The primary reservoir of VTEC is the gastro-intestinal tract of cattle.
The EU Descartes Prizes for Research and Science Communication 2005

The Descartes Prize is awarded to teams of researchers who have achieved outstanding scientific or technological results through collaborative research in any field of science, including the economic, social science and humanities. Proposals for the Descartes Prize for research may be submitted by the research teams themselves, or by appropriate public or private organisations. Research teams or nominating bodies can only present one project per proposal and can make a maximum of 5 proposals. If more than five proposals are sent by the same proposing organisation, only the last five to arrive at the Commission will be evaluated. Candidates for the prize must designate a co-ordinator that will submit the proposal and will take the leading role in representing the proposal during the selection process. The application co-ordinator must be a national of a Member State, an Associated State or someone who has been residing in the EU for at least the last five years. Applications must have been completed through a collaboration involving at least two mutually independent legal entities in two different Member States or in a Member State and an Associated State. However, provided these minimum requirements are met, research collaborations can involve teams outside the European Union. The prize is not restricted to projects which were originally financed by the European Community RTD programmes. The Laureates and Finalists of the prize are invited to participate in the award ceremony. The Descartes prize for Science Communication, is aimed at organisations or individuals who have achieved outstanding results in science communication. Nominees should have been selected as winners by European and/or national organisations which present science communication prizes of any kind. A joint call for proposals for both Descartes prizes was published on 15 December 2004, with a closing date of 10 May 2005. More information on both prizes can be found on the following website: http://www.descartes.or and by e-mail: rtd-descartes@cec.eu.int
This has been a key month for the Administration Bureau, as three important meetings were prepared and implemented.

Budgetary Conference
From 14–15 March a budgetary exercise took place to assess the use of funds by each workpackage and make any necessary adjustments. So far eleven partners have drafted a financial statement and the forms from the five remaining partners are expected soon. The Administration Bureau will then contact each of the partners’ financial officers to discuss possible problems with their financial report and to talk about their level of expenditure. This budgetary exercise gave us a trial run before the first annual report which is to be sent to the EC next October. It has allowed us to target any stumbling blocks in the way the budget is allocated to, and used by partners, and has enabled us to set measures for future budgetary management. This budgetary exercise has given rise to financial procedures which were proposed and validated at the last Co-ordinating Forum meeting at the Health Protection Agency (HPA), London.

Coordinating Forum
The Coordinating Forum meeting at the HPA was jointly organised by a team from the HPA and the Administration Bureau. It took place on 31 March and was preceded the evening before by an informal dinner, allowing participants to meet in a friendly atmosphere. A schedule was discussed and defined at the meeting, to ensure that the content and budget for all new workpackages was ready before the beginning of September. Two procedures were presented by the Administration Bureau to the Co-ordinating Forum to respond to fund management issues which have been identified across the network, and to facilitate fund management for the second JPA. The first one allows the maximisation of funds to be amended through invoicing between partners. This will be especially valuable in the management of the travel and subsistence expenses, as the needs of partners will vary throughout the workpackage period. The second procedure defines the way training will be organised and financially managed. These procedures allow workpackages a more workable budget for the second JPA. The Administration Bureau will work closely with appointed workpackage teams to draft this budget.

Governing Board
From 4–11 April the first electronic Governing Board meeting took place in the form of a forum of discussion on the Med-Vet-Net private website. This Governing Board meeting commented on decisions taken during the Coordinating Forum meeting. It was technologically challenged to organise a call to active collaboration with and invaluable support from Staffan Tamm, Webmaster of Med-Vet-Net (SVA). This electronic Governing Board meeting is the first attempt to test the functionality of the Virtual Institute under virtual conditions. An assessment of this exercise will be carried out afterwards, with the aim of defining the best combination of tools to enable the most efficient method for remote collaboration within our Network.

Dr G K (Bob) Adak, Leader of the Epidemiology Thematic Group
Bob Adak graduated in microbiology from Imperial College London and has postgraduate qualifications in toxicology and microbiology from the University of Birmingham and the University of Surrey. He has worked at Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDS) since 1989 on both surveillance and research into the epidemiology of salmonellas, Campylobacter sp., Vero-cytotoxin Escherichia coli O157, norovirus and the development of models for measuring the burden of foodborne infections. In addition he has been heavily involved in designing and conducting investigations into recent national outbreaks of foodborne disease. Bob has also served on World Health Organisation expert groups on enterohaemorrhagic E. coli and the burden of foodborne disease. Before working for the HPA, Bob worked at Great Ormond Street Hospital on a study on cerebral palsy in London Children. He also spent three years working for the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food on the development of methods for the detection of toxins in foodstuffs. Bob is currently Head, Environmental and Enteric Diseases Department, HPA Centre for Infections.

Dr G K (Bob) Adak

Project Management
Co-ordinating Forum meeting and Commissioning new workpackages
On 31 March the Co-ordinating Forum met at the HPA, Colindale, London. The Forum discussed a number of important issues. In particular the group approved the progress of the current workpackages and new financial procedures to enhance flexibility. The forum also discussed plans for the next Joint Programme of Activities (JPA) including the commissioning of new scientific workpackages. The new JPA will start in April 2006 and must be submitted for approval to the EC in September 2005. The three overarching workpackages (Virtual Institute, Strategic Integration and Spreading Knowledge) will be continued to ensure integration throughout the network. A new programme of scientific workpackages will be developed to deliver the scientific strategy generated by the Med-Vet-Net Thematic Representatives. To this end a list of workpackage concepts was developed at the Thematic Meeting in Rome in March and these concepts have formed the basis of a Requirements Call. The Requirements Call Document will be published on the private website (see your Institute Representative for access). The initial step will be for network scientists to register interest in specific topics and then, by collaboration, develop a team approach to submit a brief proposal by 8 May 2005. Brief proposals will be assessed by a Subcommittee of the Co-ordination Forum, using published criteria, and selected proposals invited to submit a detailed proposal with budgets by 1 July 2005.

General Meeting
The General Meeting is the primary integration event of the network and all scientists employed by Med-Vet-Net partners are eligible to attend. This first General meeting will be held in Winchester and we expect 200 delegates. Winchester is a historically important site in England so you may consider taking a few days sightseeing. The local organiser is Claire Cassar who has been working hard on the meeting programme. Details of the meeting have been distributed to all Institute Representatives and on-line registration and abstract submission is now available on the website. We welcome presentations in any topic related to zoonoses and there are four major thematic areas: Epidemiology and Risk Research; Detection and Control; Host pathogen Interaction and Microbial Ecology; and New and Emerging Zoonotic Diseases. To date we have received confirmation from two internationally renowned keynote speakers Professor Nina Morano (CDC Atlanta) and Professor Corrie Brown (University of Georgia) so we anticipate that this is going to be a scientifically exciting meeting with the added advantage of networking with colleagues across Europe.

From Russia without much love!
Finally, as several of you who will know I was invited by the EU to attend, on behalf of Med-Vet-Net, an important EU-Russia meeting in Moscow this month to discuss possible future collaborations. Having dutifully completed all the required formalities (visa, abstracts, registration, hotels etc.), I decided to also take the opportunity of a few well-deserved days holiday. I arrived at the airport to a wintery reception of several inches of snow but that was my only view of Russia as I was arrested at immigration and deported immediately. The reason was a simple error on the visa dates by the Russian Embassy but no amount of logical and reasoned debate made any impression with the immigration official. In fact the only Russian word I learnt was “impossible”!!! I am sure that James Bond did not have such problems!! Does anyone else want to be the Med-Vet-Net ambassador to Russia?

Diane Newell

Roundtable Discussion
Med-Vet-Net Communications Director, Teresa Belcher, will be attending a roundtable discussion with communication managers of other Sixth Framework Programme projects and networks in Brussels on 26 April. Each participant will present their project and the related communication work, stakeholders, visions and infrastructure. The afternoon session will allow discussion of what works well and what does not work well, obstacles or problems with fulfilling partners’ needs and the needs from the European Commission regarding dissemination.
Do any of your scientists wish to visit other institutes to promote technology transfer and assist in your collaborative approach to research? The Med-Vet-Net exchange programme allows Med-Vet-Net members to apply for short-term exchange visits - usually between one week and two months in length - to facilitate the sharing of skills and experience between institutions. These programmes will strengthen the network by building relations among members and will also allow members the opportunity for personal development, presentation of data and sharing of knowledge.

To apply please contact Henrik C Wegener, Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research,Morkhøj Bygade 19, DK-2880 Soborg. Tel: +45 72 34 70 75. Email: hcw@dfvf.dk

Details
Participants will be required to produce a detailed report of the outcomes of their visit at the end of the trip. Applicants must provide the following information:
1. Academic degrees
2. Current affiliation
3. Position held
4. Name of the institute you plan to visit
5. Name of the scientist you plan to visit
6. Dates and duration of stay
7. Purpose of visit
8. Detailed plan of the professional activities during the visit (max. two pages)
9. Relevance to Med-Vet-Net
10. Relevance to the fellows’ career development
11. Detailed budget (max. one page)
12. Letter of recommendation from home institute
13. Letter of recommendation from host institute
14. Curriculum Vitae
15. List of Publications
An electronic form will soon be available on the internal website.

Wild Mammals and Disease - Mammals Trust UK 2005 International Conference, Zoological Society of London Meeting Rooms, 21 May 2005
Infectious diseases can have profoundly damaging consequences for mammal populations, particularly those that are already small or isolated. Some of the diseases affecting wildlife also pose potential threats to human health. Mammals Trust UK and WildCRU, University of Oxford, are jointly hosting an international conference to consider these issues and have invited a host of leading authorities to speak about and to discuss the implications of their work. Tickets cost £50 (£40 for PTES/MTUK supporters) and include lunch, tea and coffee and entry to London Zoo during the lunch break. Please contact Zoe Greenwood at Mammals Trust UK on 020 7498 5262 or enquiries@mtuk.org for more details

COST 920, WG 3 Workshop on Microbiological Risk Assessment and MC meeting, Hotel “President” Dubrovnik, Babin Kuk, Croatia, 26-28 June, 2005
This year’s workshop will give updates on advancements in microbiological risk assessment. The first day’s topics are dose-response modelling and “The pathogen - from farm to carcasse – quantified”. The second day will address the concepts of Food Safety Objectives, Performance Objectives, Appropriate Level of Protection etc. and how can they be derived from RA models. The third day is a half day when participants can choose between a technical session and MC meeting. Visit: www.babinuk.com/cro/hotel1.aspx
For useful information about Dubrovnik, see the following web sites:
www.dubrovnik-area.com, www.dubrovnik-online.com, or www.htz.hr

European Conference on Probiotics and Their Applications, Krakow, Poland 6 - 8 October 2005
The conference aim is to present and discuss the latest achievements in the field of probiotics, including: the mechanisms of their action, laboratory research, regulation and approval of probiotics as drugs or food supplements, specialised sessions devoted to the different medical fields as well as to the technology of probiotics in dairy and food industry, probiotics as a tool to alleviate global health hazards, data and future perspectives for probiotics.
The conference is aimed at participants from the European Union and outside, with a strong predilection for the ten new member states and the countries of Eastern Europe associated with the EU.
All lectures will be presented by prominent and distinguished representatives of the scientific, industrial and administrative sectors, who are experts in probiotics in the EU and globally. For further information, please visit http://confer.uj.edu.pl/euprobio or contact: EUPROBIO Conference Secretariat Ms Agnieszka Sito, Ms Agnieszka Kawalec The Centre of Innovation, Technology Transfer and University Development, 25/3 Straszewskiego Street, 31-113 Krakow, Poland Telephone: +4812 421 83 04 Fax: +4812 422 60 18 E-mail: euprobio@uj.edu.pl

60th International Conference on Diseases in Nature Communicable to Man (INCDNCM), University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada 7-9 August, 2005
For information contact: K.Fonseca@provlab.ab.ca

The deadline for submission of abstracts is September 2005.
Visit: http://www.zoopole.com/ispaia/3s2006 or contact Pierre Colin
Chairman of the Scientific Committee
Symposium secretariat:
ISPAIA - BP 7 - 22440 Ploufragran - France
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EXCHANGE PROGRAMME