

National Report Germany

November 2015

- **Board elections:** Both BTK and bpt have elected a new executive board. New **bpt president** and replacing Dr Hans-Joachim Götz after 12 years in office is the mixed practitioner **Dr Siegfried Moder**. He is supported by the vice-presidents Dr Petra Sindern, a small animal practitioner and Dr Karl-Heinz Schulte, practitioner for small animals, equine and zoo animals.

New **BTK president** is **Dr Uwe Tiedemann**, practitioner for small animals and president of the veterinary chamber of Lower Saxony. Elected as vice-presidents were Dr Iris Fuchs, official veterinarian in Bavaria, and Dr Martin Hartmann, state veterinary officer of Baden-Württemberg. For the resort “international affairs”, Dr Cornelia Rossi-Broy was confirmed in office.

While the new bpt board started work on 1st November, the new BTK board will take office on 1st January 2016.

- Due to the amendment of the German Federal Medicines Act (“Arzneimittelgesetz”), farmers who keep fattening animals must report their **use of antibiotics** to a national database since 1st July 2014. Meanwhile the competent authority has issued the second semiannual indices for antibiotic use. Accordingly compared to the second half of 2014, the use of antibiotics has **decreased** in the first half of 2015 for almost all fattening animals. But it is thus still too early to deduce a general development. The system needs to be further established. Apparently some farmers do not report properly yet. The objective of the regulation is the reduction of antibiotic use in fattening animals. Farms with a particular high use of antibiotics are to be identified and thereafter obligated to find and eliminate the cause for the high use assisted by their veterinarian. In a legal provision minimum requirements for particular action plans have been defined.
- According to the evaluation of the **sale amount data for antibiotics** published this summer by the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), a total of 1.238 tonnes (t) of antibiotics have been sold from pharmaceutical companies and wholesalers to veterinarians in Germany in 2014. **This is 468 tonnes (about 27 percent) less compared to the first survey in 2011.** The amount of some critically and medically important antibiotics for human therapy, i. e. fluoroquinolones and 3rd and 4th generation cephalosporines, has not decreased.
- **Antimicrobial resistances** stay high on the political agenda. Several top-class events were dealing with the topic within the reported period. The latest occasion was a symposium to clarify the professional opinion at bpt’s annual congress in October. A milestone was set by an extensive evaluation by order of the Federal Ministry of agriculture. It was followed by a dialogue between concerned stakeholders in late 2014, leading to the insight, that the right of German veterinarians to obtain, stock and dispense drugs to animals in their treatment was the wrong adjusting screw to successfully fight antimicrobial resistances. First steps are taken: The German Antimicrobial-Resistance-Strategy “DART 2020” values previous achievements in veterinary medicine and strives for a better co-operation between veterinary and human medicine. This was the declared position of the German government at the G7 conference in summer, too.
- German law contains a **veterinary fee schedule** (range of tariffs). It has not been changed since 2008. Although the responsible Federal Ministry of agriculture is open to an adjustment, the project is on hold due to the “transparency exercise” and other ongoing deregulation efforts of the European Commission (DG Internal Market). In early 2015 the Commission as already launched an infringement procedure against a similar law in Austria.
- Concerning the profession’s adequate reaction to **lay people** offering treatments or therapy for animals without veterinary education BTK is running a working group. An ad hoc committee within bpt explores options for legal measures at the same time.

- **Code of ethics:** A BTK working group has worked out a draft for a novel code of ethics for German veterinarians (working title: "Ethische Leitlinien für Tierärztinnen und Tierärzte"). It was controversially discussed within the veterinary fraternity. The finalized code was adopted at the "27. Deutscher Tierärztag" (27th German veterinary Conference) on 30th October 2015.
- The Federal Council (Bundesrat) has started an initiative to prohibit **male chick killings** of laying hen breeds. The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) currently supports the development of an in-ovo sexing method. Promising research has been done by Prof. Krautwald-Junghanns and her team in Leipzig. Practical implementation of the technology is expected for 2017 and would make hatching and killing of male chicks unnecessary.
- **Slaughter of highly pregnant livestock** is to be prohibited in near future. In some German states (e. g. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein) voluntary agreements have been signed between State Ministers, meat industry associations, veterinary chambers and further stakeholders to minimize slaughter of cows in the last third of pregnancy. The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) is currently working on a legal assessment for a decree to prohibit the movement of highly pregnant animals (last third of pregnancy) for the purpose of slaughter.
- As part of the Federal Ministry's Animal Welfare Initiative ("Initiative Tierwohl") a voluntary agreement to **stop beak trimming** has been signed by BMEL and stakeholders of the poultry industry („Vereinbarung zur Verbesserung des Tierwohls, insbesondere zum Verzicht auf das Schnabelkürzen in der Haltung von Legehennen und Mastputen"). Beginning 1st August 2016, beaks of laying hens will no longer be trimmed. Concerning turkey further research needs to be done to evaluate feasibility.
- The second edict amending **BHV1 ordinance** entered into force on 27th May 2015. The measures to combat bovine herpesvirus type 1 infections (BHV1) were adapted to the improved progress currently reached in Germany. According to the amendment, all animals from bovine livestock affected by BHV1 now have to be vaccinated against the disease, if the reactors are not immediately removed from stock. With this procedure a carryover of the virus should be further minimized. Until now, only the reactors had been vaccinated. The competent authorities may allocate killing of reactor animals or ban insemination. Currently about 94 percent of Germany's bovine livestock are free from BHV1.
- Concerning **piglet castration**, an expert discussion was organized by the Federal Ministry (BMEL) in October to evaluate the status quo and develop strategies for phasing out piglet castration in the future. Piglet castration without anaesthesia will be prohibited in Germany beginning 1st January 2019. Until then, farmers have to establish alternatives. Nevertheless, there is still resistance from Germany's farmers' association (Deutscher Bauernverband).
- The registration for the **industry initiative on animal welfare** ("Brancheninitiative Tierwohl"), run by the food retailing industry, meat industry and agricultural organisations, is now completed and it is certain that there are much more interested farmers, both in the pig and poultry sector, than can be financed. The initiative is now looking for further partners in retail and gastronomy. A rise of the amount paid by retailers is also discussed (currently 4 ct per kilogram). The audits on participating hog farms are completed, and over 90 percent of the farms have passed. Failure was mainly due to shortcomings of housing equipment, such as inappropriate numbers of drinkers or deficiencies of stable floor.
- A court decision in Berlin from 23rd September 2015 states that the breeding of Canadian Sphinx cats, a hairless breed, must be regarded as **breeding of defects** and is therefore in contradiction with the German Animal Welfare Act. Due to a gene mutation, Canadian Sphinx cats have no functioning whiskers. According to the Animal Welfare Act, it is prohibited to breed vertebrates, if they lack species-specific body parts or if these are unsuitable or reshaped and thus cause pain, suffering or damage. To prevent breeding, the competent authority is empowered to order the castration of affected vertebrates. A veterinary report attested that whiskers are an important sense

organ that serves for orientation and communication of cats. Therefore, their absence should be regarded as damage and suffering. The court has approved the appointment to the Higher Administrative Court of Berlin-Brandenburg because of fundamental importance to the matter. It is the first time a court in Germany decided about breeding of defects.

- To strengthen the research on and establishment of alternatives for animal testing, a national “**centre for the protection of lab animals**” (“Deutsches Zentrum zum Schutz von Versuchstieren”) was inaugurated in September. The centre is affiliated to the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and shall coordinate all activities to reduce animal testing, promote research and intensify the scientific dialogue on alternative methods. The Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Christian Schmidt, claims the long-term objective to “phase out animal testing” in Germany.
- Following the incidents during the FEI European Championships in Aachen, i. e. the disastrous start of “Totilas” being obviously lame, a public debate on **animal welfare in equestrian sports** and a professional discussion of the role of vets in horse shows is ongoing in Germany.

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