

The Homeopathic Treatment of Animals in Europe

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A report on the situation in 15 countries

Introduction

This document has been published by the European Council for Classical Homeopath (ECCH). ECCH represents homeopaths in Europe, and focuses its representational activities within the boundaries of Europe as well as specifically within the European Union. ECCH has NGO Consultative Status with the Council of Europe and is an associate member of the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).

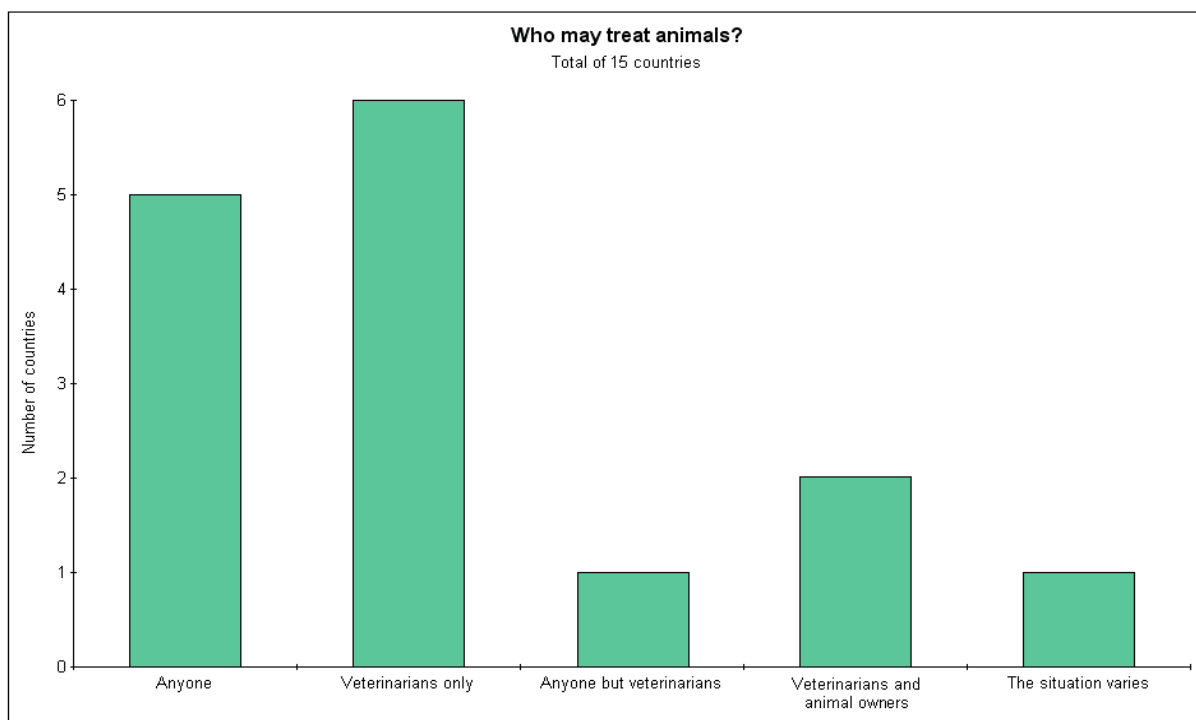
The purpose of this document is to give a brief presentation of the use of homeopathic medicines in the treatment of animals in Europe. The situation in 15 countries has been described, to serve as examples of the status and extent of homeopathic treatment of animals in Europe. A variety of countries has been included to present the situation both within and outside the European Union, in different geographical parts of Europe. This is a revised edition of the first report that was produced in 1999.

This report is divided into two main sections. The overall situation in Europe is described in the first section and the situation in each of 15 individual countries in the second. An attached list of addresses has been included as an appendix. Most of the information in the first section of this report is explained in greater detail in the second section, which also includes referral to most references.

The overall situation in Europe

The legal status for homeopathy with regards to the treatment of animals

Anyone is allowed to treat animals in five out of the 15 countries included in this report (Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Norway), and only veterinarians are allowed to treat animals in six countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Israel, Netherlands, Portugal). In Sweden veterinarians are prohibited from using homeopathic medicines to treat animals, but anyone else may do so. Only veterinarians and animal owners are allowed to treat animals in Ireland and the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands and Portugal some homeopaths advise animal owners on the treatment of their animals. In Switzerland legislation for someone who is not a veterinarian varies from canton to canton.



What animals are being treated with homeopathic medicines, and for which conditions?

Both pets and food producing animals are being treated with homeopathic medicines, for the latter particularly within the biological farming industry. Animals are being treated for both acute and chronic conditions. Examples of conditions being treated are mastitis in cows, other recurring infections, digestive problems such as diarrhoea, psychological or behavioural problems, sterility and birth difficulties. The EU Council of Ministers has recommended that for animals being raised organically for food production: '... when animals become sick or injured, they should be treated immediately by giving preference to phytotherapeutic or homeopathic medicinal products and by limiting to a strict minimum the use of chemically-synthesised allopathic medicinal products.'

Veterinarians practising homeopathy

An increasing number of veterinarians use homeopathic medicines to treat animals. Treatment methods vary from classical homeopathy to isopathy and the use of complex remedies. Organisations for veterinarians practising homeopathy and/or other CAM therapies exist in nine countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom).

Homeopaths treating animals

In several countries homeopaths who are not veterinarians treat animals. A survey showed that in Norway 39 % of all homeopaths who are members of the ECCH member association treat animals more or less regularly. The Greek ECCH member association has informed the Greek Ministry of Health that their members also treat animals with homeopathy. Several homeopaths who are members of the Finnish ECCH member association treat animals homeopathically.

Farmers using homeopathic medicines to treat their animals

An increasing number of farmers are using homeopathic medicines to treat their animals. This is true particularly within the biological farming industry. Examples of this are in Austria, where organisations for biological farming encourage conventional farmers to turn to natural methods such as homeopathy; Finland where an estimated 5 % of all cattle owners use homeopathy to treat their animals; Sweden where 14 % of all milk producing farmers regularly use homeopathy to treat their animals and the United Kingdom where an increasing number of both organic and conventional farmers are using homeopathic medicines to treat their livestock.

Training and education in veterinary homeopathy

Both private courses and university courses in the homeopathic treatment of animals are growing in numbers across Europe. Education and training in veterinary homeopathy exists for veterinarians, homeopaths and farmers in several countries. University courses exist in e.g. Austria, Greece and Switzerland. A specialist course in homeopathy exists for Nordic veterinarians. In Norway more than 50 seminars on homeopathic treatment of animals have been held for farmers and veterinarians.

Research on veterinary homeopathy

The number of research projects on the homeopathic treatment of animals is steadily increasing. Projects vary from single studies of specific species of animals suffering from specified diagnosed conditions to more extensive research programmes.

Examples of research projects vary from classical homeopathic treatment of horses in Austria, treatment of mastitis in cows in Denmark funded by the Danish Government, a Swedish survey showing that the main reason why farmers use homeopathic remedies is the risk of bacterial resistance when using antibiotics, for their own interest and economical advantages; to a strategic institute research programme for animal health in organic agriculture in Norway. The latter includes partners from ecological agriculture, the university and dairy producers.

A Nordic cooperation for research in agriculture NKJ (Nordiskt kontaktorgan för Jordbruksforskning) has financed a network of Nordic researchers who are interested in homeopathy. The aim of the network is to plan and develop high quality research and harmonise research competency in homeopathy research among the Nordic countries. Veterinarians from all Nordic countries are members of this network.

The organic farming industry

As already mentioned the EU Council of Ministers recommended in its resolutions for organic farming that phytotherapeutic and homeopathic medicinal products should be given preference when animals become sick or injured. Parts of the organic farming industry have taken particular interest in therapies such as homeopathy as an alternative to conventional treatment.

An Irish organic farming organisation has recommended that complementary or alternative treatment including homeopathic and naturopathic systems should be used in preference to conventional drugs where such treatments have been developed and are effective. A UK organic farming organisation has issued a fact sheet on homeopathy and organic farming. Demeter, an international agricultural association, encourages the use of natural remedies.

Homeopathic medicines

Existing EU directives for homeopathic medicinal products for veterinary use currently state that only homeopathic veterinary medicinal products that are intended for administration to pet animals or exotic species whose flesh or products are not intended for human consumption, may be subject to a special, simplified registration procedure.

This regulation has in a number of countries resulted in many homeopathic medicines not being registered and therefore not used to treat farming animals. In Denmark only remedies that were on the Danish market before 14 July 1994 may be legally imported. Danish Medicines Authorities have stated that no homeopathic medicine has been registered for production animals and these medicines may not be registered before EU legislation has been changed. In 1993 a few manufacturers in the Netherlands produced an almost complete list of known remedies in potencies from D2 (dilution of 1:100) and higher (more diluted). All remedies on this list may be legally used in animals, but it is unclear for how long. The Department of Agriculture is reviewing the list of remedies from 1993 and wants to introduce the same rules for registration as for human remedies. No supplier of homeopathic medicines has applied to have their homeopathic remedies licensed in Ireland, so the use of homeopathic remedies in food producing animals is strictly speaking illegal. This does not however seem to be a problem in the non-food producing animal sector in Ireland, as the whole area has not been policed so far.

The existing EU directives for homeopathic medicinal products intended for veterinary use stand in contrast to the EU Council of Ministers' resolution recommending the use of homeopathic medicinal products to treat sick or injured animals being raised organically.

In the current proposals for the revision of EU medicine directives, which include the directives for homeopathic medicinal products for human and veterinary use, these restrictions have been removed, so that any animal, including animals for food production, may be treated using homeopathic medicinal products in the future. It will, after final adoption of the revised medicine directives, be up to national medicine agencies to ensure that any homeopathic medicinal product may be registered according to the special simplified registration procedure, and thereby available for all animals.

Country by country: A brief summary of the existing situation in Europe

AUSTRIA (1, 2, 3, 4)

The practice of homeopathy

Only veterinarians are legally allowed to treat animals in Austria. About 100 veterinarians are members of the Austrian Homeopathic Veterinary Society (ÖGHV). A team of 15 specialised veterinarians are working for long term healthcare in large herds. Some veterinarians use homeopathy in acute cases. Many farmers are keen to learn homeopathy but lack experts to teach them.

With the onset of diseases such as Creutzfeldt Jacob's Disease (CJD) and foot and mouth disease, the public is becoming increasingly conscious of the quality of their food. Organisations for biological farming encourage conventional farmers to turn to natural methods such as homeopathy and phytotherapy.

Training and networks

In Austria several veterinarians are training in homeopathy. The number of courses, seminars, lectures and workshops is steadily increasing. There are training courses to teach farmers a basic knowledge of homeopathic remedies and treatment in acute cases. Seminars with up to 500 participants have been held for veterinarians, veterinary students, homeopaths, organic farmers, representatives from environmental groups and the organic farming industry. International scientific symposia on the treatment of cattle and horses have been arranged in Tirol and Salzburg. Austrian veterinarians have given lectures on complementary medicine in organic herds at the University for Agriculture in Vienna. The Austrian veterinary organisation has organised an international workshop entitled 'Veterinary Homeopathy in Organic Herds.' There are also more advanced courses for veterinarians, where they learn about constitutions, psychological problems, sterility and problems at birth in animals.

The Vienna Veterinary School runs a one semester course as an introduction to homeopathic treatment of domestic animals, and intends to extend it to farm animals. The university runs a homeopathic ambulance as part of a clinic for pets and horses. The first semester of a university education programme started in October 2002, arranged by the Veterinary University in Vienna in cooperation with an Institute called 'Trainings- und beratungszentrum für Rinderhaltung.' The veterinary organisation for homeopathy encourages universities to deliver proper training in homeopathy.

Research and surveys

Some research has been carried out on classical homeopathic treatment of horses and homotoxicological treatment of carcinoma in dogs.

Homeopathy and organic farming

Antibiotics are prohibited for ordinary breeding. In spite of this some farmers have their animals permanently on antibiotics. The Austrian Meat Authority (AMA) introduced a special label in 1995 indicating which products are of high quality and organically produced.

BELGIUM (5, 6)

Only veterinarians are allowed to treat animals in Belgium, but some homeopaths are known to advise animal owners on treating their animals. Veterinarians practising homeopathy are not united in one organisation, possibly due to language difficulties.

DENMARK (5, 7, 8)

Practice of homeopathy

About one quarter of the 80 veterinarians who are members of the Danish Association for Integrated Veterinary Medicine (FIV) use homeopathic medicines to treat animals. About half of the veterinarians mainly treat pet animals and half treat farm animals with a variety of complaints, mainly with classical homeopathy, but also with complex remedies. One Danish veterinarian has treated some dairy herds (80 milk producing cows) solely with homeopathy over a period of one and a half year. There is growing interest in homeopathy among veterinarians and farmers (both organic and conventional).

Legislation and regulation

Homeopathic medicines intended for use in veterinary homeopathy must be used in potencies of D4 (dilution of 1:10 000) or higher (more diluted). Remedies may only be administered orally or externally.

There are major difficulties with implementation of EU directive 92/74/EEC which states that homeopathic remedies intended for treatment of food production animals are restricted to remedies that were on the Danish market before 14 July 1994. This means that sale of any new homeopathic remedies is prohibited, regardless of whether they have been registered in other EU member countries. A Special Simplified Registration Procedure (SSRP) for all homeopathic remedies is necessary to change the current situation.

Any homeopathic medicine available on the market before 14 July 1994, and registered with the proper authorities by 1 May 1998, could be legally sold for the individual animal species it was registered for until 1 January 2001. Danish Medicines Authorities have stated that almost no homeopathic medicine has been registered for food production animals and may not be registered before EU legislation has been changed. This is in spite of the fact that homeopathic and phytotherapeutic medicines have been recommended by the EU Council of Ministers as a first choice therapy in treatment of organically raised animals.

Training and networks

An increasing number of Danish veterinarians attend courses in homeopathy. A specialist course in homeopathy for Nordic veterinarians exists. The Danish association (FIV) organises 1-2 seminars with national or foreign speakers, as a part of the training programme of the International Association for Veterinary Homeopathy (IAVH). About 15-20 participants attend each seminar and exams are being organised according to IAVH criteria. The Danish Veterinary Association has formed a discussion group for post graduate and student education in acupuncture and homeopathy, and in order to form an official list of veterinarians who perform these treatments.

Another organisation, Dansk Homeopatisk Selskab (DHS), is a special interest organisation for anyone working with or interested in homeopathy. The organisation, which has about 250 members and was established by producers of potentised complex and anthroposophic medicines, has a sub-group for the treatment of animals.

Homeopathy and organic farming

Danish veterinarians who practise homeopathy are working to persuade the Danish authorities to allow for wider use of homeopathic remedies according to the EU resolution on organic farming. An ecological organisation named Økologisk Landsorganisasjon exists, but does not have advisors for homeopathy.

Research and surveys

A PhD project on homeopathic treatment of mastitis in cows was financed for the period from April to December 2002. Funding was granted from a Government fund to treat cattle in 15 herds.

FINLAND (8)

Practice of homeopathy

Finnish veterinarians practising homeopathy have formed an association called Suomen Eläinlääkäreiden Homeopatiayhdistys which has 26 members. These veterinarians mainly treat pets and horses. Treatment of cattle is not common. Veterinarians use classical homeopathy, complex remedies and isopathy. About 15 homeopaths who are members of the ECCH member organisation Suomen Homeopaatit ry treat animals. These homeopaths are not veterinarians. The conditions primarily treated are diseases of the skin and bones, digestive problems, recurring infections and behavioural problems. An estimated 5 % of Finnish cattle owners use homeopathy.

Legislation and regulation

It is legal for anyone to treat animals homeopathically. Homeopathic treatment of all food producing animals was legalised on 1 March 2001 provided the medicines are diluted in D4 (1:10 000) or higher (more diluted). Treatment of pet animals was legal also before 2001.

Training and networks

Two schools for homeopathic treatment of animals exist in Finland: SHLI in Helsinki and Arcanum in Turku. Suomen Homeopaatit ry (SH) has organised seminars about allopathic treatment of food producing animals, and is planning to organise a seminar on homeopathic treatment of these animals.

Homeopathy and organic farming

The organic farming organization, Luomuliitto, does not have advisors on homeopathic treatment.

GERMANY (5, 9)

Anyone may treat animals, and several homeopaths do so. There are some specialists who call themselves Tierheilpraktiker, but it is not a recognised profession.

A German organisation for holistic veterinary medicine exists (GGTM), as well as a German subgroup of the IAVH.

GREECE (5, 10)

Practice of homeopathy

Some veterinarians and some homeopaths who are not veterinarians treat animals homeopathically in Greece. A Greek veterinarian association for homeopathy (HVHA) was founded in June 1997 and has about 50 members, whereof about 15 are members of IAVH.

Legislation and regulation

There are no regulations concerning use of homeopathy to treat animals, so anyone may treat them. The Greek ECCH member association has informed the Greek Ministry of Health that their members also treat animals with homeopathy.

Training and networks

In Greece seminars in veterinary homeopathy are arranged by the Greek veterinarian association for homeopathy (HVHA) and lectures in veterinary homeopathy have been held at two universities. Lectures in veterinary homeopathy have been held in the Veterinary School in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and University of Thessalia in Karditsa.

ICELAND (11)

Anyone may treat animals.

IRELAND (12, 13)

Practice of homeopathy

Both animal owners and veterinarians may treat animals. The Irish Society of Veterinary Homeopaths (ISVH) has between 30 and 40 members who primarily practise classical homeopathy, but also use complex medicines and isopathy. Although all species may be treated, veterinarians mainly treat small animals with homeopathy, suffering from either acute or chronic conditions.

Legislation and regulation

As no supplier of homeopathic medicines has applied to have their homeopathic remedies licensed the use of homeopathic remedies in food producing animals is strictly speaking illegal. This does not seem to be a problem in the non-food producing animal sector. The whole area has not been policed so far. The Department of Agriculture is opposed to the use of homeopathy. The responsibility has been given to the Irish Medicines Board to license the remedies.

Training and networks

The Oxford HTPG Course has planned to start a veterinary homeopathy course in Waterford in January 2003.

Homeopathy and organic farming

There are three organic farming organisations: the Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association (IOFGA), The Organic Trust and The Biodynamic Agriculture Association. IOFGA literature states "complementary or alternative treatment including homeopathic and naturopathic systems should be used in preference to conventional drugs where such treatments have been developed and are effective." IOFGA have no official advisors or homeopathic veterinarian in their organisation but are in contact with some homeopathic veterinarians as unofficial advisors. The Department of Agriculture has an Organic section.

ISRAEL (14)

Only veterinarians are legally permitted to treat animals in Israel. Someone who is not a veterinarian may carry out certain procedures (e.g. vaccination of chickens) under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. Kibbutz Harduf uses various complementary and alternative therapies to treat animals.

NETHERLANDS (15)

Practice of homeopathy

A homeopathic veterinary society called Groep hom. Werkend dierenartsen (Group of homeopathic veterinarians) has over 150 members. The members primarily treat cats and dogs, but also horses and cattle, mainly suffering from chronic diseases. The animals are treated with classical homeopathy, complex medicines or isopathy.

Legislation and regulation

Only veterinarians may legally treat animals, but some homeopaths advise owners on the treatment of their animals. In 1993 a few manufacturers produced an almost complete list of known remedies in potencies from D2 and higher. All remedies on this list may be legally used, but it is unclear for how long. The Department of Agriculture is reviewing the list of remedies from 1993 and wish to introduce the same rules for registration as for human remedies.

Training and networks

There are three schools for veterinary homeopathy, in Breda, Amersfoort and Meppel.

Homeopathy and organic farming

There are several organic farming organisations in the Netherlands: Platform, Biologica, SKAL (control body), Louis Bolk Instituut (research organisation) and St. Natuurweide.

Research and surveys

Two studies of homeopathic treatment of farm animals have been published, one is an ongoing study in treatment of nipple diarrhoea.

NORWAY (16, 17, 18)

Practice of homeopathy

A survey published in 1998 showed that 39 % of all the homeopaths who are members of the Norwegian Homeopathic Association (NHL) treat animals. NHL currently has more than 300 members. Some veterinarians and a number of farmers treat animals homeopathically.

Legislation and regulation

Anyone may treat animals in Norway as long as they do not break the 'law of quackery' or the 'law for animal protection'. The most important points in the law for animal protection are that the animal should be provided with adequate treatment and not suffer unnecessarily. Only veterinarians may perform operations. State vets have interpreted the law in such a way that it allows homeopathic treatment of animals. Any animal may be treated with homeopathic medicines, with the exception of racehorses which may not be given acupuncture or homeopathy within two weeks of a race. The Department of Agriculture has developed new regulations for practitioners treating animals.

Training and networks

Information about complementary therapies is included in the education of Norwegian veterinarians. More than 50 seminars on homeopathic treatment of animals for farmers and vets have been held all over the country.

Homeopathy and organic farming

A strategic institute research programme for animal health in organic agriculture exists. The main aim of the program is to build general and specific knowledge of animal health and welfare in organic agriculture. It includes research on homeopathy. A Norwegian centre for ecological farming (NORSØK) is a research institute and national centre for ecological farming situated in Tingvoll.

Research and surveys

The strategic institute research programme for animal health in organic agriculture includes the following projects:

- To gain insight into the use and significance of alternative veterinary medicine in organic dairy farming, with special reference to mastitis and homeopathy
- To study the relation between the quality of organic fodder (cation - anion balance) and milk fever in organic agriculture

Partners in the programme are the Norwegian Centre for Ecological Agriculture and the Norwegian Veterinary University, Norwegian Agriculture University Department of Animal Husbandry and Tine Dairies.

PORTUGAL (19)

Only veterinarians are legally entitled to treat animals regardless of therapy. However there are some homeopaths who advise owners on the treatment of their animals.

SWEDEN (5, 20, 21, 22)

Practice of homeopathy

Many Swedish homeopaths treat animals. Homeopathic medicines may be used to treat animals, but not by veterinarians. An increasing number of farmers attend courses to learn how to treat their own animals. There is general scepticism towards homeopathy among veterinarians.

Training and networks

Three schools offer education in animal homeopathy and many professional homeopaths treat animals. A Nordic network for veterinary homeopathy exists.

Research and surveys

A survey showed that 14% of dairy farmers are regularly using homeopathy to treat their animals. Another survey showed that the main reasons why farmers use homeopathic remedies is the risk of bacterial resistance when using antibiotics, for their own interest and for economic advantages. A research project on treatment of diarrhoea in calves did not show any effect of the remedy Podophyllum.

SWITZERLAND (5, 23)

Practice of homeopathy

A number of Swiss veterinarians treat animals with homeopathic medicines. An organisation for veterinarians treating animals with homeopathy and acupuncture exists.

Legislation and regulation

Veterinary doctors are officially allowed to practise homeopathy. Legislation and regulation for someone who is not a veterinarian varies from canton to canton. Remedies must be registered with the official medicines authorities, as for human beings. Single remedies do not have to be labelled 'for animals'.

Training and networks

In Switzerland a curriculum for veterinarians treating animals in organic farming has been developed. A university in Switzerland has lectures and provides consultation for organic farmers. There is also a university course for veterinarians. Swiss veterinarians are attempting to form a network which involves homeopathic veterinarians, organic farmers, farmers, organic farming organisations, universities and professional organic institutes to co-ordinate a course system for both lay people and veterinarians. A curriculum for veterinarians treating animals in organic farming has been developed. There are also contacts with German veterinarians in order to arrange more professional courses in veterinary homeopathy. The STVAH is an organisation for veterinarians treating animals with homeopathy and acupuncture.

UNITED KINGDOM

Legislation and regulation

Only veterinarians and animal owners may treat their animals. An increasing number of organic and conventional farmers are using homeopathic medicines in their livestock.

Training and networks

Several books have been published on the Homeopathic treatment of animals, both domestic and livestock. A British veterinarian society the British Homeopathic Veterinary Association exists.

Homeopathy and organic farming

The Soil Association, regulating and representing organic farming in the UK, issues a fact sheet on Homeopathy and Organic Farming (24).

Appendix

Abbreviations list

AMA – Austrian Meat Authority
CAM – Complementary and Alternative Medicine
CJD – Creutzfeldt Jacob's Disease
DHS – Dansk Homeopatisk Selskab
ECCH – European Council for Classical Homeopathy
EPHA – European Public Health Alliance
EU – European Union
FIV – Danish Association for Integrated Veterinary Medicine
HVHA – Greek veterinarian association for homeopathy
IOFGA – Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association
IAVH – International Association for Veterinary Homeopathy
ISVH – Irish Society of Veterinary Homeopaths
NGO – Non Governmental Organisation
NHL - Norwegian Homeopathic Association
NKJ – Nordiskt kontaktorgan för Jordbruksforskning
NORSØK – Norwegian centre for ecological farming
SH – Suomen Homeopaatit ry
SSRP – Special Simplified Registration Procedure
ÖGHV – Austrian Homeopathic Veterinary Society

Terminology for different farming methods

Organic/biological/ecological farming

Organic farming is farming where the use of synthetically produced fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, and livestock feed additives is avoided or largely excluded. Organic farming methods are widely used in underdeveloped and developing countries, largely because of economics and a lack of chemicals and are becoming more widely accepted in developed countries as a reaction to intensive or factory farming conditions. Organic farming is known by different names in different countries, and the estimated 16 different terms in use include biological farming, regenerative farming, and sustainable farming. Biological farming is the term most favoured in Europe, while the United Kingdom and the United States prefer organic farming. Some of the terms are not used at all in some of the countries.

Biodynamic farming

Biodynamic farming is a specific sort of biological farming that is part of a whole philosophy that includes education, art, nutrition, and religion, as well as agriculture. Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian social philosopher and founder of anthroposophy, is acknowledged as the creator of biodynamic farming. Farmers using this method also use specific alternative products to treat plants and animals.

Organic biological farming

In organic biological farming attention is paid to layers in the earth. Farmers using this method try to use methods not to plough the earth as this according to their opinion ruins the structure of the earth.

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