

# SCIENTIFIC NETWORK ON RISK ASSESSMENT IN ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

Minutes of the 23rd meeting of the AHAW Network (AW topic)



20-21 March 2024

09:40-17:30 / 09:00-12:00

Minutes agreed on 15 April 2024

**Location:** Webconference

**Attendees:**

- Network Participants:

Country	Organisation
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety</li></ul>
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bruxelles Environnement</li><li>• Service Public de Wallonie Agriculture, Ressources naturelles et Environnement (SPW-ARNE)</li><li>• Animal Welfare Department, Flemish Government</li></ul>
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk Assessment Center on Food Chain</li></ul>
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zagreb</li></ul>
Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State Veterinary Administration</li></ul>
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Danish Veterinary and Food Administration</li></ul>
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finnish Food Authority</li></ul>
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direction générale de l'alimentation Sous-direction de la santé et du bien-être animal (DGAL-BBEA)</li></ul>
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut</li></ul>
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ministry of Rural Development and Food</li></ul>
Iceland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority</li></ul>
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine</li></ul>
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Della Lombardia &amp; dell'Emilia Romagna (IZSLER)</li></ul>
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration</li></ul>
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority</li></ul>
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Norwegian Committee for Food and Environment</li></ul>
Slovak Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slovak Academy of Sciences, IPAR</li></ul>
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection</li></ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food</li></ul>



Sweden
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swedish Board of Agriculture</li></ul> |
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○ Observers:

**Kosovo:** kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency

**Montenegro:** Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary and Phitosanitary Affairs

**North Macedonia:** Food and Veterinary Agency

**Switzerland:** Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO)

**Turkey:** Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

○ European Commission/Other EU Agencies representatives:

**DG SANTE:** Unit G.3: Christian Juliusson; Unit F.2: Desmond Maguire.

○ EFSA:

**BIOHAW** Team Animal Welfare: Denise CANDIANI, Chiara FABRIS, Sean ASHE, Oana-Maria BALMOS, Eleonora CARO, Aikaterini MANAKIDOU, Cristina ROJO GIMENO, Neil Joseph TIRCHETT, Yves Pascal VAN DER STEDE, Frank VERDONK, Marika VITALI, Martina Benedetta ZANNA



## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.  
Apologies were received from Austria, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with a change (last item not addressed).

## 3. Joint session AHAW Network (AW topic) and scientific NCPs Network

The first day of the meeting (20<sup>th</sup> of March 2024) was held as a joint session among the scientific NCPs Network and the AHAW Network (AW topic).

### 3.1. Presentation of the new EFSA engagement strategy with stakeholders for Animal welfare mandates

Yves Pascal Van der Stede, team leader of the Animal Welfare (AW) Team, presented the context of the new EFSA engagement strategy with stakeholders (SHs) in relation to AW.

The recently published activities that engage with EFSA's SHs were also presented, such as:

- the call for evidence for the scientific opinion on the welfare of animals kept for fur production, with deadline on 19 April 2024 and the relevant links:

Raccoon dogs:

[https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call\[1\]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals\[1\]kept-fur-production-raccoon-dogs](https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call[1]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals[1]kept-fur-production-raccoon-dogs)

Foxes:

[https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call\[1\]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals\[1\]kept-fur-production-foxes](https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call[1]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals[1]kept-fur-production-foxes)

Minks:

[https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call\[1\]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals\[1\]kept-fur-production-mink](https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call[1]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals[1]kept-fur-production-mink)

Chinchillas:

[https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call\[1\]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals\[1\]kept-fur-production-chinchillas](https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call[1]evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals[1]kept-fur-production-chinchillas)

- the open call on 'Developing a methodology to assess positive animal welfare using behaviour analysis and ethological approaches', available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/tender-details/14842>.

The objective of this call is to develop a robust methodology to assess and interpret animals' choices and define and validate indicators for positive animal welfare on farm. Deadline is on 15 May 2023.



In addition, EFSA is preparing an open grant call for a pilot project on primary field collection of welfare data on pigs (most likely on sows and piglets). Participants were informed that an online meeting is scheduled for April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, to discuss the project, engage with potential applicants and collect information for the optimal design of the call before launching it (provisional date is May 2024).

During the Questions & Answers session, it was asked which organisations are eligible to apply for this open grant. It was explained that all EFSA Article 36 organisations can apply.

### **3.2 EFSA Sharepoint Teams groups**

EFSA updated Network members about the intention to implement the EFSA platforms for further communications (Share Point and Teams groups). Network members will be contacted to enable their EFSA profiles.

### **3.3 Revision of the EU legislation on the protection of animals in the context of the Farm-to-Fork (F2F) strategy and other context**

The European Commission (EC) representative Christian Juliusson from DG SANTE G.3 Unit (Animal Welfare) presented the ongoing activities of the EC in relation to the F2F strategy.

The EC commitments include the revision of the AW legislation, and consider options for AW labelling, to better transmit value through the food chain.

Two legislative proposals were presented: i) on the protection of animals during transport and ii) on the protection of dogs and cats.

The presented legislative proposal on animal transport has specific focus on: i) journey times, with special limitations in the case of e.g. transport to slaughter, of unweaned calves, or under extreme temperatures; ii) space allowance, with species-specific uniform rules based on allometric equation, and specific requirements in the case of high temperature; iii) extreme temperatures; iv) transport of unweaned calves; v) transport of dogs and cats; vi) exports and imports, with EU rules to apply until destination, for exports, and, in the case of imports, EU rules (or equivalent) from the point of departure in a non-EU country until destination in the EU; and, vii) digitalization and traceability.

The legislative proposal on the protection of dogs and cats includes breeders, pet shops and shelters; it foresees obligations in terms of identification of dogs and cats with microchip, registration in a national database and interoperability of national databases. EU rules (or equivalent conditions) must be applied also to pets entering the EU.

In addition, an EC 'roadmap' for upcoming EFSA Scientific opinions (2025–2030) was presented, including mandates on the welfare of several animal species, such as sheep & goats and farmed fish.

Finally, an update was given on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Fur Free Europe" on the phasing out and ban of cages for fur animals. An EFSA scientific



opinion on the welfare of fur animals is expected by March 2025 and by March 2026 the EC will communicate on the results of the assessment and the measures it intends to take.

During the Questions & Answers session, it was asked about the revision of the EU legislations on the protection of animals at the time of killing s and on the protection of zoo animals. It was replied that the revision of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 is still under discussion, as well as the legislation on AW labelling. It was also emphasised that the protection of zoo animals is not under the responsibility of DG SANTE but of DG ENV. There is currently no information about any modifications to the relevant policies.

### **3.4 Training content available in the BTSF ACADEMY in multilingual format**

The EC representative Desmond Maguire from DG SANTE F.2 Unit presented the objectives and activity of 'Better Training for Safer Food' (BTSF).

BTSF, is a DG SANTE training initiative since 2005 for EU and non-EU official control staff, and sometimes stakeholders, having the objective of providing high levels of competence and knowledge of EU rules leading to harmonised approach to control systems and enforcement, facilitating trade and market access.

The areas covered by BTSF are six: i) animal health and welfare, ii) borders, movements, official controls, iii) food and feed, iv) one health, v) plants, and vi) contingency and risk planning, for a total of > 3,000 events (approx. 20% of activities in non-EU countries) and > 85,000 of participants, since 2005.

The training is usually organised by external contractors in the form of workshops and sustained training missions, or eLearning, and following the principles of 'knowledge/experience sharing' and 'networking', and the 'train-the-trainer' approach. The eLearning platform was meticulously explained, e-learning trainings consist in eight modules of eight hours each and six additional modules that have been newly produced, of six hours each. The modules related to AW topics are: AW at depopulation, AW at depopulation specific for poultry and AW of broilers.

All training materials are available in the BTSF ACADEMY, which consists in the BTSF LIBRARY (with over 100 thematic courses uploaded), course forums, Newsletters, reports and statistics. The BTSF ACADEMY and BTSF training material are available in 22 European languages, with possibility to select the desired language.

It was emphasised that DG SANTE gives open access to the BTSF Library to all registered users (Competent Authority officials in EU and non-EU) to all existing and future course training materials and eLearning. Certain courses will also be available to stakeholders.

During the Questions & Answers session, it was asked if there are training events from the BTSF ACADEMY for companion animals and it was replied that this is not covered under the programme. National Contact Points can get access to BTSF ACADEMY and any Competent Authority officials can have free access to all course training materials in the BTSF ACADEMY (and BTSF Library) upon registration to access BTSF Library training materials and to receive BTSF Newsletters and reports.



### **3.5 Update on the 2023-2024 activities of EFSA on animal welfare**

The ongoing activities of the EFSA AW Team in relation to the new EC mandates on the welfare of turkeys on farm and on the welfare of beef cattle were presented.

#### **3.5.1 Welfare of turkeys on farm**

##### **3.5.1.1 Mandate on the welfare of turkeys on farm**

Oana-Maria Balmos provided a comprehensive overview of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the EC mandate on the welfare of turkeys on farm that EFSA received in October 2023 with a deadline of December 2025.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) 178/2002, EFSA was asked to develop a Technical Report (TR; Article 31)

<https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00648>

and a Scientific Opinion (SO; Article 29)

<https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00647>

on the welfare of turkeys in the farms. Target populations for both outputs are turkeys *Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo* of all ages (breeding turkeys, poults, and turkeys kept for meat production), including those in the hatcheries.

Some information on the approach to the mandate were also provided with special emphasis to a series of activities that were carried out with the engagement of stakeholders as preparatory work for the development of the draft scientific outputs (TR and SO):

- an EFSA call for evidence focused on eight main topics listed in the mandate was launched between December 2023 and January 2024 (PC-0741);
- an online survey to collect data on the housing systems currently used in the EU for keeping turkeys and the risk factors listed in the mandate was submitted to stakeholders by an EFSA external contractor;
- an exercise on the ABMs assessed at slaughterhouses to monitor on-farm welfare has been carried out with MSs representatives of the EFSA scientific NCPs Network during the 2023 annual meeting, and
- an online survey on mutilations performed on turkeys was submitted to the members of the EFSA AW Network (see the follow-up exercise in the next agenda point).

During the Questions & Answers session, it was asked to have more information about the survey that has been sent for collecting info on the current housing systems in the EU for keeping turkeys; it was explained that it was an online survey that was sent by the EFSA contractor (IRTA, Spain) to different type of stakeholders, including representatives from the industry, farmers and NGOs. In addition, the AHAW Network representative from Spain reported that some studies on genetic aspects in turkeys have been carried out in Spain. Information on that had been presented at the 2023 annual Network meeting.



### **3.5.1.2 Mutilations on turkeys: feedback on EFSA survey**

Cristina Rojo Gimeno involved the meeting participants in an exercise on mutilations performed on turkeys, as follow-up of a survey that was sent to Network members prior to the meeting. The results of the survey were presented and discussed, and unclarities were resolved. The outcomes of the exercise will be taken into consideration by EFSA working group experts as basis for their scientific assessment when addressing the specific mandate ToR (ToR B, request 2.e) on mutilations performed on turkeys. A separate technical report with details of the exercise and the results will be produced and published on EFSA's website, as a preparatory work for the ongoing EFSA draft SO on welfare of turkeys on farm.

## **3.5.2 Welfare of beef cattle**

### **3.5.2.1 Mandate on the welfare of beef cattle**

Sean Ashe presented the background and ToRs of the EC mandate on the welfare of beef cattle. The mandate consists of 3 Terms of Reference (ToRs). The first is a request to describe the various beef cattle husbandry systems currently in use throughout the EU. The second is the request for an animal welfare assessment to be carried out various topics for beef cattle on farm. The topics are cattle while housed, cattle kept outside, mutilations, weaning, breeding and genetics and the welfare of cull cows being kept for beef production. The 3rd and final ToR is a request to generate a list of welfare indicators (ABMs) that can be recorded and assessed in an abattoir or a slaughter house that are indicative of the welfare of beef cattle on farm.

### **3.5.2.2 Mutilations on beef cattle: feedback on EFSA survey**

Marika Vitali ran an exercise on mutilations in beef cattle following a survey that was sent to the Network members prior to the meeting. The results of the survey were presented and discussed. A Technical report will be produced out of this exercise and published on EFSA website separately, with details on the exercise, including the results. The outcomes of the exercise will be used as a preparatory work for the ongoing EFSA draft SO on welfare of beef cattle.

## **3.6 Exchange of information - Presentations by Networks representatives**

In this session, representative of both Networks proposed topics for exchange of information and plenary discussions.

### **3.6.1 Pig tails in the Netherlands**

The Network representative from the Netherlands presented the current situation in the Netherlands regarding tail docking practice in pigs.

Baseline measurements were performed in three slaughterhouses, on a monthly basis for one year. These measurements to identify a 'status quo' is necessary to be able to assess the risk for tail docking and follow developments on farm. A follow-up trial with Artificial Intelligence (AI) for image recognition of tails is currently running,





by registering automatically the ABMs in order to score and compare the length of and damage to the tails. Try-out to see if AI is a promising tool for an enforcement agency/ risk assessor to keep track of what happens in practice. Results will support the preparation of an advice to the Dutch Authority (NVWA) and possibly to the Dutch Ministry. The data obtained may be used for validation of sector initiatives with benchmarking purposes. The Dutch authorities are discussing the possibility to phase out the tail docking in 2030 and a specific Dutch working group on tail docking of pigs has been set up for that.

Subsequently, a series of questions were asked to the meeting participants to gather information about the situation in their countries.

During the plenary discussion, it was clarified that in Denmark regulations exist with the aim to gradually stop tail docking. The farmer can continue tail docking if he can document problems with tail biting. If there are no problems with tail-biting the farmer should gradually stop tail docking for at least a few pens per farm, in order to learn how to keep pigs with intact tails. The proportion of undocked pigs in Germany is unknown but probably less than 10%. In Italy the minimum proportion of undocked tail individuals is 15% and there is an experimental program for monitoring this ABM at slaughterhouses (Classyfarm). Similarly, in Ireland the aim is for 2 pens per farm to rear undocked pigs as part of a specific inspection program on tail biting risks. In other countries, e.g., Sweden and Norway, tail docking is banned.

### **3.6.2 What are the obstacles to implement the EU legislation on pig farming?**

The representative from Belgium (Wallonia) (scientific NCP Network) presented a series of activities that are in place in the EU and in Belgium on the protection of pigs on farm and on AW in general, such as: legislative acts (e.g., Council Directive 2008/120/EC and Royal Decrees of May 2001 and 2003, and April 2023), recommendations, best practices, private label projects (e.g., “*Beter voor Dieren*” in Flanders), the setting up of the EURCAW-pigs, the publication of EFSA SOs under the framework of the F2F strategy, etc.

It was asked to the meeting participants to reflect on which initiatives should be reinforced to remove or reduce the obstacles to implement the EU legislation on pig farming.

During the plenary discussion, the aspect of farm rentability was discussed. Production increases not only if the farmers are responsible, but many actors are involved and there are differences among MSs. For example, in some MSs, castration would be avoided by farmers, however it is a problem for retailers, abattoirs and the meat sector in general. Genetic companies (breeders) can also have an important role on that by working on a reduction of the boar taint.

### **3.6.3 Urban animals: how big the problem for coordinate actions?**

The scientific NCP from Belgium (Wallonia) pointed out that high density and interaction of human and nonhuman animals in urban spaces need consideration and implementation of policies to enhance animal welfare in urban regions. Humans share the urban space with companion animals (pets) and ‘wildlife’ animals such as: pigeons, stray animals, cats from colonies etc. Meeting participants were invited to





explain what is carried out on this topic in their countries and what initiatives are considered efficient. In particular, the question was asked whether animal welfare should be safeguarded in an urban context, how to do it and what initiatives are considered mostly efficient.

During the plenary discussion, meeting participants agreed on the importance of the topic, and it was reported by some MSs (e.g., Spain and Finland) that initiatives to enhance cohabitation between humans and urban animals are in place in their countries.

### **3.6.4 Animals in my life, animals in my heart: how to bring them together?**

The scientific NCP from Belgium-Wallonia highlighted the ethical and psychological aspects on the human-animal different type of interactions, i.e., in relation to the concept “animals you love, animals you hate and animals you eat”.

It was asked whether debates are undergoing in the different MSs on how society negotiates ethical dilemmas, for instance the meat paradox: a person likes to eat meat, but this conflicts with his morality that killing animals is not good.

During the plenary discussion, some Network representatives agreed on the fact that it is important to consider AW in the light of sociological and psychological challenges.

## **4. Session AHAW Network (AW topic)**

### **4.1 Recent EFSA on-farm welfare mandates**

#### **4.1.1 EFSA Scientific Report on welfare aspects related to housing and health of cats and dogs in commercial breeding establishments**

Denise Candiani (EFSA) presented 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 in May 2023 and the report was published in September 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).



#### 4.1.2 Mandate on the welfare of fur animals

Marika Vitali (EFSA) provided an overview on the mandate on the welfare of animals kept for fur production (M-2023-00148) received from the EC on the 5th of December 2023. EFSA was requested to provide an independent view on the protection of animals, specifically mink, foxes, racoon dogs and chinchillas kept for fur production by the deadline of 30th of March 2025.

The activities carried out till to date, for the purpose of this mandate were also explained and these consisted of:

- The selection and formation of the working group (WG) with experts whose expertise are in animal welfare and the production, housing and management of animals used for fur production.
- A stakeholder event held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2024 in Brussels, where the attendees were provided information about the mandate and its deliverables.
- Additionally, it was explained that four calls of evidence, each about a specific species (mink, foxes, raccoon dogs and chinchillas) were launched on the 1st of March 2024 and will remain open for submissions till the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2024.

During the Questions & Answers session information on fur animal farming in the various MSs was collected.

In Norway, the Norwegian Parliament has passed a law in June 2019, prohibiting the keeping of fur animals. For fur animal producers who were keeping fur animals, a winding-up period has been established until February, 2025.

Link to the Norwegian Official Report from 2014 on the keeping of fur animals

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2014-15/id2353568/>

Link to information and proposals on keeping of fur animals <stm201620170008000dddpdfs.pdf> ([regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)).

In Italy, fur farms are banned since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. The ban was inserted in the "Legge di Bilancio 2022":

<https://all-in-giuridica.seac.it/document/327/4726183/0>

after being promoted in the Senato, see 'Disegno di Legge':

<https://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/REST/v1/showdoc/get/fragment/18/DDLP/RES/0/1067444/all#:~:text=Sono%20vietati%20l'allevamento%2C%20la,di%20ot tenere%20pelle%20o%20pellicce.>

In Croatia, fur farms were banned from January 2017, and prior to that only chinchillas were bred. In Sweden, financial compensations were offered to the farmers in 2023 with a plan to ban fur farms in the future.

In the Netherlands, fur farms are already banned for few years (<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0032739/2019-01-01>).

In Slovakia, fur animal farming is banned by law from 2021 and the transition period ends in 2025. There is only one farm keeping American minks and 8 farms for rabbit production, that are phasing out their activities.



Also in Switzerland and Belgium fur farming is banned since few years and there is an ongoing discussion about the possibility to also ban fur import.

In Luxembourg there is no history of fur production. The animal production law of 2018 prohibits breeding animals for the primary use of their skin, fur, feathers or wool.

In Iceland there are only 6 mink farms left with a total of 7600 animals and there are specific regulations for minks. However, recently many farms are ending their activities mainly because of economic reasons.

In Finland, the fur industry has been quite strong. There are currently around 400 farms (foxes, minks and racoon dogs). There is a separate legislation for fur animals which will soon be renewed. However, the number of farms has decreased due to the corona epidemics and avian flu outbreaks. Official inspections of farms are carried out annually and "health care visits" are made to the farms by industry. Link to the report about controlling of fur animal breeding: [ruokavirasto-raportti-turkiselainten-jalostuksen-valvonta-2020\\_valmis.pdf](#)

In Czech Republic, a ban on fur farms "breeding and killing of animals solely or mainly for the purpose of obtaining fur" was approved in June 2017, following an NGO campaign, and applied from 31 January 2019. At the moment, there were 9 farms keeping carnivorous fur animals.

In Denmark, mink production was banned during covid. A few farmers have started production again when the ban was lifted but most have closed permanently.

## **4.2 Exchange of information session AW Network**

The following topics were proposed for exchange of information.

### **4.2.1 Breeding/genetics**

Winanda Ursinus (representative from The Netherlands) made a presentation on the issue of harmfulness of (extreme) external characteristics and hereditary defects in companion animals (cats, dogs, horses). Animals presenting such harmful characteristics are allowed for breeding/trading/keeping/exhibition, because of which these animals continue to exist, despite the associated welfare problems. Hereditary defects in horses include the need for painful reproduction method (ICSI/OPU). The enforcement agency in the NL usually performs inspections for other reasons (e.g., prevention of rabies in dogs, heat stress in horses). There is a wish to work with artificial intelligence to recognise by image recognition 'forbidden' dogs. The agency is currently running a risk assessment on these breeding defects in dogs and cats as the Ministry is discussing a possible future keeping- and display ban of animals with harmful external characteristics. The first question to the other MSs was whether in their countries any projects on breeding in dogs, cats or horses are ongoing, if any updates about projects are available, and if they have any protocols to ensure welfare of these breeds. Other questions were in short: if national regulations on this topic



are in place, and if so, how is it regulated (why King Charles spaniels and not English bulldogs?); how MSs assess the risk to animal welfare; and if MSs have experts in the field of dogs and cats who might provide information for or join EKE's for this Dutch project?

During the Plenary discussion session, the following information was collected.

In Finland, according to the legislation, animal breeding should strive to produce vigorous, functional and healthy animals. An animal may not be used for breeding if: 1) the breeding combination used is likely to cause the offspring such diseases or other characteristics that cause significant harm to its well-being; 2) it is unable to reproduce naturally due to a hereditary characteristic or disease; or 3) breeding is likely to cause significant harm to its well-being.

Breeding methods that may cause significant harm to the animal's well-being must not be used. A specific regulation is under preparation. It provides more detailed provisions on animal breeding. Breeding reports have been prepared to assist the legislator and supervision:

Enhancing the implementation of animal welfare legislation related to animal breeding: Part III: Problems and control criteria of dog breeding  
<https://jukuri.luke.fi/handle/10024/553173>

Animal breeding and animal welfare legislation implementation:  
[https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/globalassets/tietoa-meista/asiointi/opaat-ja-lomakkeet/viljelijat/elainten-pito/elainten-suojelu-ja-kuljetus/jalostuksen-valvontakriteerit\\_koira\\_2020-luke.pdf](https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/globalassets/tietoa-meista/asiointi/opaat-ja-lomakkeet/viljelijat/elainten-pito/elainten-suojelu-ja-kuljetus/jalostuksen-valvontakriteerit_koira_2020-luke.pdf)

In Croatia, a legislation exists on the conditions that must be met by the breeding of pets intended for sale (76/2022). For instance, Article 4:

(1) The breeder must ensure the well-being and health of the animals and prevent the infliction of pain, suffering and injuries or the intentional exposure of animals to fear, as well as prevent disorders in animal behavior and ensure that only clinically healthy animals are used in breeding.

(2) The breeder must provide conditions for animals in breeding in accordance with the type of animal, its level of development, adaptation and domestication, as well as physiological and ethological needs, and in accordance with generally accepted breeding practice and scientific knowledge.

In addition, the following requirement exist in Annex II:

'It is forbidden to breed dogs that are not clinically healthy, that have health problems of a hereditary nature and that have not been subjected to the measures specified in the regulation on measures to protect the health of animals from infectious and invasive diseases'.

Overall, there is a debate on a possible ban on cats and dogs with traits, but nothing ongoing on horses.



In Luxemburg, legislation prohibits to breed vertebrate animals by artificial selection if this constitutes a risk to the health or welfare of animals or human beings, such as:

- a) the presence of organs or body parts additional to the natural, or
- b) the absence of naturally occurring organs or body parts, or
- c) the presence of body shapes that are not compatible with the animal's well-being and health.

This provision does not apply to animals bred for scientific purposes.

Some relevant reports were shared by Germany:

- German legislative base:

[https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/tierschg/\\_11b.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/tierschg/_11b.html)

- Info for vets around harmful breeding:  
<https://bundestieraerztekammer.de/tieraerzte/qualzuchten/>

- Legal opinion: <https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/tiere/tierschutz/gutachten-paragraf11b.html>

In Iceland, there is a detailed regulation on keeping of companion animals, and regarding breeding it is forbidden to breed animals that cannot reproduce by themselves, or breeds that have characteristics compromising their welfare or health.

In Norway, the breeding of Cavalier King is prohibited but it is still possible to import it. The following piece of legislation was shared:

<https://www.domstol.no/en/supremecourt/rulings/2023/supreme-court-civil-cases/HR-2023-1901-A/>

In Denmark, work is ongoing to find welfare criteria for these traits.

In Belgium, the Scottish folds are banned based on the genetic argument that in this breed there is an association genotype-phenotype.

In Switzerland, a ban exists on breeding of all animals if they lack body parts of organs that are needed for their natural being, or if they bring traits associated to behavioural problems.

In Greece, regulations exist on breeding, also for private owners, that are now subject to strict rules for reproduction.

## 4.2.2 Tethering of bovines

The Belgian representative (Flanders) presented the issue of bovine tethering. There is a number of cattle farmers which still use tethering systems. There are 2 main systems: permanent tethering during the winter months, with access to the pasture during summer (primarily the case in older stables) and temporary tethering usually



for few weeks around the birth of the calf (primarily practiced in case of C-sections). Tethering is legally allowed, except for calves up to 6 months. If the animal is tethered, it must be possible for the animal to stand up and lying down comfortably. Flanders has not the attention to register tethering of beef cattle.

During the Plenary discussion session, the following information was collected.

In Italy at the moment there is no ban to tethering. There are still small farms performing it and most of them tether the animals during winter time and then take cattle to mountain pasture during summer.

In Sweden, there is being a gradual ban ongoing for 15 years, but old (usually small-scale production) stables are still allowed to use it. The complete ban of tethering is under discussion but there is no real decision on when this will happen. Yet a requirement exists that all dairy calves have to be out on pasture in summer, so they are not tethered all year long. Also it is not allowed to tether bulls, which should be free-ranged.

In Slovenia there is a less intensive cattle production, especially in alpine regions with small farms where the majority of tethered cattle are kept. There is not yet an intention to ban tethering, but grazing of tethered animals is encouraged, through the CAP, the and the farmers can apply for subsidies to invest in changes.

In Croatia there is no ban, but there are special regulations for calves and protection of farmed animals. In those regulations, a small specific paragraph is dedicated to freedom of movement. Animal welfare subsidies are in place and there is an intention to motivate farmers to use them to move animals from tie-stalls to pastures.

In Denmark tethering of dairy cows has been banned and the transition period is until 2027 in which cows must graze on pastures during summertime. The government has recently decided to ban tethering of beef cattle as well, but the transition period still has to be planned.

In the Netherlands, tethering is not banned but is not a very common practice for dairy cattle, while approx. 5% of beef cattle, and 5% of suckler cows (during wintertime) are kept in tie-stalls. Organic farms do not allow tethering of animals (but they are regulated by EU law).

In Iceland, permanent tethering has been banned from 2014, but exceptions exist for farms built before the regulation and those exceptions have been extended to 2034. All new farms are not allowed to have any tethering system, but they are allowed to tether young cows just before their first birth. It is mandatory to graze them for a minimum of 8 weeks during the summer (from 15 of May to 15 of October).

In Switzerland, according to the current legislation, calves up to the age of 4 months are not allowed to be kept tethered, adult cattle need regular access to outdoor at least 60 days during the growing season and 40 days during the winter-feeding period. They are allowed to remain without exercise for a maximum of 2 weeks and all the exercise periods must be recorded in a journal. Yaks are not allowed to be kept tethered.

In Norway, there is a plan for legal requirement for free-range in all cattle barns from 2024, but the transition period has now been extended to 2034. Norway has an animal welfare law from 2010 requiring that animals are ensured a minimum of well-





being, regardless of the risk of unnecessary burdens. The law thus provides that animals must have a minimum of well-being even if it is impractical and costly. The law also states that the living environment should provide the animals with good welfare based on species-specific and individual needs, including the possibility of activities, movement, rest, and other natural behaviour. Keeping cattle tethered does not allow for natural behaviour, and keeping animals tethered is not a form of operation in accordance with the animal welfare law in Norway. Nevertheless, tethering is allowed until 2034.

In Germany, tie-stalls are prevalent in the southern part. Germany is currently working on banning tethering of bovines. See the coalition contract of the current government

([https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/assets/Koalitionsvertrag\\_2021\\_barrierearm.pdf](https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/assets/Koalitionsvertrag_2021_barrierearm.pdf))

In addition, draft changes to the legislation are being discussed, especially exceptions for small farms and relation to alpine grazing.

([https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Glaeserne-Gesetze/Referentenentwuerfe/tierschutzgesetz.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Glaeserne-Gesetze/Referentenentwuerfe/tierschutzgesetz.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6))

In Finland, the animal's permanent holding place must be sufficiently spacious and suitable for satisfying the animal's physiological needs as well as the essential behavioural needs related to movement, play, rest, body care, eating, foraging and exploring the environment, and social relationships. The animal must not be kept permanently tethered and its movement must not be constantly restricted by structures that prevent the animal from turning. New parcels may not be built or take into use. There is a transition period for cattle other than cows and heifers kept for milk production, it will apply from 2028. Cows and heifers kept for milk production could be kept in the old holdings as long as the buildings are functional. Permanent tethering of calves is prohibited. Dairy cows kept in parcels must be kept at least 90 days/yr on pasture or outside in the enclosure.

In Czech Republic, permanent tethering of farm animals is banned in general, but there is a long transitional period (applies to new/reconstructed farms from 2021 and to "new/reconstructed" farms from 2030).

### **4.2.3 Risk assessment for beak trimming of laying hens**

The representative from Belgium (Flanders), made a presentation on the issue of break trimming. In the Flemish regulation, beak trimming is not allowed as a routine practice, but it is allowed when cannibalism cannot be prevented by changes in management. Beak trimming should be performed before the age of 10 days. Regarding risk assessment, cannibalism can be caused by many factors (feed, availability of enrichment, bedding, light etc.). A good risk assessment needs to address these multiple factors to be successful.

The following question was asked to the meeting participants to gather information about the situation in their countries:

- Do you have experience in the use of risk assessment (RA) for the prevention of cannibalisms in order to change the management and to have a higher level of animal welfare?





In Germany there is a management tool used for RA called MTool for feather pecking. It is designed for organic farms, but it could be applied in any farm. The animals are inspected, there is a training for people performing the assessment, and then a farm specific report is created based on the assessment of the housing environment and of the animals.

<https://www.mud-tierschutz.de/mud-tierschutz/beratungsinitiativen/etablierung-eines-managementtools-bei-legehennen/mtool-fuer-jung-und-legehennen/materialien-zum-mtool/>

In the Netherlands, beak trimming of laying hens is banned, but there are some temporary exceptions (for example specific pathogen-free farms). A project is being run to assess prevalence of beak trimming in the Dutch farms, but data is not available yet.

In Croatia, beak trimming is allowed only under certain conditions to prevent feather pecking and cannibalism. It has to be done by trained person and only in chicks under 10 days old.

In Sweden and Finland, beak trimming is forbidden.

In Iceland, it is forbidden. However, it is allowed to "trim" the beak slightly, but the upper beak needs to be no shorter than the lower, should be able to close completely and to pick food from the ground.

#### **4.2.4 Enrichment of poultry**

The representative from Belgium (Flanders) made a presentation on the use of enrichment. In Flanders, generally there is no obligation to use enrichment for poultry but there is a new legislation published recently regarding the keeping of turkeys and from 2026 straw bales must be provided together with other enrichment materials and also elevated platforms will be obligatory. There are small profit margins regarding positive welfare and this can be a limitation for farmers to invest in enrichment. In Flanders, most of poultry are still kept in cages which reduces the possibility for enrichment materials. Since there are no obligations on enrichment materials farmers provide it on a voluntary basis. Information was gathered about the situation in the MSs.

In Iceland, new houses with tradition cages are banned from 2014 (transition period ended in 2022). Now only enriched cages are allowed. Animals must be able to sit and to dig in some kind of material: <https://island.is/reglugerdir/nr/0088-2022> (see the appendixes)

In Croatia there are additional subsidies for enrichment in both laying hens (additional nests) and broilers (smaller densities). Additional space outside is also promoted through subsidies, but there is no data yet about how successful they are.

In Slovenia, from this year there are subsidies to promote straw bales and winter garden.

In the Netherlands, enrichment is used for turkeys and litter for laying hens and broilers. Enrichment or litter is regulated in a decree: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0035217/2024-01-01>



In Finland, animal welfare compensation can be granted to poultry farms that provide enrichment material, platforms, ramps or perches for the birds.

In Germany, the industry "Initiative Tierwohl" has "additional organic enrichment material" as a criterion for poultry (<https://initiative-tierwohl.de/tierhalter/gefluegelhalter/>). The "Tierschutzlabel" (animal welfare label) also has additional organic material as a criterion, amongst others: <https://www.tierschutzlabel.info/unsere-tierarten>

## **5. Closure of the AW Network meeting**

Next meeting will be held in 2025 (date to be fixed).