

## THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR VETERINARY VIROLOGY (ESVV)

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### Introduction

Veterinary virology may be said to have its origin in the work of Loeffler and Frosch, in Germany, who in 1897 and 1898 were the first to report the filterability of an animal virus. Their pioneering work on foot and mouth disease virus led to the establishment of veterinary virological research Institutes such as Insel-Riems, Pirbright and Lindholm and also stimulated the development of virology in established veterinary centres elsewhere. By the mid nineteen eighties, the science of veterinary virology was growing rapidly due to technical developments, first in cell culture and electron microscopy and more recently molecular biology.

A group of veterinary virologists in Europe put forward in 1986 a proposal to form a European Society of Veterinary Virologists. This was discussed at two meetings in Brussels and Hannover at which it was agreed to proceed with the formation of the Society.

The Society was established in Brussels in 1988 under provisional statutes and with its own distinctive logo. It was to involve all of Europe; it would have a subscription list of members; there would be national coordinators in each European country and the administration would be directed by a steering committee of five members. The aims of the new Society were:

- to further progress in veterinary virology
- to provide an organisation for individuals who devote a significant portion of their professional activities to research, teaching or the practical application of veterinary virology
- to encourage and promote improved methods of diagnosis, prevention and treatment of animal viral diseases
- to further veterinary virological education
- to promote the exchange of information in the field of veterinary virology.

It was not the intention that the Society should replace or duplicate the efforts of any existing societies or associations. Rather we sought to provide fresh insights to veterinary virology by approaching the subject from the virological viewpoint, rather than the pathological or the epidemiological. In pursuit of these objectives the Society held its first scientific congress,

attended by some 230 delegates, at the University of Liege in Belgium from 5 to 7 April 1989, under the main theme of "The Contribution of Molecular Biology to Veterinary Virology". The congress took the form of a series of keynote addresses by renowned scientists, together with selected papers from congress delegates, and a poster display. Three specialist sessions focused respectively on the seal morbillivirus, bovine herpesvirus I, and bovine virus diarrhoea virus, while a small informal meeting reviewed current knowledge on rabbit haemorrhagic disease.

The first general assembly of the Society was also held at the congress, during which the formal constitution was ratified and the five members of the first executive council were elected.

## Development of the Society

The first congress in Liege was opened by Svonimir Dinter, a strong supporter of this initiative, on the subject "Why a European Society for Veterinary Virology?" (Vet. Microbiol., 23: 8-10, 1990) in which he emphasized the importance of comparative virology and the contribution that veterinary virologists have to make not only to animal but also to human health. Sadly, he died the following year (Vet. Microbiol., 33: 3-4, 1992) and the Society has established in his honour the Svonimir Dinter memorial lecture which is given by a distinguished speaker at each of the triennial congresses.

Within this spirit of participation in the wider field of virology, the Society became a member of the International Union of Microbiological Societies.

The Society is funded entirely by the personal subscriptions of the individual members; all members have the opportunity to attend meetings at reduced rates and to vote in the elections of the executive board members. The Society came into being at a time of fundamental political changes in Eastern Europe. In order to encourage the integration of colleagues from Eastern European countries, we have so far offered them associate membership of the Society free of charge.

The scientific symposia and congresses require greater financial support that cannot be provided by the Society's central funds. In effect, each meeting is expected to be financially self supporting and this is achieved by soliciting commercial sponsorship. This enables the Society to invite distinguished speakers to give keynote lectures and thereby set the tone of the meetings at the highest possible scientific level.

Once it was clear that the Society had become successfully established the statutes were revised and formally constituted as an international organisation in 1993.

The administration of the membership list has never been an easy task; we have to contend not only with different currencies, but also different legal systems and, to some extent, languages, although it should be said that the working language of the Society has always been English. We currently have approximately three hundred members and we are seeking to expand further.

Early on the Society considered the feasibility of publishing its own journal of Veterinary Virology; this was never seen to be a viable option. Rather we have fostered links with publishers through established journals such as *Veterinary Microbiology*, *Archives of Virology* and *Acta Veterinaria Hungarica*. In addition the Merieux Foundation has published the proceedings of one of our symposia and will be doing the same for the next congress in Interlaken.

The Society has also kept members in touch with its activities through periodic newsletters and technical reports such as the abstracts of scientific meetings.

The Society has sought to recognize outstanding scientific achievements in the field of veterinary virology in a variety of ways. Honorary membership has been bestowed on seven distinguished scientists who have devoted their lives to veterinary virology; medals have also been awarded in connection with specialist symposia in recognition of outstanding contribution to research in the particular field.

This year, for the first time, the ESW has been asked to nominate the recipient for a cash prize donated by Rhone Merieux for the best scientific contribution by a young scientist at the Interlaken Congress.

## Scientific activities

The key activities of the ESW are the general congresses. The first was in Liege in 1989 (see below) , then Uppsala 1991 and this year in Interlaken. A decision was made to hold the meetings generally every three years with the specific intention of avoiding clashes with international virology congresses of the IUMS or other major events.

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### EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR VETERINARY VIROLOGY

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#### Congresses

Contribution of Molecular Biology to Veterinary Virology Liege, Belgium  
5-7 April 1989

Pathogenesis of Viral Diseases  
Molecular, Virological and Immunological Aspects Uppsala, Sweden  
23-26 September, 1991

Immunobiology of Viral Infections Interlaken, Switzerland  
4-7 September, 1994

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In addition symposia have been organised in specialist topics (see below). These proved valuable for discussions and interchanges between virologists. The topics for these symposia have been carefully selected to focus on themes not covered by other meetings and as such have expended their influence beyond Europe. We have also coordinated the activities of working groups on rabbit haemorrhagic disease and currently on pestivirus diversity.

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### Specialist Symposia

Ruminant Pestiviruses Hannover, Germany

8-9 June, 1990

(jointly with the CEC )

2nd Symposium on Pestiviruses Annecy, France

1-3 October. 1992

(jointly with the Merieux Foundation )

Aujeszky's Disease Virus Budapest, Hungary

29-31 August, 1993

( jointly with Hungarian Academy of Sciences)

Porcine Picomaviruses

Griefswald /Insel Riems, Germany 2-3 May, 1994

(jointly with CEC )

Morbillivirus Infections Hannover, Germany

12-13 June 1994

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## Conclusions

The ESW was formed by veterinary virologists. Our activities have always focused on science and are apolitical. We believe we have been successful and that we are meeting a need. We feel particularly honoured to have been invited to this meeting of Veterinary Virology in Australia.