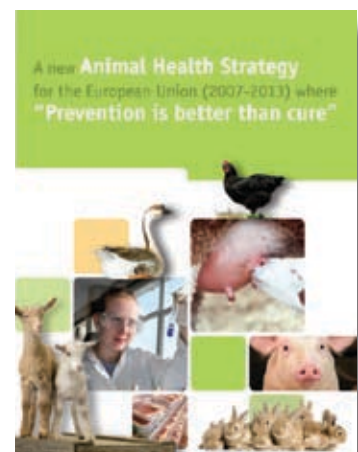
EU ANIMAL HEALTH LAW

'Clear roles' for veterinarians

During the November FVE General Assembly, Barbara Logar of DG Sanco gave an update on the development of the new Animal Health Law. *"The legislative proposal, which aims for simplification and prevention, will probably be based on a general framework, like for the Food Law of 2002, with details worked out in comitology."* However, the Commission's approach was new, she said, and an early and wide consultation of stakeholders was considered essential. "Rather than make proposals and elicit reactions, it was decided to identify the problems and interests together" – even though it was found to be "a very demanding exercise". The consultation process is still open, and FVE members wishing to contribute are invited to either contact the FVE office, which is preparing a joint statement, or reply directly¹.

Similar to the EU Food Law, the new legislation would outline the responsibilities of animal owners and keepers, while those dealing with animals would need to be trained in animal

health and welfare. There would be a clear role for the veterinary services and for the official veterinarians while professional training for both official and approved practising veterinarians was foreseen.



Animal Health Strategy for the European Union 2007-2013

During the discussion that followed her presentation, Barbara Logar was asked to comment on the role of the veterinarian. Everything is linked, she stressed, confirming that both the official veterinarian and the practitioner in the field had an important role to play.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/pillars/consultation_process_en.htm

EVOLVING EDUCATION



Last October, OIE organised a first global conference on veterinary education. The conference title “Evolving

veterinary education for a safer world” immediately points to the societal role of our profession. More than realised, veterinarians contribute to the protection of animal health and welfare, and public health, but also, though more indirectly, to alleviation of poverty, social cohesion, and food security.

Veterinary medicine is essential for all societies. All over the world, there is a need for well organised Veterinary Services, staffed with properly trained and motivated professionals: people with the right knowledge, skills and attitude, conscious about the wider context wherein they function.

Initial and continuing veterinary education lies at the base. Professional organisations, together with the establishments for veterinary education, competent authorities and private partners have to take the lead in setting up - where still necessary - and assuring veterinary education, constantly evolving with the needs and expectations of our societies.

As profession we have to be well equipped to take on our responsibilities. Moreover we have to be clear about that. It is up to us to communicate what we do and why this must be maintained and strengthened.

With the conference OIE made a good step forward, but more will have to follow. A second global conference is announced for 13 – 15 May 2011 in Lyon.

Jan Vaarten, Executive Director

ANIMAL HEALTH

SLOVENIA

Report on farm visitation scheme

The clear benefits of an annual farm visitation scheme were presented to the recent assembly of the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners by Borut Zemljic from Slovenia. The mandatory visitation scheme, set up in Slovenia in 2005, led to over 50,000 veterinary visits in 2006. Since then, 100% of farms – holdings with at least 1 horse or cow, 3 pigs, 5 sheep or 350 heads of poultry – have been visited on an annual basis. Looking back at four years of the scheme in place, he noted that 99.8% of all Slovenian cattle were now identified and registered, as were 95% of horses, 85% of pigs, and 99.8% of adult sheep. He also reported *“a 100% control of the legal use of medicines, with strict implementation of withdrawal periods, 100% disease control and a consultancy and advice service.”* The results were surprising, he said, as there were still many traditional farms in Slovenia, which were *“far removed from the EU standards”* at the start of the scheme. Also, there was a centralised reporting of all veterinary interventions and visits results, allowing central access to all diagnostic results and farm data. *“Owning a computer and having internet access has been made mandatory for participating veterinarians”*, he noted. The scheme had also increased the workload for veterinarians, in a positive manner. *“We managed to convince the farmers that we are consultants, not inspectors. As a result, we now have an increasing amount of consultancy work.”*

Q FEVER IN THE NETHERLANDS

Zoonotic outbreaks in goats and sheep

Q fever, caused by the bacterium *Coxiella burnettii*, can infect nearly all animals, but goats are seen as the main source of infection in humans. Speaking at the General Assembly of the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners on 12 November, Rens van Dobbenburgh (Netherlands) gave an update of the recent outbreaks in his country. The zoonosis has caused over 3000 human cases in the Netherlands since 2007, the largest epidemic of the disease in history. Symptoms of the current outbreak are more severe than before, and may include severe pneumonia in human patients.

Measures taken by the Dutch government include the compulsory notification of high abortion rates in goat and sheep farms and strict hygiene rules. Vaccination, voluntary in 2008, became mandatory in farms within a defined high-risk area in 2009. As the number of cases remained high in spite of these measures, vaccination became mandatory in September 2009 for all dairy goat and sheep farms with more than 50 animals, as well as farms with a public function. And since October, all farms with more than 50 dairy goats or sheep must analyse their bulk tank milk on a monthly basis for the presence of *Coxiella burnettii*.

During the recent annual meeting of Dutch farm animal veterinarians, held on 16-18 November, a Q-fever survey was carried out by the national health authorities in conjunction with the animal health services among 175 participants, who were asked to provide a blood sample and complete a questionnaire. The results will become available by the end of 2009.

EU VETERINARY WEEK 2009

Focus on TSEs, rabies and influenza



Health Commissioner
Androulla Vassiliou

"The recent outbreaks of avian influenza have highlighted once more the link between animal and public health and the importance of veterinary and medical sectors working in a coordinated way", recalled Androulla Vassiliou, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer protection, on 28 September in Brussels. During her opening address of the conference that launched the EU Veterinary Week 2009 – a joint initiative of the Commission's DG Sanco and the FVE – she pointed out that this year's event also marked the launch of the consultation on the future EU Animal Health Law. 'Animals + humans = One health' is the running motto of the EU Veterinary week, with this year's focus on zoonoses, with a particular attention to rabies, influenza and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs).

"Veterinary public health - the protection of animal and human health – is a 'global public good'", recalled Bernard Vallat, director of the World Organisation for Animal health (OIE), noting that 60% of human pathogens and 75% of emerging diseases were zoonoses. Well-organised veterinary services, with adequate manpower and funding, were essential to help prevent and control these diseases, he said. He also gave a progress report of the OIE evaluation tool of the performance of veterinary services, aimed to help raise standards on a global level. This OIE auditing system has proven to be quite successful: so

far, 97 countries had been evaluated by the OIE on a voluntary basis. A gap analysis had been requested by 39 countries, of which 11 had been carried out, and legislative missions had been requested by 20 countries worldwide.

"Animal health and human health are public goods, reiterated FVE President Walter Winding during the panel discussion on animal health legislation. *"It could therefore be dangerous to defer the responsibility of safeguarding food safety entirely to the private sector."* This concern was echoed by Sue Davies, of 'Which?' and the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC), speaking on BSE and other food safety crises from a consumer's viewpoint. She voiced her concern about the possible transfer of responsibility for food safety to the private food operators themselves. *"We should learn from the lessons of BSE",* she said, calling for more transparency and effective enforcement.

Although the number of BSE cases was now clearly on the decline in the EU and its control was a *"success story"*, there were still residual and atypical BSE cases that could persist on the long run and be hazardous to public health, warned Christian Ducrot, epidemiologist at the Institut National de Recherche Agronomique (France). A possible relaxation of surveillance and control measures should therefore be carefully examined, *"both in terms of control of the epidemic and safety for public health"*. The absence of any new cases detected did not necessarily mean eradication, he said.

World Rabies Day

28 September was also World Rabies Day, as recalled by Thomas Müller, of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Rabies Surveillance and Research and OIE Reference Laboratory for Rabies (Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut) in Ger-

many. *"Rabies is the neglected disease of poverty",* he stressed. The overwhelming majority of the 55,000 deaths due to rabies each year affect the world's poorest countries, with 90% of deaths occurring in Asia and Africa. However, the disease continued to be *"considerably underreported"*, as it mainly occurs in poor areas: 83% of rabies cases took place in rural areas – and 50% of rabies deaths occurred in children under 15 years of age. *"Dogs are the main problem,"* he recalled, with 98% of human rabies deaths being caused by bites of rabid dogs.



"Rabies is the neglected disease of poverty", stated Thomas Müller

He called for data-driven assessment for an estimate of true incidence, in order to *"break the 'circle of neglect' perpetuated by ignorance and complacency"*. This estimate could then lead to policy decisions, measure the impact of interventions and produce cost-benefit and other studies. The circle of neglect was often due to poor surveillance, he noted, with only a small number of cases being notified, which in turn led to a lack of incentive and a lack of funding... for surveillance. *"We need a paradigm shift, and should tackle rabies control with a One Medicine approach,"* he concluded, recalling that the prevention of human rabies could be achieved by dog rabies elimination. He cited the example of Mexico, where health authorities had managed to reduce the number of rabid dog cases from 3049 in 1990 down to 80 in 2006 following compulsory dog vaccination, thereby

reducing the number of human cases from 60 to zero. More demonstration projects, such as those now ongoing in Tanzania and the Philippines, were needed to supply a 'proof of concept' and to set standards for a particular region. This would encourage other countries and serve as a wake-up call for politicians, while leading to sustainable improvements in public and veterinary health sectors, he noted.

Influenza, thinking outside the box

"We should learn to think outside the box when it comes to influenza", stressed Ilaria Capua, chief virologist at the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie (Italy). Even before the current A/H1N1 pandemic, she had urged to "challenge the dogma" that a new influenza pandemic is necessarily caused by a novel subtype – or that cross-reactivity between antibodies in humans against an animal virus of the same subtype is protective against a novel animal virus. *"This dogma has undermined our preparedness: everyone expected an H5 or H7 pandemic, not an H1..."*. But the dogma was understandable: every new pandemic in the 20th century had included a novel animal component: The Spanish 'flu in 1918 was caused by H1N1 (of avian origin), the Asian 'flu in 1957 by H3N2 (avian and swine origin) and the Hong Kong 'flu of 1968 by H3N2 (human and avian origin). No wonder that all attention and research efforts worldwide were focused on viruses with novel subtypes (mainly H5 and H7). Yet all pandemics have been caused only by H1, H2 or H3 viruses, she pointed out. The circulation of influenza viruses in the human population for several decades meant that the virus was 'drifting away' from its animal progenitor. Such a large antigenic drift – within the same subtype – was often sufficient to move outside cross-protective boundaries, she said, and antigenic shift to another H subtype was not always necessary.

"We all know that the antigenic drift requires a regular update of seasonal influenza vaccines, as the widespread immunity generates the emergency of antigenic variants – within the same subtype."



Ilaria Capua urges scientists to think outside the box and share their knowledge

She urged scientists worldwide to share their findings, and called for joint surveillance and research between the human and veterinary components, to tackle human and animal health as a collaborative effort.

Other zoonoses

An interdisciplinary 'One Health' approach should not stop at avian influenza. Katinka de Balogh, of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) presented the Global strategy for reducing risks of infectious diseases at the animal-human-ecosystems interface. To address this, a global early warning and response system had been set up jointly between the FAO, the WHO and the OIE. Disease control, communication and research were also part of the strategy.

The success of the 2008 and 2009 European Veterinary Weeks have prompted the Commission to decide to repeat the initiative next year (14-15 June 2010), again in collaboration with the FVE, and also with the European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperatives (COPA-COGECA) and the European Federation for Animal Health and Sanitary Security (FESS). Next year's theme will be animal identification, both of compan-

ion and food-producing animals, and traceability.

WORLD RABIES DAY

Vaccination campaign in Romania

On 20 November, a series of events dedicated to "World Rabies Day – Bucharest 2009" were organised by team members of the Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Preventive Medicine at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Bucharest. Events included a workshop on rabies with expert presentations from Romania and Bulgaria, and was attended by the media and broadcast by a major television network².



Rabies expert workshop at the veterinary faculty in Bucharest

Furthermore, a free vaccination and microchipping campaign was held at the Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Preventive Medicine of the Faculty, which was attended by about 50 pet owners. A "rabies caravan" will drive around the country, starting on 26 November in Nuruja (Vrancea) in the east of the country, which recently observed a rabies outbreak. In collaboration with the district veterinarians, this road show will not only participate in the vaccination of domestic animals, but also educate animal owners and school children about the danger of rabies. The road show will continue during December.

² <http://beta.centruldepresa.ro/ro/comunicate/antirabic-facultatea-de-medicina-veterinara-bucuresti.html>

A DVD with videos and images of the event are available upon request³.

ANIMAL WELFARE

PIG CASTRATION

FVE rejects castration without anaesthesia and analgesia

On 13 November, the FVE General Assembly adopted its updated position paper on pig castration. The document outlines the welfare and ethics as well as the need for castration, and discusses the currently available alternatives. In conclusion, the Federation states *“surgical castration without anaesthesia and analgesia should be avoided. Surgical castration, when necessary, should be performed by veterinarians under general or local anaesthesia with additional prolonged analgesia.”* This also implies that adequate anaesthetics and analgesics *“should be authorised for piglets in all countries”*.

The FVE also concludes that *“immunocastration can be used as an alternative. The practice of castrating piglets should be phased out as soon as possible”*. Furthermore, the FVE recommends that further research be undertaken into the optimisation of boar taint detection methods, pain reducing techniques, consumer acceptance of immunocastration, genetic selection of animals, the development of commercially available sex

separation techniques of semen and management factors.

The current FVE position paper⁴ is an update of the 2001 position paper and takes into account new scientific data, commercially available alternatives and societal views.

WELFARE QUALITY®

Science-based project for on-farm welfare

“Animal welfare is part of the quality of a product,” recalled FVE guest speaker Linda Keeling (Sweden), who gave a report of the Welfare Quality Project (2004-2009), which had recently come to a close at an international conference in Sweden on 8 and 9 October⁵. The project, which had developed standardised methods for the on-farm welfare assessment, was one of the largest EU funded projects ever, with over 250 participating scientists, 44 partners in 17 countries and a budget of around 18 million euros.

There was a *“missing link”* between animal welfare on the farm and product consumer information, she said. European surveys had shown that 58% of consumers would like more information about farming conditions at the origin of the products they bought. This increased citizens' demand for higher welfare, an increased attention from productions and retailers, the EU research strategy and the commitment of scientists was at the origin of the project.

Although the traditional input-based approach, by measuring environmental factors such as nutrition and stocking densities, remained important,

there was now also increasing interest for the output-based approach, which looked at animal factors such as behaviour and body score. The scientists had developed assessment schemes based on 4 principles (good housing, good feeding, good health and appropriate behaviour) and 12 criteria, as much as possible measured by outcome based measures. Schemes had been developed for cattle, poultry and pigs. After identifying the measures to be monitored, they developed a system to calculate whether a farm would score “Excellent”, “Enhanced”, “Acceptable” or “Not classified”.



Fact sheets are available on the Welfare Quality® Website

Many governments, certification systems, retailers and producers are now exploring how the welfare quality system can be applied to measure welfare. In Scotland, a voluntary health and welfare scheme for farms had been developed. The scheme provides payments to cattle and sheep farmers who agree to draw up an animal health plan with their veterinary surgeon and select additional options to improve the health and welfare of their animals. Although it does not require an assessment using the Welfare Quality protocols (none have been developed for sheep so far), it introduces the concept of Welfare Quality and develops an acceptance of the criteria as a useful framework for considering welfare on-farm.

A follow up project will focus on extending the WQ assessment scheme to other species, including sheep, goats, rabbits and horses.

3 Please contact Dr Gabriela Bagrinovschi at ella_bagrinovschi@yahoo.com

4 http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/animal_welfare/fve_09_040_castration_pigs_2009.pdf

5 <http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone/43163/9/0/22>



EU REPORT

Animal welfare labelling

On 28 October, the European Commission adopted a report in which it outlines a series of options for animal welfare labelling. The overall goal of policy in this area is to make it easier for consumers to identify and choose welfare-friendly products, and thereby give an economic incentive to producers to improve the welfare of animals.

A feasibility study carried out for the purposes of the report indicated that the lack of animal welfare information on food products is an important issue for the consumer. While voluntary welfare labelling schemes exist, there is no harmonised system of animal welfare standards for labelling purposes and consumers are often unable to understand and differentiate the welfare standards promoted under these schemes.

Current options include the establishment of requirements for the voluntary use of animal welfare claims, the establishment of a voluntary Community Animal Welfare Label open for all to use, and the drafting of guidelines for animal welfare labelling and quality schemes⁶.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) welcomes the initiatives and discussions in the EU to improve animal welfare and it strongly supports the introduction of EU-wide Animal Welfare Labelling. The FVE underlines that the promotion of Animal Welfare Labelling must involve some essential basic principles to be successful: labels should represent animal friendly production systems well above the minimum legal requirements; consumer information is essential; regular control of rearing; transport and slaughter conditions

should be regularly controlled by independent experts.

The Commission report also presents options for the possible establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals. Such a network, modelled on the existing Community Reference Laboratories for animal health, could provide technical support for the development and implementation of animal welfare policies, including regarding certification and labelling.

PROTECTION AT SLAUGHTER

New Regulation

The welfare of animals at slaughter now has a new legal framework⁷, which was adopted on 22 June by the Council and published in the Official Journal on 18 November. The new Regulation will give increased responsibility to operators. Each slaughterhouse (except small slaughterhouses) must appoint an Animal Welfare Officer, who will be accountable for implementing the animal welfare measures. The Regulation also requires staff handling animals in slaughterhouses to possess a certificate of competence regarding animal welfare. Each operator will have to develop and implement standard operating procedures for ensuring proper welfare standards in a reliable way.

Furthermore, manufacturers of stunning equipment will have to provide instructions for ensuring proper animal welfare and a number of technical standards are updated in view of scientific progress. Finally, Member States will have to create scientific

support to provide permanent and competent assistance to official inspectors.

The Regulation allows Member States to have stricter national rules for the protection of animals at the time of killing. This was among the points put forward by the FVE in its position paper on the draft Regulation.

The FVE congratulates the Commission on the draft proposal, and is particularly pleased that this Regulation allows Member States with stricter rules on animal welfare during slaughter to maintain these. According to the FVE, the Regulation is a "significant step in the right direction" and has the potential to improve the welfare at slaughter and killing of millions of animals. FVE especially welcomes the clear operator's responsibility for the welfare of animals during slaughter, the introduction of a certificate of competence and the need for slaughterhouses to appoint an animal welfare officer.

The Regulation shall apply from 1 January 2013, with transitional provisions for the certificate of competence (by December 2015) and the construction and equipment (December 2019).

PUBLIC HEALTH

FVE POSITION

Modernising inspections in slaughterhouses

Following a seminar on modernising inspections in slaughterhouses, organised by the French presidency in

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/labelling_en.htm

⁷ Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing (Reg/1099/2009), published in the OJEU of 18 November 2009

Lyon in 2008 and subsequently discussed by the Chief Veterinary Officers of the EU, the FVE and especially its hygiene Section UEVH would like to draw the attention to certain aspects and suggest areas in the food chain where modernisation would be welcomed. The FVE notes that there are some changes which are under discussion “that might decrease the current level of food safety”. The aim of modernisation must be to increase the efficiency of the controls for food safety and not only cost reduction, the FVE stresses. FVE has therefore drawn up the following recommendations⁸:

- Meat hygiene should focus on animal health, animal welfare and public health equally. Only a holistic approach can guarantee safe food, and a ‘welfare officer’ who is not a veterinarian is not able to have this holistic view.
- Controls should be based on peer-reviewed science and should be risk based. Modernisation should not be driven by cost-reduction alone.
- A varied level of official controls should be based on risk analysis. Flexibility in the controls, inspections and audits should be possible, depending on factors such as the level of self checks, the sanitary situation in a MS, and the overall level of animal health, animal welfare and public health risks.
- There are differences in the ability of Food business operators (FBOs) to take full responsibility for food hygiene. The competence of the FBO is the single most important risk factor in the ability of a business to produce safe food.
- The consumer expects an independent body to ensure food safety. While the FBOs are responsible for

food safety and for their own checks, an independent system should be in place to make the FBO liable in case these fail. And although the FBO can take over some of the inspection duties, these procedures should be audited by an official control.



Modernising inspections in slaughterhouses: ‘Yes, but’

- Key roles of the veterinarian in public health are inspection, audit and enforcement. Most of the pathogens that are of importance in meat and meat products in Europe today cannot be detected by gross examination of the carcass. Although the inspection regime has to be adjusted accordingly, it should be based on peer reviewed science and risk analysis.
- Veterinarians must have the education and the necessary resources to be able to fulfil their tasks. The education, including continuous professional development, of veterinarians working in food hygiene is essential.
- FVE considers ante-mortem inspection performed by a veterinarian to be essential. However, under certain controlled circumstances, it may be appropriate to vary the ante-mortem inspection procedures, for example on a unit-by-unit basis, where a unit may be a group of animals or an individual animal.
- The Food Chain Information (FCI) should be linked to a herd health plan. The FCI is not only essential for the meat inspection in the slaughterhouse but can also be an important tool for the farmer and practitioner to improve animal health, animal

welfare and food safety at the primary production.

FVE is concerned about the developments in some Member States where veterinarian and therefore their expertise are more and more removed from the slaughter facilities in order to save costs. With developing the EU Community Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013) the European Commission clearly emphasises the high value of prevention and early detection in animal health, which can only be achieved by collaboration of all involved actors. Especially pillar three (‘prevention and controls’) of the strategy recognises the importance of veterinary expertise, veterinary controls and veterinary certificates with regards to prevention and crisis management.

ONE HEALTH

Influenza at the human - animal interface

On 30 October, a conference was organised by DG Sanco on Influenza, in the framework of the ‘EU Veterinary week 2009’. At the FVE GA, Nicole Schreiner (FVE Office) reported on the conference, which had included presentations on global influenza programmes, coordination at EU level, influenza surveillance programmes, epidemiological and diagnostic perspectives, vaccines and collaboration and interface activities. The programme of the conference with embedded presentations is available online⁹.

The conference, opened by Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, had attracted some 300 participants from all over Europe, and speakers included representatives of the European Commission and of various

⁸ http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/public_health/fve_09_pos_002_inspections_in_slaughterhouses_modernisation_final.pdf

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/conference/programme_influenza.pdf

health-related institutions, including the World Organisation for Animal Health, the World Health Organisation, the European Centre for Disease Control, and the European Food Safety Authority.

Nicole Schreiner furthermore announced that two DG Sanco stakeholder meetings had been held on Influenza Surveillance, discussing two working documents on the surveillance, monitoring and control measures in pigs¹⁰ and in poultry¹¹.

Animal species infected so far with the novel H1N1 Influenza virus include pigs (UK, Ireland, Norway, Iceland, Canada, Argentina, Australia, Singapore, Japan, USA and Taiwan), poultry (Chile, Canada), mink (Denmark), ferrets and cats (USA).

EFSA REPORT

EU survey on MRSA in pigs

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published the first EU-wide survey on Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in breeding pigs¹². The results indicate that MRSA, a bacterium resistant to many antibiotics, is commonly detected in holdings with breeding pigs in some EU Member States. The survey provides estimates of its occurrence and makes recommendations for further monitoring and investigation of the causes and implications of MRSA findings in pig holdings in the EU.

The survey was carried out in 24 Member States, 17 of which found some type of MRSA in their holdings with breeding pigs and 7 none at all. Dust samples were taken in the pigs'

environment in a total of 5073 holdings. On average, different types of MRSA were found in 1 out of 4 holdings with breeding pigs across the EU, but the survey also showed that figures vary greatly between Member States. MRSA ST398 was the most reported type of MRSA among the holdings with breeding pigs in the EU; some Member States also reported other types, but their prevalence was much lower.

MEDICINES

RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTIMICROBIALS

BVA launches "8-point plan"

On 18 November, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) launched a simple and effective 8-point plan for the responsible use of antimicrobials in veterinary practice. Antimicrobials are essential for the treatment and prevention of diseases in animals, but every use increases both the risk that resistance will develop and the potential for its transfer to man via food-borne pathogens. To protect animal and human health, and optimise food safety, antimicrobials should only be used when necessary and always responsibly.

The guideline plan, which is outlined in an easy-to-follow poster, ranges from reducing the need for antimicrobials in the first place and avoiding inappropriate use to selecting the correct antimicrobials to use, keeping accurate records and reporting suspected treatment failures to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

The posters will be distributed to BVA members and will be available to download from the BVA's website from 18 November¹³. The launch coincides with European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2009 organised by European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

The new guidance supports the international "One World, One Health" message promoting awareness of the link between animal diseases and human health and the BVA is also working with the FVE on using the poster in other EU countries.



The 8-point plan:

1. Work with clients to avoid need for antimicrobials
2. Avoid inappropriate use
3. Choose the right drug for the right bug
4. Monitor antimicrobial sensitivity
5. Minimise prophylactic use
6. Minimise use perioperatively
7. Record and justify deviations from protocols
8. Report suspected failure to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Commission working paper

On the occasion of the European Antibiotic Awareness Day of 18 November, the European Commission

10 SANCO/6211/2009 Revision 7, see http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/influenzaAH1N1/index_en.htm

11 SANCO/6133/2009 Revision 4

12 http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211903070127.htm

13 http://www.bva.co.uk/public/documents/BVA_Antimicrobials_Poster.PDF

presented a staff working paper for an improved approach of the growing health problem of anti-microbial resistance (AMR)¹⁴. Each year about 25,000 patients die in the EU from infections caused by micro-organisms that have developed resistance to antimicrobial medicines. It is also estimated that every year AMR costs 1.5 billion euros in healthcare expenses and productivity losses¹⁵.

The Commission's document provides an overview of the activities already undertaken by the European Union to address the AMR problem and identifies areas where further reflection could help the efforts to come up with solutions. It concludes that, although progress has been made in certain areas, further actions are needed to improve the assessment and management of AMR.

The working paper outlines the EU actions in terms of monitoring AMR and its risk assessment and management. It highlights the complexity of AMR and its links to public health, the control/eradication of zoonoses and animal health and welfare.

EU-US SUMMIT

Transatlantic task force

During the EU-US summit in Washington early November, it was decided "to establish a transatlantic task force on urgent antimicrobial resistance issues focussed on appropriate therapeutic use of antimicrobial drugs in the medical and veterinary communities, prevention of both healthcare- and community-associated drug-resistant infections, and strategies for improving the pipeline

of new antimicrobial drugs, which could be better addressed by intensified cooperation".

The FVE, which is very keen to take part in this task force, contacted the European Commission to declare its interest to take part. Committed to the One Health concept, the FVE wishes to contribute to finding solutions to the issues our societies are faced with today, and are happy to facilitate contacts with veterinarians, farmers and owners of companion animals to communicate about new insights and best practices. Meanwhile, the European Commission confirmed it would welcome input from the FVE.

EDUCATION

OIE CONFERENCE

Evolving education

At the FVE General Assembly, President Walter Winding reported on the global conference on education, titled 'Evolving veterinary education for a safer world'. The 3-day conference had been organised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in Paris on 12-14 October. The event had attracted over 450 deans and directors of veterinary schools, decision-makers, official veterinarians and representatives of the profession from around the world.

Bernard Vallat, OIE Director, had outlined the aim of the conference. *"In a rapidly changing world, veterinary education must face new challenges and continually evolve to meet societal demands in the field of prevention and control of diseases food security, food safety, public health and animal welfare"*. Appropriate edu-

cation and training have a direct effect on the quality and performance of public and private components of Veterinary Services, considered a 'public good'.

Most of the thirty-nine speakers had emphasised the skills that the veterinarians of tomorrow should possess to face the future challenges. With the increase of the number of (re)emerging diseases, climate and demographic change, world trade and travel, veterinarians required a thorough basic knowledge of public health, including zoonoses, emerging diseases and food safety.

The conference recognised the crucial role of good veterinary education for the proper functioning of veterinarians and veterinary services, and the responsibility in the matter of the competent authorities, statutory bodies, professional organisations and veterinary teaching establishments. *"The European Coordinating Committee on Veterinary Training would like to call on governments and competent authorities to implement and enforce the rules and regulations which were agreed upon, and to make the necessary resources available"*, Walter Winding added.




FVE President W. Winding and Executive Director J. Vaarten at the OIE conference

The final recommendations of the OIE conference are now available online¹⁶. A second international conference on veterinary training is planned

14 http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/salmonella/antimicrobial_resistance.pdf

15 EMEA/ECDC estimates based on bacteria most frequently isolated from blood cultures in Europe

16 http://www.oie.int/eng/A_DEANS2009/Conclusions_and_recommendations_FINAL_131109_ANG-f1.pdf



for May 2011, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the veterinary profession.

VETERINARY SPECIALISATION

National recognition of European College Diplomats

Most countries have their own national veterinary specialisation programme. But it is often unclear whether European specialists can they use their title of European College Diplomat in their home country. The answer is yes (in most countries), according to a recent survey on the national recognition of European College Diplomats in FVE member states. Of the seventeen responding countries¹⁷, only five (Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Romania and Turkey) do not have their own national specialisation programme for veterinarians. France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom indicate that their specialisation system is comparable to that of the European Colleges.

In most countries, different titles are used for the national specialists and the Diplomats of a Europe College. In six countries, Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, which responded there is no distinction made between veterinarians which obtained the national specialization and those that are Diplomats of a European College. Only in Italy and Switzerland, Diplomats cannot obtain the national degree of specialization. In all other countries with a national specialisation programme, this is possible. In some countries, including France, Portugal, Slovenia, Germany and the

UK, Diplomats have to sit an additional exam or have to pass an evaluation commission in order to obtain the national specialist title. In other countries, including Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands it is granted automatically.

The survey was held on request of the Federal Veterinary Chamber in Germany (BTK), which was faced with a growing number of individuals that have received recognition as a 'Diplomat' of one of the 23 European Colleges member of the European Board for Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS).

FECAVA

Pan-European degree in post-graduate education

The Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECVA) has proposed to develop a postgraduate programme for practitioners that involves a training programme and an exam, and would lead to a title obtained from an awarding body.

The initiative evolved from the observation that many European countries do not provide a national specialisation programme and the need for a module-based programme for practitioners. FECAVA stresses that the title obtained – still to be defined – should not be confused with the European Diplomat status, which is reserved for specialists.

Political consensus between the main veterinary organisations has been achieved and the structure for administering accreditation has been established in the form of the European veterinary accreditation for continuing education.

SPECIALISATION

New European College for Animal Welfare Science

In 2007, during the Berlin Welfare Quality® conference, the initiative was taken to set up a European College for Animal Welfare Science under the umbrella of the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS). So far, 50 veterinary surgeons working in the field of animal welfare declared their interest. In the meantime, much has happened and the establishment of the College is approaching.

In 2008, a letter of intent was sent to the EBVS Executive Committee, and two liaison officers were appointed to help with the establishment of the college. A list of founding members and a draft constitution were drawn up, and a syllabus and list of possible training centres were compiled.

In view of the EBVS future strategy, it was advised to establish a parent college (e.g. 'European College of Animal Welfare and Behavioural Science and Medicine'), which would include both the already existing European Veterinary College in Behavioural Medicine - Companion Animals and the new College for Animal Welfare Science. A formal application for provision approval will be forwarded to the EBVS before the April 2010 General Assembly.

ECOVE

Helsinki School approved

The European Committee on Veterinary Education (ECOVE), a joint Committee of FVE and the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), met in November in Vienna to decide on the

¹⁷ Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

evaluation of a number of schools recently visited by expert teams.

The first school that was approved and accredited in accordance with the recently introduced two tier system for evaluation and accreditation is the faculty of veterinary medicine of the University of Helsinki (Finland). According to the visitation report the faculty demonstrated a high degree of responsibility for and focus on quality, monitored by a thorough quality assurance system. Moreover the faculty follows a clear strategy for quality and quality control as well as a strategy for continuous enhancement of quality.

The schools of Liege (BE) and Ljubljana (SI) were conditionally approved.

At the end of the meeting the Committee said farewell to Prof Peter Horin from Brno who served in ECOVE for many years. On behalf of the Committee, the chair Prof M. Wanner thanked him for all his valuable contributions to the work of ECOVE.

FVE & PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

13-14 NOVEMBER 2009

FVE General Assembly

Animal welfare

"Animal welfare is part of your oath and should be part of your education," stressed Laurence Bonafos, of the Animal Welfare Unit at the European Commission, addressing the audience of the breakout session of the General Assembly of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE),

held in Brussels on 13 and 14 November. Animal welfare was important to all sectors of the profession, she said, and veterinary students should understand that *"even if they do not want to learn about animal welfare – they'll have to"*. Although the veterinary profession was taking this new dimension into account, she said, *"It should also be taken into account in the veterinary curriculum"*. That this was not yet the case everywhere in equal degrees transpired from the presentation of Nancy De Briyne (FVE Office) on undergraduate veterinary education in animal welfare. Although the average number of hours that this topic was taught (23h) was on the increase, there was much room for improvement, she said. She also recommended that it should not be restricted to legislative and theoretical data, but be included in undergraduate clinical training. *"The clinics should be a showcase of animal welfare"*, she added.

The workshop showed that although veterinarians have the potential and motivation to be the best-placed profession in the field of animal welfare, they needed specific training to do so. When asked, Laurence Bonafos indicated that the Commission would look into means to support such training, not just for official veterinarians but also for veterinary practitioners and students.

During the plenary session, guest speaker Linda Keeling reported on the Welfare Quality Project, which had developed standardised methods for the on-farm welfare assessment (see page 5).

Medicines and Statutory Bodies

Christophe Buhot (France), FVE Vice President and member of the Medicines Working Group, gave an update on the 'positive list' for horses for human consumption, which had been drawn up in collaboration with the Federation of European Equine Vet-

erinary Associations. All medicines on this list of products with 'added clinical benefit' had been accepted by the Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products during its September meeting – *"all with the exception of phenylbutazone and halothane"*.



Lively discussions took place at the FVE autumn General Assembly

Regarding the prudent use of medicines, Christophe Buhot said that the veterinary profession needed to become more proactive. He congratulated the British Veterinary Association on the publication of its poster presenting the "8-point plan" for responsible use of antimicrobials, and announced the FVE was looking into ways of adapting the poster on a European level (see page 8).

The FVE Statutory Bodies Working Party had become a full-fledged FVE Working Group in recognition of its role and growing importance. The remit of the new Working Group is to "assist FVE in developing its position with regards to the regulation of the veterinary profession (the access to and the exercise of veterinary medicine) in Europe". It shall also act as a facilitator for the exchange of information between national competent authorities, in particular in relation to the international movement of veterinary service providers. The role of the Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSB) had also been highlighted during the recent Conference on veterinary education, organised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

The FVE General Assembly furthermore adopted a position paper on pig castration (see page 5) and voted

former FVE President Tjeerd Jorna to become honorary member of the Federation. Mr. Jorna is currently President of the World Veterinary Association (WVA).

Also discussed were 'One Health' issues and Jean-François Chary gave a presentation on the 250th anniversary of the veterinary profession, which will be celebrated in 2011. *"It is the anniversary of the veterinary profession and veterinary science to be celebrated around the world"*, professor Chary stressed. The event will also be the occasion of the second international conference on veterinary education, and will probably coincide with the EU Veterinary Week in 2011.

The next FVE General Assembly will be held in Basel (Switzerland) on 10-12 June 2010.

FVE SECTIONS

UEVH Board 2009-2011

At its meeting of 12 November, the Union of European Veterinary Hygienists (UEVH) held its Board elections. Members of the new Board 2009-2011 are as follows: Henning Knudsen (Denmark) - President, Sergio Rodeia (Portugal), Jason Aldiss (UK), Bernhard Ursinitsch (Austria) and Robert Huey (UK).



UEVH Board (from left): J. Aldiss, R. Huey, H. Knudsen, B. Ursinitsch and S. Rodeia

EASVO Board 2009-2011

At its General Assembly of 12 November, the European Association of State Veterinary Officers (EASVO) held board elections. The new board is as follows: Romano Zilli (Italy) -

President, Herfried Haupt (Austria), Hans Petter Bugge (Norway), Véronique Bellemain (France), Morgan Lyons (Ireland) and Cornelia Rossi-Broy (Germany).



EASVO Board (from left): M. Lyons, C. Rossi-Broy, R. Zilli, V. Bellemain, HP. Bugge, H. Haupt

EVERI Board 2009-2011

At its meeting of 12 November, the European Veterinarians in Industry and Research held its board elections. The new board is as follows: Ljiljana Markus-Cizelj (Croatia) - President, Timo Wahlroos (Finland), Sabine Schüller (Germany) and Richard Weilenmann (Switzerland).



EVERI Board + Project Leader (from left): J. Bernardy, S. Schüller, T. Wahlroos, L. Markus-Cizelj, P. Nowlan and R. Weilenmann

FEEVA

Board elections

At its 5 November General Assembly in Dublin, the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (FEEVA) held its board elections. The new board is composed of Josh Slater (UK) - President, Erik Gostelie (NL), Jesper Møller Nielsen (DK), Orsolya Kutasi (HU), Marco Pepe (IT) and Karen Dunne (IE).

During the meeting, participants discussed the positive list for food producing horses, the transport of horses, the economic state of the equine practitioner, the use of the cascade and the identification of horses.

WVA

FVE hosts WVA Secretariat

On 15 October, an agreement was signed between the World Veterinary Association (WVA) and the FVE, who will supply secretarial services to the WVA from 1 January, next. Until then, the WVA headquarters will be located in Copenhagen. A new member of staff will be appointed at the FVE Office to help manage the extra workload.

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