

# A Historical Research on the First (1927) and Second (1929) Balkan Veterinary Congress on Infectious Animal Diseases <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Abstract

The first initiative aimed at international cooperation in the prevention of epizootic diseases was launched by Professor John Gamgee, and the first international veterinary meeting was held in Hamburg, Germany on July 14-18, 1863. At that time, efforts were made to fight and ensure protection against animal diseases in Turkey, but it was not until the early years of the Republic that intensive and multifaceted efforts at a national and international level came into effect. Experienced veterinarians from various countries were invited to Turkey to carry out studies here, and Turkish veterinarians were dispatched to international congresses and meetings on animal health and improvement. At the same time, attempts were made to establish a common border health authority with neighboring countries, and efforts were made to develop health legislation. Close cooperation with the Balkan states on matters of policy following the proclamation of the Republic became obligatory, particularly with respect to animal diseases, and led to the Balkan Governments Infectious Animal Diseases Congress-I being held in Istanbul on October 4-12, 1927, followed by the Balkan Veterinary Congress II, held in Bucharest on September 21, 1929. The present study found that the senior civil servants from Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia that had attended the two congresses discussed the fight against epizootic diseases and the establishment of a veterinary organization on the borders. In conclusion, these congresses may be said to have laid the groundwork for the "Geneva International Veterinary Convention (1935)" and the bilateral veterinary conventions concluded between participatory countries that followed.

**Keywords:** Balkan Countries, Veterinary congress, Animal diseases, Veterinary history

## Birinci (1927) ve İkinci (1929) Balkan Veteriner Bulaşıcı Hayvan Hastalıkları Kongreleri Üzerine Tarihsel Bir İnceleme

## Öz

Salgın hayvan hastalıklarının önlenmesinde uluslararası işbirliği yapılması için ilk girişim Profesör John Gamgee tarafından başlatılmış ve 14-18 Temmuz 1863'te Almanya'nın Hamburg kentinde ilk uluslararası veteriner hekimler toplantısı gerçekleştirilmiştir. Aynı dönemde Türkiye'de de hayvan hastalıkları ile mücadele ve koruma çalışmaları yürütülmekle birlikte, ancak Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarında ulusal ve uluslararası düzeyde gerçekleştirilen yoğun ve çok yönlü çalışmalar etkili olabilmıştır. Bu dönemde bir taraftan çeşitli ülkelerden veteriner hekimlik alanında deneyimli uzmanlar Türkiye'ye davet edilerek ülkede çalışmaları sağlanmış; diğer taraftan Türk veteriner hekimler hayvan ıslahı ve sağlığı ile ilgili olarak düzenlenen uluslararası kongre ve toplantılara gönderilmiştir. Aynı zamanda, komşu ülkelerle sınır noktalarında ortak sağlık zabıtası kurulması girişimlerinde bulunulmuş ve sağlık mevzuatının geliştirilmesine yönelik çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Cumhuriyet'in ilanından sonra izlenmeye başlanan Balkan devletleri ile yakın işbirliği politikası, özellikle hayvan hastalıkları konusunda zorunlu hale gelmiştir. Bu amaçla, 4-12 Ekim 1927 tarihleri arasında İstanbul'da I. Balkan Hükümetleri Emraz-ı Sariye-i Hayvaniye Kongresi ve 21 Eylül 1929'da da Bükreş'te II. Balkan Baytar Kongresi düzenlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada Türkiye, Yunanistan, Bulgaristan, Romanya ve Yugoslavya'dan üst düzey bürokratların katılımıyla gerçekleşen bu iki kongrede bulaşıcı hayvan hastalıklarıyla mücadele ile sınırlarda veteriner hekimliği örgütünün kurulması konularının görüldüğü tespit edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bu kongrelerin daha sonra yapılacak olan "Uluslararası Cenevre Veteriner Anlaşması (1935)" ile katılımcı ülkeler arasında farklı zamanlarda yapılan ikili veteriner anlaşmalarına temel oluşturduğu ileri sürülebilir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Balkan ülkeleri, Veteriner kongreleri, Hayvan hastalıkları, Veteriner tarihi



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## INTRODUCTION

Animals have, throughout history, always been a means of economic production. While their purpose of use diversified as they became domesticated, diseases and death in animals resulted in starvation, sadness, illness and even death <sup>[1]</sup>.

The first initiative to bolster international cooperation in the prevention of epizootic diseases was taken by Professor John Gamgee, and the first global veterinary meeting was held in Hamburg, Germany on July 14-18, 1863 <sup>[2]</sup>. Due to presence of important infectious animal diseases in the Ottoman Empire, as the point of entry of these diseases into Europe, delegates attended the second meeting which was held in Vienna. The first measures were taken and arrangements were made to both fight and prevent spread of animal diseases in these years but these attempts could not be effective until the Republican period <sup>[3]</sup>.

At the subsequent international veterinary meetings held, the prevention of epizootic diseases was discussed <sup>[4]</sup>, and the "Office International des Epizooties (OIE)" (The World Organization for Animal Health) was established in Paris on January 25, 1924 with the participation of 28 countries <sup>[5]</sup>. The animal diseases that first wreaked havoc on the animal population and devastated public health and the economy were particularly rinderpest and glanders, which spread quickly during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence as epidemics <sup>[6,7]</sup>. In order to regulate veterinary services, particularly due to the epizootic diseases that had become more important under the conditions of war, the Department of Veterinary Affairs was established in Ankara in 1920. Following the proclamation of the Republic, a five-year program was drafted that included border inspections, in an attempt to regulate the provision of veterinary services in line with the decisions taken at the Economic Congress held in Izmir in 1923, and this program entered into practice in 1925 <sup>[6]</sup>. Rinderpest was eradicated in the interior parts of Turkey in 1925, but the disease continued to enter the country through the movements of animals across the eastern and southern borders, leading to the "border veterinary authority" to be established in 1926 <sup>[8,9]</sup>. Article 4 of Section II of Law no. 1234 on the Animal Health and Inspection Authority, adopted on May 3, 1928, states: "*Any animal or animal product to be imported to and exported from Turkey in locations where there are customs administrations and other stations and ports allocated by the Ministry of Economy for processes related to the entry and exit of animals and animal products shall be subjected to the processes in such locations. The provisions of the agreements concluded with neighboring countries shall be reserved. Such locations shall be equipped with a quarantine station administered by the border Veterinarians, as well as tools, medicine and guardians as required.*"

In order to prevent the entry of epizootic diseases into the

country across the borders and the spread of disease in the country, as well as to ensure a more effective fight against infectious animal diseases in the country, the Council of Ministers decided on August 12, 1928 that Turkey would join the OIE <sup>[10]</sup>.

The Republic of Turkey's efforts to build a "national economy" accelerated, particularly following the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne, and great emphasis was placed on the establishment of new institutions and the enhancement of their effectiveness. To this end, legal efforts were made to both fight and prevent spread of animal diseases and to ensure improvements in animals, and institutions that would enable the attainment of such goals were established <sup>[11]</sup>.

In the program to fight against rinderpest, it was decided that the cattle seized while being transported to Thrace would be sent back, and those that could not be sent back would be slaughtered at the location where they were captured. Animals brought into the country by immigrants from Bulgaria and Romania were regularly inspected and vaccinated by veterinarians at the border checkpoints and ports, and animal marketplaces were prohibited in the regions where rinderpest was spreading <sup>[12]</sup>.

With a view of supporting the protection and treatment applications made in the country, discussions were made regarding cooperation with neighboring countries and the development of common prevention and protection strategies. A communiqué of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1925 stated that there was a need to establish a common border health administration in Turkey, Syria and Iraq to eradicate the rinderpest that was thriving around the Mardin-Iraq border <sup>[2,11,12]</sup>.

At the same time, agreements were concluded, and congresses were held with neighboring countries, particularly the Balkan states, to discuss the exports of animals and animal products produced by Turkish farmers in accordance with the requirements for combatting animal disease <sup>[11,12]</sup>.

## MATERIAL and METHODS

Methods commonly used in the analysis and synthesis of medical history were employed in this study. The study subject was dealt using a chronological order. During the study, documents from Turkish Prime Ministry Archives of the Ottoman and Republican Periods were reviewed. In addition, references were also made to books and other documents and literature related to the subject matter.

## RESULTS

Within the framework of the policy of close cooperation with the Balkan States that Turkey began to pursue following the proclamation of the Republic, the first

ambassador of the Republic of Turkey was dispatched to Bucharest in March 1924 [2,13]. The Balkan countries with which Turkey wanted to increase the trade of livestock and animal products voiced their satisfaction at the efforts made to fight against animal diseases in Turkey and raised concerns about the spread of rinderpest in their own countries. To report upon the efforts and measures taken in Turkey, and to ensure countries in the region were taking common action in relation to animal diseases, a Balkan veterinary meeting was planned in Istanbul with the participation of veterinarians from Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia [2,14]. The official name of the congress that convened upon the request of Bulgaria was the "Balkan Governments Infectious Animal Diseases Congress-I", where the languages of correspondence were Turkish and French [15]. An official letter sent by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs to the relevant countries to communicate the names of the Turkish delegates who would be attending the congress was written in the two languages [15,16] (Fig. 1), and the names of the delegates attending the congress from Bulgaria were communicated in an official letter dated October 13, 1927 [17,18] (Fig. 2).

Although Balkan Governments Infectious Animal Diseases Congress-I was planned to convene on October 1, 1927 [15], it was delayed by three days as the Romanian delegates could not arrive on time [19]. In the end, the congress

took place in Istanbul on October 4-12, 1927 with the participation of Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia [19,20].

Turkey was represented by Tevfik Kamil (Istanbul Deputy) as the Congress Chairman; Prof. Refik Güran (Bursa Deputy), a Bacteriologist at Istanbul University Faculty of Medicine; Ahmed Şefik Kolyalı, Manager and Bacteriologist at the Pendik Bacteriology Institute; Forgeot, expert bacteriologist at the Pendik Bacteriology Institute; Ali Rasim, Istanbul Veterinary Manager; Rıza İsmail Sezginer, Academician specializing in Bacteriology and Infectious Diseases at Istanbul Veterinary Academy; and Esad Evsen, Istanbul Veterinary Manager [2,15,16].

Bulgaria was represented by Dr. G. Pavloff, Chief of Veterinary Services at the Ministry of Agriculture; Prof. St. Angheloff, Veterinarian; Prof. Bitcheff, Veterinarian; Prof. Gheorghieff, general inspector of Veterinary Services at the Ministry of Agriculture; Prof. Goudeff, general inspector of Veterinary Services at the Ministry of Agriculture; and Dr. Dimitri Douchcoff, inspector of Veterinary Services at the Ministry of Agriculture [2,17,18].

Greece was represented by Dr. Alexandra Haralambo Pavlos, veterinarian; and Dr. C. Melanidi, Manager of the Veterinary Bacteriology Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture [2].

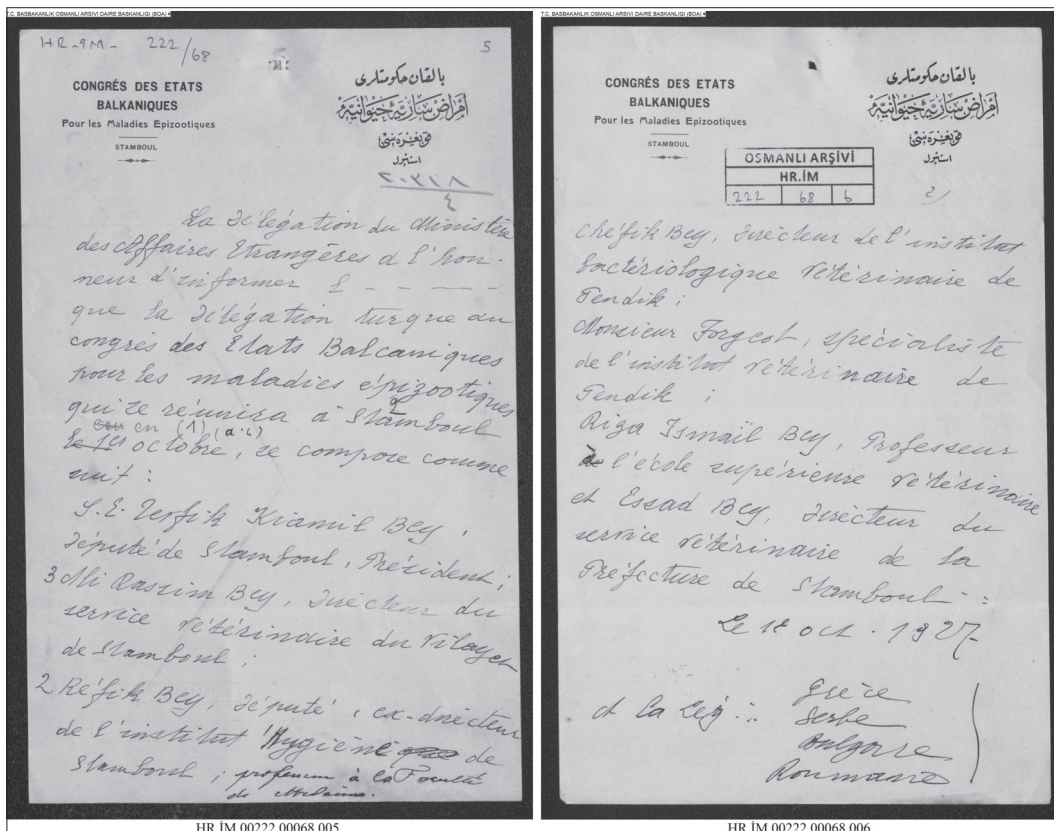
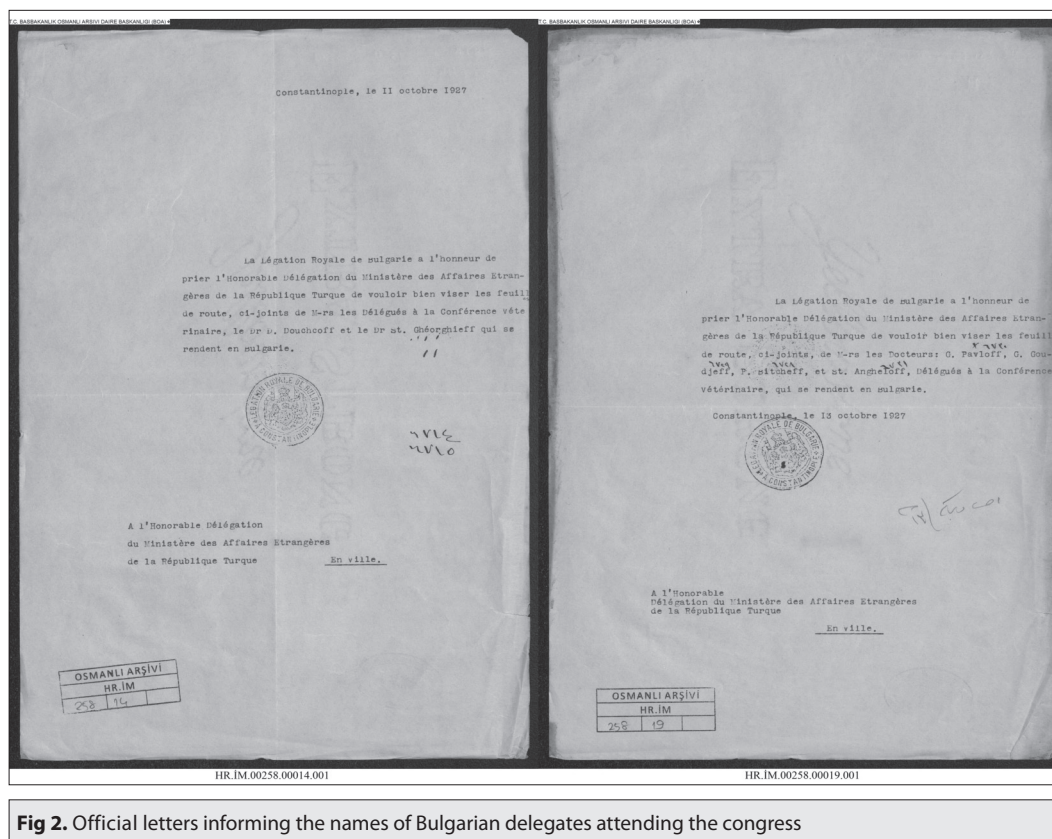


Fig 1. Official letter informing the names of Turkish delegates attending the congress





**Fig 2.** Official letters informing the names of Bulgarian delegates attending the congress

Romania was represented by Prof. Constantin S. Motas, lecturer at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; Dr. M.C.Z. Papazoğlu, advisor at the Veterinary Service of the Ministry of Agriculture; M. Georges Manolescu, general inspector at the Veterinary Service of the Ministry of Agriculture; and M. Alexandr Bacleşocnu, general inspector at the Veterinary Service of the Ministry of Agriculture [2].

Yugoslavia was represented by Dr. Bogolov Sievatchitch, chief of the Veterinary Service of the Ministry of Agriculture; Prof. Stjepanplasaj, lecturer at Zagreb University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; Dr. Kosto Konditch, inspector at the Veterinary Service of the Ministry of Agriculture; and Dr. Antonie Vonkovitch, agricultural inspector at the Ministry of Agriculture [2].

The general meeting at the Congress was chaired by Turkish Minister of Agriculture Sabri Toprak. The delegates of the Balkan states that attended the Congress requested the inclusion of the existing border inspections and four major diseases, as well as some other diseases, in the measures to be implemented. Before commencing the meeting, the delegates provided information on the number of livestock and veterinarians and veterinary institutions in their respective countries [19]. Held at Yıldız Palace, the Congress lasted for eight days that included six sessions, during which the participants discussed the fight against infectious animal diseases and the establishment of a veterinary organization on the borders [2,19] (Fig. 3).

After setting up scientific sub-commissions, the following 22 articles were adopted at the meeting [19,20].

#### Article 1

a) All countries attending the Congress shall design their own veterinary services in the best manner possible, and draft laws on animal health in the light of the most recent scientific data.

b) A common list of notifiable diseases shall be generated.

#### Article 2

a) Medical journals shall be published every 15 days and in two languages (countries' own language and French) and be sent to the veterinary services of the countries.

b) The laws and regulation of the various countries governing their veterinary services shall be discussed by the participant countries in French.

c) Abstracts of veterinary medicine publications on infectious diseases shall be mutually exchanged between the participant countries in French.

#### Article 3

a) The import of animals from countries infected with rinderpest should be prohibited, and the import of livestock for slaughter from such countries shall be permitted only when required, provided that strict measures are taken.



**Fig 3.** Delegates of Balkan Governments Infectious Animal Diseases Congress-I

Front Line 1) Antoniev Onkovitch 2) Dr. Refik 3) P. Bitcheff 4) Prof. Motas 5) Tevfik Kamil 6) Pavloff 7) Petrovich 8) Ali Rasim 9) Alexandr Haralambos

Second Line 1) Şefik Kolaylı 2) Rıza İsmail Sezginer 3) Papazoğlu 4) Hilmi Dilgimen 5) Haralambu Melanidis 6) Esat Esen 7) Nedim 8) M. Alexandr Bacleseocnu 9) Forgeot 10) Kosto Konditch 11) Prof. Goudjeff 12) Prof. Angheloff 13) Mehmet Halit Civelekoğlu 14) Stjepan Plasaj

b) In the case of a rinderpest outbreak in any of the participant countries, it shall notify the other countries via telegram and may request assistance from them.

c) The country in which the disease has broken out shall allow the other participant countries to send experts to examine the circumstances. This shall apply only to the Thrace region of Turkey.

*Article 4:* When an infectious disease breaks out within 15 km of any border, the veterinary organizations of the neighboring countries shall be informed as a matter of urgency. The same shall apply to infectious diseases not listed in the Medical Authority Law.

*Article 5:* Necessary measures shall be taken when making inspections of livestock and animal products at the borders.

*Article 6:* Detailed reports on the origin and health of livestock to be exported in accordance with the veterinary agreements concluded shall be drawn up by a veterinarian who has been authorized by the government. This report should indicate that the animal in question is healthy, that no infectious disease has been seen in the district from which the animal was brought or in the surrounding districts for 40 days, and that rinderpest has not been seen within an area of 40 km for 3 months.

*Article 7:* Inspection of foods of animal origin shall be carried out only by authorized veterinarians.

*Article 8:* Canned meats, sealed in accordance with rules, wool packaged in sealed bags, melted tallow, eggs, milk and dairy products shall be able to be transported without

the permission of the veterinary service. Permission shall be required for all other animal products. This permission document should indicate the destination of the product and the border checkpoint through which they will pass, and the number, brand and content of the products. The document shall contain a statement that the product has been produced from healthy animals, and that no infectious disease has been seen in the district from which they were brought or in the surrounding districts for 30 days.

In the report of the examinations conducted by the government veterinarian, or by a veterinarian authorized by the government, prior to and after the slaughter for meat products prepared by salting, drying and smoking, it should be certified that the animal was healthy at the time of slaughter.

#### *Article 9*

a) Freight cars and boats used for the transport of livestock and animal products should be cleaned and disinfected under the supervision of a veterinarian.

b) Freight cars should not be overloaded and should be suitable for the transportation of animals.

#### *Article 10*

a) Expert veterinarians should be consulted to terminate the veterinary agreements between the various Balkan governments.

b) It is in the interest of governments to appoint veterinarians at their political offices.



**Fig 4.** Delegates of Balkan Veterinary Congress-II

Front Line 1) P. Bitcheff 2) Mehmet Nuri Ural 3) General Inspector of Romania Veterinary Services 4) Moutas 5) Pavloff 6) Prof. Angeloff  
Second Line 1) St. Tuleff 2) Naki Cevat Akkerman 3) Dr. Al. Cicua 4) Prof. St Plasage 5) Ahmet Şefik Kolaylı

*Article 11:* Livestock passing through border checkpoints for trade shall be inspected by the veterinarians of the exporter country.

*Article 12:* The Congress recommends that the countries that have not assigned veterinarians to the management of animal production and improvement do so.

*Article 13:* Issues concerning the fight against rinderpest

*Article 14:* Issues concerning the fight against glanders

*Article 15:* In relation to pox disease, the most recent protection procedures should be applied, rather than conventional techniques.

*Article 16:* Issues concerning the fight against the foot-and-mouth disease

*Article 17:* Issues concerning the fight against swine plague

*Article 18:* Epizootic diseases of bees and silkworms should be included in the veterinary health authority law of all countries.

*Article 19:* Diseases caused by piroplasms and insect vectors should be kept track of regularly, and information should be provided.

*Article 20:* It is recommended that all countries research whether rinderpest is spread by carriers, and if so, the duration of carriage, and should share their experience.

*Article 21:* It is requested that these decisions taken in the meetings be conveyed to the relevant ministers of the participant Governments, hoping that they are put into practice.

*Article 22:* It has been decided that a Balkan countries veterinary meeting is to be held every three years, with the next meeting being held in Bucharest.

Balkan Veterinary Congress II convened at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest on September 21, 1929 (Fig. 4).

Turkey was represented by İhsan Abidin Akıncı, Undersecretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture and veterinary zootechnician; Mehmet Nuri Ural (Mardin Deputy), veterinarian; Naki Cevat Akkerman, Manager of the Department of Epizootic Diseases; and Ahmet Şefik Kolaylı, Bacteriologist and Manager of the Pendik Bacteriology Institute<sup>[2]</sup>.

Bulgaria was represented by Prof. Angheloff from the Sofia Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; P. Bitcheff and D. St. Tuleff, veterinarian in Varna<sup>[2]</sup>.

Romania was represented by Prof. P. Riegler from the Bucharest Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; Moutas and Dr. Al. Cicua from the Bucharest Faculty of Veterinary Medicine<sup>[2]</sup>.

Yugoslavia was represented by Prof. St. Plasage from the Zagreb University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine<sup>[2]</sup>.

Greece did not attend the meeting<sup>[2]</sup>.

At the meeting, the Animal Health Authority and two sub-commissions were set up to examine infectious animal diseases, and decisions were taken. The decisions taken were adopted also in the general meeting<sup>[2]</sup>.

Some of these decisions taken were as follows:

Regarding the discussions at the previous meeting as to whether rinderpest is spread by carriers, Muzaffer Bekman, the manager of the Erzincan Serum Laboratory in Turkey, prepared a report following his studies on the subject. This report indicated that the secretions and entrails of calves that had this disease, or are in the incubation period and do not have the symptoms,



were not carriers of the disease.

It was stated that a fly species found around the Danube (Tuna) in May and June caused *Hemorrhagic septicaemia* in animals, and studies on the biology of this fly were requested to be conducted. Even though there were deaths caused by a similar disease in Kırklareli, Çorlu and Lüleburgaz provinces of Turkey, it was decided that this fly be researched, as there was no information concerning its presence [2].

Following the Balkan Veterinary Congress II, "*Geneva International Veterinary Convention*", a multilateral agreement was concluded for the first time in the field of veterinary medicine on February 20, 1935 and various bilateral agreements were concluded between the participant countries of the Balkan Congress in the sub-sequent years [21].

## DISCUSSION

Following the Balkan Veterinary Congresses, the participant countries concluded a multilateral agreement and various bilateral agreements in the subsequent years. It may be argued that the Balkan Veterinary Congresses addressed in this study laid the groundwork for agreements at an international level.

In 1929, Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk signed a decree stating that epizootic and infectious animal diseases that break out in the villages within 15 km of the Turkish-Bulgarian border would be notified to the other country by the veterinarians as per Article 4 of the decisions taken at Balkan Veterinary Congress I, that this had been requested by Bulgaria, and that the implementation of this decision was approved [22]. It may be argued that this decree led to the parties implementing the decisions taken in the Balkan Congresses at the highest level.

It may also be argued that the preparation of the "*Five-year Program*" for combatting infectious diseases [6], the establishment of the "*Border Veterinary Organization*" in 1926 [8,9], and the enactment of the Law on the Animal Health Authority in 1928 were all consistent with the decision taken at the First Balkan Veterinary Congress regarding establishment of a veterinary organization on the borders, and that this had a positive impact on the establishment of Quarantine Stations and Customs Veterinary Administrations that would operate as border checkpoints in 1935.

It may be claimed further that the attendance by senior civil servants of the countries at both Congresses demonstrated the importance placed in the issue by the participant countries.

The publication of detailed information on Veterinary Congress I and the decisions taken in Baytarî Mecmua [19,20], the first veterinary medicine journal of the Republican

period [23], shows the special emphasis placed on the subject by Turkish veterinarians.

While it was decided that congresses be held every three years in the first meeting, there is no information on any meeting taking place after the second meeting.

In conclusion, it may be said that these Congresses set a good example of cooperation between neighboring countries in relation to the prevention of epizootic and infectious animal diseases. It may be argued that governments have to take into consideration the veterinary congresses and their resolutions related with infectious animal diseases today also.

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