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POSITION PAPER A NEW ANIMAL HEALTH STRATEGY FOR THE EU (2007-2013) PROMOTION OF AN AUDITING SYSTEM IN ANIMAL PRODUCTIONS

Brussels, 19th December 2007

The Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP), section of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), welcomes the proposal of the Commission for a new Community Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013) which underlines the need for an integrated approach in animal health policy-making and clearly defines the responsibilities of all stakeholders. The U EVP also fully supports the aim of the strategy to promote the “prevention of animal diseases better than cure”.

The **UEVP supports the 4 strategic goals** defined by the European Commission and particularly the need for a high level of public health and, the development of a culture of **bio-security** as well as a framework for **cost and responsibility sharing**.

1. The U EVP is in favour of the promotion of good farming and rearing practices and the development of a **farm auditing system** by veterinarians in order to control animal health and welfare. Such a system could also help to implement the “Hygiene Package”.

Farms and any animal husbandries or rearing stations should be regularly visited by the veterinarians in order to increase bio-security, insure a successful implementation of the food hygiene package, maintain a network of veterinarians in all the EU territory, guarantee the quality of the products and promote the partnership between farmers, breeders and veterinarians. Therefore special attention should be given during the visitation to the hereunder items:

- Type of production, inventory and movements of the animals
- Sanitary protection (other species, risk management and assessment)
- Housing and facilities (quarantine and calving facilities, dead animals, food storage...)
- Sanitary assessment and management of animals (fattening status, abortion, records of diseases, isolation ...)
- Welfare assessment (zootechnical parameters, transportation, animal handling ...)
- Management and use of veterinary medicines (storage, prescriptions, withdrawal time ...)
- Hygiene package (ante mortem examination, emergency slaughter...)
- Environment (waste disposals, circulation of vehicles and people, ...)
- Book keeping (herd register, laboratory results, veterinary visits, foodstuff delivery receipts, ...)

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 transmitted to the farmer or the animal keeper and another one sent to the competent authorities and the official veterinarians.

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Each audit scheme would be adapted to the type of production concerned as well as the periodicity of the visits (dairy cows, poultry, pigs, fattening or breeding, exotics, retailers ...).

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 farmers or animal rearers.

The advantages of such an auditing system are numerous:

- Provide a good risk assessment and contribute to an adapted risk management
- Strengthen epidemiological surveillance and prevention of animal diseases
- Maintain an effective veterinary web throughout the EU territory and the link between the fields and the competent authorities
- Improve food safety and public health
- Reinforce the dialogue and the collaboration between farmers and breeders, and veterinarians

The system of farm auditing could be **co-financed by the European Union and the Member States as well as by the farmers and other animal keepers**. More Rural Development Funds could be used to support practical actions such as prevention measures against the West Nile disease, leishmaniosis or rabbies.

2. The UEVP also supports the high level of the **training of veterinarians** as mentioned in pillar 3 of the new Strategy on Animal Health. The implementation of an accreditation system of the Veterinary Schools in the EU should be supported by the European Commission. According to such a system, only veterinarians graduated from accredited schools would be allowed to work in another Member State. Education and training should be a major concern for farmers and animal keepers and could be provided by the veterinarians in the fields.

3. The UEVP welcomes the priority given to the prevention of animal diseases in the new Strategy. It is important to keep in mind that 60% of human pathogens and 85% of emerging pathogens are zoonotic. **Therefore, the protection of animal health has a strong and positive impact on public health.** In order to insure a high level of safety, the role of **EFSA** should be reinforced.

4. Vaccination is a very efficient tool to prevent animal diseases and as such it should not be put aside for unjustified reasons. Vaccinated animals can be safely consumed and false information related to this issue must be definitely banned.

5. The UEVP also considers that the New Animal Health Strategy is an opportunity to **promote the development of medicines for minor uses minor species (MUMS)**. This will provide veterinarians with an adequate therapeutic arsenal and contribute to the safeguard of minor species and minor productions which are of importance in some countries. Public health would be protected as well as animal health and welfare, and historical and competing productions preserved (feta, rabbit, Roquefort, honey...). More credits should be devoted to the research on MUMS through the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health (ETPGAH).

6. It is also important to protect the competitiveness of EU products without adding unnecessary hurdles. In this perspective, the same requirements should apply both to products imported from third countries and goods produced in the EU. The veterinarians have an important role to play in the promotion of EU products and the guarantee of their quality as they are at the first step of the food chain.

To conclude, the UEVP wishes to underline the desire of the veterinarians to be part of the whole process **“From the Stable to the Table”** and to work in partnership with all the stakeholders involved in animal health. The veterinarians have a **key role to play on the prevention of**

animal diseases and the safety of public health, given the direct link between human and animal health.