

Monitoring

ANIMAL HEALTH



Monitoring: how it works

With so many people coexisting in close proximity, it is essential to have an accurate system constantly monitoring the health of all farm animals in the Netherlands. The government and livestock industry initiated a monitoring and surveillance system together with Royal GD. GD has been commissioned to lead this countrywide surveillance.

The national Animal Health Surveillance System (AHSS) is an accessible and voluntary system, providing a broad safety net for the earliest possible detection of animal health signals. Such signals originate from farmers in various sectors (cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep, goats and horses), veterinarians, the processing industry, research institutes and public health authorities. The AHSS researches, bundles and analyses these signals. The results are shared with farmers, veterinarians and relevant parties, such as the government, livestock sector, human healthcare providers and (if necessary) neighbouring countries who may need to take action.

Three goals

Animal health monitoring is vital for the health and welfare of animals, people and the Dutch economy. These interests are translated into the following monitoring goals:

- Detection of outbreaks of recognised pathogens which are not known to be otherwise present in the Netherlands;
- Detection of unknown diseases or pathogens;
- Keeping track of trends and developments in animal health.

Animal Health Regulation (AHR)

The European regulations for the prevention and control of animal diseases are registered in the Animal Health Regulation (AHR). This regulation requires each member state to establish a system to monitor designated and emerging (new) animal diseases in farm

animals and horses. The AHR has been in force since 2021. Since then, the surveillance programmes for designated animal diseases, carried out by GD, have been a statutory duty of the Dutch government. To this end, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has designated GD as a legal entity with a statutory duty.

How does it work?

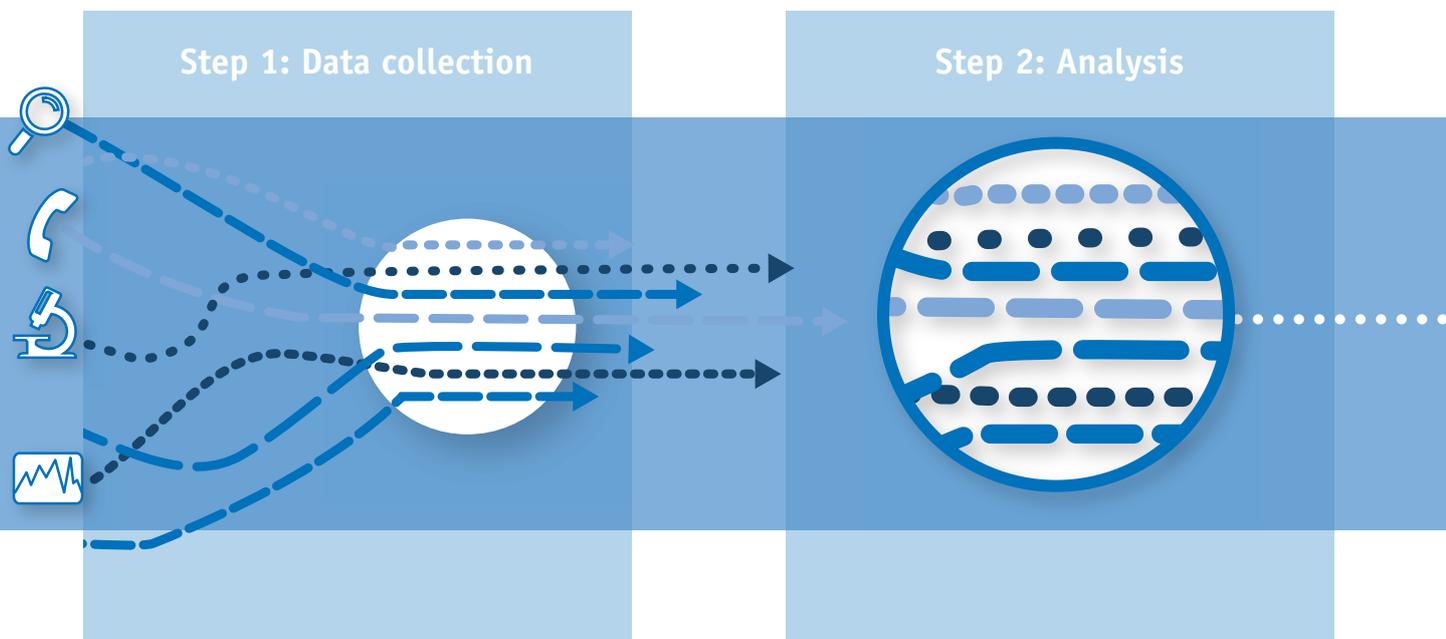
Step 1 – Data collection

The AHSS gathers signals from the field, both reactively and proactively. This information provides insight into trends and new developments in animal health.

Reactive instruments

Reactive instruments rely on the initiative of farmers, veterinarians and other parties who visit farms. Reactive gathering aims to detect signals from the field in the broadest possible sense. Reactive instruments:

- *Veekijker and Equine Help Desk*
The telephone help desk for veterinarians and farmers. Experienced and specialist GD veterinarians provide expert, tailored advice, free of charge.
- *Pathology*
Farmers and veterinarians can submit animals for necropsy by a veterinary pathologist in order to gain insight into the cause of death and/or farm problems, or simply to preclude certain problems.



- **Veterinary Monitoring Poultry (VMP)**

A cooperative agreement between a number of poultry veterinary practices and GD. Practitioners voluntarily provide digital information on poultry health, including the vaccinations administered and their findings during farm visits.

- **Online Pig Health Monitor**

On behalf of the pig farmer, veterinarians record clinical signs (and any diagnosis) in the Online Pig Health Monitor after each farm visit. This allows us to keep track of trends in pig health in the Netherlands.

- **Veterinary Environmental Toxicology**

GD offers support to livestock farmers and veterinarians as to whether animal health problems are related to environmental pollution. Early detection of such problems can prevent them from developing into public health risks and economic damage.

Proactive instruments

In the proactive instruments, the initiative to gather information lies with GD. Proactive instruments:

- **Data analysis**

Data analysis on anonymised data maps out trends and developments of general health traits and diseases. This involves data both from GD's internal lab research and from various external data suppliers. This includes data on milk production, milk quality, fertility, the use of antibiotics, purchase and disposal, and mortality.

- **Prevalence study**

Studies are regularly conducted into the prevalence of (endemic) animal diseases. The diseases to be monitored are determined on the basis of issues such as economic damage, importance for public health and the possibility of implementing measures.

- **Surveillance programmes**

EU regulations require testing of a number of animal diseases in a proportion of the Dutch herds in order to detect or preclude the presence of such diseases. GD runs surveillance programmes for brucellosis, bluetongue and avian influenza, for example.

Step 2 – Analysis

The Veekijker veterinarians regularly discuss and analyse all signals and results, together with other experts, during the Veekijker consultation.

Step 3 – Interpretation

GD writes reports for each sector, giving results and possible recommendations for further action

Step 4 – Information

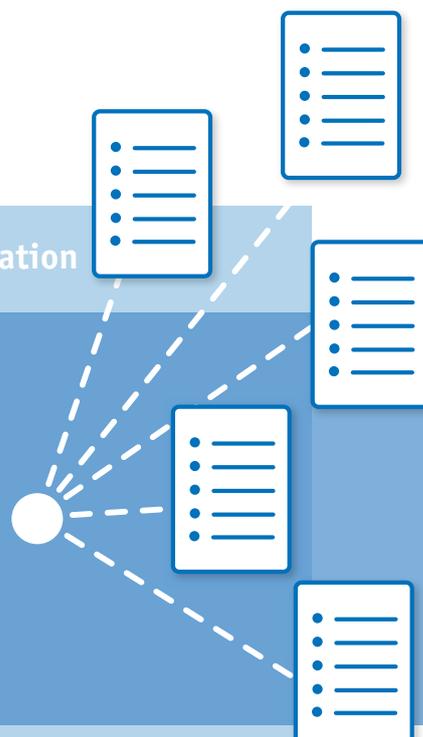
GD periodically shares the results of the monitor with the government and livestock industry, farmers and veterinarians, human healthcare providers and neighbouring countries. In the event of a possible (acute) risk for animals and/or human beings, GD directly contacts the appropriate parties. The government and sector parties subsequently decide whether further action must be taken in the industry, such as extra studies, communication or adaptations in policy.

We initially share information from monitoring with relevant target groups such as livestock farmers, veterinarians, the government, the livestock industry and human healthcare providers. The general public can also stay informed. We provide information through the monitoring reports, website, newsletters, journals (such as *Veterinair*, *Veekijkernieuws*) and our podcasts. We also share the information through channels outside GD such as *Tijdschrift voor Diergeneeskunde*, a Dutch journal of veterinary medicine. Networks such as the small ruminant knowledge network, intervision meetings and national and international conferences are also important.

Step 3: Interpretation



Step 4: Information



Want to keep up to date?

In the **Veekijknieuws** we provide feedback, by animal species, on salient issues from the monitoring. You can find the latest news on our website: www.gdanimalhealth.com/monitoringsurveillance



More information can be found at:
www.gdanimalhealth.com/monitoringsurveillance

