

Veterinary Laboratories Agency
Woodham Lane, New Haw
Addlestone
Surrey KT15 3NB

Telephone **01932 341111**
Fax **01932 357701**
Website **www.vla.gov.uk**



News Release

Date: 9th June 2006

Embargoed until: 13 June 2006 10.00 GMT

VLA to play major role in Epizone: EU Network of Excellence to fight animal diseases

On the 13th June 2006, the European Union launched **Epizone**, the largest international network of scientific excellence focused on animal diseases. Its aim is to improve international cooperation, including the fight against high-impact diseases such as bird flu and foot-and-mouth disease.

The Veterinary Laboratories Agency is eager to play a major role in **Epizone**, which will bring together, over 300 scientists from Turkey, China and ten European countries in a “virtual institute”. Dr Tony Fooks, **Epizone’s** coordinator at the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, said, “**Epizone** represents a great opportunity for us to contribute to European and global disease prevention. It will enable experts to pool their resources, harmonise their strategies and lead to improved global control of epidemic animal diseases, which we term epizootics”.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) are both partners in the Epizone network, and FAO has identified that the control of epizootic animal diseases should be treated as a priority in developing countries.

In the UK, the H5N1 avian influenza outbreak and the social and economic impact of the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak are still vivid in people’s minds. **Epizone** will improve the way governments respond to these outbreaks by providing them with the latest scientific evidence. “Networks of Excellence can mobilise key scientists rapidly to

provide policy-makers with the latest scientific information,” said Kumar Sivam, Head of VLA’s Knowledge Management team. He added, “Epizootic diseases can cause devastation amongst animal populations by crossing borders and affecting the livelihood of a great number of people. **Epizone** represents one step towards better international aid against poverty.”

For further information contact:

Trevor Harris, Marketing Manager, VLA Weybridge

Tel: 01932 357626 Fax: 01932 357701 Email: t.j.harris@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. Further information on Epizone can be obtained by contacting:
Dr Tony Fooks Telephone **01932 341111**: Fax **01932 347046**:
Email: marketing@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk

or the Epizone website:

www.cidc-lelystad.wur.nl/uk/research/international+cooperation/epizone/

2. The **Veterinary Laboratories Agency** provides all sectors of the animal health industry with animal disease surveillance, diagnostic services and veterinary scientific research. It is based in Addlestone, Surrey with fifteen regional laboratories covering England, Scotland and Wales and employs just over 1,200 with an income of around £97m. It is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) obtaining around 85 - 90% of its funding from Defra. Its mission is to safeguard public and animal health through world-class veterinary research and surveillance of farmed livestock and wildlife.

Further information can be found on: www.vla.gov.uk

Press notices are available on our website

www.vla.gov.uk

**VLA is an Executive Agency of the
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)**

End