



Network on Animal Health and Welfare Minutes of the 18th meeting

Held on 01 June 2021, Web-conference

(Agreed on 16 June 2021)¹

Participants

- **Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):**

Country	Name²
Austria	Romana Steinparzer
Belgium	Kirstine Ceulemans, Pieter Depoorter
Bulgaria	Madlen Vasileva
Cyprus	---
Croatia	Drazen Knezevic
Czech Republic	---
Denmark	Anette Ella Boklund
Estonia	Ave-Ly Toomvap
Finland	---
France	Charlotte Dunoyer
Germany	---
Greece	Evangelia Sossidou
Hungary	---
Ireland	Audrey Jenkinson
Italy	Fabrizio De Massis
Latvia	Edvīns Oļševskis
Lithuania	Vilija Grigaliuniene
Luxembourg	---
Malta	Gemma Pantaleo
Netherlands	Remco Schrijver
Poland	Przemysław Cwynar
Portugal	---
Romania	---
Slovakia	---
Slovenia	---
Spain	Elena García Villaceros
Sweden	Cecilia Hultén

¹ Minutes should be published within 15 working days of the final day of the relevant meeting

² Indicate first full name and them surname (John Smith) throughout the document

United Kingdom	---
Iceland	Auður L. Arnþórsdóttir
Liechtenstein	---
Norway	Dean Basic
Switzerland	Norbert Staeuber

- **European Commission:**

NA

- **EFSA:**

ALPHA Unit:

Gabriele Zancanaro (chair)
Yves van der Stede (co-chair)
Alessandro Broglia
Andrea Gervelmeyer
Cristina Rapagná
Eleonora Chinchio
Eliana Lima
Ewelina Czwienczek
Inma Aznar Asensio
Ludovico Lombardo
Martina Capelli
Nikolaus Kriz
Roberta Carfagnini
Sofie Dhollander
Sotiria Antoniou
Verena Oswaldi

ENCO Unit:

Julia Finger

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes:

- Cecilia Hultén (Sweden) to discuss *Salmonella choleraesuis* in wild boar in Sweden.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 17th meeting of the Scientific Network on Animal Health held on 21-22 October 2020 (web meeting).

The minutes of the 17th meeting of the Scientific Network on Animal Health held on 21-22 October 2020 were agreed by written procedure on 16 November 2020 and published on the EFSA website on 17 November 2020.

4. Topics for discussion and Q&A³

1. The SIGMA Project

1.1. SIGMA project: state of the art and next steps

DENMARK: Question on how often the data on population are collected

EFSA: At this point in time, the only active mandate which entails a data collection activity is the one on ASF for the production of the 6th epidemiological report on ASF. Therefore, for now, there is no need to collect data at a higher frequency. However, the collection of data at a higher frequency is technically feasible, but changes can only follow requests from MS or EC.

1.2. SIGMA Focal Points and Country Cards

SPAIN: Question on how often the data flow questionnaires and country cards will should be updated/resent. Regarding HPAI: question on when new information exchange steps will take place.

EFSA: MS should keep the information up to date as much as needed and feasible, at least once per year. Data flow and country cards should be kept as relevant as possible; everyone has access to its country's information and can update it at any point of time; the system records that changes have been made, but sending an email to EFSA after updating would be appreciated as well.

EFSA: On HPAI: not plan currently; on Mar 2023 MS are requested by the new AHL to provide data. Before that, SIGMA will be updated to accommodate the HPAI data submission and data providers will be trained, where necessary. Exact timelines will be developed by EFSA and the plan will be shared with data providers

SPAIN: MS need to report HPAI data to the EC before the end of March 2023 – question whether data will be sent directly to the EC

EFSA: No extra data reporting/double data submission tasks will be created; as part of SIGMA2 project, EFSA data requirements will be aligned with the EC's needs, the global number of samples, tests will probably be collected, after reporting data to EFSA, the reports that are needed by the EC will be created through the tool and MS can submit these to the EC, thereby fulfilling their reporting requirements.

³ All presentations are shared with the Animal Health and Welfare Network members in the dedicated collaboration space (Microsoft Teams)

EFSA: EFSA data requests will be adapted to the EC's needs and EFSA will be the organisation collecting the official data on behalf of the EC

2. Animal Health Law

2.1. Highlights on adopted SO (assessment of control measures of category A disease)

THE NETHERLANDS: Question on how has the density in the specific area(s) been taken into account

EFSA: The density is accounted for in each kernel.

FRANCE: France is currently working on a similar assessment for HPAI.

EFSA: Knowing this outcome would have been useful; EFSA always welcomes to share information on ongoing assessments with MS .

EFSA: Underlined that countries can indeed share activities related to Animal Health Implementation and/or share experiences they may have in implementing the AHL with EFSA.

DENMARK: Regarding AI: In Denmark a small part of the HA-gene is always sequenced, to find out whether the virus is HPAI or LPAI. If it is H5 HPAI, this will also give an indication about which clade the virus belongs to. Furthermore, we always try to sequence the full virus or at least the full length of HA. In large outbreaks as this season, full virus sequencing is done on representative samples from wild birds and from at least one sample from each positive farm.

2.2. SO in the pipeline

NA

3. Avian Influenza

3.1. An update on ongoing activities

EFSA: Question on sequencing data to the participants: how many of the isolates identified in MSs are sequenced

FRANCE: Not possible to provide an answer at the moment, but information can be retrieved from the French RefLab. Sequencing is done in France to understand if isolates found originated from poultry farms or from wild birds; for example, 3 virus introductions through wild birds were identified in La Vendee, while 500 outbreaks in domestic fowl occurred in that region

THE NETHERLANDS: Wageningen and Erasmus university carry out sequencing, decision to sequence is taken on a case-by-case basis, no fixed proportion of isolates is sequenced

SPAIN: Sequenced the 3 wild cases that occurred and shared results in GISAID; Catalanian isolates were associated with strains circulating in Central and Eastern Europe

4. African Swine Fever

4.1. Epi5 Highlights / Gap analysis / Case-control study / Ability of matrices to transmit ASFV / ASF and outdoor and outdoor farming of pigs

EPI5 report ([LINK](#)): white zones

FRANCE: Question on whether the data from Belgium were not sufficient to evaluate white zones

EFSA: Belgium submitted data for the descriptive epidemiology section, but for the white zone evaluation more detailed, georeferenced data were needed for each of the sub-zones and measures applied around the affected area, to evaluate their effectiveness. A way around this was to introduce a 'fake introduction' of ASFV in the stochastic model in the French white zone, for which we had sufficient detailed data on the measures implemented, to see what would have happened in case the disease would have escaped from Belgium. The model estimated that the measures in the white zone in France would have been about 80% efficient to stop the spread of disease, in case it would have been introduced. Of course, this was not the case, thanks to all the measures that were implemented in Belgium.

MATRICES

EFSA: Public consultation report has been published [LINK](#) and detailed EKE reports have been published [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

SWEDEN: Request for clarification on whether the compound feed are not heat-treated

EFSA: Heat treatment is indeed applied, but it is not completely impossible that the virus survives. Further, the final risk ranking is taking care of possible contamination risk and mainly due to the high volumes of compound feed exposed to pigs, this matrix ends up with a comparatively high rank to other matrices.

OUTDOOR

EFSA thanks all the MS for the replies to the survey, which were essential for addressing this mandate.

5. ENETwild

5.1. Outline and outcomes

NETHERLANDS: Prioritisation of the animal species. Question on whether data on wolves also being collected

EFSA: There are ongoing data collections on carnivores, i.e. Lynx, badgers, foxes, wolves and brown bears .

Also, data on mustelids were collected on an ad-hoc basis to address an urgent request of advice from the EC on COVID-19 in mustelids.

6. VectorNET

6.1. Outline and outcomes

EFSA: EFSA gave an update on the Vectornet project, showing the new deliverables such as updated maps, Revers Mosquito Tool, Outcome of the systematic literature review, newsletters etc. Any information on on-going vector surveillance and monitoring activities are very welcomed from the MSs.

ITALY: Initiative following bluetongue and West Nile epidemics since 2003 to carry out entomological surveillance on midges and mosquitoes, resulted in vast amount of data. High level of uncertainty: mosquitoes seem not to follow the outcomes of the modelling (Data already shared with EFSA?)

SPAIN: In Spain similarly to Italy, WN and BT (and other Culicoides-related diseases) and for invasive mosquitoes and we are working for a specific RVF vector. Reactive monitoring for CCHF risky areas at local level.

FRANCE: Ticks in relation with Lyme disease, and tiger mosquitos in relation with dengue, chikungunya and zika ([citizen website](#)).

7. Input from Network Members

7.1. COVID-19 in Animals

EFSA: Question for clarification on the finding of positive flies

DENMARK: Flies from one farm were found positive (10 pools, three flies in each pool), flies from another farm were negative. There was human-mediated spread, but the virus could have been spread also in other ways. Thus, other transmission routes were investigated. Flies were investigated as mechanical vectors, but it has not been cleared if this is a transmission way. Positive flies were only found near to the farm (<25 m). Additional information can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11010164>

EFSA: Request for more information on the "jump" between different areas

DENMARK: The word "jump" has been used to indicate that the disease moved to different municipalities. At the beginning, farms infected were only in 2 very northern municipalities, then the disease entered in the central part of Denmark and finally farms in almost all areas of Jutland were infected. No farms outside Jutland and the northern island Læsø were infected.

NETHERLANDS: Question whether there is any follow up on raccoons and foxes

DENMARK: Samples were collected from wildlife both during the outbreak and after mink culling. No infection in mink and in any other wild host investigated was found.

LATVIA: Confirmed outbreak at the beginning of April in one farm with 64,000 minks. The outbreak is still ongoing. Minks were not culled as there were no clinical signs and low mortality rates. Animals were pregnant, and no significant mortality was observed in young puppies. Pathogen introduction from one worker. Infection found out from sequencing. Testing is done every week. Last Friday 25 samples from live minks were analysed to represent all the farm. None was PCR positive, 18 were seropositive. The disease was fully asymptomatic. It is not possible to say the outbreak is faded out, but mortality rates are very low, and the situation is good.

7.2. *Brucella canis* in Italy

FRANCE: In France there are some cases, but no systematic surveillance is carried out, so it's difficult to tell how the situation is.

An American dog came to EU for reproduction and was found positive in semen. No investigation was possible as the dog was brought back to US. Many dogs in Europe could have been contaminated. Question on whether there are already information on this

ITALY: Currently there is no legislation that regulates this kind of activities. Specific Regulations are needed.

THE NETHERLANDS: In the Netherlands the incidence is low. It could be interesting to share information.

SWEDEN: [link](#) to a publication about first *B. canis* case in Sweden

EFSA: Questions in the last slide will be shared with the other MS.

7.3. *Salmonella choleraesuis* in wild boar in Sweden

SWEDEN: Question on whether other MS have some experience on *Salmonella choleraesuis* in wild boar

THE NETHERLANDS, FRANCE and BELGIUM will check and let SWEDEN know.

EFSA: Question on whether the detection occurred in domestic pig farms

SWEDEN: In one farm, following the onset of very mild clinical signs, diarrhoea and a few sudden deaths.

EFSA: Question whether there is any hypothesis on the origins

SWEDEN: The origins are not known.

EFSA: Question whether there is any hypothesis on how wild boars get infected

SWEDEN: It is not entirely clear. Probably human factors play a role.

BELGIUM: Question whether the positive domestic pig was found near the positive wild boar

SWEDEN: Indeed, the positive wild boar was located in the same area as the positive domestic pig.

8. AH Network Management

8.1. Membership and Microsoft Teams

[Link](#) to the Animal Health Network Teams Channel. Access will be granted to the official members of the Network.

8.2. Final considerations

EFSA thanks the participants and for the important rate of participation and reminds that this network plays a crucial role to gather input from the European countries

5. AOB – Dates for next meeting & conclusions

The meeting ended at 17:45. Dates for next meeting have to be defined and will be communicated in due time.

Confirmation will be communicated via the Microsoft Teams exchange platform.

[THIS TABLE IS FOR INTERNAL USE - REMOVE FROM THE VERSION TO BE PUBLISHED]

Document history

Document reference	Version 1
Prepared by	Eleonora CHINCHIO, Ludovico LOMBARDO, Cristina RAPAGNÀ
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