

President:  
Christophe  
Buhot

General  
Secretary:

President:  
Christophe  
Buhot

General  
Secretary:  
Zsolt Pinter

Treasurer:  
Marc Buchet

Vice-  
Presidents:  
Anne Ceppi  
Marco Eleuteri  
Harvey Locke

## Scoping paper Farm visitation system

### Problem definition

1. Pan European propagation of animal diseases: the occurrence of similar problems throughout the EU should lead to the implementation of similar solutions in every EU Member States

- **Recent outbreaks: Bluetongue, ESB, avian flu, FMD...: figures (costs in terms of economic and image impact)**
- No tool implemented at the EU level to enable an early identification of an animal disease outbreak

2. Lack of regular visitation of the farms in some areas

- **Figures?**

3. No tool put in place at the EU level to check whether on farm bio security measures are actually implemented

### 5. Other problems encountered in the fields?

Consequences: a European phenomenon that requires a European answer.

#### *Baseline – Today's situation*

So far, the European Community pursues 4 objectives in the field on the Animal Health policy to:

- Ensure a high level of public health and food safety by minimising the incidence of biological and chemical risks to human
- Promote animal health by preventing / reducing the incidence of animal diseases, and in this way, to support farming and the rural economy
- Improve economic growth / cohesion / competitiveness assuring free circulation of goods and proportionate animal movements
- Promote farming practices and animal welfare which prevent animal health related threats and minimise environmental impacts in support of the EU sustainable development strategy

As a consequence, two out of the four goals of the European Union deal with the prevention of animal diseases or animal health threat. However, the examination of the EU provisions in this regards, shows that measures are implemented in order to control imported animals within the EU territory.

On the other hand, very few is planned as regards the prevention within the EU territory, and more specifically within the farms. Besides the prevention aspects, it is interesting to note that very few is actually put in place, at the EU level, in order to check whether the Hygiene Package, cornerstone of the Health and Consumer protection EU legislation is implemented.

At national levels, some Member States have implemented a farm visitation system

Rue Defacqz, 1  
1000 Brussels  
BELGIUM

Tél : +32 (0)2.533.70.25 Fax : +32 (0)2.537.28.28  
Internet: [www.uevp.org](http://www.uevp.org) E-mail : [info@uevp.org](mailto:info@uevp.org)

#### Members:

Austria  
Belgium  
Croatia  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Ireland  
Italy  
Latvia  
Luxemburg  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom

FECAVA  
FEEVA

- **Give example of the Member States where it is actually implemented**
- **In other Member States, give some examples of the monitoring measures that are implemented, if any**

### *The role of the European Union*

The EC Treaty, in article 95 provides that “*the Commission, in its proposals envisaged in paragraph 1 concerning **health**, safety, environmental protection and consumer protection, will take as a base a high level of protection, taking account in particular of any new development based on scientific facts. Within their respective powers, the European Parliament and the Council will also seek to achieve this objective.*” Moreover, Article 152 of the Treaty states that the Community can now adopt measures aimed at ensuring (rather than merely contributing to) a high level of human health protection.

The link between public and animal health is clear, and was acknowledged at the occasion of the recent Veterinary Week, "One Health: Healthy Animals = Healthy People". Given this relation, the European institutions pursue as well a high level of protection for animal health.

The animal health European policy is part of the EU food safety policy which objective is to protect consumer health and interests while guaranteeing the smooth operation of the single market. In order to achieve this objective, the EU aims at ensuring that control standards are established and adhered to as regards food and food product hygiene, animal health and welfare, plant health and preventing the risk of contamination from external substances. It also lays down rules on appropriate labelling for these foodstuffs and food products.

This policy underwent reform in the early 2000s, in line with the approach “From the Farm to the Fork”, thereby aiming at guaranteeing a high level of safety for foodstuffs and food products marketed within the EU, at all stages of the production and distribution chains.

In addition to this, several other commitments of the European institutions imply an action in the field of animal health:

- Protocol on Protection and Welfare of animals annexed to the EC Treaty by the Amsterdam Treaty: This Protocol recognises that animals are sentient beings and obliges the European Institutions to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals when formulating and implementing Community legislation.
- EU’s obligations under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement adopted in 1994 in the context of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This Agreement is aimed at minimising the negative effects of unjustified health barriers on international trade.

Finally, the European Commission adopted on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, a new Animal Health Strategy for the EU, articulated around the following pillars:

- **Prioritisation of EU intervention**
- **The EU animal health framework**
- **Prevention surveillance and preparedness**
- **Science, innovation and research**

The Strategy covers the **health of all animals in the EU** kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos. It covers also wild animals when there is a risk that they transmit disease to other animals and humans. The prevention of animal health related problems is the priority, considering that “Prevention is better than cure”.

The Strategy was welcomed and endorsed by the EU Council on the one hand and by the European Parliament on the other hand.

In the Action Plan that followed the presentation of this Strategy, the European Commission mentions the fact that in the framework of the preparation of the coming EU Animal Health Law, it will analyse the addressed recommendations, including “*the possible introduction of a system of audits for farms.*”

### **Objectives**

---

The introduction of a farm visitation system in the European Union, pursues the following objectives.

### *General objectives*

To implement the objectives set out in the New Animal Health Strategy by:

- Promoting animal health by preventing / reducing the incidence of animal diseases
- Promoting good farming and rearing practices

### *Specific objectives*

- Implementing the CAHP and its main goal : prevention is better than cure
- Implementing the food hygiene package
- Improving food safety and public health
- Providing a good risk assessment and contribute to an adapted risk management
- Giving a clear picture of the situation in the fields and strengthen the link between the practitioner and the official vet or the competent authorities
- Strengthening epidemiological surveillance and prevention of animal diseases
- Maintaining an effective veterinary web throughout the EU territory
- Assuring that farms and any animal husbandries, even in remote areas, are regularly visited by the veterinarians
- Reinforcing the dialogue and the collaboration between farmers, breeders, and veterinarians
- Guaranteeing the quality of the farm products and bring added value
- Promoting the partnership between farmers, breeders and veterinarians, the first step of the food chain
- Acknowledging “good farmers” practices, through an EU recognition, and encouraging less good farmers

### *Operational objectives*

#### **What?**

In practice, specific items would be given special attention during the visitation:

- General information: type of production, inventory of movements of the animals, milk production...
- Sanitary protection: other species, risk management and assessment
- Housing and facilities: quarantine, calving facilities, nursery, dead animal storage
- Sanitary assessment and management of animals: fattening status, abortion, records of diseases...
- Welfare assessment: zoo technical parameters, transportation, animal handling
- Management and use of veterinary medicines: storage, prescriptions, withdrawal time...
- Hygiene package: milking hygiene, ante mortem examination, emergency slaughter
- Environment: waste disposals, circulation of vehicle and people
- Book keeping: herd register, laboratory results

Guidelines based on commonly adopted documents like the OIE recommendations must be set up for these audits so as to be easily used by the veterinarians.

At the end of the visitation, an evaluation would be given for each item (good, to be improved, not satisfying), and advices and recommendations written on the final report. One example of this report would be given to the farmer or the animal keeper and another one sent to the competent authorities and the official veterinarians by the practitioner. The report can be handwritten or computerized and is available in a template ready to use (tick or cross or circle; only recommendations and advices need to be written).

These visitations can be implemented gradually and progressively. It is possible to start with only 4 or 5 items, and to add new items or replace old items every year according to the sanitary status of the farm and the national or European epidemiological situation.

These visitations should involve all type of productions, from milking cow to pigs, from exotic to dogs, etc, each one with its own specificity.

#### **How often ?**

This visitation should be performed at least once a year but would need to be adapted to the type of production concerned and problems encountered. For example, dairy cows would need a visitation a

year whereas for poultry, a visitation every two months might turn out to be necessary due to the important rotation of lots. But, in this case, the content of the visitation must be adapted as it would certainly not be necessary to check each time all the items listed for the first visitation.

The UEVP stresses on the importance to grant sufficient time to these visitations so that both veterinarians and farmers can go properly through the different items and therefore fulfil this work in the most efficient way.

### **Who?**

The farmer or the animal keeper or rearer is free to choose his own veterinarian. But our recommendation would be to choose the usual veterinarian, that is to say the vet who usually has the animals under his care. It also brings the guarantee that this practitioner has a clear and global vision of the farm, including its human aspects.

In case of several productions on the same place, which might require different veterinarians, only one veterinarian will deal with the general items common to all productions and will inform the other veterinarians. Afterwards, each practitioner will treat the specific items related to the production which he is in charge of.

### **Which financing?**

The system of farm visitation could be co-financed by the European Union, the Member States as well as the farmers and other animal keepers. Funds previously intended for the BSE could be used, as well as from the European Regional Development Funds or the Common Agricultural Policy.

## **Policy options**

---

### *“To do nothing scenario”*

At this stage, the only measures implementing a farm visitation system are taken at the national level. If no further initiative is taken, it is to lead to a situation where some Member States are equipped for the prevention of animal disease, when others are not. Therefore, the “Prevention is better than cure” principle will not be applied throughout the European Union, which stands in contradiction with the objective laid down in the New Animal Health Strategy, especially given the threat implied by new outbreaks of animal diseases. Not having a uniform system of control would clearly lower the benefits of such a system in some Member States.

#### ➤ **Anything to add?**

### *“EU action”*

In the framework of the preparation of the new EU Animal Health Law, some provisions could be provided for the implementation of a farm visitation system, based on the mechanisms that are already in place in some Member States, and that have proven to be efficient.

Having a EU framework in this regards would highly contribute to satisfy the objectives laid down in the Animal health Strategy, as well as in the EC Treaty.

It would therefore give some consistency to the Animal Health Law.

#### ➤ **Anything to add?**

### *Auto / co-regulation*

Farmers and veterinarians professional associations, at the EU level, as well as national and European public authorities could agree on the implementation of the farm visitation system. It would be the result of a compromise between the various stakeholders, which could constitute an added value for the empowerment of the system by each of them.

However, such an option would be based on a free will approach, and may lead to an inappropriate implementation in some areas, which could jeopardize the whole system.

## **Impact analysis**

---

The implementation of such a system would impact different categories of persons: farmers, veterinarians, public authorities, European citizens

#### **Farmers**

- Encouraging system
- Improvement and recognition of the quality of their production
- Acknowledgement of the best practices of some farmers
- Economic impact, since the system of farm visitation would be co-financed by the European Union, the Member States as well as the farmer

#### **Veterinarians**

- Recognition of their role as part of the prevention of animal disease
- Economic impact: no additional cost

#### **Public authorities**

- Can rely on an effective veterinary network throughout the EU
- Can rely on accurate data coming from the field

#### **European citizens**

- No additional cost
- Improvement of the food safety

- **To complete with information based on the experiences in the Member States where such a system is implemented**

### **SWOT analysis**

---

#### *“To do nothing option”*

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexibility</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No tool at the European level to enable an actual prevention of animal disease</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give up on tracking</li> </ul>

- **To be completed**

#### *“EU legislative action”*

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory and uniform system</li> <li>- Cheap</li> <li>- High return on investment</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Might not be flexible enough according to the various local situations / traditions</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possibility for those who want, to go further</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System that might cause extra administrative burden</li> </ul>

- **To be completed**

#### *“Auto / co-regulation”*

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on an agreement from the different stakeholders</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Might be complicated to conciliate points of views from farmers on the one hand and veterinarians on the other hand</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>

➤ **To be completed**