



As the Members of the European Parliament will vote in plenary sitting in February 2019 on the non-legislative report of the AGRI Committee regarding the implementation of the [Council Regulation 1/2005](#) on the protection of animals during transport in the European Union, UEVP would like to reaffirm its commitment in favour of animal welfare. We will keep closely following the debate regarding this issue along with the outcomes of the evaluation of the EU Animal Welfare Strategy.

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PRIORITY ISSUES

MEPs want a better protection of animals during transport

The Agriculture Committee (AGRI) of the European Parliament adopted on 24 January 2019 a [non-legislative report](#) on the implementation of the [Council Regulation 1/2005](#) on the protection of animals during transport in the European Union. The report, adopted by 22 votes in favour, 12 against and four abstentions, calls Member States for a **strong and harmonised enforcement of the regulation**, which is currently poorly applied in some areas.

The report, written by **Jørn DOHRMANN** (ECR, United Kingdom) wants the European Commission to better impose sanctions on Member States who do not comply with the regulation, and Member States to prosecute breaches of EU rules with effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties, harmonised at the EU level. To this end, national authorities should carry out more **unannounced and risk-based checks, ban non-compliant vehicles or even suspend or withdraw transporter's license for repeat offenders**. Improving the enforcement of current rules should be possible via modern technology, such as **geolocation of vehicles** transporting livestock. MEPs also push for a **new 2020-2024 animal welfare strategy** and a clear definition of what constitutes fitness for transport and guidelines on how to assess it. Finally, the AGRI committee is calling for **shorter transport times**, by promoting alternative strategies such as local or mobile slaughter and meat processing facilities close to the place of rearing. MEPs also want EU states bordering non-EU countries to **provide rest areas** where animals could be unloaded and given food and water while waiting to leave the EU.

The text is now scheduled to be voted by the European Parliament as a whole during the **11-14 February** plenary session.

The European Parliament formally adopts the PEST report on the EU's authorisation procedure

On 16 January 2019, MEPs adopted during the plenary sitting the report of the special PEST Committee, by 526 votes to 66, with 72 abstentions. As a reminder, the Committee was set up after the controversial renewal of the marketing authorisation for glyphosate in the EU, and was supposed to investigate on the EU's pesticides authorisation procedure (*cf. the December newsletter*). The [report](#) from **Nobert LINS** (EPP, Germany) and **Bart STAES** (Greens/EFA, Belgium) was adopted with minor amendments. MEPs stressed the **importance of ensuring independent, objective and transparent scientific assessment of active substances** and plant protection products.

One adopted amendment calls for **specific protection measures towards vulnerable groups**, so that **spreading of pesticides close to public places** (residential areas, schools, playground...) **should be banned quickly**. Another amendment adopted by the PEST Chairman, **Eric ANDRIEU** (S&D, France) recommends the **creation of an independent committee**, with judges and senior officials in order to ensure there is **no conflicts of interests** within the EFSA.

The ENVI Committee wants Member states to properly implement the “sustainable use of pesticides” directive

The Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) of the European Parliament adopted a [non-legislative report](#) (by 51 votes for, 1 against and 6 abstentions) on the implementation of the [Directive 2009/128/EC](#) on the sustainable use of pesticides, calling Member States to **use more viable and alternative solutions to pesticides** in the fight against insect pests.

The report drawn by **Jytte GUTELAND** (S&D, Sweden) fully endorses the [2017 European Commission report](#) which criticises Member States over the implementation of the Directive: the **number of low-risked or non-authorized pesticides in the EU has doubled since 2009**, and alternative solutions are not fully used by national authorities, which **affects sustainable development goals** set up by the Union. MEPs then recommend to **promote the development of alternative technical solutions** to reduce the dependency towards conventional pesticides products and **eliminate growing resistance** against those products. The European Parliament is scheduled to vote on this report during the **11-14 February plenary session**.

Latest updates on food safety at the EU level

EFSA reform: the European Parliament and the EU Council are closing the gap towards an agreement

Negotiators from the European Parliament, the EU Council and the European Commission have met during two trialogue meetings on 14 and 24 January about the revision of the regulation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain, [presented by the Commission](#) in April 2018. As a reminder, the Parliament adopted its [version of the text](#) on 11 December 2018, one day before the Council formally adopted its [general approach](#). There are still some areas of disagreements, such as on the **risk communication, the EFSA Management Board and sanctions**. Intermediary technical meetings will be necessary before the next trialogue meeting scheduled on **11 February**, in order to reach an agreement.

The European Court of Auditors draws a report about Europe’s food safety system

The European Union’s food safety system is considered “**overstretched**”, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) said in a [report](#) published on 15 January 2019, urging policymakers to bolster implementation capacity. The text, which focuses on chemicals, found that the implementation of EU laws on chemicals in food, feed and plants has not reached the desired levels.

Auditors emphasised that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was **not able to deliver on increasing demands**, resulting in delays. **The lack of resources is the main problem**, according to the report. The low number of checks performed by Member States and **the lack of coordination between public and private controls** is also the main issues identified by the ECA. It recommends as a solution to **improve synergies between public and private sector laboratories**.

To better implement EU laws, the European Commission proposed a significant budget increase of €62.5 million per year for EFSA as part of the review of the General Food Law. According to the EU food safety watchdog, the new budget will **increase the overall quality of expertise** and safeguard the future sustainability of EFSA’s operations and risk assessment in Europe. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) [reacted](#) to the report saying that it is time for policymakers to **close the regulatory gaps to improve consumer protection** from harmful chemicals in their food.

The European Commission allocates €154 million to the fight against animal and plant diseases

For 2019, the European Commission decided to allocate about **€154 million** to the fight against animal diseases and infectious diseases of animals that can be transmitted to humans as well as to support plant pests surveys. In the animal health area, **€141 million** was awarded to support the implementation of the 142 approved programmes for eradication, control and surveillance of diseases, in particular **African Swine Fever** in 13 EU Member States (€14.3 million, €4.2 million of which for Poland) or animal diseases transmissible to human such as **bovine tuberculosis** (€33.1 million), **rabies** (€26.7 million) and **salmonellosis in poultry** (€19.8 million). Spain will receive the biggest share of the programme (€20.9 million), in front of Italy (€15.3 million) and Romania (€14.2 million).

Update on the EMA activities

Update on the EMA relocation to Amsterdam

The final preparations for the agency relocation in Amsterdam are ongoing. The Dutch authorities have already officially handed over the temporary building, the Spark building in Amsterdam Sloterdijk, to EMA's Executive Director **Guido Rasi** on 9 January 2019 and the agency is now preparing for its physical move. Whilst relocating, the Agency has to ensure the continuation of its main activities throughout the move and has implemented phase 4 of its [business continuity plan](#) (BCP) accordingly. The focus will be on the **authorisation, maintenance and supervision of medicines**, ongoing Brexit preparedness/implementation activities and **preparing for the implementation of the new veterinary legislation**. In April 2019, once the Agency has completed its move to the Spark building in Amsterdam, the Agency will review which other activities from the multiannual work plan can be resumed in the second half of 2019.

In the framework of the relocation due to Brexit, the Agency issued this month a revised [notice to stakeholders](#) regarding the effects of Brexit on the rules for veterinary medicinal products, as well as a "[Questions and Answers](#)" document which provide the latest news and advices available in order to comply with EU rules for the marketing authorisation holders established in the United Kingdom.

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

The Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) held a [meeting](#) from 22-24 January 2019. It adopted by consensus a positive opinion for a type II variation application for **Purevax RC, Purevax RCP, Purevax RCP FeLV, Purevax RCPCh FeLV and Purevax RCPCh** concerning quality changes. The Committee also adopted by consensus positive opinions for the renewal of the marketing authorisations for **Versican Plus DHPPi** and **Versican Plus Pi**, both for 5 years. A procedure was started for **veterinary medicinal products containing tylosin base presented as solutions for injection for intramuscular use in pigs**. This referral procedure concerns the appropriateness of the current withdrawal period in pigs for the aforementioned veterinary medicinal products containing tylosin base as a single active substance.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on animal disease at EU level

- **African Swine Fever (ASF):** during the Agriculture Council of 28 January 2019, the Health and Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis ANDRIUKAITIS called national authorities to continue their efforts of coordination and cooperation in the fight against the African Swine Fever. The disease is presented as a major threat for the pork industry in the EU, the wild boar population and the environment. More areas have been identified in a [Commission implementing decision](#) in order to implement protective measures. Long-term strategies need to be implemented such as the management of wild boars, with preventive hunts for example. In France, the army will be mobilised to eradicate wild boars in the risk area near Belgium. Even though fences are raised at some Member States borders, such as between Belgium and France or Denmark and Germany, the Commissioner reminded Agriculture Ministers that those initiatives have no scientific-base evidence and would result in a waste of public money.
- **Equine influenza:** a first outbreak has been identified in Paris in mid-December. 10 outbreaks have occurred since then, mostly in the northeast corner of France. Some alerts are also raised in other Member States, such as Belgium, England and Germany. National authorities are calling for vigilance in those areas and propose to implement precaution measures in order to prevent the spread of the disease.
- **Lumpy skin disease:** two Commission implementing decisions ([here](#) and [here](#)) published on 17 January 2019 brought some changes to animal health control measures and vaccination programmes against the lumpy skin disease in certain Member states. Due to a more favourable epidemiological situation in Croatia and neighbouring countries, the national government stopped to implement vaccination programme in favour of a surveillance programme, approved by the Commission. Therefore, this Member State has been deleted from the list of Member States with approved controls measures and vaccination programmes.

Latest updates on animal welfare at EU level

The Intergroup on Animal Welfare gathered to discuss the Zoos Directive

On 17 January 2019, the Intergroup on Animal Welfare organized a meeting in Strasbourg to discuss about the [Directive on the keeping of wild animals in zoos](#) (the Zoos Directive). Debates were focused on the implementation and the evaluation of the EU legislation and offered suggestions on how it could be improved in the future. An [evaluation report](#) published by the European Commission in November 2018 argues that the **education and public awareness objectives** settled in the directive have generally been achieved but only partly for the conservation measures. The evaluation points out **shortcomings in the licensing systems**. Inspections are often carried out by **veterinary services with limited knowledge on animal husbandry**. **Few penalties and closures** of zoos take place despite the existing breaches of the Directive, including in already licensed zoos.

To improve the implementation of the Directive, invited guests stressed the importance of the dissemination of the [Good Practices document](#) in all Member states and welcomed the decision of the European Commission to translate it in the upcoming months.

More information on the meeting can be found in this [debate summary](#).

Brexit impasse poses threats to animal welfare, Eurogroup for Animals warns.

The organization Eurogroup Animals warns stakeholders and the general public about the main threats on animal welfare Brexit could occur, depending on which way the political negotiations are going. As it is becoming increasingly likely that Britain would simply leave the bloc on 29 March 2019 without any deal, the effects on animal welfare will be terrible: **Mandatory veterinary checks would be introduced overnight** on all animals moving to/from the UK. Tariffs of well over 40% in most instances on animal derived products would be set up. The UK could not sell any meat produce into the EU market as its slaughterhouses would no longer be approved. In short, trade would be disrupted on a massive scale.

Animals in the UK could also face **shortages of feed, with even pet food being affected. Animal testing in the UK would increase by an estimated 50%** as the UK loses access to crucial EU testing information exchange bodies. **Queues stretching for many kilometres at borders would pose huge threats** for any animals being moved. Therefore, the organisation alongside its partners are determined to ensure that opportunities to improve animal welfare are seized and threats mitigated, as the 29 March 2019 is approaching.

EFSA starts a harmonisation of data collection process to better evaluate animal health risks

The European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) issued on 21st January 2019 a [report](#) to evaluate the progress made in the **data-gathering process on animal diseases**. The text is the first report of the **SIGMA project**, which aims at the automatization of the submission of data relative to disease outbreaks areas and surveillance measures. It proposes a **comprehensive approach** in order to optimise the way data are gathered by Member States and submitted to the Agency for scrutiny. Italy and Spain are already participating in the SIGMA project. The Agency invites other Member States to join, which could result in a better quality of scientific evaluations within a shorter period.

Digitalisation could improve ability to protect against animal disease

In the framework of the Global Forum for Food Agriculture held in Berlin, a debate was organised on 17 January 2019 over the digitalisation and the future of livestock production. Hosted jointly by animal medicines industry associations (AnimalHealth Europe) and experts in veterinary science and agriculture, the goal was to draw the attention around the **opportunities that digitalisation in animal health offers across the world**. Participants discussed the many benefits it would deliver, such as **optimal well-being, increased food safety and security, resilience against economic crises or enhanced resource efficiency**. The process would work thanks to **collection, monitoring and analysis of health data combined** with availability of innovative and digital solutions in livestock production. The use of digital, data-driven technologies such as **wearable sensors, AI-driven monitoring systems, and high-tech diagnostics**, is helping farmers around the globe to improve the health of their animals and produce more sustainably. Finally, participants called governments to support the application of digital technologies at regional and farm level to ensure accessibility to the latest available technologies.

The agri-food industry is counter-attacking on the “End the Cage Age” initiative

The [European Citizens’ Initiative](#) (ECI) calling for the ban on cages for animal-breeding of many species has already gathered more than 330’000 signatures and received the support of 150 NGOs and umbrella organisations. However, the agribusiness industry has been on the offensive: they denounce the report over **false allegations**, especially regarding the conditions of caged living ducks and geese used in the production of foie gras, incorrectly described in the report according to the industry. They also invite organisations and the general public to visit their farms and see for themselves about the conditions of breeding of these animals. As critics from the industry are growing over the ECI, its organisers are **still confident** about their objective, and keep calling EU institutions to act in order to ban cage-farming in the European Union.

Disappointing response to petition calling on the Commission to end pig mutilations

On 23 January 2019, the European Commission [replied](#) to the ECI “End Pig Pain”, which asks to phase out tail docking, tooth clipping and castration for pigs all over Europe. The response **recognizes the severity of the situation but gives no concrete answer** to supporters’ pleas, according to Eurogroup for Animals. As the campaign reached one million signatures in autumn 2018, the European Commission says that actions such as the **establishment of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare** will *‘enable the pig sector to gradually reduce the number of tail-docked pigs over time’*. This answer is disappointing to the ECI’s organisers, as a **specific date for phasing out piglet castration, asked in the petition is not mentioned in the Commission letter**. NGOs and other associations committed to ban those practices will continue their fight for the well-being of pigs in the European Union.

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