

Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare

Minutes of the 75th plenary meeting

Held on 21-22 05 2013, Parma
(Agreed on 03 06 2013)

Participants

- **Panel Members:**

Edith Authié, Charlotte Berg, Anette Bøtner, Howard Browman, Klaus Depner, Mariano Domingo, Sandra Edwards, Christine Fourichon, Aline de Koeijer, Frank Koenen, Simon More, Mohan Raj, Liisa Sihvonen, Hans Spoolder, Jan Arend Stegeman, Hans-Hermann Thulke, Ivar Vågsholm, Antonio Velarde, and Preben Willeberg

- **European Commission:**

- Marina Marini and Maria Pittman (H3N2v Mandate) (DG SANCO, Unit 03) joined the meeting by teleconference

- **EFSA:**

- AHAW Unit: Franck Berthe, Denise Candiani, Sandra Correia, Sofie Dhollander, Chiara Fabris, Maria Ferrara, Andrea Gervelmeyer, Per Have and Karen Mackay
- SAS Unit: Martino Laura and Didier Verloo

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair of the Panel, welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Ilaria Capua and Stéphan Zientara.

Antonio Velarde did not participate in agenda point “Request for an opinion on electrical stunning of lambs”.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of interest

In accordance with EFSA’s Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes¹ and the Decision of the Executive Director implementing this Policy regarding Declarations of Interests², EFSA screened the Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI) and the

¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencepolicy.pdf>

² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencerules.pdf>

Specific Declaration of interest (SDoI) filled in by the experts invited for the present meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the SDoI, as well as the Oral Declaration of Interest at the beginning of the meeting, please refer to Annex I.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 74th Plenary meeting held on 25-26 03 2013.

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 03 05 2013 and published on the EFSA website on 06 05 2013.

5. New mandates

5.1. Self-task for bovine tuberculosis

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) is included as one of the animal diseases to be eradicated in the European Union since 1964. Substantial progress towards eradication has been achieved by the control policies implemented. However during the years 2006-2011, the proportion of existing cattle herds infected or positive for *Mycobacterium bovis* in the EU has remained stable. Further decrease has not been observed and re-emergency is being reported in several countries.

Several EFSA opinions have looked at specific aspects of this complex picture and it is felt that a such approach is not optimal for scientific advice to risk managers since it does not contemplate the interactions between animal populations and their environment, and the specificities of testing and culling programs applied in different field situations.

The AHAW Panel wishes to develop a conceptual framework towards holistic approach to bovine tuberculosis. The objective is to establish and maintain a broad understanding of the epidemiology of bovine tuberculosis, relevant to effective surveillance and control, throughout the EU, while addressing specific questions posed from the Commission.

In order to achieve this objective, a self-task was proposed to EFSA. The expected output would be a statement of the AHAW Panel to be finalized by December 2013.

The Panel considered necessary to compare epidemiological situations in the MS and in different areas within the MS, and to identify key issues that hinder effective bTB surveillance and control or otherwise provide an explanation for differences in effectiveness of surveillance and control programs in those different epidemiological contexts.

5.2. Self-task for a guidance on assessing studies evaluating the efficacy of stunning interventions regarding animal protection during stunning

The AHAW Panel agreed to develop a guidance document, which defines the criteria against which studies evaluating the efficacy of stunning interventions regarding animal protection during stunning will be assessed.

In order to achieve this objective, a self-task was proposed to EFSA. The expected output would be a statement of the AHAW Panel to be finalized by November 2013.

The guidance should comprise a checklist of reporting quality criteria, eligibility criteria and further study quality criteria, accompanied with the scientific reasoning for each checklist item. It should also provide a description of the guidance development process and explain how studies will be evaluated. The guidance should encompass mechanical, electrical and gas stunning methods for main livestock species (bovines, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, and rabbits).

The AHAW Panel considered that the two opinions on CO₂ stunning of rabbits and electrical stunning of lambs will serve as the basis for the guidance and that further elements/depth will be added where necessary.

Work done on the critical appraisal of scientific studies by the Scientific Assessment Support Unit of EFSA was presented to the Panel. The Panel agreed that this should also be

considered during the preparation of the guidance document. A public consultation of the guidance document will be made in summer 2013 before its adoption.

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption/ endorsement

6.1. Public health hazards to be covered for animal health and welfare by meat inspection in bovines ([EFSA-Q-2011-00324](#))

The Commission requested a scientific opinion and technical assistance on the public health hazards to be covered by inspection of meat. The scope of this mandate is to evaluate meat inspection in a public health context.

The AHAW Panel endorsed its document on 25th of March. An additional recommendation was proposed and endorsed at the May plenary meeting.

The new endorsed recommendation, which was derived from the 'Food Chain Information' section (2.4), of the AHAW Bovine Opinion Appendix, is as follows:

"The value of the FCI in guiding risk management to discriminate between animals subsequently going through different types of inspection procedures should be evaluated. Priority should be given to improving test sensitivity, noting that (pre-) screening tests should preferably produce few false negative classifications for the sake of animal disease detection and surveillance. Test specificity will largely be an economical parameter, since the subsequent inspection of all "FCI-positive" animals or groups should detect any false positives not correctly identified during the FCI pre-screening."

The final opinions will be submitted for adoption by the BIOHAZ Panel in June 2013.

6.2. Request for an opinion on electrical parameters for the stunning of lambs and kid goats ([EFSA-Q-2013-00237](#))

A mandate was received in relation to Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing with focus on:

- the extent to which minimum currents lower than 1 A provide a level of animal welfare at least equivalent to that ensured by the use of a minimum current of 1 A
- the type of study and data needed to supply scientific evidence that a given electrical stunning protocol of small ruminants provides a level of animal welfare at least equivalent to that ensured by the use of a minimum current of 1 A

The approach of the AHAW Panel consisted in assessing quality, fulfilment of eligibility criteria and quality of the study documents submitted to EFSA. The eligibility criteria were derived from the legislation and focus on the intervention and on the outcome.

The AHAW Panel discussed and reviewed the draft document. The opinion was adopted on the 22nd of May.

6.3. Request for an opinion on the use of carbon dioxide for stunning of rabbits ([EFSA-Q-2013-00236](#))

The mandate received from the European Commission in relation to Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing had a focus on:

- the design of the submitted study and the conclusions drawn are scientifically sound
- the extent to which the use of CO₂ is an acceptable alternative for the stunning of rabbits based on the submitted study

The same approach as for electrical stunning of lambs was followed in this opinion (see section above).

The AHAW Panel discussed and reviewed the draft document. The opinion was adopted on the 22nd of May.

7. Progress report on other scientific outputs

7.1. Vaccine for bovine tuberculosis ([EFSA-Q-2013-00241](#))

The mandate received from the European Commission in relation to bovine tuberculosis vaccination purpose is to guide future field vaccine trials so that the best possible data regarding vaccine performance (effectiveness and duration of immunity), DIVA test performance, and related issues are gathered. Such information is essential for a future assessment of vaccination as a bovine tuberculosis control option.

The mandate was formally accepted and the deadline for this mandate is December 2013.

Initial contacts have been made with the European Medicines Agency to ensure its contribution and agree on a modus operandi for the mandate.

Aline de Koeijer was nominated as chair of the working group to be formed.

7.2. Monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses ([EFSA-Q-2012-00840](#))

On the mandate on monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses, the conceptual model is an assessment based on sensitivity and specificity of indicators for unconsciousness and death. A plan of action, including systematic literature review, data collection, and possible public consultation was presented and discussed. Specifically, an online survey to assess the use of the indicators and to get information, possibly, about their specificity and sensitivity has been launched. Since the outcomes of most of the mentioned activities will only be delivered in the end of June, it was agreed to discuss draft versions of the four opinions in the plenary meeting of June. In particular, a deeper discussion about the approach taken to develop the chapter on sampling size and sampling protocols for such monitoring procedures is foreseen. The opinions will then be circulated for written endorsement by the Panel in the beginning of July before they go out on public consultation.

7.3. Use of low atmosphere pressure system (LAPs) for stunning of poultry ([EFSA-Q-2013-00322](#))

This request is similar to the two previous ones for Scientific Opinions concerning electrical parameters for the stunning of lambs and kid goats and the use of carbon dioxide for stunning of rabbits, received in February 2013. Currently, Council Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing does not allow the use of low atmosphere pressure system for stunning of poultry. EFSA is requested to assess four scientific publications received by the Commission to support the inclusion of this method in the EU Regulation.

The mandate was formally accepted on 29 April 2013. Following the adoption of the above-mentioned Scientific Opinions on lambs and rabbits, the same methodological approach will be followed to address this mandate.

7.4. Possible risks posed by the influenza A (H3N2v) virus for animal health and its potential spread and implications for animal and human health ([EFSA-Q-2012-00912](#))

The draft opinion was presented including the approach followed to reply to each of the five ToRs. The current structure of the document was discussed and some principles for restructuring the document were agreed. The comments and suggestions received by the

Panel members were considered and discussed. Some of them will still need to be addressed to the working group experts.

In relation to the reply to ToR2 (risk of introduction of H3N2v in EU), the assumptions made for the risk assessment were discussed and agreed. The risk flow pathway was presented as well the description of the methodology followed. Two scenarios were developed: with and without separation of the imported pigs from the other animals at the farm of destination.

The current document will be revised and restructured and questions clarified through email and a TC with the relevant experts. Another TC will be organised with the EC to finalise the clarification of some pending aspects related to the risk assessment. After this, the draft opinion will be circulated to the AHAW Panel for discussion and possible adoption at its plenary in June (25, 26).

8. Feedback from EFSA

8.1. Emerging risk Unit

Ivar Vågsholm gave a presentation on the activities of the Scientific Committee working group on emerging risks (ERWG - biological hazards). The presentation also included a more specific discussion on lumpy skin disease (LSD) as a potential topic for the AHAW Panel. The disease is endemic in Africa and now in Middle East countries. It seems to be spreading towards the north. It has been identified by ERWG as a potentially emerging issue. The Panel welcomed the initiative of the Scientific Committee and recognised that LSD would require attention. It was agreed that further work is needed to identify potential risk question for the AHAW Panel.

9. Next meetings

Next meeting in 2013: June 25/26, September 18/19, October 22/23, and November 26/27.

10. Welfare of dairy calves

Calves are totally dependent on milk (or milk replacers) for at least the first three weeks of their life. Milk replacers are lower in energy content than whole milk, and they vary widely in composition and quality. Traditionally the dairy calves feeding regime suggests to offer them 8 to 10% of body weight in whole milk or milk replacer per day (so called "restricted feeding"). New literature has demonstrated that the restricted feeding is sometimes considered as a regime that underfeeds the calves.

Considering that a lot of research has been carried out over the last 10 years in the area of early nutrition of young dairy calves (for a review see Lorentz et al., 2011), the AHAW Panel has been asked whether it could be advisable, to consider reviewing the current scientific knowledge, and revising previous scientific recommendations on the nutritional regimes for dairy calves, from birth to solid feeding, in terms of quantity, quality, frequency of feeding with liquid feeds (milk - milk replacers/powdered milk) and animal welfare.

The issue was discussed by the AHAW Panel on May 22. It was emphasized that additional aspects can make the issue of the nutritional regimes for dairy calves, from birth to solid feeding, even more complex: e.g. the feeding procedures and strategies, the quantity of powder in the milk replacers, the strategies for stimulating the calves to suckle liquid feeds, the use of fiber, and the food safety implications of early nutrition and weaning of dairy calves (the risk of being infected by EHEC/STEC/VTEC).

The Panel considered it advisable to further discuss with the Commission on this issue already brought to their attention, in order to evaluate possible follow-up actions.

Annex I

Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Specific Declaration of Interests (SDoI)³

- a) **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** In the SDoI filled for the present meeting **DR. A. VELARDE** declared the following interest: Co-author of the report on stunning of lambs. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes and the Decision of the Executive Director implementing this Policy regarding Declarations of Interests, and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, the interest above was deemed to represent a conflict of Interest.

This results in the impossibility for the expert to be present when that item (Request for an opinion on electrical stunning of lambs) is discussed, voted on or in anyway processed by that concerned scientific group.

³ The Annual Declarations of Interests have been screened and approved before inviting the experts to the meeting, in accordance with the Decision of the Executive Director implementing the Policy on Independence regarding Declarations of Interests.