

PhD PROJECT – HOST-VIRUS INTERACTIONS: DYNAMICS OF HEPATITIS E VIRUS INFECTION IN DOMESTIC PIGS

A collaborative research project (Liège University, DGZ Vlaanderen, Hasselt University, ILVO) will start in January 2020 on the study of the dynamics of hepatitis E virus (HEV) infection in domestic pigs.

The aim of the project is to develop, through epidemiological and field studies, knowledge about HEV contamination and its spread in pig farms and to investigate whether it is possible, on the basis of practical sampling methods, to determine the risk status of pig farms. The project should also be able to answer the question to which extent HEV is still present among slaughter pigs and if measures can be taken during the pig production cycle to reduce HEV infection on farms and thus ultimately contribute to limiting transmission of this zoonotic virus to humans. To achieve these aims, this collaborative project will use the best advanced methods for the molecular identification of HEV infection and the epidemiological modelling of the dynamics of infection.

This project is funded by the Federal Public Service - Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment - for a period of 3 years from 1st January 2020. Funding for the fourth year of the PhD thesis will be actively looked for.

The candidate will have a Master's degree in Veterinary Medicine, Bioengineering, Biology, Biomedical Sciences or Biochemistry. The candidate will have a strong interest in virology, epidemiology and, in general, research in animal sciences. In addition to English, the knowledge of the two national Belgian languages will be an advantage. He·She will be based in the laboratory of veterinary virology, FARAH research centre, faculty of veterinary medicine (ULiège) with short stays in the other collaborative laboratories. He·she should be ready to travel in Belgium for the follow-up of the pig farms under study.

The candidate will send his·her application with a motivation letter and a curriculum vitae by 15th November 2019 by e-mail (etienne.thiry@uliege.be).