

**Commission adopts Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015****“FVE welcomes Animal Welfare Strategy but wished the Commission to be more ambitious”**Members

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On 19 January, the European Commission adopted the 2012-2015 Animal Welfare strategy paper¹. The main objectives include a reinforcement of current EU legislation and the announcement of a proposal for comprehensive EU animal welfare law.

“The veterinary profession welcomes the paper and its aim of improved guidance and stricter enforcement of existing animal welfare legislation, commented Dr Christophe Buhot, president of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE). “Even the best laws are of little use if they are not enforced.”

“The FVE is pleased that several of its recommendations² have been taken into consideration in the strategic actions outlined by the Commission,” said Dr Buhot. The FVE particularly welcomes the Commission’s announcement of a consumer study on ‘providing the relevant information’ with respect to the stunning of slaughter animals.

“The protection of animals during slaughter, and the practice of stunning in particular, is essential to safeguard the welfare of slaughter animals. Relevant labelling would enable consumers to choose meat and meat products from animals that were unconscious at the time of slaughter. We are therefore pleased that the Commission has decided to investigate this possibility,” Dr Buhot said.

The continued action towards education and training of all professionals and staff involved in animal handling is also welcomed by the FVE. Dr Buhot observed: *“Proven skills and competencies of animal handlers and of professionals will strongly contribute to animal welfare.”* He added that the FVE has already been collaborating with the Commission in this respect: *“In 2011, two successful animal welfare workshops were organised for veterinarians, in Hungary and in Spain.”* The next workshop is planned in Latvia, on 19-20 April.

The FVE regrets that the Commission paper is not more ambitious in its objectives and planned actions, and that it lacks any reference to guidelines on the welfare of dairy cattle *“for which a EU-wide legal framework is so urgently needed”*. Also, the strategy *“could have gone further in the field of companion animals, which are often largely ignored in EU legislation on animal health and welfare; one should not forget the potential consequences for human health they have”*, Dr Buhot added.

A conference to launch the new EU animal welfare strategy will be co-organised by the Danish Presidency and European Commission in Brussels on 29th February and 1st March.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/actionplan/docs/aw_strategy_19012012_en.pdf

² http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/animal_welfare/035_10_vets_and_animal_welfare_final.pdf

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 200 000 veterinarians.
1. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe. Veterinarians are, and must continually strive to be, the leading advocates for animal welfare as society evolves. Examples of some FVE activities in the field of animal welfare
 - Animal Welfare education:
 - i. FVE is leading a cross-sector group creating a model animal welfare curriculum to be taught at all EU veterinary faculties.
 - ii. FVE together with DG Sanco is running a series of workshops for veterinarians regarding animal welfare. See www.onetec.be/animalwelfare
 - FVE has several positions on animal welfare: <http://www.fve.org/news/papers.php#2>
2. For further information, consult the FVE website <http://www.fve.org> or contact the FVE Secretariat on Tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org