

BRUSSELS, 29-30/11/2011

**Minutes of the
6th Meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network on
BSE-TSE**

Brussels, 29-30 November 2011

Agenda

Item	Topic
1	Welcome and apologies
2	Adoption of the agenda
4	Briefing on Action Points from previous meeting (BIOHAZ Unit)
3	Briefing by Members and Observers on BSE-TSE related activities since last meeting occurring in their respective Countries
5	The TSE Roadmap II (European Commission)
6	Current, recent and future prospects of BSE-TSE activities of EFSA's Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ Unit)
7	Inspections of the Food and Veterinary Office related to BSE and TSE: Findings and trends (European Commission)
8	Update on the epidemiological situation of BSE and Scrapie in the EU (Network member from Italy)
9	Rapid TSE tests employed in the EU: From the application to the approval (BIOHAZ Unit)
10	Scrapie(s): What we know, what we do not know and what we may never know (Dr. Olivier Andreoletti, Member of the Panel on Biological Hazards)
11	VI years of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE and TSE (BIOHAZ Unit)
12	Round table discussion on the future of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE and TSE
13	Date and venue for next meeting and AOB
14	Closure of the meeting

Participants

Members:

Belgium and Luxembourg (Stefan Roels), Bulgaria (Ilian Boykovski), Czech Republic (Pavel Vodrazka), Cyprus (Penelope Stylianou), Denmark (Larry G. Paisley), Estonia (Olga Piirik), Finland (Leena Sahlström), France (Jean Charles Le Blanc), Germany (Anne Buschmann), Greece (Dimitrios Dilaveris), Hungary (Zsuzsanna Szogyenyi), Ireland (Hazel Sheridan), Italy (Giuseppe Ru), the Netherlands (Aline De Koeijer), Poland (Miroslaw Polak), Romania (Theodora Vasile), Slovenia (Ivan Ambrozic), Slovak Republic (Janiuk Lubomir), Spain (Maria del Carmen Sanchez Morillo) and Sweden (Maria Noremark).

Observers:

Switzerland (Peter Braam), Croatia (Branko Sostaric), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Spase Donovan), Turkey (Hikmet Un), Albania (Bernarda Haderi), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Senad Prasovic), Montenegro (Nikola Pejovic) and Serbia (Slavica Nikolic Stajkovic).

European Commission:

DG Health and Consumer Protection (Polyvios Neocleous, Martial Plantady and Fabien Schneegans).

Invited Experts:

Olivier Andreoletti (Member of the EFSA Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards)

EFSA

Marta Hugas (Chair, Head of Unit, Biological Hazards Unit), Luis Vivas-Alegre (Biological Hazards Unit) and Pietro Stella (Biological Hazards Unit).

Minutes

1. Opening, welcome and apologies for absence

The chair welcomed the participants to the 6th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE. Apologies were received from Austria (Herbert Budka), Latvia (Edvins Olsevskis), Lithuania (Petras Maciulskis), Portugal (Maria Jose Pinto), United Kingdom (Patrick Burke and Irene Hill), Norway (Bjorn Nass) and Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (Ilijana Zymberaj). Apologies were also received from Koen Van Dyck (Directorate General for Health and Consumers, European Commission) and from Vicky Lefevre and Heinz Schimmel (Directorate General Research of the European Commission).

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted including three additional items:

- Briefing by the Swiss Network Observer on the reporting of two cases of BSE in cattle in Switzerland, with an unusual prion protein signature as published online ahead of print in the Journal of Emerging Infectious Diseases as a letter to the editor. This briefing is presented under point 9 below.
- Informing the Network Members and Observers on a recent editorial article published in The EFSA Journal and authored by Prof. Herbert Budka (Network Member representative for Austria and Member of the EFSA BIOHAZ Panel). This article titled “The European Response to BSE: A Success Story” reflects on past, present and future issues related to the BSE epidemic in the EU.
- A communication from the Norwegian Network Member on the update of the epidemiological situation of Scrapie in Norway.

3. Briefing by EFSA on Action Points from the 2010 Network meeting

The Network Members and Observers were briefed by the BIOHAZ Unit on the state of the specific actions identified at the previous Network: continue to promote the participation of Candidate and Potential candidate countries as observers, plus the preparation of a presentation on the updated epidemiological situation of TSEs in farmed animals in the EU. The later was kindly prepared by Giuseppe Ru, the Italian Network Member and is further discussed under point 8 below.

4. Briefing by Members and Observers on BSE-TSE related activities since the 2010 Network meeting

All Members and Observers addressed to the group the details on their activities since the last Network meeting. Special emphasis was made in the epidemiological situation of the different countries both in bovines and small ruminants. Some particular details outlines of the briefing include:

- The representative from Belgium and Luxembourg highlighted that since the last meeting the discussion on the disinfection of laboratories decommissioned for analysing

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samples for TSE has evolved and now laboratory guidance are available, and would be translated into English.

- The representative from The Netherlands informed the group about the organisation of the next PRION conference in Amsterdam, on 9-10 May 2012.
- The representative from Poland advised on the finding in 2006 of two BSE cases in Poland with Western blot profiles similar to those now reported in Switzerland. This information has been shared with the Swiss national Reference Laboratory but it was not published in a scientific paper.

5. The TSE Road map 2

The Commission presented the details of The TSE Road map 2, the strategy paper on TSEs for 2010-2015 from the European Commission. The presentation addressed key future expected changes in particular in the context of the EU-wide feedban on proteins of animal origin to farmed animals, of the BSE monitoring and of the monitoring and control of TSEs in small ruminants. Some of the issues discussed after the presentation included:

- The need to review the monitoring and reporting of BSE by the EU MSs, where currently discrimination of Atypical BSE cases is neither legally required nor reported. This is also an issue that is not currently considered in the OIE.
- The future seeking of alignment with OIE requirements with regards measures for eradication of TSEs in small ruminants (i.e. EU measures more stringent).
- What EU MSs would be able to apply to the sample-size based for healthy slaughtered cattle BSE monitoring scheme.

6. Current, recent and future prospects of BSE-TSE activities of EFSA's Panel on Biological Hazards

The work carried out by the BIOHAZ Panel on BSE and other TSEs since the last Network meeting was presented by the BIOHAZ Unit. Details included description of the Scientific Opinions and Technical Reports adopted, and both the ongoing and future tasks.

7. Inspections of the Food and Veterinary Office related to BSE and TSE: Findings and trends

The Commission presented an overview of the tasks of the FVO regarding the verification of official controls carried out by the national competent authorities on BSE-TSE risk management issues described in legislation. The presentation also included historical information on number of audits carried out in the different EU MSs, audits carried outside the EU and on the general findings of those audits.

8. Update on the epidemiological situation of BSE and Scrapie in the EU

The Italian representative presented an epidemiological review of the trend of Classical BSE, Atypical BSE, Classical Scrapie and Atypical Scrapie in different countries (i.e. EU Member States, European countries and non-European countries). The presentation included updated data

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also for 2011 that was kindly shared by the European Commission. The review of some of the possible reasons for the difference in the epidemiological situation of Classical and Atypical Scrapie between the different MSs was made.

9. Reporting of two cases of BSE with an unusual prion protein signature in Switzerland

The Swiss representative presented the details of the molecular diagnosis results of two BSE cases that occurred in Switzerland in 2011 that presented a prion protein phenotype distinct from those of Classical, L-type and H-type Atypical BSE. It was highlighted that the autolysed state of the obex samples could account for the differences found. Nevertheless, bioassay studies are needed and already ongoing in order to fully typify the disease phenotype of those two cases. The Polish representative highlighted that in the past two cases of BSE with a similar profile to the one reported in here were found.

10. Rapid TSE tests employed in the EU: from the application to the approval

The BIOHAZ Unit provided a comprehensive review of different aspects related to the approval process of the rapid TSE tests employed in the EU for the monitoring of TSEs in farmed animals. The presentation included the detailed aspects of the approval process and provided an update on current tests under approval and on future prospects. Additional EFSA activities related to the post-approval evaluation of rapid TSE tests based on *ad hoc* requests from the European Commission were also outlined.

11. Scrapie(s): What we know, what we do not know and what we may never know

Dr Olivier Andreoletti (Member of the EFSA Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards) presented to the attendees the current state of the art on several scientific issues related to TSEs in small ruminants. The presentation was structured on different areas of knowledge with implications for TSE risk assessment, ranging from active surveillance of TSEs in small ruminants, breeding for resistance in goats, state of the art on research on *ante-mortem* testing and knowledge of agent biodiversity.

12. VI years of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE and TSE

The BIOHAZ Unit provided an overview of the 6 years of history of the BSE-TSE Network. It included considerations on the yearly increase in the number of Members and Observers, on the changes in the scope and final formalisation of the Network in line with EFSA policies, and on the activities carried out outside the regular Network meetings.

13. Round table discussion on the future direction of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE and TSE

The Network Members and Observers consider that future developments of the Scientific Network on BSE-TSE should be proportional to the future interest in the field of BSE-TSE. All the attendees found the Network as a useful tool for exchange of information, and it was felt by all that the current frequency of the meetings (i.e. once a year) was appropriate.

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Particular issues discussed for future action points were to:

- Consider the possibility for including issues related to scientific and technical aspects for the treatment and safe disposal Animal By-Products (ABP) as done in the past or the need for a dedicated EFSA Network on this subject.
- Invite the OIE to a Network meeting in order to brief the representatives on the details of the application process for the revision of the BSE risk categorisation of the countries and on the consideration given to the impact of Atypical BSE cases.
- Develop a more structure frame for the reporting of the Members and Observers on their BSE-TSE related activities at the beginning of the meetings. This could be supported by the use of a form that would be circulated in advance to the meeting requesting background on different BSE-TSE issues that are normally briefed only orally. This could also be used to get information on Atypical BSE cases and to identify topics for discussion in advance for the meeting. However, this should not jeopardise the regular use of the available electronic tools for discussion and data exchange when needed (e.g. EFSA Sciencenet, e-mail distribution list).
- Invite the EU Reference Laboratory for Animal Proteins in Feedingstuffs (EURL-AP) to a Network meeting in order to present the state of the art both in science and in practice regarding testing of feedingstuffs for the presence of animal proteins.

14. Date and venue for next meeting.

It was agreed to hold a Network meeting in 2012, preferably after the summer break. The exact date and venue remains to be confirmed.

15. AOB

Dr. Larry G. Paisley, Network Member from Denmark, informed that this was his last Network meeting before retirement. Special recognition was given to Dr. Paisley by the Chair of the Network to his contribution to and participation in all these years of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE.

16. Closure of the meeting

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm on 30th November 2011.
