



# Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+

*“cooperate – innovate – initiate”*

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# Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022 +

In international comparison, Switzerland enjoys a high standard of animal health. This is not to be taken for granted: costly eradication programmes have eliminated classical animal diseases such as infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and caprine arthritis encephalitis (CAE) as well as animal diseases with high zoonotic potential (e.g. bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), tuberculosis, rabies).

Freedom from specific animal diseases and having healthy animals pay off in all sorts of ways. With regard to livestock, this is an important basis for the production of high-quality and safe food of animal origin and is thus an important argument for the quality and sustainability of domestic production. Good animal health is a requirement for animal welfare, and animals kept in an animal-friendly manner are more resistant to disease. In addition, healthy animals prevent diseases from being transmitted to humans (zoonoses). Healthy domestic animals and livestock also protect wildlife; this means that animal health also contributes to biodiversity.

In order to guarantee animal health in the future, the right strategic decisions must be made with foresight. A first national Animal Health Strategy was drawn up more than ten years ago by the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (then the Federal Veterinary Office) in close cooperation with the cantonal veterinarians. Great progress has been made in the implementation of the Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2010+ including in the area of early detection of animal diseases, zoonoses and economically relevant animal diseases. Central elements of effective early detection are functioning national and international networks for a rapid exchange of information and knowledge, good and broad-based animal health surveillance and specific early detection programmes adapted to the situation; this also includes systematic information of all stakeholders about impending dangers with the aim of increasing disease awareness. In addition, broad-based animal health surveillance also supports the careful and targeted use of antibiotics and thus the implementation of the Swiss Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance (StAR<sup>1</sup>).

In recent years, the understanding and importance of animal health have changed nationally and internationally. The interdisciplinary “One Health” approach has become more and more important. Its purpose is to preserve and promote both human and animal health. The aim is to save resources and maintain an intact environment.

Together with the cantonal veterinary officers, the FSVO has revised the previous national Animal Health Strategy. In this process, new priorities and goals were set for the Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+. Among other things, performance targets and measures in some areas are to be increasingly tackled in line with One Health. In addition, cooperation between all stakeholders in the field of animal health in general is to be further strengthened and synergies exploited. This Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+ should provide the Swiss Veterinary Service (SVS) with a basis for future decisions and promote early discussion with all stakeholders, institutions and organisations.

The SVS is ready to implement this strategy together with all stakeholders in the medium to long term.

## Why does Switzerland need an animal health strategy?

Animal health is a central pillar for animal welfare. It is also fundamental for human health and for the sustainable production of foods of animal origin. Healthy animals need far less veterinary intervention. This reduces the use of veterinary drugs and the risk of residues in food is also diminished. Healthy livestock can be exploited for longer and thus contribute to the conservation of natural resources and to

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<sup>1</sup> StAR: <https://www.blv.admin.ch/blv/en/home/das-blv/strategien/nationale-strategie-antibiotikaresistenzen.html>

economic efficiency. Good animal health makes an important contribution to public health. It reduces the incidence of antibiotic resistance and the risk of zoonoses. Safe, high-quality and sustainably produced food also increases the competitiveness of agriculture. This is important for domestic production as two thirds of the gross yield of agriculture comes from animal production.

Human and animal health and an intact environment are interdependent. Therefore, in many areas, strategies are increasingly being dealt with using a One Health approach. One Health stands for an integrative approach to collaboration between human and veterinary medicine and the environmental sciences. This also applies to the Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+: According to One Health, the exchange must take place across sectors and in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and to this end, cooperation between veterinary medicine, human medicine and environmental sciences must be actively promoted by all sides within the framework of One Health.

The importance of this collaboration is also reflected in the fact that most new and re-emerging human diseases originate from animals. The interrelationships can only be uncovered and cross-sectoral measures be taken using a holistic approach to complex health problems and this is the only way to preserve human and animal health and an intact environment in the longer term.

Animal diseases and zoonoses cannot be stopped by national borders. We must also expect that an increasing number of new animal diseases will appear in Switzerland too. On the one hand, this is related to the increased global movement of animals and goods with short travel times, while on the other, the consequences of climatic changes due to global warming are also increasingly visible in animal diseases. In addition, wild animals can also introduce disease pathogens into Switzerland and transmit them to domestic animals. Conversely, domestic animals can be a source of infection and can thus pose a danger to native wildlife.

Animal diseases, zoonoses or new diseases can occur in Switzerland at any time, which is why good animal health surveillance is particularly important. Technological developments are opening up new possibilities in the early detection of animal health problems. For example, the systematic digital collection and analysis of animal health data has increased significantly over the last ten years. These new approaches are to be strategically developed and used by the SVS together with the stakeholders so that measures can be taken quickly to improve animal health, if required.

Switzerland is part of the European veterinary area. Close cooperation with the EU is of key importance as it is Switzerland's most important trading partner. It is fundamentally important that animal diseases are tackled where they originate, thus preventing spread to other areas as far as possible. In comparison to other countries, Switzerland has high standards in the area of animal health. In increasingly liberalised markets, Switzerland therefore secures long-term competitive advantages for its domestic production.

This strategy is a tool to actively prepare for the coming challenges in the area of animal health.

## **Main focus**

In accordance to the animal health legislation and the current threat situation, SVS is building on the existing focal points in its Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+. Infectious diseases and zoonoses in particular continue to be highly relevant, also in the spirit of One Health. Furthermore, with advancing digitalisation, the possibilities of data collection and evaluation are to be used in the best interest of animal health. Additional emphasis is placed on promoting cooperation among all stakeholders to strengthen animal health, especially in the livestock sector.

## Target groups

The Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+ is aimed at all individuals, companies and organisations that are involved in any way with aspects of animal health, as animal owners, veterinarians, hunters, authorities, companies along the food chain or research institutions. There is a particular focus on animal owners in the daily handling of animals.

## Strategic goals

In line with the strategic goals of the Animal Health Strategy Switzerland 2010+, the following goals should be pursued further in order to strengthen animal health comprehensively:

- The Swiss federal government uses its leadership role and engagement, particularly in the areas of prevention, early identification of animal diseases and crisis prevention.
- Cantonal veterinary services standardise implementation and promote intercantonal collaboration.
- Animal owners, veterinarians, animal health services and the industry organisations get more closely involved in decision-making processes and share responsibility in preventing, monitoring and controlling animal diseases.
- International networking and active cooperation with institutions and organisations involved in animal health continues to be maintained and expanded as needed.
- Animal health research is guided by the needs of animal owners and the SVS, in line with the One Health approach. Collaboration with international research partners is intensified.

## Action plans

In order to achieve the strategic goals and to foster animal health sustainably, performance targets and measures within five fields of activities, called action plans, are defined in the Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+:

### I. Prevention

In order to reduce the impact of outbreaks, the occurrence and spread of zoonoses, notifiable and economically relevant animal diseases is prevented or minimized by taking specific measures.

### II Emergency preparedness

Outbreaks of animal diseases can occur unexpectedly at any time. Optimised crisis prevention aims to improve the effectiveness of the veterinary service and all stakeholders in responding quickly and effectively in the event of outbreaks of highly contagious animal diseases.

### III Control of zoonoses, notifiable and economically relevant animal diseases

The sustainable control of animal diseases is costly. The optimisation of surveillance and the cooperation of all parties involved will make the control of notifiable and economically relevant animal diseases even more efficient.

## IV International cooperation

Animal diseases do not stop at national borders. Close international cooperation is therefore important to make progress in the field of animal health both nationally and globally.

## V Science, research and development

New findings must be incorporated into the implementation of surveillance and control programs for a sustainable improvement in animal health. The international exchange of results is an important element here.

## Performance targets within the action plans

### I. Prevention

#### a) *Preventive measures*

- All stakeholders are familiar with biosecurity as an important principle in the prevention of infectious diseases, and biosecurity measures are implemented consistently.
- Practices in livestock farming such as calf trading are assessed from an animal health perspective.
- The Swiss Veterinary Service (SVS) advocates the importance of focussing on animal health and welfare in animal breeding.
- Effective preventive measures for various zoonoses, notifiable and other animal diseases have been evaluated and are being implemented.
- An adequate supply of veterinary drugs and vaccines is guaranteed in Switzerland.
- Animal movement control satisfies the requirements of animal disease implementation.
- The implementation of import-export regulations is optimised and cross-cantonal measures are implemented efficiently.

#### b) *Strengthening livestock health through collaboration*

- Collaboration between animal owners and herd veterinarians is promoted in the livestock sector. The aims are to improve the early detection and prevention of notifiable and economically relevant animal diseases, to reduce the use of veterinary drugs and to increase animal welfare.
- Cooperation between the SVS and the herd veterinarians is being strengthened.
- The NTGS<sup>2</sup> and the animal health services are strong and reliable partners of the SVS. Their activities to strengthen livestock health are coordinated and carried out according to common guidelines.

#### c) *Early detection*

- Livestock and wildlife populations can be monitored more effectively thanks to a comprehensive national health surveillance programme. The objective is to improve early detection of animal diseases or unusual disease events.

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<sup>2</sup> Organisation for Livestock Health in Switzerland (NTGS): [www.nutztiergesundheit-schweiz.ch](http://www.nutztiergesundheit-schweiz.ch)

d) *Diagnostics*

- Efficient, rapid and modern diagnostic tools are available at all times for animal diseases relevant to Switzerland.
- The structure of animal disease diagnostics in Switzerland fulfils high standards of quality, effectiveness and efficiency (cost-benefit ratio).
- Effective and efficient animal disease implementation is further strengthened by good cooperation between the FSVO, cantonal veterinary services and diagnostic laboratories.

e) *Digitalisation*

- Databases on animal diseases and zoonoses have been optimally linked to other information systems, and data have been made available to all relevant stakeholders.
- The data from the SVS data management systems are used specifically for targeted and active communication (information, reporting) with stakeholders and the public.
- Digitalisation in the SVS sector is continuing to forge ahead, e.g. animal movement control.

f) *Increased disease awareness*

- The level of information and training of animal owners on disease awareness and on appropriate preventive measures is continuously increased.
- Disease awareness for relevant emerging and re-emerging diseases has been raised according to identified risks among official veterinarians, veterinary practitioners, people employed in animal disease diagnostics and in the public veterinary service.
- Mutual exchange between specialised staff from federal and cantonal authorities and the EU as well as other international organisations is ensured.

## II. **Emergency preparedness**

a) *Contingency planning*

- Contingency plans for all relevant highly contagious animal diseases are in place and constantly updated.
- Broad-based concepts exist to manage outbreaks of animal disease in domestic animals. There is awareness and acceptance of the necessary measures amongst domestic animal owners.
- The scientific community (scientific experts) is involved in crisis prevention and emergency situations.
- Resource management for the event of highly contagious animal diseases is efficient and the availability of sufficient human and material resources is guaranteed at all times.
- The SVS is prepared for shortages in products to safeguard animal health in crisis situations.
- The readiness of diagnostic laboratories for large-scale animal disease events is guaranteed at all times and adapted to the national and international threat situation.

- b) *Simulation exercises*
  - The control of the relevant highly contagious animal diseases is reviewed and optimized by means of regular national and international exercises.
- c) *Vaccination strategies*
  - Vaccination strategies for relevant highly contagious animal diseases have been evaluated and the contingency planning correspondingly adjusted.
- d) *Communication activities*
  - An effective emergency communication is in place.
  - Online information has been established as an indispensable source of information on animal diseases.
  - The Swiss veterinary service is known to be a competent and trustworthy partner for the media.
  - During an outbreak of a highly contagious animal disease there is understanding in the general public for prevention and control measures.

### III. **Control of zoonoses<sup>3</sup>, notifiable<sup>4</sup> and economically relevant<sup>5</sup> animal diseases**

- a) *Control and eradication programs*
  - The efforts to control animal diseases have been nationwide harmonized and implemented under the leadership of the FSVO in close cooperation with the cantons.
  - Animal owners take more responsibility in the control of animal diseases.
  - The animal diseases listed in the Animal Health Ordinance (AHO) and the associated measures have been assessed with regard to their relevance or effectiveness and feasibility.
- b) *Surveillance*
  - Organisation and processes within One Health context are designed to deal with the emergence of new zoonotic risks, and are reviewed and revised for known zoonoses.
  - The list of notifiable animal diseases has been reviewed.

### IV. **International cooperation**

- a) *Trade with the EU and third countries*
  - Trade with EU member states is conducted in accordance with the Agreement on Agriculture with the EU.
  - Swiss legislation relating to animal health, official inspections and veterinary drugs takes account of the further development of EU legislation in these areas. The EU recognises the equivalence of Swiss legislation in the form of an update to the Agreement on Agriculture.
  - The SVS has an international reputation as a trustworthy and competent partner.
  - Control of wildlife disease is coordinated with neighbouring countries.

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<sup>3</sup> Zoonoses are diseases that are transmissible between animals and humans.

<sup>4</sup> The term “notifiable animal disease” includes all diseases listed in Articles 2-5 of the Animal Health Ordinance (AHO) (SR 916.401).

<sup>5</sup> The term “economically relevant animal disease” is used here to include all infectious animal diseases that are economically relevant but not listed in the Animal Health Ordinance (AHO).

*b) International standards*

- Requirements relating to animal health in trade are based on science and adapted to the current situation.
- Science-based rules are being introduced to trading in wild animals to counteract the spread of zoonoses.

*c) Supporting partner countries*

- Good cooperation between veterinary authorities and other authorities is specifically promoted in projects to support partner countries, thereby propagating use of the One Health approach.
- The support for partner countries is designed to have a sustainable impact.
- The information gained from support projects flows into national further training courses.

**V. Science, research and development**

- Research needs for the Swiss veterinary service are accordingly assessed for implementation.
- Results of scientific studies are provided to develop future control and surveillance strategies.
- The FSVO actively promotes the networking of national and international research groups and strengthens international cooperation.

## **Implementation of the strategy?**

From 2022, the Swiss Animal Health Strategy 2022+ is to be implemented together with the partners involved. Plans for medium to long-term implementation of the various action areas are to be developed jointly with all stakeholders.