



At the beginning of the month, the designated commissioners for the future College, including Olivér Várhelyi for Health and Animal Welfare, were auditioned before the European Parliament to assess their competencies and qualifications. These exchanges provided an opportunity to better understand the directions that could shape future EU policies on animal health and welfare, pending the confirmation of the candidates.

During his hearing, Olivér Várhelyi outlined several priorities: strengthening the fight against antimicrobial resistance, supporting research on zoonotic disease vaccines, and revising animal transport regulations to prevent border incidents. He also marked a significant shift by announcing his support for the gradual elimination of cages in farming, a measure aimed at improving animal welfare. However, his hearing raised some concerns, and further questions were posed to him, leaving the future of his nomination uncertain. To be continued...

This same month, a number of measures were also taken in the field of animal health, notably concerning new outbreaks of Goat Pox in Greece and Romania, the resurgence of Avian Influenza, and new measures to combat African Swine Fever.

Finally, Spain and France placed the European animal vaccination strategy on the agenda of the Agriculture Council, highlighting the importance of a coordinated response to health challenges.

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 8th to 10th October 2024.

The Committee adopted two positive opinions for marketing authorisations. One for **Duotic (betamethasone acetate, terbinafine)**, a new product for the treatment of otitis externa associated with *Malassezia pachydermatis* in dogs and the other for **Bravecto Triuno (fluralaner, moxidectin, pyrantel)**, a new product for the dogs with, or at risk from, mixed parasitic infestations by ticks or fleas, gastrointestinal nematodes, lungworm and/or heartworm.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for a marketing authorisation for **Vaxxon ND Clone** a new vaccine for the active immunisation of chickens from the age of day one to reduce mortality and clinical signs of disease caused by infection with Newcastle Disease virus.

The Committee adopted positive opinions for a variation requiring assessment concerning quality-related changes for: **Bovela**, **Cortavance**, **Easotic**, **Enteroporc Coli AC**, **Poulvac Procerta HVT-IBD** and **Zycortal**.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for variations requiring assessment for **Bovilis Nasalgen-C** to indicate in the product information that Bovilis Nasalgen-C can be used during pregnancy ; for **Eluracat** to implement the outcome of the MAH's signal management process and change a warning for use of the product in cats with hypersomatotropism and for **Mometamax Ultra** to amend the instructions for use in the SPC and the package leaflet to indicate that the bottle must be shaken before each use.

The Committee adopted a clarification of a previous scientific advice report further to a request from the developer of a veterinary medicinal product, concerning a biological product for cattle, pigs and sheep.

The Committee adopted a draft revised guideline for the demonstration of efficacy for veterinary medicinal products containing anticoccidial substances for release for a 2nd period of public consultation.

Also, the Committee adopted the following guidelines related to limited markets after close of public consultation:

- on quality data requirements for applications for veterinary medicinal products other than biologicals intended for limited markets;
- on safety and residue data requirements for applications for non-immunological veterinary medicinal products intended for limited markets but not eligible for authorisation under the [Regulation 2019/6](#);
- on efficacy and target animal safety data requirements for applications for non-immunological veterinary medicinal products intended for limited markets but not eligible for authorisation under the [Regulation 2019/6](#);
- on safety and efficacy data requirements for applications for immunological veterinary medicinal products intended for limited markets but not eligible for authorisation under the [Regulation 2019/6](#);
- and guideline on quality data requirements for applications for biological veterinary medicinal products intended for limited markets and overview of comments.

Latest EU institutional news

Animal health and welfare: The positions of designated commissioners VARHELYI and HANSEN during the hearings

Following the presentation of the designated commissioners by Ursula von der LEYEN for the future College of Commissioners, the candidates were auditioned by the European Parliament from 4th November to 12th to assess their competencies and qualifications.

In this context, Olivier VARHELYI (Pfe - Hungary), the designated Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, was auditioned on 6th November by the ENVI and AGRI committees of the European Parliament. During this hearing, he discussed various issues related to health and animal welfare, outlining the following positions:

Measures on Animal Health:

- He is committed to ensuring that the list of antibiotics reserved for human use is regularly updated to reflect scientific advancements.
- He advocates for an increased budget for research on zoonosis vaccines, noting the rise in epizootic outbreaks and emphasizing "*the crucial role of emergency veterinarians and the EFSA*".
- He considers antimicrobial resistance a top-priority threat and aims to promote the development of new antibiotics produced in Europe, while supporting farmers in this transition.
- In response to veterinary medicine shortages, he intends to reduce administrative burdens to facilitate supply.

Strengthening Animal Welfare:

- He plans to continue the "One Health" approach, which integrates human, animal, and environmental health
- He defined animal welfare as aiming for better living conditions for farm animals and pets, and he plans a consultation process with European stakeholders on animal welfare standards, based on conclusions from the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture.
- He prioritizes animal transport issues and calls for enhanced enforcement of current animal welfare legislation to prevent recent incidents of animals being stranded at borders.
- Regarding the balance between animal welfare and competitiveness, he cited the poultry sector as an example of "*a sector driving change, with cages becoming obsolete, and we want to see the end of the era of cages*". He also proposes a dialogue with stakeholders to phase out cages, emphasizing that he will ensure importers do not exploit these future high European standards.
- Finally, he supports reducing intensive farming and highlights the importance of assisting farmers in this transition.

Christophe HANSEN (Luxembourg), the designated Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, was also auditioned on 4th November by the AGRI committee, with the ENVI and PECH committees also invited to participate in the exchange. During this hearing, the following topics were discussed:

International Trade:

- He intends to work on reciprocity in free trade agreements.
- Regarding MERCOSUR, he defended certain aspects of the agreement without explicitly supporting or opposing it, stating that the complementary protocol under negotiation should be analyzed.
- He stressed the need to monitor the sanitary standards of products entering the European territory through free trade agreements.

Animal Welfare

- Animal transport was mentioned in a question, but the designated commissioner did not respond to it.
- The designated commissioner expressed regret that animal welfare was not discussed in depth during the hearing, noting that farmers support animal welfare and are willing to engage on this topic.

Noted that Christophe HANSEN's hearing was well received, with several MEPs commending his expertise and knowledge of the sector. In contrast, Olivier VARHELYI's hearing was deemed unconvincing, particularly regarding his positions on animal welfare and his connections to Viktor ORBAN.

Political group coordinators decided not to confirm his nomination for the time being, and written questions will be sent to him before a possible second hearing. Transferring part of his portfolio (including animal welfare) to Christophe HANSEN is also under consideration.

The confirmation vote for the entire College of Commissioners is expected to take place on 27th November.

Latest news on animal health at EU level

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

On [7th](#) and [29th](#) October, the European Commission published several implementing decisions about new outbreaks of Goat pox in **Greece** and **Bulgaria**.

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

Greece is affected by several outbreaks of the disease in its territory, including:

- In the regional unit of **Evros**;
- In the regional unit of **Rhodopi**;
- In the regional unit of **Serres**;
- In the region of **Corinthian**;
- In the **Kavala** regional unit.

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

- In the **Stara Zagora** region;
- In the **Yambol** region;
- In the **Haskovo** region.

These regions should therefore set up a protection zone, a surveillance zone and, if necessary, other restricted zones around or in the immediate vicinity of the protection and surveillance zones.

The increase of Avian Influenza infections in Europe: EFSA gives warning and Commission publishes an implementing decision

Since August 2024, avian influenza infections have been on the increase in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe, Germany and Italy. This heightened risk has led to the introduction of measures such as poultry quarantine, which involves confining animals not carrying the virus, compulsory virological testing prior to any movement, and restrictions on the hunting of decoy birds.

Against this backdrop, on 1st October 2024, the European Food Safety Authority ([EFSA](#)) published an [update](#) on wild bird abundance and movement models for the avian influenza early warning system in the European Union. In particular, this [report](#) presents the integration of 12 new wild bird species into the models, as well as changes made to refine forecasts of wild bird distribution and movements.

Also, on [21st](#) October, 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:

- In the regions of **Emilia-Romagna** Lombardy in **Italy**,
- In the counties of **Békés** and **Csongrad-Csanad** in **Hungary**,
- In the federal state of **Upper Austria** in **Austria** and
- in the **Lower Silesia voivodship** in **Poland**.

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

On the [7th](#), [30th](#) and [31th](#) October the European Commission published several implementing acts about new outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe.

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

- **Germany** in the state of **Hessen** ;
- **Lithuania** in the county of **Alytaus** ;
- **Latvia** in the county of **Dobeles** ;
- **Italy** in the region of **Lombardy** ;
- **Poland** in the regions of **Zachodniopomorskie, Dolnośląskie, Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie and Pomorskie**;
- **Slovakia** in the region of **Nitriansky**

Also, during the European Parliament's [plenary session](#) on Tuesday 22nd October, several MEPs felt that the European Commission should do more to help countries combat animal diseases, in particular African swine fever. Dario NARDELLA (S&D, Italy) asked about the Commission's efforts in the area of scientific research into vaccination. The health EU Commissioner Stella KYRIAKIDES replied that the EU would continue to *support research projects to develop vaccines that could be used against swine fever*.

Publication of an implementing acts by the European Commission on certain emergency measures relating to infection with sheet and gloat plague virus in Greece

On [10th](#) October, the European Commission published an implementing decision about new outbreaks of sheet and goat plaque in **Greece**.

The sheet and goat is an infectious disease which has been seriously affecting goats and sheep in Greece for the past few months.

Greece is affected by several outbreaks of the disease in its territory, including:

- In the regional unit of **Corinthie**;
- In the regional unit of **Larisa**.

Given the seriousness and urgency of the epidemiological situation, and in order to immediately limit the spread of the disease, it is necessary to ensure that no animals are moved from the protection and surveillance zones, as well as other restricted zones, to destinations outside the outer perimeter of the other restricted zones. These regions should therefore set up a protection zone, a surveillance zone and, if necessary, other restricted zones around or in the immediate vicinity of the protection and surveillance zones.

Publication of delegated acts concerning the rules for approval and recognition of the disease-free status of compartments keeping terrestrial animals and concerning certain animal health requirements for movements within the Union of terrestrial animals

On 4th October 2024, the European Commission adopted a [delegated act](#) concerning the rules for approval and recognition of the disease-free status of compartments keeping land animals.

This text amends [the Animal Health Regulation](#), which establishes a legislative framework for the prevention and control of diseases transmissible to animals and humans. The two diseases listed in this act are highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and Newcastle disease (NDV).

Compartments keeping poultry (poultry rearing compartments) benefiting from “*disease-free*” status for HPAI and NDV will now have to comply with new specific requirements in order to maintain this status.

Initially proposed for 30th July 2024, this act was subject to a ballot period, during which the European Parliament and Council could object. In the absence of objections, the act was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*, and will come into force on 24th October 2024.

In addition, on 9th October 2024, the European Commission published a [delegated act](#) also amending the [Animal Health Regulation](#), as regards certain animal health requirements for movements within the Union of terrestrial animals. This delegated act aims **to complete the rules on epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus as regards ruminant movements**.

This delegated regulation has been in force since April 2021. However, since that date, the epidemiological situation regarding infection by the epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus has evolved. Therefore, the Commission is publishing a new version of the act showing the need for new risk mitigation measures, namely: risk mitigation measures related to vaccination and the possibility to derogate from the risk mitigation measures laid down in the Delegated Regulation by complying with specific measures established by the competent authority of the Member State of destination.

Spain and France bring the question of a European animal health and vaccination strategy to the agenda of the Agriculture Council on 21st and 22nd October

At the Agriculture Council meeting on 21st and 22nd October, France and Spain presented [a document](#) reaffirming their “*concern at the concomitant spread of several large-scale epizootics, mainly linked to vector-borne diseases*”, including bluetongue.

The document underlines the request from France and Spain to initiate discussions on the implementation of a coordinated approach at European Union level, aimed at **anticipating vaccine needs and working to improve their availability - both in terms of quantity and lead times**. Antigen or vaccine banks were mentioned as “*tools that, along with others, could guarantee the reactivity and availability of vaccines on an EU scale*”.

In particular, France called for the mobilization of the agricultural crisis reserve to help farmers combat bluetongue, and insisted on “*mirror measures*”.

During the exchange in the EU Council, Italy supported the Franco-Spanish request for vaccination, as did Finland, Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, Slovenia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Austria, among others.

Croatia and other countries such as Romania, Latvia, Belgium and Bulgaria, for their part, regretted the drop in the rate of EU co-financing for measures to combat epizootic diseases.

The reciprocity of trade standards was mentioned by several countries, while Denmark highlighted the negative effects of these “*mirror clauses*”.

A large majority of member states were in **favor of developing a European animal health strategy**, including the guarantee of a sufficient stock of “*safe and effective*” vaccines.

EU Council and Veterinary committees address challenges on Antimicrobial Resistance

At the same meeting of the Agriculture Council meeting on 21st October 2024, Hungary presented to member states a [document](#) listing the challenges it sees facing the European agri-food chain. Among these challenges,

the Hungarian Presidency pointed to **the increasing spread of animal diseases and antimicrobial resistance**.

The Hungarian Presidency also oversaw an [informal meeting](#) of the **European Union's Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) and the Coordination Group for Mutual Recognition and Decentralized Procedures - Veterinary (CMDv)**, in Budapest between 23th and 25th October.

The meeting focused on the authorisation of veterinary medications, and specifically on the fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The experts discussed the authorization of antimicrobial agents, experiences of data collection in EU member states, and the regulation of antibiotic use.

Dr SZABOLCS PÁSZTOR, Chief Veterinary Officer, who opened the meeting, emphasised the key role of veterinary medicine authorization in preventing and treating infectious animal diseases.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on international trade

EU-MERCOSUR trade agreement: EU organizations call for vigilance and MEPs voice their opinions in plenary session

On 10th October, six European agricultural organizations - including the meat poultry interprofession and COPA-COGECA - published a [press release](#) stating that a possible conclusion of negotiations with Mercosur **"would run counter to the spirit of the strategic dialogue"**.

They draw on the conclusions of the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture, [published](#) on September 4 and intended to contribute to and feed the vision of the future European Commissioner for Agriculture, which stress that: *"The European Commission must better recognize the strategic relevance of agriculture and food products in trade negotiations, undertake a comprehensive review of its negotiating strategies and revise its method for preparing impact assessments"* of trade agreements.

The co-signatories of the communiqué regret that *"the mandate used in these negotiations dates back to the last century (1999) ' and that ' quotas on sensitive products were decided before the Covid crisis, the war in Ukraine and its potential accession to the EU "*. **These six organizations are therefore calling for the agreement to be rejected.**

After several months of stalled negotiations, talks on the free trade agreement with Mercosur resumed in Brasilia at the beginning of October. In addition, some observers are raising the possibility that the conclusion of this agreement will be announced at the G20 summit to be held on 18th and 19th November.

At the plenary session on 22nd October, the political groups expressed their views on the subject. The Greens/EFA and *The Left* groups pointed out the negative implications of the agreement. The co-president of *The Left*, Manon AUBRY, called for a debate on the subject to be held in Strasbourg, without success. Meanwhile, the EPP continues to defend the agreement as essential.

Latest news on animal welfare at EU level

MEPs from the EPP, S&D and Renew groups want to create an intergroup dedicated to sustainable livestock farming

The three MEPs, Benoît CASSART (RE, Belgium), Alexander BENHUBER (EPP, Austria) and Maria GRAPINI (S&D, Romania) would like to push forward a project to create an intergroup dedicated solely to sustainable livestock farming. Indeed, Benoît CASSART (RE, Belgium) has expressed his view on the subject, saying that *livestock farming is too often wrongly criticized for its environmental impact. The positive aspects should also be taken into account.*

The intergroup will work in conjunction with DG AGRI, DG ENVI and the European Parliament's DG CLIMA, with the aim of providing a *platform for all MEPs, scientists and representatives of civil society sectors to exchange views and reconcile the sector's major challenges: environmental, social and financial sustainability, food safety and animal welfare*.

So far, only EPP, S&D and Renew MEPs have been approached. A number of MEPs from the AGRI committee could join, including the three coordinators, Herbert DORFMANN (EPP, Italy), Dario NARDELLA (S&D, Italy), Elsi KATAINEN (RE, Finland) and Pascal CANFIN (RE, France).

MEPs put the question of animal health and animal transport on the agenda at plenary sessions and intergroup meetings

At the plenary session on 22nd October 2024, MEPs [debated](#) the animal health situation in Europe: *“How to ward off and prepare for future health crises in agriculture”*.

Pina PICIERNO (S&D, Italy) introduced the debate, recalling the importance of the subject. Discussions focused in particular on epidemics, epizootics, and the actions taken by the Commission and its financial support to combat animal diseases. The question of prevention was also raised, as was the relationship with member states on these issues.

In particular, the Parliament stressed the importance of the “One Health” approach in tackling current and emerging crises, and recalled that human health, animal health and environmental health are inseparable.

In addition, on 25th October 2024, a meeting of the [Animal Welfare](#) Intergroup also took place, during which MEPs debated the issue of animal transport. The following issues were addressed: the recurrent cases of mistreatment of young calves exported from Ireland, the question of pregnant cows from Germany blocked at the Bulgarian-Turkish border and the new ban on live animal exports to the UK.

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