

170<sup>th</sup> AHAW Panel Plenary meeting

28-29 January 2026

9:00-17:00 /09:00-13:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 16 February 2026

**Location:** EFSA, Parma and teleconference

**Attendees:**

o Panel Members:

ALVAREZ Julio, BOKLUND Anette, 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

o European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

EC: ALAEZ PONZ Ester

o EFSA:

ALARCON Evelyn, ANTONIOU Sotiria Eleni, ASHE Sean, AZNAR ASENSIO J Inmaculada, BALDINELLI Francesca, BALTUSYTE Ieva, BENEDETTI Beatrice, BIGONI Fabio, BOELAERT Frank, BROGLIA Alessandro, CARO Eleonora, DHOLLANDER Sofie, FABRIS Chiara, GERVELMEYER Andrea, HEMPEN Michaela, KONDRASHOVA Julia, KRYEMADHI Kamela, LIMA Eliana, LOPEZ Aitana, MANAKIDOU Aikaterini, MELO Miguel, MUR Lina, ROJO GIMENO Cristina, STOCKER Anna Sophia, VAN DER STEDE Yves, VERDONCK Frank, VITALI Marika

o Others:

Not Applicable

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The chair welcomed the participants. No apologies were received.

## 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<sup>1</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management<sup>2</sup>, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No conflicts of interest related to the issues discussed have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the Panel members at the beginning.

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 169<sup>th</sup> Panel plenary meeting held on 10 December 2025

The minutes of the 169th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 19 December 2025.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf](https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf](https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf)



## 5. Scientific output submitted for discussion/adoption

### 5.1 Vector Borne Disease ([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 Panel received an update on the progress of the report concerning vector-borne diseases (VBDs), their competent vectors, and the pathways of introduction. In addition, the Panel was informed about the planning of the Opinion that will assess the risk of introduction, spread, and impact of 25 VBDs.

The Panel was informed that a stepwise approach will be applied for the initial and thorough reading, as well as for the adoption of the risk assessments for each of the 25 diseases. The Panel also received a brief update on the systematic literature review that is being conducted to summarise the available evidence on mitigation measures for these 25 VBDs.

### 5.2 Art. 29 - Request for a Scientific Opinion concerning the welfare of horses ([EFSA-Q-2024-00188](#)) donkeys and their hybrids ([EFSA-Q-2024-00189](#))

The WG chair updated the panel on the progress made, in particular to TORs 1, 3 and TOR 2a. The Panel was informed that the draft sections addressing a description of keeping of Equidae (TOR 1) and ABMs to be collected at slaughter to measure the welfare on farm (TOR 3) will be shared with the panel before the next plenary for their revision. In addition, a detailed description of the methodology and results to answer the TOR 2a on space allowance were provided. An expert knowledge elicitation was carried out to provide recommendations for minimum space allowance based on the ABMs agonistic behaviour and locomotory behaviour.

### 5.3 Art. 29 Request for a Scientific Opinion on the use of Diathermic Syncope for stunning Cattle ([EFSA-2023-00085](#))

The draft Scientific Opinion was submitted to the Panel for adoption. All Panel's comments were addressed prior to the plenary meeting and a few of them were further discussed and addressed during the meeting. The Scientific Opinion was adopted unanimously.

### 5.4. Art.29 – BSE Surveillance ([EFSA-Q-2025-00443](#))

The panel discussed and received clarifications regarding the interpretation of the ToRs of the mandate, the approach taken to answer these TORs, the BSE model, the re-positioning and making some subsections more concise, the sources and positioning of content related to uncertainty, the presentation and phrasing of some results of the risk assessment, the content to be featured in the conclusions of the risk assessment, the potential future benefits of the retained components of EU BSE surveillance, the origins and infectivity of atypical BSE and some suggested rephrasing of the answers to the TOR.

### 5.5 Art. 29 – Specified Risk Material (SRM) removal ([EFSA-Q-2025-00442](#))

A draft methodological protocol was presented to the panel for information. The protocol will be submitted to the panel for approval at the next panel plenary in March.

## 6. Other scientific topics for information/discussion

### 6.1. Breakout sessions

6.1.1. Animal Health – Brainstorming on methodology to assess mitigation measures for vector borne diseases

The break out session on AH was about the methodology for risk assessment on VBD mitigation measures. A RA framework was presented and the following points discussed: i) for each disease or group of disease some epidemiological scenarios are to be defined; ii) in each scenario/disease combination a certain objective of the applied mitigation measure should be defined; iii) Once the



framework is set, it should be defined whether a certain measure is applicable and/or would be appropriate to disease/scenario/objective combination (Yes/No assessment) ; iv) After that it was discussed whether a scoring for effectiveness of each measure could/should be provided and how these could be combined for a score of the measure combination; v) a pilot assessment was performed on bluetongue to highlight caveats and possible improvements.

#### 6.1.2. Animal Welfare - Brainstorming on improving assessment in practice

The breakout session gathered expert inputs on the continuous improvement of animal welfare risk assessment by enhancing the clarity and communication of extensive scientific opinions and methodologies used, integrating the latest scientific knowledge, and identifying elements that support the implementation of mitigation measures. The use of animal-based measures was considered central, and needs and priorities were identified in animal welfare assessment both on farm and at slaughter, considering opportunities for improvement and priorities, including aspects related to quantitative data analysis. The Panel agreed that the discussion should be considered an initial brainstorming to highlight relevant points for further discussion.

## 7. AOB

### 7.1. Update on the measures for shortening EFSA opinion

The Panel was updated on selected measures for shortening EFSA opinion and discussed on their implementation.

### 7.3. Information on 2<sup>nd</sup> Burden of zoonoses workshop

EFSA staff provided a brief oral update on the progress of EFSA's Framework Contract on the Burden of Zoonoses in the European Union and EEA/EFTA countries. The four-year project (2025–2028), led by an international consortium coordinated by Sciensano (Belgium), aims to estimate the combined human and animal burden of nine foodborne zoonoses in Europe. The project also assesses direct and indirect costs and develops a harmonised methodological framework integrating health and economic impact measures to support evidence-based policy and intervention strategies, in collaboration with ECDC. Work under year 2 is ongoing. The second annual online workshop is scheduled for 9 April 2026, 09:00–12:00 CET (by invitation only). Panel members have received the invitation email and were asked to indicate their interest in participating.

### 7.4. Update on ASF epi report

The panel was provided with an update on the timelines of the annual African Swine Fever epidemiological report which is based on an analysis of data submitted by Member States affected by the disease (TOR 1 of the mandate). The deep reviewers will be sent a draft by mid-March for review, with the report expected to be published by the end of April 2026. In addition, the workplan for the Risk factor report (TOR 2) was presented, with activities expected to be carried out between January and October of this year with expected publication by December 2026.

### 7.5. Presentation of the new mandate "Scientific and technical assistance for the continuation of coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union"

The new mandate for scientific and technical assistance for the One Health surveillance of zoonotic pathogens in animals and the environment was presented. The surveillance will be carried out in 2027-2028 under the grant agreements linked to action CP-g-25-08 of the 2025 EU4Health work



program. The legally required surveillance for AIV is the first priority, followed by other AIV surveillance and surveillance for other pathogens identified as priority by MSs in 2022. EFSA will continue providing data submission and analyses tools to countries, the EC and ECDC and collaborate with countries' grant agreement holders under the One Health Surveillance subgroup of its Animal Health Network.

## **8. Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 18-19 March 2026 via teleconference.