



**FVE & EAEVE ADOPTED REPORT ON
EUROPEAN VETERINARY EDUCATION IN ANIMAL WELFARE
SCIENCE, ETHICS AND LAW**

June 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Veterinarians are, and must continually strive to be, the leading advocates for the good welfare of animals in a continually evolving society.” (FVE/AVMA 2011).

Welfare science is a dynamic and multi-disciplinary subject; including the study of the mental and physical health of animals, as well as its ethical implications in relation to humans, the environment and regulation. The FVE strategy for 2011-2015 states that veterinarians have a professional and ethical responsibility to use their scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of animal welfare. All veterinarians should be able to educate, inform and influence animal owners, caretakers, handlers and policy makers to protect and improve animal welfare. Welfare (and its associated research) is, therefore, seen as an important aim in veterinary education along with other key subjects such as animal health and public health. The veterinary profession will also be needed to monitor and help implement good welfare for national governments which will create future employment needs for the profession.

In view of the on-going scientific developments and societal expectations in this field, FVE decided to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group (WG) to map animal welfare teaching in undergraduate veterinary education and to develop a core curriculum. The WG comprised representatives of FVE, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and the EU FP7 research project AWARE (Animal Welfare Research in an Enlarged Europe).

The Working Group developed an animal welfare curriculum (see Table), composed of a model syllabus, the corresponding learning objectives and a list of the essential Day One Competences (or learning outcomes). These will enable veterinary graduates to fulfil their role as primary advisers on animal welfare across all contexts of animal use. The model animal welfare curriculum was designed in order to be easily adapted and implemented at every veterinary school.

Many of these requirements tie in with the more traditional core Day One Competencies at graduation, particularly clinical competence, and so should not be seen as unique and requiring special coursework, although it might involve some novel inputs. Moreover, some of the Day One Competences suggested in the Table will complement other competencies e.g. holding a scientific

evidence based position, recognition of strong and weak arguments, provision of advice in relation to any wider public debate, and the close links between animal and human health, and animal health and welfare.

The mapping of the status of animal welfare education was done in two stages. In the first stage the WG, in collaboration with AWARE, an EU funded project, analysed the results of a survey in which 45 European veterinary faculties responded. It was found that courses, including farm animal welfare, were provided mainly at the Bachelor and Masters levels and were usually compulsory. The main focus of the education was ethology, followed by welfare assessment and legislation. In the second stage, a survey was carried out to obtain feedback on the FVE's proposed model draft curriculum: this showed that the main obstacles to strengthening animal welfare teaching include, by decreasing order of scoring importance: lack of space in the curriculum; difficulties in organising practical sessions; financial difficulties; lack of qualified teachers; and a low priority for animal welfare within that faculty. To overcome these obstacles, Section 3 of the report provides guidance on how animal welfare teaching can be organised in an already crowded veterinary curriculum.

Recognising and respecting the diversity of educational strategies and curricular approaches found in European veterinary programmes, the WG took an overall learning-outcome based approach to the teaching of animal welfare, further supported by an appropriate syllabus. This approach seemed to be generally acceptable and the proposed learning outcomes attainable. Almost all faculties agreed with the proposed list of learning outcomes, although less than half stated that they currently delivered these outcomes, and almost three quarters stated that they could reach these learning outcomes within the next five years. It will ultimately be up to each veterinary college to decide how to incorporate the learning outcomes into their curriculum and how the subjects are taught, bearing in mind that all veterinary education must meet certain EU standards. It must also retain public confidence.

Learning outcomes for Day One for veterinary graduates in respect of animal welfare related competencies (further details can be found in the full report)

1. Appraise different concepts as well as analytical frameworks of animal welfare and how they relate to practice and to the context in which they are set.
2. Apply sound principles to objectively evaluate the welfare status of animals and to recognise good and poor welfare.
3. Participate in animal welfare assessment, monitoring and auditing with the aims of improving the physical and mental health of animals.
4. Formulate an informed, science-based, view on animal welfare matters and communicate effectively with those involved in keeping animals.
5. Appraise the social context and participate in societal debates about animal welfare and ethics.
6. Retrieve up-to-date and reliable information regarding local, national and international animal welfare regulations/standards in order to describe humane methods for animal keeping, transport and killing (including slaughter).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The FVE and EAEVE should actively encourage all European schools to implement these Day One Competences and the corresponding learning objectives, and to have them

- incorporated and evaluated through the EAEVE/FVE accreditation system of veterinary schools.
2. European veterinary schools should ensure adequate time, staff and practical sessions for teaching animal welfare science, ethics and law.
 3. Animal welfare science, ethics and law teaching should be delivered in such a way that the study subject is clearly identifiable in its own right, while being integrated throughout the veterinary course.
 4. Animal Welfare science, ethics and law should be a core subject, and examinable with the same pass/fail criteria as other core subjects.
 5. European veterinary schools should encourage cutting edge animal welfare research as this will attract both students and top quality staff.
 6. CPD providers should incorporate advances in welfare, ethics and law into their programmes through the principles of life-long learning
 7. All staff, as role models, should be continually updated in Animal Welfare.