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Dear Colleagues

First of all we say cordially welcome to all participants of the 11th congress of the European Society of Veterinary and Comparative Nutrition in Leipzig.

No doubt, the annual congress of the ESVCN is well established. It is a story of difficult initiating steps, overridden scepticism and attractive meetings. Three aspects are of interest to clear the differences to many other nutrition orientated conferences.

1. The link between nutrition and health: The part of the society's name “..Veterinary Nutrition” indicates a general structure in the view on nutrition in teaching and research. Our congress brings together many people – mostly < 45 years of age – who work on nutrition either in the industry, administration and legislation or in a scientific environment, closely in touch with the nutritional impact on health,

The actual meeting is in line with that part of the ESVCN profile. The reviews draw our attention towards vital segments of the communication between nutrition and the entire organism. A healthy gut essentially owns a huge capacity to adapt to different conditions regarding feed selection, feed processing, feeding technique nutrient uptake, undesirable substances. Many signals are generated during ingestion and digestion which are not sufficiently considered by caloric data or nutrient quantities but represent the dynamic environmental variation at the borderline feed and organism. If we understand – and I think we should do so – a gut related disease as an incompetence in adaptation, we need to understand more the power of those dynamic, complex processes and how we feed them, on both sides, the positive and the negative one. We need the insight in adaptation, repair and damage of the gut wall.

Interestingly we feel it rather normal to look on e.g. nitrogen intake and the nitrogen accretion during growth as the natural key response and our discipline produced an incredible depth of knowledge in those processes. But the life spending reply from the hormone and the immune system to nutrition has been ignored and calls for more interest as in the past.

The spectrum of contributions and the individual topics incorporates these two aspects of the **nutrition-health axis, adaptation, regulation and defence**.

2. The volume of scientific input into the congress and selection:

Most of us are familiar with the process to write and submit an abstract and usually we wait for the answer by a scientific committee to accept one and to reject the other. There is a very weak tradition in our society to insist on such rules. The product of that what organizers of the conferences in the past and of that what we have done this year is simple: a) The diversity in the spectrum of subjects in scientific work, and b) the attraction of scientist from as many parts of Europe as possible. The contributions to the congress do not reflect a selection of the so called top 25 % - regardless the question which procedure is credible to select the top 25 % properly. As in the years before, the congress shows the **average product of our scientific work**. Of course one Congress is more attractive as another one, many reasons create differences in that concern, but I am convinced, the congress does not reflect the quality in science of a stranger. The congress is – and should be – a reflexion of our own. The questionable inflation of peer reviewed communications damages the responsibility which we have by our own first of all. By that reason it is a benefit to have our specific volume of scientific input, to have that “ESVCN-way” for selection and rejection based on the idea to create a representative collection of contributions in a stimulating order. This benefit has a second

element. If we feel unhappy with the collection of abstracts and presentations we are unhappy with our own scientific work.

3. Undefined congress directives and structure: Our congress jumps from one place to the next, unpredictable sometimes and without professional institutions for organisation. The powering idea is to stay at a place where we have a university hosting an institute or department or other type of working structure focussed on animal nutrition. Consequently we have huge differences regarding the environment for science, the density of the programme, appending activities, the local style, temperament and atmosphere. **Each congress has an own face.**

This year it seems to be a little a sweating one, showing the need for oxygen to drive and join all the sessions. But you may have a little the taste of the mixture of your presentations and the local spirit of the city of Leipzig and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. If you go through the city of Leipzig and cross the place between the opera and the concert hall ("Gewandhaus"), you can see at the top of a major building the inscription by golden letters "OMNIA VINCIT LABOR" below two metallic fellows mauling a big bell every hour. Not far away you may meet Dr. Faust and Mephisto, the leading characters in the drama written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe dealing with the destructive disbelief of a scientist. In another part you may cross the house in which Schiller lived when he finished the poem "Ode to joy". This poem was completed by Beethoven by that composition which is today the anthem of the European Union. Having the congress inside of that triangle hopefully is a stimulating position.

The conference needs enormous personal and financial support. **Thanks** to my colleagues and the staff of the entire institute, it was possible to go ahead. They were highly motivated and busy to organize the congress. Ingrid Vervuert, Marion Schnellert, Norman Ständer, Mandy Bochnia, Klaus-Dieter Markuske and Sara Klein carried the major load in communication, composition of the programme, selecting the congress venue, preparing the proceedings, booking rooms et cetera; thanks to them and not at least to all members of the staff and the students doing the masses of secret but essential work in the background.

We thank the ESVCN for the opportunity to host you all here in Leipzig and the support to keep it running.

We are very pleased to have the support by our sponsors. We recognize with many thanks their input which is essential to have a moderate congress fee for all participants, to open the congress to students, to have all the social activities which complete a congress feeling which hopefully is characterized by the communication on scientific work, the discussion between the participants and the cordial welcome of the hosting team.

I hope the conference is
uncomfortable enough to keep you restless,
presenting work with edges in order to provoke discussion,
big enough to meet people you never met before,
familiar enough to stay together for confidential disputation,
irritating or conflicting in order to know what to prefer and what to avoid for the next conference,
and of course relaxed enough to enjoy Leipzig hosting ESVCN 2007



Manfred Coenen

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Marion Schnellert
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