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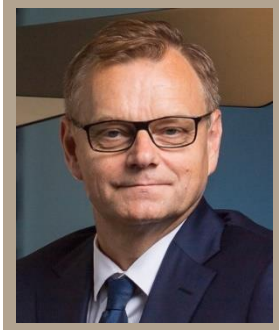
UEVP

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



As this year is coming to an end, the European institutions are continuing the negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. UEVP would like to highlight the importance of animal welfare in this policy for the coming years.

In the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the upcoming EU legislation is expected to ensure a better protection of animal welfare, including during animal transport. UEVP will closely follow the work of the European institutions on this crucial topic.

Moreover, I take the opportunity of this briefing note to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, hoping that the coronavirus situation will quickly improve all over Europe.

Piotr KWIECIŃSKI, UEVP President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRIORITY ISSUES

Latest EU institutional news

CAP post-2020: latest developments on the negotiations on the Common agricultural policy (CAP) reform

The European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament are negotiating the CAP reform in trilogues. On 10 November 2020, a first political meeting on these negotiations took place in Brussels. Then, a second meeting took place on 19 November 2020, on the national strategic plans.

As a reminder, in the week of 19 October 2020, the Council and the European Parliament adopted their respective positions on the three regulations covering the CAP.

At the Council:

- Position of Member States on the proposal for a regulation on the national strategic plans
- Position of Member States on the proposal for a regulation on the common organisation of the markets in agricultural products
- Position of Member States on the proposal for a regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy

At the European Parliament:

- Adopted report on the proposal for a regulation on the national strategic plans
- Adopted report on the proposal for a regulation on the common organisation of the markets in agricultural products ("CMO Regulation")
- Adopted report on the proposal for a regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy.

As a reminder, the elements still to be decided between the Council, the Parliament and the European Commission in the inter-institutional negotiations (trialogues) that started on 10 November include the following topics:

- the definition of an active farmer, which has been clarified in particular by the European Parliament;
- the inclusion of social aspects in the conditionality of direct payments, an element also added by the European Parliament, as well as the issue of animal welfare in the conditionality of direct payments;
- the conditions for setting up eco-schemes: although their compulsory nature has been validated by the Member States, as regards the budget to be devoted to eco-schemes, the European Parliament plans to devote 30% of the first pillar to them, whereas the compromise reached by the Member States concerns 20% of the first pillar.
- The European Parliament also proposes to dedicate 35% of the second pillar budget to environmental measures.
- The setting up of a market observatory with an alert mechanism introduced by the European Parliament in the proposal for a CMO Regulation.

It should be noted that on 2 December, in a meeting with the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport (ANIT) in the European Parliament, commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski thanked the European Parliament "*for its suggestion to introduce animal welfare into eco-schemes*".

At the same time, the European Commission is preparing recommendations to Member States to help them prepare their national strategic plans in the framework of the CAP reform that will apply from 1 January 2023.

Latest news on the spread of COVID-19 to animals

The EU's response to the spread of COVID-19 to animals

Following the contamination of around 200 Danish mink farms by COVID-19, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) realized a rapid risk assessment on the risk to human health posed by SARS-CoV-2 mink related variants.

The ECDC concluded in its assessment that the overall level of risk to human health posed by SARS-CoV-2 mink-related variants is "*low for the general population and moderate for medically-vulnerable individuals*"; "*low for the general population in areas with a high concentration of mink farms and moderate-to-high for medically-vulnerable individuals living in the same areas*"; "*moderate for non-medically vulnerable individuals with occupational exposure and very high for medically vulnerable individuals with occupational exposure*".

Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States also reported coronavirus cases in mink farms. As a reminder, the Danish minister for Agriculture Mogens Jensen resigned on 18 November 2020, due to his management of this health crisis. On 4 November 2020, his government had ordered the elimination of all mink in the country (between 15 and 17 million), which has been denounced on the grounds of the lack of a legal framework.

Latest updates on the Veterinary profession

Open feedback period on a European Commission's draft act on how to apply for authorisation to sell a veterinary medicine

On 10 November 2020, the European Commission launched an initiative which aims at providing technical details on how to apply for authorisation to sell a veterinary medicine.

The Commission will revise, update, and adapt Annex II of Regulation (EU) 2019/6 to scientific and technical progress. This Annex provides details on the technical data to be provided by the applicants for marketing authorisations of veterinary medicinal products.

The European Commission's initiative enables stakeholders to give their feedback on the Commission's draft act which will modify the current Annex II. The feedback period on this draft act is open until 8 December 2020.

Latest news on antibiotics at EU level

Open feedback period on a European Commission's draft act on the sale and use of antimicrobial drugs

The European Commission opened on 20 November 2020 a feedback period on a draft act which will provide requirements and methods that national authorities in the European Union should use to gather data on antimicrobial resistance.

According to the European Commission's draft act, it will specify requirements for the collection of data on antimicrobial medicinal products used in animals and provide for the following elements:

- the types of antimicrobial medicinal products used in animals for which data shall be collected;
- the quality assurance that Member States and the European Medicines Agency shall put in place to ensure quality and comparability of data;
- the rules on the methods of gathering data, both on the use of the antimicrobial medicinal products used in animals, and on the method of transfer of those data to the European Medicines Agency.

The European Medicines Agency also released a concept paper on this topic.

The feedback period on the Commission's draft act is open until 18 December 2020.

Positioning of Animal health Europe on the antibiotic awareness day

On 18 November 2020, on the antibiotic awareness day, Animal health Europe recalled the theme of this day, namely '*Stay United to Preserve Antimicrobials*'.

According to Animal health Europe's Secretary General, "*it is important that a balance remains between ensuring Responsible Use of antimicrobials, reducing the need to use antibiotics, and protecting animal health and welfare".*

The organization considers also that "*a firm focus must remain on knowledge transfer and training for farmers, access to animal health management and disease prevention tools, and continued awareness raising to ensure greater uptake of Responsible Use practices on all farms, in all countries*."

Latest news on animal health

Update on the spread of the avian influenza in the European Union

Since October 2020, more than 300 cases of avian influenza have been detected in different Member States, such as the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and Belgium.

In this context, the European Food Safety Authority (Efsa) realized an update on this situation. Among its conclusions, Efsa indicates that the risk of further spread to unaffected areas via wild bird migrations is high and that the risk of virus spread from wild birds to poultry is high as well.

Efsa advises national authorities to continue the surveillance of wild birds and poultry and to implement control measures to prevent human contact with infected or dead birds. In addition, it recalls Member States to enforce in their high-risk areas the risk mitigation and reinforced biosecurity measures provided in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1136.

A parliamentary question on the Animal Health Law

On 7 September 2020, six Members of the European Parliament in the Renew Europe political group, namely Jérémy Decerle (France), Irène Tolleret (France), Hilde Vautmans (Belgium), Atidzhe Alieva-Veli (Bulgaria), Ulrike

Müller (Germany) and Elsi Katainen (Finland), submitted a parliamentary question for written answer to the European Commission.

In their question, members of the European Parliament asked to postpone the entry into force of the Regulation on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ("Animal Health Law").

As a reminder, the entry into force of this Regulation was initially set on 21 April 2021. The above-mentioned Members of the European Parliament indicate, however, that most of the delegated acts which should have been taken in April 2019, have not been adopted yet.

On 18 November 2020, the Commission replied to this question and underlined among others, that it is not in favour of postponing the date of application of the Animal Health Law, but the Commission "*is aware of the concerns raised by Member States and various stakeholders and is assessing the situation*".

According to the Commission, postponing the date of application would lead to delays in the implementation of several animal health measures and of directly related official control measures.

Open feedback period on a European Commission's draft act on age determination, disease control and import requirements for animals

On 26 November 2020, the European Commission opened a feedback period on a draft act on age determination, disease control and import requirements for animals.

The European Commission's initiative aims at amending several annexes of Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 (Annexes III, V, VII and IX), in order to end an option for determining the age of sheep and goats; end the compulsory two-year period of closely monitoring flocks/herds affected by the disease atypical scrapie, and align certain import requirements for products derived from sheep, goats and cattle.

The feedback period on the Commission's draft act is open until 24 December 2020.

The European Commission announces it will update the EU legislation on the fight against the African Swine Fever

On 16 November 2020, the commissioner for health and food safety Stella Kyriakides announced during a meeting with ministers of agriculture of the EU, that the European Commission is updating its legislation on the African Swine Fever.

The Czech Republic and Poland also asked the Commission to support the continuation of coordinated efforts of Member States in the fight against the disease and to reduce the administrative burden related to the measures and the co-financing system.

In addition, on 10 November 2020, in Germany a measure authorizing the "*reduction of the wild boar population to zero*" in areas where African Swine Fever has spread came into force.

The latest decision of the European Commission on the evolution of the African Swine Fever situation in the European Union was taken on 27 November 2020.

Two parliamentary questions on the African Swine Fever in the European Union

On 14 September 2020, Member of European Parliament Clara Aguilera (S&D, Spain), submitted a question for written answer to the European Commission, asking the measures taken by the Commission to stop the spread of the disease, as well as the measures which show the best results taken by Member States.

In its reply on 16 November 2020, the European Commission indicated that "*containment measures are very effective in commercial pig farms*", whereas "*controls on backyard farming and wild pig populations are more critical*".

The Commission also recalled its strategic approach to the management of African Swine Fever for the European Union drafted in April 2020, and provided a document containing a chronology of the main measures taken at European level.

A second parliamentary question has been submitted on 8 October 2020 by three Polish members of the European Parliament from the PPE political group, namely Jarosław Kalinowski, Krzysztof Hetman and Adam Jarubas. The MEPs asked to amend the rules on African Swine Fever to allow farms with no infected case located in long-standing risk areas ("Blue zones") to continue producing pork.

In its reply on 25 November 2020, the European Commission underlines that the designation of blue zones depends on the level of risk arising from the spread of African swine fever in those areas, and that these risks are assessed on the basis of the information provided by the concerned Member State and the epidemiological situation of the disease. The Commission stresses that its approach has been successful in reducing the spread of the disease and does not consider changing of strategy.

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 3 to 5 November 2020.

The Committee adopted 2 positive opinions for NexGard Combo from Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica GmbH and Enteroporc Coli from IDT Biologika GmbH concerning marketing authorization applications.

The Committee adopted 2 positive opinions on type II variation applications for Advocate to update the product information, and concerning quality related changes for Clynav, Sevohale (grouped and Equilis Prequenza and Equilis Prequenza Te.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for a type IB variation application for Respiporc FLU3, Ecoporc Shiga, Respiporc FLUpan H1N1 and Rabitec concerning quality-related changes.

The Committee concluded the referral procedure for Valbazen oral suspension and associated names, including its generic/hybrid products which contain 100 mg or 200 mg albendazole per ml. The Committee adopted an opinion concluding that the marketing authorizations of the concerned products should be varied in order to amend the product information accordingly.

The Committee agreed to update the entry for propylene carbonate on the list of substances considered as not falling within the scope of regulation (EC) No 470/2009.

The Committee adopted seven separate scientific advice reports further to requests for initial advice of which two, concerned immunological products and five, pharmaceutical products.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on animal welfare

Efsa publishes an opinion on welfare of cattle at slaughter

On 3 November 2020, the European Food Safety Authority (Efsa) published a scientific opinion on the welfare of cattle at slaughter, which assesses cattle's welfare from pre-stunning to bleeding.

Efsa identified 40 welfare hazards which could occur during slaughter, 39 of these are linked to a lack of appropriate skill sets needed to perform tasks or to fatigue. The EFSA opinion also proposes preventive and corrective measures.

This analysis was requested by the European Commission to feed into the reflections for the revision of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

Two parliamentary questions on laboratory testing

On 23 September 2020, Member of the European Parliament Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, Luxemburg), who is also chair of the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport (ANIT) in the European Parliament, submitted a question for written answer to the Commission on the scope of the ban on animal testing for cosmetics.

This question follows the European Chemicals Agency's Board of Appeal, which ruled on August 2020 in two cases (A-009-2018 and A-010-2018), that the German cosmetics manufacturer Symrise AG had to carry out tests on animals in order to determine the potential toxicity of two substances which are only used in cosmetic products.

On 20 November 2020, the European Commission explained in its reply that in these cases, the need for a test on vertebrate animals has been confirmed for substances exclusively used in cosmetic products, and that the test on vertebrates is "*only acceptable as a last resort*".

The second parliamentary question has been submitted on 10 September 2020 by MEP Elżbieta Kruk (ECR, Poland), and deals with the breeding of animals, particularly dogs, for laboratory testing in France. MEP Elżbieta

Kruk asked the Commission whether this situation was in compliance with European law, as well as the measures the Commission plan to propose against the suffering of animals and to reduce the number of dogs used in experiments in France and in the European Union.

In its reply of 4 November 2020, the European Commission reminded the existing Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes, and the launch of an infringement procedure on July 2020 by the Commission, since it found that France did not correctly transpose this Directive.

In addition, the European Commission stressed the publication of its first statistical report on the use of animals for scientific purposes in the European Union in February 2020. According to the Commission, this report should help Member States and stakeholders achieving the three key legal obligations introduced by the Directive, namely: replacing the use of animals with non-animal alternatives wherever scientifically possible; reducing numbers of animals to minimum possible; and, refining procedures to reduce pain, suffering and distress.

Update on the current legislation on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices

On November 2020, the EU Dog & Cat Alliance released a report on the current legislation of the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices across EU countries. The organisation's main findings and recommendations are the following:

- The identification and registration of dogs is currently compulsory in 22 Member States: most Member States have a national database of registered dogs, but the majority of these databases are not linked to an EU database.
- 7 Member States impose compulsory identification and registration at national level for cats, and in 5 countries, some regions have rules in place to impose it.
- Commercial breeders need to be registered and/ or licensed in most Member States but licensing requirements vary widely, and the definition of commercial breeders is not harmonised across countries.
- A compulsory permanent identification and registration of dogs and cats on an appropriate database linked to an EU database should be established.
- There is a need for compulsory licensing of dog and cat breeders and harmonised EU standards for dog and cat breeders.

In addition, on 6 October 2020 three French Members of the European Parliament from the Identity and Democracy Group submitted a parliamentary question for written answer to the European Commission, asking the ambitions of the Commission with regard to the falsification of animal passports and vaccination certificates.

In its reply, the European Commission reminded the current Regulation (EU) 2016/429 which will apply from 21 April 2021, and which includes the compulsory registration of establishments for breeding of dogs and the obligation for approval of shelters and assembly centres from which dogs can be moved to other Member States. The Commission also reminded the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 which entered into force in 27 April 2017.

In addition, the Commission also refers to the establishment of national contact points by Member States to exchange information on cases of non-compliances through the administrative assistance and cooperation mechanism.

The EU Platform on Animal Welfare adopts guidelines on the health and welfare of pets in trade

In November 2020, the EU Platform on Animal Welfare adopted guidelines on Responsible Dog Breeding, Responsible Cat Breeding and on commercial movement of cats and dogs by land.

As a reminder, this Platform has been established by the Commission Decision of 24 January 2017 and according to the Commission, it allows "*an open dialogue on animal welfare, sharing good practices and undertaking non-legislative initiative*".

The Platform's tasks and operations have been extended until 30 June 2021 by the Commission Decision of 29 November 2019.

Latest updates on the welfare of animals during transport

On 16 November 2020, 45 Members of the European Parliament sent a letter to the German minister of Agriculture Julia Klöckner who chairs the Council of the European Union for agricultural matters until the end of December 2020. These MEPs demanded that Julia Klöckner commit to the revision of Regulation of 2005 before the end of the year.

In particular, they asked to give "*a clear mandate to the Commission*" to assess the possibility of replacing the transport of live animals with the export of carcasses or genetic material. The information collected would support the work of the Committee of Inquiry on animal transport (ANIT) of the European Parliament, which is due to conclude its work in June 2021.

In addition, Member of the European Parliament Peter Lundgren (ECR) submitted a parliamentary question to the Commission on September 2020, proposing to ban the export of live animals outside the European Union. In its reply, the Commission underlined that it "*cannot impose a general ban on export of live animals to non-EU countries on the basis of animal welfare violations in the third country*" and that ensuring animal welfare in non-EU countries "*is under the competence of the respective national competent authorities*".

On 2 December 2020, during an ANIT Committee meeting, the commissioner for agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski explained that he considers that much of the transport of farm animals could be avoided by giving priority to local trade. In particular, he suggested reducing or even abolishing the transport of young piglets, by supporting farmers. He also said that it would be preferable to switch from the transport of live animals to the transport of meat, if possible.

Latest news on genetics

Efsa advises on risk assessment of engineered gene drives

The European Commission asked the European Food Safety Authority (Efsa) to assess whether its existing guidelines for the risk assessment of genetically modified animals can be used for the risk assessment of gene drive modified insects.

Efsa's opinion has been released on 12 November 2020.

According to Efsa, its existing guidelines for the risk assessment of genetically modified animals are adequate for evaluating risks associated with gene drive modified insects. Efsa underlines that further guidance is however needed for some areas, such as molecular characterisation, environmental risk assessment and post-market environmental monitoring.

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