



*This month, political statements were made at the European level concerning the recognition of professional qualifications, with potential implications for the profession of veterinary surgeons. The European Commission announced that it had accepted the recommendations of the Court of Auditors and committed to implementing them. Specifically, the Commission pledged to regularly update Annex 5 of the Professional Qualifications Directive related to automatic recognition, which includes veterinary professionals.*

*Antimicrobial resistance has also been an important focus at European level, with the publication of a report by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) highlighting the need to step up efforts to reduce antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in order to meet the European Union's targets by 2030 set by the European Union. This is a key priority for our profession!*

*Additionally, several measures were taken by the European Commission regarding animal health, addressing new outbreaks of Goat Plague in Greece and Romania, the resurgence of Avian Influenza, and new actions to combat African Swine Fever.*

*On the animal welfare front, following the appointment of the new European College of Commissioners, various EU actors—including Members of the European Parliament and animal welfare organizations—have called on the new European Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare to swiftly present the remaining proposals for an ambitious revision of EU animal welfare legislation and include them in the 2025 work programme.*

**Volker MOSER, UEVP President**

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# PRIORITY ISSUES

## Update on EMA activities

### Meeting highlights from the Committee for Veterinary Medicinal Products (CVMP)

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The Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) held a [meeting](#) from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for a marketing authorisation for **Carprofen Orion** (carprofen), a new generic veterinary product. It is intended for dogs to relieve inflammation and pain associated with musculoskeletal and joint disorders, as well as after surgical procedures, particularly for managing perioperative pain and inflammation in orthopedic and soft tissue (including ocular) surgeries. For cats, it is approved for perioperative pain relief.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for two variations requiring assessments for **MS-H Vaccine** updating the pharmaceutical dosage form and route of administration from ocular to oculonasal use aligning with the revised EDQM standard term definition. It has also amended the product characteristics to enhance warnings and provide detailed guidance on diagnosing M. synoviae-free birds, as well as emphasizing precautions to prevent the vaccine strain from spreading.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for a variation requiring assessment for **Simparica Trio** to add a new therapeutic indication for the treatment of the lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum*.

The Committee adopted positive opinions for a variation requiring assessment concerning quality-related changes for: **Baycox Iron**, **Eurican L4**, **Eurican DAPPI LMULTI**, **Eurican DAP LMULTI**, **Rabitec** and **RenuTend**.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for variations requiring assessment to align the product information with version 9.0 of the QRD template for **Equisolon** and **Rexxolide**.

The Committee has issued its first certificate for a vaccine platform technology [master file](#) (vPTMF). The certified Innovax vPTMF is based on a turkey herpesvirus platform which is already used in several approved vaccines for chickens. The vPTMF scheme is aimed at speeding up the development and approval of new veterinary vaccines in the EU.

Also, the Committee adopted a revision of the guideline on the evaluation of the benefit-risk balance of veterinary medicinal products and the overview of comments following the close of the public consultation. The guidelines will replace the “*recommendation on the evaluation of the benefit-risk balance of veterinary medicinal products*” and has been updated primarily to align with the regulatory and scientific framework provided by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/6](#), as well as to take account of experience gained over the years in the pre- and post-authorization assessment of veterinary medicinal products.

## Latest news on professional qualifications for veterinary surgeons

### Presentation to the European Parliament of a report on the recognition of professional qualifications in the Union by the European Court of Auditors

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On 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the European Court of Auditors presented the findings of its [special report](#) on “**the Recognition of Professional Qualifications in the EU – an essential mechanism, but used sparsely and**

**inconsistently”** to the European Parliament during an exchange of views with Members of the European Parliament from the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) and representatives of the European Commission.

In this report published on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, the Court of Auditors specifically recommends ensuring:

- Uniform application of the professional qualifications recognition system;
- Integration of the alert mechanism into the recognition procedure;
- Annual updates of qualification lists;
- Provision of reliable information.

**Regarding professional qualifications**, the report emphasizes the importance of clear qualification standards for professionals, as well as ensuring initial and continuous training for professionals to meet the changing and evolving needs of the labor market.

**On professional mobility**, the report highlights initiatives aimed at facilitating the mobility of skilled workers, particularly through exchange programs and cooperation between Member States, as well as existing obstacles and administrative barriers between different systems. The report also explains that professional mobility should be considered a key factor in addressing labor shortages.

During these discussions, the European Commission announced that it had accepted the recommendations of the Court of Auditors and committed to implementing them. Specifically, it committed to regularly updating Annex 5 of the Professional Qualifications Directive concerning automatic recognition. The European Commission also expressed its intention to explore the issue of digitalizing information.

The European Commission therefore commits to publishing a report on the implementation of the directive **by the end of the next semester (Q1 2025)**, thus paving the way for the examination of new long-term actions.

## **Latest news on antimicrobial resistance**

### **ECDC publishes report on the need to intensify efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance in the EU**

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On 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published [a report](#) highlighting the need to intensify efforts to reduce antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in order to meet the European Union’s targets by 2030.

The ECDC warns of the urgency for decisive measures if the EU is to avoid missing its AMR targets by 2030. According to the agency, *“between 2019 and 2023, antibiotic consumption in the EU increased by 1%, deviating from the recommended 20% reduction target for 2030”*. While a *“significant decrease in bloodstream infections caused by methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus was observed during this period, other infections, such as those caused by carbapenem-resistant Klebsiella pneumoniae, have seen a considerable increase, with a nearly 60% rise between 2019 and 2023”*.

The ECDC concludes that antimicrobial resistance (antibiotics, antifungals, antiparasitics) poses a growing threat to public health. While some member states have made notable progress towards AMR targets, the overall picture shows that stronger and more targeted action is now essential at the EU level. The agency recommends three key actions: infection prevention and control, more rational use of antimicrobials, and the development of new antimicrobials.

The ECDC considers that a reduction in the use of antibiotics and public awareness campaigns, combined with social and behavioral interventions, are necessary to prevent unnecessary use. The ECDC also continues to advocate for access to new antimicrobials and safe, effective alternatives. The agency has declared its willingness support member states in achieving their AMR objectives by 2030 by offering concrete measures, such as specific visits and assessments in the affected countries.

On this topic, several European stakeholders have reaffirmed their commitment, including the FVE and CPME, who co-signed a [press release](#) during European Antibiotic Awareness Day. Indeed, the European veterinarians and physicians expressed their commitment to translating global calls for action against AMR into concrete measures. They specifically call on the new European Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare to step up efforts to meet the EU's AMR goals by 2030, based on the "One Health" approach. Meanwhile, Animal Health Europe [emphasizes](#) that prevention must remain at the heart of strategies to combat AMR.

### **Latest news on animal health at EU level**

#### **EFSA publishes report on risk factors and mitigation measures for African swine fever in the European Union**

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On 4<sup>th</sup> December, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published [a report on the risk and protective factors for African swine fever in domestic pigs and wild boars within the European Union, and the mitigation measures for managing the disease in wild boar populations](#).

According to the report, EFSA considers that in order to combat the spread of this epizootic within pig farms, "*strict biosecurity measures are essential*". The authority particularly recommends storing bedding "*safely*", using "*insect nets*" to limit bites from horseflies and other flies, and advises against "*spreading manure from neighboring farms, especially in areas*" where the epizootic is circulating.

Furthermore, the European authority also believes that while the installation of fences can "*help fight*" the spread of the disease among wild boar populations, these fences, to be fully effective, should be designed with the road infrastructure in mind and combined with other measures such as culling and carcass removal.

It was observed that, although wild boar density is an important factor in disease spread, the analysis did not highlight a clear effect. EFSA experts examined the use of immunocontraception to control wild boar populations but concluded that further research is needed to develop a safe and effective oral vaccine. These efforts should take into account, among other things, the long-term environmental impacts, according to EFSA.

On this same topic, the European Commission published several implementing acts on 12<sup>th</sup> November ([here](#) and [here](#)) and [20<sup>th</sup> November](#), regarding new outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe. The regions affected by new protection, surveillance, and restriction rules include:

- **Italy** in the region of **Piedmont**;
- **Germany** in the state of **Hessen**;
- **Poland** in the regions of **Zachodniopomorskie, Dolnośląskie, Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, and Pomorskie**.

However, the epidemiological situation regarding farmed pigs has improved in certain areas of Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Poland, such as:

- **Croatia** in the counties of **Sisak-Moslavina and Karlovac**;
- **Germany**, in the states of **Hessen, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Brandenburg**;
- **Italy**, in the region of **Emilia-Romagna**;

- **Lithuania**, in the regions of **Klaipeda, Panevėžys, and Šiauliai**;
- **Poland**, in the region of **Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship**.

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#### **Publication of several implementing acts by the European Commission on certain emergency measures relating to infection with sheet and goat plague virus in Greece and in Romania**

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On 20<sup>th</sup> November, the European Commission published two implementing decisions about new outbreaks of sheet and goat plague in [Greece](#) and in [Romania](#). Indeed, the sheet and goat is an infectious disease which has been seriously affecting goats and sheep in Greece and Romania for the past few months.

**Greece** is affected by several outbreaks of the disease in its territory, including:

- In the regional unit of **Corinthie**;
- In the regional unit of **Ilia**.

Given the seriousness and urgency of the epidemiological situation, and in order to immediately limit the spread of the disease in Greece and in the rest of the Union, the areas listed as protection and surveillance and further restricted zones should be therefore be adjusted.

**Romania** is also affected by several outbreaks of the disease in its territory, including:

- **Timis** county;
- **Caras Severin** county.

Therefore, the size of the protection and monitoring zones and the measures to be applied should be adjusted.

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#### **Publication of an implementing acts by the European Commission on avian influenza**

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On 29<sup>th</sup> November, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a [scientific report](#) on “*the extension of the early warning system for avian influenza in the EU to assess the risk of transmission from wild birds to poultry*”.

The report mentions that, while EFSA had already developed an early warning system based on spatio-temporal risk mapping, called the “*Bird Flu Radar*”, to address the challenge of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), the objective of this new report is to conduct a case study in Italy and France to test the model’s performance using one year of data. The model’s predictions are then compared to primary outbreaks reported in the European Union Animal Disease Information System (ADIS).

The report details the extension of the spatio-temporal risk assessment model, initially developed to assess the risk of introduction and establishment of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in wild birds. Key findings include:

- *Italy*: The model’s performance was satisfactory, with all outbreaks detected in areas located within or near high-risk spatio-temporal units.
- *France*: The results are more mixed. Several outbreaks were reported in high-risk areas, but others were not detected by the model.

On 19<sup>th</sup> November, the European Commission published an [implementing decision](#) amending the annex to the implementing decision on emergency measures due to outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in certain Member States.

The implementing decision notes that :

- Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland and Romania have taken the necessary disease control measures in accordance with the, including the establishment of protection and surveillance zones around these outbreaks;
- The competent authorities of Hungary and Romania have cooperated fully in establishing the necessary surveillance zone;
- The European Commission has examined the disease control measures taken by Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland and Romania and is satisfied that the boundaries of the protection and surveillance zones established by these Member States and the boundaries of the other restricted zones established by Poland are at a sufficient distance from the establishments where the outbreaks of HPAI have been confirmed;
- The annex to the [implementing decision](#) can therefore be amended accordingly.

### **The European Parliament's Agriculture Committee exchanges views with the European Commission on animal disease management and funding challenges**

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On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024, the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee hosted an exchange of views between Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and a representative from the Directorate-General for Health (DG SANTE) of the European Commission to discuss the challenges posed by animal diseases.

Key concerns included epizootics, particularly bluetongue disease, which raised several questions among MEPs:

- Stefan KÖHLER (EPP, Germany) asked: *"How does the Commission plan to respond in the future? Is a vaccination strategy being considered? And with what funding?"*
- Dario NARDELLA (S&D, Italy) inquired whether a *"risk management fund"* was being considered.
- Bert-Jan RUISSEN (ECR, Netherlands) suggested considering a *"compensation mechanism,"* adding: *"What are the possibilities for utilizing EU funds?"*
- Benoît CASSART (Renew, Belgium) called for *"specific funding for vaccine research."*

Despite the unanimous concerns raised by MEPs, the response from the DG SANTE representative was nonetheless unequivocal: *"Given the major outbreaks of African swine fever and avian influenza, we are already facing a debt of 400 million euros (...) We have had to reduce the co-financing we used to provide. New expenditures are not feasible as the money is not available".*

This response highlights the budgetary tensions the European Commission is facing, even as the needs of the agricultural and animal health sectors continue to grow.

# OTHER ISSUES

## Latest news on international trade

### European Commission announces conclusion of EU-Mercosur free trade agreement negotiations

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On 6<sup>th</sup> December, the European Commission [announced](#), during a visit to Uruguay led by the President Ursula von der LEYEN, the conclusion of negotiations on the free trade agreement between the European Union (EU) and Mercosur.

Despite concerns and strong opposition from several countries - including France, Poland and Ireland - , as well as reservations from Italy, the European Commission stated that this was the best possible outcome. The Commission emphasized that the past nine months of discussions had addressed the concerns of states and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) opposed to ratifying the agreement "*as is*".

Regarding the [elements](#) of the agreement related to animal welfare and health, the agreement aims to:

- Strengthen cooperation between the EU and Mercosur to improve animal welfare standards;
- Engage in a joint effort to combat antimicrobial resistance linked to the use of antimicrobials in both humans and animals – a first for an EU agreement.

However, the free trade agreement is still far from coming into force. It must be approved by a qualified majority of Member States, the European Parliament, and, depending on the ratification procedure chosen, by national parliaments.

France, while criticizing the agreement as "*unacceptable as is*", condemned the decision by the Commission President to announce the conclusion of negotiations without first securing the support of the Member States, considering it a risky move.

## Latest news on animal welfare at EU level

### The European Commission launches the European Committee on Agriculture and Food (EBAF): A new advisory body for agricultural policy

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On 5<sup>th</sup> December, the European Commission launched the European Committee on Agriculture and Food (EBAF), implementing one of the key recommendations from the final report of the [strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture](#).

This advisory group, chaired by Christophe HANSEN, European Commissioner for Food and Agriculture, will aim to establish a structured dialogue between actors in the food supply chain, civil society, and the European Commission. Established for a five-year term, the Committee will meet two to six times per year, with the possibility of additional meetings convened by Commissioner Hansen when urgent advice is required.

The EBAF will provide high-level strategic guidance to the Commission on the follow-up to the report on the future of EU agriculture and contribute to shaping a vision for agriculture and food, expected to be presented within the first 100 days of the mandate.

The call for applications, open until 8<sup>th</sup> January, seeks to select up to 30 member organizations, evenly representing three categories: the agricultural community, other actors in the food supply chain, and civil

society (including areas such as environment, climate, **animal welfare**, and consumer issues). The European Committee on Agriculture and Food is expected to hold its inaugural meeting in **early 2025**.

### **Discussions at the December Agriculture Council in favor of more ambitious animal welfare initiatives**

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During the Agriculture Council planned for 10<sup>th</sup> December, the European Ministers of Agriculture will be invited to deliberate on the progress report concerning the ongoing negotiations on the revision of legislation related to animal transport. They will also examine a [note](#) submitted by Sweden, supported by Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Slovenia, **calling on the European Commission to propose additional initiatives on animal welfare**, in line with the commitment made by the previous Commission in response to the [European Citizens' Initiative](#) "End the Cage Age."

Highlighting the growing threat posed by antimicrobial resistance (AMR), considered a global concern requiring urgent action, Sweden emphasizes the link between **high standards of animal welfare, good animal health, increased productivity, and reduced antibiotic use**. In this context, the co-signatory countries stress that the "One Health" program and animal welfare must be central to the mission of the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare.

They also advocate for the integration of recent technological advances while addressing existing gaps in the implementation and enforcement of legislation across the European Union. Finally, these countries urge the Commission to *"promptly present the remaining proposals for an ambitious revision of European animal welfare legislation and include them in the 2025 work program"*.

### **Publication of an EFSA report on turkey mutilation practices across Europe**

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The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a [report](#) on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024, concerning mutilation practices in turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*), as part of the work conducted by the EFSA Network on Animal Welfare.

As a reminder, the EFSA Network on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) includes two sub-groups: the Animal Welfare (AW) sub-group and the National Contact Points (NCP) scientific sub-group, responsible for providing scientific support in accordance with [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1099/2009](#). During the annual meeting of the sub-groups held in March 2024, EFSA conducted an information-gathering exercise on mutilation practices in turkeys, covering both breeders and turkeys raised for meat production. The study focused particularly on beak trimming, toe trimming, and de-snooding across different countries.

During the meeting, network members shared their knowledge and experiences regarding these practices in their countries/regions, as well as the measures implemented to reduce their use:

- **Beak Trimming:** Beak trimming is the most commonly performed mutilation in both fattening turkeys and breeders of both sexes, regardless of the housing system. While certain national legislations prohibit this practice, it was noted that the absence of beak trimming may exacerbate injurious pecking behavior.
- **Toe Trimming and De-Snooding:** These practices remain marginal and are conducted in only a limited number of countries. Turkeys that do not undergo these procedures are not perceived as posing a significantly increased risk of injuries, scratches, or wounds, including at the snood.
- **Alternatives and Preventive Measures:** In countries where beak trimming is neither practiced nor permitted, management measures have been implemented to prevent both the need for such mutilations and injuries among non-mutilated turkeys. These measures include optimizing stocking density, controlling growth rates, providing environmental enrichments, managing light schedules, and ensuring an appropriate feeding regime.

The information collected will contribute to the risk assessment underpinning the scientific opinion on turkey welfare in farming, which the EFSA AHAW Panel is expected to publish in **2025**.

## **European animal welfare associations mobilize following appointment of new European Commissioners**

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Following the appointment of the new European College of Commissioners, several European Professional animal welfare associations have intensified their efforts to promote concrete actions for animal welfare.

On 27<sup>th</sup> November, **Eurogroup for Animals**, representing animal protection organizations from the 27 EU Member States and several other countries, [published](#) a press release urging the European Commission to "*act for animals*".

In its statement, Eurogroup for Animals welcomed the appointment of Commissioner Oliver VARHELYI, praising his commitment to animal welfare. However, the association expressed disappointment at the lack of a clear timeline for upcoming legislative proposals on this critical issue. The recommendations put forward by Eurogroup for Animals for the next European Commission mandate include notably the publication of an action plan for the transition to animal-free science and the strengthening of legislation on fur products, including a ban on fur farming (as requested by the *Fur Free Europe* European Citizens' Initiative).

Additionally, a coalition of veterinary associations, led by the **Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)** and including the **Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA)**, the **Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations (FEEVA)**, and the **World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA)**, released a [position paper](#) addressing key issues on animal welfare, with a specific focus on dogs, cats, and horses. Among the 14 recommendations outlined are the following:

- Strengthening veterinary training to better equip professionals to identify abnormal behaviors and recognize signs of stress or pain in animals ;
- Developing universal guidelines to ensure the welfare of animals in breeding establishments with including species-appropriate conditions (i.e. canine, feline, and equine), and promoting positive human interactions;
- Implementing a harmonized ban and strict enforcement of unnecessary and painful medical procedures;
- Banning training devices using electric shocks, such as shock collars, deemed cruel and ineffective;
- Banning highly restrictive living environments and practices, such as prolonged tethering of horses or dogs, that severely limit movement.

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