Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations

FEEVA GA Vienna
Minutes 28 November 2012

Welcome and opening
Christine Hinterhofer-Austria- who together with Karin organised the Equine meeting of the year, welcomed everyone and gave some housekeeping information. Josh Slater started by thanking Karin and Christine for the organisation. He introduced the board and went over the agenda shortly.

Roundtable discussion
Each delegation had 3 minutes to present the ‘hot’ issues in their country.

Austria – Christine Hinterhofer –
She mentioned that in the Austrian association the main focus was on:
- Education / University-The way the limitation of access to the University is organised leads to the reduction of male veterinary students. This in combination with the fact that they also get many foreign students that go home after graduation has as a result that they cope with a reduction of male large animal veterinarians.
- Down regulation of salary-Equine vets don’t charge enough for their professional services. Fighting before court rises over pre-purchase exams
- A conflict in the veterinary chamber.

Latvia – Juris Tolpeznikovs–
In Latvia main topics are:
- Continued education
- New law on pharmaceuticals-They still face the very difficult situation where no medicines are available for equines with as a result that veterinarians buy medicines in Germany. Despite the lack of availability of equine VMPs, the Latvian authorities do not facilitate importation of medicines from other countries and appear to be obstructive rather than helpful.
- The veterinary faculty has a big equine hospital-this new clinic has recently opened and it is not yet clear how this will influence the work of private equine veterinarians.
- The Equine veterinary association has a course on equine homeopathic medicine that is going very well.

Hungary – Istvan Soos–
Main topics in Hungary are:
- Medicines-the whole country is covered by a few companies. Owners buy medicines without involvement of veterinary practitioners because these companies employ veterinarians who take care of the prescription, often without seeing the patient before. This is a big problem that is also seen in other countries. A lot of medication
is not available because the licensing is too expensive for the companies. There is no system of insurance on horses, so owners cannot afford expensive treatment.

- Post graduate education is a new initiative that is going well.

**Ireland** – Donald Collins –
He said that a new animal health and welfare bill is one of the main subjects the Irish association is working on at the moment. It was proposed that pin firing should be banned although the majority of veterinarians wants to keep it. This was discussed by the delegates and it became clear that some chambers have position papers on firing. Josh suggested that this subject may need more FEEVA attention and a FEEVA position paper, especially given the debate at the 2012 BEVA congress and the possibility that this issue may gain public and/or media attention.

The other main issue would be decoupling and the association has set up a working group to look into the question of AB resistance.

A growing number of practitioners were being asked to provide certificates of ‘soundness’ pre sale on for the vendor. These are very different from Pre Purchase Examination certificates for the purchaser and there is concern that this is creating new legal and ethical challenges and pitfalls for practitioners.

**France** – Claire Scicluna–
Main topics for France are:

- **Antibiotics**-Government plan for 4 years. They have worked on a survey and have produced practical guidelines for the use of medicines. The booklet will be ready by the end of April. They based themselves on the way this is done in human medicines. With regard to the prescribing and selling of drugs by veterinarians they have to show that they behave responsibly. They also have problems with medicines being sold on internet.
- **Acknowledged vet**-The association is working together with the university on a certificate of for equine veterinarians and this project is well-advanced.
- **World equestrian games in France in 2014**

The guidelines were discussed and Claire explained that the guideline is not organised by substances, but rather is a practical guide with questions and answers on how to deal with AB resistance. Giorgio added that vets in the field still have to become aware of the importance AB resistance and the need to do something. It was agreed that it is worth the effort to try and get the message down to equine practitioners and raise awareness on this subject.

**Sweden** – Lena Malmgren–

- **Medicines**-In Sweden all drugs are sold through pharmacies. Use of antibiotics is set out in a practical guideline (like France) They also organise discussions with vets to
share information. Like the other Scandinavian countries they have very little antibiotics available for horses in Sweden, but they can also make use of the cascade.

- Another topic brought forward by Lena was the fact that many veterinary hospitals and clinics are being bought by corporate investors. This is a big issue for them now.
- Continued education is expensive and they are working out who should have the responsibility and who will pay for this.
- Employment-They used to have more jobs than veterinarians, but this is changing now and they even see unemployment in vets.

Josh asked whether these corporate investors were an issue that other countries face as well and whether this was mainly seen in companion animal practices or also in equine practices? This was being discussed and it was clear that this is seen in many countries. In some countries this is seen as a positive development because the corporate model is seen as an answer to some of the problems faced by the new generation of veterinarians (working hours/gender change)

Andrew Byrne (FECAVA) gave some information on the experiences from the small animal practice side. Bigger practices are more attractive for the corporate model than small 1 or 2 vet practices.

The question was raised whether associations should provide business support to members and whether this done already. It was said that some countries apply a business program in the curriculum at university and some associations provide this as well.

Josh suggested that FEEVA should collect information from the different countries about this subject in a survey and this was agreed.

**Italy** – Giorgio Ricardi –

- Medicines-In Italy drugs have to be prescribed by veterinarians and sold by the pharmacists.
- Recession has had a major impact and the economics of veterinary practice and standard of living for vets are hot issues. 44% reduction in registered horses.
- Many vet schools produce too many veterinarians. The association tries to convince faculties to have a lower number of graduates per year.
- Continued education is also an important subject in Italy.
- Taxes-They try to reduce the VAT rate from 21% to 10% on veterinary services and the Central tax agency has indicated horse ownership as a wealth marker. This is a problem because they see all horses the same way (back yard or race horse). It was discussed if FEEVA could be of help with this.
- Italy has a central database for horses, which works well.

Ben comments on the UK database. This database used to be handled and funded by the government but is being handed over to the private sector. One of their problems is that
although the database is central, there are many (>80) passport issuing agencies that have to feed into this one database. The industry has been asked to set up a new central database but at the moment it is not clear where the funding will come from

**Portugal** – Bernardes Nuno –
He said that Portugal shares most of the problems discussed.
- One main issue in Portugal is that they still have to organise the identification and registration in a central database for horses. The fact that the horse is not clearly a companion animal or food producing animal makes this harder. He asked that the FEEVA Board write a letter to the Portuguese authorities to make the required changes and implement the regulation without further delay.
- Economical status is difficult at the moment. People have less money to spend.
- Management skills are not being taught in university.
- Pricing for services is a problem because this cannot be discussed due to the competition law. Medicines availability is an issue. Equine vets use products that are not licensed.
- Continued education- They are a small organisation and it is difficult to organise continued education. He suggested that he would like to have cooperation on this with Spain.

**Spain** – Miguel C Llorca –
- The first problem he mentioned was that Spain with its 11 faculties produces too many graduates to make interesting revenue.
- Like mentioned in some other countries, many owners buy medicines without consulting the veterinarian. Legislation in this field is a problem for Spanish veterinarians, he called the system corrupted. He said that veterinarians have to fill in the paperwork while the owners buy medicines at the black market.
- The good news was that they started a mid level specialisation training program which can be adapted to be compliant with the VetCEE programme specifications.

**Germany** – Michael Due–
Michael gave information on the Directive on services in the internal market. He would like FEEVA to look into this.
This subject was discussed and will be looked into.
Talina to give Michael some information on the services directive

**Switzerland** – Daniel Meister –
Topics raised by Daniel were:
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- Competition from non-vets-In Switzerland certain acts are carried out by non-veterinarians like for example dentistry. The association has decided that the best way to face this problem is to develop post graduate training programs in these fields in order to improve the skills of veterinarians so they would stand out.
- Antibiotics-In this field the association works together with the human doctors.
- Horse Passport Issue.
- Swiss horse vet association is 200 years next year and he invited the members to come to Bern to celebrate.

Denmark – Steen Bo Larsen –
- Medicines-He explained how the Danish veterinarians since they cannot sell medicines make money on diagnostics instead.
- Gender issue-like the other countries, they have more female graduates.
- Too many young vets as well. They look at a system where young vets work together with an older vet in a “mentorship way”

UK – Ben Mayes–
- Medicines-He explained that in the UK there are no constrictions on prescription and distribution of medicines. Clients need a prescription if they want to order medicines at a pharmacy. 60% of equine practitioners’ income comes from fees and 40% from medicines. He added that the Majority of horse owners live above the poverty level so most of them can afford to buy medicines from the veterinarian.
- Olympics-this was a very big event and fortunately everything went well.
- Firing-like in Ireland the topic of firing is being discussed in the UK. He said that some owners choose for this treatment and that mainly the older generation wants to keep this possibility.
- Dentists are trying to get legal status and they are helping them and try and make them as good as possible and they work together. The same is true for physiotherapists etc.. Insurance is available for horse healthcare. The current arrangements for free movement of horses under the Tripartitie Agreement is being re-negotiated with France Ireland and UK to provide additional clarity about which horses are covered under the agreement.

Netherlands – Erik Gosteli–
- Medicines-The use of antibiotics has gone down by 50% under pressure of the medicines authority – evidence that the profession can regulate its affairs and reduce AM use without the requirement for legislation.. Practitioners must earn money on fees instead of medicine sales.
One health issue. Many initiative have been taken between the human and veterinary sector. The veterinary association has launched a Veterinary quality system.

**FEEVA News Slot & guests:**

**Andrew Byrne – Presenting the Veterinary Continuous education in Europe (VetCEE) project and the possibility for equine CPD standards**

Andrew explained that VetCEE was founded by the EAEVE, EBVS, FVE and the UEVP. FECAVA is a Co Opted member.

The objectives of this committee are

- To promote structured continuing professional development and life-long learning in order to improve the level of knowledge, skills and competencies of the veterinary practitioner to a level higher than graduation level but at a level below that of a European Diplomat Specialist.
- To encourage and facilitate the delivery of high quality veterinary care at first opinion practice level for the benefit of animal health and welfare and also the benefit of owners and society.
- To accredit structured programmes that are achievable by veterinarians in full time employment.
- The development of a system whereby practising veterinarians across Europe can gain recognition for attainment of structured postgraduate education which indicates a competence to deliver a high level of veterinary service in their chosen field of practice.

The system proposed would recognise and embrace systems, which already exist in some European countries and provide the base for their mutual recognition across Europe.

The VETCee programme would be totally different from the EBVS specialisation model, which requires superior academic achievement, and continuing research based post qualification obligations.

VETCee has several subcommittees of which the one for companion animals has now finished drafting the program and will go into the pilot stage. The Porcine group has started drafting their program and will present a final draft in May next year.

The list of competencies/skills specific to each program will be developed by the sub committees.

Andrew proposed that the Equine Sub Committee would be formed by FEEVA and that this committee would develop the Equine program standards and competencies.

Josh thanked him for the presentation and asked for questions.
One of the delegates asked whether the awarding body would be at national level. Andrew explained that the VETCee committee accredits the programs that comply with the standards but that the qualification and awarding will be done by a National Body. Also the title will be decided by the National Competent authority. The fact that some countries already have an acknowledged vet system available is not a problem because if this has the same level (or even higher) than the VETCee parent standard this can be used and will be accredited by the committee. He explained that this is about establishing a standard that is clear to everybody, including the clients. This is also about mutual recognition. Some countries may be too small to have their own program but they may work together with other countries in the region. Some countries have obligatory postgraduate education in place. Countries that have this intermediate level in place in their country are: UK, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, France, Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Austria. They see an advantage of having mutual recognition of their systems.

The equine subcommittee needs to be established and will at least comprise of: The UK (BEVA), Switzerland (ASME/SVPM), Ireland (VIEG), ECEIM and Italy (SIVE).

**Jesper Moller Nielsen – Update on the European Horse Network activities (EHN)**

Last GA it was decided that FEEVA would join the EHN for an initial period of three years, towards the end of which progress and further FEEVA involvement would be reviewed by the FEEVA Board. FEEVA took a position in the board (Jesper). In the mean time FEEVA has participated in a meeting in the European Parliament earlier this year and will continue to go to these meetings. It is a good place to meet people from the Parliament. The goal is to have two meetings a year with the network at the Parliament. Jesper said that it would be good if delegates could contact there MEP’s to inform them of these meetings and get them enthusiastic to come to these meetings. During the first lunch meeting that FEEVA joined, Rural development and the horse sport was discussed. The next meeting (24 January) will be dedicated to horse welfare and diseases and to research and medicines. Jesper and Josh will prepare a short presentation and a leaflet for the next MEP lunch meeting. They will circulate it to the board for comments. This will be done before Christmas. In this presentation attention will be asked for Medicines availability, Surveillance and Research. Horse welfare will also be included.
The drive from the EHN is to acknowledge that there is economic value in the horse sector but not over the whole sector. A large part of the sector has a different more cultural and social value that needs support.

**Update on Medicines: FEEVA & FVE WG and survey**

With regard to the Essentials List, Josh said that this list will most probably finally be adopted. The Commission has published the list with substances essential to the equine practitioner and the European Parliament still has until Christmas to react to this list. However it is expected that they won’t react and that the list will be adopted. He also explained that this is not be a fixed list and encouraged all members to continue to submit requests for amendments – realistically, the Commission would probably not reconsider the List for a while but FEEVA’s job was to maintain a ‘watching brief’ and be ready to submit new proposals when the Commission or EMA was receptive. Revisions to the List would involve addition and removal of substances.

Josh presented the medicines working group project that Erik Gosteli has worked on together with Claire Scicluna, Giorgio Ricardi and Ulrike Grundland. They have developed a survey with as a goal to compliment the 2012 FVE-HMA survey and to collect additional information about antimicrobial use by equine practitioners. Key questions in the survey will be:

- how often are antimicrobials used?
- are antimicrobials used responsibly?
- frequency of off-label and cascade use?

The survey is developed as a scenario based questionnaire and also has questions relating to attitudes to antimicrobial resistance, frequency of culture and sensitivity testing and frequency of ‘early treatment’.

He stated that it is very important to have data on equine antibiotic usage to show to the Commission that these drugs are used responsibly.

He proposed to circulate the survey to all delegates for them to fill in and say if it is clear or suggest changes if necessary. After this it will be put online for all equine vets to fill in. The target for the launch is the Arezzo AGM. The survey will be open between February and April. Delegates are asked to encourage all their members to fill it in.
All the information gathered by the survey will go to FVE where analysis will be done by an FVE intern together with the FEEVA medicines working group. After this the information will be given to the Commission.

The next step will be guidelines for responsible use.

Juris brought up the problem of the lack of a free market of veterinary medicines. This was discussed and Josh said that the FEEVA Board would be pleased to write a letter to the Latvian authorities encouraging them to facilitate movement of equine VMPs if that might be helpful.

**Miguel Llorca – Update on disease surveillance:**

A Disease Surveillance Survey was done in 2009. This survey has now also been completed by Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Portugal. Miguel invited the delegates go to the FEEVA webpage to look at it.

A printed version of The FEEVA Vision paper for equine disease surveillance by Miguel was circulated. He explained the importance of establishing effective, on-going surveillance for both exotic and endemic diseases affecting horses. Mainly in the field of endemic diseases not enough has been done so far. Also he pointed out that it would be important to correct the fear from owners, breeders and veterinarians about the control measures in case of disease outbreaks because of the difficult assessment of its economical repercussions.

Some good examples of endemic disease surveillance are RESPE and EQUINELLA

RESPE is an initiative from the AVEF and practitioners in France, coordinated through the Normandie regional government. Participants in this project used to have free access to the laboratory testing (paid for by the Normandie regional government and pharmaceutical sponsorship) so they wouldn’t hesitate to take a swab (from 2013 clients will pay 50% of the laboratory costs). This has been a big success. RESPEE is open to all practitioners and also information from owners is included. Alerts are distributed immediately through sms or e-mail, so it is easy, quick information that is updated easily, and also on the RESPE website. The information stays general, so premises are not identified only regions, this is important for the cooperation of owners.

The cost of sampling is not free anymore because it became too expensive, but it is still cheaper to send in a sample since lab work is being sponsored by AVEF, local government and partly industry and one large pharmaceutical company. The idea is to let the owners also pay part of the cost.
EQUINELLA is a Swiss project that was developed because in Switzerland the government has diseases that they control however some diseases that are interesting to practitioners are not controlled by the government. This was taken up by the association in the EQUINELLA project. It is a voluntary system and they keep it very simple. Reports come in from practitioners. The idea is just to know what is happening in the field. It is supported by the government and they use the government website.

In Sweden disease surveillance is done by the government for certain diseases and information in spread to other vets in the area.

Miguel proposed a Strategic plan for disease surveillance. He said that the three objectives are:

- Information sharing – FEEVA should collect, collate and update the disease surveillance resources available in all Member States and make this information available via the FEEVA website.
- Raising awareness and education – FEEVA will coordinate the production and distribution of awareness-raising materials
- Defining and promoting best practice – FEEVA will facilitate the definition and promotion of best practice for disease surveillance and will lead on facilitation the sharing of best practice between Member States.

The GA agreed with the FEEVA strategic plan. Miguel proposed to work on the following areas:

- Survey on the compensation for compulsory slaughter – This could be done by FEEVA itself
- Financial help for laboratory diagnostic testing – see what can be done at EU level plus each delegate org. should go back to their own country and lobby the government.
- Raising awareness and education

Miguel suggested to create a Disease surveillance working group – one member from each country should sit in this WG. This group should communicate mainly through Skype/e-mail etc…The members of the working group shouldn’t have to be the delegates to FEEVA. We should encourage specialists in this field (epidemiologists) to join as co-opted experts. AVEF and Switzerland should at least be included since they have experience with a well functioning system of endemic disease surveillance. Miguel will take the lead on this and together with AVEF and Switzerland they will form the initial group. It was agreed to form
this group and that every country should also look at contacting either one of the delegates or an expert to join the group.

Josh Slater – Update on guidelines for fitness for transport of horses

Josh gave an update on the Practical guidelines to assess fitness for transport of horses. These guidelines should look similar to the bovine guidelines. He proposed a similar stakeholder group and similar lay out to the bovine group. This project would be funded by FEEVA together with World Horse Welfare and the secretariat support will be provided by WHW. He explained that this would not be a legal document or replace legal obligations and it also shouldn’t be used to make a diagnosis. This would be a code of practice, a practical guide to assess fitness for transport.

The structure will be the following:

- Introduction: definitions, warnings, coding signs
- Part I: Summary of European legislation
- Part II: Animal conditions prohibiting transport
- Part III: Animal conditions where further assessment is needed before transport
- Annexes: Regulatory references, measures to take when animal unfit, example of generic contingency plan, example of specific contingency plan

Stakeholders should be identified, so Josh asked for input on key stakeholders from the delegates.

Talina will circulate the Bovine guidelines to the members.

Talina Sterneberg – Update on Callisto Project and FEEVA Involvement

Talina gave an update on the Companion Animal Zoonoses project CALLISTO. She gave some information on the background and the aims and also on the structure of the project. CALLISTO will provide an overview of the current situation with regard to the role of companion animals, as a source of infectious diseases for people and food animals, to identify knowledge and technology gaps for the most important zoonoses and propose targeted actions to reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases transferred via companion animals. She explained that FVE is the coordinator of the project that is funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the Commission and that they have formed a multidisciplinary, multisectorial and interprofessional network of experts, representing the major relevant stakeholders.
FEEVA has a place in the expert advisory group on the user community. This group includes leading experts of international organisations representing medical associations, veterinary associations pet food industry associations and companion animal owners. Its main task is to address the CALLISTO issues from the perspective of the recipient groups of the proposed actions. Until her leave, Vivienne Duggan had taken this place and has contributed a lot to this group, however she could not be present at the yearly conference in October and will still be on leave for the meeting in January, so Talina asked FEEVA whether they would be able to replace her. Josh said that a member of the new FEEVA board would take her place.

A short discussion on whether the Horse should be included as a companion animal or not followed the presentation. Talina explained that the definition as adopted in the project proposal could not be changed.

**Ben Mayes – Presentation, survey and discussion on for pre-purchase exams**

Ben gave a presentation on the subject of pre-purchase exams, a procedure in which the veterinarian advises the buyer if the horse he would like to buy is suitable for the purpose that the horse is bought for. He said that Pre-purchase examination is an important aspect of equine veterinary work throughout Europe and that it is also one of the procedures that is most likely to be carried out for a client in another country or performed in another country to where the veterinary surgeon normally practices. He added that the PPE is the dominant procedure in the UK that results in complaints or legal action.

There are significant differences in how these examinations are performed and reported across Europe and these differences in the can lead to problems. Also when veterinarians are not registered in the country that they do the exam this leads to problems, especially with insurances and legal obligations

Ben proposed to hold a survey on this subject in order to learn from the experiences of other countries. He suggested to focus on the issues of veterinarians carrying out PPEs in countries in which they are not registered, with an aim to make it easier for veterinarians to legally carry out PPEs in other European states. He said that we could also look at whether there are some aspects of PPE that can be unified across the member states.

The aim of the survey he proposed is to see how this is organised in the different countries and what the examination includes.

The subject was discussed and it was decided that FEEVA wants to go on with this survey and that Ben would take the lead on this.
President’s report – Josh Slater

Josh gave an overview of the activities of the last year. He mentioned the cooperation with FVE and the working groups FEEVA takes place in.
He said that the position statements are doing their job and if any country would need a paper on a different subject, please inform the board.
He said that he is excited about the VETCee subcommittee and also with the engagement of FEEVA with other networks and professionals.
He added that disease surveillance has been on the agenda for quite some years now and that Miguel has done a good job on this and this work will be continued.
Furthermore he mentioned the Equine fitness for transport guidelines, the Callisto project and the Pre Purchase Examination.
With regard to the Future Equine Meetings of the Year, he thanked Giorgio for the invitation for 2013 and said that the Board is looking for locations for the following years. Nuno Bernardes said that Portugal could maybe be an option either in 2014 or 2015 and Michael Due said that Germany may also be an option. Claire said that France would already be possible for January 2014. Josh thanked them for their invitations.

Succession planning – Josh explained that a large part of the board will have to be replaced now and during the February meeting and that he is glad to have some good nominations for new members.

Treasurer’s report – Erik Gostelie

Erik explained that FEEVA is now a registered company in the UK, but the money is transferred to Belgium, so the account is held at the FVE office.
He explained that FEEVA had been gradually accumulating money, but that this is not the FEEVA goal as it is a not-for-profit company. He proposed that FEEVA funds should be spend on FEEVA activities, within the limits of FEEVA’s reserves policy. He showed the profit and loss sheet.
No comments were given on the report and the report was accepted by the GA.

Nominations new FEEVA Board members

Jesper proposed that in order to keep some continuity in the board, Josh could stay on as co-opted board member until the GA in February and Jesper could after this meeting stay on as a co-opted member in the EHN for another 2 years.
This would mean that the board would comprise of Miguel and Jesper (until February) and 4 new Board members. At the previous GA it was decided that Giorgio Ricardi and Claire Scicluna would take place in the board from this GA onwards, meaning that another two
members would have to be elected today. Four nominations were received, namely, Istvan Soos, Juris Tolpeznikovs, Ben Mayes and Christine Hinterhofer. They introduced themselves and after that a closed ballot was held.

Ben and Juris were elected and Istvan and Christine were encourage to nominate again for the next elections in February.

The new board comprises of:

Jesper Moller Nielsen
Miguel Llorca
Claire Scicluna
Giorgio Ricardi
Ben Mayes
Juris Tolpeznikovs

**Final Discussion followed by closure by FEEVA President**

Giorgio gave a presentation on the Arezzo meeting in February and said he is looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Jesper thanked the organisers Christine and Karin for the organisation and Christine gave some housekeeping messages.

Ben thanked all the outgoing board members for all the work done after which the meeting was closed.