

# The need for Animal Disease Prevention

Disease prevention is a routine part of our lives, and the importance of preventive measures have never been so evident than during today's challenges. Working together to ensure better preparedness for identifying and controlling diseases in the future is a priority for the animal health industry. Animals – mostly wildlife, but also farm or companion animals – can carry some pathogens that can cause disease in other animals but also in people, leading to serious public health challenges.



**Where such diseases affect other animals, or where the pathogens carried by animals cause disease in people, veterinary vaccines can help break the cycle of transmission between animals and/or to people**

## Working together we can:



**Improve surveillance**



**Improve preparedness**



**Strengthen animal disease prevention**

Animal vaccination is important for animal welfare. AnimalhealthEurope members are committed to playing our role as an innovative industry through the development of effective vaccines and a reliable animal identification system. We also support better implementation of preventative measures.

Industry and authorities have already been successfully working together to address certain threats. Further collaboration will be required to be able to rapidly respond to and halt or slow transmission of transboundary emerging diseases to protect public health and our farming communities.

The impacts of disease on animal welfare are multiple, and outbreaks also carry economic and social costs which can be difficult to measure as livestock product prices and productivity vary widely, as do the costs of resources used for disease monitoring and control. Figures from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for major disease outbreaks between 2000 and 2015, put the estimated total cost at US\$12,1 billion (EUR€10 billion)<sup>(1)</sup>.

**Successful cooperation in Europe: Salmonella infections in people are under better control thanks to EU coordinated programmes, with an integrated approach to food safety from farm to fork.**

**The approach consists of both risk assessment and risk management measures and one of its key elements is poultry vaccination against Salmonellosis. Some European countries support farmers by offering subsidy schemes for Salmonella vaccination which proved to be an effective measure in tackling the disease.**

**Up to €3 billion / year**

**Overall economic burden of human salmonellosis (EFSA)**

# What can the EU do?

## INCENTIVISE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF VACCINES AGAINST EMERGING DISEASES

Working together, industry and authorities can respond rapidly in order to halt or slow transmission of existing and newly emerging transmissible diseases. Incentives to support the development of tools and infrastructure that support early detection, animal identification and prevent disease spread are needed. Based on learnings from rapid development of Bluetongue and Schmallenberg vaccines, facilitating efficient vaccine development by optimising existing regulatory tools will greatly contribute to improved preparedness.

Flexibility on the data package for the authorisation of vaccines for emerging diseases exists in theory<sup>(2)</sup> in current EU legislation. Practical implementation of this flexibility can be more difficult however at EU level compared to Member State level where there may be an immediate need. Faster decisions can sometimes be taken by the Member State in which the disease is present, meaning vaccines are first made available in the affected country (like for Bluetongue or Schmallenberg virus), and further requirements need to be met before the vaccine can be used throughout the EU. We would recommend that this approach to accelerate authorisations is also implemented at the EU level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the EU to improve preparedness for emerging diseases which may threaten public health as well as animal health and welfare<sup>(3)</sup>:

- Establish and maintain a list of criteria for diseases that are eligible for fast-track approval of vaccines.
- Facilitate the registration procedure: agree on a minimum data set for an emergency vaccine per type of disease and ensure the acceptance of Minor Uses Minor Species (MUMS) (limited market) for vaccines targeting such diseases. For example: considering a partial dossier with only a complete quality and safety data section could increase the speed to market considerably in case of an outbreak of a known disease not previously reported in Europe.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Build on European HOLD-FAST strategy for Foot and Mouth Disease and Similar Transboundary (FAST) animal diseases, in particular for the governance and coordination with partners and technical support structures.
- Prioritise investment at national and European level in innovative early research through funding programmes such as Horizon Europe. This can enable the development of new generations of vaccines and allow for fast modification if a new pathogen variant appears.
- Ensure that legislation, international standards (OIE code) and trade agreements allow for prioritising the use of DIVA vaccines. Allowing for differentiation between infected and vaccinated animals (DIVA) helps avoid impediments to trade of livestock or livestock products, or culling of animals. This also enables a speedier return to “disease-free” status (for a specific disease) in a Member State.
- Optimise and harmonise interpretation by States/Parties of Nagoya Protocol<sup>(4)</sup> implementation to secure access to antigens or antigen sequences in due time to avoid any delay in vaccine development.
- Support the establishment of antigens and/or vaccine banks, including diseases not yet present in EU, to enable a fast response in case of an outbreak.

## IMPROVE VACCINE ACCEPTABILITY AND USE

Disease prevention is always preferable to treatment of a disease. Preventive care is a solid basis for animal welfare. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent a disease from spreading to people or other animals. It protects animals from pathogen exposure and prevents infection should the animal be in contact with the pathogen, despite protective measures taken. Preventive measures on farms such as biosecurity and vaccination should be promoted and when possible supported as sustainable farm management practices from a public health, animal welfare, economic and an environmental perspective.

Disease prevention is greatly enhanced through the availability of high quality, safe and efficacious vaccines. Vaccine hesitancy remains a challenge in the EU, not only in the public health domain, but also for animals. Scientifically proven benefits are neglected, and perceived risks are emphasised. Societal and political acceptance of the culling of herds – including healthy animals – as a measure to eradicate certain officially notifiable diseases is also decreasing.

Disease prevention not only protects the health and well-being of farm animals, it also makes food production more sustainable, prevents loss of animal life, supports farmers in their daily work and improves food security, contributing to the Green Deal and Sustainable Development Goals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the EU to promote resilience by facilitating animal disease detection and prevention:

- Raise public awareness of the benefits of prevention and new technologies advancing animal health, and their role in overcoming future health challenges.
- Ensure consistency of science-based thinking through the confirmation that diagnostic tools, digital monitoring of health and husbandry, and vaccines are central tools for managing animal disease outbreaks: e.g. prioritise vaccination to combat disease outbreaks to avoid culling of animals.
- Actively support the uptake of the technologies and preventive tools for veterinarians and farmers that help improve animal health and welfare and sustainable farming practices.
- Encourage support schemes for farmers for use of vaccination.

(1) The economics of animal health: direct and indirect costs of animal disease outbreaks, OIE 2016. Available at: [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/home/eng/Media\\_Center/docs/pdf/SG2016/A\\_84SG\\_9.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/home/eng/Media_Center/docs/pdf/SG2016/A_84SG_9.pdf)

(2) Art 7 (MA in other EU MS), art 8 (no authorisation), art 26.3 (exceptional authorisation) of Dir. 2001/82/EU as amended & Art. 23–27 in the Regulation (EU) 2019/6

(3) Global Benchmarking Survey 2020 – Impact on competitiveness of the Animal Health Industry – Europe – Available here

(4) Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is part of the International Convention on Biological Diversity



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