

**European Association
of Establishments for Veterinary Education**



RE-VISITATION REPORT

**To the Institute of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Sciences,
Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia**

On 06 – 08 November 2019

By the Re-visitiation Team:

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Introduction

The Institute of Veterinary Medicine and Sciences (IVMAS), Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia was evaluated by the ESEVT on November 16-20, 2015.

The previous Visitation Team considered that in some laboratories, equipment necessary to implement appropriate biosecurity measures was missing and the staff and students could not preserve hygiene and prevent contamination due to inadequate entrance into the necropsy area.

Furthermore, during the Visitation the staff did not enforce necessary bio-security measures, while the large animal isolation unit – one of its kind in the country, needed immediate renovation; the management of the pharmacy and usage of drugs was inappropriately documented, creating potential risks. The IVMAS did not make appropriate use of its wildlife care facilities, while the opportunity to enhance this service and train proper skills in this field was underused. The Team also underlined that efforts should be made to improve the exposure of students to farmed animals such as pigs, small ruminants, poultry, rabbits and also to exotic animals intra-murally, while in pathology more attention should be allocated to acquire necropsies of cadavers from the visited and surrounding farms.

These findings led to the identification of one Major Deficiency:

“Inadequate biosecurity and biosafety procedures in several areas, including control of drug management, necropsy hall”

The ECOVE Final decision was “CONDITIONAL APPROVAL”, issued on 11th of May 2016.

The Re-visitation Self Evaluation Report (Interim Report) was provided on time to the Re-visitation Team and included relevant information.

The Re-visitation was well prepared and well organised by the Establishment. It was performed in agreement with the ESEVT 2012 (Budapest) SOP.

1. Correction of the Major Deficiency

1.1. Major Deficiency: “Inadequate biosecurity and biosafety procedures in several areas, including control of drug management, necropsy hall”

1.1.1. Findings

From the RSER provided by IVMAS, the Establishment has made efforts to correct all points attained in the results provided by the Visitation Team in 2015. All measures taken were designed step by step, the Establishment providing a calendar of progress in each undertaken issue. The process started in 2016 and continued all along to 2019, with also setting long-term

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goals such as appointing a full-time biosafety officer. The deadline for this application has been extended as no suitable candidate was found yet.

A biosafety and biosecurity manual was developed starting from the bottom up, by first identifying the weak points and then discussing those with all departments and clinics and also with external experts. In 2017, the premises were divided in green, yellow and red areas, according to their biosecurity risks. Biosafety issues are presented to students in every practical course and an emergency line was implemented for emergency events (MRSA, MRSP). Biosafety lessons are included in the study plan of a course (VL.0784) being awarded 1 ECTS, further increased to 2 ECTS in 2018. After approval of the manual in the Council of the Institute and its adoption, it was made available for staff, students and all those interested on the webpage of the Establishment in both English and Estonian and also posters were placed in relevant points, advertising biosecurity measures in both English and Estonian.

All changes necessary in the infrastructure of the Establishment (reconstruction of the necropsy room, reconstruction of the small and large animal clinics, the room for CT and also the food hygiene laboratories needed to be introduced in the Real Estate Plan and the Procurement Plan of 2017, 2018 and 2019, being carried out gradually.

New changing rooms were built with barriers towards the necropsy room entrance, the ventilation and sewage systems were upgraded, the cold storage is renovated while the large animal euthanasia and cadaver storage room are planned for 2020.

The large animal isolation facility was separated into three boxes with individual access, with entrance through barriers and surveillance monitors installed. The ventilation system was rebuilt. The wild bird clinic and service area was built in the corridor/service gallery and there is a wild bird isolation unit. At present, a contract is in place to refurbish and make functional the ready-to-use rooms by late November.

The entrance and changing rooms to the large animal clinic have just been finished, with some minor refurbishing still needed.

Other measures taken to ensure biosecurity included the moving of the laboratory and laundry room between the small and large animal clinics, filters and automatic door system installed to the small animal clinic, dental clinic in the small animal clinic renovated, new air condition system installed.

The overall management of drugs, in-pharmacy storage and circulation in the Establishment were revised according to Estonian legislation, such as Medicinal Products Act; Conditions and procedure for storage and transportation of medicinal products; and Veterinary Activities Organisation Act. Medications are released from the main pharmacy upon written prescriptions, or on written request by each clinic. The stock is revised every month, the inventory occurs every three month and the full inventory is yearly. The clinics are responsible for the proper management of drugs under their care. The drugs storage in the small animal clinic has a retrospective entrance record and is equipped with cameras, was refurbished with appropriate labelling of the shelves. In the equine and large animal clinic the drugs are kept locked. Only appointed personnel (vets, vet nurses) have access and can collect the drugs, no unsupervised student access is possible to the medication storage rooms. Opioids and anaesthetics in the anaesthesia room are kept under lock. Prescriptions are kept on file. The work of merging the pharmacy software to that of the Provet Cloud used to manage the clinics

is ongoing. The head veterinarians of the clinic are responsible for drug and narcotic psychotropic drug management.

1.1.2. Comments

Numerous points of the biosecurity implementation were attained. The correction of the major deficiency concerning biosecurity is an ongoing process at IVMAS, including both theoretical and practical aspects. The process is kept transparent, with very clear drawing of tasks and responsibilities, thus improving the quality of the process.

1.1.3. Suggestions

The biosecurity measures should be a priority at all times, being considered with every refurbishment or any other changes within the premises. The two computer systems (the Pharmacy and Provet Cloud) should be merged to further improve the drug management.

1.1.4. Decision

The Major Deficiency has been corrected.

2. Correction of the Minor Deficiencies

Improvement subsequent to suggestions by the Visitation Team in 2015

2.1. Suggestions connected to Objectives

“1.3. Clarity would be improved if the Mission statement were condensed into a more concise form, giving greater emphasis to the provision of veterinary undergraduate education.”

2.1.1. Findings

New mission statements were issued subsequent to restructuring the Institute in seven Chairs, which were approved by the Council in March 2019. The University will be subject to major changes according to Estonian University of Life Sciences Act, with a different leadership, in order to better connect it to the society.

Now the mission statement of the IVMAS considers creation and dissemination of knowledge and practical skills in fields of: veterinary medicine, animal husbandry, aquaculture, and food science to the benefit of both animals and humans.

2.1.2. Comments

None

2.1.3. Suggestions

None

2.2. Suggestions connected to Finances

“3.3. The Institute should review its fees for the clinical services it delivers and actively promote to veterinary practitioners its facilities for diagnostic testing, to provide further sources of income.”

2.2.1. Findings

Improvement in financial status of the Establishment was promoted by involving two directions of development: re-thinking the fee system in the clinics and also improving the provided services (hiring an anaesthesiologist, a wildlife veterinarian, a full-time exotic species

veterinarian, improving infrastructure) and by advertising by all means the profession, its importance and also the veterinary life in field and education.

2.2.2. Comments

IVMAS made important changes at the level of its infrastructure and staff, which supported, along with better services and media campaign an improvement in the overall financial situation of the Establishment.

2.2.3. Suggestions

IVMAS should continue its endeavour to broaden the services they offer and justly plan the use of their income to further improve veterinary education.

2.3. Suggestions connected with the Curriculum

“4.1.3.1. Given the importance of research in the Estonian university funding and the responsibility of veterinarians for animal welfare, it would be useful to include teaching in laboratory animal science. At least some of the hours of the elective should become compulsory.

4.1.3.2. Some other subjects taught as electives (wildlife, exotics) should have some basic teaching in the compulsory part of the study.

4.1.3.2. An elective in Food Hygiene and VPH could be reinstated to promote the Institute as a centre of excellence and attract investment.

4.2.3. The expertise of visiting specialists (e.g. veterinary pharmacologist, virologists, bacteriologists) from other institutes should be used to raise knowledge and training in these fields for veterinary students, resident veterinarians and support staff.

4.4.3.1. Increasing cases from disciplines, which are not well distributed in the case log.

4.4.3.2. Increase the number of surgery cases in horses.

4.4.3.2. Creating an additional position of senior teacher in equine medicine could help the future developing of the horse clinic.

4.4.3.3. The expertise of visiting specialists (e.g. veterinary pharmacist, radiologist, emergency and critical care specialist) from other Institutes should be utilised to raise knowledge and training in these fields for veterinary students, resident veterinarians and support staff.

4.4.3.4. An anaesthesiology service should be available at all clinical departments that perform anaesthesia (e.g. the equine clinic, ophthalmology).

4.5.3.1. More external lecturers could be used for specific seminars regarding food control, food processing and hygiene.

4.5.3.12. The laboratory facilities should be improved.

4.6.3.1. Efforts should be made to increase the caseload in some species, esp. pigs, sheep, poultry, rabbits and exotic animals. Perhaps the Institute can buy some animals to be used for clinical teaching, research and pathological education.

4.6.3.2. A track in Food Hygiene and VPH could be reinstated, to enhance the Department of Food Hygiene as a centre of excellence.”

2.3.1. Findings

Starting with 2018/2019, the course VL.0180 Medicine of exotic animals (2 ECTS), which became a compulsory subject, also included teaching on laboratory animals, while the elective is still available for those with specific interest in laboratory animals.

A new inter-unit entity VALORTECH – ERA Chair for Food (By)-Products Valorisation Technologies was created to best use the technologies related to the food chain with zero

waste/maximum utilisation and valorisation. This brings together the know-how and infrastructure of IVMAS and the Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and is also linked with the University various compartments.

There was an increase in lecturing from foreign and local specialists (16) and also teaching staff exchange within the framework of Erasmus Mundus (11). Invited lectures were presented in core subjects such as VL.1172 Food production chain, VL.1205 Basics of product development in food industry, VL.0251 Product development in food industry, VL.0905 Veterinary radiology, VL.1286 Small animal internal medicine and VL.1080 Medicine of exotic animals. The specific seminars concerning food control, processing and hygiene also benefitted of invited lectures in HACCP held within the discipline VL.0700 Hygiene and veterinary control in meat industry.

The number of cases also continuously increased in almost all species, excluding pigs, due to the threat posed by African Swine Fever. However, an agreement is now in place with a large pig farmer to provide practical on-farm training for the students.

The number of equine surgeries increased with 47% to 2017. An equine dummy and new equipment (anaesthesia, endoscope) for equine allowed a better training. There was an improvement in number of teaching staff in Equine medicine, by hiring a senior teacher specialised in soft tissue surgery and also signing a long term agreement with a clinical teacher from Helsinki. Junior staff is encouraged to focus on different areas such as dentistry or neonatology.

Also, the laboratory complex of the Chair of Food Science and Technology was upgraded, increasing the space allowance to 95 m².

A full-time anaesthesiologist was hired, which serves all three clinics of the IVMAS, improving the student education and patient care.

2.3.2. Comments

The IVMAS had a very thorough, multilateral approach trying to improve the areas of concern identified by the Visitation Team in 2015, including improvement of curriculum and its content, clinical sciences and food safety, with special stress on the IVMAS excellence in the field, as well as personnel and its continuous training in order to improve student training.

2.3.3. Suggestions

The work to improve the caseload in all species and provide students with the expertise of specialists in different fields of veterinary medicine should be a continuing process, in order to persistently increase the veterinary training quality not only for the present, but also for subsequent generations of veterinary students.

2.4. Suggestions connected to Teaching and learning; quality and evaluation

5.1.3. *It is recommended to give more feedback to the students.*

5.2.2.1. *Oral examinations are usually conducted by only one examiner. In certain circumstances, this could be an unsafe environment for the students. Additionally, objective judgement of student performance is not always guaranteed when the oral examination is conducted by only one examiner.*

5.2.2.2. *Most students take a final examination, rather than a thesis.*

5.3.3.1. *It is recommended that the Institute provide a room where the students can eat their lunch and preferably also can buy some food. Besides the lunch facilities, the duration of the lunch breaks is experienced as too short and should be adjusted.*

5.3.3.2. Cooperation between the Estonian and the international students should be encouraged and every effort should be made to enhance this.

5.3.3.1. Staff and students should be informed about what they should do if they become aware of a student experiencing personal problems or difficulties with their studies and students should be encouraged to consider volunteering for peer support. The Students' Union should also be encouraged to publicise and make use of these arrangements.

2.4.1. Findings

Numerous ways to provide feedback to the students were implemented (individual, group, surveys, group or individual feedback on tests, feedback in Moodle, briefing and de-briefing during clinical rotations) after being several times discussed with student representatives, the Department of Academic Affairs and to the Vice-rector of Studies.

In case the subject is based exclusively on oral examination results, in most cases two teachers are present at the examination to secure the student environment.

The students who started their veterinary studies from 2016 onwards will defend at the end of their studies a graduation thesis.

Several cafeterias and restaurants were open since 2015 visitation around the clinical buildings. As the Zoomedicum third building will be finished it will host a café. Nevertheless, in a poll carried out by students' organisations, they expressed their wish to avoid prolonging their full days with long lunch breaks.

The contact between Estonian and international students has improved, but still need more encouragement. Although all events organised, such as Freshmen Party, Christmas Party or others, other approaches such as clubs starting at student initiative, enclosing both Estonian and foreign students should be pursued.

Since 2017, the University increased the number of credits allocated to introductory courses, while from 2018/2019 the content was revised to enhance the understanding of the curricular requirements. Students have now the opportunity to turn to representatives of the student organisations and the representative of the student career service, student counsellor, psychologist, who present their activities but also to their mentors and advisors. A buddy system was developed at University level.

2.4.1. Comments

The manner feedback is provided is still highly depending on the teacher. The student-to-student communication should be further encouraged, overcoming the eventual gaps in student – teaching staff communication.

2.4.2. Suggestions

None

2.5. Suggestions connected to Facilities and equipment

“6.1.2.1. Hygiene awareness should apply all over the Institute for both staff and students.

6.1.2.2. Provide an effective hygiene barrier for the necropsy hall. Take bio-security in the necropsy hall more seriously and provide students and staff with clear instructions and protocols regarding bio-security.

6.1.2.3. Make a clear protocol for storage and documentation of drugs, especially controlled drugs. Advocate a culture within the staff to apply these protocols, and keep all drugs, especially controlled drugs, locked away at all times. Make one person in the Institute responsible for the application of these protocols, e.g. the staff member responsible for pharmacotherapy or the pharmacist.

6.1.2.4. Provide adequate eyewashes and consider installing emergency shower(s) at relevant spots in laboratories where students and staffs do practical work. Ensure that posters with clear instructions on what to do in case of emergencies are displayed in all laboratories and clinics.

6.2.3.1. The planned upgrade and improvement of the isolation unit for large animals and equines is strongly advised, especially since it is the only isolation unit in the whole country.

6.2.3.2. The facilities for the care of wildlife and birds should be improved, as it is an opportunity to enhance this service, which is unique in the region and contributes specialist skills to the Institute.

6.2.3.3. There should be an improvement in the laboratory in the clinics, to simulate modern 1st line diagnostic practice equipment, which includes haematology.

6.2.3.4. An effort should be made by the pathology department to acquire necropsies from the farms that are visited by the Institute, in order to teach students the follow-up of clinical cases.”

2.5.1. Findings

Most of these areas of concern were dealt with in correcting the Major Deficiency (see above). The laboratory was moved between the Small and Large animal clinics serving both and new haematology analyser was purchased in 2018. The connection between the clinical and pathology units improved, so now the students can follow (if it is the case) their clinical cases all the way through.

2.5.2. Comments

None

2.5.3. Suggestions

None

2.6. Suggestions connected to Animals and teaching material of animal origin

“7.3.1. Try to increase the number of poultry flocks seen by students.

7.3.2. Acquire a small number of rabbits, chickens and exotic animals.”

2.6.1. Findings

The number of poultry farms visited by the students increased by visiting smaller private farms in the area. Similarly, the caseload in numerous species, rabbits and exotic species included, increased, also due to the hiring of a veterinarian specialised in exotic animals.

2.6.2. Comments

See also under 2.3 Curriculum.

2.6.3. Suggestions

None

2.7. Suggestions connected to Library and learning resources

“8.3. The OIS system should be better organised to make it more student-friendly.”

2.7.1. Findings

The subject information, expected learning outcomes, assessment were already upgraded. In 2020, The University of Tartu is going to develop a new OIS system, which will be adopted by IVMAS.

2.7.2. Comments

None

2.7.3. Suggestions

None

2.8. Suggestions connected to Academic and supports staff

“10.3.1. Provide proper job descriptions for the teaching and clinical staff, and check that all teaching, clinical, and management related responsibilities are adequately covered.

10.3.2. Encourage and facilitate young staff members to apply for either an exchange or regular residency abroad thus increasing the number of European Board certified diplomates at the Institute.”

2.8.1. Findings

Adequate job descriptions covering veterinarians, junior and senior positions included were drawn up. Job descriptions for the two categories of veterinary assistants were also described. For both academic and clinical staff, regular professional reviews are carried out.

Since the Visitation in 2015, two members of the teaching staff became European specialist in Small animal cardiology and Dermatology, another is taking the examination in Dermatology in 2020 and another followed the European specialisation college in Neurology, but did not pass the exam. Young members are encouraged to apply for exchange or residency, and the IVMAS supports financially some of the applications (3/15).

2.8.2. Comments

By providing more explicit job descriptions and career possibilities for every position, and also finding financial support for some of the young applicants for self-improvement courses, the IVMAS clearly stated its teaching staff professional improvement policy.

2.8.3. Suggestions

None

2.9. Suggestions connected to Continuing education

11.3.1. The Institute might be able to offer some speciality courses if it develops some “areas of excellence” that might be of some international interest. Funds raised out of these CPE’s can be used to enhance services and/or research (Continuing education).

11.3.2. Some courses given to the lay public could raise the profile of the Institute and might attract more investment.

2.9.1. Findings

The IVMAS provided lately numerous courses, tailored to the request of various national and international stakeholders (dairy associations, Estonian Food Industry, Open University courses, etc.). Similarly, courses for the broader public (Child and the dog, Food hygiene – myth and reality) were presented. To increase its prestige, the IVMAS arranged numerous topic based information days for the broader public, student organizations, Tallinn Zoo, etc.

2.9.2. Comments

None

2.9.3. Suggestions

None

2.10. Suggestions connected to Postgraduate education

“12.3.1. An internship programme should be reintroduced and integrated as a pre-programme for junior veterinary clinician-teacher programme/position and future residency programme in EMÜ and abroad. Internship is necessary for applying to residency programme in EBVS.

12.3.2. The high percentage of withdrawals of PhD students calls for action; in the past 3 years, the same number of graduates and students withdrew from PhD programme (n=6).

12.3.3. Specializations should be encouraged by cooperation and exchange with other faculties of Veterinary Medicine as, for such a small faculty, it is nearly impossible to do it onsite.”

2.10.1. Findings

Two veterinarians were accepted for the junior veterinary clinician in 2018 and four in 2019, launching the program. The salaries of junior scientists were increased, including for PhD students. PhD students are aimed to be part of teaching, clinical work and research, without a negative impact on their studies.

It is not cost effective to open specialisations in Estonia, therefore discussions were started with other establishments in the Baltic Nordic region, with no decision taken yet. The Estonian Veterinary Association therefore accepts the EBVS diplomas.

2.10.2. Comments

None

2.10.3. Suggestions

None

2.11. Suggestions connected to Research

“13.3. A final thesis should be considered for all students provided that there is sufficient time for the preparation.”

2.11.1. Findings

As mentioned above, the student series of 2016 will graduate presenting their thesis, and time is being allocated to finish it.

2.11.2. Comments

None

2.11.3. Suggestions

None

3. ESEVT Indicators

3.1. Findings

The indicators provided by IVMAS are all in positive range, except the one of companion animal patients seen extra-murally. This lower number is being compensated by the very high number of companion animals seen intra-murally.

3.2. Comments

The overall caseload, including companion animals has been and continues to increase.

3.3. Suggestions

None

4. Conclusions

The Major Deficiency identified in 2015 has been addressed and is considered corrected.

The suggestions of the Visitation Team were implemented, and the process is an ongoing one.

Decision of ECOVE

The Committee concluded that the Major Deficiency identified in 2015 had been corrected.

The Institute of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Sciences of the Estonian University of Life Sciences is therefore classified as holding the status of: **APPROVAL**.