

**BSE/TSE Scientific Network
18th Annual meeting**



11 October 09:00-13:30h CET
MINUTES - Agreed on 23 October 2023

Location: Webconference

Attendees:

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

Country	Name
Austria	Hermann Schildorfer
Bulgaria	Madlen Vasileva, Martin Hristov
Croatia	Tihana Miškić, Karmen Branović Čakanić
Cyprus	Sotiria Georgiadou
Czechia	Pavel Vodrážka, Klara Jelinkova
Denmark	Tim Jensen
Greece	Vaia Palaska
Estonia	Piret Aasmae
Finland	Suvi Joutsen, Ari Kauppinen
France	Thomas Maignien
Germany	Christine Fast
Hungary	Tamas Lancsak
Ireland	Justin Byrne, John McConville
Italy	Romolo Nonno, Giuseppe Ru
Latvia	Edvins Olsevskis
Lithuania	Kristina Stakyte, Viktoras Maskaliovas
Luxembourg	Vera Adam
Malta	Sergio Fiore, Steve Farrugia
The Netherlands	Linda Kox
Poland	Miroslaw Pavel Polak
Slovakia	Martin Mojzis
Slovenia	Polona Juntos, Kristina Tekavec
Spain	Maria Esther Prieto Caballero
Iceland	Sigurbjorg Olof Bergsdottir
Norway	Michael A. Tranulis
Switzerland	Torsten Seuberlich
Albania	Lika Aldin
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Slobodan Dojcinovic
Montenegro	Rados Mkojic, Nikola Pejovic
North Macedonia	Melita Jankovska Trajkovska
Serbia	Sanja Aleksic Kovacevic
Kosovo	Saranda Ahmetaj-Draga

EFSA BIOHAW Unit: Ernesto Liebana, Angel Ortiz Pelaez, Kateryna Chuzhakina, Inmaculada Aznar Asensio



WOAH: Natalie MOYEN

EURL : Giuseppe RU, Romolo NONNO

External speakers: Walter MARTELLI (IZSPLV)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

The Chair welcomed the participants from 23 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia.

No apologies were received.

Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without comments. A new point was added in AoB: the information provided by the European Commission to be presented by EFSA on their behalf.

Agreement of the minutes of the 17th meeting of the Network on BSE/TSE held on 13-14 October 2022, Parma¹.

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 22 October 2022 and published on the EFSA website on 03 November 2022.

2. Animal and public health risks of relaxing the feed ban from (The Netherlands)

Linda Kox, Senior advisor Microbiology from the Office for Risk Assessment Office for Risk Assessment & Research of the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority presented possible public and animal health risk of relaxing the feed ban.

Current legislation requires the ban on feeding animal proteins to farm animals, the prohibition of interspecies recycling and removal of specified risk material from cattle that led to significant decrease in incidence of BSE. But it was emphasized that incidental cases of classical BSE still occur, although classical BSE is nowadays outnumbered by the atypical BSE cases. The national control programme of BSE for feed was presented highlighting the number of samples collected by species to detect prohibited material like ruminant PAP. Critical issues associated to the progressive lift of the feed ban following the reauthorisation of the use of poultry PAP and insect PAP for pig and pig PAP and insect PAP for poultry were highlighted, with the potential cross-contamination despite the separation of production lines. One point was showcased when ruminant DNA is found in compound feed in which dairy products in the label appear as ingredients. The detection of ruminant DNA does not allow the discrimination between legal bovine milk and bovine PAP. Yet again the effectiveness and scale of the feed testing programme for monitoring the feed ban on the use of prohibited animal proteins was discussed in the questions after the presentation.

3. 2022 TSE EU summary report: provisional results

Walter Martelli, veterinary epidemiologist of the IZSPLV, presented 2022 TSE EU summary report, containing the description of legal basis of TSE monitoring system, results of tests

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-10/20221013-m.pdf>



on cattle, sheep and goats in both time and space as well as the description of the caseload, the data regarding to genotyping of sheep and goat cases and the results of the voluntary testing in cervids. The EFSA online storymap and dashboard on TSE reports (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/microstrategy/tse>) were also presented.

4. TSE EURL: update activities

Giuseppe Ru, Director of the EURL on TSE presented EURL-TSE activities. The main topics elaborated were: to ensure availability and use of high-quality methods and to ensure high quality performance by NRLs; to provide scientific and technical assistance to NRLs; to provide scientific and technical assistance to the European commission and other organisations; to produce, store and circulate (reagents) and reference material, and to account for requirements related to other legislation. He presented the newly designed EURL website (<https://www.eurl-tse.eu>), fostering communication.

Romolo Nonno, responsible for strain typing and genotypes in the EURL, provided with a detailed information regarding to the Survey on biosafety procedures delivered to National Reference Laboratories or TSE. He also shared data on the study of the genetic profile of cases of atypical scrapie in Italy and the identification of mutations in animals homozygous ALRQ.

5. EFSA TSE activities 2022-2023

Angel Ortiz presented EFSA TSE activities 2022-2023, particularly regarding to scientific opinion on the monitoring of CWD, scientific and technical assistance to evaluate the application of the Czech Republic to be recognised as having a negligible risk of classical scrapie, requested estimation of BSE risk ruminant collagen and gelatine. Additionally, was provided information regarding to published scientific opinion concerning the efficacy of methods 2 to 5 and method 7 to inactivate relevant pathogens when producing processed animal protein (PAP) of porcine origin intended to feed poultry and aquaculture animals and new ABP application for New European Transformation Parameters for Composting Animal By-Products in a Tunnel 2023.

6. Updates on the WOAHP activities in the field of TSEs

Natalie Moyen, Disease Status Officer, provided information on BSE risk status recognition, updated BSE Standards, and their transition process. She shared details on the impact of the new provisions to the status applications, trade, members, and zones, along with the development of BSE surveillance guidelines.

7. Update on regulatory activities on TSE in the EU

Angel Ortiz presented to the audience Update on regulatory activities on TSE in the EU, provided information from the European Commission. Information included the Sante changes regarding to Transferring of the TSE file to SANTE G2. Regulatory adjustments on Feed ban and Scrapie measures. Trade-related issues due to Revision of the WOAHP *Terrestrial Animal Health* Code, the decision to secure funding for the study to procure Atypical-BSE reference material. The follow-up of the EFSA's opinion on monitoring of CWD is the examination of the recommendations of EFSA and discuss the matter at the TSE WG. So will be discussed the next steps following the approval of the new BSE chapter by the WOAHP.

8. Q&A and 9. Round-the-table discussion on the topics discussed in the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE and country updates



- Italy asked WOAHP if now that atypical BSE has been delisted, and the cases will only appear in the annual reconfirmation dossiers that are undisclosed, there will be any way to ascertain the caseload in third countries. WOAHP replied that, following the delisting of atypical BSE, this information is no longer available on WAHIS. Spain asked for confirmation that cases of atypical BSE do not need to be notified to the WOAHP. WOAHP reiterated this is the case.
- Norway informed that Norway will continue doing surveillance in cervids for the foreseeable future, with special emphasis on the transmissible presentation in reindeer and the possible spontaneous nature of the disease moose. Last week a new case of CWD in moose was confirmed.
- An update of the situation in Norway was presented. Multiple strains are circulating in Norway, more than one in moose, and different from that in red deer and reindeer. Forthcoming results of experimental challenge of sheep with CWD are showing unusual presentations. Classical scrapie was last confirmed in Norway in 1999 but a number of cases of atypical scrapie are confirmed every year adding extra uncertainties, in general on these diseases and in particular on the origin of CWD.
- Both Italian members of the network expressed the value of the scientific network as one of the only opportunities left to networking and fostering collaboration. They also pointed out the risk associated with the changes in the regulatory framework of TSE, the possible reduction in surveillance and that continue reduction in the amount of data and knowledge available. If a new TSE crisis appears, it will be very difficult to detect and will take many years to detect an increase of cases.
- Ireland highlighted the importance of the next meeting of the TSE working group of the EC, in which the EC anticipated important points will be discussed, like the future surveillance of cervids in Europe and the alignment of the EU legislation to the provisions of the new WOAHP BSE chapter.
- Italy also reminded that Classical BSE has not been eradicated, last case was in 2021. Germany expressed concern about the possible reduction of surveillance when there are still questions unanswered about the species barrier, the nature of prion strains and their zoonotic potential and their origin. France concurred with these comments adding concerns if the removal of SRM is discontinued as well as the increase of use of processed animal protein for feed, like the recent reauthorization of poultry to pig and viceversa. The Netherlands expressed similar concerns that were articulated in the presentation.
- France reminded the risk assessment done by ANSES the last year on the use of tallow for ruminant feed as an example of activities led by member states. France asked if other countries were conducting similar assessment. No other country reported any TSE risk assessment done recently.
- Spain expressed concern and asked about the end of co-funding of TSE testing by the EC. EFSA mentioned it is an issue raised by several countries in several venues but should be redirected to the EC and their own competent authorities.

10. 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 2024. Additional meetings/activities will be organised depending on the need and topics for discussion identified by the Network.
- The chair also suggested changing the Network meeting's timing to May-June if the annual meeting of the TSE EURL is scheduled for October as usual, in order to avoid staggered meetings during this period of the year. The final decision will be made when the EURL decides in agreement with the animal proteins EURL.
- Participants discussed the format and involvement of European and international experts. Many emphasized the importance of keeping conduction of the event physically.
- No other businesses were discussed.



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