SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

160th Panel Plenary meeting

27 November 2024
9:00-18:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 12 December 2024

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Location: EFSA, Parma / Teleconference

Attendees:

- Panel Members:
ALVAREZ Julio, BOKLUND Anette, DIPPEL Sabine, DÓREA Fernanda, FIGUEROLA Jordi, HERSKIN Mette, MICHEL Virginie, CHUECA MIRANDA Miguel Ángel, NANNONI Eleonora, NIELSEN Søren Saxmose, NONNO Romolo, RIBER Anja, STÅHL Karl, THULKE Hans-Hermann, TUYTTENS Frank, WINCKLER Christoph.

- Hearing Experts[1]:
Not Applicable

- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
EC: ALAEZ PONS Ester,

- EFSA:
ANTONIOU Sotiria-Eleni, ARDIZZONE Michele, ASHE Sean, AZNAR Inma, BALDINELLI Francesca, BROGLIA Alessandro, CANDIANI Denise Francesca, CARO Eleonora, CATTANEO Eleonora, DHOLLANDER Sofie, FABRIS Chiara, GERVELMEYER Andrea, HEMPEN, Michaela, KOHNLE Lisa, LOPEZ Aitana, MANAKIDOU Aikaterini, MUR Lina, ORTIZ PELAEZ Angel, ROJO GIMENO Cristina, VAN DER STEDE Yves, VERDONCK Frank, VITALI Marika,

- Other
Not Applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- The Chair welcomed the participants.
- Apologies were received from Jan Arend Stegeman

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management3, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the

[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

issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 159th AHAW Panel Plenary meeting held on 18-19 September 2024, in Parma

The minutes of the 159th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 4 October 2024.

5. Report on written procedure

Not applicable

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion/adoption.

6.1 Art. 29 - Scientific opinion concerning the killing for slaughter of other species – horses - Art 29 - EFSA-Q-2023-00310

The draft opinion was discussed for possible adoption. The following points were addressed: i. pain and fear are negative affective states overarching all other welfare consequences experienced by horses during slaughter, ii. new text produced to clarify that this opinion equally applies to slaughter on farm (for human consumption), iii. additional evidence originally reported in the uncertainty results for captive bolt shooting position was brought to the main text in the chapter as part of the assessment. The opinion was unanimously adopted. It will be published in January 2025.

6.2 Art. 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the killing for other purposes than slaughter of other species – horses - Art 29 - EFSA-Q-2021-00285

The draft opinion was thoroughly discussed. The chapter on lethal injection will need amendments, especially aimed at clarifying the combinations of substances in use, and their route of administration. A discussion was held on the possible recommendation to kill severely sick or injured animals in their home pen. The opinion will be amended accordingly and will be submitted for possible adoption at the Plenary of December 2024.

6.3 Art. 29- GMO unit: Scientific opinion on new developments in biotechnology applied to animals -(EFSA-Q-2023-00050) – update on the aspects related to AW assessment

The mandate, timeline, activities, and main content of the SO were explained to the AHAW Panel members, with a particular focus on the section related to AHAW. It was also agreed that the draft text will be submitted at the next plenary meeting for the panel experts to review and comment on the section relevant to animal health and welfare.

6.4 Art. 29 - Joint mandate EFSA-ECDC on Avian Influenza: Task 2. Scientific Opinion on zoonotic avian influenza– (EFSA-Q-2024-00172) -Thorough discussion.

The opinion was presented to the Panel. The results about the mutation analysis were illustrated, as well as related conclusions and recommendations. A point about AI transmission via food was discussed and amended in the draft, by including mention about the uncertainty about that. Environmental surveillance and wastewater monitoring was discussed also with the European Commission, and it was agreed to clarify that it is just a complementary monitoring tool and cannot substitute or complement the official AI surveillance in animals.

6.5 Art. 29 – Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the protection of turkeys on farm (EFSA-Q-2023-00647) and Art. 31- Scientific and technical assistance (EFSA-Q-2023-00648) - Update.

The Panel was updated, according to SOP 6, that the HoU of BIOHAW had nominated Anja Riber as the working group chair of the mandate on the welfare of turkeys from 1st January 2025. Anja Riber will take over the chair from the current chair Antonio Velarde. The Panel was requested to review the report on the turkeys' housing and management practices report (Art. 31) to be discussed at the next panel meeting.

6.6 Art. 29 - Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the welfare of horses – Update - (EFSA-Q-2024-00188).
Art. 29 - Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the welfare of donkeys and their hybrids – Update - (EFSA-Q-2024-00189).
Art. 31 - Request for a Technical Report on common husbandry systems for the keeping of Equidae – Update - (EFSA-Q-2024-00187).

The last WG meeting was on 26 November 2024 which focussed on the expert knowledge elicitation methodology. In 2025, at least two EKES will be carried out for TOR 2. The panel was also updated on the progress of the outsourcing activities. A specific agreement under a tasking grant is concluded which provides preparatory work for TOR 1 describing the most common husbandry systems for the keeping of Equidae. In relation to TOR 2, EFSA is in the process of contracting Individual Scientific Advisors to support the WG: two contracts concern the literature search and data extraction on space allowance and working activity and a third on breeding and genetic selection of certain phenotypes. This work will start in December 2024. The next WG meeting in on 9th December 2024.

6.7 Art 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of beef Cattle (EFSA-Q-2023-00535) -Update.

A short update on the timelines and progress of the work under the mandate on the protection of beef cattle was provided to the Panel. The Panel was informed that they will be requested to review a draft section on housing topics (flooring, water access, nutrition and feeding, extreme environmental heat, lack of outdoor access, enrichment and mixing practices) to be discussed at the next AHAW panel meeting. Relevant timelines for the remaining chapters of Art. 29 and the Art.31 outputs were also discussed with a view to adopt the SO in June 2025. Following a call for volunteers, a member of the Panel offered to be a "deep reviewer" of the scientific opinion.

6.8 Art 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of animals kept for fur production – (EFSA-Q-2023-00869) - Update.

A brief update on the timelines and progress of the work under the mandate on the welfare of animals kept for fur production was provided to the Panel. The Panel was informed that the section on the welfare assessment of mink (Art.29) will be presented for the first reading at the next AHAW Panel meeting. It was discussed that, once agreed, the same approach would be applied to the remaining species. The timelines and next steps were also outlined for the Panel experts.

6.9 Art. 29- Scientific Opinion concerning the use of Diathermic Syncope for stunning cattle – (EFSA-Q-2023-00085) - Update

The Panel was informed on the methodology followed for the non-formal expert elicitation exercise, regarding the scale scoring and the highly selected hazards for each comparable stunning method. A clarification teleconference with the applicant took place leading to a final request for additional data on 06 November 2024 and to a clock-stop of the assessment of the new stunning method until the applicant submits this information.

6.10 Art 31 - Risk and protective factors for ASF and mitigating measures for wild boar in the EU– (EFSA-Q-2022-00381) – Update.

The highlights of the first Risk factor analysis report produced this year (approved in October and published the 4th December) were presented. The risk and protective factors in domestic pigs obtained via systematic literature review and statistical analysis of the data from a case control study in commercial farms were explained. Similarly, the risk and protective factors for ASF in wild boar were analysed through systematic literature review, statistical and mathematical models that analysed the role of wild boar density in the occurrence, persistence and spread. The results of these models were presented along with the conclusions and the recommendations.

The presentation continued with the review of the role of biological vector (*Ornithodoros erraticus*) in ASF epidemiology in the last 10 years in the EU, and the surveillance efforts done in that area. The role of mechanical vectors was also reviewed and discussed, for which there is still uncertainty due to the lack of data. The results of the analysis of barriers efficacy for controlling wild boar movements done via literature review and questionnaires was also presented. This chapter includes also practical details of the fences implemented in some ASF affected countries. Finally, the results of the literature review update on the use of immunocontraception for controlling wild boar populations were presented.

6.11 Avian influenza annual report – Update.

The new report on avian influenza was presented, highlighting the main novelties. As a general comment, it was highlighted that there is a shift from a report solely dealing with data on surveillance to a more comprehensive report encompassing all data related to avian influenza sampling and testing activities. More specifically, regarding the report, the introduction has been reshuffled to provide an updated profile of the pathogen and the disease, including countermeasures such as vaccination. It was stressed that for the first time, population data on poultry was included, which will be better exploited in subsequent reports. Regarding the methodology, significant novelties will be introduced next year, including a revision of the acceptance process and the creation of an R-markdown within the Kaleidoscope application. The results section has been split into Poultry and Wild birds, with dedicated chapters on sampling and laboratory results. A key novelty is the introduction of ADIS data. Looking ahead to next year's data collection, all laboratory data will follow the SSD2 SIGMA data standards; additional data (mammals) will be collected or included (One Health data collection, Active Surveillance in Wild Birds project). There will also be a refinement of the R code and its migration into the R4EU Kaleidoscope, as well as a revision of the validation and acceptance process.

6.12 The European Union summary report on surveillance for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) in 2023–

The TSE EUSR was presented for the first time to the AHAW Panel. After a description of the legal framework, the mandate of the EC to EFSA to produce the report, the production cycle with the legal deadlines and how the data are collected, validated, extracted and analysed by EFSA, the main results of the 2023 report were shared with the Panel.

This report presents the results of surveillance on TSE 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 (the data reported by Switzerland include those of Liechtenstein) and Türkiye.

In total, 948,165 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). Three additional atypical BSE cases were reported by UK (1), USA (1) and Brazil (1). In total, 284,686 sheep and 102,646 goats were tested in the EU27 and XI (−3.5% and −5.9%, respectively, compared to 2022). In sheep, 538 cases of scrapie were reported by 14 MS

and XI: 462 classical scrapie (CS) by 4 MS (104 index cases (IC), 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. 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. In total, 2096 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 was published on 28 November 2024.

7 Other scientific topics for information/discussion

7.1 Early warning for HPAI in Europe: The Bird Flu Radar and capacity-building for active surveillance in wild birds.

EFSA presented two outsourcing activities in relation to early warning for HPAI in Europe. The Bird Flu Radar is a publicly available online tool that allows the visualisation of risk maps displaying the probability of introduction of HPAI in wild birds per 50 x 50 km grid cell and week. Underlying models have recently been improved and a prototype version for poultry is currently developed. Interested stakeholders can subscribe to the tool and read more in the three External Scientific Reports that have already been published. More work on the use of weather data is currently underway. In addition, EFSA presented the new SENTINEL Wild Birds project aimed at establishing capacities for active surveillance of HPAI in wild birds in Europe. A total of eight contracts have been signed with different consortia who have already started their field work and laboratory analysis. The first monthly report providing a summary and analysis of the samples collected will be published soon.

8. Update on new mandates

8.1. Art.29 – Fish diseases' introduction in free areas (EFSA-Q-2024-00668). Feedback

The mandate received by the EC on risk of introduction of three viral diseases namely, VHS, IHN or HPR-deleted ISAV by eggs, sperm and gametes in listed species, from a non-free to a free area taking into consideration if those diseases could be transmitted vertically and effectiveness of specific measures to mitigate that risk was presented. The four terms of reference were presented. The Panel was informed about the general approach discussed with the chair to address the ToR and on the status of the ongoing literature review. The timeline for endorsement of the protocol (January 2025) and discussion and adoption of the mandate (November 2025) was also presented.

9. Feedback from the Scientific Committee

9.1. Feedback from the Scientific Committee

A short feedback of the last Scientific Committee meeting was provided, focusing on key messages provided by Executive Director B. Url, namely that the role of the scientists (i.e. panel members) are to describe the risks and reduce the uncertainty about these through their specific description, and that AI tools are evolving fast, but they are not yet in a shape that they can take the scientists role in risk assessment. Furthermore, he noted that for assessment of application mandates, EFSA is receiving many applications of low quality, resulting in many "stop-the-clock"-processes (as observed for the DST mandate). Therefore, in the future, more interaction with applicants will be devoted.

10. Any Other Business

Not applicable

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 12-13 December 2024 by web conference.