



PhD position

Welfare of Pigs and Poultry in Outdoor Systems

Vacancy number: EV/2020/001/D68

ILVO / Ghent University

The PhD-student will be employed by the Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO) and registered for a PhD at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Ghent University (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.

The research activities at the **Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (Ghent University)** receive both strong national and international recognition. The Faculty is accredited by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and is ranked in first place in the prestigious "Shanghai Ranking of Academic Subjects" for the third year in a row. More information can be found at: <https://www.ugent.be/di/en>.

The Project

The PhD student will be employed on the EU Horizon 2020 PPILOW project "*Poultry and Pig Low-input and Organic production systems' Welfare*", of which ILVO is one of 23 European partner organisations.

PPILOW aims to co-construct through a multi-actor approach solutions to improve the welfare of poultry and pigs reared in organic and low-input outdoor farming systems.

More precisely, PPILOW will co-create with end-users welfare self-assessment tools, innovative breeding and rearing strategies and techniques for improving the welfare of animals by avoiding mutilations (piglet castration or beak trimming in poultry), the elimination of one day-old layer male chicks, favouring positive behaviours, and improving health and robustness in both species. The innovative solutions will be investigated experimentally and the most promising ones will be tested on-farm. Subsequently, multi-criteria analyses of the most effective breeding and rearing strategies will be realised to evaluate their economic, social and environmental impacts. Finally, to ensure the rapid uptake of the project results by end-users, appropriate dissemination activities will be developed and the close involvement of national practitioner groups throughout the EU will be managed to facilitate change.

Your Function

Your main task in the frame of this project (together with an international team of researchers and facilitators) will be evaluating how effective animal welfare self-assessment by the farmer (via a mobile application) combined with automated feedback (including anonymous benchmarking



with other comparable farmers) 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.

These 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 automated feedback on the animal welfare status will be tested by comparing differences in animal welfare outcomes before and after using the tools. Data collected by the trained researcher and/or farmer will be used to document trends over time.

ILVO will be working together with other partner organisations in France (ITAVI, INRA), the Netherlands (Utrecht University) and Belgium (BioForum) to achieve these aims.

You will be responsible for study set-up, data generation in the field, data analysis, 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.

The goal is to obtain a PhD in Veterinary Medicine at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (Ghent University) based on the results of your research within 4 years.

Your Profile

We are looking for a motivated colleague who:

- holds a university degree (Master's or a degree of minimum 4 years of study considered equivalent by Ghent University) in a biological science, including animal science, veterinary medicine, zoology, bio-engineering, and related disciplines *
- has strong interest in sustainable and animal-friendly pig and poultry farming
- is fascinated by scientific research and highly motivated to obtain a PhD
- has good IT (MS Word/MS Excel/Powerpoint/Outlook), numeracy and statistical skills
- ideally has experience in designing and conducting scientific experiments, analyzing data, presenting results
- has a European driving license (category B)
- has an analytical and critical mindset
- likes taking initiative, is pro-active
- 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
- ideally is able to speak both Dutch and French
- ideally has knowledge and/or hands-on experience with either pigs or poultry



- holds a FELASA C certificate (laboratory animal science) or will obtain such a certificate within the first year of the PhD (courses will be organized)

* Comply with the general terms and regulations for PhD positions at the ILVO:

<https://www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be/language/en-US/EN/Work-at-ILVO/General-terms-and-regulations-for-PhD-scholarships.aspx#.XhOSA0dKhPY>

* Comply with the general terms and regulations for PhD positions at the Ghent University:

[https://www.ugent.be/prospect/en/administration/application/requirement/phd.htm#DoctoralDegree\(i.e.Doctorate,Ph.D\)](https://www.ugent.be/prospect/en/administration/application/requirement/phd.htm#DoctoralDegree(i.e.Doctorate,Ph.D))

What do we offer?

A varied and challenging job as a research fellow that is also socially relevant. You will be part of a team of researchers from the various research institutes involved. You will be employed as a doctoral scholar (4 years) in a young and dynamic research environment in which the ILVO values of being positive, proactive, professional, exemplary and collaborative are paramount, and with many possibilities for your own development and training. The doctoral scholarship is initially granted for 1 year and is subject to a favourable evaluation extendable to 4 years. The fellowship is free of personal income tax, but contributes to your social security (e.g. pension). The net fellowship amount is € 2,283,86 net (€ 2,627,24 gross) for the first 2 years. For the last 2 years it is € 2,387,30 net (€ 2,746,23 gross). Prof. dr. Frank Tuytens (ILVO/Ghent University) will be your PhD-promotor and Prof. dr. Bas Rodenburg (Utrecht University) your co-promotor.

Start: April or May 2020

How to apply?

Deadline for application is 15th of February 2020. Please send a letter of application highlighting your motivation to join our team and extended CV with clear reference to project **PhD - PPILOW** to Prof. dr. Frank Tuytens, Group Leader Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour (Animal Science Unit) via email to personeel@ilvo.vlaanderen.be. Selected candidates will be invited for a personal interview on Friday 28th of February or Monday 2nd of March 2020.

For more info please contact

Job content: Mirjan Thys, Post-Doc Researcher, Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour: +32 9 272 25 84 – mirjan.thys@ilvo.vlaanderen.be or Frank Tuytens, Group Leader, Farm Animal Welfare & Behaviour: +32 9 272 26 05 – frank.tuytens@ilvo.vlaanderen.be.

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



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