European Food Safety Authority

AHAW UNIT

Minutes of the technical meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network on Tuberculosis Testing Parma, 21 February 2012

Participants

Network Tuberculosis Experts: Douwe Bakker (NL), Marek Lipiec (PL), Heike Koehler (DE), Jose Luis Saez Llorente (SP), Anthony Duignan (IE), Eamonn Gormley (IE), Martin Vordermeier (UK), Shelley Rhodes (UK), Maria-Laura Boschiroli (FR), Anne Praud (FR), Edith Authié (FR), Szilard Janosi (HU), Maria Pacciarini (IT), Ivonne Archetti (IT), Marc Govaerts (BE).

EFSA: Ana Afonso, Franck Berthe, Karen Mackay, Chiara Fabris, Tomasz Grudnik, Eleonora Bastino (AHAW Unit), Didier Verloo (SAS).

1. Welcome and apologies

The meeting was chaired by Ana Afonso.

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Simon More (AHAW Panel), Lukas Perler (SW) and Valentina Piazza (EC Observer).

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA encouraged participants to fill in the Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI).

4. AHAW Network-Mandate and mission

Franck Berthe (Head of AHAW Unit) briefly explained the mission/purpose of the Network.

In particular, the objectives of this technical meeting were:

- To share information about tuberculosis (TB) and TB tests between member states (during the last Network meeting in November 2011 it became clear that several member states are interested in the subject).
- For EFSA to obtain information to answer ToRs of the European Commission mandate EFSA-Q-2011-01254 on tuberculosis testing, received by EFSA in December 2011

5. Current work on Bovine Tuberculosis at MS

Tb experts were invited to give a short oral or power point presentation about the current situation in their countries.

Presentations were given by at least one expert per member state participating (10 in total: NL, PL, DE, SP, IE, GB, FR, HU, IT, BE). Ireland and France gave two different presentations.

The points covered were mainly in relation to the following:

- Country bovine Tb status: Free/Not free/ Not Officially free/outbreaks
- Testing protocols: Skin test / gamma interferon / meat inspection /other, Antigen used, cut-off values, etc
- Situation with test confounders
- Situation with Tb in wildlife

All the participants agreed to share their presentations and contact list/ personal CVs

After each presentation, the experts were given few minutes of discussion and questions.

The questions were particularly focusing on the use of different antigens. Other issues were practical aspect of the use of IFN-γ test such as the time lapse between blood sampling and laboratory processing, or the value of the meat inspections at the slaughterhouses.

All the participants agreed on the fact that there are variations concerning the use of skin tests and IFN-γ tests that can affect the tests accuracy. This result in datasets that are difficult to compare: they are collected for different purposes, using different methods etc.

6. Presentation of the EFSA Mandate regarding bovine tuberculosis testing

Ana Afonso gave a power point presentation explaining the EFSA Mandate on tuberculosis testing (EFSA-Q-2011-01254). Terms of reference provided by the European Commission were presented and explained.

AA also presented the data sources that are being considered to answer those ToR. Experts agreed that a comparison between different datasets is needed. AA showed a list of possible tests to be taken into account and asked to the expert to express their opinions and their preferences. The IFN- γ (Antigen CFP10 and ESAT6 in particular) was the one indicated as most promising. Serology tests are useful but they must be associated with skin tests in order to improve sensibility.

A discussion on the use and performances of IFN- γ followed. One of the main points was the difficulty of comparing results obtained in different member states. All experts agreed that there is a strong need of validation of a single or standardised testing protocol in order to avoid the same problems showed by skin test.

The network representatives were asked if they considered IFN- γ as a possible replacement for the skin test. The response was that it was not considered possible due to logistical, performance (specificity is lower in IFN- γ compared to the skin test) and possible cost reasons. It was highlighted that the use of the tests presently available cannot fit all situations. IFN- γ tests are more suitable for use at an individual animal level, however the use of the skin test (although still limited for use in all situations) could be more wide ranging, in terms of interpretation.

The effectiveness of the skin test also depends on the quality of how the test was performed, as there may be differences in the level of competence for those carrying out the tests.