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**Community Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013**  
**“Prevention is better than cure”**  
**FVE Comments**

**Introduction**

First of all FVE would like to congratulate the European Commission, in particular DG SANCO with the development of this Animal Health Strategy.

Although the Commission's role in respect of the Animal Health and Welfare has become increasingly successful and widely accepted, FVE very much welcomes its initiative to shift from a series of interrelated policy actions to defining a strategy and identifying long term goals.

FVE is especially pleased to see that the Strategy recognises the strong relations between Animal Health and Public Health and between Animal Health and Animal Welfare. Only in combination these can be effectively promoted. Keeping the welfare of animals high is critical in keeping them healthy. In the Strategy Animal Welfare is identified as important and we hope this will be reflected in the actions. The added value that Animal Welfare offers to the European society should be recognised and debate should not be limited to the issue of economic costs.

FVE welcomes a new Community general legal framework as the “Animal Health Law”, establishing the general principles, defining the roles and responsibilities, foreseeing efficient organisational arrangements and clear procedures in accordance with existing decision making process.

Another point of the Strategy we value is the international and global approach of the control of Animal Health. It will be much more effective to go to the origin of transmissible disease outbreaks and try to solve these, than to wait until they have reached our borders.

**President**

Walter Winding

**Vice-Presidents**

Ljiljana Markuš  
Rainer Schneichel  
Stephen Ware  
Margareta Widell

We support increased coordination with OIE– in terms of legislation, structure, organisation, resources, capacities, the role of the private sector and paraprofessionals – as a ‘minimum goal’. Adequate resources should be directed to achieve this objective in order to protect Animal Health, Animal Welfare, Public Health and the global economy.

### **One Health**

Taking into account that 60% of infections in humans and over 75% of emerging diseases originate from animals, it becomes clear that cooperation between veterinarians and medical doctors must be enhanced. Therefore the role veterinarians play in all professional disciplines and in every part of the food chain (‘from fork to farm’) should be promoted. We should embrace the “One Health” concept.

It should also be anticipated that the emergence of infectious diseases worldwide is emphasised by the climate instability. Surveillance, including networks and early warning systems, could be a way to protect human and animal health in the view of climate change.

### **Prevention is better than cure**

In the view of FVE, the statement ‘where prevention is better than cure’ is pivotal and should be more forcefully expressed: “Our vision is to work in partnership to prevent animal health problems before they happen.” We wholeheartedly support the need to shift the emphasis from disease control to prevention. Adequate monitoring and surveillance systems are crucial. We are very happy with the attention given to the need to promote and improve better bio-security.

With regard to promoting on-farm “biosecurity” the key question is not “if “ but “how“ can farmers and veterinarians do more....?” This item should be looked upon from both sides: what can be done to avoid introduction of pathogens on the farm and what to avoid further spread to other holdings? In the opinion of FVE much can be achieved by raising people’s knowledge and awareness of risks and changing their attitudes towards these risks, not necessarily requiring expensive on-farm investments. Early reporting of animal health problems is an essential part of reinforcing biosecurity. Long-term health management programmes, including regular consultations with a veterinary practitioner familiar with the farm, should be an integral part of overall farm management programmes.

Vaccination has to be re-considered as a very valuable tool in the prevention and control of animal diseases. Its contribution to avoiding culling of healthy animals should not be under estimated. In general we feel that the EU veterinary community needs to reevaluate the non-vaccination strategy.

### **Veterinary Services**

We endorse the need to have adequately funded and supported Veterinary Services and border controls to implement the Strategy. They play an essential role in prevention of disease outbreaks. Veterinary services are a public good and a priority

for the society. It should be assured that adequate funding and resources will be made available.

Special attention should be given to an adequate veterinary coverage of remote areas. Disease monitoring and surveillance are crucial for the prevention of large outbreaks and the occurrence of white spots on the map without veterinary service should not occur.

FVE considers the illegal introduction (smuggling) of live animals, animal products and biologicals as an ongoing threat to Animal Health, Public Health, international trade and consumer confidence. Co-operation between Veterinary Services, Customs Services, and Police Services in im- and exporting countries should be strengthened.

### **Identification and Registration**

An essential requirement for monitoring animals and their health status (including the necessary food chain information) is an internationally operating, coherent and reliable system for identification and registration for animals, both food producing animals as well as companion animals.

### **Veterinary medicinal products**

We consider that the development of vaccines and diagnostic tests to distinguish between infected and vaccinated animals should be given high priority. Because of the public interest in having reliable vaccines and diagnostic tests available we think that the development of these products should not be left to market forces alone. Especially in cases where it is very uncertain, if, when and how much a vaccine will be used, one cannot expect an industry to invest large amounts of money in the development of such products. Competent authorities should take a greater interest and more initiatives in stimulating the development of these products and in sharing financial risks connected to such product development. Even if they will never have to be used, it still is more preferable to have reliable vaccines readily available than to wait to start develop them until an outbreak has occurred.

More in general there is a need for effective and safe veterinary medicinal products. Especially for the so-called minor uses and minor indications the number of products available on the market is insufficient. For these products, in particular in the smaller Member States, the market size often does not justify the effort and costs involved in bringing products to and keeping them on the market. <sup>1</sup>

### **Animal Transport**

FVE is concerned that the role of animal transport and gathering places like markets as a threat to Animal Health is not sufficiently recognised. Each transport of animals from one region into another region, carries the risk of introducing an animal disease into the importing region. The examples of the spread of infectious disease from one country to another through animal transport are numerous. More-over the (long-distance) transport of live animals carries serious risks for the welfare of these animals. Since many years already, FVE holds the opinion that fattening of animals

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.hma.eu/uploads/media/TF\\_Report\\_Availability\\_Vet\\_Medicines.pdf](http://www.hma.eu/uploads/media/TF_Report_Availability_Vet_Medicines.pdf)

should take place within or near the place of birth and animals should be slaughtered as near to the point of production as possible. Frequent transports of large groups of animals throughout Europe, especially when they are brought together at live stock markets and other gathering places, carry large risks for animal health and welfare.

## **Finances**

Regarding cost sharing schemes, it is crucial that the incentive to report immediately any suspicions about or cases of disease outbreaks is not delayed by uncertainty about the reimbursement of direct and indirect costs.

A more general point of concern FVE does not see sufficiently well reflected in the Animal Health Strategy is the structure of the European Animal Production sector. In our view it still focuses too much on large-volume-low-costs production, which hampers the development of high quality production methods and products and which is not sustainable. If Europe wishes to remain competitive with other parts of the world it should much more aim at the development of other values such as healthy products and animal welfare friendly production methods.

## **Co-operation with Stakeholders**

The involvement of interested bodies in the development of European Community policy is a welcome indication of the European Commission's desire to work in partnership to produce successful results. Involvement should be started at the very early stage.

FVE looks forward on how the Strategy will be implemented and outlines the necessity to involve stakeholders when developing the action plan. As a member of the Advisory Committee on Animal Health, FVE strives to be a efficient and constructive partner in the further development and implementation of the Animal Health Strategy

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