

19 June 2025

09:00-16:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 9 July

Location: tele-conference

Attendees:

○ Panel Members:

ALVAREZ Julio, DIPPEL Sabine, DÓREA Fernanda, FIGUEROLA Jordi, HERSKIN Mette, MICHEL Virginie, MIRANDA CHUECA 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, 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.

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. Agreement of the minutes of the 164th Panel plenary meeting held on 21-22 May 2025 via web-conference

The minutes of the 164th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 4 June 2025.

5. Report on written procedure

5.1 Endorsement of Technical report on husbandry systems for fur animals ([EFSA-Q-2024-00126](#))

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion/adoption

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

The AHAW Panel discussed the welfare assessment of mink and foxes. Selected comments were addressed during the meeting, while others will be reviewed and incorporated by the working group ahead of the next AHAW Plenary. Given the length of the document, the experts agreed to minimise repetition between the scientific opinion and the technical report. The need for further interpretation of findings related to fox welfare was acknowledged, and it was agreed that such interpretation should be included where necessary, while keeping the document concise.

In the conclusions, the possibility of providing additional information on the space required to mitigate welfare consequences in foxes will be further discussed with the working group. Although the available literature on floor size in husbandry systems is limited, the Panel agreed to explore this issue further and develop a proposal for the next Plenary.

The Panel was informed that the technical report will be shared by email for endorsement, and the scientific opinion will be submitted for adoption at the next AHAW Plenary.

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

The AHAW Panel discussed comments on four sections of the scientific opinion on the welfare of beef cattle: welfare of beef at pasture, welfare of beef cattle in feedlots, criteria for the euthanasia of cull suckler and dairy cows kept for fattening, and welfare risks related to weaning. On the section on welfare of beef cattle at pasture, the Panel requested to clarify the text on cold stress including a better explanation of concepts such as thermo-neutral zone and thermal comfort zone. It was also agreed to refer to the welfare consequences that apply to suckler cows and suckler calves under a single heading rather than explaining it under each welfare consequence heading. On the chapter on feedlots, it was decided to mention high stocking densities as a risk factor for muddy conditions in addition to the other factors listed. On the chapter on decision-making criteria for the euthanasia of cull cows kept for the production of beef it was agreed to add a preamble to the current text to better explain that the scope of the request was not to carry out a full welfare risk assessment but rather identify key decision-making steps. Important data gaps on, for instance, criteria for fitness for transport will also be explained. On the section of weaning risks, the AHAW Panel suggested minor edits and requested to specify what is meant by 'early weaning' in the context of this mandate. Conclusions and recommendations on these four sections were agreed on. The adoption of this scientific opinion is planned for June 2025.



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

The AHAW Panel discussed comments on two sections of the scientific opinion on the welfare of turkeys: space allowance and group size. On the section on the impact of space allowance on the welfare of turkeys, the panel requested to add clarity of the two models used to estimate the minimal space allowance, i.e. the elliptical for the space taken by individual turkeys and the circular taken by the birds distributed in a flock. In addition, the panel requested more clarity in the text to indicate the level of synchronicity of the behaviours as per the elicited time budgets. With regards to the hazard of 'excessive stocking density', it was agreed to report in the interpretation of the ToRs that the factors included in the mandate (space allowance) become hazards when they start causing welfare consequences. Regarding the conclusion indicating that different space allowances should be provided per each sex and weight category it was agreed to add an example to increase the clarity for the reader.

Regarding group size, the general lack of data and information available to provide quantitative recommendations on a maximum group size was highlighted. It was agreed to discuss with the working group the uncertainty surrounding the link of the hazard 'excessive group size' with the welfare consequence group stress. Conclusions and recommendations on the minimum space allowance and maximum group size were agreed on.

6.4 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 comments by AHAW Panel to the report have been presented and discussed. In particular a comment about the depth of analysis about risk pathways of HPAI through migratory birds, one panel member had suggested to avoid descriptive text about what is already known on migratory routes and unravel more the risk linked to species or routes. Actually, the ToR requests "describe the potential pathways for entry of the virus into the European continent via trade and via migratory birds" thus the chapter will not be changed but a clarificatory sentence added to explain the table about relevant bird species for introduction of HPAI into Europe.

6.5 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 ToRs of the Scientific opinion were presented to the AHAW panel and in particular the issues to be included on welfare impact by potential novel hazards/risks from new developments in biotechnology applied to current and near-market animals. The outcome and comments of the public consultation were presented to the AHAW panel. Pre-commercial development of existing genomic techniques (EGT) and novel genomic techniques (NGT) animals may involve procedural steps that are not present in the conventional breeding process. In these procedural steps, animals with phenotypes are produced, and for this reason novel hazards on AHAW might arise that are specific for NGTs and EGTs. The following sections were discussed and endorsed by the AHAW panel: section 1.2 Interpretation of TORs; section 1.3. Additional information to set the scene for the execution of the EC (including 1.3.3 & 1.3.4); section 2.2 Ad hoc expert Working Group and its methodology, and existing guidelines; section 3.23.3.1.1. EFSA GMO and AHAW Panel (2012); Section 1.1 - Potential effects of genetic modification on animal health and welfare; section 3.3.4.10. Impacts of GM mammals and birds on non-GM animal health and welfare; section 4.1.1. Comparative approach & section 4.1.4 Animal health and Welfare. Conclusions and recommendations related to animal welfare are foreseen to be endorsed at the next AHAW Plenary. The opinion is planned to be adopted in June by GMO Panel.



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 WG chair gave an update on the activities of the WG. The last WG meeting was held on 1st April and the next meeting is planned on 26 May 2025. The Art 31 (ToR 1) is progressing and the draft will be shared with the panel after June plenary. On TOR 2, the first EKE on Space allowance will be held on 11-12 June 2025. Concerning Breeding and Blood collection, a Call for data was launched which is open until 23 July 2025. The WG is developing overview tables for hazards, welfare consequences, ABM and prevention/mitigation for each subToR of ToR 2. The EKE on Working activity is planned for 7-8 Oct 2025. For ToR 3, the NCP Network meeting was on 2nd April and EFSA is now drafting the Event report summarising the results of ranking exercise which will inform the WG on the ABMs at slaughter.

67 Art.29 – Fish diseases’ introduction in free areas ([EFSA-Q-2024-00668](#)) – updates on the mandate

The Panel was updated on the status of the work. Following the finalization of the assessment on ToR 1, the sub-questions and methods for conducting the assessment related to ToRs 2, 3 and 4 were briefly presented. The Panel will be updated again on the progress done by the WG experts on those ToRs at the June Plenary meeting; first reading of the opinion will be in September, deep discussion in October and adoption in November 2025.

6.8 Vector Borne Diseases: Update on methods and planning ([EFSA-Q-2024-00178](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00179](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00180](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00181](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00182](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00183](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00185](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00186](#))

The European Commission has tasked EFSA with assessing the risk of infection in animals in the EU from pathogenic agents—some of which are zoonotic—transmitted by arthropod vectors such as mosquitoes, ticks, sandflies, and midges. This request builds on earlier EFSA assessments conducted in 2017 and 2020. Since 2018, twelve vector-borne diseases have been listed under the EU Animal Health Law, though many more are recognised as potential threats. Despite their differences in hosts, vectors, and impacts, these diseases share common features that make them suitable for a coordinated risk assessment and management approach.

To support this, EFSA will produce three annual scientific reports that include knowledge maps of 25 selected vector-borne diseases, maps of the distribution of their known and potential vectors, and an overview of available mitigation measures. These measures include tools such as vaccines and repellents, whose effectiveness will also be described, based on available information gathered through systematic literature reviews. Additionally, a separate scientific report will describe the possible pathways through which these 25 diseases could be introduced into the EU.

To keep stakeholders informed, EFSA will issue six-monthly newsletters summarising key epidemiological developments concerning the 25 vector-borne diseases. In parallel, monthly updates will focus specifically on West Nile fever, given its ongoing relevance in Europe.

Two scientific opinions will be delivered as part of this mandate. The first will assess the likelihood of introduction of both listed and non-listed vector-borne diseases into EU Member States where they are not currently present, as well as the potential impact of their spread during the first year following introduction. The second opinion will explore which mitigation measures are appropriate



to apply in different epidemiological contexts for the 25 vector-borne diseases considered and assess the need for new or improved control strategies.

The VBD working group will be supported by three expert consortia: VectorNet will contribute to entomology-related assessments, L'ORA will lead the risk assessment activities, and the Disease Profiles consortium will develop knowledge maps for the selected vector-borne diseases. While the scientific reports and Opinions will present a comparative, high-level overview across diseases and vectors, more detailed information will be accessible through links to the individual assessments behind each summary.

7. Update on new mandates

7.1

8. Any other business

8.1