

SITE VISIT REPORT

Second Revisit to Firat University, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Elazig, 12-13 June, 2013

Experts

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In November 2011, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Firat University, Turkey, was revisited to evaluate the progress done in solving the category one deficiencies identified in the first visit in 2007.

The decision by ECOVE following this revisit was:

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

One cat. 1 deficiency remaining:

1. Insufficient necropsy case load

Two years after these events, a second revisit was requested by the Faculty.

Prior to the visit the Team received a letter from the Dean, a list of the case load of necropsies performed since 2007 (in annex), and a program for the visit designed according to suggestions previously advanced (in annex).

Therefore, the team was guided through a program designed to see the improvements that have been made in pathology teaching since the revisit in 2011, complemented by visits to other premises related to the necropsy case load, such as the Small Animal Hospital.

Everything was very well prepared and the reception was very professional and simultaneously very warm, caring for the needs of the team at all times.

The visit started with a presentation by the professors and the following facts were presented:

Academic organization of Pathology

Pathology, apart from other collaborations, is taught in four semesters of the core curriculum, each with an independent exam:

- i. Pathology I (second year)
- ii. Pathology II (third year – 5th semester)
- iii. Pathology III (third year- 6th semester)
- iv. Necropsy and report writing (fourth year)

The students also rotate for three days through the pathology service in the final semester. This limited amount of time has to do with the fact that, as compared to the other disciplines, they had already a longer exposure to practical pathology during the regular course.

The practical lectures with necropsies take place in the necropsy room that is provided with four good size tables. Each lecture is organized for thirty students at the time, divided in two groups of fifteen (the total number of Students per class is approx.. 130).

The necropsies are performed under the teacher's supervision. There is a professor for each thirty students.

Students will be either executants or observers and the registry of who did what is made by the teacher. He/She also makes sure that all students have the same opportunity to perform necropsies.

In general, depending on the species, each necropsy is performed by five students. All students take part in the discussion of the lesions identified at the end of the necropsy.

Each student has a log register in which he/she makes a short report of the necropsies they have followed or actually done, with a short description of the lesions identified and the presumptive diagnosis (in annex). The team had the opportunity to look through this information and found that the necropsy logs were completed in most cases.

Each student has to attend 20 necropsies and perform 4 themselves.

In case they have not achieved that number they have to come back to the necropsy room until they do. Otherwise they are not admitted for the final exam.

Final year students (final year students in "internship") have to perform five necropsies and they also have to come back to the necropsy room until they have their 5 cases.

The necropsies to be done on a particular day are advertised in panels and in an internal video system available in places like the student's cafeteria.

About 80% of the necropsies are said to include histopathological examination.

In case there are no necropsies to be performed teachers organize macroscopic rounds based on material collected during previous necropsies.

The number of teaching staff has increased since the last visit in 2011 and it is now nine in total: 4 professors, 2 associate professors, 2 research assistants, 1 PhD student.

There are two support staff members: one in the necropsy room and one responsible for the registry of the cases submitted to pathology.

Case load for necropsies

The team had already received a table with the numbers of necropsies performed since 2007 (in annex).

The numbers presented show a very significant increase in the necropsies made since 2007, with the numbers rising continuously.

The number of necropsies of companion animals is still considerably low, although higher than in previous years.

The sources of cadavers of companion animals are:

1. Euthanized animals from the school's small animal hospital
2. Stray dogs that die in the kennels or that died in road accidents
3. Cadavers from the private clinics in Elazig and surroundings

Small animal clinics cannot be found in the Elazig area, the number of pets being still small, mainly due to economic constraints of the families and also due to cultural traditions that do not favor the presence of dogs in small apartments, the main type of housing in Elazig.

However, the Team was told that the numbers are increasing and the perspectives are that they will continue to increase.

The Team got the impression that the faculty is doing the best they can to get as much necropsies of companion animals as possible but that larger numbers of cases will only be possible in the future when the Hospital will receive more clients. The Faculty has also put forward measures to improve the numbers of necropsies of companion animals, such as:

1. Advertising on the university radio that the Faculty provides this service for free, explaining that it is beneficial to have your companion animal necropsied.
2. The faculty does not charge for the necropsies, unless a report is required. In that case the price may be around 100TL (40 euros).

There are also severe limitations to get horses for necropsy for Elazig is not in a horse production area. In fact, an equine clinic is basically lacking in Elazig. However, horses are used for racing in the area and are owned by private organizations like Jockey Clubs, which also operate their own horse clinics. The Faculty has some limited contacts with the latter mainly for student's visitations. For the remaining species the faculty shows high numbers of necropsies especially in large and small ruminants, the main species produced in the province.

Since the beginning of 2013, there is an arrangement with the Animal Health Institute where students can follow the necropsies made there. So far 277 necropsies have been recorded, mostly infectious or metabolic problems in ruminants. 205 of these 277 were bovine aborted fetuses.

Necropsy room and Pathology registers

New improvements have been added to the necropsy room since the last EAEVE visit in 2011:

- I. a cold room that may accommodate various medium size cadavers.
- II. a large two sinks lavatory with a shower head faucet
- III. a fork lift to handle cadavers of large species

It is not possible to install a crane system for handling cadavers of large animals due to the low height of the necropsy room. The fork lift is a way of dealing with that problem and the faculty is studying the possibility to install a larger door in the necropsy room to facilitate the handling large cadavers.

There is a new computerized system for registering all the material submitted to pathology in addition to a book in which this information is registered by hand. In that book for each new entry it is also indicated if photographs have been taken and if tissue samples have been collected to be used in microscopy lectures.

At the end of the necropsy the cadavers are cut in pieces small enough to be accommodated in a large plastic container. The disposals are kept in a cold room until they are removed by a specialized company that provides the service twice a week at the price of 1€/kilo.

The team also noticed that students are provided with good study material such as well illustrated notes prepared by the professors and a nice necropsy technique manual.

Practical lectures also include microscopic examination of selected histological slides.

Tissue processing, cutting and staining is performed in two different laboratories, but there is a plan to get all the equipment in the same new laboratory.

There is no histology technician. Slides preparation is done by PhD students. There are serious restrictions from the university in regard to new contracts for technicians.

In the afternoon the team was given to opportunity to observe what would have been a normal practical necropsy session. The students, using good protection (lab coats, aprons, masks, and boots belonging to the department) performed a necropsy of a calf showing that they are quite familiar with necropsy techniques.

The Team visited the clinical facilities. These are very adequate for large animals with ample space and good equipment.

The new Small Animal Hospital appears adequately equipped. Teachers , students and support staff were performing regular activities during the visit.

However, the case load is still very low (with ca. 100 client owned cases received in the first 5 months of 2013). The large majority of cases shown on the list prepared for the visit are in fact stray dogs collected by the municipality that go through clinical evaluation, castration and occasionally treatment for any illness they may have. We learned that following hospitalization they are returned to the municipality to be released!!!!

Meeting with the students

A meeting with the students was organized. Eleven attended (ten males and one female). They were generally fluent in English, some more than others. They were all very positive about the changes introduced in the faculty, and happy to be able to benefit from the improvements. They confirmed that the access to necropsy cases had markedly improved.

Meeting with the Rector

The Team and members of the Faculty including Dean and Vice-Dean were received by the Rector who appeared to be very interested in the outcome of this visit. Since the team expressed its concern about the lack of histopathology technicians in the pathology department, the rector promised to provide two such positions as soon as possible.

Conclusions of the visit can be summarized as follows:

The team got the impression that students are receiving a good practical and theoretical training in pathology, supported by good lecture notes, adequate facilities and dedicated teachers.

Students showed a very positive attitude regarding pathology teaching.

The team is aware that great efforts have been made to increase the necropsy load, which has tripled since the last evaluation in 2011.

The number of necropsies performed in food production animals is very good, nearly twice the EAEVE recommendation (as calculated for approximately 130 graduates in Elazig per year).

The necropsies of birds and rabbits is consistent with the EAEVE main indicators of the SOP .

The team was also aware that:

The number of necropsies of companion animals has been increased, but remains very modest, far removed from the EAEVE main indicator for companion animal necropsies in the SOP. It is our belief that the numbers will only reach acceptable levels when the population of domestic pets in the area increases significantly.

It should be noted that the observations of the previous team regarding this problem were similar to ours:

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The amount of material for necropsy is still low and the faculty should continue its work to increase the necropsy caseload. However, the necropsy caseload does not indicate neglect from the faculty but rather reflects the regional species composition, traditions in local veterinary practices and among farmers and lack of a tradition for doing necropsies at a high level as part of clinical practice.”

The team’s recommendations for the ECOVE are:

- *Based on the fact that the total number of necropsies per student is now acceptable and that the Faculty has done all it possibly could to optimize the use of these cases for teaching we recommend that the remaining Cat.1 deficiency should be considered to be rectified.* This recommendation is also based on the fact that the University of Firat is located in an area of intense animal production, in which small animals only represent a very marginal part of the activity of the practicing veterinarians due to low acceptance of pets in society. This is a fact of life which inevitably results in a low small animal case load at all levels.

- In respect to the deficiency in technical staff recorded in previous visits, the team was happy to witness that our suggestion to hire histopathology technicians was very well accepted by the rector. We have hopes for the future that this may perhaps induce a serious improvement to follow the others mentioned above. We recommend that ECOVE makes a point of the rector’s promise in its report to the institution.

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DECISION BY ECOVE: FULL APPROVAL