

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON Animal Health and Welfare 155th Plenary meeting



13 March 2024

9:00-16:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 26 March 2024

Location: EFSA, Parma / Teleconference

Attendees:

o 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, STÅHL Karl, VILTROP Arvo, WINCKLER Christoph.

o Hearing Experts¹:

Not Applicable

o European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

EC: ALAEZ PONS Ester, COHEN Iulia-Delia, DITTMANN RASMUSSEN Susanne, MESMAN Sanna

o EFSA:

ASHE Sean, AZNAR Inma, BALDINELLI Francesca, BOELAERT Frank, BROGLIA Alessandro, CANDIANI Denise Francesca, DHOLLANDER Sofie, FABRIS Chiara, GERVELMEYER Andrea, Barbara Lanfranchi, KOHNLE Lisa, MANAKIDOU Aikaterini, MUR Lina, ORTIZ PELAEZ Angel, ROJO GIMENO Cristina, VITALI Marika,

o 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

¹ As defined in Article 34 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



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. Certain interests were declared orally by Karl STAHL before the beginning of the meeting (see Annex). All interests declared were related to public research funding. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence¹¹ and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management¹², and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, the interest above was not deemed to represent a Conflict of Interest for the expert concerned.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 154th AHAW Panel Plenary meeting held on 21 February 2024, via teleconference

The minutes of the 154th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 6 March 2024, and republished on 12 March 2024.

5. Report on written procedure

Not applicable.

6. Scientific output(s) submitted for discussion

6.1 Draft Opinion on vaccination against highly pathogenic avian influenza: TOR3 and 4. (EFSA-M-2022-00145).

An overview of the state of the work was provided, reminding the Panel Members of important dates for the finalisation of the draft Scientific Opinion. The focus of the discussion was on major comments and on important new sections recently included. One major achievement is that conclusions and recommendations are now clearer, and the message is easier to understand. The first section to be addressed was on the uncertainty analysis. This part was recently added. Some minor changes still have to be made, but the list of uncertainty points for both diagnostic methods and the surveillance was provided. Then, the new part on serological data from challenge experiments in chickens, turkeys and ducks from different countries was presented. This section is now in the assessment, but it is still under discussion which parts could be moved. The corresponding conclusions and recommendations were read and discussed with the Panel members. Prior to the Plenary, an important point was raised, regarding the lack of specific recommendations for captive birds. It was suggested that, for such type of birds that are valuable and long living, a clinical inspection can only be carried out. Afterwards, another point was addressed, regarding how much the results of the model are related to the size of the poultry establishment, referring in particular to small-scale farms. Different approaches according to the species have been proposed. For early detection for emergency vaccination, a new proposal was suggested to streamline the reporting of results, by directly referencing the Tables in the assessment, thereby condensing the paragraphs for improved clarity. For conclusions and recommendations for early detection after preventive vaccination, a lack of clarity was highlighted, so specific results were added as a separate bullet point and presented to the Panel. In this section, another point addressed was to propose alternatives when no dead birds are available for testing, but increased mortality is seen between two planned samplings. So, it was clarified that passive surveillance should be always applied to both unvaccinated and vaccinated poultry flocks. However, it was agreed that this specific point should not be a recommendation, since it is a normal practice to take action when an unusual increased mortality is detected.

6.2 Draft opinion on concerning the on-farm killing of small ruminants. ([EFSA-Q-2018-00722](#)).



The draft Scientific Opinion was submitted to the Panel for first reading. Comments raised by the Panel were discussed. It was agreed that some clarifications would need to be explained in the section on the interpretation of the mandate (e.g. stunning/killing naming convention, natural disasters). For the small section on gas stunning, it was agreed to specify in the interpretation that some methods, currently not allowed in the EU but under research, would be shortly assessed. A separate chapter on gas stunning will therefore be created. The draft opinion will be submitted for in-depth reading at the Plenary in April and for possible adoption at the Plenary in May 2024.

6.3 Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the use of high-expansion foam for stunning and killing pigs and poultry ([EFSA-Q-2022-00344](#)) Update

The Panel was further informed about the method used for the assessment of the equivalence of high expansion foam with other killing methods and the relevant hazard ranking exercise that the working group performed. The new modified method was compared with controlled atmosphere systems and with other killing methods, listing and ranking the most relevant hazards with the focus on the welfare consequences that are caused by these hazards. An example of the narrative about the common hazards among the methods and the conclusions was given to the Panel, followed by a constructive discussion.

6.4 Request for a scientific opinion concerning the protection of animals kept for fur production -Update

The AHAW Panel was updated on the launch of the call for evidence on animals kept for fur production and the related deadline, and topics included. The Panel was also informed of the upcoming kick-off meeting of EFSA's WG on the welfare of fur animals, and short planning of the next activities.

6.5 Scientific and technical assistance for a coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens threatening the Union: Update

The Panel was updated about the One Health surveillance project (Art. 31) that supports the 23 MSs having a direct grant for coordinated surveillance under the One Health approach for early detection of cross-border threats to public health in animals and the environment.

6.6 African swine fever: Update on epidemiological report and risk factor analysis: Update

The AHAW Panel was updated on the progress of the two reports to be delivered this year under the ASF mandate. First, the protocol for the TOR 2 (Risk factor analysis report) was presented to the Panel and the comments and suggestions from the reviewers were discussed. Finally, the detailed plan for the TOR1 (Annual epidemiological report for ASF in 2023) was presented, as well as the online tool used to facilitate the production of that report.

6.7 Pandemic drivers of Avian Influenza: Update

The AHAW Panel was updated on the state of the art of the joint ECDC EFSA report on drivers for Avian influenza pandemics. A list of categories of possible drivers resulting from the assessment was presented.



7. Other scientific topics for information/discussion

7.1 Update on the upcoming meetings of the EFSA Networks dealing with Animal welfare: the AHAW (AW topic) Network and the Network of the scientific National Contact Points for Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009.

The AHAW Panel was updated on the upcoming meetings of EFSA's Networks dealing with AW topics: the AHAW Network and its sub-group, the Network of the scientific National Contact Points (NCPs) for scientific support under Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009. The two Networks will meet on 20 March for a joint session with presentations on the EC and EFSA ongoing activities on AW, two exercises on mutilations performed on beef cattle and turkeys and exchanges of information. On the following day, the AHAW Network will meet in the morning in a session focused on the topic of welfare on farm. The scientific NCPs Network will meet on 21 March in the afternoon for a session focused on the protection of the animals at the time killing.

8. Update on new Mandates

8.1 Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning Avian Influenza: terms of reference

The AHAW Panel was updated on the developments related to the recently received mandate on Avian Influenza. The deadlines agreed with the requestor for each of the individual tasks were presented as well as some clarifications made together with ECDC on how these tasks will be delivered.

- 8.2 Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the welfare of horses – terms of reference.**
Request for a Technical Report common husbandry systems for the keeping of Equidae – terms of reference
Request for a Technical Report common husbandry systems for the keeping of Equidae – terms of reference.

The terms of reference were presented. The EC requests three outputs: two scientific opinions on the welfare of horses and donkeys, mules and hinnies, and a technical report on the common husbandry systems of horses, donkeys, mules and hinnies. The deadline for these outputs is December 2026. A stakeholder engagement event is planned for June 2024. The WG is being set up and its work will be supported by outsourcing activities.

8.3 Application of Slovenia for obtaining the status negligible risk for classical scrapie

The new mandate of the application of Slovenia for the recognition of the negligible risk of classical scrapie was presented to the Panel. It is an Article 31 mandate, in line with similar mandates for previous applications, the latest the one submitted by the Czech Republic in 2023. The deadline for submission of the scientific report to the EC is 31 October 2024. EFSA will share with the AHAW Panel a mature report at the end of the summer for information and comments, but endorsement



by the Panel will not be requested. For the sake of consistency and to avoid unfair treatment to any applicant country, the approach and methodology applied will be the same as in previous applications: scenario tree modelling with fixed design prevalence, two risk factors: species and surveillance stream, and six scenarios for different values of diagnostic sensitivity of the screening test.

9. Feedback from the Scientific Committee

Not applicable

0. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 24 April 2024 via teleconference.