BSE/TSE NETWORK
Minutes of the 19th meeting

16-17 October 2024
14:00-18:00 / 09:00-13:00
Minutes agreed on 28th October 2024

Location: EFSA - Parma (Meeting Room 00/M07)/Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	**Name**
Austria	Austrian Agency for Health Food and Safety
Belgium	Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre
Bulgaria	Bulgarian Food Safety Agency
Bulgaria	Risk Assessment Center on Food Chain, Ministry of Agriculture
Croatia	Croatian Veterinary Institute
Cyprus	Veterinary Service Cyprus
Czech Republic	State Veterinary Institute Jihlava
Denmark	Copenhagen University
Estonia	Ministry of Rural Affairs and Agriculture
Finland	Finnish Food Safety Authority – EVIRA
France	French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES)
Greece	Ministry of Rural Development and Food
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office (NEBIH)
Iceland	The Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST)
Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
Italy	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale del Piemonte, Liguria e Val d'Aosta
Italy	Istituto Superiore di Sanità
Latvia	Food and Veterinary Service Republic of Latvia
Lithuania	State Food and Veterinary Service
Luxembourg	Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration - ALVA
Malta	Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights
Netherlands	Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)
Norway	Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Portugal	Autoridade de Seguranca Alimentar e Economica
Romania	National sanitary veterinary and food safety authority
Slovak Republic	State Veterinary and Food Institute in Slovak Republic - Veterinary Institute in Zvolen

Slovenia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection
Spain	Subdirección General de Sanidad e Higiene Animal y Trazabilidad, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (MAPA)
Sweden	Swedish Veterinary Agency (SVA)

- Observers:
  Natalie MOYEN (WOAH); Erson DHIMESPIRA(Albania); Slobodan DOJCINOVIC (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Saranda AHMETAJ-DRAGA (Kosovo*); Nikola PEJOVIC (Montenegro); Radoš MIKOVIC (Montenegro); Melita JANKOVSKA TRAJKOVSKA (North Macedonia); Sanja ALEKSIC KOVACECIV (Serbia); Anıl DEMELI (Turkey).

- Hearing Experts:
  Fernanda MEJIA SALAZAR (for item 7); Brenda RAJANAYAGAM (for item 9); Nathan MEIJER (for item 12).

- European Commission:
  Aleksandra Miteva

- EFSA:
  BIOHAW Unit: Angel Ortiz Pelaez, Inmaculada Aznar Asensio, Francesca Baldinelli, Frank Verdonk, Barbara Lanfranchi, Miguel Melo.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

The Chair welcomed the participants from 27 EU Member States, and from 10 non-EU countries: Norway, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Turkey.

Germany sent apologies.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 18th meeting of the Network on BSE/TSE held on 11 October 2023, web-conference

The minutes of the 18th Network meeting had been previously agreed by written procedure on 23 October 2023 and published on the EFSA website on 27 October 2023.

Day 1

4. TSE in EFSA and in the EC

Inmaculada Aznar, Leader of the Animal Health team in the BIOHAW unit of EFSA, explained the changes in TSE portfolio remit within EFSA from the BIOHAZ team to the Animal Health team with the same unit BIOHAW. Since April 2023, the TSE portfolio also moved at the European Commission (EC) level, from the G5 unit (Food Hygiene) to the G2 unit (Animal Health) in DG-SANTE. Therefore, it was decided to assign TSE mandates to the Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) panel, instead of the Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ) panel. However, within EFSA, animal by-products portfolio will continue under the remit of the BIOHAZ Panel. This has some impact at internal level but not for the Network, even though it is also managed now within the AHAW team.

5. CWD zoonotic potential: new data or scaremongering?

Romolo Nonno, from the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) and responsible for biological characterization of TSE in EURL, summarized the three types of evidence needed to ascertain the CWD zoonotic potential: exposure measured by the disease prevalence and studying the pathogenesis of the disease; evidence of zoonotic cases in humans, and permeability of the species barrier. A comparative analysis of the epidemiological situation in North America and Europe was presented, highlighting key differences in prevalence and geographic data between the two continents. He noted that the majority of scientific evidence to date is derived from studies on North American (NA)CWD, due to a relative scarcity of recent research on EU-CWD. These epidemiological and pathological studies showed no evidence of association between human TSE and NA-CWD, although methodological and logistical constraints must be considered, e.g. long incubation period in humans, among others. Additionally, it was highlighted that the available data do not allow for a definitive conclusion regarding the potential for CWD to cross the human species barrier. Finally, a recent study showed that NA-CWD prions have a higher propensity to induce the formation of human prions in vitro compared to EU-CWD prions. European CWD isolates did not transmit disease to humanized transgenic mice although a recent study showed a positive transmission after passage through an ovine PrP^{C} expressing transgenic mice. It was highlighted the importance of minimizing exposure of humans to CWD prions.

Norway concurred with the conclusion presented and emphasized the importance of preventing the entry of prions into the human food chain and the livestock population, given the existing uncertainties.

EFSA inquired how to interpret the replication of CWD prions in humanized transgenic mice after passage through a different species (ovine). The speaker replied that the adaptation to a different species makes the strains to modify the tridimensional structures and the ability to replicate. And Norway confirmed that the inoculate in the second passage was ovine prions with different properties.

6. CWD in Scandinavia: epidemiological updates

Maria Nöremark, Deputy State Epizootologist at the Swedish Veterinary Agency (SVA), shared the latest updates on CWD in moose, in Norway, Sweden and Finland. The first study published in 2023 revealed differences in the OD values in the ELISA, the histopathological profile and the IHC scoring among thirteen CWD cases in moose in the three countries, distribution of PrP^{Sc} in the brain, indicating variation in the presentation of CWD in Nordic moose and also showed differences to those of CWD in reindeer and red deer. The second study investigated the possible presence of clusters of CWD in the three countries and if CWD in moose seem to be contagious between animals under natural conditions. Although statistically significant clusters were identified, the authors argued that the pattern of these cases does not follow that of a contagious disease under natural conditions. And if it was contagious, the pattern is different to that of CWD cases in North America. For example, in Selbu in Norway, where a cluster was detected and where sampling has been extensive, apparent prevalence decreased over time and the moose in the cluster were affected by different strains of CWD. All 18 moose cases were positive for CWD in brain tissue, but negative in lymph nodes. Notably, all affected individuals were old (mean 16 years) and all but one female, which contrasts with findings in wild reindeer in Norway and North America, where CWD is typically detected in lymph nodes and shows a higher prevalence in younger, male individuals. However, the observed difference in gender distribution might be attributed to the fact that female moose tend to live longer, as males are often hunted at a younger age for their antlers. Finally, it was concluded that the findings in Nordic moose share similarities with those of atypical scrapie and atypical BSE, and that the findings suggest that they occur sporadically and are likely non-contagious or have a low contagiousness.

Italy highlighted the decline in surveillance efforts in Europe. Sweden responded that this decline is largely due to budget constraints and competing priorities, but noted that as sampling increases, so does the complexity of the issues encountered, revealing more unexpected findings and unanswered questions and there are parts of Europe where less sampling of cervids have been done compared to NO, FI and SE.

7. Situation of TSE in Canada: surveillance, control and feed ban

Fernanda Mejía-Salazar, Policy and Program Specialist at Canadian Food Inspection Agency, presented a historical timeline of the presence of scrapie, CWD, and BSE in Canada, highlighting key milestones and events. She also outlined the three national programs: National Scrapie Eradication Program, the National BSE Control Program

and National CWD Control Program, discussing their primary components, current status, and future directions. She described the legislative framework, the diagnostic and research capacity, collaborative projects with other countries.

EFSA inquired about the strategies to enhance genetic resistance in goats to TSE and the level of farmer acceptance of this approach. Canada replied that opinions among farmers are divided, but noted that they are motivated to adopt such measures in order to open the market and trade with key partners, such as the USA.

EFSA asked about the public perception of TSE in Canada. Canada replied that challenges persist in communicating effectively with farmers, particularly when explaining the transmission routes of TSE, and that some farmers tend to downplay the significance of these diseases, especially CWD.

Croatia inquired about the active versus passive surveillance approach for BSE in Canada. Canada explained that the current approach involves testing a broad population of animals, without differentiating between subgroups. Going forward, however, the plan is to transition to a more targeted approach, focusing on animals with a higher risk profile, such as those flagged for slaughter, and reducing testing of fallen stock without a clinical history, in line with the new provisions of the WOAH terrestrial manual.

Brenda Rajanayagam asked how Canada plans to ensure that veterinarians and farmers will notify the clinical signs. Canada answered that they have developed an app to notify and monitor cattle candidates for BSE surveillance. They also plan to implement monetary incentives such as free veterinarian consultations, and free transportation to the necropsy site.

UK also asked as to why fallen stock are not being tested instead of those at the abattoir. Canada explained that, culturally, farmers have a strong emotional attachment to their animals, which can make it challenging to obtain consent for post-mortem testing of dead animals.

8. Investigations of BSE in the UK (new C-BSE case, etc.)

Brenda Rajanayagam, Scientist in the Department of Epidemiological Sciences at the Animal and Plant Health Agency, in the United Kingdom, started by giving a comprehensive timeline of BSE history in the UK, tracing its developments over time. Additionally, a detailed flowchart was showcased, outlining the protocol for active BSE surveillance and disease confirmation in Great Britain, providing a clear overview of the process. Then, she briefed the attendees on the conclusions of the investigation of latest C-BSE case detected in Scotland in May 2024. An investigation was conducted into the Natal Herd, with a risk assessment performed in accordance with the EFSA framework. The assessment identified several potential risk pathways with a very low likelihood of occurrence and high uncertainty, including: accidental exposure to contaminated feed, maternal transmission, and environmental exposure to BSE agents through birth products or previous cattle burials. While the exact source of infection was not determined, the investigation concluded that potential risk pathways were identified, and that this case posed no threat to food safety, animal health, or human health.

Austria asked if the farm's restocking after the FMD outbreak could have played a role in the C-BSE case. UK responded that restocking did not present a risk, and pointed out that the cleaning procedures implemented to address FMD may not be adequate to remove BSE.

Canada inquired why cohorts and offspring were traced, given that the new WOAH standards no longer require this practice, and if this decision might have been related to trading partners. UK explained that the procedures had not been significantly altered, and that tracing cohorts and offspring was done to exhaustively investigate all possible leads at the time of the case. It was also emphasized that this decision was not driven by pressure from trading partners, but rather to ensure a thorough investigation.

9. Use of ruminant fats, gelatine and collagen in animal feed. Opinion of ANSES Collective expert report. 2022

Thomas Maignien, member of the Risk Assessment Department at ANSES, presented the risk assessment of rendered bovine fat. Previous opinions and reports from Anses showed a BSE risk associated with this tissue collected after carcass splitting. The new work is an update of these previous opinions on the BSE risk associated with bovine fat collected after carcass splitting and used for animal feed. The main source of infectivity considered was certain internal adipose tissues by contamination of vertebral column bone splinters or spinal cord projections. The working group recommended to use for feed, only fats for which the risk is considered to be lower or negligeable: adipose tissues collected before splitting and adipose tissues after splitting but at a distance from the spinal column, and that the use of ruminant PAPs in animal feed for food-producing species must remain totally prohibited. Regarding small ruminant fats, the risk remains the same since 2025 hence the working group recommended not to use small ruminant fats in feed of any food-producing animals. Finally, the third and last request was addressed: a risk assessment on the use of ruminant products (gelatin and collagen) in feed for non-ruminant animals. The recommendations were: bovine vertebral columns from animals over 30 months old should always be excluded from these manufacturing processes and the relevance of removing the 5 cm around the trepanning point (provided for in the regulations) for the recovery of leather from bovine masks to ensure that they are not contaminated by the central nervous system.

10. Results EFSA survey on the TSE EU summary report

Francesca Baldinelli, Scientific Officer at EFSA, explained the importance of having feedback on this report, not only for legal reasons but also to improve the report. The survey was delivered prior to the network meeting via Microsoft Teams and consisted of 12 questions. Eight responses were received before the meeting. It provided insight into the usefulness of the data presented for activities related to TSE monitoring. Specific comments were provided regarding the report's length, as well as its use of text, figures, and tables. Feedback was also provided on possible data to be included in the next report. Finally, the key takeaways were that, despite a limited number of participants, the report was deemed lengthy but informative. It

was suggested that future reports be reorganized to include more subdivided sections, and that efforts be made to eliminate redundant information across sections. A suggestion in the anonymous survey proposed the inclusion in the Tse report the results of the surveillance programme of animal feed in the EU. EFSA replied that this is out of the legal remit of the data to be included and reported to the EC, but for example in the EFSA opinion on the updated quantitative risk assessment (QRA) of the BSE risk posed by processed animal protein (PAP) (2018) it was recommended to create an EU-level reporting system for the test results from the monitoring of the feed ban that would allow the collection, collation and analysis of MS feed testing data and subsequent dissemination throughout the EU.

Norway asked about projects with AI to produce these reports in EFSA. EFSA replied that there has been some work on this direction, enhancing the automatization of the production of the report from 2025. Italy insisted in the need to have a human scientific validation of the data to avoid errors since they could have implications for the reporting countries.

Following a discussion about the low turnout of the survey, it was suggested to dedicate few minutes on day 2 to give access to the participants to complete the survey during a break of the agenda. It was also highlighted by some participants like Ireland or Slovenia the impossibility to access the EFSA platform in Microsoft Teams during the protections and firewalls set up by their employers. The possibility to inform the network by email was ruled out a few years ago but it may need to be reconsidered to improve the engagement of the network.

Day 2

11. Welcome back and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed back the participants.

No apologies were received.

12. The use of animal by-products in a circular bioeconomy: Time for a TSE road map 3

Nathan Meijer, Wageningen Food Safety Research (The Netherlands) presented a review of the work done by his research group and published in two recent papers: 'the use of animal by-products in a circular economy: time for a TSE road map 3?', and 'New approaches for safe use of food by-products and biowaste in the feed production chain'. The previous roadmap focused mostly on BSE management and very little on the circularity of animal by-products. The legal framework is based in an overall feed ban followed over the years by a number of derogations. There have been technological developments increasing the opportunities to produce safe alternative proteins. Some of these solutions are biological conversion (insects), heat sterilization, chemical modification, protein hydrolyzation, fermentation. Some

proposed derogations were highlighted, such as the role of insects as intermediary and other possible end uses (chitin, frass). The importance of genetic distance between species must be taken into account. Insects could fulfill key intermediary role and other aspects to take into account are: susceptibility to TSE and the biological dietary preferences of the specific species in question (omni- / herbivorous)

The Netherlands commented on the indirect intra-species recycling when feeding insects to the same species that is fed to the insects. Intra-species recycling is a means whereby unusual infectious agents can accumulate by virtue of the constant recycling in a susceptible species, therefore not finding DNA of species fed to insects does not necessarily mean that no pathogenic agents are present. Nathan Meijer agreed in the terms of intra-specific diseases; however, if these insects are processed (as is stated and required) this should not be a concern. Though the possibility of new agents like prions emerging cannot be disregarded.

Slovenia commented on the use of live insects as feed for farmed animals that is allowed by the EC, and wondered if the potential risks have been evaluated. Nathan Meijer confirmed that the PAFF Committee had clarified earlier in 2024 that indeed live insects are now permitted for feeding livestock, except ruminants. However, although it can be assumed that the species permitted to be fed as live insects are the same eight that are permitted to be processed into PAP, this intention is not formalized. Along that same line, the legislation also does not differentiate in which life-stage insects may be processed into PAP; most probably the larval phase (of flies and beetles) is implied, but this is not defined. In the novel food evaluation of *Alphitobius diaperinus* mealworms, a potential risk of benzoquinones was identified for the adults of this species, necessitating physical separation of larvae and beetles in production. Hence, live beetles of this species should not be used in feed, which does not appear to be explicitly prohibited at this time.

13. Update on the activities of the TSE EURL

Giuseppe Ru, Director TSE EURL at Istituto Zooprofilattico del Piemonte, Liguria e Valle d'Aosta, gave an overview of EURL activities regarding TSE. The 2023 cycle of 9 external quality assessments (EQA) was completed and all laboratories completed their tasks successfully. He informed of the publication of an amended version of the ISS Discriminatory Western Blot for small ruminants and the multiple interactions with different NRL during the year. The presentation also covered scientific collaborations, as the research project on determinants of classical scrapie cases in genetically resistant goats in Greece and on the presence of genetic mutations in the *PRNP* gene determining susceptibility of atypical scrapie in sheep. A successful joint meeting of the EURL-TSE and EURL-AP took place on May 2024 that enabled a great exchange of information. The joint meeting EURLS-TSES and EURL-AP will be repeated in 2027.

Attendees were invited to explore the EURL website and in particular the new section on laboratory biosafety and related best practices. At least once a year a biosafety virtual meeting of the NRL and EURL will be held. The first took place in June on the decontamination of laboratory equipment/environment. Additionally, the personal area of the website dedicated to NRL staff will feature videos demonstrating best practices for brainstem harvesting, which will be made available for training events.

Finally, the ongoing project of propagating atypical BSE to ensure the provision of sufficient positive material for future activities of the EURL was described. The project started and the collection of reference material will take place at 20 months post-inoculation.

14. Update on the activities of the WOAH in the TSE field

Natalie Moyen, Disease Status Officer, WOAH, presented an update following the revised BSE standards of the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (*Terrestrial Code*), adopted in 2023. At the moment, 53 Members and 3 zones have negligible BSE risk status, and 4 Members 2 zones have controlled BSE risk status. The transition process from the old to the current BSE standards involves adaptation of several different activities in BSE. It was noted that by now they should all be aligned with current BSE standards, but WOAH understands that changes and full alignment take time. An update on BSE risk status was given, and there have been two new applications for recognition of negligible/controlled BSE status that have been evaluated in 2024. Subsequently to the BSE case in the UK, after evaluation by the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases, it was decided to maintain the same risk status in the zone of Scotland. She reminded of the cycle to submit applications for official recognition of BSE risk status and informed of the recent meeting of the ad hoc group on evaluation of BSE risk status. It was reminded that the starting date from which the risk of BSE agents being recycled within the bovine population can be estimated for Members and zones with a negligible BSE risk status as at least 8 years prior to the year of official recognition by WOAH, and for Members and zones with a controlled BSE risk status as at least from the year of official recognition by WOAH. Annual reconfirmation forms have been adapted to the current BSE requirements and the evaluation focuses on changes compared to last year, in, for example, risk mitigation practices, legislation reports of atypical BSE cases and their management, the number of animals reported to the Veterinary Authority for suspicion of BSE and tested. Finally, she reported that Chapter 14.8 of the *Terrestrial Code* on scrapie was being revised: the first ad hoc group meeting on it was convened in April, and the report should be published shortly on the WOAH website.

15. New BSE surveillance provisions WOAH/EU requirements: clarification

Angel Ortiz from EFSA and Natalie Moyen from WOAH presented the differences between the new provisions for BSE surveillance according to WOAH requirements and EU legislation on BSE surveillance. The presentation focused on description of what animals and how many animals must be tested according to the two requirements. The four target surveillance groups and practically the same, with no more distinctions between passive and active surveillance, with the emphasis on the surveillance groups are within the clinical spectrum of BSE, from the moment the animal starts showing clinical signs compatible with BSE until the animal is found dead. The current WOAH standards require to have supporting clinical history of the animal before it is selected for BSE testing whereas the EU requires a quota based on age limit.

Ireland asked if the EU requirements exceed those of the current WOAH BSE chapter. WOAH and EFSA agreed that this is the case. So, if there is compliance with the EU requirements, those of the WOAH BSE chapter are automatically met. Further questions will be addressed by WOAH and answers will be sent via email.

Croatia asked how to report fallen stock if there is no clinical history of the animals and whether this will constitute for the WOAH a noncompliance. It was suggested that the testing of all fallen sock will include anyway those with clinical history so it would be compliant. They also asked if there was still a specific "reporting period" to report in the annual reconfirmation form. WOAH explained that specific dates were no longer required but information was requested over the past 12 months, finishing as close as the national reporting system allows to November, as for other diseases.

France points out that passive surveillance requires an examination by a veterinarian able to discerning clinical signs suggestive of BSE or at least neurological signs. Active surveillance is based on a systematic rapid test, mainly at the rendering plant, for cadavers over 48 months of age. The two systems are therefore different. Before the introduction of rapid tests, passive surveillance alone underestimated the true prevalence of BSE. For example, it is important to consider the number of asymptomatic BSE cases (or with no specific clinical signs) detected in 2023 by the active surveillance in EU (see point 17). These cases would no longer be detected by passive surveillance.

Netherlands asked whether the revision of the BSE standards of the WOAH Terrestrial Code was based on a risk assessment. Natalie Moyen answered that she is not aware of this, but she will check this at WOAH and give feedback to the network via Angel Ortiz.

16. Update on the EFSA activities on TSE

Angel Ortiz, Scientific Officer at EFSA, presented the outline of the activities undergoing at EFSA on TSE and ABP. Two outputs were presented in the TSE area: the scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed using ruminant collagen and gelatine produced from bones, following the previous opinion produced in accordance with the human and the ABP regulations in feed for non-ruminant farmed animals (2020). The risk pathways selected were explained and the conceptual framework of the model to estimate the total BSE infectivity contained in a batch of gelatine in which one infected adult cattle with C-BSE has been included. The opinion concluded that the probability that no new case of BSE in the cattle or small ruminant population would be generated through oral exposure to gelatine made of ruminant bones is 99%–100% (almost certain). For humans, exposure to infectivity cannot be directly translated to risk of disease because the transmission barrier has not yet been quantified. Then, the application of negligible risk classical scrapie submitted by Slovenia was also mentioned, that will be published in October 2024. In the area of ABP, he briefly described the ongoing work on the efficacy of incineration, co-incineration and combustion of Category 1 ABP on TSE hazards, and two ongoing ABP applications: alkaline hydrolysis under atmospheric pressure for disposing bodies of pets, and the fluidized Catalytic Cracking co-processing for the production of renewable fuels using rendered fats. Finally, the ABP application on an alternative method of Tunnel Composting published in April 2024 was mentioned.

Slovenia pointed out that the timeframe applied to obtain the status of negligible risk is extremely lengthy and requires a great economic investment from the country applying. Angel Ortiz pointed out that the EC agreed with EFSA six months for delivery of the scientific report on the analysis of the surveillance data, even though the dossier had been submitted earlier to the EC proposed. It was also highlighted the use of a scenario tree model rather than pure statistical frameworks, which gives different weight to the value of the sheep and fallen stock samples, given the high probability to detect scrapie in this group.

17. EU TSE annual report 2023: preliminary results

Giuseppe Ru, Director TSE EURL at Istituto Zooprofilattico del Piemonte, Liguria e Valle d'Aosta, presented the 2023 EU TSE summary report (EUSR) produced annually by EFSA, outlining the regulatory framework for the TSE monitoring system that leads to the production of the report. The report presents the results of surveillance on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in cattle, sheep, goats, cervids and other species, and genotyping in sheep and goats, carried out in 2023 by 27 Member States (MS, EU27), the United Kingdom (in respect of Northern Ireland, (XI)), and other eight non-EU reporting countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey. In total, 948,163 cattle were tested by EU27 and XI (-3%, compared with 2022), with five atypical BSE cases reported (four H-type: two in Spain, one in France and one in Ireland; one L-type in the Netherlands); and 46,096 cattle by eight non-EU reporting countries. Five additional atypical BSE cases were reported by Switzerland (2), UK (1), USA (1) and Brazil (1). In total, 284,687 sheep and 102,646 goats were tested in the EU27 and XI (-3.5% and -5.9%, respectively, compared to 2022). In the other non-EU reporting countries 26,047 sheep and 589 goats were tested. In sheep, 538 cases of scrapie were reported by 14 MS and XI: 462 classical scrapie (CS) by 4 MS (104 index cases (IC) with genotypes of susceptible groups in 93.4% of the cases), 76 atypical scrapie (AS) (76 IC) by 12 MS. In the other non-EU reporting countries, Iceland reported 70 cases of CS while Norway reported 7 cases of ovine AS. Ovine random genotyping was reported by six MS and genotypes of susceptible groups accounted for 6.9%. In goats, 183 cases of scrapie were reported, all from EU MS: 176 CS (47 IC) by seven MS, and 7 AS (7 IC) by five MS. Three cases in Cyprus and one in Spain were reported in goats carrying heterozygous alleles at codon 146 and 222 respectively. In total, 2,096 cervids were tested for chronic wasting disease by ten MS, none tested positive. Norway tested 14,224 cervids with one European moose positive. The Report will be published in November.

France noted that 3 asymptomatic cases of BSE had been identified in 2023. With regard to the 2 additional cases for which clinical signs were mentioned, France asked whether these signs were neurological or suggestive of BSE. The response was negative (only general clinical signs).

18. Update on the activities of the EC in the TSE field

Aleksandra Miteva, European Commission, presented the regulatory adjustments made to Regulation No 999/2001, in particular on feed ban (end points for organic fertilisers/soil improvers), on changes of scrapie regulations (alignment of the conditions to genetically resistant goats and the placement of the market of ovine and caprine animals and products. The reports of breeding programmes are only needed in case of changes occur. EC approved the negligible risk status for classical scrapie for Czechia in March 2024. Regarding to trade issues, the revision of the WOAH provisions will be focused on the BSE surveillance programme, the BSE risk categorisation, safe trade and SRM. All these topics will be discussed with the member states. The project to produce atypical BSE material was also mentioned.

19. Round-the-table discussion on the topics discussed in the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE and country updates

Inma Aznar, Animal Health team leader at EFSA, opened up discussion on the usefulness of this annual network meeting and the frequency of these type of meetings. According to EFSA policies the next meeting will be held online, but members are invited to express feedback and opinions if they deem necessary or more appropriate to hold physical meetings. EFSA is always open to listening and accommodating to solutions that are better for most. She encouraged to provide feedback to the relevant officers in their competent authorities on the usefulness of the network itself and on the adequacy of physical meetings It was pointed out that October is full month, so maybe online could be advisable to limit travels during intense work periods.

Croatia expressed that with the constant decline in BSE cases there are fewer meetings on TSE and time is always lacking to discuss many topics that are still of interest and importance among experts. It also raised the issue on how to report the number of cattle tested following the new requirements and how this could affect the co-funding of BSE surveillance for member states, if the future of the EU BSE surveillance would be aligned with the WOAH.

Both Sweden and Italy underlined the importance of these meetings. Sweden suggested that part of the meetings could be dedicated to smaller working groups that interact together as opposed to having two full days of single presentations. This could promote more active participation from countries.

More proactivity was encouraged from the MS representatives while drafting the topics for the next network meeting.

20. Any Other Business

The date of the next meeting will be agreed with the members once the format of the meeting for next year is decided by EFSA.

No other businesses were discussed.

21. Closure of the meeting

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