

NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2013

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Aquaculture a challenge and an opportunity for the profession



"While capture fisheries production remains stable, aquaculture production keeps on expanding. Aquaculture

is set to remain one of the fastest-growing animal food-producing sectors and, in the next decade, total production from both capture and aquaculture will exceed that of beef, pork or poultry."(FAO, 2012 edition of The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture).

European aquaculture should become *"an economically viable, competitive, environmentally friendly industry, able to face global competition, while providing consumers with healthy products."* This is one of the aims of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, recently set up by the European Commission, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy.

There is no doubt about the enormous potential of aquaculture. However, diseases of aquatic animal represent a major limitation to production and trade. This requires profes-

sionals with the knowledge, skills and competencies to diagnose diseases and treat aquatic animals. Veterinarians have a fundamental role to play in assuring fish health and welfare, thereby safeguarding public health.

However, the lack of veterinarians dealing with aquatic diseases or historical reasons have led some Member States to recognize the *"aquatic animal health professionals"* mentioned in the proposed EU Animal Health Law. These professionals are not qualified veterinarians but practice aquatic animal medicine and have the same legal responsibilities and obligations as veterinarians, according to the proposal.

This seems an appropriate moment to discuss the role veterinarians have played in aquaculture so far and the role that can and should play in the future. FVE has opened a debate on aquaculture that started with a conference and will continue with a working group to explore the involvement of the veterinary profession in this sector.

R. Laguens, FVE Vice President

ANIMAL HEALTH

ANIMAL HEALTH LAW

FVE welcomes veterinary farm visits

On 6 May, the EU Commission published its official proposal for a new community Animal Health Law (AHL). This 'package' includes an Animal Health Regulation and Official Controls regulation, as well as Laws on Plant health and propagating material. Part five of this package covers the feed and food expenditure multi-annual budget for 2014-2020.

The new AHL was also the topic of the recent stakeholder Conference on "Animal, Plant and Control Package: Smarter Rules for Safer Food", held on 13 June. Jan Vaarten, FVE Executive director, said FVE was pleased with the proposed role of Animal Health Services and the Member States' responsibilities, but noted that the "missions of the Food and Veterinary Office have revealed several weaknesses" in this area, which "should be resolved for any legislation to be effective". He also said that the proposed regular 'animal health visit' by vets to farms was "a cornerstone of the 'prevention is better than cure' strategy." However, the effectiveness of these visits much depended on how they would be addressed by the delegated acts and "political will" to implement and maintain such legislation.

An issue lacking in the proposed AHL is a clear recognition of the role of the veterinarian. "Veterinary medicine is a regulated profession", he stressed. The veterinarian is licensed by the le-

gal authority to perform his tasks, to be done in an "independent, ethical and personally responsible capacity". It was important to recognise that the veterinarian is accountable to the licensing authority, "especially where consumer confidence is critical."

The proposals^{1 2} are now being considered by the European Parliament (EP) and Council, although the timeline is uncertain in view of elections. For the EP, the rapporteurs are Marit Paulsen (DG Agri)³ for the AHL and Mario Pirillo (DG Envi)⁴ for the Official controls.

AQUACULTURE

FVE Conference on fish health and welfare

"Caring for health and welfare of fish – A critical success factor for aquaculture" was the topic of a conference

held in Brussels on 16 and 17 May, and organised by the FVE in association with the Irish Presidency and the European Commission (speakers in the picture).

There is a significant potential in the EU for aquaculture. Currently, the EU imports two-thirds (65%) of its aquaculture products. The availability of veterinary medicines specific for fish should be ensured throughout Europe, participants found, while "antibiotics for fish should only be prescribed by a veterinarian, for the fish under his/her supervision." Other topics discussed included the diversity of fish species and fish-farming methods, current and emerging diseases, sustainable fish-farming and the role of the veterinarian in aquaculture. "Veterinarians are the experts in animal health, welfare and public health – including fish," stressed Christophe Buhot, FVE president. The European Board of Veterinary Spe-



1 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/pressroom/docs/proposal_ah_en.pdf

2 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/pressroom/docs/proposal-regulation-ep-council_en.pdf

3 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0136%28COD%29&l=en>

4 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0140%28COD%29&l=en>

cialisation also announced that a European College on Veterinary Aquatic Health would soon be established.

To maintain high standards, veterinary schools were encouraged to provide more aquatic veterinary disciplines

and/or training programmes in their curricula, and the licensing of fish farms should be based on scientific knowledge and sustainable farming practices. Currently, the EU fish farming sector produces 2 million tons of fish, and is worth a turnover of €7 billion, generating over 190,000 jobs. FVE also set up an ad-hoc working group on aquaculture (2013-2014). Its members are Kari Norheim (Norway, chair), James Casey (Ireland), Andrea Fabris (Italy), Baska Ferenc (Hungary), Armand Lautraite (France), Buket Ozkan (Turkey) and Alain Schonbrodt (Belgium).

EU REGULATION

Travelling with pets

The new EU Regulation on the Non-commercial movement of pets has been published on 28 June⁵. The Regulation includes two lists: list A for dogs, cats and ferrets and list B for “other pets” including invertebrates, ornamental fish and small mammals. The Regulation lays down rules for the non-commercial movement of pets and for compliance checks.

“Non commercial movement” is defined as travelling with an aim other than selling and with less than five animals. More than five are allowed for sporting events or shows, but a written derogation is required, and animals need to be over 6 months of age.

Movement between rabies-free countries or regions without vaccination is possible if both the country / region of origin and of destination agree and if they have been free from rabies for at least two years. Preventive measures regarding *Echinococcus* remain unchanged in the new regulation.

Animals must be identified by microchip (or tattoo if this was done before 3/7/2011). “However, the regulation does not mention the need for central registration of chipped animals, which is regrettable”, she stressed. “FVE has campaigned consistently for linking the identification of pets to registration in an approved database. This is essential to effectively control the risk of disease spread and prevent risks associated with illegal trade,” Ms De Briyne stressed. “The recent case of imported rabies in Spain and re-emergence of the disease in Greece, underline the importance of good identification and registration of pets.”

Although there is no mention of registration in the regulation, the annex of the Regulation states that the European Commission “investigate the feasibility and appropriateness” of extending the registration system to cats and dogs. The Regulation (and the new pet passport model) will enter into force on 1 January 2015

WILD ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY

Exotics as pets: towards a positive list

“Vets are the guardians of animal health and welfare – including wild animals in captivity.” So said Christophe Buhot, FVE president, speaking at the conference ‘Wild Animals in Captivity – Animal Welfare, Law and Enforcement’ held on 19 and 20 June, organised by Vier Pfoeten and the Born Free foundation, with support of FVE. Despoina Iatridou, FVE policy

officer, reported on outcomes of the October 2012 conference on the import and keeping of exotic animals in Europe. She also said that intermediary findings of the Callisto project had revealed an “unprecedented increase in the keeping of wild animals”, with rodents being the most widespread wild pet in Europe. This was not without zoonotic risk, she explained.

Some zoos were very well managed, while others had problems. Also, the inspections were found to vary greatly between countries and were often

purely administrative. The conference also showed that circuses rose significant animal welfare problems and that there were still many circuses with large animals in captivity. Some cities and countries (e.g. Austria) had banned circuses with wild animals in captivity. As circuses travel across Europe, this issue should be tackled from a European level.

The keeping of wild animals by private individuals was another issue. The Dutch Stichting AAP, a European rescue home for exotic and wild mammals⁶ indicated that about half the animals they rescue come from private individuals. This is why it warmly welcomed the recent initiative of the Dutch government to issue a so-called positive list of ‘suitable companion animals’, which will enter into force on 1 January 2014. The list was established by examining various criteria including the zoonotic risk, the impact on animal welfare and the domestication capacity. A similar list has already been introduced in Belgium in 2009. In collaboration with the Born Free foundation, the FVE has prepared a short survey on exotic animals in veterinary practice, to assess the degree of exposure to exotic companion



5 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOhtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:178:SOM:EN:HTML>

6 <http://www.aap.nl>

animals by veterinary practitioners. The questionnaire is available in five languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The closing date for the survey is 9th August 2013.

HONEYBEE HEALTH

Tackling the bee decline

'Tackling Europe's bee decline – the role veterinarians can play' is the title of a new brochure⁷ produced by the FVE together with its working group on honey bees. For the past 10-15 years, European beekeepers have been reporting weakening



bee numbers and colony losses, in particular in Western Europe (France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain). This decline is due to several factors, including the Varroa destructor mite, various viral, bacterial and parasitic diseases (European and American foulbrood, noseosis...), pesticides, poor agricultural and beekeeping practices.

Regarding the revision of the Veterinary medicines directive (2004/28/EC), the FVE has urged the Commission to explore how medicines availability for bees can be improved. Also, it was necessary to fight the inappropriate use of chemicals and medi-

cines, which could lead to disease spread and an increase in resistance against medicines. The FVE strongly recommends that all veterinary medicines should be on prescription only.

At the European Food Safety Colloquium⁸ (15 and 16 May) on the risk assessment of multiple stressors in bees, Nicolas Vidal-Naquet (France), FVE chair of the honey bees working group, underlined the importance of defining indicators taking into account management in honey bee health.

ANIMAL WELFARE

COMPANION ANIMALS

28 October: EU pet welfare conference

"The welfare of dogs and cats in the EU - Building a Europe that cares for companion animals" is the theme of a full-day event to be held on 28 October in Brussels. The event is organised by the European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency, with the support of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE).

The first European Conference on the Welfare of Dogs and Cats will involve stakeholders from government, veterinary and inspection authorities, breeders, trade show organisers and NGOs. It will be an important opportunity to reflect on and discuss the practical considerations and approaches in tackling the key issues of commercial breeding and companion animal trade as a source of danger for pet welfare, public health and consumer protection.

This conference will also see the launch of a study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices. Based on the outcomes of the study and the conference's proceedings, the Commission will consider if further action is necessary in order to increase transparency and adequacy of information to consumers on animal welfare for their purchase choice (i.e. a traceability system).

The EU dog and cat population is estimated to be around one hundred million animals, mainly privately owned, but it is difficult to estimate the volume of pet animals traded in the EU.

VETERINARY EDUCATION

Animal welfare curriculum adopted

Animal welfare and its associated research is "an important aim in veterinary education along with other key subjects such as animal health and public health. The veterinary profession will also be needed to monitor and help implement good welfare for national governments which will create future employment needs for the profession." So said Professor David Morton, chair of the FVE working group on European veterinary education in animal welfare, speaking at the FVE general assembly in Maribor, on 8 June.

He went on to present the pillars of a model syllabus for veterinary undergraduates. "Animal Welfare science, ethics and law should be a core subject, and examinable with the same pass/fail criteria as other core subjects," he stressed. "This subject is key to the future of veterinary practice. It should be delivered in such a way that the study subject is clearly identifiable in its own right, while be-

7 http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/bees_entire_brochure_02.pdf

8 <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/130515.htm>

ing integrated throughout the veterinary course.” Day-one competencies should include the ability to “participate in animal welfare assessment, monitoring and auditing” in order to improve the physical and mental health of animals. “That’s where the jobs are!” he added. Graduates should also be able to “formulate an informed, science-based view” on animal welfare matters and “communicate effectively with those keeping animals.” European schools should “encourage cutting edge animal welfare research as this will attract both students and top quality staff.”



The proposed model curriculum and day-one veterinary competencies on animal welfare were adopted by the FVE general assembly in Maribor. It was also approved by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), and will be taken on board in the evaluation system of veterinary faculties.

DUBLIN

Reinforcing animal welfare during transport

The Conference on the reinforcement of animal welfare during transport, held in Dublin on 29 May – “was just that!” commented FVE deputy director Nancy De Briyne. “It was a stakeholders meeting on how to improve enforcement (GPS data, cross country collaboration, police cooperation) and the implementation (guidelines) – not a meeting about revising the

transport regulation.” The meeting, organised by the European Commission, the Irish presidency and the UECBV – was found to be “very constructive”.

Over 1 million citizens have signed the 8-hour petition asking the EU to restrict transport for slaughter to maximum 8 hours. However, changing the Regulation is politically as good as impossible, so the aim of this conference was to see how transport could be improved focusing on implementation and enforcement

TRANSPORT

Improving control posts

Results of an EU project on the renovation and upgrading of control posts were also presented at the Dublin meeting on 29 May (see above). The 120 authorised control posts in the EU are mainly used as a resting place for animals and drivers on long-distance transport, who are obliged to rest for 24 hours.

DG Sanco has funded two research projects on the upgrading and renovation of control posts. The first project (2010-2012) renovated 8 control posts, develop an electronic ‘booking’ system, an animal welfare assessment protocol and educational material. The second project aims to renovate a further four control posts and to develop an EU-wide transport certification system

EUROPEAN GUIDELINES

Fitness for transport of horses

After the success of the European guidelines for the fitness for transport of bovines, released in 2012, and similar guidelines for pigs – now being drafted⁹ – a kick-off meeting was held on 11 June to discuss the future fitness for transport guidelines for horses. Aim of the meeting, an initiative of the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (Feeva) and World Horse Welfare, was to develop practical guidelines of the assessment of horses to see if they are fit or not for transport.

“The Guidelines will cover the basic requirements of fitness for transport as required by Regulation 1/2005”,

⁹ See FVE Newsletter 1/2013

recalled Giorgio Ricardi. *"This should not provide any issues for the high value horse industry or the commercial movement of leisure animals, as the vast majority would meet these basic standards."*

The meeting was well attended by stakeholders including the FVE and members of the European Commission, although transporting companies were not represented. *"The Guidelines will not be a legally binding document",* stressed Mr Ricardo. *"They simply aim to contribute to horse welfare in a proactive, positive way. However, there is a potential for the Guidelines to be used by certain Member State as a reference document and therefore drafting should be done in a prudent way and by consensus within the whole sector."*

The next meeting will be held in October, and it was hoped that stakeholders such as transporters and representatives of importing/exporting countries would also be present to help start drafting the guidelines.

PIG WELFARE

End of surgical castration in sight

The end of surgical castration of pigs seems to come into sight – although not necessarily through legal steps. The first meeting of the expert group on pig castration was organised by DG Sanco on 17 June. Its aim is to promote the European Declaration on pig Castration. This declaration, adopted in 2010, has been signed by more than 30 organisations – including the FVE.

The main points of the declaration¹⁰ are: a voluntary stop to all pig castration by 2018 and a mandatory use of anaesthesia and/or analgesia before that date (starting 2012).

The stakeholders discussed the actions proposed in the European declaration; several task forces will work on different actions, e.g. drawing up a list of traditional productions requiring heavier pigs benefiting from

reduction of boar taint compounds by pig breeding and/or management and feeding.

PUBLIC HEALTH

CALLISTO UPDATE

Experts to focus on 16 diseases

At the FVE general assembly in June, director Jan Vaarten gave an update on the Callisto project¹¹, a multidisciplinary, multisectorial, interprofessional think tank on the role of pets in the transmission of diseases to people and food producing animals.

The three-year project, led by FVE, was now halfway its second annual cycle. As the number of zoonoses was too long to cover all, the experts had drawn up a list of selected paradigmatic diseases to be discussed. Callisto will therefore focus on the following diseases:

- Viral diseases: Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic fever, West-Nile disease, Foot and Mouth disease, rabies and Bluetongue.
- Parasitic diseases: those caused by *Echinococcus granulosus*, *Leishmania infantum*, *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Giardia spp.* and *Toxocara canis*, *Toxocara cati*
- Bacterial diseases: those caused by *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Leptospira interrogans*, *Salmonella enterica*, *Bar-*



derogation from the ban on surgical castration. The European commission is also supporting several studies on pig castration such as detection of boar taint at slaughter, the public acceptance of on boar taint and the

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/docs/castration_pigs_declaration_en.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.callistoproject.eu/joomla/>



tonella henselae and ESBL bacteria.
- Bite wound infections.

The second conference will be held in Brussels on 23-24-25 October.

MEAT INSPECTION

Main risks

"Inconsistent interpretation" of proposed amendments to EU legislation on the modernisation of meat inspection¹² was one of the main risks identified by the Union of European Veterinary Hygienists (UEVH), during their recent general assembly, held in Maribor on 6 June. Other risks included the *"constant pressure from competent authorities to reduce staff and costs"*, reported Sean O'Laoide, UEVH president, *"as well as the anticipation, by the food business operator, of reduced costs and controls."* Another concern was the implementation of requirements for the food chain information (FCI), and the interpretation by the Official veterinarian – and any meat inspection decisions arising from it

On behalf of UEVH, he therefore asked the FVE board to *"set an objective to the FVE Hygiene working group to draw up guidelines for Official veterinarians and private veterinary practitioners."* These guidelines should outline the respective roles of private practitioners on the farm and of Official veterinarians in the slaughterhouse *"in particular as it relates to the food chain information and meat inspection decisions"* arising from it. In April, a delegation of the FVE had already met with Commission representatives to

discuss the proposed amendments of the Hygiene Regulations. Speaking on behalf of FVE, Robert Huey had expressed his disappointment that the integrity of the FCI process had not been strengthened. *"There is no link to the new Animal Health Law that proposes a requirement for veterinary visits to farms, and nothing on farm audits,"* he regretted.

FOOD HYGIENE

Carcase decontamination

Lactic acid may now be used to decontaminate cattle carcasses, according to the recently published Regulation¹³ which was adopted and published after lengthy debates in the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCFCAH). At the FVE General Assembly in June, FVE policy officer Francesco Proscia commented that a number of FVE recommendations had been taken on board by the Commis-



sion concerning the conditions of use:

- Decontamination may only be carried out on carcasses and half carcasses or quarters.
- Carcasses with visible faecal contamination should not be treated
- Lactic acid decontamination should not result in any irreversible physical modification of the meat.

- Sampling of carcasses¹⁴ for bacteriology must be carried out before the application of lactic acid solutions
- Food business operators must inform their clients if carcasses have been treated. This information should be documented.

MEDICINES

ADVICES TO PET OWNERS

Responsible use of antibiotics

"Antibiotics are not always the answer; not every infectious disease requires antibiotic treatment (e.g. viral infections, superficial cat bite wounds). Don't demand antibiotics when your veterinarian says they are not needed." This is one of the many recommendations of the leaflet for pet owners on the responsible use of antibiotics¹⁵, published recently by the FVE in close collaboration with Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations and the Bella Moss Foundation.

FVE president Christophe Buhot outlined the rationale behind the initiative: *"Education and information are the cornerstones of fighting antimicrobial resistance – and not just of veterinarians and farmers, but also of citizens and pet owners, who should realise that antibiotics are not an 'automatic' solution to all ailments."*

FVE has already published leaflets for veterinary practitioners and for the wider public. Leaflets for horse own-

¹⁴ COMMISSION REGULATION (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuff

¹⁵ http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/fve_antimicrobials_pets_final_small.pdf

¹² 853/2004 and 854/2004

¹³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:034:0001:0003:EN:PDF>

ers, farmers and medical practitioners/dentists are currently in preparation.

FEEVA SURVEY

Antibiotic resistance rare in equine practices

Antimicrobial resistance in equine practice is considered “rare” by a third of horse veterinarians, according to the preliminary results of a survey on antimicrobial use in equine practice. The results were presented by Giorgio Ricardi, president of the Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (FEEVA), during the FVE general assembly early June. Similarly, a majority (58%) of equine practitioners did not think that “a broader range of available antimicrobials” was required.

Clinical or professional experience, bacterial culture and sensitivity testing and guidance/codes of practice were the most important factors that influenced the choice of antimicrobials, according to the survey. Owner or trainer demand, marketing offers and price/profit margin were considered least important. This was in line with findings of an earlier survey on veterinary prescribing behaviour, organised by the Heads of Medicines Agencies and FVE. The FEEVA survey also suggested that penicillin and trimethoprim-sulphas were still among the

most frequently used antimicrobials, and that metaphylactic use was rare.

ANTIBIOTIC SURVEILLANCE

Germany: complementary state and private system

“The goal of any programme fighting antimicrobial resistance should be to reduce the use of antibiotics, not just



increase transparency”, according to Hans-Joachim Götz, vice president of the FVE. Speaking at the General Assembly of the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners on 6 June, he presented the German system on the monitoring of antibiotic use. Two systems exist side by side:

- organised by the state, through the Veterinary medicines law on minimising the use of antibiotics (Arzneimittelgesetz or AMG-Novelle), and
- a private initiative operating via the quality assurance system (Qualitätssicherung or QS). Different actors of the food chain (including feed mills, farmers, slaughterhouses, etc) are members of QS.

The AMG Novelle is in its final phase of adoption. Due to the political elections it is not sure when a compromise will be reached.

Regarding the QS system, a “nation-wide monitoring programme for the reduction of antibiotic use” in poultry fattening was set up in April 2012, followed by pig fattening in September 2012. All veterinarians prescribing antibiotics for QS-farms will need to be registered and comply with the QS rules. They submit the data on the antibiotics prescribed into a central database, VetProof. It is a voluntary system – although QS participants can be excluded from QS if they do not comply. So “*de facto, it is compulsory*”, commented Hans-Joachim Götz. He added that a combination of pressure from the authorities (AMG) and from the market (QS) was probably the best way forward.

Farms will be classified on the basis of the level of antibiotic use and ‘over-average-use farms’ will need to consult veterinarians and set up an action plan (hygiene management, husbandry, health management). “*Market pressure will make sure that the ‘bad apples’ are left out – or improve. Big retailers will only want to buy from the best performers*”, explained HJ Götz. The private to state system will be compatible, so that vets will need to submit the data only once.

Currently, 95% of pig and poultry farms are registered, as are 92% of QS veterinarians. “*By July 1st 2013, all poultry and broiler farmers and by 2014, all pig farmers need to be members of QS if they want access to the market*”.

The Dutch model: -51% in less than three years

In the Netherlands, government required a reduction of antibiotic use in production animals of 50% by end 2013 (a goal reached end 2012) and of 70% by end 2015 compared to 2009. UEVP Vice president Rens van Dobbenburgh explained how the "Dutch model" worked.

It included the set-up a digital database (VetCIS) in which veterinarians registered their prescription data on a weekly basis. A national veterinary medicines authority had been created to monitor the use of veterinary pharmaceuticals, and take action if veterinary practices exceed key performance indicators. Also, the formularies (guidelines for the use of veterinary medicines) were adapted. "For example, antibiotics against ESBL have automatically become second-choice antibiotics, while fluoroquinolones and 3rd/4th generation cephalosporins are now only allowed after sensitivity testing." Herd health plans and farm treatment plans were also set up, with a one-on-one relationship agreement between farmers and their veterinarian. The system is voluntary, "but quality assurance systems require from farmer members that they allow their veterinary practitioners to submit data." The mixing of antibiotics at feedmill level was also banned "which suited everyone". Monitoring is an effective tool for the responsible use of antimicrobials, he concluded. "Two years after the start of intensive monitoring of antibiotic use, the Dutch government announced a decrease of 51% late 2012".

EDUCATION

VETCEE

Pilot phase underway

Veterinary Continuous Education in Europe or VetCEE was created in



2010 to "provide for mutual recognition of an agreed common standard and level of post graduate veterinary programmes" that can be attained by veterinary practitioners. In other words: working towards an equivalence of "intermediary" (non-specialist) degrees provided at a European level. It is made up of representatives of European veterinary bodies (FVE), practitioners (UEVP), specialists (EBVS) and teaching establishments (EAEVE).

Speaking at the general assembly of the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP), current VetCEE chairman Andrew Byrne (Ireland) announced that a pilot phase is currently underway, with the evaluation of three companion animal further education programmes, provided in Denmark, the UK and Poland.

The proposed system would recognise and embrace systems which already exist in some European countries and provide the base for their mutual recognition across Europe. Additionally, the system would provide practising veterinarians in countries which do not have such systems to complete a programme which would lead to such recognition. "VetCEE will not

issue qualifications," Andrew Byrne stressed. "That remains a function of national authorities – provide training or regulate veterinarians, nor will it substitute national CPD committees or veterinary statutory bodies."

EAEVE

Increasing number of approved schools

Currently, three-quarters (76.1%) of all evaluated European veterinary teaching establishments were either accredited, approved or conditionally approved, announced Laslo Fodor (Hungary), current president of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE). "The trend is towards an increase of approvals. This is a welcome development: raising standards of veterinary education is the key objective of the evaluation system."

The joint FVE/EAEVE evaluation system just celebrated its 25 years, he added, and its standard operating procedures were currently now being updated. "The system will become less descriptive and more descriptive, and the focus will be on day-1 competencies." Approved evaluations will be valid for 7 years, and aim to harmonise with other evaluation systems. The system was voluntary, he recalled, but added that European schools refusing to undergo an evaluation could no longer be full EAEVE members. Currently, there are 97 EAEVE member schools in 34 countries, of which 24 member schools in the EU. Late 2012, EAEVE had become an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and hopes to become an associate member by the end of the year.

BRIAN KILLGALLEN

Brian Kilgallen, an Irish veterinarian with a law degree, is Agriculture Attaché in the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU. He is responsible for a number of areas including animal health and welfare, plant health and trade. Ireland has just completed its seventh Presidency of the EU.

How did you experience running the Presidency?

An incredible experience! It's been extremely demanding, but also great fun! In the lead-in period to the Presidency (and by this I mean 30-36 months), I think all of us in the Permanent Representation and on the Presidency team saw it as a great opportunity to present a positive image of Ireland and to really make an impact in terms of moving things forward in the EU. This effort and the focus on this goal kept all our spirits up during the long days and long weeks. Ireland has a reputation for running hard-working, impartial Presidencies and I hope that the 2013 Presidency will be similarly remembered. And the fun part was being at the very centre of all that is happening in the EU and being lucky enough to make a huge range of contacts in Brussels and beyond.

What was the biggest challenge for you during the presidency? And the biggest achievement?

Before the Presidency, I often thought of Donald Rumsfeld's famous speech about 'known and unknown unknowns'! I tried to prepare as best I could for what I knew would happen: we had a number of tricky legislative files on the table and I knew that negotiations within Council and with the European Parliament would be testing. Also, we had a very busy meeting schedule: Agri Council Meetings, Chief Veterinary Officers, etc. All of these I was able to prepare for. However, the real 'unknown unknown' was the horsemeat

issue. Nobody foresaw this and in terms of dealing with it, we had to write the manual as we went. The EU is frequently subject to criticism for being overly-bureaucratic and slow-moving, but I firmly believe we can move quickly and efficiently when necessary, as this issue clearly demonstrated. At 48 hours notice we organised a meeting of Ministers in Brussels. This led to the Commission proposing a regime of testing, which was approved by Member States and up and running several days later. Member States and the Commission cooperated well in investigating the cause of the problem and in putting measures in place to deal with it. I think the lessons learnt from the issue will strengthen and enhance the already high levels of food safety and traceability in the EU.



How did you experience the cooperation with FVE?

As veterinarians, we are very lucky to have in the FVE, a highly effective and efficient organization representing our interests in Europe. I have dealt with them since I moved to Brussels, four years ago, and I have always been impressed at the impact and reach that can be achieved by a relatively small administrative core. In May, in association with FVE, we were very pleased to organize a two-day Conference on Aquatic Animal Health. This was very well-attended and featured a superb line-up of speakers. For me, it also underlined the role of veterinarians in the health, welfare and production of all species of animals.

FVE & PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

FVE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Consolidating the role of the veterinary profession



"The quantity of fresh graduates seems to exceed by far the real need for veterinary manpower", leading to "increased unemployment" and "lower standards", affirmed Karel Daniel, representative of the Czech veterinary chamber. Addressing the FVE General Assembly, held on 7 and 8 June in Maribor, this triggered a lively discussion about the veterinary labour market (Picture above: Borhut Zemljic from Slovenian Veterinary Chamber).

Peter Jones (UK) said that this resonated with similar concerns being expressed in the UK after the announcement last year of the opening of a new vet school. *"After the recent establishment of a veterinary school in Nottingham, surrey university announced the creation of a new veterinary school, just 60 kms from the royal veterinary college in London."*

Many members think that this may exacerbate the problems of finding adequate work experience, adequate well qualified teaching staff and deteriorating job prospects, he said, adding that this may not be the last school, as there were rumours of others in the future

Hans-Joachim Götz (Germany) suggested that the problem was not necessarily caused by an overproduction of veterinarians but with a poor distribution of manpower. *"We are educating more than enough veterinarians, yet we are struggling to find graduates for public health, rural practices and large animal work."*

"Decreasing the number is not necessarily the solution", agreed Frederic Lohr (International Veterinary Students' Association). "Instead you may want to attract new graduates to new fields, such as One Health." Karin Östensson stressed the *"need to work on facts and look at manpower surveys"*. While some countries would need to fight a *"ridiculous overproduction"*, others may face a shortage. *"We should defend and promote*

cussions had revealed many potential "new" fields, including aquaculture, bee medicine, animal welfare and One Health, and these should all be explored. He added that a tool had been published explaining the role of veterinarians¹⁶. Called 'Veterinarians, vital for animals, vital for people', the brochure highlights the role of the veterinarian in animal health, food safety, the economy, disease prevention and control and the environment.

Other topics discussed in Maribor included the proposed Animal Health Law, animal welfare, Callisto, Professional recognition, the modernisation of meat inspection, bee health and aquaculture. The Bundesverband praktischer Tierärzte (BpT) from Germany was welcomed as a new member.

In Maribor, the entire FVE board (picture below) was re-elected for a second mandate, as follows: Christophe Buhot (France, president), Robert Huey (UK), Karin Östensson (Sweden), Hans-Joachim Götz (Germany), Rafael Laguens (Spain). During its own gen-



veterinary competence wherever it is needed."

FVE president Christophe Buhot concluded that the general assembly dis-

eral assembly on 7 June, the Union of European Veterinary Practition-

¹⁶ http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/bro_fve_vital_final.pdf

ers elected its board for 2013-2015 as follows: Andrew Robinson (UK, president), Rens van Dobbenburgh (Netherlands, general secretary), Thierry Chambon (France), Torill Moseng (Norway), Piotr Kwiecinski (Poland) and Marjan Tacer (Slovenia), vice presidents. The UEVH

ognised, thanks to the agreement¹⁷ reached on 12 June between the Irish Presidency of the Council and the European Parliament representatives. The main points for the veterinary profession:

1) Partial access



General Assembly as well nominated E. Kudyba (Poland) new member of the Board (picture above, from the left: G. Klein, J. Aldiss, H. Knudsen, S. O'Laoide, E. Kudyba). Next FVE General Assembly: Brussels, 15-16 November 2013.

STATUTORY BODY

New FVE working group

Lynne Hill, chair of the new FVE's Statutory Bodies working group, reported at the FVE General Assembly that the group already met on 30 May and discussed the Directive 36/2005/EC (PQR), cross-border professional indemnity insurance, inclusion of the definition of a specialist in the Veterinary Act, paraprofessionals, VetCEE and cross border drug prescription.

As regards the Professional Qualification Directive, veterinarians moving to another country will find it easier to get their qualifications rec-

2) Training: for the veterinary profession, it included an important update knowledge and skills, as requested by the European Parliament;

3) Language tests: these should be limited to the knowledge of a language of the host country and take place after the recognition of qualifications;

4) Delegated acts: these are intended to update the requirements of knowledge and skills. They are also kept for the establishment of common training frameworks. The professional opinion should be taken into account when drawing up delegated acts

Although the training requirements for veterinary surgeons, as described in article 38 of the proposed directive, was "very prescriptive", with a "very long list of required subjects, mixing knowledge, skills and competencies", FVE welcome the feasibility of applying delegated acts, she said. "This means that the proposed directive will allow the Commission to enable changes to this list (An-

nex V) and will be able to consider the recommendations of the FVE in this matter." She also mentioned the reference to "evaluations of veterinary schools carried out by well-established and accepted bodies".

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