



RE-VISITATION REPORT

To the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the Ghent University, Merelbeke, Belgium

On 23 – 25 October 2023

By the Re-visitiation Team:

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Introduction

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Ghent University (FVMG) (called the Veterinary Education Establishment /VEE/ in this report) and the Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Medicine of the University of Antwerp were assessed by ESEVT on March 27-31, 2023, according to the ESEVT SOP 2019, as amended in September 2021.

The visitation team identified one major deficiency and two areas of concern.

The major deficiency was under ESEVT Area 4:

- Non-compliance with Standard 4.6 as although isolation facilities were provided, they were not maintained and operated to provide for animal care and for prevention of spread of infectious agents to modern standards.

These two areas of concern (minor deficiencies) were identified by the team:

- Partial compliance of the VEE at Ghent with Standard 4.9 because of sub-optimal posting of biosecurity signs, and other procedures not being adhered to, in a number of areas where students are trained.
- Partial compliance of the VEE at Ghent with Standard 8.5 because of (at the current time) a sub-optimal use of a logbook system for the recording of clinical skills.

On June 7, 2023, ECOVE made the decision that the status of FVMG was Pending Accreditation.

The Re-visitation Self Evaluation Report (RSER), and the Annexes were provided to the Re-visitation Team on time and contained relevant information. The RSER was informative and well written.

The Re-visitation was well prepared and well organised by the VEE. It was performed in a cordial working atmosphere, in agreement with the ESEVT 2019 SOP.

1. Correction of the Major Deficiencies

1.1. Major Deficiency 1: Non-compliance with Standard 4.6 as although isolation facilities were provided, they were not maintained and operated to provide for animal care and for prevention of spread of infectious agents to modern standards.

1.1.1. Findings

The suggestions for improvement from the previous visitation were as follows:

- A separate entry area for changing with appropriate PPE should be formed within the cat and dog isolation unit or delineated with disinfection mat for shoes on entry. This is expected and may happen under the new plans for that area of the VTH by 2024.
- The entry to the large animal unit should be made more secure to prevent people and wild birds having access to the unit with the possible consequential disease implications.
- Appropriate signage should be visible with full instructions on biosecurity. These should be in Dutch and English to ensure Erasmus and other foreign students can understand the instructions. The signs were not consistent in this or any part of the VTHs, large or small animal.
- Access to isolation units should be secured for lorries and for other non-authorized persons.
- All student's instruction on first day of rotations must be given in English as well as Dutch to ensure all students can understand what is expected of them in these areas.
- The VEE must decontaminate manure from its isolation units as they do for experimental animals.

As a response to this, the VEE has made the following changes:

For the Large Animals Unit:

- Reduction of the number of isolation units
 - Reduced from 12 to 10. The 2 isolation units in barn IX are no longer in use. There are now 7 isolation units in barn IV and 3 in barn V.
- Secure access to the isolation unit
 - Metal doors have been placed at the entry to all units. Birds can no longer gain entrance to the barns.
- Appropriate signage at the isolation units
 - All signage is provided in English and Dutch and securely fixed. The signage notifies and prevents unauthorised persons entering the barns.
 - Student instructions are given on first day of rotations in English as well as Dutch.
- Appropriate structure and operations for each isolation unit
 - All structures and operations now meet accepted standards. With designated entry points, benches to separate the entrances, appropriate PPE and boots available for staff and students.
- Separate collection and decontamination of manure
 - Contaminated manure is now collected into one designated area which is collected by a licensed provider.
 - Chains have been erected to secure the contaminated manure area. Metal polls have been installed to prevent lorries entering the isolations area.

For the Small Animals Unit:

- Adjustments have been made to the present area being used for isolation of small animals.
 - The VEE has placed a bench at the door to prevent direct entry, and also a rack for shoes has been placed at the door for staff/students to leave their trainers.
 - Within the unit, clogs are available for staff/students to change into before entering the Unit, alongside appropriate PPE.
 - Clear instructions on their use are available.

1.1.2. Comments

The VEE has worked hard to amend deficiencies and has accomplished much in a short period of time. They are commended for the progress that has been made in improving the culture for biosecurity and for addressing, so quickly, the recommendations from the previous visitation team.

There are plans to develop a new isolation unit for small animals in 2024 which has been designed to modern standards.

1.1.3. Suggestions

In line with continuous improvement, the team recommends that the VEE might consider enclosing the contaminated manure in the future.

The VEE is encouraged to establish the new small animals isolation facilities as soon as viable.

1.1.4. Decision

The Major Deficiency 1 “Non-compliance with Standard 4.6 as although isolation facilities were provided, they were not maintained and operated to provide for animal care and for prevention of spread of infectious agents to modern standards” has been fully corrected.

2. Correction of the Minor Deficiencies

2.1. Minor Deficiency 1: Partial compliance of the VEE at Ghent with Standard 4.9 because of sub-optimal posting of biosecurity signs, and other procedures not being adhered to, in a number of areas where students are trained.

2.1.1. Findings

- The previous visitation team made the following suggestions for improvement:
- Use of shoes dedicated for areas such as theatres should be kept on site to guarantee a higher level of biosafety.
- Boots must be cleaned and be free of mud when hung up in clinical areas.
- Signage on biosecurity, use of PPE and other protocols must be used consistently throughout the VEE.
- This signage should follow the protocols and be in two languages.
- All staff and students must follow the policies and protocols.
- The Dispensary must put in the appropriate radiation signage/red light and policies for everyone to see and use.
- Reinforcement of these each rotation for all to understand and follow is encouraged.

The changes now made by the VEE to address these deficiencies are as follows:

- Clogs for the theatre areas are now provided by the VEE.
- A separate rack for trainers has been installed at the entrance to the Ambulatory Unit.
- A central database for reporting accidents/biosecurity issues for all areas has been developed which allows for trends to be analysed and individuals recognized as necessary. The results are regularly reported to the Biosecurity Committee and thereafter to the Faculty Board.

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- Consistent signage has been placed throughout the clinics in English, Dutch and sometimes French (where clients/visitors would have access to).
- Regular information and teaching sessions are held to update and inform staff and students on biosecurity matters.
- The VEE has appointed a Biosecurity Coordinator who walks the corridors of the Clinics on monthly basis to ensure protocols are being adhered to. She also monitors and reports on the database to the Faculty Clinical Biosecurity Committee.
- In The Dispensary, extra signage is now provided in Dutch and English with ‘No Entry’ signs visible on the three entry doors when equipment is in use. A red warning light is not legally required in Belgium.

Two observations were made in the ambulatory practice unit that should be addressed in that an open bin, in the ambulatory clinic, was seen containing medicine bottles and sheathed needles as well as couple of dirty boots on the stand.

2.1.2. Comments

The VEE has worked hard and in a short period of time they have changed their approach and culture towards biosecurity in order to comply with the standards.

The appointment of the biosecurity coordinator has had a positive effect on compliance of protocols.

The Faculty Clinical Biosecurity Committee now meets more frequently.

The reporting from students and staff on breaches of protocols both from internal and external sources has increased since the new protocols were instituted.

The Dean/Faculty Board have set a positive environment for improvement.

2.1.3. Suggestions

Empty medicine bottles should be dealt with as appropriate for their usage and needles need to go into a closed container with a lid.

The protocol for keeping the boot washing area clean should be revisited to prevent cross contamination.

2.2. Minor Deficiency 2: Partial compliance of the VEE at Ghent with Standard 8.5 because of (at the current time) a sub-optimal use of a logbook system for the recording of clinical skills.

2.2.1. Findings

During the visitation in March 2023, the team commented that “there is currently no logbook to centrally record all student's clinical activities and ensure that he/she has achieved the Day One Competences.” Due to this, the visitation team made the following suggestion for improvement of minor deficiency no. 2:

- The VEE needs to complete its reflection on the setting-up of a user-friendly student-centred system to collect the hands-on and clinical procedures performed by each student and

to link them with the acquisition of the Day One Competences as is already done for the activities carried out during the externships.

Following the visitation, the VEE has established a “logbook working group” which has continued to work on the development of the logbook. Due to the new IT strategy of the university, the VEE is now collaborating with the external company Paragin who will provide a platform for the future electronic logbook. This system is currently under construction, with planning for full implementation during 2024.

2.2.2. Comments

The VEE has identified all the competences for both bachelor and master’s programs, and has made good progress in developing the Paragin system to fit for the bachelor program (clinical skills) at this point in time. This system will be tested in December 2023. Subsequently, The VEE intends full implementation, including the master’s program skills, in July 2024.

Antwerp will be implementing a similar assessment system for their bachelor students, using the same competences as identified by the VEE.

All the data will be kept and secured at university level.

Until the full implementation of the new logbook system can be made, student competences are being recorded using the existing programs.

2.2.3. Suggestions

None.

3. ESEVT Indicators

3.1. Findings

There have been no modifications to the ESEVT Indicators.

4. Conclusions

The major deficiency has been fully corrected.

Good progress has been made to correct the minor deficiencies. The VEE is showing commitment to continual improvement in all fields of their activity.

Decision of ECOVE

The Committee concluded that the Major Deficiency identified after the Full Visitation on 27 – 31 March 2023 had been corrected.

The Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) of the Ghent University is therefore classified as holding the status of: **ACCREDITATION**.