



A new ruminant disease spreading through Europe

“FVE calls for vigilance for Schmallerberg virus”

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Brussels, 01 February 2012 – FVE calls all veterinarians for increased vigilance of a previously unknown disease in ruminants, caused by the so-called Schmallerberg virus.

The virus affects sheep, goats and cattle and is primarily spread by biting midges. It causes congenital deformities and nervous defects in newborn lambs, goat kids and calves. Clinical signs in cattle include fever, reduced milk yield and diarrhoea. Infection of currently observed cases may have occurred late last summer/autumn with congenital deformities now becoming visible.

The disease, named after the German town where it was first observed in August 2011, has been reported in several European countries including the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, the UK and France. Susceptible animals imported from the affected areas are considered to be at risk.

Even though the disease is not legally notifiable, FVE President Christophe Buhot urges all practitioners to report any outbreak: *“All veterinarians observing suspicious clinical signs on their client’s farms should immediately report these to their competent authorities for further investigation.”*

“Veterinarians – both private practitioners and officials – and farmers need to work together to fight this new challenge. A well-functioning network of veterinary services that is nation-wide, including remote areas, is essential to detect and control known and emerging disease, such as this one. “

“Due to their unique position, veterinary practitioners are at the frontline of new diseases and form an essential link in the chain of veterinary services: a Global Public Good¹”

According to the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the risk for humans by the Schmallerberg virus cannot be excluded, although it is unlikely, as other viruses of the same family (Orthobunyaviruses) do not pose a risk to human health.

A reliable and simple serological test for the disease is not yet available. Development of a vaccine to combat the disease may take at least 2 years.

¹ Veterinary Services are a public good as they contribute to the access of other Public Goods such as food security, public health and alleviation of poverty. Healthy animals lead to safe food. Countries are depending from one another and an inadequate action by one nation can jeopardize all the others.

President

Christophe Buhot

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Hans-Joachim Götz
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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 200 000 veterinarians. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe.
2. For more info on Schmallenberg see:
 - [Friedrich-Loeffler Institute](#)
 - [OIE](#)
 - [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\)](#)
 - [European Commission](#)
3. OIE factsheet on Good Veterinary Governance
http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Media_Center/docs/pdf/Fact_sheets/GOUV_EN_FS_01.pdf
4. For further information, consult the FVE website <http://www.fve.org> or contact the FVE Secretariat on Tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org