



EFSA in focus **ANIMALS**

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> Key topics

EFSA advises on welfare of dairy cows

EFSA's Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) has published five scientific opinions and a scientific report on the overall effects of the most relevant farming systems on the welfare of dairy cows and related diseases. The Panel concluded that long term genetic selection for higher milk yield and the nature of the farming systems used – i.e. housing and equipment, as well as management and handling practices – are major factors affecting the health and welfare of dairy cows. Lameness and mastitis are the most significant indicators of poor dairy cow welfare, as well as reproductive, metabolic and behavioural disorders. The Panel proposed a series of recommendations which could be taken into account by risk managers in view of further improving welfare in the areas of housing, feeding and the genetic selection of dairy cows.



whether current farming and husbandry systems meet the welfare needs of dairy cows. The Panel also evaluated the impact of genetic selection aimed at increasing milk yield on dairy cow welfare in the various farming systems used, and highlighted the correlation between genetic selection and the incidence of lameness, mastitis, reproductive and metabolic disorders.

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EFSA experts say more research needed on breeding goats for TSE resistance

EFSA experts on the Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ) said in an opinion that further research is needed on breeding programmes in goats for genetic resistance to Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) (including Classical scrapie, Atypical scrapie and BSE).

[For more information](#)

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Over the last thirty years genetic selection for higher milk yield has changed the body shape and increased the size of dairy cows, therefore increasing their requirement for space. Scientific experts highlighted the importance of allocating enough space for cattle movement when designing resting, feeding and walking areas. The Panel recommended that the genetic selection of dairy cows should address their resistance to diseases such as lameness and mastitis, as well as improve their fertility, health and longevity.

Scientific experts took into account all available data in defining levels for light, indoor temperature and relative humidity for good welfare. They recommended that the design of resting, walking and feeding areas in the buildings should allow for sufficient movement and exercise. The Panel also said that while the use of tie-stalls continues, cows should have daily exercise that involves walking freely. On this point, six members of the AHAW Panel expressed a minority opinion highlighting evidence of poor welfare in dairy cattle held in tie-stalls and recommended that dairy cattle should not be routinely kept in tie-stalls

The Panel concluded that achieving reduction of mastitis can be obtained not only from treating the disease and preventing its transmission, but also from improving the animals' immune systems. This can be achieved by minimising stress factors and through controlled and nutritionally-balanced feeding (e.g. by providing the most appropriate type of dietary fibre for the digestive system of dairy cows).

The Panel also concluded that farms with a high prevalence of lameness in dairy cows (e.g. above 10%) do not have an adequate prevention programme and should improve housing conditions, genetic selection and management practices. Moreover, farmers who are well trained in recognising signs of disease at an early stage and in knowing when to seek veterinary advice can contribute to reducing the prevalence of lameness.■

[For more information](#)

More data collection needed on scrapie resistance in Cypriot goats, advises EFSA

Suggestions from the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) to complement the initial findings of a Cypriot pilot study on a breeding programme for scrapie resistance in goats in Cyprus still have limitations, according to a recent EFSA statement.

The European Commission asked EFSA's Panel on Biological Hazards for technical advice on a protocol for additional data collection supporting a possible breeding programme for scrapie resistance in goats in Cyprus. The protocol was drawn up by the CRL for TSEs, based on EFSA's recommendations in its earlier opinion on genetic TSE resistance in goats.

The CRL protocol addresses the six areas of research that were suggested in the previous opinion. The Panel concluded that the protocol is mainly an extension and an improvement of the Cypriot case control study that was presented in their pilot project. However, the low number in the population of alleles of the PrPC protein gene (*PRNP*) compromise the statistical power of the present proposal. Since the potential diversity of TSE



agents in Cypriot goats cannot be foreseen, EFSA recommends the systematic screening of all samples available by high throughput biochemical tests rather than using the proposed reduced panel of isolates.

Also, the proposed experiments are unlikely to document the distribution of PrPSc in homozygous goats but could, to some extent, in heterozygous goats. This is due to the limited number of the relevant PRNP alleles and the assumed prevalence of classical scrapie in infected herds.

Finally, it was concluded that the modelling approach on the feasibility and duration of selection for resistant alleles depends on the availability of data. This protocol cannot substitute the experiments advised in EFSA's previous opinion. These experiments remain crucial for a definitive assessment of resistance. ■

[For more information](#)

> EFSA at work

Introducing the benchmark dose approach - a more sophisticated choice for deriving health-based guidance values?

EFSA's Scientific Committee considers the benchmark dose (BMD) approach for deriving health-based guidance values, such as an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI), to be scientifically more advanced than existing methods. This follows a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.

Traditionally, when experimental animal data are used for risk assessments of non-genotoxic and non-carcinogenic food substances, the No-Observed-Adverse-Effect-Level (NOAEL) and/or the Lowest-Observed-Adverse-Effect-Level (LOAEL), are the reference points for deriving health-based guidance

values. However, while these approaches may use qualitative information, they do not use all the available data quantitatively. In contrast, the BMD approach makes extended use of dose-response data from studies in experimental animals or from observational epidemiological studies to better characterise and quantify potential risks. Therefore, the Scientific Committee concludes that the BMD approach is scientifically more advanced than the NOAEL approach.

Using the BMD approach also results in a more consistent reference point, as a consequence of the specified benchmark response. In addition, health-based guidance values derived using the BMD approach can be as protective as those derived from the NOAEL approach, i.e. on average over a large number of risk assessments. Therefore the default values for uncertainty factors currently applied remain appropriate and there is no need for any additional uncertainty factor.

The BMD approach is applicable to all chemicals in food, irrespective of their category or origin, e.g. pesticides, additives or contaminants. The BMD approach is of particular value for: i) situations where the identification of a NOAEL is uncertain; ii) providing a reference point for the margin of exposure in case of substances that are both genotoxic and carcinogenic; and iii) dose-response assessment of observational epidemiological data. In the short term, the Scientific Committee strongly encourages EFSA's Scientific Panels and Units to adopt the BMD approach to situations such as those above.

In the longer term, the Scientific Committee anticipates that the BMD approach will be used as the method of choice for the determination of the reference points for deriving health-based guidance values and margins of exposure. Given that there are practical considerations regarding its introduction and wider use in EFSA, and that its application requires a level of expert judgement and modelling expertise, the Scientific Committee proposes that training in dose-response modelling and the use of relevant software be offered to EFSA experts. The Scientific Committee would then review the implementation, experience and acceptability of the BMD approach in EFSA's work in two years time.

EFSA has not systematically used the BMD approach so far, although some EFSA Scientific Panels have been applying the BMD approach occasionally. However, the Scientific Committee does not consider it necessary to repeat all previous evaluations using the BMD approach, because, on average, the BMD and NOAEL approaches give comparable results. Where refinement of previous risk assessments is considered necessary, for instance where the human exposure is close to the ADI, application of the BMD approach would be of particular value. ■

[For more information](#)

> Meeting report

Technical meeting on animal welfare aspects of genetic selection in broilers and broiler breeders

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) scientists held a meeting with stakeholders on 23 September to exchange views on the welfare implications linked to the genetic selection in broilers, and welfare aspects related to the management and housing of broiler breeders.

The meeting provided an opportunity to inform stakeholders about the background and scope of the request received by EFSA from the European Commission (EC), to discuss the challenges of data collection and to foster further cooperation with all interested parties. Representatives of the poultry industry, breeding companies, research groups, NGOs, national and international institutions attended the meeting.

The participants exchanged views on scientific and technical aspects related to welfare of broilers, with special focus on data availability, data sources, and clarification of the scope of the request from the EC. It was concluded that genetic background, management and environment contribute to the welfare of the birds and hence need to be considered in the assessment.

Participants also agreed that poultry breeding for meat is a dynamic sector and stressed the importance of having access to the most recent data. It was concluded that the lack of a harmonised system for data collection may hamper scientific risk assessment. Methodologies for data analysis were presented to tackle these difficulties and to identify data gaps.



Request from the European Commission

The European Commission has requested EFSA to gather and assess all data available on the subject and produce two scientific opinions: one on the influence of genetic selection on the welfare and resistance to stress of commercial broilers; and a second on the welfare of broiler breeders. Based on these

opinions, the Commission will submit a report concerning the influence of genetic parameters on the welfare of chickens to the European Parliament and to the Council.

EFSA's work

EFSA's Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) is supported by two *ad hoc* Working Groups of experts to draft a scientific report on the current knowledge on the welfare aspects of genetic selection in broilers, and broiler breeder management and housing. This work will form the basis for two scientific opinions planned to be adopted in June 2010. Both draft opinions will be subject to a public consultation in early 2010 and comments received will be taken into consideration when finalising the opinions.

Data collection and evaluation

A **call for data** relevant to the welfare aspects of genetic selection in broilers and the welfare aspects of the management and housing of the broiler breeders was published on EFSA's website. The deadline for receipt of data was 15 October 2009 (see p.5).

EFSA also launched an **Article 36 call for proposals** to carry out data collection, integrate data from the public call for data and process a systematic evaluation. The project was awarded to a consortium coordinated by the French Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) who have begun the 5-month project.

[For more information.](#)

The European Consumers' Association (BEUC) visits EFSA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) welcomed Paolo Martinello, the new President of the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC), who led a BEUC delegation on a visit to EFSA headquarters on 9 July 2009. EFSA presented its core activities in risk assessment, scientific cooperation and communications and reiterated the importance of dialogue with stakeholders in fulfilling its mandate of protecting consumers.

EFSA explained how scientific opinions are finalised, from the initial mandate given to the European food safety watchdog to the final publication of the opinion. The BEUC delegation received an update on the work of the Panel dealing with dietetic products, nutrition and allergies (NDA), with a focus on EFSA's opinion on reference intakes and nutrient profiles, and on the guidelines produced by EFSA's Panel on food contact materials, enzymes and flavourings for the safety assessment of substances used in active and intelligent materials. In addition, EFSA also discussed with BEUC its approach to risk communication and provided an update on its activities in this area.

BEUC is a member of EFSA's Stakeholder Consultative Platform where it contributes its views on a wide variety of issues related



to the work of the Authority. The Platform is composed of 24 EU-wide stakeholder organisations working in areas related to the food chain, representing consumers, food and feed operations, the food industry, food trade and NGOs. The Platform meets twice a year to assist EFSA in developing its overall relations and policy with stakeholders.

Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality visits EFSA

The Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Mrs Gerda Verburg, visited EFSA on 8 June 2009, accompanied by a delegation of government officials and representatives from the Dutch food safety agency, VWA.

Minister Verburg was welcomed by EFSA's Chair of Management Board, Prof. Diána Bánáti and EFSA's Executive Director, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle. During the visit the delegation discussed how EFSA works, its scientific cooperation with Member States and its risk communication activities. Particular attention was paid to EFSA's work on nutrition, GMOs, animal health and welfare, and on new technologies.



Call for health and welfare data on broiler genetic selection

EFSA has issued a call for data on the genetics and welfare of chicken kept for meat production (broilers) as the basis for its risk assessment when advising the European Commission.

A 2000 report from the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare concluded that a wide range of metabolic and behavioural traits in broilers have been changed by selection practices. Following the EU Directive laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production, the European Commission will submit to the European Parliament and Council, a report concerning the influence of genetic selection on identified deficiencies resulting in poor welfare of chickens. The Commission asked EFSA to assess all available information and to then issue two scientific opinions. It seeks advice firstly, on the welfare of grandparent and parent stocks raised and kept for breeding

purposes, and, secondly, on the influence of genetic selection on the welfare and resistance to stress and to disease agents of commercial broilers.

EFSA drafted a list of 19 technical questions and has asked governments, interested organisations, breeding companies, universities, research institutions, other stakeholders and individuals to submit any available relevant data. The information sought also included the animal health aspects of genetic selection in broilers.

The call closed on 15 October 2009.

[For more information.](#)



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Vitamin E for all animal species and categories

Mandate Number: M-2009-0233

PROSTORA Max (*Bifidobacterium animalis*) for pets and other non-food producing animals

Mandate Number: M-2009-0234

BIOSPRINT (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) for cattle for fattening

Mandate Number: M-2009-0235

Acitek® (also denominated as Advastat®, containing acarbose) for calves for fattening and dairy cows

Deadline: 28-Feb-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0239

Biomin® C3 (*Enterococcus faecium*, *Bifidobacterium animalis* ssp. *animalis* and *Lactobacillus salivarius* ssp. *salivarius*) for chickens for fattening

Mandate Number: M-2009-0240

Biosprint® (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) for dairy cows

Mandate Number: M-2009-0241

Ecobiol® and Ecobiol® plus (*Bacillus amyloliquefaciens*) for chickens for fattening

Mandate Number: M-2009-0242

Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ)

Statement on a protocol for additional data collection based on the EFSA recommendations about resistance to scrapie in goats in Cyprus

Deadline: 31-Jul-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0142

Request for technical assistance related to the EFSA opinion on transformation of animal by-products into biogas and compost

Deadline: 31-Dec-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0143

Analytical sensitivity of approved TSE rapid tests

Deadline: 31-Dec-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0165

Self-tasking mandate on risk based control of biogenic amine formation in fermented foods

Deadline: 31-Dec-11 Mandate Number: M-2009-0245

Joint EFSA/ECDC mandate on links between human and animal TSEs

Deadline: 31-Jul-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0221

Neste oil application for new alternative method of disposal or use of animal by-products

Deadline: 31-Mar-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0226

Contaminants in the food chain (CONTAM)

Increase of the level for aflatoxin total from 4 mg/kg to 10 mg/kg for tree nuts other than almonds, hazelnuts and pistachios

Deadline: 30-Jun-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0154

Brominated flame retardants in food

Deadline: 30-Jun-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0162

Marine biotoxins in shellfish - Summary on regulated marine biotoxins

Deadline: 31-Aug-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0163

Evaluation of previous cargoes substances

Deadline: 30-Nov-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0164

Scientific Committee & Advisory Forum (SC&AF)

Genotoxicity testing strategies

Deadline: 31-Dec-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0215

Zoonoses (Data Collection)

Community Summary Report on antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic agents in 2008 (Internal mandate proposed by EFSA to the Unit on Zoonoses Data Collection for issuing a Community Summary Report on antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic agents in 2008 in the EU)

Deadline: 28-Feb-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0168

Community Summary Report on zoonoses, zoonotic agents and food-borne outbreaks in 2008

Deadline: 31-Dec-09 Mandate Number: M-2009-0169

Reviewing the reporting guidelines for food-borne outbreaks

Deadline: 31-Mar-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0170

Revising the manuals to guide the reporting of zoonoses, zoonotic agents, antimicrobial resistance and food-borne outbreaks, 2009

Deadline: 31-Mar-10 Mandate Number: M-2009-0171

> Opinions and other documents

List of adopted opinions and other documents per unit: Jun-Sep 2009

Disclaimer: This is not the full list of all EFSA opinions but only those considered relevant to this newsletter. For full list.

Animal Health & Welfare (AHAW)

Knowledge gaps and research needs for the welfare of farmed fish

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00627

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902603576.htm

Request for a scientific opinion on *Brucella suis*

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-665

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902618690.htm

Scientific Opinion based on the Risk Assessment of the impact of housing, nutrition and feeding, management and genetic selection on behavioural problems in dairy cows

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-340

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902628688.htm

Scientific Opinion based on the Risk Assessment of the impact of housing, nutrition and feeding, management and genetic selection on metabolic and reproductive disorders in dairy cows

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-339

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902629142.htm

Scientific Opinion based on the Risk Assessment of the impact of housing, nutrition and feeding, management and genetic selection on udder problems in dairy cows

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-338

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902629243.htm

Scientific Opinion based on the Risk Assessment of the impact of housing, nutrition and feeding, management and genetic selection on leg and locomotion problems in dairy cows

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-337

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902629358.htm

Scientific Opinion on the overall effects of farming systems on dairy cow welfare and disease

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2006-113

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902630995.htm

Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ)**Joint scientific report of ECDC, EFSA and EMEA on meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in livestock, companion animals and food**

Adoption date: 05-Jun-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00612

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902590639.htm**Statement on a protocol for additional data collection based on the EFSA recommendations about resistance to scrapie in goats in Cyprus**

Adoption date: 09-Jul-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00631

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902708663.htm**Food safety considerations concerning the species-specific welfare aspects of the main systems of stunning and killing of farmed fish**

Adoption date: 09-Jul-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-770

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902703803.htm**Food safety aspects of the welfare of dairy cows**

Adoption date: 09-Jul-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-296

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902703055.htm**BSE-related risk in bovine intestines**

Adoption date: 10-Sep-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00226

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902899454.htm**Contaminants in the food chain (CONTAM)****Effects on public health of an increase of the levels for aflatoxin total from 4 µg/kg to 10 µg/kg for tree nuts other than almonds, hazelnuts and pistachios**

Adoption date: 16-Jun-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00675

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902631994.htm**Domoic acid in shellfish**

Adoption date: 02-Jul-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2006-065H

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902707355.htm**Marine biotoxins in shellfish - Summary on regulated marine biotoxins**

Adoption date: 13-Aug-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00685

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902812884.htm**Feed Additives (FEEDAP)****Safety and efficacy of Natugrain®Wheat TS (endo-1,4-β-xylanase) for use as feed additive for chickens for fattening and ducks**

Adoption date: 17-Jun-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-418

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902625185.htm**Safety and efficacy of Avizyme 1505 (endo-1,4-β-xylanase, α-amylase, subtilisin) as a feed additive for turkeys for fattening**

Adoption date: 17-Jun-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2007-112

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902657263.htm**Safety and efficacy of Avizyme 1505 (endo-1,4-β-xylanase, α-amylase, subtilisin) as a feed additive for chickens and ducks for fattening**

Adoption date: 17-Jun-09

Question number: EFSA-Q-2007-020

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902659505.htm

Modification of terms of authorisation of Natuphos® (3-phytase) as feed additive for pigs for fattening

Adoption date: 07-Jul-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-692

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902685800.htm

Safety and efficacy of Ronozyme® ProAct (serine protease) for use as feed additive for chickens for fattening

Adoption date: 07-Jul-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-431a

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902706995.htm

Safety and efficacy of AveMix® 02 CS/L (endo-1,3(4)-β-glucanase, endo-1,4-β-xylanase and pectinase) as feed additive for weaned piglets

Adoption date: 08-Jul-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-432

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902700890.htm

Consumer safety of a manganese chelate of hydroxy analogue of methionine (Mintrex®Mn) as feed additive for chickens for fattening

Adoption date: 15-Sep-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00489

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902905600.htm

Formi LHS (potassium diformate) for sows

Adoption date: 15-Sep-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-00693

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902908997.htm

Safety and efficacy of *Bacillus subtilis* PB6 as a feed additive for chickens for fattening

Adoption date: 15-Sep-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2008-473

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902909079.htm

Scientific Committee & Advisory Forum (SC&AF)**Guidance on safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations intended for use as ingredients in food supplements**

Adoption date: 22-Jul-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00668

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902880131.htm

Further advice on the implications of animal cloning (SCNT)

Adoption date: 23-Jun-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2009-00449

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902619111.htm

Existing approaches incorporating replacement, reduction and refinement of animal testing: applicability in food and feed risk assessment

Adoption date: 8-Apr-09 Question number: EFSA-Q-2005-0231

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902559349.htm

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