

PVSGEU HistoryPAGE

THE POULTRY VETERINARY STUDY GROUP FOR THE E.E.C. - THE EARLY YEARS

by DANIEL BRUYNNOOGHE, A FOUNDER-MEMBER

It was our active President who had the good idea that something should be told about the early stage and the first years of our now well-organised and active Study Group.

Quite a few of the present members of our group do not know perhaps that it started about 25 years ago.

In September 1964 the second European WPSA Congress was held in Bologna.

During one of the receptions four colleagues working in the poultry industry had a couple of drinks together. They had known each other quite well for several years, and had an informal discussion on some of the actual problems the industry was faced with at that time. The idea was expressed that it would be very useful and interesting to get together on a more regular basis in order to discuss in an informal way our common problems.

These four colleagues were:- J. P. Verdruye, J. Vitré, J. P. Willemart and D. Bruynooghe. J.P. Willemart readily agreed to organise the first meeting.

This "première réunion de vétérinaires de souches" was held in the Diagnostic Laboratory of Arpajon (near Paris) on November 9th 1964 with the following participants:

From France:- Drs. E. Schricke, M. Verger, J. Vitré and J.P. Willemart

From Belgium:- Drs. D. Bruynooghe and J. Verdruye

They can be considered as the founding members of our E.E.C. Study Group.

Among them, two of our friends have already left us - much too early.

At this moment it is appropriate to salute and commemorate them: Jean Pierre Verdruye died in a car accident in June 1967 and Jerome Vitré, seriously handicapped by an accident but still active and very courageous, passed away in 1980. Let us also commemorate the colleagues and friends, members of our group, who passed away in the course of the years: Drs. Volker André, Bernd Hüttner, Jürgen Gebhardt and Helga Landgraf from Germany, Andrew Barber-Lomax from the U.K., Amand Bar, Jean Hurard and Pierre Montlaur from France.

The founders had in mind some basic ideas, which are still worthwhile to consider and substantiate in our now well-organised study group.

- Since in our daily work we are faced with similar problems, let us discuss them openly and exchange our views and experiences among colleagues, so that it can contribute to a mutual enrichment of our knowledge.
- For some common problems, let us try to find a common point of view. According to the matter concerned, it can be used as a guideline in our daily work or it should be published in the poultry press or brought to the attention of colleagues in research, professors and of official veterinary authorities.
- Some of these examples are: publications concerning vaccinations in the poultry industry in the E.E.C. countries (1965-1966); warning against injudicious I.L.T. vaccination (on the Continent) 1966; and the famous statement about responsibility in the matter of leucosis complex (1969) which has been undersigned by colleagues from five E.E.C. countries.(cfr. infra).
- Besides (and after) the serious and useful work in our meetings let us not neglect the social part so that we get better acquainted with each other. And in doing so, we could enjoy quite an unforgettable evening in the course of these many years.

The informal character of the group was also reflected in the fact that - during the first years - less attention was paid to finding an adequate name and an appropriate structure which have been established in the by-laws (Nov 1967).

The first meetings passed under a variety of names such as:

- "réunion de vétérinaires de souche" - meeting of veterinarians of poultry breeds.
- "colloque des vétérinaires avicoles" - Colloquium of poultry veterinarians.
- "Colloques d'Arpajon" - the Arpajon Colloquia
- and "Poultry Veterinarians Committee".

The group started with French and Belgian colleagues, but was soon extended to other nationalities of the E.C. namely Dutch, German and Italian colleagues. With the extension of the Community, English, Danish and Irish colleagues joined. Since almost eighteen years two colleagues from Spain and one colleague from Norway were regular participants of our meetings and several years ago colleagues from Sweden and Portugal became members of our Studygroup. Now we are looking forward to welcome a Greek colleague as member of our group.

In 1965 there were two "organised" meetings and two others were more or less "improvised".

The first meeting was held in January in Paris, at the Headquarters of Roussel-Uclaf. Colleague Willemart was our host and took care of the organisation. 7 French, 3 Belgian and 2 German colleagues attended.

Here it was decided that our group should be extended to colleagues of all other E.E.C. Countries.

The second meeting took place in Brussels in June and was organised by the duo Verdruye-Bruynooghe.

At this meeting, in addition to 9 French and 5 Belgian colleagues, 4 German and 2 Italian and one Dutch colleague could be welcomed so that this can be considered *the first meeting on a broader E.E.C. scale*.

Of the two "improvised" meetings, which took place in Paris, the first was held during the agricultural exhibition in March with French and Belgian colleagues, while the second was held as an annex of the WVPA Conference in September with colleagues attending from different countries.

In 1966 three meetings were held.

The first was held in February in Brussels. Again the duo Verdruye-Bruynooghe was in charge of the organisation.

The second was held in London in May and was organised by Willemart and Bruynooghe.

The third was in Gardone (Italy) in October and colleague Valentines took care of the organisation.

At the meeting in Brussels the denomination of our study group, in the terms which are familiar to all of us now, was chosen and adopted for the first time.

The following items were discussed:

- the sanitary policy and regulations in the E.E.C. Countries
- the acceptance of vaccination (La Sota, AE-inactivated) in France
- warning against injudicious ILT-vaccination
- problems of nutrition (layer and meat-type birds)
- problems of guarantees to be given by the breeder/hatchery on hatching eggs, day-old chicks and started pullets.

I remember colleague Verger giving a review of the guarantees and problems of started pullets in France and Germany. At the end of his discussion about the regulations in Germany he concluded that, instead of rearing chickens, it was rather preferable to cultivate vegetables!

At the London meeting the main topic was the battery-system, which was discussed in its different aspects, and related problems. There was a large contribution to the subject from staff-members of feed companies (BOCM, Spiller's, Crossfield) and colleagues from pharmaceutical companies (Wellcome, Glaxo, Pfizer) informed us about their experience with inactivated IB-vaccines.

At the meeting in Gardone the general theme was "from the egg laid to the day-old chick", and various aspects and problems of incubation and hatching were treated by members of the group.

In 1967 the group met twice.

The first meeting was in Ploufragan at the Poultry Experimental Station, organised by Willemart-Bennejean.

The second meeting was held in Hannover, at the Veterinary Faculty and colleague Vielitz took care of the organisation. *Dr Willemart was elected as president. He was confirmed in a mandate which he had practically fulfilled since the group started in November '64.*

The Ploufragan meeting took place at the Experimental Station and colleagues Meurier and Bennejean were excellent hosts of 20 members of our group. Here we had a first discussion about the organisation and structure of our Study group. It was decided that an inquiry about terms and conditions for membership, officers and committee members, contribution, by-laws and so on, would be set up in order to get more organised by the next meeting in Hannover. There was an interesting discussion about the different regulations in regard to poultry diseases in various E.E.C. countries. Another interesting topic was about specific problems in cage layers and rearing in batteries.

It is also very nice looking at a picture of our group taken in Ploufragan and to see what young and vigorous fellows we were at the time!

During 1968 the meetings took place in Boxtel and Boxmeer (Holland) in May, and in Antwerp (Belgium) in November.

At the meeting in Boxtel the main topic was Marek's Disease, with an excellent paper about the current stage of research presented by Peter Biggs.

Another subject of general interest was the Mycoplasma Eradication Programme and related problems, with a subsequent visit to the Egg dipping station in Rijkevoort.

In the absence of our President, J.P. Willemart, I acted as chairman of the sessions. During the internal meeting a first concept of the by-laws was discussed. Since it was stated that "membership is open to colleagues living in the E.E.C. countries", and since the U.K. at that time was not yet a member, it was decided that our British friends (Blaxland and McLeod who were regular participants at our meeting) would no longer be invited till the U.K. would join the Community.

May '68 - I also remember our friend Et. Schricke, who was so excessively interested in the results of the referendum by president De Gaulle that he used every spare minute to listen to the latest radio-news in his car.

In Antwerp the meeting was held in the complex of the Zoo.

So we had a good opportunity to complete or refresh our zoological knowledge apart from the general subjects on evaluation of the mycoplasma antigens in use and on synovitis and related problems.

We had an interesting visit to Janssen Pharmaceutica in Beerse and enjoyed an excellent evening in the guesthouse.

In 1968 our group consisted of 30 members:

4 from Belgium, 6 from W. Germany, 13 from France, 5 from Italy and 2 from the Netherlands.

In 1969 there was a meeting in Ploufragan at the experimental station in June and a second in Berlin.

Colleague Willemart felt that he could no longer act as president since his duties in the Roussel Company were less related to poultry and this mandate was transferred to me.

During this year the most remarkable event was the elaboration of a statement concerning responsibility in the matter of the leucosis complex (see page 61). This statement has been undersigned by the members of our group attending the Ploufragan meeting in June and has subsequently been published in the poultry press in various E.E.C. countries. It should be remembered that the now quite efficient control of Marek's Disease, by means of vaccination at day-old, was not yet available and the industry as a whole suffered heavy losses.

The Berlin meeting in November was organised by colleague Vielitz who also acted as chairman since I could not attend. Again Marek's Disease was on the agenda, with contributions by Rispens (from C.D.I. - Rotterdam) and by

Helga Landgraf (Lohmann Group) about the latest developments in research and the first results of vaccination which looked very promising.

In 1970 the first meeting was held in Bardolino (near Verona) Italy and was organised by colleague Politi.

The general subjects were:

- experimental Marek's vaccination and first results
- legislation concerning medicated feed in the E.E.C. countries.

The second meeting took place in November in Utrecht and was excellently organised by colleague Hans Van Swaay.

There was an overwhelming participation of some 45 British colleagues, members of the B.V.P.A., who were on a three-day visit to Holland.

As guests of the Veterinary Faculty we had our meeting in the new Transitorium building to the Faculty at the "Uithof". The main subject of the first day was the results of Marek's vaccination in different countries with reports from Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Netherlands and U.K.

The next day both groups visited the experimental animal institute of the Medical Faculty of the University of Nijmegen.

The afternoon session was held in Doorn at the Central Poultry Health Service where we were welcomed by Dr. Roepke, Director. This was the end of our meeting while the following day colleague Van Swaay was still guiding the B.V.P.A. Group. On the occasion of the joint meeting E.E.C.-B.V.P.A. Group in Utrecht we met old friends and made acquaintance with new ones, while enjoying a nice dinner party in the evening at Hotel Smits.

Since the U.K. was about to join the common market it was a good opportunity to invite British colleagues to join our group, on the condition however that their number should be restricted, otherwise one country would be over-represented and too large a number of group-members would harm the personal and informal basis on which our meetings are conducted.

At the next meeting in Tours, in May 1971, colleague Blaxland was asked to propose 10-11 names of British colleagues with work and responsibilities similar to the work done by the members of our group. With such a request to choose 10 out of 150 I did place him in a rather embarrassing position, but he took care of this in an excellent way and free from any personal bias.

Among those 10 names proposed at that time - now 19 years ago!
- I can mention our friends and members:

Tony Harris, Ian McPherson, Keith Gooderham and Olaf Swarbrick, while two others J. O'Brien and Peter Dalton were also members of our group for some time. As you see, the choice made was not so bad at all! At about the same time 2 Spanish colleagues, Aleson and Morlan regularly attended our meetings, *long before Spain joined the E.E.C.*

At the Utrecht meeting I had proposed to resign as president because, being no longer fully employed by a breeding company it was rather difficult to fulfill this mandate properly. Consequently, colleague Vielitz was elected as president, H. Van Swaay as vice-president and L. Deruyttere as secretary.

In 1971 the spring meeting was held in Tours in the veterinary and zootechnical research centre and was organised by colleague Verger in an outstanding way. During the internal meeting there were confidential reports about the N.C.D situation and outbreaks in different countries of the E.E.C.

Other topics of this meeting were: fatty liver syndrome, and latest results of Marek vaccination.

An interesting visit to the Research Station and discussion with the research staff members was the finishing touch of the meeting in Tours.

The autumn meeting was held in November in Ghent and colleague Deruyttere took care of the organisation. Seven British colleagues were welcomed here as regular members of our group.

There was a long lasting general discussion on Rules in the various E.E.C. countries concerning common trade and traffic of eggs, day-old chicks, live and slaughtered poultry, and the N.C.D. situation was still a matter of serious concern.

At the end of the meeting, an interesting visit was made to the Petersime Incubator Factory in Olsene.

In 1972 the spring meeting was held in Hamburg, organised by colleague Vielitz. Hans Van Swaay was elected as president, colleagues Conrad and Schricke as vice-president and L. Deruytere stayed on as secretary.

During the internal meeting, the by-laws were discussed concerning a restriction of the membership number per country - in order to maintain the confidential and informal basis of our group.

After a long discussion it was decided that our group should not exceed 50 members, with following participation per country:

Belgium 5, Denmark 2, Gr. Britain 10, W. Germany 10, France 10, Italy 9, Ireland 2, Norway 1, Spain 2 (observers).

A letter was sent by our active president, colleague H. Van Swaay, to the Directory General of Agriculture of the E.E.C. in Brussels, pertaining some good and practical suggestions concerning the Rules for transport of poultry and hatching eggs between E.E.C. countries.

It took at least 5 months before we got an answer, explaining that it was advisable to direct our action through the Veterinary Liaison Committee of the E.E.C.

The autumn meeting was held in November in Varese, excellently organised by colleague Prof. Zanella.

The main topics were: Turkey management and disease problems, avian Salmonellosis, and poultry meat inspection and hygiene problems. Also Gumboro Disease was discussed at length.

In 1973 the spring meeting took place in Maidenhead and Olaf Swarbrick took care of organisation in an excellent way. He also had ordered good weather in a beautiful country side. Besides contribution of members of our group, there were 7 guest-speakers treating topics of actual interest. Back in the hotel, after an excellent dinner in the Sindlestam Mill, the whole party enjoyed the entertainment of Tony Harris at the piano. The autumn meeting was held in Lyon, at the Headquarters of Merieux and was excellently organised by colleague Willemart.

In 1974, at the spring meeting in Oosterbeek/Arnhem, colleague Tony Harris was elected an president, Schricke and Conrad as vice-presidents and Ian McPherson our dedicated secretary.

Our friend Tony has beaten every record. Scarcely four years after the British colleagues joined our group, he was elected as president, a mandate which he fulfilled in such an excellent way that he was re-elected two times consecutively.

And this is the (happy!) end of my story about the starting period and the early years of our now well-organised and active study-group.

May our group remain, as it was in the past, successful, communicative, sociable and friendly for the next twenty-five years!