



This month, the European Commission has continued its efforts to combat African Swine fever and Avian influenza by implementing various measures, including the release of an EFSA opinion emphasizing the significance of post-vaccination surveillance.

The European Commission's proposal on animal welfare during transport took center stage. Members of the European Parliament's AGRI Committee engaged in debates over EFSA's scientific assessments. Additionally, the European Parliament's Research service conducted a review of the European Commission's impact assessment on the same proposal. We will keep following the debates on this important proposal which foresees an important role for veterinarians for its implementation;

With elections approaching swiftly, parliamentary activities are slowing down. The Parliamentary Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals held its final session and took the opportunity to evaluate the ending term and outline expectations for animal welfare in the upcoming term. We do hope that the next term of the European Parliament will see the intergroup on animal welfare continuing its activities.

Volker MOSER, UEVP President

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PRIORITY ISSUES

Update on EMA activities

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

The Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) held a [meeting](#) from 16th to 18th April 2024.

The committee adopted a positive opinion for marketing authorisation application for **Innovax-ND-H5**, a vaccine for the active immunisation of one-day-old chicks or 18–19 day-old embryonated chicken eggs to reduce mortality.

It also adopted marketing authorisation applications for **RESPIVAC TRT** a new vaccine for the active immunisation of chickens to reduce the detrimental effect caused by virulent avian metapneumovirus on the ciliary activity.

The committee adopted positive opinions for variation requiring assessment concerning quality changed for: **Coxatab, Coxevac, Evant and Simparica Trio**.

The committee adopted variations requiring assessment to align the product information with version 9.0 of the QRD template for: **Advocate, Arti-Cell Forte, Convenia, Cortavance, MS-H vaccine, NexGard, Syvazul BTV, Tessie, UpCard**.

The Committee concluded the first phase of a review of its previous opinion on maximum residue limits (MRLs) for **ketoprofen in bovine, porcine and Equidae**.

In view of deficiencies in the quality of Kexxtone, the Committee, seized by the European Commission, initiated a procedure concerning the **Kexxtone 32.4 g continuous-release intraruminal device for cattle**.

The committee adopted a draft concept paper about the development of a guideline on the safety of nanoparticles for release for a 3-month period of public consultation.

The committee also adopted a draft guideline on stability testing for changes to veterinary medicinal products, which will be published for a three-month public consultation period. This document provides guidance on the stability data that must be produced to justify a variation to a marketing authorization for veterinary medicinal products.

Latest news on animal health at EU level

EFSA publishes a report on the importance of post-vaccination surveillance for avian influenza and new outbreaks of the disease

On 17th April, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published [a report](#) on **post-vaccination surveillance for avian influenza**, complementing an earlier EFSA [scientific opinion](#) (published in October 2023) on vaccination strategies against the disease.

In this report, EFSA stresses the importance of post-vaccination surveillance in containing the spread of the disease. In particular, the Authority calls for reinforced control measures to be put in place, as well as effective coordination between national and European health authorities. EFSA also shares surveillance strategies for different emergency and preventive vaccination scenarios:

- **In the case of emergency vaccination against avian influenza:** surveillance programmes must take into account and be adapted according to the type of poultry and the size of the flock in order to detect new outbreaks at an early stage;
- **For preventive vaccination against avian influenza:** monthly virological tests should be carried out on dead birds to demonstrate the absence of disease and to ensure the safe movement of poultry;
- Vaccinated and unvaccinated flocks should be **passively monitored**.
- Animals vaccinated as a preventive measure or in an emergency **must be subject to a ban on movement inside and outside the vaccination zone**, unless there are specific exceptions, and until the incubation period has been reached or they meet the required criteria.

Moreover, the European Commission published three implementing decisions about new outbreaks of avian influenza in Europe, one on [5th April](#), one on [17th April](#), and one on [23rd April](#). The regions affected by new protection zone and surveillance zone are as follows:

- Bulgaria in the counties of **Pazardzhik, Haskovo and Plovdiv**
- Sweden in the municipality of **Svedala**
- Hungary in the counties of **Békés and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok**.

Publication of three implementing decision concerning new outbreaks of African swine fever

On [16th April](#) and [29th April](#), the European Commission published two implementing decisions concerning new outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe. The regions affected by new protection and surveillance zone are as follows:

- Bulgaria in the counties of **Plovdiv**
- Poland in the regions of **Dolnośląskie, Świętokrzyskie, Zachodniopomorskie, Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Podlaskie and Lubelskie**
- Lithuania in the districts of **Joniškio and Ignalinos**
- Greece in the regions of, **Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus and Western Macedonia**
- Czechia in the region of **Liberec**.

Some regions of Germany have seen the disease disappear and are therefore no longer considered to be at risk, as it is the case for **Kujawsko-Pomorskie Łódzkie and Mazowieckie** in Poland.

Publication in the Official Journal of the European Union of a delegated regulation on the establishment of specific maximum levels of cross-contamination of antimicrobial active substances in non-target feed and methods of analysis for these substances in feed

On 30th April the [delegated regulation](#) on the establishment of specific maximum levels of cross-contamination of antimicrobial active substances in non-target feed and methods of analysis for these substances in feed has been published in the Official Journal of the European Union

As a reminder, the commission had opened a scrutiny phase on 20th February 2024. This delegated act completes the [regulation on the manufacture, placing on the market and use of medicated feed](#).

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on international trade

Free trade agreements between the European Union, Mercosur member countries and New-Zealand

Free trade agreement with New Zealand:

The [Free Trade Agreement](#) (FTA) between New Zealand and the European Union came into force on 1st May. It was ratified on 25th March 2024.

The Free trade agreement liberalizes trade in most animal products and should therefore further stimulate animal agriculture in the EU and New Zealand.

The FTA only covers grass-fed animals, which explicitly excludes feedlots. This condition is motivated by animal welfare and sustainability concerns. It is also the first to include sanctions in its Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter and the first to include a chapter on cooperation in animal welfare.

Free Trade agreement with the Mercosur:

A [report](#) commissioned by the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament was published on 16th April, setting out alternatives for a fair and sustainable partnership between the European Union and Mercosur. Co-authored by the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law ([CISDL](#)), the [E3G](#) think tank, the non-governmental organisation Fair Trade Advocacy Office ([FTAO](#)), the Institute for European Environmental Policy ([IEEP](#)) and the [Veblen Institute](#), the report sets out a number of alternative proposals:

- **1st alternative:** Renegotiate the treaty by integrating the Paris Agreement and the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), while providing for sanctions in the event of non-compliance.
- **2nd alternative:** Emphasise a bilateral partnership focusing on sustainability issues and cooperation on transition incentives.
- **3rd alternative:** Facilitate trade in green goods and services in the market, rather than in all sectors.
- **4th alternative:** Establish a targeted and strategic partnership on critical raw materials, in order to pursue the EU's objectives under its Raw Materials Act.

The European Commission has also published [guidelines](#) for the next G20 summit, to be held in Brazil from 11th to 13th September 2024. The European Commission shared that *“The main objectives are to [...] support the Brazilian presidency in carrying out fruitful work on agriculture within the G20, in the spirit of strengthening bilateral cooperation with the host country, taking into account the long-term negotiations underway for a trade agreement with Mercosur”*.

Latest news on animal welfare at EU level

AGRI Committee meeting on EFSA opinions on animal transport

On 15th April, the European Parliament's Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) Committee [met to discuss](#) the European Commission's proposal on animal welfare during transport. During this meeting, a representative of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) presented the scientific opinion and its [recommendations](#), in particular:

- **Transport times:** According to EFSA, loading and unloading times should be included in the total duration of journeys, as these times can also expose animals to stress and fear. It is recommended that journey times be kept as short as possible, and that the animals be given breaks to rest and eat. EFSA has also stressed the importance of avoiding mixing animals.
- **Space in the vehicle:** Each animal must have the necessary space according to its size and weight to avoid injury:
 - Sheep: 0.43 m²
 - Cattle: 1.84 m²
 - Weaner pigs: 0.26 m²
 - Pigs for fattening: 0.62 m²
 - Sows: 1.04 m²
- **Recommended temperatures:** EFSA stresses the importance of route planning to take account of weather conditions, as stress and fear can increase the body temperature of animals. “Upper critical temperature” limits have been established for the different types of animals, to which they must not be exposed:
 - Pigs: 25 degrees
 - Horses: 25 degrees
 - Cattle: 25 degrees
 - Sheep: 32 degrees
- **Rest for unweaned calves:** In the specific case of unweaned calves, longer rest periods have been recommended.
- **Transport by sea:** EFSA stresses the need to have an emergency plan in the event of an accident and to check weather conditions before departure. Adequate ventilation in means of transport must also be provided to avoid toxic gases.

Co-rapporteur Anna DEPARNAY-GRUNENBERG (Greens/EFA, Germany) within the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee (TRAN) expressed her wish to limit long journeys of live animals to third countries because of the risk of disease. For his part, rapporteur Daniel BUDA (EPP, Romania) in the AGRI committee felt that EFSA's recommendations would lead to excessive additional costs.

In response to the comments made by some MEPs, the European Commission's representative, Andrea GAVINELLI, pointed out that despite the accidents, the European Commission had chosen not to ban sea travel, but rather to screen vessels authorised to transport animals.

EPRS report on the impact assessment on animal welfare during transport

On 8th April, the European Parliamentary Research Service published [a report](#) on the impact assessment (IA) (part I – II) accompanying the [European Commission's proposal on animal welfare during transport](#).

The purpose of this report is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the European Commission's impact assessment. Overall, the report demonstrates that the impact assessment is complete and coherent.

- **Definition of problems and drivers** for problems such as the conditions of transport are well identified in the IA and clear.
- The IA described the **various objectives**, both general and specific. The report argues that the objectives identified are consistent with the problems and their drivers identified by the IA.
- The IA examines how the situation would evolve through a **range of options**. The report considers that the IA describes the policy options in a sufficient, transparent and balanced manner. Nevertheless, the IA does not present alternatives for some policy measures, for instance in the case of space allowance.
- Concerning **stakeholder consultation**, the report states that the AI openly acknowledges the difference of perspectives of stakeholders, such as those concerning live animal exports and the maximum duration of journeys.

- Finally, about **the assessment of economic, social, territorial and environmental impact**, the report argues that territorial impact could have been more explored.

Meeting of the Intergroup on the welfare and conservation of animal: assessment of the term and future expectations

On 25th April, the Animal Welfare Intergroup held its [last session](#) of the legislature to discuss the last term and the forthcoming European elections and the Vote for Animals 2024 commitment.

Among the achievements the group highlighted during the meeting we can mention:

- The set-up of a [Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport \(ANIT\)](#), which pushed for the revision of the [Regulation on animal transport](#);
- The resolution on actions to accelerate a [transition to non-animal science](#);
- The working group on the [ECI End the Cage Age](#);
- The [resolution on improving Regulations on wild and exotic animals to be kept as pets in the EU](#), through a positive list;
- The support for a [campaign](#) calling for an EU commissioner on animal welfare;
- The creation of a [working group on companion animals](#).

The Intergroup President Tilly METZ (Verts/EFA, Luxembourg) deplored the absence of a complete package proposal on animal welfare promised by the European Commission.

MEPs highlighted the “[Vote For Animals 2024](#)” campaign run by the Eurogroup for Animals and its members. The ten-question pledge covers issues such as the transport of live animals, imports of animal products, the welfare of aquatic species, non-animal science and the conservation of wild animals.

Publication of a delegated act to enable animals to be slaughtered safely on the farm

On 19th April, the European Commission published a [delegated act](#) concerning specific hygiene requirements for certain meat, fishery products, dairy products and eggs. This act supplements Annexes II and III of the [Regulation laying down specific hygiene rules for on the hygiene of foodstuffs](#).

The aim of these new rules is to authorise the slaughter of certain animals on farms, subject to strict conditions. The new rules allow on-farm stunning and bleeding for sheep and goats, with slaughter now authorised for any pig, cattle, horse, sheep or goat, provided that the restriction relating to a possible risk to the person handling the animal or to the animal is lifted. Strict hygiene rules will need to be set up under the control of official veterinarians.