

7 Summary

Development of an internet-based information system on BSE to present current topics of veterinary medicine on the internet

It was the objective of this project, to evaluate a methodology of presenting current topics and developments of veterinary medicine on the internet, using the example of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). The focus of the internet-based BSE-information system was on the interests and needs of German veterinarians and veterinary students. Also the system was supposed to be very user friendly.

For the user, the internet provides access to current information and knowledge independent of time and place. In the hypertext different levels of information can be chosen from a great variety of information. This is achieved by a hierarchic organization of the contents that can be used via the navigation system. Furthermore the hypertext offers direct links to further sources of information in the literature and on other websites, respectively.

Information on the internet can be updated at any time. Therefore the information system could keep up with the rapid development of the BSE crisis. The system provided veterinarians with information on etiology, epidemiology, clinical features and measures for control and eradication of the disease. It also provided information on links between the new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob-Disease (nvCJD, vCJD, vCJK) and BSE and regulations instituted for consumer protection. It was the aim to enable the target group to analyse the facts and to decide whether the public concerns that rose from the detection of the first BSE cases in Germany had a scientific basis or were just created by the mass media.

This thesis describes the current mass media, their function and their importance in creating opinions in the public. It focuses on the role the utilization and the various opportunities that the internet offers as a medium of communication for veterinarians.

The advantages and disadvantages of the internet as a medium for scientific publication are discussed and guidelines for the design of websites and online texts are given. Particularly problems concerning copyright, quality and consistency of the information given in the internet are addressed.

The process of planning and producing the information system is described and deviations of the original system to the needs of a BSE-information system are presented and explained.

Changes and compromises concerning structure and design were necessary to integrate the system into the internet portal Vetion[®].de as the consistency, uniformity and userfriendliness of the portal had to be assured.