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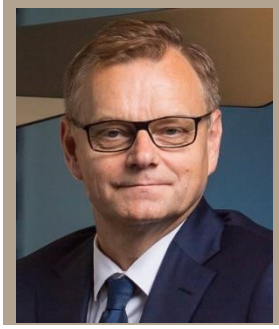

With the United Kingdom formally leaving the European Union on 31 January 2020, the UEVP wants to highlight its will to continue working with its British members and partners in the months and years to come. We also call on the European institutions and the British administration to build a relationship for the upcoming years that will mitigate the impact of Brexit on the activities of veterinary practitioners.

Piotr KWIECIŃSKI, UEVP President

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PRIORITY ISSUES

Latest news about Brexit

On 1st February 2020, after nearly 50 years of European integration, **the United Kingdom (UK) has formally left the European Union (EU)**. For now, this means that the UK is no longer a member of the EU, that British nationals are no longer EU citizens, that British Ministers will not negotiate in the Council anymore, that there are no more British Commissioner and that no British Prime minister will attend EU summits.

Concerning the European Parliament, the departure of the 73 British Members of the European Parliament (MEP) will not be fully compensated. The European Parliament will therefore go from 751 to 705 MEPs.

At the same time, several member states, including France, will see their "Brexit" MEPs join them. France will thus have 79 MEPs (compared to 74 today) and will be the second largest contingent after Germany (96). With regard to the other countries, the most represented member states are now: Italy (76); Spain (59); Poland (52); Romania (33); Netherlands (29).

The departure of the British MEPs will also have an impact on the political balance of the European Parliament. The main losers were the groups with the most British MEPs, such as Renew Europe (97 against 108), the Socialists (148 against 154) and the Greens (67 against 74). The latter became the 5th political group, behind Identity and Democracy of Matteo Salvini and Marine Le Pen (76 against 73). The EPP group is the big winner in this political rebalancing as they go from 182 to 187 MEPs.

Nevertheless, everything should stay as it in 2020 due to the fact that the UK has entered an 11-month transition period during which a future relationship is negotiated with the EU. Until (at least) the end of the year 2020, the UK will remain in the EU's single market and customs union and continue paying into its budget; people, goods, capital and services will continue to move freely across the bloc; including the UK.

In a press release, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) highlights the fact that during this transition period, the EU pharmaceutical law will continue to be applicable and that Companies have until 31 December 2020 to make the necessary changes ensuring that their medicines comply with EU law and can remain on the EU market. The EMA has created a Brexit dedicated webpage for Updated Brexit-related guidance for animal medicines companies.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) calls on the EU and the UK to write a Withdrawal Agreement that "*should help to mitigate Brexit's impact upon the European veterinary profession*". Furthermore, the FVE insists on the fact that "*standards for animal health, animal welfare, public health, access to veterinary medicines, disease control, food chain security and environmental protection must be maintained*". Finally, the FVE informs us that its UK members, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), will remain members of the organisation.

NGO AnimalHealthEurope Secretary General **Roxane Feller** commented, "*During the transition period and into the future we rely on the authorities to keep as aligned as possible in terms of regulatory requirements. Our collective priorities remain: (1) ensuring continued access to animal medicines; (2) maintaining collaboration in the field of transboundary diseases; and (3) encouraging further innovation in the animal health sector by pursuing scientific cooperation*". The NGO will continue to work with its UK member NOAH; **Dawn Howard**, NOAH Chief Executive commented, "*As the UK leaves the EU, NOAH will continue to support the health and welfare of all animals as a member of both the European association AnimalhealthEurope and globally, HealthforAnimals. Animal diseases know no borders and it remains ever more important to work closely with our colleagues into the future*".

Latest news on antimicrobial resistance at EU level

Swiss Strategy Against Antimicrobial Resistance

Since 2015, Switzerland fights against AMR related problems. This fight is based on the national strategy on antimicrobial resistance (StAR).

This strategy helped raise awareness among veterinarians and pet owners. As a matter of fact, the sale of veterinary antimicrobials is now half the amount it was ten years ago, the providing of certain antibiotics has been constrained and treatment guidelines and information for veterinarians and the public have been put in place.

As of 2019, the information system of antibiotics in veterinary medicine (ISABV) has been put in place. This national information system records antibiotic prescription in veterinary medicine and has been helping with an overview of the use of antibiotics. It first started for veterinarians in the farm animal field and as of 1st October 2019, it started for the companion animal practitioners.

Finally, in November 2019, the country, in cooperation with pharmacies, also launched a campaign to return unused antibiotics to the veterinary clinics and also encouraged to prevent its inappropriate use and incorrect disposing.

Update on the EMA activities

Decisions of the Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP)

The Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) held a meeting from 21 to 23 January 2020.

The Committee adopted by consensus a positive opinion for application for a type II variation application for Bravecto as well as for grouped type II variation application for Clevor, both concerning quality-related changes. It also adopted by consensus a positive opinion for a type II variation application for Rabitec concerning the extension of the immunity duration from 6 to 12 months.

The Committee adopted a document (EMA/CVMP/QWP/153641/2018) outlining the view of the European Medicines Agency on risk management requirements for elemental impurities in veterinary medicinal products. This document follows the close of the public consultation and offers the industry guidance on the requirements to control elemental impurities in veterinary medicinal products.

Veterinary medicines: highlights of 2019

The Amsterdam based European Medicines Agency (EMA) has published, on 10 January 2020, a synopsis of its major recommendations for the year 2019. These recommendations regarded the authorisation and safety monitoring of veterinary medicines.

It can be found in this report that, in 2019, the EMA increased by 50% compared to the year 2018 its marketing authorisations for medicines with the granting of 15 of these authorisations. It is interesting to note that four of these are vaccines and five of these had a new active substance.

Categorisation of antibiotics in the European Union

On 28 January 2020, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) released **an updated scientific advice categorising prescribed antibiotics for animal care.**

This document levels antibiotics by consideration of both the need to use them in animal medicine and the potential risk that their use in animals could cause to public health through the possible development of antimicrobial resistance.

The report is based on the initial 2014 categorisation of antibiotics, it considers all classes of antibiotics and adds new criteria such as the possibility of using alternative antibiotics in veterinary medicines. The labelling is now composed of four categories.

- Category A. (Avoid) concerns antibiotics not authorised in veterinary medicine in the European Union. They may not be used in food-producing animals and may be used, under certain strict conditions, to individual companions.

- Category B. (Restrict) concerns critically important antibiotics in human medicine and should be restricted to mitigate the risk to public health.

- Category C. (Caution) concerns antibiotics with existing alternatives in human medicine in the EU but with only few existing alternatives in certain veterinary indications.

- Category D. (Prudence) concerns antibiotics that should be used as first line treatments. Prudence means that unnecessary use and long treatment periods should be avoided, and group treatment should be restricted to situations where individual treatment is not practicable.

This report also evaluates the impact of the route of administration on the selection of antibiotic resistance.

An infographic resuming and presenting this categorisation is also available and is, according to the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) that gave input in the making of the publication, a must have "*on the wall in every veterinary practice*".

This publication is in line with EMA's 'One Health' approach promoting a more integrated cooperation between the human and veterinary sector of medicine.

Update on delegated regulations supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 – Animal Health Law

The European commission presents 4 delegated acts relating to the animal health law

During the meeting of the Agriculture and Rural Development Commission of the European Parliament (COM AGRI) of 22 January 2020, a presentation was given by Bernard Van Goethem, person in charge of the Crisis Management direction in the food, animal and plants sector from the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission.

The purpose of this intervention required by MEP Anne SANDER (EPP, France) was to present to the members of the AGRI committee the series of 4 delegated acts relating to the Animal Health Law - (EU) 2016/429 adopted by the European Commission on 17 December 2019.

As a reminder, a delegated act is a legal act enabling the European Commission to supplement or modify non-essential elements of EU legislative acts. From the moment the act is adopted by the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council have two months to examine the text and raise any objections.

This series contains:

- A delegated regulation (+annexes) concerning the rules for surveillance, eradication programmes, and disease-free status for certain listed and emerging diseases. This act focuses on the notification of diseases, surveillance, eradication programs and conditions for the recognition and maintenance of disease-free status of particular countries or areas. It will apply to diseases affecting terrestrial and aquatic animals.

- A delegated regulation (+annexes) concerning the rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases. This act focuses on disease prevention and control measures for certain listed diseases. It will apply to diseases affecting terrestrial and aquatic animals. It will lay down the conditions for the use of veterinary medicinal products to prevent or control the diseases in question and technical details on the measures to be taken in the event of suspicion and confirmation of the diseases in question, including in wild animals.

- A delegated regulation (+annexes) concerning animal health requirements for movements within the Union of terrestrial animals and hatching eggs. This act focuses on the animal health requirements applicable to the movement of terrestrial animals and products of animal (terrestrial) origin in the Union. It aims to effectively prevent and control animal diseases spread by their movements and to simplify legislation by streamlining the rules of a number of existing legal acts in a single act.

- A delegated regulation (+annexes) concerning the approval of germinal product establishments and the traceability and animal health requirements for movements within the Union of germinal products of certain kept terrestrial animals. This act focuses on the approval of germinal product establishments, the collection and handling of germinal products, their traceability and animal health requirements for movements within the Union of these germinal products originating from kept bovine, ovine, caprine, porcine and equine species and, if necessary, other species.

These acts having been adopted on 17 December 17 2019, the Parliament and the Council were to carry out their examination within a period of two months. The coordinators of the European Parliament's political groups have nevertheless decided to extend this examination period to an additional two months.

Resolution of the European Parliament on the Green Deal

On 15 January 2020, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a resolution containing recommendations and requests for the European Commission regarding its Green Deal. Animal welfare issues were mentioned and reaffirm the motivations of the EU to take new steps in this direction.

These issues were stated in the paragraphs related to the agri-food strand of the Green Deal: The *Farm to Fork* strategy.

The EP wrote, in its resolution, that it wants to see producers rewarded for supplying high-quality food that also delivers 'public goods' such as higher animal welfare standards, and improved food labelling in terms of environment and animal welfare. Furthermore, the document insists on the potential of increased animal welfare (development of legislation and infringement procedures against non-compliant Member States) as well as other sustainable practices.

The resolution also focuses on the 2030 biodiversity strategy. The document calls for a fully integrated, strengthened Action Plan against wildlife trafficking and the launching of infringement procedures against Member States who do not respect nature protection legislation.

This joint document comes from the initiative of four Members of the European Parliament (MEP) from four different political groups: **Esther de Lang** (EPP, Netherlands), **Miriam Dalli** (S&D, Malta), **Fredrick Federley** (RE, Sweden) and **Bas Eickhout** (Green/ALE, Netherlands).

Compulsory European system for the identification and registration of cats and dogs news

On 21 January 2020, the European Parliament's Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted with 66 votes in favour, no votes against and 3 abstentions, a draft resolution on the protection of the internal market and EU consumer rights against the harmful consequences of pet trafficking. This resolution, supported by major political groups in the European Parliament, is supported by the following MEPs: **Stanislav Polčák** (EPP, Czech Republic), **Sylwia Spurek** (S&D, Poland), **Martin Hojsík** (RE, Slovakia), **Alexandra Louise Rosenfield Phillips** (Verts, ALE), **Jadwiga Wiśniewska** (CRE, Poland), **Anja Hazekamp** (GUE / NGL, Netherlands) and **Eleonora Evi** (NI, Italy).

MEPs from the European Parliament's ENVI committee specifically call on the European Commission to develop a cross-sectoral action plan at EU level to "end trafficking in pets in the Union".

Within the framework of this draft resolution, the ENVI committee of the European Parliament is specifically interested in the identification and registration of dogs and cats and:

- *"Emphasises that the **identification and registration of cats and dogs is a crucial and necessary first step in the fight against illegal trade**, and that registration and identification are key conditions for control, enforcement, and traceability;*
- ***Urges the European Commission to come forward, via a delegated act under the Animal Health Law, with a proposal for detailed, compatible systems for the means and methods of identification and registration of cats and dogs in databases in the Member States, which should be interconnected**;*
- *Calls for a **clear linkage between the EU Pet Passport and Pet Microchip Registration** to ensure that the origin of the companion animal remains clear even if the Pet Passport is replaced*."

This draft resolution could be voted on at the next plenary session of the European Parliament from 10 to 13 February or at the plenary session in March. Once adopted, **this resolution will not be binding**. It will still represent an important political message sent by the European Parliament to the other European institutions and in particular to the Commission, summoned to act with regard to the identification and registration of dogs and cats.

A debate on the illegal trafficking in pets will be organized in plenary session in the European Parliament on 12 February 2020 following a parliamentary question on the subject.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on animal diseases at EU level

New outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N8 hits the European Union

On 2 January 2020, cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza, type H5N8, have been detected in turkeys in eastern Poland. In a matter of days, other cases were detected in other eastern European countries such as Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. On 16 January 2020, the Member States of the EU have backed a proposition of the European Commission consolidating protection measures against such outbreaks. These measures aim to protect the rest of the EU and third countries by ensuring the pursuit of secure trade without compromising the health status of the EU.

Nevertheless, the outbreak continues its spreading with, less than a week after the backing of the proposition, cases detected in Czech Republic, Germany and Ukraine.

It is well known that avian influenza occurs every few years and that the disease probably came back with migrators birds. With about 15 outbreaks detected, it is estimated that the disease already caused the death of more than 300 000 birds.

On 30 January 2020, the European Commission published a Decision applicable until 31 May 2020 containing new protective measures motivated by the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N8 in certain Member States.

The NGO Eurogroup for Animals has published a position paper proposing measures to slow the spreading of the disease and calling for alternatives to the massive killings of birds that occurs when highly pathogenic avian influenza hits the EU. As a matter of fact, the Member States touched by the disease have to apply the measures foreseen by Directive 2005/94/EC that includes, in addition to protection and surveillance measures, the killing of all birds on affected farms.

Update on African Swine Fever

On 27 January 2020, the agricultural ministers of the EU have insisted on the need to effectively cooperate in order to continue the fight against the spread of African swine fever (ASF). **Stella Kyriakides**, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, answered that concern by stating that surveillance has to be stepped up after discovery of recent cases in west Poland.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the European Association Porcine Health Management (EAPHM) have issued a press release welcoming the different initiatives of the European Commission to fight the spread of the disease and offering their help and knowledge to any actor involved (governments and pig sector) by "*distributing targeted communication tools, increasing biosecurity measures with farmers, transporters and at borders, and by offering potential solutions for veterinary shortages such as for sampling and other veterinary tasks*".

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published, on 30 January 2020, a report presenting its annual update (November 2018 – October 2019) on the presence of ASF in the European Union. The organisation found that the ASF is moving mainly towards the south-west of the EU with still nine affected countries: Poland, Latvia,

Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia, Belgium, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and some worrying presence in neighbouring Slovakia.

According to the report, multiple factors influence the prevalence of the disease; these factors includes the structure of domestic pig production, geographical conditions, and the characteristics of the wild boar population. Two important challenges for the eradication of the ASF are the existence of numerous 'backyard' farms that are not complying with European health requirements, and the spread of the disease by humans, for example between local villages.

The document also reports some better news such as the fact that the Czech Republic is now officially ASF-free and that Belgium successfully slowed down the entry of the disease.

Finally, the report presents science-based recommendations for the regions that are affected by the disease or could potentially be affected such as a combination of measures, including the use of fences and surveillance, but also measures to control the population of wild boars.

Latest updates on animal welfare at EU level

EU-level animal welfare labelling scheme

During the AGRIFISH Council of 27 January 2020, Germany proposed an EU-level animal welfare labelling scheme aiming at informing consumers about the welfare of animals during food production.

On this proposal, Germany was backed by Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy and Lithuania. One of the main arguments of Germany was that this system could create new markets and new outlets for producers.

Some countries such as Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Poland, Luxemburg, Greece, Bulgaria and Malta agreed with the proposal but advocated for this system to be on a voluntary basis.

Almost all the Member States called for a study by the Commission to assess the feasibility of such a labelling scheme. Commissioner **Kyriakides** suggested that such a study could be part of the upcoming Farm-to-Fork Strategy.

Welfare of Rabbits in the European Union

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a series of three documents assessing the welfare of rabbits in the European Union (EU).

The first study concentrates around the welfare of rabbits kept in conventional cage systems. The study compares six different methods of raising rabbits, making suggestions for improvements in each of the systems and emphasising the need for data on the welfare of farmed rabbits to be collected across the EU. The variables considered by the EFSA gravitated around welfare consequences related to health and behaviour, such as restricted movement, resting problems, prolonged thirst or hunger, thermal stress and skin disorders.

The conclusions of this study were that, in conventional cages, the welfare of rabbits is lower compared to other systems (organic systems coming out on top). The EFSA suggested in the study that conventional cages should be enlarged and structurally enhanced.

The topics of the two other reports concentrated on welfare issues associated with the stunning and slaughter of rabbits and on welfare issues associated with killing for reasons other than meat production.

The studies reported different facts and recommendations:

- Rabbits are the second most farmed species in the EU in terms of numbers (+ 300M)
- There is no species-specific legislation protecting the welfare of farmed rabbits in the EU
- The presence of hazards should be monitored at each phase of slaughtering by assessing the welfare consequences through indicators in order to mitigate negative welfare consequences.
- slaughterhouse staff should be adequately trained.

These reports echoes with the 'End The Cage Age' European Citizens' Initiative calling the EU to propose a ban on cages for animals and that secured over 1.5 million signatures. The authors of this initiatives had the chance to present their views in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 23 of January 2020 and are now waiting for the Member States to verified the initiative before being submitted to the European Commission.

France and Germany take actions concerning the grinding of male chicks.

On 13 January 2020, Ministers of Agriculture from Germany and France have gathered, in Berlin, an important number of actors from the poultry industry in order to "*accelerate the dynamics of development and deployment of alternatives"* to the grinding of live male chicks.

The main outcome of the seminar is the formalization of a bilateral partnership, with a 2020 and 2021 framework, relating both to applied research and innovation as well as industrial developments.

The Ministers have called the European Commission and all the Member States to back this approach.

Animal tests not needed anymore to guarantee safe transport of corrosives

In 2018, the Joint Research Centre of the European Union presented a proposal to the United Nations (UN) subcommittee on the Transport of Dangerous Goods to incorporate non-animal testing in the criteria for classification of corrosives in the 21st revision of the UN Model Regulations. It is interesting to note that severely corrosive chemicals are only to be transported in limited quantities and when the packaging rules set by the UN Model Regulations are respected.

The subcommittee has now allowed testing on engineered skin rather than on animals to identify correct packing requirements for corrosive chemicals. This news paves the way for more and more replacement of animal testing with more reliable *in vitro* methods.

The revision will be, in the EU and in the vast majority of countries worldwide, directly transposed into national legislation.

Feedback opening – requirements for movements of aquatic animals and their products in the EU

On 16 January 2020, the European Commission opened a feedback period concerning the delegated regulation (+ annex) on requirements for movements of aquatic animals and their products in the EU.

The 4 week long feedback period ends on 13 February 2020. The webpage of the consultation is accessible here.

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