



# TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ANIMAL HEALTH NETWORK AND ITS SUBGROUPS

## BACKGROUND

Establishing a system of networks of organisations operating in the fields within EFSA's mission is among the tasks of EFSA, according to its Founding Regulation (Article 22(7) and Article 23(g) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002<sup>1</sup>), in order to facilitate a scientific cooperation framework by the coordination of activities, the exchange of information, the development and implementation of joint projects, the exchange of expertise and best practices.

In accordance with Article 22(7) and Article 23(g) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, EFSA shall promote the networking of scientific organisations of EU Member States (MSs) operating in the fields within the Authority's mission.

A new regulation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain (Regulation (EU) 2019/1381<sup>2</sup>, amending Regulation (EC) No 178/2002), strengthens the Authority's ability to carry out its risk assessment functions in accordance with the highest transparency standards.

On 24 June 2021, the Management Board of the Authority has adopted the Decision<sup>3</sup> concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission. According to Article 2, the aim of the networks is to support EFSA and MSs in carrying out the Authority's mission in accordance with the established standards of scientific excellence, transparency and responsiveness foreseen in Regulation (EC) No 178/2002. These include, *inter alia*:

- facilitating the development of a scientific cooperation framework by the coordination of activities;
- the exchange of information;
- the development and implementation of joint projects;
- the exchange of expertise and best practices in the fields within the Authority's mission.

The **Animal Health (AH) network** was established in 2025. Before, it was part of the wider EFSA Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW).

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1–24.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/1381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain and amending Regulations (EC) No 178/2002, (EC) No 1829/2003, (EC) No 1831/2003, (EC) No 2065/2003, (EC) No 1935/2004, (EC) No 1331/2008, (EC) No 1107/2009, (EU) 2015/2283 and Directive 2001/18/EC. OJ L 231, 6.9.2019, p. 1–28.

<sup>3</sup> [Decision of the Management Board concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission](#)



## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the Animal Health network are:

- **To promote evidence-based risk assessment practices and methodologies, as well as research initiatives, and to advocate for harmonised data collection and surveillance activities in the area of animal health:**
  - to promote and/or expand the implementation of best practices and new scientific methodologies in animal health risk assessment at national level, as well as in the area of veterinary public health in the case of zoonotic diseases;
  - to promote harmonised data submission to EFSA by discussing issues related to the availability and format of the data generated at national level;
  - to improve data quality for animal health risk assessment purposes;
  - to improve dialogue and exchange of information on, among others, new scientific developments and guidance documents, EFSA scientific outputs, and current research and surveillance activities in order to improve knowledge, leverage synergies and avoid duplications;
  - to discuss and agree on common priorities and research needs.
- **To develop and strengthen cooperation and partnerships between Member States (MSs) and EFSA in the area of animal health:**
  - to identify common themes and areas for collaboration between EFSA and MSs, and between MSs, in the area of animal health, as well as in the area of veterinary public in case of zoonotic diseases, including also ECDC networks;
  - to contribute to the development and implementation of joint projects within the network or between EFSA and MSs;
  - to identify and map expertise in specific areas and/or on certain topics in MSs;
  - to explore possibilities for mutual and reciprocal support between EFSA and MSs, and between MSs;
  - to actively participate in the network community through a common digital exchange platform (e.g. Microsoft Teams and/or SharePoint).

## MEMBERS

The members of the Animal Health network are organisations appointed through the EFSA Advisory Forum members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks.

The Animal Health network shall be composed of experts with the following profile:

- Experience in animal health risk assessment, animal health data collection, monitoring and/or surveillance.
- Knowledge of the national animal health status and of the European and/or international context of animal health risk assessment.

Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the networks. Representatives of other EU agencies may participate in the work of the networks as appropriate.

Other organisations may be invited, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate in a network meeting, where deemed appropriate or necessary. These organisations may be invited either to participate in full or as observers only.



## WORKING METHODS

The Animal Health Network shall meet at least once per year, and further meetings can be organised if necessary.

After each meeting, minutes shall be issued and published on the EFSA public website. The working language will be English.

The network will use other means of collaboration:

- Exchanges of MS risk assessment activities and other relevant information via the digital exchange platform (Microsoft Teams/SharePoint).
- Conversations on the digital exchange platform (Microsoft Teams) on specific questions or issues.

MS representatives in the network shall commit to liaise as appropriate at national level before and after each meeting in order to make sure all the necessary information is shared without prejudice to Article 12 of the Decision of the Management Board concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisation operating in the fields within the Authority's mission.

EFSA may ask the network to contribute to the EFSA risk assessment process by, for example: conducting preparatory work for scientific outputs, providing scientific and technical assistance, participating in surveys and ad hoc enquiries, and implementing data collection systems at national level.

## DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting(s)
- Minutes of the meeting(s)



# TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE *ECHINOCOCCUS MULTILOCCULARIS* SURVEILLANCE SUBGROUP

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the subgroup on *Echinococcus multilocularis* surveillance are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## MEMBERS

The members of the subgroup on *Echinococcus multilocularis* surveillance are organisations appointed through the EFSA Advisory Forum members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks. Members are appointed based on nominations made by the countries listed in the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/878<sup>4</sup> (as amended by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2017<sup>5</sup> of 9 December 2020): Malta, Finland, United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)<sup>6</sup>, Ireland and Norway.

While Northern Ireland remains obliged to provide data in line with the Decision No 1/2024 of the Joint Committee established by the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, respective experts cannot be invited to attend meetings where data are discussed with Member States; therefore their data shall be handled bilaterally.

Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the subgroup. Representatives of other EU agencies may participate in the work of the subgroup as appropriate. Other organisations may be invited, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate in a subgroup meeting, where deemed appropriate or necessary. These organisations may be invited either to participate in full or as observers only.

## WORKING METHODS

The subgroup on *E. multilocularis* surveillance shall meet once a year prior to the publication of the annual assessment. Members are asked to provide feedback on the correctness of the data in the scientific outputs and on the data collection process, with the goal of increasing the speed and the quality. In addition, they should provide EFSA with information on issues as well as good

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<sup>4</sup> Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/878 of 18 June 2018 adopting the list of Member States, or parts of the territory of Member States, that comply with the rules for categorisation laid down in Article 2(2) and (3) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/772 concerning the application of preventive health measures for the control of *Echinococcus multilocularis* infection in dogs. OJ L 155, 19.6.2018, p. 1–3.

<sup>5</sup> Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2017 of 9 December 2020 amending Part 2 of the Annex to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/878 as regards the entry for United Kingdom in respect of Northern Ireland. OJ L 415, 10.12.2020, p. 43–45.

<sup>6</sup> In accordance with the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, and in particular Article 5(4) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in conjunction with Annex 2 to that Protocol, for the purposes of this Annex, references to Member States include the United Kingdom in respect of Northern Ireland.



practices. The European Union Reference Laboratory is invited and requested to provide insights, good practices, advice and novelties in relation to laboratory practices.

All other working methods are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting
- Minutes of the meeting
- Scientific Report on *E. multilocularis* (freedom from disease)



# TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ONE HEALTH SURVEILLANCE SUBGROUP

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the subgroup on One Health surveillance are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## MEMBERS

The members of the One Health surveillance subgroup are organisations appointed through the EFSA Advisory Forum members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks. Members are appointed based on nominations made by the MSs that carry out One Health surveillance under direct grant agreements under the EU4Health Programme<sup>7</sup>. They consist of the relevant MS authorities responsible for public health, animal health and environmental health, as required by the division of responsibilities in the respective MSs.

Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the subgroup. Representatives of other EU agencies may participate in the work of the subgroup as appropriate. Other organisations may be invited, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate in a subgroup meeting, where deemed appropriate or necessary. These organisations may be invited either to participate in full or as observers only.

## WORKING METHODS

The subgroup on One Health surveillance shall meet at least once per year, and further meetings can be organised if necessary. For meetings of the OH surveillance subgroup, each member organization can be represented by one participant. In addition, representatives of countries that have not applied for a direct grant under initiative CP-g-22-04.0<sup>8</sup> of the EU4Health Program 2022 can attend the meetings of the OH surveillance subgroup as observers.

All other working methods are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting(s)
- Minutes of the meeting(s)

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<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/sante/health/funding/wp2022\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/sante/health/funding/wp2022_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Direct grants to Member States' authorities: setting up a coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union; page 38 in [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/sante/health/funding/wp2022\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/sante/health/funding/wp2022_en.pdf)



# TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE AVIAN INFLUENZA SUBGROUP

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the subgroup on avian influenza are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## MEMBERS

The members of the subgroup on avian influenza are organisations appointed through the EFSA Advisory Forum members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks. Members are appointed based on nominations made by the countries<sup>9</sup> performing sampling and testing activities for the detection of avian influenza virus in poultry, wild birds and mammals.

Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the subgroup. Representatives of other EU agencies may participate in the work of the subgroup as appropriate. Other organisations may be invited, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate in a subgroup meeting, where deemed appropriate or necessary. These organisations may be invited either to participate in full or as observers only.

## WORKING METHODS

The subgroup on avian influenza shall meet once a year to discuss the preliminary outcomes of the data related to the previous year and the actions that may be identified for the year after. Members are asked to provide feedback on the correctness of the data in the scientific outputs and on the data collection process, with the goal of increasing the speed and the quality. The European Union Reference Laboratory is invited and requested to provide insights, good practices, advice and novelties in relation to laboratory practices.

All other working methods are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting
- Minutes of the meeting
- Scientific Report on Avian Influenza

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<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, and in particular Article 5(4) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in conjunction with Annex 2 to that Protocol, for the purposes of this Annex, references to Member States include the United Kingdom in respect of Northern Ireland.



# TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN SWINE FEVER SUBGROUP

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the subgroup on African swine fever are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## MEMBERS

The members of the subgroup on African swine fever are organisations appointed through the EFSA Advisory Forum members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks. Members are appointed based on nominations made by the countries selecting experts directly involved in African swine fever management in the country with sufficient knowledge on the activities developed in this field.

Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the subgroup. Representatives of other EU agencies may participate in the work of the subgroup as appropriate. Other organisations may be invited, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate in a subgroup meeting, where deemed appropriate or necessary. These organisations may be invited either to participate in full or as observers only.

## WORKING METHODS

The subgroup on African swine fever shall meet once a year to discuss the preliminary outcomes of the report produced with the data related to the previous year. Members are asked to provide feedback on the correctness of the data in the scientific outputs and on the content of the report in relation with their country. Additional meetings could be organised to share information on African swine fever activities and data collection process. The European Union Reference Laboratory is invited and requested to provide insights, good practices, advice and novelties in relation to laboratory practices.

All other working methods are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting
- Minutes of the meeting





# TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (TSE) SUBGROUP

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the subgroup on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## MEMBERS

The members of the subgroup on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) are organisations appointed through the EFSA Advisory Forum members, in accordance with Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision of the Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks. Members are appointed based on nominations made by the MS national food safety authorities or risk assessment bodies responsible for the area of TSE and/or researchers providing advice to competent authorities in the area of TSE.

Representatives of the European Commission may participate in the work of the subgroup. Representatives of other EU agencies may participate in the work of the subgroup as appropriate. Other organisations may be invited, including those from outside the EU, with specific expertise to participate in a subgroup meeting, where deemed appropriate or necessary. These organisations may be invited either to participate in full or as observers only.

## WORKING METHODS

The subgroup on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) shall meet once per year. The European Commission, European Union Reference Laboratory and the World Organisation for Animal Health are invited to provide updates of their work in the area of TSE.

All other working methods are in full alignment with those of the Animal Health network.

## DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting
- Minutes of the meeting

## TIMELINE

The Terms of Reference for the Animal Health network and its subgroups can be updated whenever deemed necessary and are valid until a decision of discontinuing the network/subgroup is taken.

Subgroups are created under the scope of a network, the duration of the subgroups can therefore be inferior or equal to the network timelines.

Last updated: May 2025