



Considered a priority for the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council, a ministerial conference on animal health was held last month, underlining the importance of a preventive approach based on biosecurity and vaccination as tools for combating animal diseases. Our profession must therefore benefit from this political commitment and continue to put key issues on the political agenda.

In terms of animal health, the impact of detected cases of avian influenza, African swine fever and, more recently, sheep pox and goat pox has also required coordinated and targeted action. In response, the European Commission has taken measures to prevent, monitor and manage new epidemiological outbreaks.

As far as animal welfare is concerned, expectations vis-à-vis the European Commission are still not being fulfilled regarding the remaining legislation on animal welfare. While progress in the preparatory work and public consultations has been announced, a specific timetable remains unspecified. Let us continue to closely monitor the situation's evolution...

Last but not least, to support the actions taken to promote the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability, the UEVP is co-signatory to a Position Paper ([here](#)) aimed at raising awareness of our position and making concrete proposals to improve the identification and registration of these animals.

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 17th January 2024.

The Committee adopted positive opinion for a grouping of variations requiring assessment for **Metacam**, solution for injection for dogs and cats.

Also, the Committee adopted positive opinions for variations requiring assessment concerning quality-related changes for: **Fevaxyn Pentofel/Suvaxyn CSF Marker/Suvaxyn PRRS MLV** and **Rexxolide**.

The Committee concluded the follow-up assessment procedure of the conditions on the marketing authorizations for veterinary medicinal products containing **moxidectin** to be administered orally, topically, or subcutaneously to cattle, sheep and horses.

The Committee adopted two scientific advice reports concerning one pharmaceutical product and one biological product, for dogs and cats, respectively (not yet published).

The Committee classified a product for the genitourinary system and sex hormones for cats as not intended for a limited market and not eligible for authorization under [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/6](#) on veterinary medicinal products.

The Committee adopted [a guideline](#) on determination of the need for an MRL evaluation for chemical-unlike biological substances that will come into effect on 1st August 2024.

the Committee launched a consultation on https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/scientific-guideline/guideline-determination-need-mrl-evaluation-chemical-unlike-biological-substances_en.pdf [the draft revised guidelines](#) on data requirements for veterinary medicinal products for zootechnical purposes for a period of 4 months. The purpose of this revised guideline is to provide more detailed guidance regarding data requirements for the conduct of pre-clinical studies and clinical trials for veterinary medicinal products for zootechnical purposes.

The committee also opened a consultation for a 4-month period on a [draft revised guidelines](#) on live recombinant vector vaccines for veterinary use. The purpose of this guideline is to provide advice on the data to be presented in applications for a marketing authorization of live recombinant vector vaccines, taking into account their particular properties.

After a public consultation, the Committee adopted a [guideline](#) on plasmid DNA vaccines for veterinary use. This guideline has been developed to provide advice to manufacturers seeking marketing authorization for nucleic acid vaccines for use in animals when the vaccine consists of (a) bacterial or a synthetic DNA plasmid(s). The guideline will come into effect on 17th July 2024.

Finally, the committee elected Damien Bouchard as chair of the Antimicrobials Working Party (AWP) for 3 years.

Publication of an implementing decision concerning new outbreaks of avian influenza in France

On [10th January](#) and [25th January](#), the European Commission published two implementing decision concerning new regions affected by avian influenza.

The countries affected by protection and surveillance measures are the following:

- **Germany** in Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Bayern and Brandenburg states
- **Hungary** in the counties of Békés, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Jász-Nagykun- Szolnok, Komárom-Esztergom, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Somogy
- **Belgium** in West Flanders province
- **Poland** in the Kuyavian–Pomeranian, Lower Silesian, Masovian, West Pomeranian Voivodeships and Lublin Voivodeship regions
- **Italy** in Apulia region
- **Slovakia** in the Nitra and Trnava regions
- **Romania** in Olt county
- **Lithuania** in the Marijampolė municipality
- **France** in Nord and Vendée departments
- **Bulgaria** in the Plovdiv region
- **Sweden** in the Sjöbo and Ystad municipalities.

Publication of an implementing decision by the European Commission on new outbreaks of African Swine Fever

On 25th January, the European Commission published an [implementing decision](#) concerning new regions affected by African Swine Fever.

Certain areas in **Poland**'s Zachodniopomorskie Region and **Bulgaria**'s Montana, Vratsa and Lovech Regions - which were previously under restricted zone - will now be listed as **protection and surveillance zone** due to the absence of African swine fever outbreaks in kept porcine animals.

In **Italy**, the region of Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont and Liguria will be listed as **protection and surveillance zone**.

Finally, in **Greece**, the regions of East Macedonia and Thrace that are currently under surveillance zone, will now be listed as **restricted zone** because of the increased level of risk that represent new outbreaks. As a reminder, restricted zone are areas where there are restrictions measures on the movement of certain animals or products and other disease control measures are applied to prevent the spread of a disease.

Publication of an implementing decision on new outbreaks of sheep pox and goat pox in certain Member States

On [11th January](#) and [23rd January](#), the European Commission published two implementing decisions concerning new regions affected by sheep pox and goat pox.

In **Greece**, the regional unit of Phthiotis is now under **surveillance and protection zone** as new cases of the disease appeared. The Island of Lesvos also continues to be under **restricted zone**.

Moreover, no new outbreaks have been reported in **Bulgaria**.

Ministerial conference on Animal Health organized by the Belgian Presidency

On 24th January, the Belgian presidency organized a ministerial conference to talk about animal health.

The main aim of the event was to discuss the importance of a preventive approach based on **biosecurity and vaccination as tools in the fight against animal diseases**, with a particular view to avoiding mass culls, and a particular focus on the African swine fever and the avian influenza.

During the conference, data was presented on the large-scale spread of the two diseases, followed by a discussion on the prospects for control in the context of the latest updates to European legislation. France and the Netherlands shared their experiences and difficulties with vaccines for the avian influenza.

In conclusion, the ministers stated that biosecurity is a key and fundamental factor in disease prevention and control, but that additional strategies and vaccination are also necessary.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on international trade

EU – MERCOSUR trade agreement : Negotiations at a standstill?

Despite several months of negotiations, discussions on the free trade agreement with MERCOSUR appear to have stalled.

According to the European Commission, the necessary conditions for concluding the agreement have not been met, and a political agreement does not seem to be on the right track. This situation stems from a sharp division among European leaders, between those who favour trade policies and those who emphasise non-negotiable mirror clauses to ensure that EU rules apply beyond the EU's borders.

Among the problems identified are the environmental dimension of the draft free trade agreement, and the lack of reciprocity in commitments on plant protection products, for example. As far as animal welfare commitments are concerned, the challenge is to strengthen them, particularly in terms of animal traceability and identification. A point of vigilance, still unresolved— something to keep an eye on...

Latest news on animal welfare at EU level

Meeting of the Animal Welfare Intergroup on the proposal for a regulation on the protection of animals during transport

On 18th January, the Animal Welfare Intergroup held its [monthly meeting](#) and took the opportunity to discuss the European Commission's proposal of 7th December 2023 for a [regulation on the protection of animals during transport](#).

A representative from the [Animal Welfare Foundation](#) presented a critical overview, stating that the legislative proposal lacked significant improvements for animal welfare. While some measures, such as the 9-hour journey limit, updated space allowances, new transport rules for animals transported in containers, clear definition of "place of departure", and the rules for transporting dogs and cats for economic purposes, concerns were raised about several points in the proposal:

- Export of live animals to third countries
- Long-distance sea transport of live animals

- Temperature limits
- Enforcement measures and harmonisation of penalties
- Lack of measures to encourage local slaughter

Representatives from [Human Behaviour Change for Life](#) also presented a [report](#) on the comparative costs of meat trade, carcass trade, and live animal transport. The report examines how a shift from live animal exports to meat and carcass trade could benefit the farming sector and the environment.

The results of this research show that exporting live animals is nearly 2.5 times more costly and has almost 6 times the CO2 emissions per kilo compared to transporting carcasses. According to the conclusions, shifting towards meat and carcass trade could benefit the farming sector, by reducing environmental impact, reducing the risks of disease spread for both animals and humans, and enhancing animal welfare.

Answer by the European Commission to a written parliamentary question on animal welfare

On 10th January, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella KYRIAKIDES, [responded](#) to a [written parliamentary question](#) concerning the state of animal welfare legislation in October 2023.

Her response mentioned that the European Commission is continuing its preparatory work, including following the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) proposed on this subject : This is an impact assessment currently underway, which indicates that *"the transition to cage-free systems demands the adaptation of several farming parameters, such as enriching the environment of the animals, and providing them with more space"*.

In addition, the EU Commissioner recalled the forthcoming public consultations (with no precise timetable) on costs, the appropriate length of the transitional period and relevant import measures.

As a reminder, on 20th December 2023, the European Ombudsman opened an enquiry into the lack of response to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "End of the Cage Age", focusing mainly on the lack of transparency in the European Union's decision-making process. The European Commission had until 31 January to respond to this enquiry.

European Commission response to a parliamentary question on the illegal pet trade

Following a [written parliamentary question](#) on the digitisation of zoo-sanitary certificates to combat puppy trafficking in Europe, the European Commission recalled - in [an answer](#) given on 8th January 2024 - the following elements:

- **To combat fraudulent practices in the cat and dog trade, a multidimensional approach is needed :** reinforced targeted controls, effective and dissuasive sanctions, increased collaboration between competent authorities at national and European level - as well as with stakeholder organisations - and public awareness.
- To this end, the European Commission has focused on the following points:
 - **For control tools:** in addition to current legislation, the obligation to issue animal health certificates and the electronic notification of these movements via TRACES.
 - **To strengthen measures to combat the illegal trade in dogs:** the European Commission recalls its proposal for a [regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability](#), presented on 7th December 2023.
 - **For pet passports:** the European Commission points out that they *"which must accompany every individual dog and cat being moved within the EU and are still in a paper format"*, in accordance with the security features defined in the regulation. Furthermore, *"their*

distribution is limited to authorised veterinarians and organised under the supervision of relevant Member State authorities”.

Communication from the European Commission on the European Citizens' Initiative “Fur Free Europe”

The European Commission presented [a communication](#) in response to the “Fur Free Europe” citizens' initiative calling for an end to fur in Europe. As a reminder, a communication is not legally binding and is mainly used to share information, analyses and general guidelines on a specific subject.

In this communication, the European Commission indicated that it had mandated the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to issue a scientific opinion on the welfare of fur animals by **March 2025**.

In particular, the European Commission stated that, based on the EFSA's recommendations, it will assess whether it seems *“appropriate to propose a ban, after a transitional period, on the rearing and killing of mink, foxes, raccoon dogs or chinchillas, and whether it should propose a ban, after a transitional period, on the placing on the EU market of fur and fur products”*. This decision will be taken by the European Commission by **March 2026**.

