

Future Animal Health Regulation: A step forward to a better biosecurity?

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Abstract

EU legislation for the prevention and control animal diseases and to ensure safe trade in animals and their products has been in place since many decades. An evaluation of Community Animal Health Policy and subsequent consultations with the stakeholders completed in recent years, broadly agreed that the current system of EU animal health legislation functions well. But they have also identified a number of areas with the possibilities for improvements, such as an improved focus on disease prevention, with a particular emphasis on the need for increased biosecurity.

The EU Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013 adopted by the European Commission in 2007 with the motto "Prevention is better than cure" has addressed the issues from the evaluation. One of the actions foreseen was to create a new, single "Animal Health Law". This legal framework has been considered as a key element to implement the objectives of the Strategy. A proposal for a Regulation on Animal Health was adopted by the Commission on 6th May 2014.

In line with the EU Animal Health Strategy, prevention represents one of the most important new principles of this legal framework. Biosecurity alone, or in combination with an effective surveillance system are crucial elements for applying it.

According to the new proposal, biosecurity represents an overarching approach in its broadest sense. It is neither limited to any specific measure nor understood in a narrow context. Responsibilities of all involved actors for prevention and control of diseases are defined. There are elements for more biosecurity on farms and in operations that represent higher risk of spreading diseases. Those measures should be in accord with already existing legal requirements, such as the hygiene package.

Finally and most importantly, biosecurity is to contribute to a better overall health status and husbandry, which without any doubt represent the most important incentives its' application.