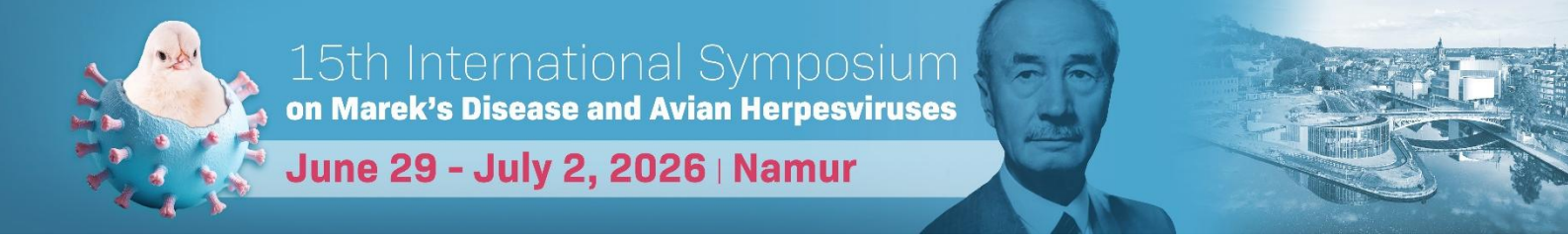

Monday June 29, 2026

PRE-SYMPOSIUM COURSE OF "AVIAN ANATOMY, HISTOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY"

The symposium is preceded by a unique pre-symposium course on “Avian Anatomy, Histology and Pathology”, offering participants an in-depth introduction and hands-on practical sessions to explore avian anatomical structures, examine bird tissues and identify both normal and pathological features.

08:30 – 09:00 *Pre-symposium registration – Welcome coffee*

09:00 – 09:30 **Introduction to the courses**

09:45 – 12:00 **Practicals in parallel sessions**
Group 1: Avian anatomy and pathology
Group 2: Avian histology

12:00 – 13:00 *Lunch*

13:00 – 15:00 **Practicals in parallel sessions**
Group 1: Avian histology
Group 2: Avian anatomy and pathology

15TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MAREK’S DISEASE AND AVIAN HERPESVIRUSES

14:00 – 20:00 *Symposium registration – Open bar with coffee, tea & soft drinks*

15:00 – 17:00 *Guided tour of Namur (duration: 2h - groups of 25 people max)*

Opening ceremony

18:00 – 18:15 **Welcome speech**
Benoît Muylkens
University of Namur, Belgium

18:15 – 19:15 **Keynote lecture: Marek’s Disease Virus history: key discoveries over five decades of research**
Karel (Ton) Schat
Cornell University, USA

19:15 – 21:30 *Welcome dinner with Belgian delights*

Tuesday June 30, 2026

09:00 – 09:45 **Keynote lecture: Title to be confirmed**
Benjamin Dewals
University of Liège, Belgium

Session 1: Virus/host-omics

Chairs:
Keith Jarosinksi, University of Illinois, USA
Benoît Muylkens, University of Namur, Belgium

09:45 – 10:00 **[O1] Genome-wide analyses of an avian herpesvirus identify 10 loci associated with tumorigenicity and vaccine escape**
Alejandro Ortigas-Vasquez
Pennsylvania State University, USA

10:00 – 10:15 **[O2] Different regulation of gut microbiota-metabolism by oncogenic and/or attenuated Marek's Disease Virus**
Aijian Qin
Yangzhou University, China

10:15 – 10:30 **[O3] Viral Lipase of Marek's Disease Virus: a model to study the biogenesis of non-canonical circular RNAs**
Damien Coupeau
University of Namur, Belgium

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:00 – 11:15 **[O4] Mapping chicken immune cell landscapes during MDV-induced tumorigenesis**
Yaoyao Zhang
The Pirbright Institute, UK

11:15 – 11:30 **[O5] Rural Indonesian chickens reveal a deeply divergent clade of Marek's Disease Virus associated with low virulence**
Steven Fiddaman
The Pirbright Institute, UK

11:30 – 11:45 **[O6] Comparative transcriptomics of Infectious Laryngotracheitis Virus and *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* coinfections in chicken tracheal organ cultures**
Hasitha Disanayaka
University of Melbourne, Australia

11:45 – 12:00 **[O7] Transcriptomic analysis of host-virus interactions during infection of chicken embryo kidney cells with live attenuated vaccine strains of infectious laryngotracheitis virus**
Md. Sirazul Islam
University of Melbourne, Australia

12:00 – 12:15 **[O8] Nucleocytoplasmic shuttling of Marek's disease virus UL47-TEG5 is required for its role in horizontal transmission in chickens**
Keith Jarosinksi
University of Illinois, USA

12:15 – 12:30 **[O9] Characterising the activity of the Marek's disease virus virion host shutoff protein**
Sophie Cutts
The Pirbright Institute, UK

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch*

Session 2: Virology

Chairs:
Caroline Denesvre, INRAE, France
Benedikt Kaufer, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

13:30 – 13:45 **[O10] Functional characterization of Meq-derived circular RNA in the tumorigenesis of Marek's disease virus**
Pierre Lombard
University of Namur, Belgium

13:45 – 14:00 **[O11] Host ssDNA Gap Prevention Pathways Are Exploited by α-Herpesviruses to Support GC-rich Genome Replication and Reactivation**
Wei Wu
Zhejiang University, China

14:00 – 14:15 **[O12] Identification of ILTV genes involved in dysregulation of the interferon type I response**
Stephen Spatz
USDA-ARS, USA

14:15 – 14:30 **[O13] A recombinant Marek's disease virus using ANCHOR™ technology: a novel tool to monitor viral infection in vitro and in vivo in the chicken**
Caroline Denesvre
INRAE, France

14:30 – 14:45 **[O14] Ultrastructural insights into Marek's Disease Virus-host cell interactions using cryogenic electron and light microscopy (cryo-CLEM) and cryogenic electron tomography (cryo-ET)**
Kallinikos Chalvatzis
University of Oxford / The Pirbright Institute, UK

14:45 – 15:00 **[O15] Identification and functional characterization of a conserved locus producing circular RNAs in avian herpesviruses**
Camille Ponsard
University of Namur, Belgium

15:00 – 15:30 *Coffee Break*

15:30 – 16:30 **Panel Discussion: "Field perspectives on Marek's disease challenges"**

16:30 – 17:30 **Poster session – odd numbers**

17:30 – 18:30 *Free time*

18:30 – 22:00 *Boat cruise on the Meuse & Walking dinner*

Wednesday July 1, 2026

09:00 – 09:45 **Keynote lecture: Title to be confirmed**
Sébastien Pfeffer
University of Strasbourg, France

Session 3: Clinical Presentations and Diagnosis

Chairs:
Joanne Devlin, University of Melbourne, Australia
John Dunn, USDA-ARS, USA

09:45 – 10:00 **[O16] Marek's Disease Virus Reference Laboratory: diagnostics and research**
Susan Baigent
The Pirbright Institute, UK

10:00 – 10:15 **[O17] Marek's disease virus serotype 2 circulates freely and naturally in commercial poultry flocks in the UK and Europe: A10-year molecular surveillance study by real-time PCR**
Soumendu Chakravarti
The Pirbright Institute, UK

10:15 – 10:30 **[O18] Molecular Characterization and Enhanced early Pathogenicity of Recently Circulating Marek's Disease Virus Strains in China**
Haijun Jiang
Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, China

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*

Session 4: Pathogenesis

Chairs:
Mark Parcells, University of Delaware, USA
Shiro Murata, Hokkaido University, Japan

11:00 – 11:15 **[O19] The role of Mardivirus glycoprotein C in cross-species transmission**
Kathrine Van Etten
University of Illinois, USA

11:15 – 11:30 **[O20] A Meq-derived circular RNA is a potent mitigator of the virulence associated with Marek's disease virus**
Alexis Chasseur
University of Namur, Belgium / Karolinska Institute, Sweden

11:30 – 11:45 **[O21] Decoding Marek's disease virus pathogenesis and shedding using barcode viruses**
Yulin Cong
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

11:45 – 12:00 **[O22] Very short isoform of Meq protein reduces tumorigenicity and immunosuppressive capacity of Marek's disease virus**
Yoshinosuke Motai
Hokkaido University, Japan

12:00 – 12:15 **[O23] The Meq oncoprotein of very virulent plus Marek's Disease Viruses (vv+MDVs) specifically binds chromatin modifier BRG1 and increases its transcriptional activity**
Christian Gravino
University of Delaware, USA

12:15 – 12:30 **[O24] The Meq oncoprotein of Marek's Disease Virus binds DNA-damage and repair proteins and the chromothripsis-inducing protein NEDD4-BP2 (N4BP2)**
Mark Parcells
University of Delaware, USA

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch*

Session 5: Immunology, vaccines and prevention

Chairs:
Venugopal Nair, The Pirbright Institute, UK
Aijian Qin, Yangzhou University, China

13:30 – 13:45 **[O25] *In vitro* evaluation of intergenic sites suitable for insertion of foreign genes in the infectious laryngotracheitis virus (ILTV) genome to develop as a vaccine vector**
Vishwanatha Reddy
North Carolina State University, USA

13:45 – 14:00 **[O26] Development and validation of a real time PCR for the detection of the Prevexxion™ RN1250 vaccine strain**
Aniek Garritsen
Royal GD, The Netherlands

14:00 – 14:15 **[O27] Comparative dynamics of vaccine and virulent Marek's disease virus replication and host responses in vivo**
Shaozhi Zuo
The Pirbright Institute, UK

14:15 – 14:30 **[O28] A Recombinant Marek's Disease Virus Vectored Vaccine Conferring Dual Protection against Virulent NDV and MDV Challenges**
Kun Qian
Yangzhou University, China

14:30 – 15:00 *Coffee Break*

15:00 – 16:00 **Panel Discussion: "Bridging scientific research and field realities in Marek's disease"**

16:00 – 17:00 **Poster session – even numbers**

17:00 – 18:00 *Free time*

18:00 – 18:30 *Cable car to the Citadel of Namur*
18:30 – 22:30 *Gala dinner at the Castle of Namur*
22:30 *Return by bus to the hotel*

Thursday July 2, 2026

Session 5: Immunology, vaccines and prevention

Chairs:
Maricarmen Garcia, University of Georgia, USA
Shayan Sharif, University of Guelph, Canada

09:00 – 09:15 **[O29] Proteomic and Kinomic Analysis of the Effects of Marek's Disease Virus Tumor-associated Exosomes (TEX) on Innate Immune Signalling**
Sohee Lee
University of Delaware, USA

09:15 – 09:30 **[O30] Evaluation of the Efficacy of rHVT+IBD+ILT Vaccine in Commercial Native Broiler Chickens in Vietnam**
Hoa Do Duy
Boehringer Ingelheim, Vietnam

09:30 – 09:45 **[O31] Meq-specific immunity protects against Marek's Disease virus-induced pathogenesis**
Ahmed Kheimar
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

09:45 – 10:00 **[O32] Recombinant HVT-vectored Innovax®-ND-IBD-ILT vaccine induces early and long-lasting protective immunity against four major poultry pathogens**
Jaap Kool
MSD Animal Health, The Netherlands

10:00 – 10:15 **[O33] Evaluating the impact of tandem repeats and structural variants on Marek's disease virus attenuation and vaccine effectiveness**
Alejandro Ortigas-Vasquez
Pennsylvania State University, USA

10:15 – 10:30 **[O34] Transcriptomic profiling reveals early immune activation and metabolic remodeling in lymphoid tissues following in ovo Marek's disease virus mRNA vaccination in chickens**
Janan Shoja Doost
University of Guelph, Canada

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:00 – 11:15 **[O35] A novel double-gene deleted vaccine against hypervirulent variant of MDV (HV-MDV) generated by the CRISPR/Cas9-based gene editing technology**
Jun Luo
Henan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, China

11:15 – 11:30 **[O36] Comparing Marek's disease vaccines' effect on virus shedding based on vaccine type and pathotype**
John Dun
USDA-ARS, USA

11:30 – 11:45 **[O37] Mass Administration of Infectious Laryngotracheitis Virus (ILTV) Chicken Embryo Origin (CEO) Vaccine: Hatchery vs. Drinking Water Vaccination**

Maricarmen Garcia
University of Georgia, USA

Closing ceremony

11:45 – 12:30 Boehringer Ingelheim Karel Schat Awards

Meeting wrap-up by Mark Parcells, University of Delaware, USA

12:30 *Lunch box distribution*

Posters

Virology	**[P1] Prevalence of Marek's Disease Virus Serotype 1 on Slow-Growing Broiler Farms: Findings from the Netherlands and Northwest Germany Between October and November 2025** **Arjan Baijense** Animal Health Group, The Netherlands **[P2] Bcl-2 homolog Nr-13 (vNr-13) encoded by herpesvirus of turkeys is essential for the virus proliferation in vivo** **Yaoyao Zhang** The Pirbright Institute, UK **[P3] Investigations into viral-bacterial coinfections in respiratory diseases of animals across 2D, 3D and in vivo models** **Paola Vaz** University of Melbourne
Clinical presentations and diagnosis	**[P4] Unexpected Marek's Disease Virus detection in conventional broilers farms in France** **Thomas Delquigny** Boehringer Ingelheim, France **[P5] Comparison of tumor development potential of pathogenic strains of Marek's disease virus in chickens** **Girish Sarma** Hygieia Biological Laboratories, USA **[P6] Detection of Marek's disease virus in poultry in Slovenia in years 2024–2025** **Zoran Žlabravec** University of Ljubljana
Pathogenesis	**[P7] Evolution and functional significance of Meq oncoprotein isoforms and polymorphisms in Marek's disease virus across different countries** **Soumendu Chakravarti** The Pirbright Institute, UK **[P8] Deciphering the role of exosomes in Marek's Disease Virus Pathogenesis: an *in-vitro* study** **Asok Kumar M** ICAR – Indian Veterinary Research Institute **[P9] Exploring the role of endothelial cell infection for Marek's disease pathogenesis** **Laëtitia Trapp-Fragnet** INRAE, France **[P10] Understanding the sequence diversity and functional characterization of Meq oncoprotein in Marek's disease virus from different countries** **Leonardo Gonzales** The Pirbright Institute, UK

Immunology, vaccines and prevention	**[P11] Construction of Recombinant CVI988 Vaccine Expressing H9 Subtype AIV Hemagglutinin and Its Protective Efficacy** **Kun Qian** Yangzhou University, China **[P12] Generation and efficacy of a recombinant Herpesvirus of Turkeys (rHVT) co-expressing IBDV-VP2 and NDV-F as a Trivalent Vaccine Candidate** **Muhammad Abid** The Pirbright Institute, UK **[P13] Pathogenicity of Field Marek's Disease Virus Serotype-1 and Vaccine Efficacy Test in Chicken in Eastern Shewa Ethiopia** **Molalegne Bitew** Ethiopian Bio and Emerging Technology Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **[P14] Cellular infiltrations if the feather pulp of CVI-LTR-vaccinated chicken with or without challenge with vv+MDV 648A strain at 3 weeks post infection** **Federico Bonorino** North Carolina State University, USA / Universidad de León, Spain **[P15] Serial back passages of vv+MDV 648A strain in CVI-LTR-vaccinated chickens result in a drastic decrease in its transmission** **Abdelhamid Fares** North Carolina State University, USA / University of Sadat City, Egypt **[P16] Safety and efficacy of HVT vaccines grown in Diploid Growth Serum Reduced Medium** **Isabel Gimeno** North Carolina State University, USA **[P17] Transforming Poultry Health in India: ProVect-NDIBD Experimental Vaccine Against Newcastle & Infectious Bursal Diseases** **Gurudutt Joshi** Ventri Biologicals, Venkateshwara Hatcheries Pvt. Ltd, India **[P18] Recombinant HVT Breakthrough in India: Advancing Protection Against Newcastle Disease in Poultry** **Gurudutt Joshi** Ventri Biologicals, Venkateshwara Hatcheries Pvt. Ltd, India **[P19] The recombinant HVT-vectored Innovax®-ND-IBD-ILT vaccine induces protective immunity against Infectious Bursal Disease Virus two weeks after vaccination** **Jaap Kool** MSD Animal Health, The Netherlands **[P20] Early post-vaccination assessment of CVI-LTR vaccine intake using a purpose-built molecular detection protocol** **Caterina Lupini** University of Bologna, Italy

[P21] HVT-ND-H5: A Double Recombinant HVT-Based Vaccine for Protection Against Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza clade 2.3.4.4b

Henk Pouwels
MSD Animal Health, The Netherlands

[P22] Rismavac®: Efficacy and Immunological Characteristics Compared to Chimeric serotype-1 construct vaccine (CVI-LTR)

Esther Schonewille
MSD Animal Health, Germany

[P23] Impact of standardized inversion agitation of vaccine bags on the immunization efficacy against Marek's disease in layer pullets

Yu-Wei Tsai
National Pingtung University of Science and Technology, Taiwan