Media release

20 January 2014

Swiss Federal Government and University of Bern set up future-oriented centre of excellence for animal health

On 1 January 2014, the University of Bern and the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) officially combined their respective skills in the area of veterinary virology and immunology. The former Institute of Veterinary Virology of the Vetsuisse Faculty at the University of Bern was integrated into the Federal Institute of Virology and Immunology (IVI). This step is designed to boost competence in the fields of animal health, research and teaching.

The Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern and the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office have cooperated closely in various areas for many years. The integration of a university institute and a Federal administrative unit with effect from 1 January 2014 has both strengthened their existing cooperation and provided a strong, innovative foundation for the future. The decision to integrate the Institute of Veterinary Virology (IVV) of the Vetsuisse Faculty Bern into the Federal Institute of Virology and Immunology (IVI) will enable the new IVI to exploit synergies and will boost its research activities.

Boosting research and services

Combining activities in a single institution will improve research and boost animal disease control overall. The Institute of Virology and Immunology (IVI) is the Swiss reference laboratory for the diagnosis, surveillance and control of highly infectious animal diseases such as avian influenza, foot and mouth disease and classical swine fever. The IVI investigates the emergence of new diseases in animals and their potential for transmission to humans. It is the approval authority for vaccines and sera for animals.
The IVI has two sites, one in Mittelhäusern and one now in Bern. The Bern site now also has laboratories for higher-security work where a wider range of animal diseases can be processed. Working with the Vetsuisse Faculty of the University of Bern, the IVI will now be able to offer top-quality research and teaching in the areas of virology and immunology.

The IVI’s virology and immunology departments will be run by Professors Volker Thiel (Virology) and Artur Summerfield (Immunology). Both are members of the Vetsuisse Faculty Bern, so the IVI will be well-integrated within the Faculty and the University of Bern. This will enable it to develop and conduct inter-institutional, cross-faculty research based on a multidisciplinary, synergistic approach for the benefit of humans and animals alike.

Further information about the new IVI can be found at www.ivi.admin.ch.

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