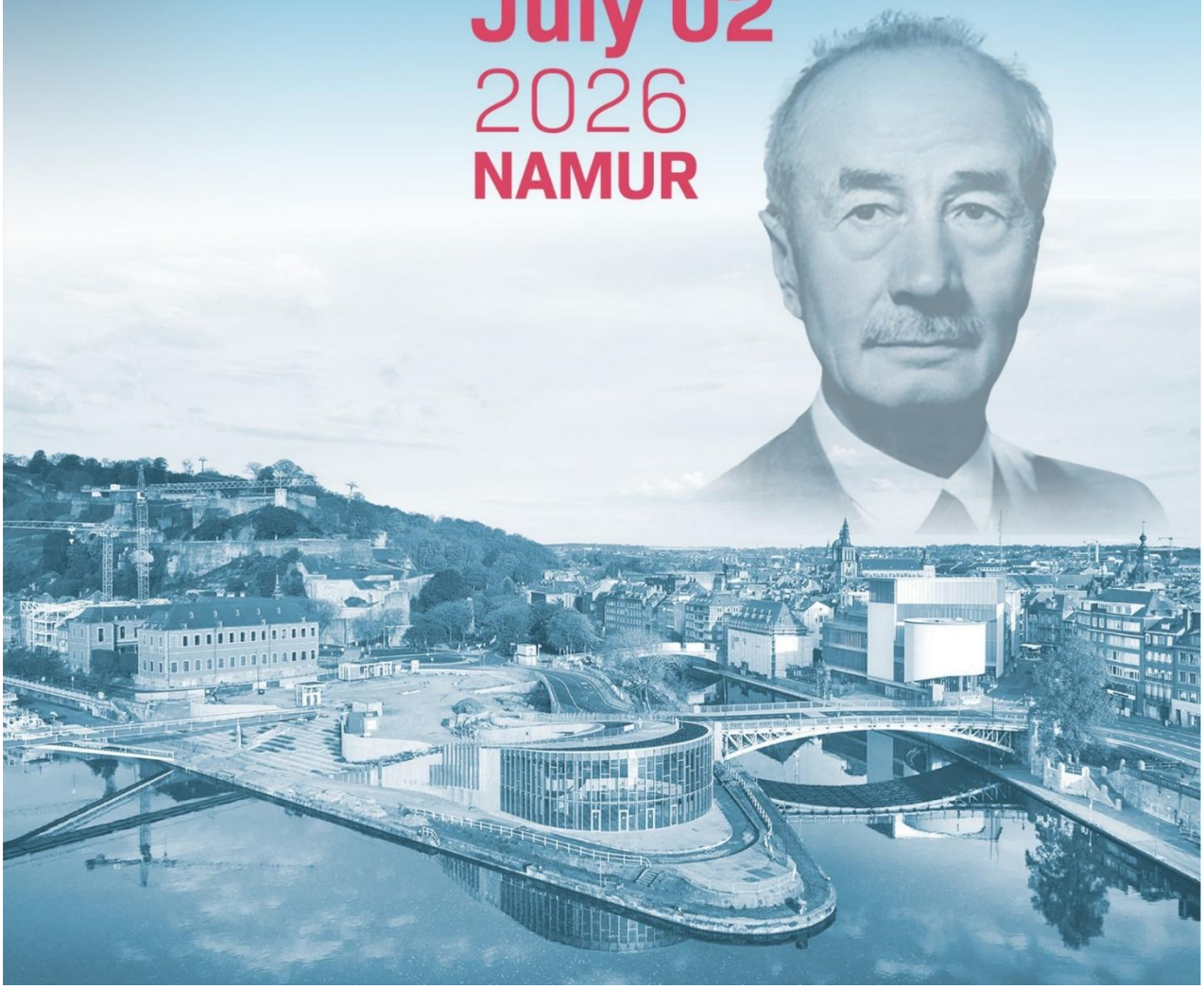
15th International Symposium

on Marek's Disease and Avian Herpesviruses

(MDAH 2026)

June 29
July 02
2026
NAMUR



We thank our sponsors

PLATINUM

Boehringer Ingelheim

Ceva

DIAMOND

Aviagen®

MSD Animal Health

GOLD

VENTRI

SILVER

LOHMANN BREEDERS

aaap
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AVIAN PATHOLOGISTS

Programme

Monday June 29, 2026

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

08:30 – 09:00 Pre-symposium registration
09:00 – 09:30 Introduction to the courses
09:30 – 11:45 Practicals in parallel sessions
Group 1: Avian anatomy and pathology
Group 2: Avian histology
11:45 – 12:45 Lunch
12:45 – 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
15:00 – 17:00 Guided tour of Namur | Groups A & B
15:30 – 17:30 Guided tour of Namur | Groups C & D

OPENING CEREMONY

18:00 – 18:15 Welcome speech
18:15 – 19:15 **KEYNOTE LECTURE**
Karel « Ton » Schat, Cornell University, USA
Marek's Disease Virus history: key discoveries over five decades of research
19:15 – 21:30 Welcome dinner with Belgian delights

Tuesday June 30, 2026

09:00 – 09:45 **KEYNOTE LECTURE**
Benjamin Dewals, University of Liège, Belgium
Unraveling the pathogenesis of malignant catarrhal fever: a peripheral T cell lymphoma of cattle

SESSION 1: VIRUS/HOST-OMICS

Chairs: **Keith Jarosinksi** and **Benoît Muylkens**

09:45 10:30	**[O1]**	**Moriah Szpara** Pennsylvania State University, USA	Genome-wide analyses of an avian herpesvirus identify 10 loci associated with tumorigenicity and vaccine escape
	[O2]	**Aijian Qin** Yangzhou University, China	Different regulation of gut microbiota-metabolism by oncogenic and/or attenuated Marek's Disease Virus
	[O3]	**Damien Coupeau** University of Namur, Belgium	Viral Lipase of Marek's Disease Virus: a model to study the biogenesis of non-canonical circular RNAs
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break		

11:00 12:30	**[O4]**	**Yaoyao Zhang** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Mapping chicken immune cell landscapes during MDV-induced tumorigenesis
	[O5]	**Steven Fiddaman** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Rural Indonesian chickens reveal a deeply divergent clade of Marek's Disease Virus associated with low virulence
	[O6]	**Hasitha Disanayaka** University of Melbourne, Australia	Comparative transcriptomics of Infectious Laryngotracheitis Virus and *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* coinfections in chicken tracheal organ cultures
	[O7]	**Md. Sirazul Islam** University of Melbourne, Australia	Transcriptomic analysis of host-virus interactions during infection of chicken embryo kidney cells with live attenuated vaccine strains of infectious laryngotracheitis virus
	[O8]	**Keith Jarosinksi** University of Illinois, USA	Nucleocytoplasmic shuttling of Marek's disease virus UL47-TEG5 is required for its role in horizontal transmission in chickens
	[O9]	**Sophie Cutts** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Characterising the activity of the Marek's disease virus virion host shutoff protein
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch		

SESSION 2: VIROLOGY

Chairs: **Caroline Denesvre** and **Benedikt Kaufer**

13:30 15:00	**[O10]**	**Caroline Denesvre** INRAE, France	A recombinant Marek's disease virus using ANCHOR™ technology: a novel tool to monitor viral infection *in vitro* and *in vivo* in the chicken
	[O11]	**Wei Wu** Zhejiang University, China	Host ssDNA Gap Prevention Pathways Are Exploited by α-Herpesviruses to Support GC-rich Genome Replication and Reactivation
	[O12]	**Stephen Spatz** Athens, GA, USA	Identification of ILTV genes involved in dysregulation of the interferon type I response
	[O13]	**Pierre Lombard** University of Namur, Belgium	Functional characterization of Meq-derived circular RNA in the tumorigenesis of Marek's disease virus
	[O14]	**Kallinikos Chalvatzis** University of Oxford / The Pirbright Institute, UK	Ultrastructural insights into Marek's Disease Virus-host cell interactions using cryogenic electron and light microscopy (cryo-CLEM) and cryogenic electron tomography (cryo-ET)
	[O15]	**Camille Ponsard** University of Namur, Belgium	Identification and functional characterization of a conserved locus producing circular RNAs in avian herpesviruses
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**

Sébastien Pfeffer, University of Strasbourg, France

A perspective on the role of RNA regulation during virus infections

SESSION 3: CLINICAL PRESENTATIONS AND DIAGNOSIS

Chairs: **Joanne Devlin** and **Damien Coupeau**

09:45 10:30	**[O16]**	**Susan Baigent** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Marek's Disease Virus Reference Laboratory: diagnostics and research
	[O17]	**Soumendu Chakravarti** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Marek's disease virus serotype 2 circulates freely and naturally in commercial poultry flocks in the UK and Europe: A 10-year molecular surveillance study by real-time PCR
	[O18]	**Haijun Jiang** Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, China	Molecular Characterization and Enhanced early Pathogenicity of Recently Circulating Marek's Disease Virus Strains in China
10:30 – 11:00		Coffee break	

SESSION 4: PATHOGENESIS

Chairs: **Mark Parcells** and **Shiro Murata**

11:00 12:30	**[O19]**	**Kathrine Van Etten** University of Illinois, USA	The role of Mardivirus glycoprotein C in cross-species transmission
	[O20]	**Benoît Muylkens** University of Namur, Belgium	A Meq-derived circular RNA is a potent mitigator of the virulence associated with Marek's disease virus
	[O21]	**Yulin Cong** Freie Universität Berlin, Germany	Decoding Marek's disease virus pathogenesis and shedding using barcode viruses
	[O22]	**Yoshinosuke Motai** Hokkaido University, Japan	Very short isoform of Meq protein reduces tumorigenicity and immunosuppressive capacity of Marek's disease virus
	[O23]	**Christian Gravino** University of Delaware, USA	The Meq oncoprotein of very virulent plus Marek's Disease Viruses (vv+MDVs) specifically binds chromatin modifier BRG1 and increases its transcriptional activity
	[O24]	**Mark Parcells** University of Delaware, USA	The Meq oncoprotein of Marek's Disease Virus binds DNA-damage and repair proteins and the chromothripsis-inducing protein NEDD4-BP2 (N4BP2)
12:30 – 13:30		Lunch	

SESSION 5: IMMUNOLOGY, VACCINES AND PREVENTION

Chairs: **Venugopal Nair** and **Aijian Qin**

13:30 14:30	**[O25]**	**Vishwanatha Reddy** North Carolina State University, USA	*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
	[O26]	**Aniek Garritsen** Royal GD, The Netherlands	Development and validation of a real time PCR for the detection of the Prevexxion™ RN1250 vaccine strain
	[O27]	**Shaozhi Zuo** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Comparative dynamics of vaccine and virulent Marek's disease virus replication and host responses *in vivo*
	[O28]	**Jun Luo** Henan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, China	A novel double-gene deleted vaccine against hypervirulent variant of MDV (HV-MDV) generated by the CRISPR/Cas9-based gene editing technology
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 and return by bus to the hotel		

Thursday July 2, 2026

SESSION 5: IMMUNOLOGY, VACCINES AND PREVENTION

Chairs: **Shayan Sharif** and **Isabel Gimeno**

09:00 10:30	**[O29]**	**Sohee Lee** University of Delaware, USA	Proteomic and Kinomic Analysis of the Effects of Marek's Disease Virus Tumor-associated Exosomes (TEX) on Innate Immune Signalling
	[O30]	**Hoa Do Duy** Boehringer Ingelheim, Vietnam	Evaluation of the Efficacy of rHVT+IBD+ILT Vaccine in Commercial Native Broiler Chickens in Vietnam
	[O31]	**Ahmed Kheimar** Freie Universität Berlin, Germany	Meq-specific immunity protects against Marek's Disease virus-induced pathogenesis
	[O32]	**Jaap Kool** MSD Animal Health, The Netherlands	Recombinant HVT-vectored Innovax®-ND-IBD-ILT vaccine induces early and long-lasting protective immunity against four major poultry pathogens
	[O33]	**Declan Kehlbeck** Pennsylvania State University, USA	Evaluating the impact of tandem repeats and structural variants on Marek's disease virus attenuation and vaccine effectiveness
	[O34]	**Janan Shoja Doost** University of Guelph, Canada	Transcriptomic profiling reveals early immune activation and metabolic remodeling in lymphoid tissues following *in ovo* Marek's disease virus mRNA vaccination in chickens
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break		

11:00 **11:45**	**[O35]**	**Kun Qian** Yangzhou University, China	A Recombinant Marek's Disease Virus Vectored Vaccine Conferring Dual Protection against Virulent NDV and MDV Challenges
	[O36]	**John Dunn** Athens, GA, USA	Comparing Marek's disease vaccines' effect on virus shedding based on vaccine type and pathotype
	[O37]	**Rachel Jude** University of Georgia, USA	Mass Administration of Infectious Laryngotracheitis Virus (ILTV) Chicken Embryo Origin (CEO) Vaccine: Hatchery vs. Drinking Water Vaccination

CLOSING CEREMONY

11:45 – 12:30	Boehringer Ingelheim Karel Schat Awards Meeting wrap-up by Mark Parcells Presentation of the 2028 symposium in Japan by Shiro Murata
17:00 – 18:00	Lunch box distribution

Posters

[P1]	**Arjan Baijense** Animal Health Group, The Netherlands	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
[P2]	**Yaoyao Zhang** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Bcl-2 homolog Nr-13 (vNr-13) encoded by herpesvirus of turkeys is essential for the virus proliferation *in vivo*
[P3]	**Paola Vaz** University of Melbourne	Investigations into viral-bacterial coinfections in respiratory diseases of animals across 2D, 3D and *in vivo* models
[P4]	**Rayanh Gutierrez** Pennsylvania State University, USA	Modelling the Within-Host Dynamics of Marek's disease virus
[P5]	**Thomas Delquigny** Boehringer Ingelheim, France	Unexpected Marek's Disease Virus detection in conventional broilers farms in France
[P6]	**Zoran Žlabravec** University of Ljubljana	Detection of Marek's disease virus in poultry in Slovenia in years 2024–2025
[P7]	**Soumendu Chakravarti** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Evolution and functional significance of Meq oncoprotein isoforms and polymorphisms in Marek's disease virus across different countries
[P8]	**Asok Kumar M** ICAR – Indian Veterinary Research Institute	Deciphering the role of exosomes in Marek's Disease Virus Pathogenesis: an *in-vitro* study
[P9]	**Laëtitia Trapp-Fragnet** INRAE, France	Exploring the role of endothelial cell infection for Marek's disease pathogenesis
[P10]	**Leonardo Gonzales** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Understanding the sequence diversity and functional characterization of Meq oncoprotein in Marek's disease virus from different countries
[P11]	**Kun Qian** Yangzhou University, China	Construction of Recombinant CVI988 Vaccine Expressing H9 Subtype AIV Hemagglutinin and Its Protective Efficacy
[P12]	**Muhammad Abid** The Pirbright Institute, UK	Generation and efficacy of a recombinant Herpesvirus of Turkeys (rHVT) co-expressing IBDV-VP2 and NDV-F as a Trivalent Vaccine Candidate
[P13]	**Molalegne Bitew** Ethiopian Bio and Emerging Technology Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Pathogenicity of Field Marek's Disease Virus Serotype-1 and Vaccine Efficacy Test in Chicken in Eastern Shewa Ethiopia
[P14]	**Federico Bonorino** North Carolina State University, USA / Universidad de León, Spain	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
[P15]	**Abdelhamid Fares** North Carolina State University, USA / University of Sadat City, Egypt	Serial back passages of vv+MDV 648A strain in CVI-LTR-vaccinated chickens result in a drastic decrease in its transmission

[P16]	**Isabel Gimeno** North Carolina State University, USA	Safety and efficacy of HVT vaccines grown in Diploid Growth Serum Reduced Medium
[P17]	**Gurudutt Joshi** Ventri Biologicals, Venkateshwara Hatcheries Pvt. Ltd, India	Transforming Poultry Health in India: ProVect-NDIBD Experimental Vaccine Against Newcastle & Infectious Bursal Diseases
[P18]	**Gurudutt Joshi** Ventri Biologicals, Venkateshwara Hatcheries Pvt. Ltd, India	Recombinant HVT Breakthrough in India: Advancing Protection Against Newcastle Disease in Poultry
[P19]	**Jaap Kool** MSD Animal Health, The Netherlands	The recombinant HVT-vectored Innovax®-ND-IBD-ILT vaccine induces protective immunity against Infectious Bursal Disease Virus two weeks after vaccination
[P20]	**Caterina Lupini** University of Bologna, Italy	Early post-vaccination assessment of CVI-LTR vaccine intake using a purpose-built molecular detection protocol
[P21]	**Henk Pouwels** MSD Animal Health, The Netherlands	HVT-ND-H5: A Double Recombinant HVT-Based Vaccine for Protection Against Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza clade 2.3.4.4b
[P22]	**Yu-Wei Tsai** National Pingtung University of Science and Technology, Taiwan	Impact of standardized inversion agitation of vaccine bags on the immunization efficacy against Marek's disease in layer pullets
[P23]	**Louann Tournoux** University of Namur, Belgium	Characterization of a conserved circular RNA produced from Marek’s disease virus UL15 gene, a key component of the viral DNA packaging machinery
[P24]	**Moriah Szpara** Pennsylvania State University, USA	Genome-wide analyses of an avian herpesvirus identify 10 loci associated with tumorigenicity and vaccine escape
[P25]	**Declan Kehlbeck** Pennsylvania State University, USA	Evaluating the impact of tandem repeats and structural variants on Marek’s disease virus attenuation and vaccine effectiveness