

Vytenis Andriukaitis: 'One health' approach key to animal health policies

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News

Policymakers and the animal health industry have a duty to work together, says EU's health and food safety Commissioner



The public health benefits of strong EU animal health policies are manifold, for both food safety and security and for sustainable agriculture, according to European health and food safety Commissioner, Vytenis Andriukaitis.

He made his remarks at an event marking the launch of AnimalhealthEurope, the new identity of IFAH-Europe, the European trade body for the animal medicines industry, Andriukaitis stressed that although animal health is an important issue in its own right, it needed to be viewed in through the prism of the highly interdependent and interlinked nature of our relationship with animals.

Andriukaitis argued that what brings benefits to animal health also brings benefits to human health and vice versa, and it is that makes a 'One Health' approach so important.

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However, he warned, a One Health approach will not happen spontaneously. Its success, he argued was dependent on the willing cooperation of all stakeholders and therefore it was vital to adopt a collaborative approach.

Andriukaitis also highlighted continuing concerns surrounding antimicrobial resistance, reassuring his audience that the revisions to EU legislation on veterinary medicines would deliver One Health action by redressing the need for increased innovation and availability of new animal health solutions.

He said he hoped that an agreement, in Council, on the veterinary medicines proposals would be reached during the course of the Estonian EU Council presidency this year leading to progress to the trilogue discussions with the European Parliament with minimum delay.

He confirmed that the Commission would continue to support research into new antimicrobials as well as other approaches, including vaccines and new, faster diagnostics to augment the responsible use of existing treatments.

Roxanne Feller, AnimalhealthEurope secretary general, echoed the Commissioner's remarks, saying, "No individual member state, no individual health sector, nor indeed the EU have the capacity to tackle global health challenges single-handedly. This demands a collective approach, and the animal medicines industry stands ready to play its part."

On tackling the threat posed by antimicrobial resistance, she acknowledged the many steps taken by the Commission to rationalise the use of existing antibiotics.

However, she stressed that new treatments are still urgently needed. To work towards these, it is important to build an environment that provides the incentives necessary to promote innovation.

"Our industry has the expertise, potential and determination to develop the solutions - both new vaccines and new antimicrobials - that will help prevent and treat infectious diseases capable of shaping a global One Health agenda. However, we need the legislation and policies that encourage investment and research," she said.

About the author

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