

Animal Health Network

1st meeting



8-9 October 2026

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

Minutes agreed on 23 October 2026

Location: EFSA - Parma (Meeting Room M04)/Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	• AGES
Belgium	• Ministry Health, Food Chain Safety and environment
Bulgaria	• Risk Assessment Center on Food Chain
Croatia	• Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food
Czech Republic	• State Veterinary Administration of the Czech Republic
Denmark	• University of Copenhagen
Estonia	• Riigi Laboriuuringute ja Riskihindamise Keskus National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment
Finland	• Finnish Food Authority • Ruokavirasto
France	• ANSES
Germany	• Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut
Iceland	• MAST
Italy	• Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale
Latvia	• Food and Veterinary Service
Luxembourg	• Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration (ALVA)
Netherlands	• NVWA
Norway	• Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment (VKM)
Poland	• General Veterinary Inspectorate
Portugal	• Direção-Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária
Romania	• National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority of Romania
Slovak Republic	• University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Kosice
Spain	• MAPA
Sweden	• Swedish Veterinary Agency



- Observers:
Veterinary office of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Food Veterinary Agency of Kosova (Kosovo*); Food and Veterinary Agency (North Macedonia); Scientific Veterinary Institute Novi Sad (Serbia).
- Hearing Experts:
BORTOLAMI Alessio; BOUWMAN Kim
- European Commission:
CALVETTI Francesca
- EFSA:
BIOHAW Unit: ALARCÓN Evelyn; AMORE Giusi; ANTONIOU Sotiria Eleni; ASHE Sean; AZNAR Inma; BALDINELLI Francesca; BIGONI Fabio; BOELAERT Frank; BROGLIA Alessandro; DHOLLANDER Sofie; FEREIDOUNI Sasan; GERVELMEYER Andrea; KOHNLE Lisa; LIMA Eliana; STOCKER Anna Sophia; VADALA Miriam; VERDONCK Frank; VITALI Marika; ZANCANARO Gabriele



1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.
Apologies were received from Switzerland and Slovakia.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 26th meeting of the Network on ANIMAL HEALTH held on 10-11 July 2025

The minutes of the 26th meeting of the Network on ANIMAL HEALTH had been agreed by written adoption in 2025.

4. Welcome message from the Head of the Biological Hazards and Animal Health & Welfare Unit

The Head of Unit welcomed participants attending in Parma and online and highlighted the broad scope of the two-day agenda. He stressed that the Network should support active exchange among Member States and between countries and EFSA, including closer collaboration with public health colleagues under a One Health approach. The importance of Member State presentations and practical experience for creating added value was emphasised. EFSA's participation as a full partner in the European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare (EUPHAW) was presented as an opportunity to connect research more closely with risk assessment and policy needs. Participants were also encouraged to use the informal and social parts of the meeting to strengthen professional cooperation.

5. Vectorborne diseases: EFSA update on risk assessment, communication activities, GBIF and more

EFSA presented progress under its vectorborne disease mandate (25 diseases), covering information gathering, assessment of introduction, spread and impact, and evaluation of mitigation measures. The Living One Health Risk Assessment (LORA) tool is being used to combine epidemiological, vector and pathway information, including a windborne pathway model producing monthly regional incursion risk estimates. Results were presented for comparative and pathogen-specific incursion and impact assessments, with environmental, societal and economic dimensions considered separately. EFSA also encouraged countries to contribute validated vector distribution data through the VectorNet/GBIF portal using Darwin Core standards. Discussion addressed the interpretation of new incursion risk in areas where diseases are already present, differentiation of



animal and human health impacts, and the use of outputs to inform national prioritisation and risk-assessment capacity.

6. Shamonda-like virus: situation update from Germany

Germany reported the emergence and rapid spread of a Shamonda-like virus following initial clinical cases in dairy cattle in late July 2026. Typical findings included short-lived high fever, diarrhea, reduced activity and marked but generally temporary decreases in milk production, with high herd morbidity but little or no mortality. Sequencing identified two distinguishable European clades, suggesting separate introductions into southern and northwestern Germany, followed by wider spread and geographical mixing. Positive detections involved cattle and, for one clade, also sheep, goats, alpacas, horses and aborted bovine fetuses; neurological disease in horses and possible reproductive effects remained important uncertainties. Participants discussed the absence of systematic reporting for a non-notifiable disease, limited retrospective evidence, vector investigations and the need to clarify when an emerging infection should trigger enhanced surveillance.

7. Shamonda-like virus: situation update from the Netherlands

The Netherlands described its response after receiving early information on the Shamonda-like virus from Germany in August 2026. Veterinary practitioners and farmers were alerted to the clinical signs, while syndromic surveillance based on mortality, veterinary calls and bulk milk production was intensified. Eight strongly suspected farms were visited and sampled, with infection confirmed by the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, after which further PCR-positive holdings and both European lineages were detected. Bulk-milk monitoring illustrated the geographical spread from the eastern Netherlands to other parts of the country and demonstrated the potential value of production data for early signal detection. The wider discussion confirmed detections in several European countries and highlighted uncertainty concerning abortions, congenital abnormalities, equine neurological disease, vector involvement, costs and the legal basis for surveillance of non-notifiable emerging diseases.

8. Vectorborne diseases: preliminary results from assessment of surveillance and control measures by EFSA

EFSA presented ongoing work to assess surveillance and control measures for the 25 vectorborne diseases under different epidemiological scenarios, including disease freedom, first occurrence and endemicity. Measures considered included vector, active and passive animal surveillance, movement restrictions, vector control, vaccination, culling, treatment and biosecurity. Experts classified each measure for each disease and scenario as having minor or no contribution, being supportive, or constituting a core measure needed to achieve the objective. The resulting framework is intended to provide a practical toolbox and to support comparison between scientific evidence and measures prescribed in legislation, including options for maintaining safe trade. Discussion stressed that the usefulness of movement restrictions varies by pathogen, vector, geography and other available measures, and may differ between Culicoides-borne and tickborne diseases.



9. One Health Surveillance: results 2025 and next steps

EFSA presented results from the 2025 One Health surveillance activities conducted by 23 countries for 11 priority pathogens in animals, vectors and the environment. Approximately 90,000 samples were reported across around 250 surveillance components, together with extensive mosquito and tick occurrence data submitted through VectorNet. Countries considered the surveillance aims fully or partly achieved for 85% of components, while 56% produced high or very high knowledge gains and 78% generated intersectoral discussions. Collaboration between animal and public health improved, although links with ecosystem health authorities, timely testing, sufficient sampling, staffing and sustainable financing remained challenges. EFSA also outlined the future integration of One Health and avian influenza reporting into a single data model and submission process, with the new system planned for data reported in 2028 and training and piloting during 2027.

10. Vectorborne diseases: Joint ECDC-EFSA surveillance of West Nile virus infections in humans and animals in Europe

EFSA presented the joint ECDC–EFSA monthly surveillance report on West Nile virus, based on human cases reported to the European surveillance system and equid and bird outbreaks reported to ADIS. As of 3 September 2026, more than 1,000 locally acquired human infections and 61 deaths had been reported by 15 countries, alongside 121 equid and 281 bird outbreaks. Italy was the most affected country, while several countries showed intense or unusual circulation and important differences in surveillance sensitivity and structure. The report supports public health and veterinary authorities, including decisions on blood safety and prevention measures, and is complemented by studies of infections outside the main transmission season and spatiotemporal clusters. Participants discussed the current inability to include harmonised mosquito infection data at European level, under-ascertainment of human infections, differential diagnosis in birds and horses, and the need for clear public communication on prevention of mosquito bites.

11. Vectorborne diseases: France's experience with lumpy skin disease

France presented its recent experience with lumpy skin disease, including the epidemiology, clinical presentation and practical implementation of control measures. The national strategy relied on total depopulation of infected holdings, movement restrictions and mandatory vaccination, supported by surveillance, tracing, awareness activities and vector control. Implementation was complicated by farmer opposition, obstruction of culling and vaccination, unauthorised or untraceable animal movements and wider social unrest, illustrating the importance of social acceptability and risk communication. Further spread to southern France was associated with poor compliance with movement restrictions, while vaccination reduced risk but did not immediately protect animals infected around the time of vaccination. Discussion covered the uncertain origin of introduction, possible links with Sardinia, vaccine adverse-event reporting, compensation claims and the need to consider traditional farming practices when designing and communicating disease-control measures.



12. Wildlife: emerging threats and new invasive species

Participants discussed emerging wildlife threats, beginning with a report from Serbia on a carnivore and parvovirus associated with severe, often fatal multisystemic disease in Dobermans and a suspected wildlife-to-domestic-animal pathway. Additional examples included *Baylisascaris procyonis* in raccoons, HPAI exposure in seals, hunting dogs and stray cats, and *Toxocara cati* in wild boar meat. A summary of the European Wildlife Disease Association (EWDA) conference highlighted climate change, anthropogenic pressure, multidisciplinary surveillance and targeted monitoring as recurring themes. The discussion also covered surveillance gaps for bats and the limited centralisation of European wildlife health data. Participants stressed the value of integrated One Health surveillance and collaboration among laboratories, hunters, conservation actors and veterinary authorities.

13. EUPAHW: biosecurity in small ruminants

EFSA presented a scoping review conducted under the European Partnership for Animal Health and Welfare (EUPAHW) on biosecurity in small ruminant production. The review screened 3,551 records and included 307 studies, covering 35 biosecurity categories and 351 individual measures. Only about 5% of the studies focused primarily on biosecurity, while most assessed individual measures as risk factors rather than biosecurity as an operational farm system. Important evidence gaps concerned vehicles, visitors, carcasses and other by-products, shared equipment, reproduction management, wildlife, vectors and practical measures on pastures. Participants clarified that these were gaps in the research literature, not proof of poor implementation, and highlighted the need for farm-level studies and practical guidance adapted to traditional and nomadic systems.

14. EUPAHW: dashboard of data sources for animal diseases

EFSA presented a public dashboard developed under the European Partnership for Animal Health and Welfare (EUPAHW) to organise data sources relevant to epidemic intelligence and risk assessment. Sources were structured around the epidemiological triangle of host, pathogen and environmental context, and included European, international and selected national resources. The dashboard acts as a repository directing users to the organisations and webpages where data can be found; it does not itself host or validate the underlying datasets. Participants considered the tool useful for locating population, movement, health, environmental, socioeconomic and preparedness data. Future maintenance and the involvement of Member States in updating national sources remain under internal discussion at EFSA.

15. African swine fever: recent reports and ongoing activities by EFSA

EFSA presented the 2026 African swine fever epidemiological report, which analyses 2025 data, and outlined the forthcoming biennial risk factor report. Domestic pig outbreaks increased in 2025 but remained below earlier peaks and were largely concentrated in small holdings, while wild boar



outbreaks rose by 44%, with notable activity in Poland, Germany and the Baltic region. Passive surveillance remained more sensitive than active surveillance, particularly the systematic testing of dead pigs and the search for wild boar carcasses. The risk factor report will address carcass-search and dating methods, wild boar movement, proximity to farms, hunting, density and drivers of ASF occurrence, spread and persistence. Participants also discussed how the annual report is used and suggested broader stakeholder input and more information on country best practices.

16. African swine fever: Romania's experience with African swine fever

Romania described the development of ASF since its first detections in 2017 and the continuing challenge posed by widespread infection, backyard pig production and wild boar. Key difficulties include low biosecurity in small holdings, incomplete identification and movement control, reliance on owner notification and the proximity of commercial farms to backyards. Surveillance follows EFSA recommendations, including passive surveillance, testing of dead pigs in commercial units and active and passive surveillance in wild boar. Romania also applies incentives for carcass searches and hunting, promotes biosecurity and farmer awareness, and conducts regular inspections and veterinary training. A detailed discussion followed on high seropositivity in wild boar, the uncertain epidemiological significance of survivors and the value and cost of continued serological surveillance.

17. BSE/TSEs: ongoing activities by EFSA

EFSA summarised three areas of work on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). An assessment of aligning EU BSE surveillance with WOAHP provisions indicated that reliance on clinical signs alone would substantially reduce detection, whereas retaining systematic fallen-stock testing at an age threshold of 60 or 72 months would preserve most surveillance sensitivity. The annual TSE report found no BSE cases among approximately 900,000 cattle tested and noted that no classical BSE case has been detected in Europe since 2016; decreasing trends were also reported for classical scrapie in sheep. Chronic wasting disease surveillance detected no positive cervids in the EU and three in Norway, although most tested animals were not from high-risk groups. EFSA also outlined ongoing modelling of the risks associated with changing specified risk material (SRM) rules and emphasised that surveillance, the feed ban and SRM removal should not be considered independently when control measures are revised.

18. Use of artificial intelligence in animal health risk assessment/management

Participants exchanged examples of current and planned uses of artificial intelligence in animal health risk assessment and management. Most applications remain exploratory and include literature screening, predictive modelling, risk mapping, image analysis, animal behaviour monitoring, slaughterhouse identification, insect traps, salmon lice counting, and early disease or welfare detection. Several institutions are comparing AI-assisted reviews with human review and reported that prompt refinement, validation and transparency require substantial effort. EFSA noted that commercial tools may have limited access to literature, unclear models and insufficient methodological transparency, and that early tests missed a substantial proportion of relevant papers before prompts were improved. Participants supported further exchange on governance,



trust, legal frameworks, validation and shared good practices, potentially through a dedicated follow-up session.



Day 2 – 9 October 2026

1. Welcome back and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed participants back for the second day and did not note any apologies for absence.

19. HPAI: 2025-2026 overview of monitoring and surveillance activities in animals

EFSA presented the avian influenza situation from 1 October 2025 to 28 August 2026, during which Europe recorded approximately 7,000 wild bird detections, the highest annual total to date. H5N1 predominated and 843 poultry outbreaks involved around 33 million susceptible birds, while wild bird activity peaked in November 2025 and February 2026. The Sentinel Wild Birds project complemented official reporting through active surveillance at nine nodes involving 15 countries and detected avian influenza viruses in 9.4% of sampled birds. Mallards and Eurasian teals accounted for most positive detections, including apparently healthy birds infected with HPAI, and the project generated valuable genomic and contextual data. The discussion addressed mammalian infections, including cattle and cats, and the need for continued surveillance at the wildlife, poultry and mammal interfaces.

20. HPAI: state of play of vaccination in France

France provided an update on its mandatory preventive HPAI vaccination programme for commercial ducks in continental France. Vaccination is combined with reinforced biosecurity and post-vaccination surveillance, and the financial contribution of the poultry sector is progressively increasing while government continues to fund surveillance. Around 50 million ducks had received a first dose and 45 million a second dose, with additional boosters used in higher-risk production systems. Despite high infection pressure in wild birds, France recorded far fewer poultry outbreaks than before the vaccination campaign, although infections still occurred in vaccinated flocks, particularly toward the end of the immunity period. France is therefore using a heterologous vaccination protocol to extend protection and continues genomic monitoring, adverse-effect surveillance and occupational One Health surveillance.

21. HPAI: vaccination of poultry against HPAI H5 in the Netherlands

A Dutch field study assessed several HPAI vaccination strategies in commercial laying hens through combined farm monitoring and controlled challenge experiments. Vaccination did not adversely affect egg production, and antibody responses persisted through the end of the 85-week observation period. Challenge studies showed substantially reduced mortality and virus spread, with booster vaccination bringing the reproduction number close to 1 and allowing infected birds to clear the virus more rapidly. Because clinical signs and mortality may be limited in vaccinated flocks, the study stressed the importance of targeted surveillance, including regular testing of



mortality. Participants discussed surveillance sensitivity, implementation costs and the interpretation of results in relation to challenge dose and circulating strains.

22. Burden of zoonoses: an EFSA project

EFSA presented its four-year project assessing the One Health burden of nine foodborne zoonoses across EU Member States and EEA/EFTA countries. The project develops an integrated framework covering disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), human cost of illness, animal cost of illness and animal-loss equivalents. A feasibility study for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands demonstrated the feasibility of applying the methodology and identified differences in under-reporting, public health burden and animal-related costs. Preliminary estimates showed a higher public health burden for *Campylobacter* than for *Salmonella* in all three countries. For *Salmonella*, animal-side costs were strongly influenced by control and eradication measures. The project is now being expanded to all EU and EFTA countries for *Salmonella* and will subsequently cover the remaining zoonoses.

23. EFSA mandates in the pipeline

EFSA briefly presented three recently received mandates. The first will develop and pilot a methodological framework for assessing risks associated with movements of products from Rift Valley fever restricted zones, including mitigation through treatment, surveillance, biosecurity and vaccination. The second concerns New World screwworm and will assess the current situation in the Americas, possible entry pathways into Europe, potential impacts, prevention and surveillance options. The third mandate addresses Newcastle disease and will describe the epidemiological situation and available vaccines before assessing vaccination effectiveness, suitable protocols and surveillance in vaccinated flocks. Outputs are scheduled between late 2026 and mid-2027, and the work is being undertaken with relevant EU reference laboratories, EMA and expert working groups.

24. Newcastle disease: what is new?

The EU reference laboratory presented a marked resurgence of Newcastle disease in Europe, with more than 300 outbreaks reported in eight countries in 2026 by the end of September. Most outbreaks were associated with genotype VII viruses, with several independent introduction and spread clusters linked phylogenetically to neighbouring endemic regions. Trade in live poultry and hobby birds was considered an important pathway, while the contribution of wild birds remains uncertain because systematic surveillance is limited. Vaccination can reduce mortality without fully preventing infection or shedding, which makes passive detection difficult, particularly in vaccinated commercial flocks and backyard holdings. The presentation called for stronger active surveillance, harmonised serological monitoring, improved movement tracing, more sequencing and information sharing, and urgent action to prevent possible endemic establishment.

25. Newcastle disease: situation update from Poland

Poland described the progression of Newcastle disease from initial outbreaks in northeastern Poland in 2023 to a nationwide and increasingly severe situation. The virus was identified as



genotype VII.1.1, with evidence of two independent introductions related to Russian strains. Poland strengthened legislation, made vaccination mandatory for chickens and turkeys, introduced risk-based checks of vaccination effectiveness and intensified biosecurity controls and reporting. A targeted state-funded vaccination campaign was launched for backyard birds in high-risk areas, alongside work to improve identification of backyard holdings. Remaining challenges include correct vaccine application, operational biosecurity, bird movements and the need to evaluate genotype-matched vaccination strategies.

26. Newcastle disease: situation update from Germany

Germany reported 68 Newcastle disease outbreaks in 2026, concentrated in Brandenburg, Berlin and Bavaria and linked to the wider genotype VII.1.1 cluster in neighbouring countries. Commercial layer holdings were most affected, while smallholders appeared to play a limited epidemiological role and no genotype VII virus was detected in sampled pigeons or wild birds. Clinical signs and mortality were often mild, with most commercial flocks remaining below the 2% mortality threshold used for notification, making early detection difficult. All poultry holdings are subject to mandatory vaccination, yet well-vaccinated flocks could still become infected, particularly where application or population immunity was suboptimal. Germany responded through culling of infected farms, intensified surveillance and strengthened vaccination by industry, while discussions continue on the possible value of genotype VII vaccines.

27. Newcastle disease: situation update from Spain

Spain reported two distinct Newcastle disease situations: outbreaks in Valencia associated initially with genotype VII.1.1 and a larger cluster in Castilla y León associated with genotype VII.2. Further outbreaks detected in Valencia in October were preliminarily identified as genotype VII.2 and may be linked to the Castilla y León cluster, although investigations were ongoing. Control measures included further restricted zones, movement controls, risk-based restocking, enhanced clinical and production monitoring, strengthened biosecurity and mandatory vaccination in affected autonomous communities. Eighteen of 44 outbreaks occurred in previously vaccinated farms, and identified risk factors included common ownership, shared personnel and vehicles, integrated production links and operational biosecurity weaknesses. Spain recommended tailored vaccination programmes, post-vaccination antibody monitoring and continued investigation of transmission pathways, while noting that available vaccines are based on genotypes I and II.

28. Any Other Business

EFSA circulated a survey from the VIVACE project on the animal welfare burden of HPAI and invited participants to share it with suitable experts. Denmark announced that it would begin mandatory HPAI vaccination on turkey establishments above a defined size threshold, creating a small-scale pilot involving approximately 14 establishments. Participants proposed possible topics for future network meetings, including artificial intelligence, IBR surveillance using bulk milk, swine influenza, tuberculosis and vaccination of badgers or cattle, and non-foodborne zoonoses. It was clarified that the Network is not restricted to category A diseases and that topics may be included when countries or experts can contribute relevant experience. EFSA will consider these suggestions alongside emerging priorities when planning the next meeting.



29. Conclusions

The Chair thanked participants, speakers, Hearing Experts and EFSA colleagues for their contributions to the two-day meeting. The meeting highlighted the value of the Network for sharing national experience, surveillance findings and emerging scientific work across Europe. Participants were encouraged to continue exchanging information through the newly established Teams channel and to propose topics and contributions for future meetings. Presentations and meeting photographs would be made available through the channel. The Chair closed the meeting and confirmed that participants would be contacted regarding the next meeting.