



Veterinary medicines legislation: vote in European Parliament ENVI committee

Veterinarians play a crucial role in fighting antimicrobial resistance, but are concerned about banning certain antimicrobials used in the treatment of animals

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19 February 2016. Last Wednesday the Environment and Public Health (ENVI) Committee of the European Parliament voted on proposals to amend the EU law on veterinary medicines as proposed by the European Commission.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is happy to see that the ENVI Committee puts much emphasis on fighting antimicrobial resistance in animals and people. The Committee clearly recognizes that “prevention is better than cure” and the important role of veterinarians in keeping animals healthy. It also recognizes that when animals become sick and treatment is needed, the veterinarian plays a crucial role in the examination of the animals, making the diagnosis and in the prescribing of medicines. FVE appreciates that the Committee underlines the need for rapid, reliable and effective veterinary diagnostics both to identify the cause of the disease as well as to perform antibiotic sensitivity testing.

The Committee clearly voted for responsible use of medicines. According to the votes, preventative use of antimicrobials will only be permitted in individual animals with exceptional indications and when fully justified by a veterinarian. Group treatment of animals would only be allowed in animals that are clinically ill and to those individual animals that are identified as being at high risk of contamination. FVE agrees with the Committee’s vote to keep decisions in the way veterinary medicines are distributed at the National level.

FVE is glad to see the Committee’s support for the implementation of obligatory health plans by requesting farmers to have such a plan that specifies appropriate non-medical measures to replace the need for repeatedly using medicines to stop the spread of disease.

FVE also embraces the Committee’s response to concerns raised by the veterinary profession, by prohibiting internet trade of antimicrobials or psychotropic veterinary medicinal products and by restricting advertising of prescription only medicines to the respective veterinary prescribers and the suppliers.

FVE remains however concerned about the adoption of amendments that aim to ban certain antimicrobials for use in animals. FVE can agree with the Committee’s wish to introduce conditions on the use of some important antimicrobials, but fears that a complete ban will lead to serious animal health and welfare issues. The Federation also warns that further measures should always be based on scientific evidence, be proportionate, and aligned with complementary measures in the human use of the product. Any action to be taken should follow a risk assessment based upon a world-wide ‘One Health’ approach. FVE is happy to see that MEPs confirmed their preparedness to go in that direction.

The Committee adopted some of the amendments regarding one of the main goals of the legislative proposal, the availability of veterinary medicines. These amendments could make small steps to improve the situation. However, since the proposal will not lead to a single EU market for veterinary medicines, FVE remains worried that the availability problems will not be solved.

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The legal services of the European Parliament will now bring all amendments adopted together into a new draft text, which will be debated and voted in the European Parliament's plenary meeting in March/April in Strasbourg. At the same time the Council is working independently on the text and hopes to have a Council version adopted by the end of this year, before the dialogue between the European Commission, European Parliament and Council can start.

The proposal on a regulation for medicated feed is expected to be voted in March in the agriculture committee of the European Parliament.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 240 000 veterinarians.
- The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe.

For further information, consult the FVE website www.fve.org or contact the FVE Secretariat on Tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org.