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UEVP

Union Européenne des Vétérinaires Praticiens – AISBL
Union of European Veterinary Practitioners - AISBL

Animal welfare represents an important part of this month newsletter. The adoption in plenary sitting by the European parliament of the non-legislative resolution on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU and the debate organised between MEPs and representatives of the European Commission on animal welfare in the aquaculture sector are two important topics for the UEVP. We will keep calling for more and more respect for animal welfare during the upcoming campaign for the European elections and all along the next term.

Thierry Chambon, UEVP President

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PRIORITY ISSUES

The European Parliament formally calls for better rules on transport of animals

MEPs adopted at the plenary sitting of 14 February 2019 a non-legislative resolution on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU (by 411 votes for, 43 against and 110 abstentions). The text comes from the report of **Jørn DOHRMANN** (ECR, United Kingdom) which was adopted in the Agriculture (AGRI) Committee in January. As a reminder, the report checks the implementation of the Council Regulation 1/2005 and calls for a **strong and harmonised enforcement of the regulation**.
The final text adds several amendments to the AGRI report *(see the January newsletter)*:

- The next MEPs are asked to form a **special committee to investigate** on animal welfare during transport
- The transport of unweaned animals should be **limited to 50 km and not exceed one and a half hour**.
- The **use of local or mobile slaughterhouse should be enhanced**, in order to shorten the distance from the location of breeding to the slaughterhouse, in a strategy for a transition towards a regional cattle breeding.

Since the adopted text is a non-legislative resolution, its provisions are not **legally-binding** in the EU law: it only shows the **political commitment** from the European Parliament to ensure animal welfare in the EU, as a way to influence the European Commission to come up with proposals to better address the issue.

NGOs are asking Official Veterinarians to refuse to approve animal transport to third countries

Eurogroup for Animals and other animal welfare NGOs sent an open letter to Official Veterinarians asking them to **refuse the authorisation for exporting live animals to non-EU countries**. This follows the decision from three Bavarian districts that have refused to give certificates that approve the export of live animals to third countries, as it seems **impossible to monitor compliance** with the Regulation's provisions on animal transport. In the letter, the NGOs call the other Official Veterinarians to refuse to sign the necessary certificates, as NGOs consider they have a **key role to play in fighting against animal cruelty**.

The European Commission is warning Croatia for insufficient protection of animals during transport

The European Commission released on 18 March 2019 the final report of an audit carried out in Croatia in September 2018 in order to evaluate animal welfare during transport to third countries. The auditors concluded that Croatian competent authorities have not taken **sufficient measures to minimise suffering for animals** arriving at the port of Rasa to be further transported by sea. The executive summary concludes: *"The Croatian system to approve livestock vessels for transport in the EU and for inspecting them before each loading **does not minimise the risk of adverse welfare conditions for the animals** during the journey. This happens because the veterinary inspectors have neither sufficiently detailed instructions nor sufficient technical knowledge to assess properly the vessel's facilities, and they allocate a very short time to inspect vessels."* The report confirms the findings of animal welfare NGOs, showing **lack of control and insufficient protection of animals during loading** to reach non-EU destinations.

The EMA communicates on EU actions to prevent medicine shortage due to Brexit

The European Medicines Agency published on 26 March 2019 a questions-and-answers document on the preparatory work that European Union authorities are doing to prevent medicine shortage due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. It explains that in case of a **withdrawal agreement**, there will be a **transition period** during which EU law will continue to apply in the United Kingdom. This means that **access to medicines will not be affected**.

If the UK leaves without a withdrawal agreement or deal ('**no-deal scenario'**), EU law will cease to apply in the UK. In this case, in order to be able to continue to supply medicines in the EU, companies carrying out certain activities in the UK will need to make changes to comply with EU law. The document underlines that **Brexit will not impact the safety of medicines**, nor the way they are evaluated. EMA and the Member States will continue to monitor the safety and efficacy of medicines without any changes.

The EU spotted flaws in Chinese controls on residues in live animals

EU veterinary experts published a report on 22 March 2019 highlighting **weaknesses** in the Chinese system of control of residues in livestock. Although surveillance programmes are well-established and implemented accordingly, three main issues are spotted by the experts: the **lack of several pharmacologically active substances in the scope of testing, the low number of samples collected, and the discrepancy of the sampling**, which should cover the whole year and the whole production period. The report concludes that **surveillance programmes are compliant** with the EU laws, but testing should better **reflect the availability of veterinary medicines** in China and **include active substances** that are not restrained in Europe.

MEPs and the European Commission debated over animal welfare in the aquaculture sector

On 14 March 2019, a debate was held during the plenary sitting of the European Parliament between MEPs and the European Commission over **animal welfare rules in aquaculture**. It follows a question submitted by several MEPs, including **Eleonora EVI** (EFDD, Italy) asking the European Commission on its intentions to come up with **legislative requirements in aquaculture**, in order to harmonise best practices throughout the Union. Commissioner **Neven MIMICA**, in the name of the European Commission answered that **Member States are more able to develop best practices** regarding their national context. A 2017 study by the European Commission on the welfare of farmed fish during transport and slaughter identified **shortcomings** in the achievement of the international standards of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). However, the report following the study concluded that improvements in fish slaughter practices can equally be **achieved by voluntary measures**, and that any **rules** would be best made at **Member State level**.

Update on the EMA activities

The EMA officially started its operations in Amsterdam

The European Medicines Agency announced on 1 March 2019 the **official start of its operations in Amsterdam**. The Agency has been working hard, in close cooperation with the Dutch authorities, to ensure these temporary premises would be ready to move into before 30 March 2019, when EMA's seat formally changes from London to Amsterdam. The relocation of the Agency's workers already started in summer 2018, and will continue gradually until the **second half of 2019**, in order to ensure a smooth transition for both workers' families and EMA core 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 19-21 March 2019, the first one located in Amsterdam. It adopted by consensus positive opinions for initial marketing authorisation applications for **Afoxolaner MERIAL**, a new product for the treatment of fleas and tick infestations in dogs, as well as for **Baycox Iron**, a new product to prevent clinical signs of coccidiosis in piglets. The CVMP adopted by consensus positive opinions for an extension of the existing marketing authorisation for **Innovax ND-IBD**, and type II variation for **Vectra 3D** (by majority), **ProZinc**, **MS-H Vaccine, CLYNAV** and **CYTOPOINT.** The Committee also adopted by consensus positive opinions for the renewal of the marketing authorisations for **Nobilis IB Primo QX, Suvaxyn PCV** (indefinite) and **Versican Plus Pi/L4R** (for 5 years)**.**

Highlights of the EMA Management Board meeting, March 2019

The EMA Management board held its meeting in Amsterdam for the first time, on 22 March 2019. Members have re-elected **Christa WIRTHUMER-HOCHE** as its chair for a three-year mandate. Dr WIRTHUMER-HOCHE is Head of the Austrian Medicines and Medical Devices Agency, a post she has held since October 2013. This is her second and final mandate as chair. The Board was updated on the **potential impact of Brexit** on the supply of centrally authorised products (CAPs) and noted that the number of medicines at **risk of shortages continues to decrease** because more companies take the necessary steps to ensure that their medicines can remain on the market. Work is still ongoing with national competent authorities to verify availability and identify alternatives at national level.

The meeting has seen the EMA's annual report for 2018 being adopted, where in the veterinary area, the Agency recommended **ten medicines for marketing authorisation** (four of these had a new active substance and three were vaccines). Its publication is planned for April 2019.

20 years of sampling and testing programme for medicines authorised for the EU

The EMA celebrated at the end of March the anniversary of the Agency's sampling and testing programme for centrally authorised products (CAPs) on the EU market, which has been organised yearly since 1998. It complements similar surveillance programmes, which are carried out at national level, for both human and veterinary medicine. Between 1998 and 2017, more than **700 products were tested**, representing a significant percentage of the total number of products authorised through the centralised procedure. The programme will be expanded from 2019 to include testing of **biosimilar medicines**, and testing of CAPs from the parallel distribution chain to verify their authenticity. Additionally, the **generics programme** started in 2011 will be **expanded** to increase the coverage of market surveillance by creating synergies with national sampling and testing programmes for products authorised through the mutual recognition and decentralised procedures.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on animal disease at EU level

- **African Swine Fever (ASF):** the European Commission extended the list of high-risk areas in Belgium and Poland, and also approved the eradication plan submitted by Bulgaria. Furthermore, the Health and Food General Directory of the European Commission issued a report on Estonia measure to control and prevent the disease, which congratulate the country for having a **good and reliable system**, as national authorities dedicate significant resources towards controlling and monitoring the African Swine Fever.

- **Lumpy skin disease:** EFSA's latest report shows that there were **no outbreaks** in the Balkans in 2018. Since this number decreases dramatically the previous year, compared to 2016, the agency concludes that the disease is now **absent from the region**. However, the lumpy skin disease (LSD) is still present in Russia, Georgia and Turkey. Due to the continuing threat of reintroduction from LSD-affected countries, the report recommends that the **vaccination programme be continued in 2019** in high-risk areas of the Balkans such as Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and the southern part of Serbia.

- **Lyme disease:** the European Commission answered on 21 March 2019 the question submitted by MEP **Frédérique RIES** (ADLE, Belgium) on the follow-up to the European Parliament resolution on the Lyme disease. The European Commission indicates that the disease is already **under mandatory surveillance** by the ECDC. Member States will share their first data before the end of May 2019. The answer also recalls that **several EU-funded projects helped improving patient's lives**.

- **Avian influenza:** a new outbreak occurred in Bulgaria, and the government took several sanitary measures to prevent the spread of the disease. Therefore, the European Commission modified an implementing decision to include the newly impacted region in the list of surveillance and restriction of circulation.

Latest updates on animal welfare at EU level

The Intergroup on Animal Welfare organised a meeting about the use of animals for cosmetics testing

On 28 March 2019, the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals discussed the **continued use of animals for testing the safety of cosmetic ingredients** in the EU. Although the EU Cosmetics Regulation, adopted in 2013, established an important precedent worldwide by **banning animal testing for cosmetic products** and for their ingredients, **animal testing is required for chemicals used in cosmetics** when there is a possibility of workforce exposure during manufacturing processes, under the REACH regulation.

Last year, the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament calling for a worldwide ban demonstrated that ending tests on animals for cosmetics remains an important priority for both the Parliament and EU citizens. The members of the Intergroup addressed several key points to put a definitive end to animal testing for cosmetics. They raised the issue of **proper labelling** and shared concerns on the risk of misleading consumers into believing that their products were cruelty-free. They discussed how to held EU institutions accountable and urge the MEPs of the next Parliament to keep the pressure on the next European Commission.

Eurogroup for Animals released its magazine on EU animal welfare issues

Eurogroup for Animals published the 13th issue of its quarterly magazine in March 2019. Several topics are presented and discussed, including the **effects on the Common Agricultural Policy on welfare, illegal puppy trade, animal transport or the debate over cage-free breeding**. The NGO also takes advantage of the magazine to present their campaign for the upcoming European elections, *VoteforAnimals2019*. The goal of the campaign is to ensure that candidates are committed to defend animal welfare topics during the election and possibly the next term.

EU citizens are calling for better broiler chicken welfare

Eurogroup for Animals published a recent survey to understand the **perceptions of EU citizens on the welfare of broiler chickens** in the EU. More than 7,000 people from 7 countries (United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and Belgium) were asked what they actually know about broiler welfare, what they deem important, and about their consumer preferences. The results found that 89% of respondents across the 7 EU countries believe **broiler chickens should be better protected** than they are now, with 84% recognising that chickens feel pain and 82% stating that they think it is important for chickens to enjoy their lives without suffering.

These answers emphasises the resolution of the European Parliament adopted in October 2018, urging the European Commission to improve welfare of broiler chickens, not only for the sake of animals, but also to **reduce the sector's use of antibiotics**.

The NGO is advocating for a **market-driven change**, through a **commitment** from European retailers, food businesses and outlets to adopt measures improving broiler welfare. Ultimately, citizen's call should translate into a **revision of the broiler directive** and the introduction of **mandatory method-of-production labelling**.

The FVE Animal Welfare Working Group prepares its renewal

The last meeting during the current term of the FVE Animal Welfare Working Group was held on 19 March 2019. During the last three years, many topics were discussed such as **transport of animals, cattle lameness, rabbits, extreme breeding of dogs, end of life of horses**, and many more. Companion animal topics on the last meeting were the current status of the early neutering of cats' position paper, which was launched for consultation until end of March. The Working Group also discussed particularly on **dog and cat transport guidelines**. Even though the subgroup does not seek for any change on the actual legislation, those guidelines on the transport of dogs are aimed to be included, over time, in the transport legislation. The new term of the Working Group will start with a meeting after summer.

NGOs are calling the EU to ban ivory market

A group of NGOS promoting animal welfare issued a joint statement on 26 March 2019, following the vote at the Belgium's House of Representatives calling for the **ban of commercial trade in ivory**. The federal Parliament will vote at its plenary session in April, and is expected to adopt the proposals. The NGOs are calling for an **EU full-ban on ivory trade**, since trade is permitted for ivory imported before 1990, and it is used as a loophole to launder ivory from illegally poached elephants into the legal trade.

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