



Network on BSE-TSE Minutes of the 16th meeting

Held on 18-19 October 2021, web-meeting

(Agreed on 05 November 2021)

Participants

- Network Participants of Member States (including EFTA Countries and IPA countries):**

Country	Name
Austria	Hermann Schildorfer
Belgium	Severine Matthijs
Croatia	Tihana Miškić (day 2), Karmen Branović Čakanić
Cyprus	Penelope Stylianou
Czechia	Pavel Vodrážka, Kristyna Slamova
Estonia	Olga Piirik-Laiho, Piret Aasmäe
Finland	Suvi Joutsen
France	Thomas Maignien, Jean-Nöel Arsac (day 1)
Germany	Christine Fast
Hungary	Zsuzsanna Baraczka
Ireland	Bairbre Sharkey, Paul Corkery (day 1)
Italy	Romolo Nonno, Giuseppe Ru
Latvia	Madara Volka
Lithuania	Viktoras Maskaliovas, Kristina Stakyte
Malta	Sergio Fiore
The Netherlands	Linda Verhoef
Poland	Miroslaw Pavel Polak
Romania	Theodora Chesnoiu Vasile
Slovakia	Martin Mojzis
Slovenia	Polona Juntres
Spain	Maria Esther Prieto Caballero
Sweden	Maria Nöremark
Norway	Michael A. Tranulis (day 1)
Switzerland	Torsten Seuberlich (day 2)
Turkey	Anil Demeli

- **EFSA:**

BIOCONTAM Unit: Bianca Bottoni, Lorena Corredor, Nikolaus Giannoulis, Michaela Hempen, Maria Francesca Iulietto, Ernesto Liebana, Angel Ortiz Pelaez, Pietro Stella.

ENCO Unit: Stylianos Koulouris (for point 7)

- **European Commission (EC):**

Fabien Schneegans, Jean-Baptiste Perrin (DG SANTE - G4)

- **Others:**

OIE: Aurelio Cabezas Murillo

External speakers: Simon Mead, Bjørnar Ytrehus.

Day 1, 18 October 2021

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants from 22 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Apologies were received from representative of Montenegro.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 15th meeting of the Network on BSE/TSE held on 7-8 October 2020, Parma¹.

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 21 October 2020 and published on the EFSA website on 28 October 2020.

4. Chronic wasting disease (CWD)

4.1 VKM latest opinions on zoonotic potential and management measures. PRNP genetics in Norwegian cervids

Michael Tranulis, Network participant representing Norway, presented the results of one of the two VKM (Norwegian Food Safety Authority) opinions published this year: "Zoonotic potential of chronic wasting disease (CWD) associated with animal slaughter and consumption of meat". He also presented new data on the recently

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/2020/15th-meeting-efsa-biocontam-biohaz-bse-tse-network-minutes.pdf>

published (humanise transgenic mice) and ongoing studies (inoculation in macaques).

4.2 CWD in Sweden: update and surveillance in 2021

Maria Nöremark, Network participant representing Sweden, presented the cases of CWD identified so far in Sweden, the intensified surveillance around the positive cases, the ongoing general surveillance and the extension beyond the legal requirement in 2021.

4.3 Control measures of CWD in Norway in the last 5 years: Lessons learnt

Bjørnar Ytrehus (external speaker), Professor of veterinary pathology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, presented the outbreak of Norway after five years of the confirmation of the first case and of the control measures applied in the last 5 years, providing insight on the lessons learnt.

4.4 Q&A

To the questions by Italy about the prevalence of CWD in old moose in Sweden, it was unknown. On the origin of the reindeer in Hardangervidda, it was commented the different genetic profile to the reindeer in Nordfjella. The EC asked about the scientific basis for the use of the term “atypical CWD” as opposed to “typical CWD”. Norway explained the different profile of CWD in reindeer (like that of North America) than in moose, that affects old animals and have a different localization and tissue distribution of PrP^{Sc}, only in the brain. There was a discussion on the need to clarify the denomination of CWD in European cervids and get a consensus on whether the use of the term “atypical CWD” is scientifically justified according to the current knowledge, as well as on the need to differentiate from NA CWD, and on whether the terminology should be applied at strain, species or phenotypical presentation level. This was followed by a discussion triggered by the question posed by the external presenter for agenda item 4.3 on whether the reduction of density in Hardangervidda should be done fast or not. The role of environmental contamination was also pointed out.

5. TSE and public health

5.1 Risk Assessment on the lift of the feed ban (ANSES)

Thomas Maignien, Network participant representing France, presented the risk assessment on the recent partial lift of the feed ban, i.e. the reauthorisation of pig PAP in poultry feed, poultry PAP in pig feed and insect PAP in poultry and pig feed, published in June 2021 by ANSES (Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety Agency).

5.2 Prevalence in Britain of abnormal prion protein in human appendices: historical perspective and latest results

Simon Mead (external speaker), consultant neurologist and TSE researcher, provided a historical perspective of the long-standing project on the prevalence in Britain of abnormal prion protein in human appendices, focusing on the latest result published in 2020, of which he is co-author: Gill et al., 2020: *“Prevalence in Britain of abnormal prion protein in human appendices before and after exposure to the cattle BSE epizootic”*.

4.5 Q&A

Norway asked to the external speaker of agenda item 5.2 whether the presence of immunostaining in the appendices was unequivocally due to vCJD. The speaker answered that it is not possible to conclude that the signal is due to a prion disease, and that further tests like PMCA would be advisable to perform on these samples, which is the case in the next phase of the project. The speaker confirmed the suspicion that the only case of vCJD of 129MV genotype could be due to longer incubation period and that there is concern of a possible second wave in semi-resistant genotypes, and that the incidence of sCJD in the UK should reach a plateau but it has not done yet, although no signal of unusual cases due to other possible origin has been identified. Germany asked if the presence of immunostaining was also observed in other tissues (small intestine for example) but it was confirmed that there were no other tissues available from these patients for comparison.

Day 2, 19 October 2021

6. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants to the second day of the Network meeting.

7. New mandate of EFSA Scientific Networks 2021-2023. Joint activities of the BSE/TSE Network

Stylianios Koulouris, from the EU Cooperation Team (EUCO) of the Engagement & Cooperation Unit (ENCO) of EFSA presented the modifications on the New Management Board Decision on Scientific Networks and the consideration when setting the Terms of Reference (ToRs). The EFSA Management Board (MB) will receive activity reports of the EFSA networks and decide on their continuation on a basis of at least every three years. The mandate of the BSE-TSE network has been renewed for the period 2021-2023.

8.1 EFSA activities on TSE 2020-2021

Angel Ortiz Pelaez (EFSA) updated the Network on the TSE-related risk assessment activities that took place in EFSA since the 2020 annual Network meeting. In particular, he presented the scientific opinion on the evaluation of an alternative method for the production of biodiesel using rendered fat of Category 1 (BDI-RepCat), and the scientific report on the request for scientific and technical assistance to examine the data collected by the Member States in the framework of the 2-years compulsory intensified surveillance in case of atypical scrapie.

8.2 EU TSE annual report 2020: preliminary results

Maria Francesca Iulietto (EFSA) presented the main findings that will be included in the EU Summary Report on TSE for year 2020. The report presents the results of surveillance of TSE in animals and is expected to be published towards the end of November 2021 by EFSA. It includes data from 27 Member States (MS), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (as non-MS from 1 February 2020).

8.3 Update on the activities of the OIE in the TSE field

Aurelio Cabezas Murillo, Disease Status Officer of the Status Department of the OIE, updated the Network on the TSE-related activities ongoing in the OIE since the previous Network meeting. The 2021 annual campaign for the maintenance of the officially recognised statuses, including BSE risk status, is due to start in November 2021. During 2020 there have been many activities in OIE linked to the revision of the BSE chapters in the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* and the *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals*.

8.4 Update on the activities of the EC in the TSE field

Fabien Schneegans, legislative officer of G4 – Food Hygiene, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, European Commission, presented the activities of the EC since the last Network meeting. Two horizontal topics were presented: 1) Feed ban; 2) Trade-related issues. Three disease-specific topics were also presented: 1) BSE; 2) scrapie; 3) CWD.

8.5 Q&A

Netherlands presented a paper on the risk to implement the lift of the feed ban on the context of a circular economy. In particular, the risk of transmission of prions due to the ruminant origin of the substrate used to feed insects, allowing the propagation and amplification in farmed animal, and due to the use of former foodstuff as substrate as well. This could result on indirect cannibalism. The EC explained that this is a topic under discussion internally in the EC and highlighted the complexity of the controls for the feed ban. Sweden stressed out the difference in the great efforts to conduct surveillance in live animals compared to the limited ones for surveillance of the ban in feed. Italy agreed and pointed out the lack of centralised systematic collection of data on monitoring of the feed ban in the EU.

8.6 Round-the-table discussion on the topics discussed in the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE

The chair asked participants for further comments and questions but there were none.

9. Any Other Business

The draft minutes will be circulated soon following the requirement to publish the network minutes within 14 working days. At least one Network meeting will be planned for 2021. Additional meetings/activities will be organised depending on the need and topics for discussion identified by the Network. No other businesses were discussed.

The Chair thanked all participants for their attendance and closed the meeting.