EUBTNet System and Medreonet Integration

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During summer 2006, a bluetongue (BT) epidemic occurred for the first time in Northern Europe, caused by virus serotype 8 (BTV-8). The disease reached latitude 53°N, involving Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. In 2007 more than 40,000 outbreaks of BTV-8 have been recorded up to latitude 55°N, involving new countries such as Denmark, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and almost the whole territory of France.

In this epidemiological context, the European Commission recognized the need to develop a web-based information system, EUBTNet, i.e. a bluetongue network application for the European Union (EU), to ensure BT real-time assessment at the European level. A first release of EUBTNet (http://eubtnet. izs.it/btnet/index.htm) was made available to all EU Member States (MS) on 31 May 2007. EUBTNet is a tool for the rapid collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of large quantities of data generated by national/regional bluetongue monitoring programmes, directly provided by EU MS. The BT occurrence data, extracted from the Animal Disease Notification System (European Commission) and from the World Animal Health Information System for non-EU European and Mediterranean countries, are also included. The access to the system is governed by different procedures depending on the user's profile ensuring security and integrity of the data stored. A web-based geographic information system (Web GIS) is included in EUBTNet to provide a useful and immediate visual resource for decision-makers and competent authorities so as to help them in disease management and in the application of appropriate control measures. EUBTNet is highly flexible as it pursues the maximum level of interoperability with the existing national systems of MS and integrates continuous changes and refinements, after requests by the European Commission or MS. EUBTNet provides also several other tools to facilitate the exchange of information between MS and the European Commission. Taking into account the objectives of the Medreonet project EUBTNet represents a valuable source of validated data, allowing the project's partners to retrieve epidemiological data while avoiding the duplication of efforts in collecting such information.

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94