

WittKieffer highlights major managerial changes in Q3 **S&P Global**

25 Nov 2025 - Animal Health | Headline Analysis

Analysis by WittKieffer has revealed an “exceptionally active” period for senior leadership changes in the third quarter of 2025.

The company – a specialist in executive search, leadership advisory, and interim and on-demand leadership – tracked 130 senior leadership moves across 40 leading animal health and nutrition companies in Europe and the US.

Joe Kennedy – managing director for WittKieffer’s animal health team – told S&P Global Animal Health: “A notable trend this quarter was change at the highest level, as we saw a few major companies appointing new chief executives, signaling strategic shifts.”

Mike Nassif was appointed president and chief executive at Neogen – an external hire from the medical technology sector (formerly at Siemens Healthineers). Philipp Navratil took the helm as chief executive of Nestlé – the parent company of Nestlé Purina – after having spent 24 years with the company in various commercial positions. **Paul Martingell** became chief executive at Virbac at the start of September, bringing experience of working in consumer health within academy companies (Opella/Sanofi, Boehringer Ingelheim, Novartis and Reckitt Benckiser).

According to WittKieffer, the majority of Q3 moves were internal promotions (58% of all moves). Mr Kennedy said this indicates “a strong focus on rewarding tenure and developing internal talent pipelines”. Key examples of this trend include Rafael Lopez’s promotion to chief executive for Europe at Nestlé Purina after a 30-year career with the company and the appointment of **Yvonne Hsu** to the role of president at Hill’s Pet Nutrition following 25 years of service, including 18 years at parent company Colgate-Palmolive.

Mr Kennedy explained: “While internal moves were more common, external hires remain a key strategy (42% of all moves) to close talent gaps and bring in fresh perspectives. These appointments – particularly the recruitment of leaders from adjacent industries like biopharma and other industries like advanced industrials or technology – underscore a continuing search for diverse skill sets to drive innovation.”

WittKieffer also tracked a notable outflow of 38 senior leaders during Q3. Mr Kennedy suggested this raises important questions about long-term retention at animal health companies.

He noted: “While some churn is healthy – with leaders retiring, building their own businesses or moving between competitors – we observed a significant number of executives departing the sector entirely. Key leaders accepted attractive opportunities in adjacent industries like biopharma and health tech, and diverse sectors including chemicals, financial services and consumer goods. From our perspective, if this talent drain is not addressed, it may lead to a critical challenge. As the industry focuses on attracting new skills, it must equally prioritize creating a compelling environment that convinces its most experienced and valuable leaders to stay.”

Diversity perspective

Mr Kennedy also highlighted progress in the area of diversity. The Q3 data revealed “a major positive shift in how the animal health industry is embracing female leadership”.

Across all 130 senior appointments tracked during the third quarter, 48 were women (37%) – a figure that moves the industry much closer to equitable representation.

Mr Kennedy said the animal health sector has reached “a pivotal milestone in internal succession planning” with women securing 47% of all internal promotions during Q3. He noted this brings animal health “to the very cusp of gender parity for internal career pathways”.

No portion of this report may be reproduced, reused, or otherwise distributed in any form without prior written consent, with the exception of any internal client distribution as may be permitted in the license agreement between client and S&P Global. Content reproduced or redistributed with S&P Global permission must display S&P Global legal notices and attributions of authorship. The information contained herein is from sources considered reliable but its accuracy and completeness are not warranted, nor are the opinions and analyses which are based upon it, and to the extent permitted by law, S&P Global shall not be liable for any errors or omissions or any loss, damage or expense incurred by reliance on information or any statement contained herein.

Mr Kennedy commented: “As a firm dedicated to building high-impact leadership teams, we consider this a highly encouraging development. It suggests the industry’s focus on cultivating internal career pathways for women is yielding tangible results. The challenge now shifts from fixing a ‘blind spot’ to building on this momentum. While external hiring still shows a gap, with women representing 24% of new leaders hired from outside the organization, the trends from Q3 2025 present a clear success story and a new opportunity.

“As the animal health sector continues to evolve, the ability to build in-house talent, attract and retain diverse leadership is not just an ethical imperative but a proven strategic advantage. The trends from Q3 offer a clear path forward – to lead among all industries in building the most diverse and effective leadership teams for the future.”

This article includes an interactive object. Please click [here](#) to view it.

Analyst Contact Details: Joseph Harvey