

Location: EFSA, Parma and teleconference

Attendees:

- 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
- Hearing Experts¹:
Not applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
EC: ALAEZ PONZ Ester, MITEVA Aleksandra
- EFSA:
AMATO Laura, AZNAR ASENSIO J Inmaculada, BALDINELLI Francesca, BALTUSYTE Ieva, BENEDETTI Beatrice, BIGONI Fabio, BROGLIA Alessandro, CANDIANI Denise, DHOLLANDER Sofie, FABRIS Chiara, FEREIDOUNI Sasan, GERVELMEYER Andrea, HEMPEN Michaela, KONDRASHOVA Julia, KOHNLE Lisa, LIMA Eliana, LOPEZ Aitana, MANAKIDOU Aikaterini, ROJO GIMENO Cristina, STOCKER Anna Sophia, VAN DER STEDE Yves, VITALI Marika
- 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 Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, 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 171st Panel plenary meeting held on 18-19 March 2026

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 https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

³ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf



The minutes of the 171st Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 7 April 2026.

5. Scientific output submitted for discussion/adoption

5.1 Art.29 Welfare of horses, donkeys and their hybrids ([EFSA-Q- 2024-00188](#), [EFSA-Q-2024-00189](#))

- Risk to welfare associated with mutilations (ToR-2c)
- Risk to welfare associated with breeding (ToR-2e)
- Risk to welfare of *Equus caballus* and *Equus asinus* related to genetic selection for certain phenotypes (ToR-2f)
- Risks to welfare associated with collection of blood for commercial purposes (ToR-2g)

Four draft sections of ToR-2 (*Equidae*) were presented and discussed with the Panel. The draft of section 2c), addressing mutilations, was reviewed, with discussions centering on the appropriate formulation of the animal-based measures (ABMs) section; it was agreed that good veterinary practices are assumed, and that associated hazards, such as septic conditions and post-surgical infections, will therefore not be discussed in this ToR. The draft of section 2e), addressing breeding practices, was reviewed, with discussions focusing on the description of assisted reproductive technologies, including the definition of weaning. It was agreed that reproductive performance indicators provide limited information for welfare assessment. The draft of section 2f), addressing genetic selection for certain phenotypes, was reviewed, with discussion focusing on the interpretation of genetic tests, and the role of genetic tests and selection scheme to prevent welfare consequences associated with certain genotypes was discussed. The draft of section 2g), addressing blood collection was reviewed, with discussion focusing on the maximum volume of blood that can be collected. The Panel agreed that all pending comments and proposals would be reported to the working group, and that the amended text would be resubmitted to the Panel for further revision.

5.2 Art 31-Vector Borne Disease -risk assessment ([EFSA-Q-2024-00185](#))

The draft Scientific Opinion (SO) on assessing the risk for introduction, spread and impact of 25 vector-borne diseases (VBDs) was presented, focusing on the structure of the SO, and preliminary outcomes of the first nine disease-specific assessments. The results presented in the SO primarily address the incursion of VBDs into the EU and the potential impact following incursion, assessed with the LORA risk assessment framework.

The Panel acknowledged the overall approach and results but recommended further elaboration of the methodology to improve transparency and facilitate interpretation, without making it too technical or long. In particular, it was suggested to clearly describe all steps of the assessment framework, including also briefly the first and third steps in the LORA framework (incursion and spread), even if these are not explicitly presented in the results. The Panel also agreed with a concise description of the outcomes for each disease, including background information to support the interpretation of extreme results (e.g. reasons for uniformly high or low scores, or outstanding incursion or impact scores).

In addition, the Panel emphasized that the Opinion should more clearly reflect its comparative risk assessment nature. This should be explicitly addressed in the interpretation of the Terms of Reference and in the results, including dedicated comparison sections highlighting VBDs at higher risk of incursion or with higher impact, given incursion. Finally, the Panel suggested correct and consistent use of terminology and avoidance of expressions such as "rate of incursion".



5.3 Art 29- Scientific Opinion on the notification by Sweden of stricter national measures according to Article 26(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 ([EFSA-Q-2025-00653](#))

The draft protocol was submitted to the Panel for endorsement and was discussed. Proposals of the Panel to improve clarity of the procedure, such as adding an extra question and rearranging the order of some sub-questions, and of the evidence needed were discussed and agreed. The protocol was endorsed unanimously.

6. Other scientific topics for information/discussion

6.1 Art 29- VBD Mitigation measures on risk posed by VBD ([EFSA-Q-2025-00186](#)).

The preliminary approach proposed by the WG in response to the ToRs 2.4 and 2.5 of the mandate (i.e. to critically assess the currently available risk mitigation measures for VBDs in the EU, and the assessment of the need for the development of these and further measures within the EU) was presented to the Panel. In particular, the Panel was informed about the structure of the expert elicitation exercise supporting the risk assessment process. The approach was briefly discussed with the Panel experts, and it was agreed to continue the discussion and respond to follow-up questions in writing and at subsequent meetings. It was also agreed to test the approach on two diseases before finalising it.

7. New mandates

7.1 Presentation of the mandate on New World Screwworm

The Panel was informed regarding the new mandate on the risk of New World screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) affecting the Americas, with a focus on current outbreaks in Central and North America. The presentation included the Terms of Reference (ToRs) regarding the preparation of a Scientific Report (deadline 31/10/2026), and a Scientific Opinion (deadline 31/05/2027), as well as a brief overview of the recent outbreaks reported in Central American countries and Mexico.

8. AOB

The Panel was informed on items related to the organization of the next physical plenary (see point 9).

9. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 27 and 28 May 2026 in Parma.