Citizens' summary
EU animal health law

The European Commission is proposing a single, comprehensive animal health law to replace the complicated animal health rules currently in place.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Current EU animal health legislation – some 400 individual acts – is complex and difficult to navigate.
- Animal disease outbreaks can harm not just other animals but also humans, as well as the overall economy and trade.
- An overall strategy is lacking and there is insufficient focus on preventing disease.
- There is no objective categorisation & prioritisation of animal health policy measures.
- Coordination of animal disease surveillance needs to be improved, with the various sectors and surveillance systems working together effectively.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

- The huge number of legal acts relating to animal health would be streamlined into a single law.
- Simpler & clearer rules would free up time, enabling authorities and those having to follow the rules to focus on key priorities: preventing and eradicating disease.
- Responsibilities would be clarified for farms, vets and others dealing with animals.
- The new rules would allow greater use of new technologies for animal health activities – surveillance of pathogens, electronic identification and registration of animals.
- Better early detection & control of animal diseases, including emerging diseases linked to climate change, would help the EU meet with international standards.
- There would be more flexibility to adjust rules to local circumstances, and to emerging issues such as climate and social change.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- Farmers (livestock, fish and shellfish farms) – better rules to prevent major disease outbreaks and help them compete effectively.
- Traders of live animals and animal products (semen, ova, embryos, etc.) – simplified administrative obligations.
- Veterinary authorities in EU countries – clearer legal basis and better tools to fight diseases, particularly surveillance and notification.
- EU consumers – fewer food safety risks.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

Uniform rules and cooperation between EU countries is essential, as:

- Animal diseases cross borders.
• To be effective, prevention, surveillance, notification and eradication needs to be a joint effort by all EU countries.
• Action at EU level for shared priorities is in the long run cheaper.
• Farming is an important industry for the EU both in terms of jobs and economic output.

**WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?**

• 2016.