



Federation of
Veterinarians
of Europe



Newsletter - May 2008

Rabies: don't smuggle death!

Rabies is a major disease, both from an animal and public health perspective. The disease, nearly always fatal, is caused by a viral infection of the central nervous system. Despite being 100% preventable, it is estimated that worldwide 50,000 people die from rabies each year, mainly in developing countries. Children are particularly at risk, with almost half of all rabies deaths occurring in children under 15.

Members of the *Canidae* family, such as dogs, foxes and wolves, are the most susceptible animal species, but all mammals are susceptible, including ferrets, rodents, bats, cats – and men. The infection is mainly transmitted through a bite or scratch from an infected animal, but transmission may also occur via inhalation or contamination of a wound or via the mouth or eyes. The incubation time (the interval between contamination and symptoms), can be quite long, but once the first signs appear the disease is nearly always fatal.

Almost 125 years ago, on 30 July 1883, Émile Roux presented a dissertation, *Des Nouvelles Acquisitions sur la Rage*, in which he described the research he carried out with Louis Pasteur, which led to the development of the first anti-rabies vaccine. Interestingly, while most vaccines need to be administered prior to contamination, rabies vaccination can also be effective when administered – promptly – after contamination.

However, although such post-exposure vaccination is possible, this does not mean that every vaccinated animal can be considered safe immediately. When vaccination is given too long after infection, or if the animal is immunodeficient or simply too young to respond properly to vaccination, disease might still develop.

The development of oral vaccines that are taken up through palatable baits, has helped to eradicate the disease in wildlife in certain parts of Europe. However, this does not exclude the possibility of new outbreaks. Only this month, a 3-month-old infected dog from Gambia arrived in France via Belgium. Rabies infection was also discovered during quarantine in London, in a puppy from Sri Lanka.

World Rabies Day, an initiative aimed at raising awareness and promoting disease control, is held on September 28. The initiative, fully supported by the FVE, advocates the improved health of the population through a One-Health approach. The European Veterinary week, to be held later this year, will also focus on the spread of disease via the transport of animals.

Especially now, at the start of the tourist season, it is essential that the public is well aware of risks involved with animals from endemic areas. However lovely or endearing that little stray dog might be, it should never be smuggled into another country, as the consequences for in-contact people and animals can be fatal. While for many diseases “prevention is better than cure”, it should never be forgotten that rabies is a disease for which there simply is no cure.

Jan Vaarten,
FVE Executive Director



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Animal Health

Biosecurity 2008

FVE and DG Sanco to organise European Veterinary Week

A European Veterinary week will be organised jointly by DG Sanco and FVE. This is a communication event, to take place in all EU Member States in the 4th quarter of 2008 (probably 15-21 November). The overall theme for the event is "Where Prevention is better than Cure", as it aims to highlight the importance of implementing the EU Community Animal Health Strategy and FVE's One Health policy. For 2008, the event will focus on biosecurity. *"This will include both biosecurity on farms as well as biosecurity at the EU-borders"*, FVE Executive director Jan Vaarten explained at the recent stakeholders meeting, held on 14 April.

Biosecurity at farm level would aim to reduce the number of pathogens entering and spreading through a farm. The target audience of this topic would be both veterinarians and farmers (including technicians, advisors, agricultural and veterinary teaching establishments). It aims to cover all types of farming, including large animal productions, poultry, aquaculture and companion animal breeding establishments.

Communication initiatives regarding the biosecurity at EU borders will be carried out by DG Sanco in collaboration with the Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD). The main target would be travellers and the general public, and it would aim to raise awareness and to reduce the amount of illegal food and animals brought into the EU.

Pet passports

European Parliament votes extension of transitional period

Regarding an amendment to Regulation on the non-commercial movement of pets¹, the European Parliament voted to extend the transitional period

¹ Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the animal health requirements applicable to the non-commercial movement of pet animals

to 30 June 2010 (rather than 31 August 2009) for the entry of pets into Ireland, Malta, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Until that date, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden and the UK may set special rules regarding the treatment of echinococcosis. Ireland, Malta and the UK may also do so for tick treatment.

The Regulation introduced the pet passport for cats, dogs and ferrets when being moved from one Member State to another, which provides proof that the animal has been vaccinated against rabies

Catering waste

EU Parliament to re-allow swill feeding to swine?

In the wake of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001, it was decided (Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002) to stop the use of catering waste for animal feeding. Reasons for the ban were that catering waste can easily be contaminated and cause a serious risk for major outbreaks of diseases like Classical Swine Fever. Moreover it is almost impossible to identify and hardly traceable. The ban entered into force in 2002, with a derogation for Germany and Austria until November 2006.

In the revision of a new proposal for a Waste Framework Directive (COM 2005/0667) the European Parliament adopted an amendment re-authorising the use of catering waste for feed purpose. Although for obvious reasons such amendment was not acceptable for Council and Commission, the ENVI Committee of the European Parliament, in second reading, has again accepted an amendment that would allow Member States to authorise, under certain conditions, the use of catering waste in feed for pigs (article 19c).

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe is very much against any attempt to use the Waste Framework Directive to re-allow swill feeding. It poses serious risks to animal health and public health. It would also be in contradiction with the existing ban on the feeding of catering waste to pigs, laid down under a different legal basis. Additionally the value of catering waste is very little compared to the damage caused by a disease outbreak. Swill feeding might be penny-wise but certainly is pound-foolish!

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe urges the European Parliament to reject the proposed amendment at the vote in its plenary meeting.

Animal Welfare

Long distance transport

Commission to review loading densities and travelling times

Loading densities and travelling times are the two topics the Commission will focus on when preparing a proposal to amend the current Regulation on the transport of animals². This was made clear at the recent Working Group on Animal Transport, held in Brussels on 3 March. FVE participated as member of the Advisory Group on the Food chain, Animal health and Plant health, and was represented by John Williams (UK) and Nancy De Briyne (FVE Deputy executive director).

At the meeting, Laura Perez-Alvarez (DG Sanco) informed the participants that the Commission intended to revert to the parameters included in the original Commission proposal of 2003.

FVE welcomes the initiative to amend the current Regulation, as it *“does not believe it has so far significantly improved the welfare of animals during transportation”*. Anecdotal accounts from members suggest that the Regulation is often not respected and that animal welfare during transportation may actually have deteriorated.

The FVE recommends that the Regulation should aim to simplify its provisions and to reduce the number of long distance journeys. *“Long distance journeys too frequently compromise the welfare of the animals transported – and far too many journeys do not comply with the Regulation”*. Long distance transportation of animals also carries a serious risk of disseminating animal diseases and zoonoses, especially when it involves staging posts and gathering places like markets.

In order to promote the welfare of animals, FVE recommends *“to reduce the overall length of journeys and to apply economic sanctions to those who continue to transport live animals over long distances”*.

FVE recommends that the maximum journey time for all animals should be set at 8 hours. While this should be rigorously enforced, the FVE proposes that a clause should allow to exceed the maximum journey time if the transporter can demonstrate that it was in the best interests of the animals for the journey to be completed, rather than subjecting them to the additional stress of

unloading, reloading and undergoing a second short journey.

Finally, the FVE urges the Commission to make strenuous efforts to ensure that Member States implement and enforce both the existing provisions of the current Regulation, as well as any new provisions agreed. The European veterinary profession recognises that it carries primary responsibility for safeguarding the health and welfare of animals during transportation, it stated. *“But to be able to act for the animals, the profession needs the tools to do the job - in whichever MS problems occur”*. Veterinarians concerned *“cannot act without the support of its government and backed up by legal powers”*. Failing that, *“there is a risk that the veterinary profession will be blamed for failing to protect the welfare of animals during transportation”*.



FVE welcomes the initiative to amend the current Regulation, as it does not believe it has so far significantly improved the welfare of animals during transportation

² Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operation

Animal welfare labelling

Commission to carry out feasibility study

A feasibility study and an impact assessment on animal welfare labelling in the EU will be carried out to help the Commission prepare a policy report, Andrea Gavinelli, Head of the new Animal Welfare unit (DG Sanco) announced. Speaking at the meeting of the Working group on Animal welfare labelling on products of animal origin (Advisory Group on the food chain, Animal Health and Plant Health), held on 21 April, he said the Commission planned to present its report to Council and the European parliament early 2009.

The feasibility study will look at existing schemes and options (e.g. mandatory or voluntary labelling), the process and the scope of the labelling (all products or certain products only). It will also look at the possible creation of a Community Reference Centre for animal protection and welfare. Stakeholders will be consulted through interviews and a questionnaire. The results to this feasibility study are expected by December 2008.



The feasibility study on animal welfare labelling will look at existing schemes and options, the process and the scope of labelling

A wide range of labelling proposals

A proposal to categorise farms according to their welfare level (e.g. not classified, acceptable, enhanced and excellent) was made by Harry Blokhuis of the Welfare Quality (WQ) project. This European-wide project (of which FVE is an advisory committee member) developed 12 criteria used to assess welfare. These criteria, all “*science-based, reliable and feasible*”, are currently being tested on over 600 farms in Europe, before selecting the final assessment criteria. WQ aims for a flexible system, which

allows the label to be used for cooperate image but also for the labelling of a specific product. He also noted that in quality food chains, the view on welfare issues is moving from ‘a legal obligation’ to ‘an essential part of our high quality production’.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) was “*strongly in favour of a European Welfare Label*”, said Christopher Wathers, Chair of FAWC. The group proposed to look at ‘quality of life’, with three categories: ‘a life not worth living’ ‘a life worth living’ (the legal minimum) and ‘a good life’. The standards should be set and claims verified by an independent body.

Products from free-range poultry labelled ‘*Label Rouge*’ are checked at three different levels (self-check by farmer/producer; checks by the regional organisation; and an independent third party ISO certification), according to Agnes Lasczcyk-Legendre. Currently, *Label rouge* represents 10% of the poultry meat produced in France but 40% of the poultry farmers, she added. Most products are sold in the shops. The price (+ 60%) seems to be the limiting factor, which is difficult to alter, in particular in view of the rising feed prices.

Richard Weilenmann presented a proposal by the FVE working group on labelling, to create a European animal welfare label with several levels (e.g. bronze, silver, gold). Other initiatives presented at the meeting included the “Freedom Food Label” for pigs and chicken meat (Compassion in World Farming), the “Animal Welfare Approved” label for meat, dairy products and eggs (Food & Water Watch Europe) as well as organic, ecological and biological labels (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement).

In the UK, the sale of eggs from non-cage systems had risen by 275 % in 10 years, and “*only became efficient once mandatory labelling was introduced*”, said Peter Stevenson, of Compassion in World Farming. Currently, 50% of the eggs sold in the UK are free-range.

There is no special consumer demand for animal welfare labelling, according to Fatma Sahin of Eurocommerce, representing the retail and wholesale trade in Europe, adding that there are already many labels/initiatives “*which fulfil the market demands*”. Although Eurocommerce is against mandatory animal welfare labelling, they had no position on establishing a legal framework for voluntary labelling.

The label should suit both large and small family farms, reminded the Copa-Cogeca representative, recalling that many farm assurance systems existed and that a new label should be compatible with those.

Forum on animal welfare and trade

Developing a global strategy on farm animal welfare

Working together on higher standards for animal welfare will stimulate trade between countries: this was one of the conclusions of the International Forum on Global Aspects of Farm Animal Welfare, held in Brussels on 22 and 23 April. The aim of the forum was to “*begin the process aimed at developing a global strategy for the welfare of farm animals*”. The meeting was jointly organised by the Directorate-General for External Trade and DG Sanco, together with Eurogroup for Animals, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

The forum brought together farmers, retailers, politicians, academics, and animal welfare organisations to discuss the opportunities cooperation on animal welfare offers.

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals which represents animal welfare organisations throughout the European Union, said: “*The route from farm to fork increasingly involves more countries, and it is only right to make interested parties come together to find ways to cooperate. Like the environment, animal welfare is something that touches upon all of us.*”

Adolfo Sansolini, trade policy advisor for RSPCA, CIWF, Eurogroup for Animals and WSPA, commented: “*Companies and governments have got a lot to gain from sharing experiences and expectations, and working together. Business opportunities don’t stop at the border.*”

Other speakers included Daniela Battaglia (FAO), David Bowles (RSPCA), Margaret Wittenberg (Global Vice President of Quality Standards and Public Affairs for Whole Foods Market, the largest supermarket chain of natural and organic food in the USA), Dr. Ricardo Moralejo (advisor to the Argentinean Animal Welfare Foundation), Agnès Laszczyk, (Director of Synalaf, representing producers involved in Label Rouge and Bio free-range poultry and egg production) and Leopoldo Stuardo (representing the OIE).

The outcome will be used as input for the 2nd OIE global conference on animal welfare in October³, and will be followed by a Conference on Global

Trade and Farm Animal Welfare⁴ organised by the European Commission, RSPCA, WSPA, CIWF and Eurogroup for Animals on 20 and 21 January 2009. “*If the principle that farm animal welfare must be taken into consideration and improved is agreed, dialogue can lead to adapt to other countries choices already made elsewhere*”, the organisers underlined. Finally, they announced the creation of a discussion blog on their website.



The aim of the forum was to begin the process aimed at developing a global strategy for the welfare of farm animals

Change at DG Sanco

Animal welfare: now separate unit

Animal welfare has now become an independent unit within DG Sanco (Commission directorate general for health and consumers). Headed by Dr Andrea Gavinelli, new unit D5 is currently composed of 11 members of staff, and will work in close relation with other units dealing with animal health, feed and international questions in DG Sanco Directorate D for animal health and welfare.

Before the creation of the unit, first announced a few weeks ago, animal welfare was dealt along with animal feed in a more general unit.

³ http://www.oie.int/eng/A_AW2008/

⁴ <http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com>

FVE conference on MRSA

“Raising awareness is key to control”

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a growing problem in both animals and humans and urgent action is required – and such action should be based on a shared responsibility between the veterinary and the public health sector. That was the main conclusion of the recent European conference on MRSA, organised in Brussels on 8 April by the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), and supported by TAIEX (DG Enlargement).

Pig-related NT-MRSA, a new zoonosis?

Until recently, only two types of MRSA were recognised in human medicine, said professor Jaap Wagenaar (Utrecht University & Central Veterinary Institute). Hospital acquired (HA) MRSA, which first occurred in the 1960s following the introduction of methicillin to counter β -lactamase penicillin resistance. Outbreaks mainly occur in healthcare facilities and do not readily survive outside these settings. In the 1990s, Community acquired (CA) MRSA emerged. It affects healthy individuals, and usually occurs in groups of people with close physical contact such as rugby teams or prison inmates. The CA type is less resistant to antimicrobials but toxin-producing and clinical signs of infection are generally severe.

In 2004, three human cases of MRSA in the Netherlands were related to pig farming. Subsequent screening of pigs showed an estimated incidence of 39% in fattening pigs in that country. All pig-associated MRSA was found to be unidentifiable by routine typing, and was called NT or ‘non typable’ MRSA. All pig-related NT-MRSA was later found to belong to one specific clone, the ST398 type. A case-control study in humans identified ‘contact with pigs or bovines’ as a risk factor for the presence of NT-MRSA.

“NT-MRSA is a real emerging disease in production animals, and not just due to improved detection, Professor Wagenaar said, describing the first human cases of NT-MRSA. As there are many asymptomatic carriers and few clinical cases, this MRSA type is considered “not highly

virulent”, although, he warned, “this can change!” He also warned that methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus intermedius* (MRSI) was on the increase, mainly a problem in companion animals. “MRSA is a big problem, he concluded, “although extended-spectrum beta-lactamase resistance (ESBL) is potentially an even bigger problem! We should try to change things before they escalate.”

“Until 1940, the mortality associated with *Staphylococcus aureus* septicaemia was over 80%, dropping dramatically (to around 20%) after the introduction of penicillin, recalled Dr Stef Bronzwaer, of the European Food Safety Authority. However, within 10 years, 90% of all *Staphylococcus aureus* had become resistant. Citing findings of a Dutch study, Dr Bronzwaer furthermore reported it was “unlikely” that food is a vehicle of transmission of NT-MRSA among the human population, based on current scientific data. Nevertheless, the increasing rates of MRSA in animals were reason for concern, and MRSA should be seen as a potential zoonotic agent.

“Hospital acquired MRSA emerged in a setting where antibiotic pressure is high, and we should realise that antibiotic pressure is also high in production animals, where NT-MRSA emerged”, noted Dr Bronzwaer. “However, other factors should also be taken into account, such as density, husbandry systems and farm management, commented Dr Olivier Espeisse (International federation of animal health – Europe).



The increasing rates of MRSA in animals are reasons for concern and MRSA should be seen as a potential zoonosis agent said Dr Stef Bronzwaer from EFSA

MRSA in farm animals

Surveys of animal-related MRSA in various countries had shown that risk factors for humans included a contact with pigs (Netherlands, odds ratio 12), cattle (NL, OR 20), dogs (Belgium, OR 16) or working in large animal practice (Canada, OR 2.9), noted Dr Carl Suetens, of the European Centre for Disease Control. Reported protective measures such as masks, gowns and gloves “seem

to have no or little effect". Professor Wagenaar warned that care should be taken regarding advice on hygiene measures that was not evidence-based. "For example, we found that masks may even be a risk factor, if people slip them to the top of their head to have a breather – in doing so, they may contaminate the mask with infectious dust particles".

The percentage of MRSA carriers was found to be higher in pigs from standard industrial indoor systems than in both intensively reared or free-range Iberian pigs, according to Dr Concepción Porrero Calonge (Visavet, University of Madrid), who presented the intermediary results of an MRSA survey of pigs in Spain. It was not clear whether this was due to the lower stocking density, the genetic make-up or the average age of the animals at slaughter. She also noted that the resistance of isolates against fluoroquinolones was relatively high (around 40%) in pigs "even though these substances are rarely used in pig production".



NT-MRSA is a real emerging disease in production animals, and not just due to improved detection said Professor Wagenaar

The European Commission was trying to establish the baseline MRSA infection rate in pigs, reported Dr Kris De Smet (DG Sanco). To do so, it had extended the 2008 EU baseline survey for *Salmonella* in pig farms to include a survey for MRSA. The survey would aim to determine the prevalence and the type of strains present in European pig farms but also to identify the risk factors (size, type of production system, replacement policy, use of antibiotics, floor type etc.). The survey will also investigate a possible link to the prevalence of human isolates.

MRSA in pets

The vast majority of MRSA cases in companion animals were seen in post-surgical wound infections, in particular in case of orthopaedic implants, noted Dr Nola Leonard (University

College Dublin). This was probably due to the biofilm that formed on such implants: the patients resistant to antimicrobial therapy responded to treatment once the implants had been removed. "MRSA is an emerging nosocomial infection in veterinary hospitals", she noted, presenting the results of an ongoing survey into the importance of MRSA in companion animal practices in Ireland. This had shown a growing incidence: from two isolates in 2001, the first cluster (one hospital submitting several positive samples) was observed in 2002, and the number of clusters had risen to over 40 by 2006.

It was estimated that, in Ireland, 13% of dogs with clinical infections in referral hospitals were MRSA carrier, compared to 8% in similar dogs in first-line practices and 0.6% of healthy dogs. In the UK, 9% of dogs sampled at the RVC were found to be carrier in 2005, while in Germany, 7.5% of "dogs with wounds" were MRSA positive. Interestingly, in Slovenia, the prevalence in dogs was nil, "probably due to improved preventive measures in human health care settings". The origin of MRSA in pets may be linked to a "spill over" from nosocomial infection in humans, she recalled. "This is a zoonosis that works both ways".

As control measures, Dr Leonard advocated the screening of animals (in particular in veterinary hospitals) and applying strict isolation and barrier nursing to positive patients, and, in case of clusters, the screening of staff.

Studies in North America had shown that regular contact with more than 20 horses – "such as large breeding farms" – was a risk factor for CA-MRSA colonisation both in horses and humans, according to Dr Nicola Williams (University of Liverpool). Although the prevalence of MRSA in horses was unknown, they seemed to have strains that are uncommon in the human population. Horses may act as a reservoir and source of infection to humans at close contact, such as intensive nursing of foals during so-called foal brigades. Although there is little evidence to suggest that equine MRSA is a major public health risk, veterinarians should be considered as a high-risk group. The analyses of nasal swabs taken at the 2006 congress of the British Equine Veterinary Association, showed that 7.3% (20/274) of delegates were MRSA carriers.

Antimicrobial use and resistance

"Pharmacovigilance doesn't really help to reveal resistance problems, as we tend to get few reports of drugs not working due to resistance," noted Dr Karolina Törneke, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Group on Antimicrobials (SAGAM) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). While

she supported the “cascade”, she observed that off-label use was rampant, both in farm and companion animal medicine. She also noted that “evidence based medicine does not always equal prudent use”, citing the example of internationally recognised veterinary dermatologists recommending the use of mupirocin (Bactroban) in certain cases, a substance “reserved for the eradication of MRSA colonisation in people” according to most prudent guidelines. Although there was “always a risk for resistance whenever antimicrobials are used”, she noted that data were lacking to confirm a clear link between the veterinary use of antimicrobials and the presence of MRSA.

This point was reiterated by Mrs Avril Doyle, a member of the European Parliament: “The answer to the question ‘is there sufficient, rigorous, peer reviewed scientific evidence to suggest that antibiotics such as cephalosporins or fluoroquinolones should be prohibited from veterinary practice?’ is a resounding ‘no’ – today,” she said. However, veterinarians play a key role in prescription, and the most appropriate action is to prescribe “antibiotics if and when necessary, she added. “With respect, these words should be imprinted in the brains of veterinarians – and of general practitioners!”

This was not always easy, Dr Michael Wilks, of the Standing committee of European doctors noted. “To have a tablet seems to be a basic human need for many, and to overcome a self-containing or a viral disease without a tablet seems to be a frightening prospect to many people.”



Epidemiological data show a relation between the exposure to antimicrobials and a selection for MRSA and MRSI said chair Johanna Fink-Gremmels

Time for action

“Currently, human MRSA carriers are advised to undergo nasal treatment with mupirocin, while clinical cases need to be hospitalised and require

intensive care, including IV treatment with vancomycin”, explained Dr Michael Wilks, of the Standing committee of European doctors. He also announced the Antibiotic awareness day (18 November 2008) to ‘help slow down the spiral between new drugs and new resistance’.

“It is time to act, confirmed Walter Winding, FVE president. “Raising awareness among veterinarians, doctors and the public at large is key to tackle the problem”. He also recalled that such an approach was “a good illustration of the ‘one health’ concept” as promoted by the FVE.

“We seem to have a risk, both in human and veterinary medicine, concluded professor Johanna Fink-Gremmels (Utrecht University), who chaired the conference. “Epidemiological data show a relation between the exposure to antimicrobials and a selection for MRSA and MRSI. Although risk assessment should precede risk management, there will always be levels of uncertainty. We should think about what we can do now and if necessary refine our decisions. MRSA is perhaps only the tip of the iceberg.”

The conference was attended by 190 participants from 34 countries including the United States, and included representatives from the veterinary, medical and farming sectors as well as scientists and policy makers.

Risk assessment

Chemical decontamination of poultry carcasses: reconsidering the ban

Will the EU allow future imports of chlorine-treated chicken from North America? Or even allow chemical decontamination of poultry carcasses in the EU? These questions are currently being re-examined by various EU institutions, most recently at the 14 April meeting of EU Agriculture ministers.

“Decontamination can never replace good hygiene practice on farms and in food production establishments”, stressed the FVE, who submitted its position on the decontamination of carcasses⁵ to the recent meeting of the Working Group on Antimicrobial treatments of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain, Animal and Plant Health, held on 9 April. “A decontamination process may remove the normal competitive microflora. This could render the surface of the carcass

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http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/public_health/fve_06_03_7_decontamination.pdf

susceptible to preferential growth of pathogens that may be already present or added by recontamination after treatment”. Furthermore, the FVE believes that “concern regarding decontamination of meat should be addressed by hygienic measures applied at all stages of the food chain including primary production.”

One month earlier, on March 6, the EFSA Panel on Biological Hazards published its scientific opinion on the possible effect of four disinfecting substances (chlorine dioxide, acidified sodium chlorite, trisodium phosphate and peroxyacids) used to remove microbial surface contamination from poultry carcasses on the emergence of antimicrobial resistance⁶. The Panel concluded that *“despite a long history of use, there are currently no published data to conclude that the application of the four substances to remove microbial contamination of poultry carcasses at the proposed conditions of use will lead to the occurrence of acquired reduced susceptibility to these substances or to resistance to therapeutic antimicrobials.”*



Decontamination can never replace good hygiene practice on farms and in food production establishments

This was followed, on 3 April, by a joint opinion of the Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks on the environmental impacts of the four chemical substances used⁷. The report concluded that *“the direct discharge of chlorine dioxide and acidified sodium chlorite used solutions may represent a significant risk for the receiving water bodies even after dilution with the slaughterhouse waste waters.”* The same applies to peroxyacids. Furthermore, *“Trisodium phosphate solutions should be managed in order to avoid release of phosphate into the aquatic*

⁶ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178697425124.htm

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/documents/joint_001.pdf

environment, with the associated risk of eutrophication.” Although the Committees found limited evidence on the potential of inducing bacterial resistance, they observed that *“these chemicals are able to select less susceptible strains of Salmonella and some other pathogens”*. In conclusion, *“there is insufficient data to determine whether they may cause cross-resistance to antibiotics or the selection of specific microbial groups associated to resistance.”*

Antalya, Turkey

FVE attends Public Health and Food Safety Congress

The International Congress on Veterinary Public Health and Food Safety was held in Antalya (Turkey) on 12 and 13 April. The Congress, opened by Dr. M. Mehdi Eker, Turkish Minister of Agriculture, included a presentation on the FVE Perspective on Veterinary Public Health and Food Safety by Nicole Schreiner (FVE Policy adviser).

Other speakers included representatives of international organisations such as the World Veterinary Association, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Directorate General for health and consumer protection.

Medicines

TAIEX: Zagreb and Brno

Meetings on veterinary medicines

Two meetings, in Zagreb (Croatia, 18 March) and in Brno (Czech republic, 9-10 April) were held to inform the candidate and new EU Member States on the veterinary medicines legislation and challenges in the EU. Organised by Taiex, the FVE and the Czech Veterinary Chamber, topics included veterinary drug regulations, pharmacovigilance, distribution channels, drug availability and drug resistance.

Education

Meeting of the ECCVT

Towards a legal basis for the evaluation system

Several members of European Parliament had been very supportive of finding a legal basis for the evaluation system of veterinary schools in Europe, reported Christophe Buhot, president of the Union of European Veterinary practitioners (UEVP). Speaking at the 11 April meeting of the European Coordination Committee on Veterinary Training (ECCVT)⁸, he announced that several amendments supporting the official recognition of the evaluation system were proposed in the report on the Community Animal Health Strategy (CAHS), which had been adopted at Committee level. If adopted in Plenary, the Commission and Council would need to take the tabled amendments into consideration.

At the meeting of the European Board for Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS), held the following day, it was decided that only residents from “*approved*” teaching establishments would be allowed to enrol in an EBVS residency programme. Candidates from non-approved schools would be required to first complete an internship. The decision was taken to avoid a possible “*influx of insufficiently trained students*”. A further proposal to promote positively evaluated schools was to limit Erasmus exchanges between “*approved*” faculties.

An update of the minimum training requirements, as listed in Annex V.4 of the Directive on professional qualifications⁹, was also discussed at the ECCVT meeting. It was suggested to delete certain subjects (e.g. ethnography), to add others (e.g. communications skills, management) and to possibly review the general organisation of subjects.

At the EBVS meeting, Stefano Romagnoli (European College of Animal Reproduction) took over the helm as EBVS president from Frank Gasthuys (European College of Veterinary Anaesthesia).

Evaluation of veterinary schools

Maison-Alfort, Vet-Suisse and Berlin added to positive list

The Joint Education Committee (JEC) of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and the FVE met on 22 and 23 April in Vienna. The Committee, chaired by EAEVE president professor Marcel Wanner, discussed the evaluation reports of several veterinary schools. Those of Maisons-Alfort, Vet-Suisse and Berlin were added to the so-called positive list. Bristol was conditionally approved. Schools with one or more major deficiencies first need to improve their facilities or curricula before applying for re-evaluation. For a few schools, the JEC could not come to a conclusion. Discussions about these schools have been postponed to the next JEC meeting in July.

FVE & Professional matters

6-7 June 2008

FVE spring general assembly in Vienna

The next general assembly of the FVE will take place in Vienna, on 6 and 7 June. Agenda points include the Veterinary act and the European code of conduct. Several guest speakers have been invited, including Dr Bernard Vallat, director of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The sections (UEVP, UEVH, EASVO and EVERI) will meet on 5 June, while the Statutory bodies meeting is planned on 4 June.

The FVE general assembly will be held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2, 1020 Vienna), and not at the Nationalbibliothek / Hofburg as previously announced.

⁸ a platform which includes the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education, the European Board for Veterinary Specialisation and the FVE

⁹ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications

World Veterinary Association

FVE now associate member

The FVE has become an associate member of the World Veterinary Association (WVA). Previously, FVE held an observer status. WVA associate members include world and regional (international) veterinary organisations, which have at least 250 members in 10 different WVA member countries. Together with the Dutch veterinary society (KNMvD), the FVE supports the nomination of Tjeerd Jorna, former FVE President, as candidate for the upcoming WVA presidential elections, to be held on 30 July at the WVA congress in Vancouver (Canada).

Obituary

Gunnar Vigleik Øvernes

With sadness, the FVE Board announces the death of its colleague, Gunnar Vigleik Øvernes, delegate from Norway to the FVE and the UEVP, who died on 26 March in a tragic accident while logging timber at his farm in Etne.

Gunnar was a general practitioner in the south-western part of Norway, near the town of Haugesund. He was about to take up a position as a teacher in large animal medicine at the Veterinary School's field station in Stavanger when the accident occurred. Gunnar leaves behind a wife and three children.

The FVE will be missing Gunnar, a regular and dedicated delegate at UEVP and FVE meetings, and extends its sincere condolences to his wife and family.



Late UEVP delegate, Gunnar Vigleik Øvernes

Former FVE president honoured

Dr Tjeerd Jorna, Knight in the Order of Oranje Nassau

Former FVE president Dr Tjeerd Jorna was appointed Knight in the Order of Oranje Nassau on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands (30 April), in recognition of his contributions to the development of veterinary medicine. The decoration was awarded by the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Ms Gerda Verburg.

Although Tjeerd Jorna already has an impressive career behind him, this does not necessarily mean it has come to an end! The Royal Netherlands Veterinary Association nominated him as a candidate for the World Veterinary Association presidential elections, to be held on 30 July in Vancouver.

WVA delegates who are unable to attend the elections may appoint a so-called Temporary Substitute, to avoid votes being lost. For further information please contact WVA secretariat in Copenhagen (phone + 45 38710156 or e-mail wva@dd.dk).



Support candidature of former FVE President Tjeerd Jorna for presidency of the World Veterinary Association!



FVE

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of veterinary organisations from 37 European countries, regulated by the law on international societies in Belgium.

Members

Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FYR of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom

Sections

EASVO-State Officers, EVERI – Education, Research and Industry, UEVH-Hygienists, UEVP- Practitioners

Observers

Ukraine, Albania

FVE Staff

Jan Vaarten – Executive Director, Nancy De Briyne – Deputy Executive Director, Nicole Schreiner –Policy Officer, Clara Espósito – Communications Manager, Ulrike Tewes – Office Manager

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Acknowledgements:

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