



The own capital of ILVO is looking for a

Researcher: Welfare of Farm Animals (part-time)

Vacancy number
Place of employment

EV/2020/025/D68
Scheldeweg 68 - 9090 Melle

Are you a passionate researcher with a heart for the Welfare of Farm Animals? Someone with an open, critical and scientific mind?

Job description

You will be employed primarily on the PPILOW project and on various other on-going or ad-hoc projects at ILVO's Animal Sciences Unit.

PPILOW is a EU Horizon project entitled "*Poultry and Pig Low-input and Organic production systems' Welfare*", of which ILVO is one of 23 European partner organizations.

More information: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/816172>.

Besides the PPILOW project, you will contribute to (and write applications for) other research projects, mainly at the Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour research group of the ILVO's Animal Sciences Unit. One of these projects is WEIDESCHERM on "*Determining adequate plantations for providing shelter to animals kept outside*" in which ILVO collaborates with BOS+ Vlaanderen.

Specific

Your main task will be to coordinate ILVO's contribution (together with an international team of researchers and facilitators) to the **PPILOW** project (2019-2024), for which you report directly to Prof. Frank Tuytens. You will be in charge for the organization of activities by yourself, two ILVO PhD students, a ILVO technician and our collaborators from Belgium (Bioforum, CRA), the Netherlands (Wageningen University, Utrecht University) and France (INRAE, ITAVI). This predominantly includes the following 3 studies.

In the first study we aim to evaluate how effective animal welfare self-assessment by the farmer (via a mobile application) combined with automated feedback (including benchmarking) is in improving the welfare of animals in commercial organic and low-input production systems. Other aims include (1) farmer sensitisation about animal welfare issues, (2) testing agreement in scoring of animal welfare measures between farmers and trained observers, (3) providing data for the central data base that will be useful for researchers and the farming sector for documenting main animal welfare issues in low-input farming systems and for identifying differences in time or between systems. Data will be generated during a longitudinal study including 20 to 30 broiler chicken and 20 to 30 pig farmers from three (BE, NL, FR) and two (BE, NL) countries, respectively. The effect of using the self-assessment tool and being given feedback on the animal welfare status

will be tested by comparing differences in animal welfare outcomes before and after using the tools.

The aim of the second study is to develop an optimised design for the outdoor area for laying hens that maximises use of the outdoor area and minimises feather pecking, feather damage and mortality. A unique ILVO experimental set-up will be used where laying hens can be given access to a free range with two types of natural vegetation (short rotation willow area and a hazel tree area). Birds can be tracked automatically in the free-range using state-of-the-art UWB-localisation technology. Birds that have been subjected to two incubation and two rearing treatments by our collaborators of Utrecht University, will be transported to the ILVO in order to investigate long-term effects during the egg production phase. Moreover, the hens will alternately be offered insect larvae as enrichment in the outdoor range. Early-life and late-life treatments effects on plumage condition, other welfare indicators and (ranging) behaviour will be investigated, and free-range use will be linked to plumage condition at the individual level. Moreover, promising treatments to prevent feather pecking during the laying period proposed by practitioners will be followed up on 5 commercial laying hen farms in The Netherlands and Belgium.

The third study investigates early life management solutions to improve resilience in slow-growing broilers. The ability to absorb change and to anticipate future perturbations through adaptive capacity (or resilience) has been shown to be affected by early life experiences, not only early post-natal, but also already during incubation. Adjusting the incubation temperature profile can program chickens during the embryonic phase to cope with various challenges, such as fluctuations in (outdoor) temperatures, but also pathogenic challenges. Our collaborators at Wageningen University will expose slow growing broiler eggs to three different incubation temperature treatments and assess differences in metabolic activity of the embryo, and the quality and behaviour of the hatched chicks. After hatching, these chickens will be transported to the ILVO rearing facilities with outdoor access and will be reared until 11 weeks of age. Blood samples will be taken (to be analysed on metabolites, haptoglobin-like activity, total antioxidant status, blood TBARS and CK activity by INRAE), behaviour and welfare will be assessed, and the use of the free ranges will be monitored using the UWB-technology.

You will be responsible for coordinating activities between the staff involved; liaising with and reporting to the PPILOW consortium; (co-) supervise PhD / Master / Bachelor students; ensure efficient collection of valid and reliable data, proper experimental set-up, statistical analyses, interpretation of results and writing of scientific manuscripts. In addition, you will present your work at (inter)national project meetings with the collaborating project partners, and at (inter)national scientific conferences.

Additionally, you are expected to contribute to other tasks within the PPILOW project and activities within the Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour Group of ILVO. This includes seeking opportunities for attracting research funds, writing grant applications, contributing to ongoing (contract) research such as WEIDESCHERM, administrative tasks and representing the research group at internal and external meetings.

Our organization

The researcher will be employed by the Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO, Belgium).

ILVO is a scientific institute of the Government of Flanders. ILVO performs multidisciplinary, innovative and independent research aimed at economically, ecologically and (socially) sustainable agriculture and fisheries. Through this research, ILVO accumulates fundamental and applied



knowledge which is vital for the improvement of products and production methods for quality control and the safety of end products, and for the amelioration of policy instruments as a foundation for sector development and agricultural policy for rural areas. More information can be found at: www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be/language/en-US/EN/Home.aspx.

Your Profile

We are looking for a highly motivated team-player who:

- holds a PhD (preferentially) or at least a Master's degree in a biological science, including animal science, veterinary medicine, zoology, bio-engineering, and related disciplines
- has a scientific, analytical and critical mindset
- likes taking initiative, and is pro-active
- has an open mind, and is eager to learn new skills
- has strong communicative skills and actively engages to build and maintain contact with the collaborating project partners
- has strong organizational and people skills
- is fluent in writing and speaking in English
- holds a FELASA C certificate (laboratory animal science) or will obtain such a certificate within the first year of the employment

Other (non-essential) selection criteria include:

- Strength of the academic track record with a demonstrable interest in farm animal welfare and behaviour
- Interest and expertise in sustainable poultry and pig production
- IT (MS Word/MS Excel/PowerPoint/Outlook), numeracy and statistical skills
- Experience in all stages of scientific research (grant application, designing and conducting scientific experiments, analyzing data, publishing & presenting results)
- European driving license (category B)
- Knowledge of Dutch (and/or French)
- Knowledge and/or hands-on experience with pigs or poultry

Our offer

We offer a part-time contract (50-80%) until the end of August 2024, with the possibility to extend this period. You will be recruited in the salary scale A165 or A166 (depending on your diploma). You can make a gross and net calculation of your monthly salary, a holiday bonus and your end-of-year allowance via <https://www.vlaanderen.be/werken-voor-vlaanderen/het-salaris>. Relevant experience can be considered for financial seniority.

Additional: Hospitalization and group (life) insurance, commuting allowance (bicycle – public transport), meal vouchers (7 € /day) and a total of 35 holiday days (of which 15 are extra-legal via a private arrangement) on an annual basis.

We offer you a varied and challenging job as a researcher that is also socially relevant. You will be part of the Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour Research Group of the ILVO. This group is

headed by Prof. dr. Frank Tuyttens and includes two post-doc researchers, 4 resident PhD students and 3 technicians.

ILVO offers a young and dynamic research environment in which the values of being positive, proactive, professional, exemplary and collaborative are paramount, and with many possibilities for your own development and training.

Start: November 2020

How to apply?

You can apply online via 'werken voor Vlaanderen' and this at the latest until October 11th 2020. If you cannot apply online, you can request the application form via personeel@ilvo.vlaanderen.be.

Candidates found fit (based on CV screening) will be invited for a selection interview on October the 20th (date subject to change). Please include a telephone number and e-mail address where you can be reached during the day and block this date in your agenda.

For more info please contact

Job content: Frank Tuyttens, Group Leader, Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour: +32 9 272 26 05 – frank.tuyttens@ilvo.vlaanderen.be.

Selection procedure, salary and benefits: Caroline Buyst, HR-specialist, ILVO: +32 9 272 25 12 - caroline.buyst@ilvo.vlaanderen.be.