Animal health visits have great potential to improve animal health and welfare, reduce the use of antibiotics, enhance sustainability and profitability, and improve working conditions in terms of workload planning and predictability, especially in rural areas.

These ‘animal health visits’ were to be implemented in all EU countries by April 2021. With the support of its members, FVE investigated the situation in 2022 and established a country score based on the criteria laid out in the FVE position paper ‘Prevention is better than cure’.

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)
- Eight countries scored > 65
- Nine countries had between 65 and 40
- Eight countries scored < 40

Results

A total of 18 EU MS/EFTA countries (58%) had implemented regular animal health visits in 2022, 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.

WHO? Most regular animal health visits are performed by private practitioners with a one-to-one contract with the farm (15/21 responses). Alongside private practitioners, official veterinarians perform the animal health visits in Finland, France, Spain, and Sweden. In Switzerland and Estonia, solely official veterinarians oversee the animal health visits.

Conclusions

- 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.
- FVE reinitiates 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 robust preventive animal health plan.