

09 April 2025

09:00-16:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 28 April 2025

Location: Web-conference

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, STAHL Karl, STEGEMAN, Arjan, THULKE Hans-Hermann, TUYTTENS Frank, WINCKLER Christoph

○ Hearing Experts¹:

Not Applicable

○ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

EC: ALAEZ PONS Ester, BONBON Etienne, MITEVA Aleksandra, POPA Ana Maria, ROSADO MARTIN Pedro, TOFT HOLM Laerke,

○ EFSA:

ASHE Sean, AZNAR Inma, BALDINELLI Francesca, BENEDETTI Beatrice, BROGLIA Alessandro, CANDIANI Denise Francesca, CATTANEO Eleonora, CECCHINATO Giulia, DHOLLANDER Sofie, FABRIS Chiara, GERVELMEYER Andrea, HEMPEN, Michaela, KOHNLE Lisa, KRYEMADHI Kamela, LIMA Eliana, LOPEZ Aitana, MANAKIDOU Aikaterini, MELO Miguel, MILLAN Claudia, MOSBACH-SCHULZ Olaf, MUR Lina, ORTIZ PELAEZ Angel, PAPALEO Stella, ROJO GIMENO Cristina, VAN DER STEDE Yves, VERDONCK Frank, VITALI Marika

○ Others:

Not Applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants and the observers.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

¹ As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups":
<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.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



4. Panel members introduction

The AHAW Panel members briefly introduced themselves to the observers.

5. Presentation of Guidelines for observers

The AHAW Panel Chair introduced the EFSA Guidelines for observers, including the rules for attending the meeting, and informed when the specific slot for answering questions from the observers was planned in the agenda.

6. Agreement of the minutes of the 162nd Panel plenary meeting held on 25 February 2025 via web-conference

The minutes of the 162nd Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 12 March 2025.

7. Report on written procedure

Not applicable

8. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion/adoption

8.1 **Draft Art 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of Beef Cattle - ([EFSA-Q-2023-00535](#))**

The Panel discussed the comments on the mutilations section (castration, disbudding and dehorning, and tail docking). It was agreed to edit the main text to make clear that mitigation of the pain associated with the mutilation procedures does not mean full pain relief. It was discussed whether the meaning and duration of 'acute pain' was clear, or an alternative wording should be used; the Panel agreed to use 'pain around the procedure' instead. The Panel also suggested to better explain in the main text what is meant by 'generalized' pain sensitivity; it will be explained that this corresponds to the hypothesis that there is a development of a lower pain threshold when animals are exposed to painful stimuli early on in their lives. On the section on disbudding/dehorning, the Panel asked whether the positive aspects of not having horns are also discussed in the document. It was explained that the mutilation section discusses the negative welfare consequences of the procedures themselves, and that potential positive aspects of not having horns (e.g. fewer open lesions) will be briefly described on the polledness section (part of 'breeding and genetics' section) and that a reference will be done to that section. Regarding the text on analgesia and anesthesia, it was also agreed to be more specific on the compounds discussed (e.g. procaine, xylazine). On the tail docking section, it was suggested that a reference to the section on flooring should be added when discussing factors that prevent the need to tail dock (e.g. absence of hard flooring and sufficient space).

The Panel also discussed the general structure of the document. It was suggested to discuss with the WG how to make the 'summary conclusions' more useful as they somewhat repeat the 'conclusions' content. One option is to remove them from the document; this will be discussed with the WG and a proposal presented to the Panel in the next meeting.



8.2 Risk of infection with HPAI virus affecting dairy cows in the USA (H5N1, Eurasian lineage goose/Guangdong clade 2.3.4.4b. genotype B3.13) (Art 31 [EFSA-Q-2024-00715](#)), Art 29 [EFSA-Q-2024 00712](#))

The draft protocol for the scientific report and the scientific opinion has been reviewed by the Panel experts prior to the meeting. The feedback provided by the Panel experts was discussed and solutions were identified. The Panel approved the protocol (Tollgate 1).

9. Art. 29 – Fish diseases’ introduction in free areas ([EFSA-Q-2024-00668](#)): presentation of the preliminary results on ToR 1

The preliminary results of Term of Reference 1 on the assessment of the risk of vertical transmission of VHSV, IHNV and HPR-deleted ISAV and on the effectiveness of measures, including those proposed in the draft Chapter 4.Z. of the WOAH’s Aquatic Code, to mitigate that risk were presented to the Panel and agreed upon. It was clarified that, although the section is not officially endorsed, only minor changes can be made, as this piece of risk assessment will be shortly provided to the European Commission, as agreed when receiving the mandate. The Panel was informed of the next steps for the finalization of the sections addressing the other TORs in the Scientific Opinion.

8.3 Art. 29- Draft Scientific Opinion on the welfare of turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) on farm ([EFSA-Q-2023-00647](#))

The panel discussed the comments on the sections of the scientific opinion addressing the risk factors included in the mandate ‘temperature’, ‘concentration of ammonia’, ‘concentration of CO₂’ and ‘ABMs collected at slaughter to measure welfare on farm’ including their respective conclusions and recommendations. With regards to the effective environmental temperature it was agreed to discuss some key comments with the working group to finalize the narrative assessment. It was agreed to add a note in the Interpretation of Terms of Reference on the difference between the EFSA definition of heat stress and cold stress that considers the affective states of the animals and the used definition of heat and cold stress in literature that considers physiological measures. Regarding the ABMs at slaughter, it was agreed to add a conclusion on the welfare consequences that can be assessed with the proposed selected ABMs and also the welfare consequences that cannot be assessed. The scientific opinion is planned to be adopted in December 2025.

10. Art. 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of animals kept for fur production – ([EFSA-Q-2023-00869](#))

A progress update was presented on the mandate concerning the welfare of fur animals, covering five species: American mink, red fox, arctic fox, raccoon dog, and chinchilla. The extension of the mandate deadline to June 2025 was noted. The update highlighted the near finalization of the technical report, which includes a review of species-specific biology, production cycles, and farm practices. It also describes the predominant husbandry system (cage system), in all species. The scientific opinion focuses on identifying and evaluating the most relevant welfare consequences (WCs) under current farming conditions. EFSA applied its welfare assessment methodology, including expert elicitation, literature review, stakeholder consultation, and field visits. Following the request of the mandate, five most relevant WCs were selected per species (six for chinchilla), some common to more than one species (e.g. restriction of movement). Hazards and corresponding preventive or mitigating measures were identified for each WC. The welfare assessment is more advanced for raccoon dogs and chinchilla, and still more work to do is needed on mink and foxes. The findings are being finalized, with public presentation of the scientific opinion scheduled for September 2025.

11. Art 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of animals kept for fur production – ([EFSA-Q-2023-00869](#)) -Reading (raccoon dogs and chinchilla sections) and updates on the mandate (continuation)



During the closed session the panel discussed draft text prepared for mink and foxes and the full assessment of racoon dogs and chinchilla. The definition of "substantial mitigation" was discussed. It was acknowledged that a broad clarification of this term, as given by the mandate, was necessary to support a clear understanding of the welfare assessment process. The panel agreed that, due to insufficient data, it was not feasible to establish a quantitative threshold for what constitutes substantial mitigation. Instead, conclusions were reached through expert consensus. This limitation in data availability will be explicitly noted in the uncertainty section of the assessment. Then the panel discussed restriction of movement in mink including mustelids movement peculiarity. Second, the panel explored specific welfare consequences related to raccoon dogs. Topics included winter dormancy, as well as animal-based measures (ABMs) potentially associated with locomotory disorders. Similarities and differences were also mentioned with ABMs related to locomotory disorders in Arctic foxes, based on the available information. Suggestions on improving clarity of the text were made on the section related to chinchilla and also on the other species. These discussions will inform the ongoing refinement of the scientific opinion. The rest of the welfare assessment of the welfare of mink and foxes is foreseen to be provided for deep revision at the next AHAW Plenary. Adoption is planned in June.

8.4 Art. 29 – Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of Beef Cattle - ([EFSA-Q-2023-00535](#)) (continuation)

The AHAW Panel endorsed the 'Technical report on the most common husbandry systems and practices for keeping beef cattle' (Art. 31) drafted by the working group. This document describes the main productive cycles, housing practices, and feeding strategies used to keep beef in the EU and identifies the beef cattle categories of interest (suckler cows, suckler calves, heifers, fattening cattle, breeding bulls, and cull dairy cows). It will complement the 'EFSA Scientific Opinion on the welfare of beef cattle' (Art. 29) and will be published as a separate document.

In addition, the Panel discussed comments and proposed edits to the space allowance section (main text, conclusions and recommendations). The reporting of the results of the expert knowledge elicitation was agreed on to refer to the final fitted distribution of values only, and to add the confidence interval regarding the estimate for total space allowance. On the main text, it was agreed that the welfare consequence 'restriction of movement' was a better reflection of a welfare consequence resulting from low space allowance rather than the initially selected 'inability to perform exploratory and foraging behaviour'. It was also agreed to add more detail on the literature review on behavioural synchronization and its importance for welfare. On the conclusions and recommendations sections, it was agreed to make the conclusions simpler by not referring to the methods used, and rather to the final estimates.

The SO is planned to be adopted in June 2025.

8.5 Questions from and answers to Observers (in application of the guidelines for Observers)

1. Question: Are there any updates on Welfare of Equidae?

Answer: Please refer to the ongoing mandate on Equidae, and outputs to be expected by Dec. 2026:

- [Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of donkeys and their hybrids;](#)
- [Scientific opinion concerning the welfare of horses;](#)
- [Technical report on common husbandry systems for the keeping of Equidae.](#)

Please also be informed about the:

- [Minutes stakeholder meeting](#)
- Upcoming Call for data on Equidae (to be launched in April 2025).

2. Question: How does EFSA's assessment account for species-specific behavioral needs and the potential adaptation of welfare recommendations to different management systems, including zoological?

Answer: EFSA conducts risk assessments on animal welfare following its own guidance documents. Species-specific behavioral needs are considered using animal-based measures (ABMs) tailored to the species in question. When relevant, EFSA assessments may also address different management systems. So far, EFSA did not receive mandates on zoological settings. General Framework for Animal Welfare Risk Assessment (2012)
<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2012.2513>.



3. Question: What key surveillance strategies should institutions prioritize to detect and mitigate emerging vector-borne disease threats?

Answer: EFSA received a mandate on Vector Borne Disease (VBD) – One of the outputs will be a Scientific Opinion on the Risk posed by VBDs: mitigation measures (Dec 2026).

Are there any upcoming EFSA mandates that could impact animal health and welfare policies in zoos and aquariums?

Answer: EFSA did not receive mandates on these topics.

4. Question: What risk mitigation measures are considered most effective in preventing disease introduction in controlled environments like zoos and aquariums?

Answer: EFSA did not assess the prevention of introduction of pathogens in zoos and aquariums.

5. Question: Fur farms are known to harbour a multitude of zoonoses and mink were one of the first species known to suffer from TSE.

Answer: EFSA assessed the SARS-CoV-2 in mink, but not of other zoonoses, such as TSE.

6. Question: What measures are in place to monitor and counter the presence of zoonoses and TSE in fur farms including the possibility of the carcasses of slaughtered fur animals being fed to remaining stock?

Answer: Regulation (EC) No (999/2001) on TSE, and Regulation (EC) 1069/2009 and Commission Regulation (EU) 142/2011 on ABP, provide comprehensive measures on the material allowed to feed fur animals and to monitor TSE.

7. Question: Considering the risk of HPAI spillover, what biosecurity measures would be most effective in institutions housing diverse species, including avian populations?

Answer: EFSA has provided scientific advice on biosecurity in poultry to prevent HPAI in 2017: Urgent request on avian influenza, which is still valid. EFSA has also received a mandate to develop a communication campaign to improve the uptake of biosecurity measures in poultry. This three-year campaign will be designed based on the outputs of social science work that will take place during 2025 and early 2026.

8. Question: In beekeeping, several activities require improved definition and harmonization to safeguard honeybee health, particularly during transportation and greenhouse pollination. Are you currently addressing the topic of honeybee welfare? What are your future research or project expectations in this area?

Answer: Please check the dedicated site on Insect pollinator health for risk assessments on bees carried out by EFSA, including the must-B projects and EU pollinator hub.

9. Question: How does EFSA identify its Agenda? How are EU policy makers, mandated in Risk Management, involved into the process of subjects (hazards) for scientific opinions selection?

Answer: thorough explanations on EFSA's working practices, including the reception of mandates by policy makers are available online.

10. Question: Concerning the opinion on the welfare of turkeys on farm: will EFSA consider the outcomes and practices observed at the fact-finding studies organised by the EU Commission on the production of turkey meat, organised in France, Germany and Italy?

Answer: Yes, the outcomes of the fact-finding studies are being considered in several parts of the assessment already such as the section of the Animal Based Measures collected at slaughter to measure welfare on farm and in particular the ABMs total mortality, Foot Pad dermatitis and carcass condemnation.

11. Question: I did not see visits to Finland mentioned in the presentation. Were there some fact-finding missions to Finland concerning the welfare of fur animals?

Answer: Visits were scheduled based on Member States' availability and workload constraints, and the need for specific information relevant to the assessment. Finland was not visited, but



EFSA participated as hearing in an online meeting on animal welfare of fur animals in Finland organized by EC.

12. Question: Why were field visits made to Denmark and Poland, when major European fur producers include Greece and Finland?

Answer: As explained previously, visits were scheduled based on Member States' availability, workload constraints, and the need for specific information relevant to the assessment. For example, the visit to Denmark included chinchilla farms, while Poland was visited as it farms all fur species covered by the mandate.

13. Question: Not directly related to the agenda, but important on fish: Today the first draft opinions on turkey and beef were presented, in accordance with the 2021 roadmap. However, the farmed trout mandate which was also supposed to be issued in June 2024 but it has not been presented yet. Can you provide clarity on the timeline for this mandate, and the other foreseen farmed fish and invertebrates mandates, and confirm that the farmed trout mandate will be next?

Answer: No mandates have been received on trout welfare. Timelines of potential future mandates need to be discussed with the European Commission.

14. Question: Can I ask why killing was not included in the mandate since the slaughter of animals on fur farms raises very serious welfare concerns, particularly regarding gassing?

Answer: We acknowledge the welfare concerns that can raise during the slaughter of fur animals, but this assessment was not requested in the current mandate and shall therefore not be included in the current Scientific Opinion on the welfare of fur animals on farm.

15. Question: On farm emergency killing of turkeys is a serious welfare concern as there are limits in the slaughter regulation on weight and allowed stunning methods. Will there be a chance to work on this by EFSA

Answer: Kindly refer to the Scientific Opinion on Killing for purposes other than slaughter: poultry - adopted in 2019. <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/5850>

8.6 Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 21 and 22 May in Parma.

Annex III List of Observers

Online:

75 registered, (but only 45 observers attended)

Observer	Organization
BALMOS Oana Maria	University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca
BERK Jutta	Retired
BISSET Richard	Respect for Animals
BOCHICCHIO Davide	CREA - Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi
CASTELLUCCIO Domenico	Italian Ministry of health
DIANA Alice	Federation of Veterinarians of Europe



DE MATTEIS Giovanna	CREA - Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi dell'economia agraria
DE SANTIS Marta	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie
FERRARI Beatrice	University of Bologna
GARTLON Joanne	Freelance-Private sector
GLOVER Mark	Respect for Animals
GOUIGOULOVA Gabriela	CORHV- Risk assessment center on food chain
GYORFFY Andrea	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Lazio e Toscana
HARENIUS Anna	Project 1882
JENSEN Helene	University of Copenhagen
KHALDOUNE Nadia	AVEC EU POULTRY MEAT ASSOCIATION
KIVEKAS Heidi	Animalia
KOUBKOVÁ Marie	State Veterinary Administration
LIU Yangfan	The University of Copenhagen
LUKANOVA Nadejda	CORHV- Risk assessment center on food chain
MACKENSEN Henriette	Deutscher Tierschutzbund
MALMBERG Bethania	European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA)
MIGLIORE Sergio	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Sicilia "A. Mirri"
MILANO Azzurra	ASST Fatebenefratelli - Sacco
MUELLER-ARNKE Ina	FOUR PAWS
NIJS Hanne	Experimental Poultry Centre (EPC)
OLIVEIRA CARAPETO Sandra Filipa	University of Copenhagen
PAVESI Simone	LAV – Lega Antivivisezione
PIETSCH Thomas	Four Paws International
REMES Christina	Swedish Food Agency
RONCORONI Cristina	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale del Lazio e della
ROTA NODARI Sara	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna
SANTIAGO Catarina EAZA	European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA)
SCHIRÒ GIORGIA	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Sicilia
SCHOENWALD Sybille C	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture Germany
SKOWRON Monika	Polish General Veterinary Inspectorate
SOIMAN Oana	Hull and Goole Port Health Authority
SOLE SORRIBES Alba	Generalitat de Catalunya
STARK Katharina	Swiss Federal Food safety and Veterinary Office
STOLDT Ann-Kathrin	Bundesverband für Tiergesundheit
TARANTOLA Martina	University of Turin
TIRCHETT Neil	Teagasc
VAN STAAVEREN Nienke	Utrecht University
WHITE Kati	SEY Animal Welfare Finland
WILLMES Michaela	Experimental Poultry Centre (EPC)