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European Horse Network Welcomes Simplicity in Animal Health Regulation but Questions Priorities

Today the European Horse Network welcomed the principle of a simplified Animal Health Regulation during its lunch with MEPs and leaders of the European horse sector, but questioned whether it was too amorphous, or whether it would address the health and welfare concerns of most urgency in the horse world.

Welcoming how the new Regulation would add coherence by replacing 50 directives and 400 pieces of secondary legislation developed over 50 years in response to animal health crises, **Julie Girling MEP (South West England)** questioned how the good principles in the Framework Law could be applied in practice. An example of this was in reference to the requirement that all keepers of animals acquire 'basic knowledge' of animal health 'and related matters'. However there is no detail as to what this knowledge should be, how it would be implemented or enforced.

"The legislative process allows the European Parliament only two months to consider the legislation, which is not enough time. This is not an abstract concept for us. Animal health is close to the heart of constituents. This is also about the food chain. Our constituents care about this and there is a lot to consider before the end of this parliamentary cycle," said Julie Girling. Moreover, **Kent Johansson, MEP (Sweden)** asked for a clear framework in order for each animal sector to be clear in its own responsibility and follow good governance and best practices.

Jan Vaarten, Director of FVE, The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, explained that "health is a precondition for welfare in animals, and good health and welfare of animals, especially horses, is essential to the health and welfare of people in light of their roles as companions, recreation, sport, and food".

"The overarching approach of a Framework law certainly does allow the flexibility for the Animal Health Regulation to adapt in the future. However, there is a question about whether such a loose framework, with a heavy reliance on delegated acts, can ensure the consistency of implementation across Member States and coordination in the wake of a disease outbreak. A great deal of the burden is placed on Member States who may not have the resources," said **Jan Rogers of the British Equestrian Federation**.

"In this light we urge Parliament and the Commission to consider in a practical way how this Regulation will achieve its purpose of protecting the health of Europe's horses," said **Roly Owers, Chief Executive of World Horse Welfare**.

MEPs Janusz Wojciechowski (Poland) and Julie Girling also questioned Commission priorities, and whether instead they should be acting on live transport for slaughter where there is significant public and Parliamentary support for change, and where transport is one of the most significant health and welfare issues affecting horses. "Horses are the most transported of all animals," observed Jan Vaarten.

For more information;

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The European Horse Network is a non-profit network of stakeholders acting within the European horse sector. One of its purposes is to act as a platform for the horse industry to communicate common issues with European institutions and media at the European level. Members include : EFTBA - European Federation of Thoroughbred Breeders Associations, FEI - International Equestrian Federation, EEF - European Equestrian Federation, EPMA - European Pari Mutuel Association, ESSA – European State Studs, Hippolia - Horse Cluster and Research Foundation (Normandie), FEIF – Icelandic Horses, WBFSH – World federation of Sport horses Breeders, Swedish Horse Council Foundation, EMHF (European & Mediterranean Horseracing Federation), UET - European Trotting Union, WHW - World Horse Welfare, FECTU – European Draught Horse Federation, Confédération Belge du Cheval, Equestrian Educational Network, FERPI (Tuscany Horse Industry).