



**ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI
PRESS OFFICE**

ph. (+30)2310 997158 e-mail: press@auth.gr

Administration Building «K. Karatheodori» AUTH, P.C. 541 24, Thessaloniki

[@Aristoteleio](https://www.facebook.com/Aristoteleio) [@authuniversity](https://www.instagram.com/authuniversity) [@Auth_University](https://twitter.com/Auth_University)

ANNOUNCEMENT

**UNANIMOUS RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SCHOOL OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE, FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY**

**Subject: The Sheep Pox and Foot-and-Mouth Disease Outbreaks and the Future of
Greek Livestock Farming**

Thessaloniki, 10 July 2026

"The Assembly of the School of Veterinary Medicine of Aristotle University (Meeting No. 875/10-7-2026), acting with a sense of responsibility towards the primary sector and in recognition of the role of the Public University, expresses its deep concern over the situation created by the sheep pox outbreak and the new challenges arising from the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease on the island of Lesbos. Sheep pox has developed into one of the most serious crises facing Greek livestock farming in recent decades. Following many months of restrictive measures, the culling of hundreds of thousands of animals, and significant socio-economic consequences for the livestock sector and local communities, a comprehensive assessment of the management strategy implemented to date has become essential, together with the development of an integrated plan for the next phase. Despite the extraordinary efforts of the veterinary services, the outbreak continues to raise questions regarding its true extent and epidemiological dynamics in different regions of the country. The recent decline in reported cases is a positive development; however, it must be assessed with caution and interpreted on the basis of reliable epidemiological data. An accurate assessment of the epidemiological situation is an essential prerequisite for sound decision-making and the effective planning of disease control measures.

In light of the above, the School of Veterinary Medicine of Aristotle University considers it absolutely necessary to strengthen active epidemiological surveillance through systematic sampling and laboratory testing in a representative number of livestock holdings across all regions of the country, regardless of the presence of

clinical signs. A scientifically documented assessment of the epidemiological situation constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for evaluating the effectiveness of the measures implemented to date and for planning the next steps in addressing the crisis. Greek sheep and goat farming is facing serious risks that threaten its very foundations, as thousands of livestock farmers continue to experience prolonged financial and professional uncertainty and express growing concern about the future of their farms. The longer the current situation continues without a clear timetable and a concrete plan for restarting production, the greater the risk that a significant number of livestock farmers will permanently abandon the profession. Today, the greatest danger is not only the loss of more animals; it is the loss of the livestock farmers themselves. While rebuilding livestock populations is undoubtedly difficult, rebuilding the human capital of Greek livestock farming is becoming even more challenging and, in many cases, impossible. The loss of skilled human resources, particularly young farmers, poses a long-term threat to rural Greece, food production, and the national economy. For this reason, the immediate development of a comprehensive national plan for the restoration of livestock holdings and the resumption of production is essential, with clear implementation timelines, technical support, and adequate financial assistance for livestock farmers.

At the same time, the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease on the island of Lesbos demonstrates that Greece continues to face persistent threats from highly contagious diseases affecting productive livestock. This development highlights the urgent need to strengthen the human resources and preparedness of the country's veterinary services. The experience gained from managing sheep pox, together with the new challenges posed by foot-and-mouth disease, underscores the need for a realistic, flexible, and scientifically evidence-based approach to the management of infectious diseases affecting productive livestock. Disease control measures must effectively limit the spread of infection while remaining practical under the actual conditions of Greek livestock farming and compatible with maintaining the long-term viability of livestock holdings.

The prolonged crisis affecting Greek livestock farming as a result of sheep pox and foot-and-mouth disease now requires a reassessment of all scientifically supported disease-control options, including the possibility of implementing organised and fully controlled vaccination programmes wherever deemed necessary. Within this context, policymakers must carefully consider the potential impact of any future strategy on the movement and export of animal products, particularly Feta cheese, which is a national product of high added value and a cornerstone of Greek sheep and goat farming. Protecting the national livestock population and safeguarding the competitiveness of Feta should not be viewed as conflicting objectives. On the contrary, they require a coordinated national and European strategy capable of achieving both.

For these reasons, the Assembly of the School of Veterinary Medicine of Aristotle University calls upon the Greek Government and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food to:

- strengthen active epidemiological surveillance and the systematic collection and evaluation of national data on sheep and goat pox;
- develop and publish a comprehensive national plan for the restoration of livestock holdings where animals have been culled and for the resumption of production;
- establish a meaningful institutional dialogue among the State, livestock farmers, representatives of the dairy industry, and the scientific community to design the future of the Greek sheep and goat farming sector;
- evaluate all scientifically validated management measures for sheep pox and foot-and-mouth disease, taking into account both disease-control effectiveness and the long-term sustainability of livestock holdings; and
- undertake initiatives at the European level to promote dialogue aimed at safeguarding the marketability of products of animal origin, with particular emphasis on Feta cheese.

The School of Veterinary Medicine of Aristotle University remains at the disposal of the State and all stakeholders within the livestock farming ecosystem to provide scientific expertise and evidence-based guidance with the aim of effectively protecting animal health, supporting Greek livestock farming, and ensuring the sustainable development of the primary sector."

We kindly request that this event be published, broadcast, and covered by the media.