



*On 1 December 2019, the new commissioners’ college lead by Ursula von der Leyen finally took office after several delays due to the necessity to restart the validation process within the European Parliament for the new candidates from France, Hungary and Romania. Some precisions were given regarding the portfolios of the new commissioners. Notably for Stella Kyriakides, which portfolio evolved from “Health” to “Health and Food Safety”. UEVP welcomes this precision which emphasizes the will of the European Commission to move forward on a key dossier for our profession: the “Farm to fork strategy”.*

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## PRIORITY ISSUES

### **The new European Commission has entered into function after being approved by the European Parliament.**

On Wednesday 27 November 2019, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) gathered in plenary meeting in Strasbourg and voted by simple majority (461 for, 157 against and 89 abstentions) on the College of Commissioners, chaired by Ursula von der Leyen.

MEPs from the European People's Party (EPP) and Renew Europe (RE) largely supported the Commission, while the votes of the Social Democrats (S & D) and the European Conservatives and Reformers (CRE) revealed some differences within the political groups. The Greens (Greens/ EFA), for the most part, abstained, while the Identity and Democracy (ID) and the European Unified Left (GUE) groups showed strong opposition to the new Commission.

It should be noted that the College of Commissioners does not have a British commissioner yet. Indeed, despite the infringement procedure launched by the European Commission, the United Kingdom has not appointed a representative.

The von der Leyen Commission has started its work on December 1st 2019.

### **Latest news on antimicrobial resistance at EU level**

#### **AMR: European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2019**

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On November 18<sup>th</sup> 2019, the European Antibiotic Awareness Day took place to increase concern and awareness on the different threats and dangers for public health that a non-prudent use of antibiotics can have.

A great number of institutional bodies and civil society organisations have issued publications, taken positions or organised and participated in various events.

The **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)** and the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)**, two EU agencies, have held an [event](#) in Stockholm, Sweden. According to the ECDC *"The event was a platform for governmental institutions, professional and patient organisations, country representatives and media to come together and discuss the current situation regarding antibiotic resistance and the actions taken to address them by all stakeholders, both at EU/EEA and national levels"*.

In an [article](#) in the official magazine of the European Parliament, Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General of the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, assesses the situation and advances that the European Commission should and is going to continue its efforts in the fight against AMR.

The **European Court of Auditors** published a special [report](#) addressing antimicrobial resistance stating that progress in the animal sector is made, but also explaining that this health threat remains a challenge for the EU. The document assessed that the Member States' "One Health" approaches (human health, animal health and the environment) to AMR was valuably supported by the European Union. In particular, this support contributed to well-informed policy decisions and facilitated cooperation and exchange of experience between Member States. Nevertheless, the report highlighted the fact that further synergies are possible through targeted and cost-effective investments.

This publication also advances that EU action has led to some progress on veterinary issues; as a matter of fact, it reports that the use of veterinary antimicrobials had become more prudent in most EU Member States. However, the report states that Member States still face difficulties in collecting data regarding the monitoring of resistant bacteria in food and animals.

The report presents some recommendations about:

- furthering support to Member States;
- continuation of the promotion of prudent use of veterinary antimicrobials and better monitoring of AMR;
- strengthening strategies for boosting AMR research in the EU.

The **European Platform for the Responsible Use of Medicines in Animals (EPRUMA)** released [guidelines](#) on the responsible use of antibiotics. This organisation had already published some [guidelines](#) on this issue and restated, for the European Antibiotic Awareness Day, its adherence to these guidelines; furthermore, EPRUMA stated that the principles of responsible use of veterinary medicine and of enhancement of knowledge on disease prevention, animal health, animal welfare and husbandry practices are to be followed when promoting responsible use of antibiotics. The document also states that good husbandry practices in the context of exposure to disease-causing bacteria includes housing, biosecurity and nutrition. Finally, this organisation states that monitoring of animals and observation records are indispensable in the making of early diagnosis and that every farm should establish a pertinent animal health plan.

The **NGO Animal Health Europe** published, in the context of its *Roadmap to Reducing the Need for Antibiotics*, a [roadmap pledge](#) of 25 global actions to be taken by 2025 aimed at reducing the need for antibiotics in animals. The actions are designed to improve the three areas of the AMR issue: prevention, detection and treatment. The roadmap foresees:

- the training of more than 100 000 vets
- the availability of technical guidance to all product users,
- the investment of at least €4.5 million in veterinary scholarships and educational grants and of at least €9 billion in R&D.
- The improvement of cooperation with other stakeholders.

The **Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)** also issued a [press release](#) stating that “*Veterinarians continue to be committed to responsible and judicious use of antimicrobials*”. In this document, the FVE reaffirms its commitment to the “One Health” approach and expresses its concerns about the results of various reports published in the past few years ([ESVAC Report](#), [Court of Auditors Report](#)). The federation also reaffirmed in the document its will to get a better insight in the use of antibiotic for animal species and the impact of AMR.

## **Update on the EMA activities**

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

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The Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) held a [meeting](#) from 5 to 7 November 2019. The Committee adopted by majority a positive opinion for an initial marketing authorisation application for Stelfonta. It also adopted by consensus a positive opinion for an initial marketing authorisation application for Aservo EquiHale and for a type II variation application for Bravecto Plus, Exzolt, Poulvac E. Coli, ProZinc and Vectormune ND.

The Committee also adopted one scientific advice report further to a request for initial advice on safety and efficacy issues for an antimicrobial veterinary medicinal product for dogs.

## OTHER ISSUES

### Latest news on animal disease at EU level

#### Event at the European Parliament (EP) on the role of vaccines in tackling infectious and emerging diseases.

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On 19 November 2019, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) **Martin Hlaváček** (RE, Czech Republic) and **Simone Schmiedtbauer** (EPP, Austria) hosted an event studying the role of vaccines in the prevention of animal diseases in Europe. This event gave the opportunity to various EU officials to meet with interested stakeholders.

Roxane Feller, Secretary General of Animal Health Europe, insisted on the importance of the tools made available to veterinarians and promoted the 'prevention is better than cure' motto. She stated that *"When we are having to deal with such issues as climate change, new diseases like African Swine Fever, an increased need for sustainable farming and an urgency to address the challenge of antibiotic resistance, we must do more to prevent diseases in animals from the outset. Treatment will always be important, and when animals fall ill with a bacterial illness, there is no alternative to antibiotics. But today the focus is increasingly shifting to disease prevention and animal resilience as well as earlier diagnosis to facilitate better interventions to improve animal health. We ask EU officials and new MEPs here today to make prevention a priority"*.

The European Commission, through Bernard Van Goethem from DG Health and Food Safety, talked about the EU's track record in responding to disease outbreaks and Max Hörmann from the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture informed the assembly of insights from Austria's livestock sector and how they use biosecurity measures and diagnostics to keep animals healthy and prevent disease spread.

The two hosting MEPs developed their views concerning the importance of animal vaccination and evidence-based topical debates in policy making. They both approved that a prioritisation of the topic of animal health is necessary in the future.

#### African Swine Fever (ASF): recommendations from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

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The **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)** published on 5 November 2019 a [risk assessment of ASF](#) in the south-eastern countries of Europe (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia). This document estimates that the chances of the disease spreading across these countries within the first year of introduction is very high (66-100%), however the chances concerning the disease spreading into western EU Member States is very low (0-15%). Early detections and preparedness are, according to EFSA, one of the most important points on which the control measures (in place since 2014) should continue to focus.

Five main recommendations can be found in the text:

- Meticulous surveillance of wild boars and domestic pigs
- Reduction of the number of wild boars (hunting and limited access to food)
- Limitation of the risk of spread via movement of people through an augmentation of awareness campaigns
- Better communication and collaboration among national authorities and stakeholders
- Augmentation of training activities for relevant bodies such as veterinary officers and hunters' associations in order to increase the level of early detections and effective control.

## **African Swine Fever (ASF): The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) warns that no country is immune to an outbreak of the disease.**

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OIE Director General, **Monique Eliot**, stated that the ASF, partly due to its easily transmittable characteristic, can spread in all countries.

The disease that erupted in Africa and then spread throughout Europe and Asia is expected to contaminate more countries in the coming months. *“In the short term we are not going towards an improvement. We will continue to have more outbreaks in the infected countries. Neighbouring countries are at high risk and for some, the question, is when they will be infected”* said Monique Eliot.

## **Latest updates on animal welfare at EU level**

### **The Council of the European Union is working on conclusions about animal welfare.**

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EU veterinary experts are currently examining a [draft EU Council conclusion](#) on the improvement of farm animals' welfare.

The draft (that may still evolve) highlights a need of legislation update, especially on animal transport and slaughter, pig welfare and animal welfare indicators.

This document, that will be discussed during the 'Agricultural' Council of 16 December 2019, requests the European Commission to evaluate the potential need for renewed legislations in the areas of young cattle, rabbits, cats and dogs, (farmed) fish, turkeys, poultry and animal welfare labelling. The text also focuses on animal welfare during long distance transportation.

### **Extension of the mandate of the Animal Welfare Platform**

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The European Commission has agreed to an extension of the mandate of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare until **June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021** in order to ensure the continuousness of the discussions and actions of members on animal welfare files.

The platform, launched in 2017, often serves as a dialogue and exchange stage that tends to create non-legislative initiatives. The next platform meeting is planned for the beginning of 2020.

### **Eurogroup for Animals published a strategy aiming at reducing and replacing live animal transport.**

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On 18 November 2019, after a stakeholder meeting, Eurogroup for Animal published a [report](#) intitled 'A strategy to reduce and replace live animal transport: Towards a meat and carcasses only trade'.

Some dispositions aiming at making a successful shift to transporting meat and carcasses were identified during the meeting: incentives supporting logistic solutions such as better product labelling, financial support or the taxing of non-sustainable products. The meeting underlined the fact that animal transport issues should be *“substantiated by a solid regulatory framework setting a maximum journey time of eight hours for animals transported for slaughter, with a derogation for shorter journey time for animals at the end of their lives”*.

The report from Eurogroup for Animals gives an overview of the flaws in trade inside and outside the EU, studies the forces driving the transport of animals and gives ideas on how to deal with these forces in order to achieve the transition to a meat and carcasses only trade. Some examples of best practices are given.

An important argument put forward by Eurogroup for animals against the transport of live animals is the increasingly prolonged periods of high temperatures over the summer months that will further worsen, due to global warming.

### **Illegal trade of pets: new laws in perspective.**

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There is a growing consensus in Brussels on the issue of illegal trade in domestic animals, especially online. A recent six-month European Commission [follow-up initiative](#) by 17 EU countries [concluded](#) that "electronic commerce controls need to be strengthened today".

Veterinary experts from all member states and the European Commission agree to say that illegal pet trade is an issue of first importance. Animal Welfare, a Brussels based advocacy group, warmly welcomed this renewed context centred on this issue.

In a recent Council [survey](#), the chief veterinarians of 24 countries expressed strong support for stricter European regulations on the protection of marketed dogs and cats.

The European Council is working on a [draft EU Council conclusion](#) on animal welfare that englobes this issue. The Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU aims to present a finished version of the document to agriculture ministers in December.

### **Poultry welfare at slaughter**

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In the context of a series of updates on welfare of animals at slaughter requested by the European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published two analytical documents ([slaughter of poultry / killing for purposes other than slaughter for poultry](#)) containing 20 proposed measures to address poultry welfare issues during the slaughter of these animals.

The hazards encountered are, according to the EFSA, related to the failing numbers of staff and the lack of training and skilled personnel; EFSA's recommendations are thus partly focused on that issue.

Other report of this kind for other species will be published throughout the coming year: pigs (March), cattle (June), and other species (December). The findings of these documents will help the European Commission in its dialogue with the World Organisation on Animal Health (OIE) on animal welfare at slaughter issues.

### **The NGO *Animal Advocacy and Protection (AAP)* calls for a common approach to wildlife rescue**

During an event in the European Parliament (EP), the Animal Advocacy and Protection NGO presented a '[white paper](#)' requesting, from the European Commission, harmonized guidelines enabling Member States to co-ordinate their efforts in order to develop action plans for the rescue of exotic animals.

An important point of interest of these recommendations is about a better handling of the rescue facilities currently operating in the EU. These facilities should be, according to the AAP, further developed and new ones should also be created.

The NGO said in a statement that "*The development of such action plans should ensure adequate government funding for rescue facilities and a consistent interpretation of the rules on the rescue of exotic animals*".

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