Henk P. Haagsman

Henk P. Haagsman (1954) is Professor of Molecular Host Defence, Chair of the Department of Infectious Diseases & Immunology of Utrecht University and coordinator of the One Health Infection & Immunity program of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. In 2014 and 2016 he was chairman of two successful international conferences on 'ALTernatives to ANTibiotics' (ALTANT-conferences).

He has a long-standing interest in the physiological barriers that protect humans and animals from the outside world. Most of his work focused on the barrier functions at the air-fluid interface in the lungs but he also investigated host defence in the gastro-intestinal tract. Since 1998 his work is aimed to reduce infections in farm animals and to prevent farm animal-derived zoonoses. With his research he does not only want to improve public health by reduction of zoonotic diseases but also by reduction of antibiotic use in farm animals. Understanding the innate immune system of farm animals is of utmost importance.

Dr. Haagsman's research focuses on two classes of effector molecules: (1) collectins and (2) host defence peptides (HDPs). The susceptibility to infectious diseases but also the propensity to spread disease may be partially determined by these molecules. Current research projects on collectins are mainly aimed to understand the role of these proteins in the protection against viruses, particularly influenza A virus. The research projects on HDPs (cathelicidins and defensins) are aimed to understand their role to protect from bacterial infections. An important goal is to investigate the possibility to develop prophylactic and therapeutic anti-infectives based on these effector molecules.

Email: H.P.Haagsman@uu.nl