

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FVE SURVEY ON REGULAR ANIMAL HEALTH VISITS IN 2022

In 2016, the European Union adopted the 'Animal Health Law', and Article 25 laid down requirements for all operators (from production animals to companion animals) to ensure that their establishments receive regular animal health visits from a veterinarian.

These 'animal health visits' were to be implemented in all EU countries by April 2021 to strengthen animal health by improving disease prevention, through enhanced biosecurity, and early disease detection. Regular animal health visits have great potential to improve animal health and welfare, reduce the use of antibiotics and enhancing simultaneously sustainability and profitability as well as to improve working conditions in terms of workload planning and predictability, especially in rural areas. With the support of its members, FVE investigated the situation and established a country score based on the criteria laid out in the [FVE position paper](#).

The maximal score of 100 (the ideal situation according to the FVE position paper) was not achieved by any country. The Netherlands and Belgium head the ranking (respectively 78 and 77 points). Nine countries scored > 65, whereas eight countries had between 65 and 40 as well as eight countries < 40 (Fig. 1). Notably, some countries have not implemented preventive animal health visits yet. The full report is available [HERE](#).



Fig. 1: Mapped benchmarking score of countries based on their implementation of regular animal health visits

IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

A total of 18 EU MS/EFTA countries (58%) already had implemented regular animal health visits before the Animal Health Law came into force, but most of them only in specific livestock species. Of eight countries that haven't implemented regular animal health visits, three said they had plans to do so in the future. In those countries that already have regular animal health visits, most are performed by **private practitioners with a one-to-one contract with the farm (15/22 responses)**. Alongside private practitioners, official veterinarians perform the animal health visits in Finland, France, Spain, and Sweden. In Estonia, solely official veterinarians oversee the animal health visits.

OBJECTIVES OF THE VISITS

Based on combined data from 2017 and 2022, animal health data followed by animal treatments (e.g. antibiotic use, withdrawal times), performance parameters, and identification & registration were the most current subjects covered by animal health visits. **Biosecurity, while specifically mentioned in Art 25 of the Animal Health Law, was only included in 23 countries having implemented regular animal health visits.**

CONCLUSION

- Our results indicate that the majority of EU countries have animal health visits, but many **are restricted** either to specific species (e.g. only pigs), only covering specific aspects (e.g., medicines control), or were under the umbrella of official controls by state veterinarians. **The plethora of national requirements with respect to the covered species, type of holdings, executing veterinarian, and subjects indicate a crucial need for more consistent implementation in most EU countries.**
- In the light of the **budgetary constraints to co-finance emergency measures** to control outbreaks of animal diseases, it is essential that appropriate additional flanking measures, such as regular animal health visits, continue to be implemented to **prevent disease outbreaks from happening to the maximum extent possible.**
- FVE reiterates that the intention of regular animal health visits should be **to advise farmers on improving animal health, biosecurity and to carry out preventive work.** To achieve this, only a veterinary practitioner regularly visiting the establishment will have solid and detailed knowledge about the operating conditions and will be able to build, together with the caregiver, a strong preventive animal health plan.
- **Initial and continued training** for veterinary practitioners on performing regular visits, incl. biosecurity, are also important to build a **relationship of trust** between the farmer and the veterinarian.

FVE CALLS UPON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 25 AND TO GIVE FURTHER GUIDANCE TO ENSURE PROPER AND CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 25!

Notes to Editor: The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) - representing around 300,000 veterinarians across 38 European countries - aims to enhance animal health, animal welfare, and public health and to protect the environment by promoting the veterinary profession.