



The Official Veterinarian's role in food hygiene

An essential public good

FVE/11/PR/005

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Brussels, 13 December 2011

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) wishes to underline the pivotal role played by the veterinary profession in Europe in the provision and assurance of the safety of foods of animal origin, from healthy animals managed, from farm to slaughter, in a manner that does not compromise their welfare, to the consumer.

This is especially the case where animals are processed through a slaughterhouse where, *'meat inspection, both ante and post mortem, is a key component of the overall surveillance system for animal health and welfare'*.

FVE is concerned that some Competent Authorities, international and national organisation and specific private sector interests would wish to undermine the role of the Official Veterinarian in food hygiene to the detriment of food safety, animal health and welfare, public health and the environment.

While recognising that the prudent use of financial resources is extremely important FVE wants to outline the **added value and global public good** which Official Veterinarians bring in their role, particularly in the slaughterhouse environment.

The Official Veterinarian's role in the slaughterhouse supports the interests of many different stakeholders each with their own specific priorities; through their independence and professional integrity the Official Veterinarian adds value to:

- **The animals;** *by ensuring proper caring, handling and stunning procedure in respect of the animal welfare legislation*
- **The consumer;** *by providing assurance and reassurance on food safety*
- **The citizen;** *by providing verification that the operator or the slaughterhouse is fulfilling their responsibilities with regard to animal health, public health, animal welfare and the protection of the environment*
- **The operator of the slaughterhouse;** *through technical knowledge and support in development of self control processes*
- **The farmer;** *by providing animal health information specific to their livestock*
- **The private veterinarian;** *by providing information about the health status of livestock from specific holdings and populations, including data on emerging diseases*
- **The Competent Authority;** *by delivering Official Controls through inspection, audit and enforcement*
- **The economy;** *by supporting and facilitating national and international trade*

The Official Veterinarian in the slaughterhouse, through his knowledge, maintained through his working life through professional Continuous Professional Development, and experience, has a key role to play on behalf of society, but particularly in the independent assurance of the provision of safe food which is recognized as a public good¹.

The international recognition of the Official Veterinarians' role makes it essential that their involvement is both recognised by all stakeholders and maintained.

¹ **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.** Art 25. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- 2nd Roundtable on modernization of meat inspection - October 2010
 - Towards an improved inspection system - Dr [R Huey](#) (FVE Board)
- 14 September 2010: FVE, UECBV and Copa/Cogeca Joint Seminar
Food safety: a shared responsibility. The future of meat inspection: stakeholders' contribution to the Commission round tables on the review of meat inspection
 - [Key findings](#)
- FVE position papers
 - Vets adding value [\(2011\)](#)
 - FVE paper on "Decontamination of carcasses" - revised [\(2011\)](#)
 - Herd Health Plan 2010 - UEVH/UEVP [\(FVE/doc/10/054\)](#)
 - [UEVH - Food safety: the farm to the fork approach](#) (Revised version 2010)
 - [Modernising Inspections in Slaughterhouses - FVE Position Paper \(FVE/pos/09/002\)](#)

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The FVE is an umbrella organization of 44 veterinary organizations from 38 European countries, representing approximately 250,000 veterinarians.

For more information

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