

Report on NEAT Meeting

James Bost, Vice-President and Secretary General of IVSA 2013-14

On 10-11 September, I was one of just under 100 people to attend the first NEAT meeting on behalf of IVSA. I was also the only student representative there (most others were professional veterinarians or economists). NEAT ("Networking to enhance the use of economics in animal health education, research and policy making in Europe and beyond") is a 3 year project funded by the EU.

The objectives of NEAT are as follows (from the website www.neat-network.eu):

1. Improved organisational coordination for those developing and delivering curricula and course content on economics for animal health professionals.
2. Identification of teaching and training needs for undergraduate, postgraduate and established professionals.
3. Development of curricula, course contents, teaching and training materials for undergraduate, postgraduate and established professionals.
4. Dissemination of curricula, course contents, teaching and training materials.
5. Evaluation of the delivery of teaching and training materials.

NEAT is all about adding value to decision making in the field of veterinary medicine. To do this, we need professionals educated in assessing the impact of diseases and health problems. This includes impacts on economics, and also social and political acceptability of changes in surveillance, control and prevention.

The current status is that after a literature review and survey was conducted, it was concluded that there is a gap between supply of teaching in economics of animal health and demand/need for such teaching.

The NEAT project will result in new teaching resources being made available in this area. One of the ways in which IVSA (as an official partner of the NEAT project) can be useful is in making these resources known and available to veterinary students around the world, and I suggested this possibility to those present at the meeting.

One of the issues that was discussed at the meeting was how "open access" these resources should be, and the consensus seemed to be that the resources should be as freely and widely available as possible (a collaboration with Wikivet, who were represented at the meeting, is one possibility).

Another issue that was discussed is at what level the economics of animal health should be taught. It was decided that a certain level of teaching should ideally be included in all undergraduate curricula, whereas more could be taught to graduated vets, for example through online courses and webinars.

The next meeting will be held in October 2014. A representative of IVSA will attend.

For those interested in the project, more information can be found on the website (www.neat-network.eu) – the resources section (within which the newsletter can be found) and the blog might be of interest.