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Current and future needs of EAH education, research and policy making



It was our pleasure at the recent NEAT annual meeting to present the final outcome of one of the major activities during the first year of the project: The online survey to map current teaching in economics of animal health. Based on the analysis of this survey, we conclude that there are **unaddressed needs** in both training and expertise in animal health economics. Private organizations such as veterinary bodies and industry bodies expressed an interest in a wide range of general economic topics. In contrast, the needs of educational and public institutions appeared to be more focused on economics of animal health specifically. However, the interdisciplinary nature of economics of animal health was generally confirmed.

The identification of the future needs for different time horizons seemed less distinct between the respondent groups. A minor difference concerned public organizations which anticipate an increasing training need in micro-economic and agro-food related topics. In general, it appeared that all groups – but especially public and private organizations – expect an **increasing importance of economic topics**, including aspects which are currently outside of their core interest.

These results – combined with the material made available through the contacts of NEAT partners, as well as the outcomes of the different working groups conducted during the annual meeting – will help inform the **development of teaching material and innovative teaching tools** (WP4). The latter will be tailored to the different stakeholder needs depending on their main use of economics in daily professional activities. Particularly, the perceived underutilization and need of more distance and **e-learning material** will be considered; this should also help improve the **training coverage** which in many cases was perceived to be inadequate.

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1 NEAT first annual network meeting

An exciting moment for NEAT had arrived on 10-11 September, when for the first time the whole network was convening at the Royal Veterinary College in London. In addition to the NEAT members, the event attracted external experts interested in the teaching of economics of animal health, creating a lively crowd of about 80 participants from across the world.

On day 1, all participants learned about the progress and outcome of recent NEAT activities, such as the literature review and the survey. In addition, a large part of the first day was dedicated to parallel workshops addressing social, technical, political and other factors that impact on teaching and training demands. In the evening the animated discussions in the workshops were partially continued over a pint and fish & chips in a nearby pub.

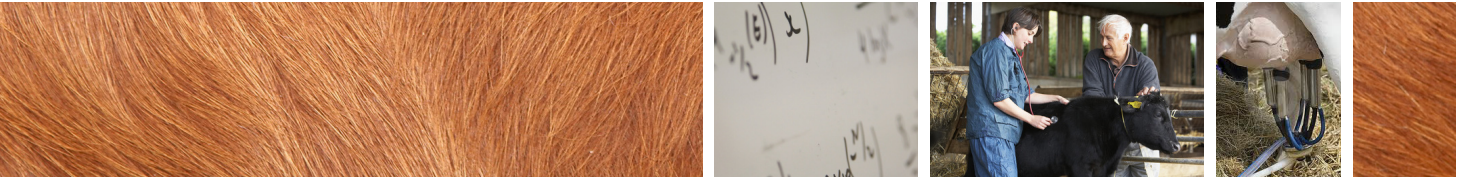
The second day started with short feedback presentations from the workshop groups, followed by discussions on needs and objectives for the next phase of the project. While the annual meeting was formally concluded at lunchtime, the NEAT management board convened again in the afternoon to plan the next steps of the project.

Overall, NEAT is looking back on a productive meeting that inspired and motivated the participants for the upcoming tasks in the next project phases.

A recording of the presentations and some of the pictures will be available [here](#).



Neat network



2 Comprehensive examples for high-quality literature



The publications review showed that a large number of literature focuses on highly contagious animal diseases rather than 'production diseases'. Assessing the costs of disease and cost-benefit analysis of intervention measures are common approaches. In recent years, consumer-oriented studies and positive methods have gained importance from simulation-oriented literature fo-

cus on farm and sector-level issues. Partly, this is due to increased attention to topics where consumer response is important. Fewer studies have focused on the role of institutions, agency theory, incentives, finance and competition issues.

The review suggests that some rigorous works are underused because they may be considered too theoretical. There is room for literature which further develops EAH, a topical and comprehensive introductory textbook, and literature which improves our capacity to understand and explain the behaviour of people and other stakeholders. Discussion papers which put EAH into a wider context and hence allow less experienced persons to access the field and examples on typical errors made in EAH are also appreciated as teaching material.

3 WP4 - next steps

NEAT WP4 has the objective to develop proposals to improve curricula with regard to Economics of Animal Health (EAH) and involves the development and testing of teaching materials regarding EAH. In August, a limited number of people within NEAT were approached to provide insight in the EAH in their current curricula. It became clear that those curricula have a broad EAH definition, if included at all. Evidently, the response was too limited to come up with proposals to improve the curricula to meet the determined demands at undergraduate level.

The initial results were reported by Henk Hogeveen during the first annual NEAT meeting. Based on that presentation, the participants agreed on two things: the first thing was that the primary focus of WP4 should be the curricula of veterinary faculties. The second thing agreed on was to send an email to every participant of the meeting to help WP4 move forward in improving the curricula.

As of today, about 20 out of 85 participants responded to that email. Participants that do teach economics in animal health can expect a follow-up email in which

some more detailed information regarding courses offered is asked.

The next step for WP4 will be a meeting, held in the Netherlands, where experts will define topics that can be taught in EAH. In addition to the Dutch representatives of NEAT, Keith Howe, Karl Rich and Jarkko Niemi volunteered to participate. Based on these topics, a top five list will be formulated that should be included in standard veterinary education.

The top-five list can be compared with the topics that are currently offered and gaps will be defined. Those gaps will help to formulate proposals to improve current curricula.

4 NEAT teams up with African network

Paul Gamba from the Egerton University in Kenya attended the NEAT first annual meeting in London. He is the coordinator of the Network for Livestock Socio-economists in Africa (LSPNet). In order to enlarge the NEAT network worldwide, to use synergies and to exchange best practice, it is important to investigate on relevant linkages between both projects and to support the creation of such networks. Consequently, one of the next steps will be to encourage the American experts in the field of animal health economics to set up a similar network in their region.



5 Upcoming events

Agricultural Economics Society 88th Annual Conference

The AES conference will be held in Paris from 9-11 April 2014. It will include keynote speakers, symposia, contributed papers, discussion papers and poster sessions. For more information on submission deadlines, please click [here](#).

6 Meet new members of the NEAT team



James Boost is a final year Veterinary Medicine student from the University of Cambridge, UK. He is representing IVSA (International Veterinary Students' Association) to NEAT, as he is the Vice-President and Secretary General of IVSA. He has been involved in IVSA since 2011 and was elected to the Executive Committee of IVSA this year, commencing his term in September 2013.