



While August was marked by a summer break for the European institutions, September now signals the start and continuation of legislative work.

During this break, the process of institutional renewal has however continued with the appointment of a new college of EU Commissioners and the preparation of a future program for the European Commission, which could include measures relating to animal health and welfare.

This month has also been particularly marked by the measures taken by the European Commission to combat the spread of several epidemic outbreaks in the EU, notably African swine fever, goat plague, sheep and goat pox and Avian influenza. Managing these diseases is more crucial than ever for our profession!

African swine fever was also highlighted at the back-to-work meeting of the MEPs on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, where an exchange of views underlined the importance of developing a vaccine against this disease, as well as the role and efforts we are making in this context.

Meanwhile, the European Commission also announced the forthcoming launch of work on the veterinary package's secondary legislation concerning the manufacture of veterinary vaccines and the active substances used in veterinary medicines.

Finally, on animal welfare, the report on the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the European Union includes recommendations on animal welfare, which could lead to future European Commission initiatives in this area.

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PRIORITY ISSUES

Latest news on animal health at EU level

Publication of several implementing acts by the European Commission on new outbreaks of African swine fever

On the [9th](#), [19th](#) and [27th](#) August the European Commission published three implementing acts about new outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe.

The regions affected by new protection, surveillance and restriction rules include:

- **Italy** in the region of **Lombardy, Emilia Romagna** and **Piedmont**;
- **Latvia** in the county of **Valkas**;
- **Poland** in the region of **Zachodniopomorskie , Wielkopolskie, Podlaskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie** and **Kujawsko-Pomorskie**;
- **Germany** in the States of **Hesse, Baden-Württemberg** and **Rheinland-Pfalz**;
- **Slovakia** in the region of **Banskobystrický**.

In the context of this outbreak in Italy, the European Commission launched an [EUVET](#) (EU Veterinary Emergency Team) mission to Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna at the beginning of July to assess the measures implemented in Italy, the results of which were considered to be negative.

According to the conclusions of the European Commission:

- The EU experts are calling for greater harmonisation by the competent authorities, the development of a strategy and greater coordination between regions and between Italy and its neighbours.
- The EU experts also deplore the use of wild boar hunting as the primary means of eradicating the disease. The European Commission points out that hunting should only take place in regions where the disease has not yet spread, and that it is a tool not a solution.

Publication of several implementing acts by the European Commission on new outbreaks of goat plague in Greece and Romania

On 6th ([Greece, Romania](#)), 19th ([Greece, Romania](#)) and 29th August ([Greece, Romania](#)), the European Commission published several implementing decisions about new outbreaks of goat plague (also called “*peste des petits ruminants*”) in Greece and Romania.

Goat plague is an infectious disease which has been seriously affecting goats and sheep in Greece and Romania for the past few months.

Greece is affected by several outbreaks of the disease in its territory.

- In the regional unit of **Larisa**;
- In the region of **Thessaly**;
- In the regional unit of **West Attica**;
- In the region of **Attica**;
- In the regional unit of **Corinthia**;
- In the region of **Peloponnese**;
- In the regional unit of **Trikala**;
- In the regional unit of **Aetolia-Acarmania**;
- In the regional unit of **Rodopi**;
- In the regional unit of **Ilia**;
- In the regional unit of **Iraklio**;
- In the regional unit of **Drama**;
- And in the regional unit of **Karditsa**.

In Romania, regions affected by new outbreaks are listed as follows:

- In the county of **Tulcea**;
- In the county of **Constanta**;
- In the county of **Timis**;
- In the county of **Ialomita**.

Regions affected by the disease will now be under surveillance, protection and restriction measures.

Publication of an implementing decision by the European Commission about an outbreak of sheep pox and goat pox in Greece

On 29th August, the European Commission published an [implementing decision](#) about new outbreaks of the sheep and goat pox in Greece.

The country suffers with seven outbreaks of that disease in caprine and ovine animals in the **regional unit of Evros** which will be placed under restricted zone.

Publication of an implementing decision by the European Commission about new outbreaks of Avian influenza in Europe

On [20th](#), [27th](#) and [30th](#) August the European Commission published [an implementing decision](#) on outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in certain Member States of the European Union.

Following the notification by national authorities to the European Commission of outbreaks of the disease in their countries, the following regions are placed under protection and surveillance zones:

- France, in the departments of **Ille-et-Vilaine** and **Morbihan**.
- Germany in the state of **Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**;
- Portugal in the district of **Viana do Castelo**.
- Poland in the province of **Lubuskie**.

Announcement from the European Commission on upcoming public consultations regarding veterinary medicines and vaccines

The European Commission has announced the forthcoming launch of two public consultations concerning implementing acts related to veterinary medicines and vaccines:

- The [first consultation](#) will focus on **veterinary medicines** and the rules governing good manufacturing practices for active substances used as starting materials. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that good manufacturing practices for these active substances are applied consistently across the Union.
- The [second consultation](#) will address uniform rules for good manufacturing practices for **inactivated autogenous veterinary vaccines**.

The European Commission is expected to publish these two initiatives in the **1st quarter of 2025**.

Meeting on African swine fever within the European Parliament's agriculture committee

On 4th September, the European Parliament's agriculture and rural development committee held its first meeting of the new parliamentary session. Among the items on the agenda was a discussion on African swine fever (ASF), focusing on the current situation and future actions.

The meeting began with a presentation by Bernard VAN GOETHEM, Director at the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission. He highlighted the ongoing challenge of ASF across the EU, noting that the disease, which is fatal to pigs and causes significant trade disruptions, currently lacks effective vaccines or treatments. He recalled that the disease was currently continuing spread across Europe, with significant outbreaks reported in Italy, Germany, and Poland.

Several best practices from the Czech Republic and Belgium were mentioned, including successful eradication efforts supported by European veterinarians. The Commission also stressed the importance of improving biosafety measures and managing wild boar populations, which are key vectors for the disease.

Following this overview, MEPs were invited to share their views. MEPs unanimously called for more information on the vaccine research and development process. Other contributions from MEPs included:

- **Herbert DORFMANN (PPE, Italy)**: Expressed concern over the disease's spread and suggested stricter management measures.
- **Dario NARDELLA (S&D, Italy)**: Underlined the economic impact of these epidemics on pork exports.

- **Rafaella STANCANELLI (ECR, Italy):** Advocated for substantial wild boar culling in risk areas.
- **Elsi KATAINEN (Renew, Finland):** Recalled the complexity of managing this disease, highlighting in particular the potential role of consumers in contaminating and spreading the virus through infected food products during cross-border transport, and stressing the need to improve public awareness and education.
- **Tiemo WAITZ (Greens/EFA, Germany):** Opposed to the culling of wild boar as a primary strategy, suggesting that natural predators such as wolves could help manage wild boar populations.
- **Benoit CASSART (Renew, Belgium):** Raised concerns about Blue Tongue and suggested further reflection on this vector-borne disease.
- **Carmen CRESPO DIAZ (S&D, Spain):** Stressed the need to strengthen border controls and adopt sustainable hunting practices.
- **Emma WIESNER (Renew, Sweden):** Described Sweden's effective management of ASF, stressing the need to learn from best practices and improve biosecurity measures.

In response to the interventions, the European Commission emphasized that large-scale eradication of ASF remains impossible without a vaccine; only efforts to reduce its spread are feasible. While veterinary services in Belgium, Sweden, and the Czech Republic have managed to control the disease using fences to limit wild boar movements, the European Commission highlighted that effective management of wild boar populations and appropriate veterinary measures are crucial in limiting disease spread.

The Commission also discussed the role of hunters, stressing the need for training and awareness to adopt proper behaviors, as the virus can remain infectious on a carcass for up to 6 months. The development of biosecurity measures and uniform restrictions to support agricultural and industrial activities were also mentioned.

Vaccination, although considered the ultimate solution for eradicating the disease, is still in development and will require rigorous evaluations. According to the European Commission, the Vietnamese vaccine -currently the most advanced - does not yet meet European standards. The European Union continues to invest in vaccine research projects, including two new projects starting this year with a total funding of 12 million euros.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on animal welfare at EU level

Publication of the final report on the future of EU agriculture by the European Commission including recommendations on animal welfare

On 4th September, the European Commission published its [final report](#) on the strategic dialogue regarding the future of agriculture in the European Union.

Professor Peter STROHSCHNEIDER presented the final report to European Commission President Ursula VON DER LEYEN. This report is the result of the work of the [29 members](#) of this strategic dialogue, which was launched in January 2024 amid an agricultural crisis. The dialogue aimed to address the following four questions:

- *How can we provide our farmers and the rural communities in which they live with better prospects, including a fair standard of living?*
- *How can we support agriculture within the limits of our planet and its ecosystem?*

- *How can we better leverage the vast opportunities offered by knowledge and technological innovation?*
- *How can we promote a bright and prosperous future for the European food system in a competitive world?*

The report, unanimously adopted and titled "*A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe*" aims to identify challenges and opportunities for the European agricultural sector and offers a series of recommendations.

In this context, 14 recommendations were formulated by the participants in the strategic dialogue, some of which focus on animal welfare, including:

- **Preparing a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) fit for purpose** (Recommendation 3):
 - To accelerate the ongoing transition of food systems towards more sustainable, competitive, profitable, and diversified future systems, the dialogue participants recommend that the future CAP should focus on several core objectives, including "*promoting positive environmental, social, and animal welfare outcomes for society*".
- **Creating pathways for sustainable farming in the EU** (Recommendation 9):
 - As part of establishing a strategy on the role of animal farming, including concrete action points, the dialogue participants call for "*a revision of the animal welfare legislation as well as establishment of a new regulatory framework for an EU-wide animal welfare labeling system*".

The content of this report will contribute to the vision for agriculture and food that President Ursula VON DER LEYEN will present within the first 100 days of her mandate and represents a first step in the development of the future CAP reform post-2027.

Analysis report from the European Commission on the implementation of the Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes

The European Commission has published a [report](#) analysing the implementation of the [Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes](#) in the Member States between 2018 and 2022.

The report is based on data sent in by the Member States, which are required to submit information on the implementation of the Directive every five years.

In its report, the European Commission summarises the highlights of the implementation of the Directive:

- **Education and training:** Responsibility for education and training lies primarily with the Member States, in accordance with the framework established by the Commission to define training requirements. Although mutual acceptance of training between States reduces duplication, specific training remains necessary due to national differences. In this context, the European Commission points out that an e-learning module on skills assessment is currently being developed.
- **Project evaluation and authorisation:** When assessing projects, applications must be examined carefully to ensure that the use of animals is justified and that the 3Rs principles (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) are properly applied. Most Member States ensure the transparency of the process, but there are variations in the consistency and speed of decisions between Member States, including the assessment of the competence of project evaluators.
- **Animals bred for use in scientific procedures:** A reduction of 29% has been observed for these animals, but there is still a surplus. In this context, the European Commission mentions that initiatives to reduce the surplus of animals have been identified such as seminars and training programmes as well as guidance on surplus prevention developed at national level.

- **The '3Rs' principle:** The directive requires the systematic application of the '3Rs' principle (referring to : Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) in animal testing. Several Member States have reported improvements over the last five years, thanks in particular to better sharing of knowledge.
- **Authorisation of breeders, suppliers and users:** There are differences of interpretation between 'establishment' and 'user', 'breeder' and/or 'supplier'. The European Commission has noted that some Member States may grant several authorisations to an establishment, either for each of the types listed, or for a combination of them, or several authorisations of the same type may be granted within the same premises, company or educational establishment.
- **Withdrawal of authorisations for establishments and projects, and penalties:** The European Commission reports that penalties and fines vary considerably from one Member State to another.
- **Inspections:** While most Member States have complied with the requirement to inspect one third of their user establishments each year, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges for some Member States, which have encountered staffing problems.

For the proper implementation of the directive, three new guidance documents have been developed by the European Commission, covering [genetically modified animals](#), [non-technical project summaries](#) and [the results of retrospective assessments](#). On the basis of this analysis report, the European Commission mentions that training tools are currently being developed. Thirteen additional e-learning modules will be available in 2025, aimed at ensuring the competence of personnel involved in the care and use of animals throughout the EU.

The European Commission has also committed to developing a **roadmap for phasing out animal testing for chemical safety assessments in response to the [citizens' initiative on ending animal testing for cosmetics](#)**. The roadmap should be finalised at the start of the new European Commission's term of office.

Finally, in terms of transparency on the use of animals in science, the European Commission recalls the launch of two public databases on annual statistics on the use of animals and non-technical summaries of projects ("[ALURES](#)").

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