

The value of membership of FECAVA

What does FECAVA do for you?

FECAVA has come a long way in the last nineteen years. From its humble beginnings as a body formed to harmonise the activities of its thirteen founding members, initially the production of the European Journal of Companion Animal Practice (EJCAP) was its *raison d'être*. Today, it does much, much more:

Harmonisation

FECAVA is the organisation that unifies and represents the national companion animal veterinary associations of Europe and provides a conduit through which the common objectives of its members are pursued. FECAVA works closely with UEVP and FVE in a focussed and co-coordinated manner to ensure strong representation of the issues.

Voice

FECAVA provides a voice for companion animal issues and ensures inclusion of the topics on the European political agenda.

Focus

The focus of EU policy had traditionally been on food safety and therefore food animal issues. The importance of food safety within the European community suggests prioritisation of these aspects of veterinary activity, which can work to the detriment of the companion animal arm of the profession. However there is increasing recognition of the importance of companion animals in the physical and mental well being of European societies. In addition to zoonotic diseases the sociological and economic importance of companion animals must be promoted.

How does FECAVA carry out its work?

The **Council** is the main structure of FECAVA comprising one director from each of our 36 member associations and is the forum through which all objectives are proposed and policy ratified. The Council establishes **Working Groups** to concentrate on the implementation of projects initiated by Council. The **Board** works as a close knit team to lead and implement objectives defined by Council. In addition the **Managing Editor of the European Journal of Companion Animal Practice** co-ordinates and delivers a high quality European journal. Executive assistance and administration to the Board is engaged efficiently on a part time professional basis.

Current working groups include standing committees and special projects working groups:

- EJCAP Production Sub-committee
- Financial Advisory Sub-committee

Working groups:

- FECAVA Eurocongress Protocols Review
- Constitution Review
- Continuing Education Accreditation
- Hygiene and the Use of Antimicrobials in Veterinary Practice

- Continuing Education in Easter Europe
- Socioeconomic Value of Companion Animals
 - Sub-committee on Animal Assisted Therapy and Animal Assisted Activities
- Website Development

Some area that are currently receiving special attention

Medicines

Maintaining availability of medicines for use in companion animal practice in Europe is an ongoing challenge essential to the practice of high quality veterinary care. This is not only an issue for smaller member states but in the future will remain an important issue for larger member countries where continued availability of products must be protected. Medicines legislation is under review by the European Commission and FECAVA plays an active role in the FVE Medicines Working Group where the particular challenges both present and future are kept on the agenda.

Animal Health Legislation

European common animal health laws and strategy are under review with legislation and policy being drafted for implementation between 2011 and 2014. The remit of the EU Commission in relation to animal health has focussed on the protection of consumers of animal derived food and the food sector economy. Yet the definition of community health refers to the social and mental wellbeing of the community. Companion animals contribute significantly to this wellbeing. This sector also makes a large contribution to the economy of Europe which is often over looked. FECAVA is active in collating information to support this fact and promoting this to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the public.

Education

FECAVA provides input into the visitation of veterinary schools in conjunction with UEVP through ECCVT. It is well placed to contribute to debate on the future strategies for education of veterinary undergraduates ensuring a reasonable balance of integration that includes appropriate attention to companion animal aspects of undergraduate education. Continuing education is supported by its program for CE in Eastern European regions and of course through the *FECAVA Eurocongresses* which provides a forum annually for veterinarians across Europe to come together in a pan European congress.

The Blue Dog Project – the education of young children to the benefits (and potential dangers) of dog ownership is pivotal in developing the next generation of companion animal owners and ensuring responsible pet ownership.

Veterinary Nursing Education

FECAVA liaises with the Veterinary Nursing profession. It has worked closely with VETNNET, the European network of veterinary Nursing educators and nursing associations. FECAVA has been a project partner in several European funded education projects with VETNNET including DASVENT which led to the formation of ACOVENE (the Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nursing Education in Europe). It is also a

project partner in the Leonardo supported PEPAS project to develop a European OSCE examination protocol for veterinary nurses to facilitate the assessment of practical competences of trainee veterinary nurses.

Liaison with other Veterinary Organisations

FECAVA enjoys a productive and close working relationship with other key veterinary organisations such as UEVP, FVE (including its sections and working groups) and WSAVA.

Communications

EJCAP - *The European Journal of Companion Animal Practice* is published three times a year. Two hard copy issues and one on-line issue, dedicated to a particular discipline, are produced. The journal continues to emphasise the reprint of peer reviewed papers especially from non-English language publications to bring information to a wider readership across Europe. In addition, original work and commissioned papers are published together with news, editorial comment, book reviews and calendar information on CE in Europe producing a comprehensive and varied journal. This is a high quality production with a strong multi-cultural European flavour that is sent to each and every member of FECAVA. It is included in FECAVA membership and represents exceptional value for money to the individual veterinarian.

Does FECAVA threaten any member association's publications?

We believe that EJCAP augments existing national publications and provides additional resources to all European veterinarians. Existing veterinary journals published by our member associations should have continued confidence in their own journals safe in the knowledge that their own Federation adds diversity and a European flavour to their members reading through EJCAP.

Website - www.fecava.org provides an information resource and promotion of FECAVA activities and projects.

Electronic Newsletters

Regular electronic newsletters are published and sent to each member association for distribution to every member. We are proud that every member of FECAVA can be kept up to date on all activities. Distribution of this newsletter through the member associations is essential and from feedback we know that it has been very successful in generating awareness and ideas.

Promotion of Member Association Educational Events - members CE events are advertised through the calendars in the Journal and on the website.

Policy Statements

Member associations find FECAVA Policy Statements useful when lobbying national government agencies. Suggestions for policy and appropriated statements can be received by the Board at any time from individual member association.

FECAVA Eurocongress Protocols Review

Congress protocols have been reviewed to provide comprehensive guidelines and SOPs for FECAVA Eurocongresses. These protocols will be reviewed at regular intervals to keep them current.

Constitutional Review

A review of the constitutions is underway to ensure it meets the needs of today.

Continuing Education Accreditation

A working group has been established to explore the development of accredited modular C.E. that is achievable by practitioners. FECAVA have been liaising with the other veterinary organisations and have reached agreement on a multi-organisation working group, including FECAVA, FVE (UEVP), EAEVE, Statutory Bodies and EBVS, to bring this concept forward.

Hygiene and the Use of Antimicrobials in Veterinary Practice

This working group is reviewing information on resistant microorganisms relevant to companion animal practice and will develop protocols and guidelines for infection control practices and protocols for use of antimicrobials in companion animal practice. FECAVA is liaising with UVEP and FVE on this matter.

Continuing Education in Eastern Europe

FECAVA provides support to member associations in Eastern Europe to assist with C.E events. These events have been very successful and many have attracted collaboration and participation from neighbouring countries. As time progresses some countries no longer require assistance and so funds are redirected as appropriate

Socio-economic Value of Companion Animals

This working group is expanding to include a sub-committee on Animal Assisted Therapy and Animal Assisted Activities and will collate information and explore how the veterinary profession may work with and assist groups providing such services. It is important to collate evidence and promote the value of companion animals both in economic and social terms. The effects of such efforts are not seen immediately but are a long term investment in the development and promotion of the relevance of companion animal welfare and healthcare in Europe.

Cultural Benefits.

It is easy to overlook the obvious but important cultural benefits arise at all levels from a strong pan-European Federation that joins 36 countries in the common goals of furthering the quality companion animal veterinary care and welfare and protecting the integrity of the veterinary profession. As in all walks of life participation and engagement is the key to fulfilment - the more you take part the more you benefit. This is true from committee and working group level to participation in European CE events, reading and exchanges.

Cost and Value

FECAVA Officers and Council members are all volunteers. As activities increase there will be an increasing need for professional secretarial help. In order to remain active the Federation needs income to fund the costs of running a professional and effective organisation. It is important that the future of FECAVA activities is sustainable.

In the beginning, the first volume of EJCAP was purchased at 2.6 ECU per member and the second at 2.2 ECU per member and they were distributed to each member of the founding national associations. In 1992, the Federation dues were agreed at 1.8 ECU payable twice a year. Allowing for inflation, the 3.6 ECU payable in 1992 is approximately equivalent to 5.48€ today. So in real terms, the proposed membership fee of 6.40€ per member would represent only a 0.92€ increase in nineteen years. The net cost of membership is roughly equivalent to two glasses of beer.

Some members have raised the issue of the cost of distribution of the two hard copies of the journal to their members which varies from country to country but is estimated to cost about 4.00€ per member per year. Whilst this sum is not inconsiderable, the distribution costs have been borne by the member associations, and therefore their members, from the beginning and it would seem extraordinarily good value to receive the benefits of an excellent European veterinary journal as well as all the other FECAVA activities carried out on behalf of the European community of companion animal veterinarians.

The voluntary Board of FECAVA remains ever mindful of costs and value for membership and continues to monitor expenditure on its activities carefully e.g. the investigation of on-line publication and electronic communication. However it is also intent on securing the activity level of FECAVA which relies heavily on the voluntary commitment of colleagues to enable it to function efficiently.

Self Help and Solidarity

FECAVA relies on the generous contribution of energy and time from its member associations' representatives on Council and the Board. It also relies on the financial contributions from each individual member through their associations. It also relies on the solidarity of the 36 member associations who bring diversity of needs and diversity of talents and ideas. Every individual member association, large and small, benefits from the existence and activities of the *professional community* that is FECAVA