

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON
ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE
151st Plenary meeting



27 September 2023

09:00-15:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 10 October 2023

Location: Link 124 Hotel, Parma and Web conference

Attendees:

○ Panel Members:

ALVAREZ Julio, VELARDE Antonio, BICOUT Dominique, CALISTRI Paolo, CANALI Elisabetta, DREWE Julian Ashley, GARIN-BASTUJI Bruno, GONZALES ROJAS Jose Luis, GORTAZAR SCHMIDT Christian, HERSKIN Mette, MICHEL Virginie, MIRANDA Miguel Angel, NIELSEN Søren Saxmose, PADALINO Barbara, ROBERTS Helen, SPOOLDER Hans, STÅHL Karl, VILTROP Arvo, WINCKLER Christoph.

○ Hearing Expert1:

Not Applicable

○ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

GEOGHEGAN Fiona; COHEN Iulia-Delia, SEDLBAUER Mitja, AMSLER Sandrine; ALAEZ PONZ Ester; RASMUSSEN DITTMANN Susanne.

○ EFSA:

AIRES Mariana, ANTONIOU Sotiria-Eleni, ASHE Sean, AZNAR ASENSIO J Inmaculada, BALDINELLI Francesca, BROGLIA Alessandro, CANDIANI Denise Francesca, DHOLLANDER Sofie, FABRIS Chiara, GERVELMEYER Andrea, KOHNLE Lisa, LIMA Eliana, MANAKIDOU Aikaterini, MUR Lina, ROJO GIMENO Cristina, RUSINA Alessia, VAN DER STEDE Yves Pascal, VITALI Marika.

○ Others:

Not Applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

¹ As defined in Article 17 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/expertselection.pdf>

² http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

³ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf



4. Agreement of the minutes of the 150th AHAW Panel Plenary meeting held on 21st June 2023 via Web

The minutes of the 150th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 30 July 2023.

5. Scientific output(s) submitted for adoption

- 5.1 Draft opinion on the listing and categorisation of certain diseases of aquatic animals and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law: Spring Viraemia of Carp. (EFSA - M-2022-00144).**

Minor comments on the draft Scientific Opinion on the listing and categorisation of Spring Viraemia of Carp and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law were discussed. The Opinion was adopted unanimously.

- 5.2 Draft opinion on the listing and categorisation of certain diseases of aquatic animals and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law: Gyrodactylus salaris. (EFSA - M-2022-00144).**

Minor comments on the draft Scientific Opinion on the listing and categorisation of *Gyrodactylus salaris* and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law were discussed. The Opinion was adopted unanimously.

- 5.3 Draft opinion on the listing and categorisation of certain diseases of aquatic animals and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law: Salmonid alphavirus. (EFSA - M-2022-00144).**

Minor comments on the draft Scientific Opinion on the listing and categorisation of Salmonid alphavirus and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law were discussed. The Opinion was adopted unanimously.

- 5.4 Draft opinion on the listing and categorisation of certain diseases of aquatic animals and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law: Bacterial kidney disease. (EFSA - M-2022-00144).**

Minor comments on the draft Scientific Opinion on the listing and categorisation of Bacterial kidney disease and the listing of relevant aquatic species, in the framework of the Animal Health Law were discussed. The Opinion was adopted unanimously.

6. Scientific outputs for information/updates

- 6.1 Vaccination against highly pathogenic avian influenza: Term of reference 3 and 4. (EFSA-M-2022-00145).**

The discussion focused on ToR 3 and 4 of the mandate on vaccination of poultry against HPAI. An overview of the interpretation of these ToRs and the methodological approaches to perform the assessment, as it is in the protocol that was endorsed by the Panel in January 2022, was presented to the Panel. The timeline of the work was discussed and as mandated from the EC, adoption is scheduled in March 2024.

- 6.2 Scientific Opinion concerning the use of high-expansion foam for stunning and killing pigs and poultry (EFSA-Q-2022-00344).**



After the 2nd the Working Group (WG) meeting on reviewing the description of the stunning method, it was decided that some information is still unclear and/or missing, therefore a second request for additional information was made, sending to the applicant 8 questions, in order to proceed the assessment of the application. A stop clock mechanism of about 2.5 months was established for the mandate, until the information is received by the applicant. The deadlines of the deliverables of the tasking grant group were re-organised, the WG meetings for 2023 and 2024 were re-planned and the related Panel activity was revised and announced.

6.3 Scientific Opinion concerning the use of Diathermic Syncope for stunning cattle (EFSA-Q-2023-00085).

An update of the state of play of the mandate was presented: After the 1st meeting of the Working Group, the check for completeness of the dossier was finalised and 99 questions were sent to the applicant requesting additional information, to proceed to the assessment of the method. A stop clock mechanism of 4 months was established for the mandate, until the information is received by the applicant.

6.4 Scientific and technical assistance on welfare aspects related to housing and health of cats and dogs in commercial breeding establishments (EFSA-Q-2023-00340)

A presentation was given about the Report delivered by EFSA to address an EC mandate according to Art 31 of Council Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 (technical assistance) on some aspects of cat and dog welfare in commercial breeding establishments. The request was received by the EC on 3 May 2023 and the deadline was set on 31 July 2023. The report includes a descriptive assessment of literature findings on some specific topics (e.g., type of housing, age for breeding, convenience surgery) for which the EU AW Platform voluntary initiative on the welfare of cats and dogs had produced recommendations. In some areas evidence was found in support of these recommendations (e.g., it is recommended that surgery procedures can be performed only if necessary for health reasons), for other areas more evidence is needed (e.g., optimal dark/light duration, minimum age for breeding, minimum interval for breeding, optimal temperatures).

7. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels/EFSA/ EC

7.1 Scientific Committee guidance on protocol development for EFSA generic scientific assessments.

The Panel was informed that the guidance on protocol development for EFSA generic scientific assessments has been adopted by the Scientific Committee during the Scientific Committee plenary meeting in September. Use of protocols is now mandatory, but flexibility exists in how they are implemented for specific scientific opinions.

7.2 Scientific Committee guidance on appraising and integrating evidence from epidemiological studies for use in EFSA's scientific assessments

The Panel was informed that the working group of the Scientific Committee continues to work on the guidance on appraising and integrating evidence from epidemiological studies for use in EFSA's scientific assessments. The guidance is still in the early stage of development.

8. New Mandates



8.1 Request for a scientific opinion concerning the protection of beef cattle.

The mandate was presented to the Panel for the first time. Each term of reference (TOR) was presented and explained.

TOR 1 requests EFSA to review the most common husbandry systems and current practices for keeping suckler calves, fattening cattle, suckler cows, heifers, breeding bulls, end-of-career dairy cows and end-of-career suckler cows in the EU. This is to include types of housing, flooring and bedding, access to the outdoors, periods at grass and nutrition and feeding. It also includes a description of calving facilities in use and the practice of tethering.

TOR 2 requests EFSA to identify the most relevant welfare consequences; describe suitable ABMs to detect and monitor the most relevant welfare consequences on farm; provide qualitative or quantitative recommendations to prevent or mitigate the welfare consequences. The lists of hazards for each type of cattle described below are non-exhaustive and are provided as a guide:

TOR 2a requests EFSA for a welfare assessment of housing conditions for beef cattle (including feed lots) in relation to: flooring - types of flooring, including bedding and resting areas; minimum space allowance at different resources (e.g. total space allowance and space needed in bedding and resting areas, feeding trough space requirements); water access - type of drinkers, number of drinking points; nutrition and feeding strategies; extreme environmental heat (housed and outdoors); environmental enrichment; lack of outdoor access; and mixing of cattle.

TOR 2b requests EFSA for a welfare assessment of fattening cattle kept at grass considering outwintering: protection from cold, wind, rain and underfoot conditions; nutrition and feeding; and water access.

TOR 2c requests EFSA for a welfare assessment of suckler cows and calves associated with the weaning of suckler calves.

TOR 2d requests EFSA for a welfare assessment associated with the mutilation of cattle including castration, disbudding, dehorning and tail docking.

TOR 2e requests EFSA for a welfare assessment associated with breeding strategies and genetics in relation to Hyper-muscularity; dystocia and caesarean sections; polledness; maternal ability and temperament.

TOR 2f requests EFSA for a welfare assessment related to the euthanasia of end of career dairy and suckler cows being kept for the production of beef.

TOR 3 requests EFSA for the assessment of Animal Based Measures collected in slaughterhouses to monitor the level of welfare on farm for fattening cattle.

Some clarifications were made in response to Panel members questions. The Head of Unit of BIOHAW in consultation with AHAW Panel chair nominated Christoph Winckler as chair of the Working group. The working group experts were also presented.

8.2 Request for a scientific opinion concerning the protection of turkeys on farm; presenting TORs and discussion

The mandate on the welfare of turkeys on farm was presented to the Panel for the first time. Each term of reference was presented and explained. Below a summary is included of the TORs of the request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the protection of turkeys on farm.

1. EFSA is requested to provide a review of the most common husbandry systems and current practices for keeping turkeys *Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo* on farm, covering turkeys of all ages (breeding turkeys and turkeys kept for meat production) including hatchery conditions in the EU. This also includes a description of the types of housing, litter



availability, access to outdoors (including covered veranda), stocking density applied, the enrichment provided (perches, platforms, pecking objects, etc.) and the light scheme, the practices of thinning, the separation of sexes and mutilations, the hatchery conditions and the use of cages and breeding practices (including artificial insemination) in turkey breeders.

2. a) EFSA is requested to assess for turkeys kept for meat production, turkey breeders and poults, the risk to welfare posed by the type and condition of the litter, type and presence of enrichment, availability and condition of outdoor space (including covered veranda), space allowance, environmental (ammonia, CO₂, temperature), and light conditions, group size and keeping of males and females;

b) requests to assess for turkeys kept for meat production, the risk to welfare posed by: the final weight, average daily weight gain, the practice of thinning and the practices of feed and water restriction;

c) requests to assess for turkey breeders, the risk to welfare posed by the age of onset of breeding, nest conditions, artificial insemination and the practices of feed and water restriction;

d) requests to assess the risk posed by the hatchery conditions

e) requests to assess the risk to welfare associated with beak trimming and other mutilations (e.g. de-toeing and de-snooding)

f) requests to assess the breeding and genetic traits that improve/impair welfare

3. EFSA is requested to identify the relevant welfare consequences of the housing systems and the risk factors and practices described in Request 1 and 2, by using animal-based measures for the assessment of these welfare consequences.

4. EFSA is requested to provide qualitative and, where applicable, quantitative recommendations to prevent or mitigate the welfare consequences on farm identified in Request 3;

5. Assess and define suitable animal-based indicators collected at the slaughterhouse to monitor the level of welfare of turkeys on farm

Some clarifications were made in response to Panel members' questions. The Head of Unit of BIOHAW in consultation with AHAW panel Chair nominated Dr Antonio Velarde as chair of the Working group on the welfare of turkeys on farm. The tentative plan of the working group was presented, the Panel aims at delivering the scientific opinion in December 2025. [The planning for the stakeholder meeting on the welfare of beef cattle and turkeys - farming practices and data](#) - scheduled on 8 November, was presented.

9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

Not applicable.

10. Any other business

10.1 Bluetongue outbreak in the Netherlands

A short update was provided on the Bluetongue virus (BTV) epidemic in the Netherlands. The first suspicion due to clinical signs in sheep was notified and September 3, 2023, which was confirmed as BTV serotype 3. Later outbreaks in cattle were also observed. Clinical signs are similar to those observed during the BTV-8 epidemic and appear to be more severe in sheep. At the time of this panel meeting there were 140 outbreaks confirmed. Outbreak location can be followed at <https://www.wur.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/onderzoeksinstituten/bioveterinary-research/show-bvr/blauwtong-bij-herkauwers-updates-2023.htm>. the possible routes of introduction remain unknown.



10.2 African Swine fever outbreak in Sweden

A short update on the African swine fever outbreak in Sweden was provided, including the particularities of the location of the outbreak, the possible routes of introduction and the control measures that are implemented.

10.3 Upcoming call for the establishment of an active surveillance network for HPAI in wild birds

Preliminary information on EFSA's upcoming call for the establishment of an active surveillance network for highly pathogenic avian influenza in wild birds was presented. The call will cover 9 geographic locations in Europe, for which a total budget of EUR2 million will be made available. Tasks will include the establishment and maintenance of relevant infrastructure, trapping and sampling of wild birds, screening of samples, and whole genome sequencing. The call for proposals (Framework Partnership Agreement with 9 lots) will be launched in November and applications can be submitted for 14 weeks. The project is expected to run for 3 years and aims to build capacities and long-term partnerships with respective institutes/organisations in the geographic areas proposed. Information presented during the public event can be found [here](#).

10.4 Disease profiles

An update on the Animal Disease Profiles (<https://animal-diseases.efsa.europa.eu/>) was provided, focusing on the changes since the last presentation in the Disease tab.

The disease profiles will undergo further improvements until December 2024. In December, the Panel will be requested to review the Disease Profiles and will be acknowledged.

10.5 Living online risk assessment tool

The Panel was informed about an on-going framework contract to develop a Living Online Risk Assessment (L'ORA) tool. The Framework contract was awarded to a consortium led by the Swedish National Veterinary Institute (SVA), and is implemented together with the partners Wageningen University, the University of Copenhagen, the Statens Serum Institut and Animal and Plant health Agency as subcontractors. The project will run for 4 years (2022-2026). The objective is to identify areas of greater risk for 47 pathogens affecting animal or public health and to inform risk managers in the EU on where to focus attention for early detection and resources for instance for risk-based surveillance. Priority will be given to zoonotic diseases in the first years of the project implementation.

10.6 Update Panel renewal and plenary meetings in 2024

The Panel was informed about the next steps for the Panel renewal and the date when they will be informed about the outcomes of the new Panel composition. In addition, the planning of the 2024 plenary meetings was presented and agreed upon.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 13th December 2023 via teleconference.