

## AHAW UNIT

### SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE (AHAW)

#### Minutes of the 69<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare

Held on 19 & 20 September 2012, Parma

(Agreed on 12 October 2012)

#### Participants

- **Panel Members:**

Edith Authie, Charlotte Berg (Sept. 19), Anette Bøtner, Aline de Koeijer, Klaus Depner, Mariano Domingo, Sandra Edwards (Sept. 19), Christine Fourichon, Frank Koenen, Simon More, Mohan Raj, Liisa Sihvonen, Hans Spoolder, Jan Arend Stegeman (Sept. 19), Hans-Hermann Thulke, Antonio Velarde, Ivar Vågsholm, and Preben Willeberg.

- **European Commission:**

Marina Marini (Sanco Unit 03), Denis Simonin (Sanco Unit G3), Helene Klein and Sigrid Cabot (Sanco Unit G2) for *Echinococcus multilocularis* and infectious salmon anaemia respectively.

- **EFSA:**

- **AHAW Unit:** Ana Afonso, Franck Berthe, Denise Candiani, Sandra Corriea, Sofie Dhollander, Chiara Fabris, Maria Ferrara, Andrea Gervelmeyer, Per Have, Karen Mackay and Frank Verdonck.
- **Other EFSA Units/Directorates:** Citláli Pintádo (LRA Unit), Bernhard Url (RASA Director), Gabriele Zancanaro and Elisa Aiassa (SAS).

#### 19 September 2012

##### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Simon More, chair of the Panel, welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Howard Browman, Ilaria Capua, and Stéphan Zientara.

The chair invited members of the Panel who had not been able to participate to the July meeting to introduce themselves. Ivar Vågsholm, newly appointed chair of the ISA working group indicated that ISA was his first topic as PhD student; he also mentioned his previous role on the BIOHAZ panel of EFSA. Antonio Velarde also introduced himself to the Panel and explained his activities in the field of animal welfare.

Simon More also invited Marina Marini to introduce herself to the Panel and explain the role of the Unit 03 of DG Sanco. He stressed the importance of maintaining good communication between the Panel and the Commission.

## **2. Adoption of agenda**

Simon More proposed to present the outcomes of the recent meeting of the Scientific Committee. Sofie Dhollander proposed to include an item on the ongoing grant on Leishmaniasis. Ivar Vågsholm and Franck Berthe offered to provide some feedback on a recent seminar organised by the Swedish Academy of Sciences. The agenda was adopted.

## **3. Declarations of interest**

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes regarding Declarations of Interests (Dols)<sup>1</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director implementing this Policy<sup>2</sup>, EFSA screened the Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI). No conflicts of interests related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process or in the Oral Declaration of interest (ODoI) at the beginning of this meeting.

## **4. Visit of the Director of Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance**

Bernhard Url, RASA Director, visited the Panel. He briefly presented the RASA Directorate within EFSA and highlighted the importance of the AHAW Panel. A question was raised by the Panel on the EFSA policy on independence. Bernhard Url explained that EFSA was often challenged on independence, or the perceived lack of independence, and that in return EFSA is currently having the most advanced policy on independence. He exposed the rules for implementation of the EFSA policy and specific points in the evaluation of the Declarations of Interest filled by experts. Simon More expressed the concern raised by few members of the Panel on the request of some agencies and institutions in Member States to receive payment of the daily allowances and travel indemnities of EFSA experts. Bernhard Url confirmed that several organisations have made such a request and clarified that this does not constitute a change in the status of experts, nor their independence. The issue of transparency and openness was also brought to the discussion. The Director presented a pilot for opening plenary meetings of Panels. The Panel was informed that it was planned to have an open plenary meeting in November this year.

## **5. Election of the second AHAW Panel Vice Chair**

Citláli Pintádo (LRA Unit) joined the meeting for this item. In July, the Panel had decided to proceed with the election of the second Vice Chair at the September AHAW Plenary meeting in September 2012. As for the July elections, the Panel agreed to waive the secrecy requirement for the secret ballot. Howard Browman was elected as Vice Chair by unanimity of votes.

## **6. Discussion of the draft opinion on Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA)**

ISA is a fish disease listed in Part II of Annex IV to Council Directive 2006/88/EC on animal health requirements for aquaculture animals and products thereof, and on the prevention and control of certain diseases in aquatic animals. There are several variants of ISA virus, one of which is known not to cause clinical disease (HPR0). Virulent strains of the virus are usually regarded as HPR0 deleted strains. It is requested to assess: 1) the capability of HPR0 ISA strains to cause disease in Atlantic salmon, and 2) the risk of HPR-deleted ISA virus emerging from HPR0 ISA virus and, if relevant, indicating the risk factors causing such an emergence.

Ivar Vågsholm presented the document. The opinion was submitted for discussion in view of its possible adoption in October. The TORs are addressed by analysing published scientific

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencepolicy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencerules.pdf>

literature on the genetics of ISAV in relation to field and experimental evidence of pathogenicity.

The structure of the opinion, the issue of vaccination in relation to the second term of reference, the general issue of focusing on virulent strains (e.g. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, HPAI), the different levels of risk across the breeding pyramid, the role of wild and feral salmon and criteria for recognizing ISAV strains, were among the issues discussed by the Panel. It was reminded by the Commission that the critical question was about measures needed upon detection of ISAV HPR0. The parallel with avian flu was also discussed. The discussion emphasized that there was more absence of evidence than evidence of absence. The panel felt that section on risk factors was insufficiently developed and questioned if a new deadline could be requested in November. Deep- readers are Ilaria Capua and Liisa Sihvonen.

## **20 September 2012**

### **7. Presentation of new mandates**

Denis Simonin (Sanco Unit G3) joined the meeting by tele-conference.

The Commission plans to establish EU guidelines concerning monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses, providing slaughterhouse operators with scientifically based procedures to carry out effective checks and obtain proper information on their stunning processes. The guidelines will also be used by the competent authorities in order to check that slaughterhouse operators are not using unreliable monitoring procedures. In order to prepare these guidelines with a sound basis, the Commission requests EFSA to provide an independent view on the indicators and elements for putting in place monitoring procedures at slaughterhouses for various methods and species (pigs, poultry, bovine and small ruminants).

Article 16 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing requires slaughterhouse operators to put in place and implement monitoring procedures in order to check that their stunning processes deliver the expected results in a reliable way. Article 5 requires operators to carry out regular checks to ensure that animals do not present any signs of consciousness or sensibility in the period between the end of the stunning process and death. According to Article 16(2), a monitoring procedure shall include in particular the following: (a) indicators designed to detect signs of unconsciousness and consciousness or sensibility in the animals (indicators A); or indicators designed to detect the absence of signs of life in the animals slaughtered without stunning (before undergoing dressing or scalding = indicators B); (b) criteria for determining whether the results shown by the indicators previously mentioned are satisfactory; (c) the circumstances and/or the time when the monitoring must take place; (d) the number of animals in each sample to be checked during the monitoring.

Denis Simonin presented the new request and indicated that the format of the scientific opinion on water bath stunning is seen as a good example by the Commission. The objective of this new mandate is to provide a tool-box and Sanco insisted on the importance of practicality of the proposed indicators.

The Panel welcomed this new request. Question was asked if in the case of slaughter without stunning, monitoring should look only for signs of life, or also include signs of consciousness. It was agreed to focus only on signs of life. Another question was asked to elaborate the "satisfactory" concept; reference was made to performance of the indicators, their sensitivity (Se) and specificity (Sp). With regard to practicability the issue of cost (e.g.

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speed of the slaughter line) would be connected; however the Panel clarified that it is not in the EFSA remit. The Commission services also clarified that the overall assumption of the assessment should be that operators are compliant with the current regulation.

Denise Candiani explained that for practical reasons it was proposed to issue 4 opinions, most likely based on the species or groups of species to be covered. Franck Berthe asked if the deadline could be extended to late 2013 considering that there may be a need for call for data and public consultation.

Several Panel members expressed their interest in participating to the working group: Hans-Hermann Thulke, Mohan Raj, Hans Spoolder and Antonio Velarde.

## 8. Progress report from on-going mandates

The work program for AHAW in the period 2012 to 2014 was presented and discussed at the July plenary meeting of the Panel.

Andrea Gervelmeyer presented the AHAW workflow for scientific opinions. The exercise was initiated in June 2012 when the former Panel held a session dedicated to lessons learnt. The different phases of the workflow, from reception of a request to the publication of a scientific opinion, were presented in line with the guidance of the AHAW Panel on good practices of conducting risk assessment using modelling (EFSA, 2009). The issue of publication of papers in peer reviewed scientific journals was also discussed. Several examples were presented and the Panel strongly supported the idea of promoting publication when and where possible. Simon More recommended that Panel members mentor scientific officers to facilitate the process.

Reports were given on the following on-going mandates:

- Jan Arend Stegeman and Ana Afonso presented the work on bovine tuberculosis (bTB) testing. The work is progressing well and a draft scientific opinion will be presented to the Panel to be discussed in October. It was agreed that Mariano Domingo and Preben Willeberg will be deep-readers.
- On Rift Valley Fever (RVF), Jan Arend Stegeman and Sofie Dhollander indicated that the mapping of the outbreaks (first term of reference) is ongoing. The second ToR is about mapping of the vector which was outsourced and is to be delivered in December 2012. The third term of reference will be addressed by a model and documented by Expert Knowledge Elicitation (EKE) to respond the risk in EU neighboring countries. An EKE workshop is planned in November 2012. The last ToR is about risk of endemicity, for which a model will be used.
- On bees, and Risk of introduction and spread of the small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*) and *Tropilaelaps* in the EU. Frank Koenen and Frank Verdonck presented the methodological approach and state of play. It is proposed to use the guidance of the EFSA Panel on plant health (PLH) to commodity based risk assessment. The PLH import risk assessment provides patterns of risk along the different pathways identified, including uncertainty. The OIE algorithm to combine scores is also proposed to be used in order to provide an overall score for the pathways. There was some concern expressed by the Panel on the combining of the OIE and PLH approach. It was agreed that documenting the possible disagreements in the expert opinion was important. It was also agreed that the patterns of risk provided by the PLH approach would be useful for the last term of reference (mitigation options). It was clarified that the mandate calls for overall evaluation of risk pathways. It was recommended to increase the precision of definition for low scores. It was

agreed that some Panel members should participate to the November meeting where hearing experts will be consulted on the preliminary draft of the risk assessment.

- The proposed approach to address the request for scientific and technical assistance on *Echinococcus multilocularis* (EM) infection in animals was presented by Andrea Gervelmeyer, and Elisa Aiassa and Gabriele Zancanaro from the SAS unit of EFSA. The data collection and surveillance models were presented. It was suggested that MS submit their surveillance data via the EFSA Data Collection Framework (DCF). The Panel pointed out that an important issue was to know if the objective of the surveillance systems prescribed by Regulation 1152/2011 was also early detection, in addition to demonstrating freedom from EM infection. The panel commented on the importance of estimates for probability of introduction of EM. Risk factors were discussed (population density, proximity to endemic areas), in relation to the surveillance model, and sample size. It was suggested that it may be difficult to apply a risk based approach in countries where there were no cases; or those risk factors would be mainly theoretical with exceptions (e.g. proximity with endemic areas). The probability of being free depends on the probability of entry and therefore information on the implementation of pre-travel deworming of dogs is paramount for MS like the UK, IE, MT. . Mariano Domingo, Ivar Vågsholm, Hans-Herrmann Thulke and Preben Willeberg accepted to assist AHAW and SAS units to review the approach together with 2 external EM experts (Peter Deplazes, Thomas Romig). Preben Willeberg and Mariano Domingo will also participate to the meeting with experts from the concerned Member States on 16 October.
  - Karen Mackay briefly presented the ongoing mandate on meat inspection, the approach and state of play. The work is following the approach of former species, defining diseases/conditions of AHAW interest, including topic consultation with experts in specific animal species, further modelling and assessment of potential impact on AHAW of changes proposed in public health context.. Assessment on the impact, in AHAW perspective, of proposed changes to the current meat inspection system would be possible in the autumn 2012 – spring 2013. The external reports from the contractor COMISURV on bovines, small ruminants, solipeds, and farmed game will be published soon. Mariano Domingo accepted to chair the working group to which Mohan Raj and Preben Willeberg will be members, with assistance of ad hoc experts.
  - Ana Afonso and Aline de Koeijer presented the status quo of the mandate on data collection. A brief presentation of the data specification project was given. The Panel agreed that this work would form the body of the second part of the opinion.
  - The ongoing project on leishmaniasis was presented very briefly by Sofie Dhollander. Edith Authié and Aline de Koeijer accepted to follow the project and assist the AHAW unit in progressing on the question. The Panel stressed that Sanco has listed the topic in the management plan of AHAW and asked clarification whether a mandate would be sent to EFSA,
  - The technical assistance on the possible risks for animal health caused by the Schmallenberg virus could not be discussed because of lack of time. It is the intention to present the on going work on the epidemiological report update in November 2012 .
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## **9. Feedback from the Commission on scientific opinions provided by the AHAW Panel**

Marina Marini reported that the opinion on Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) was instrumental in follow up discussions, and to re-establish FMD free status for Bulgaria. The opinions on bluetongue (BT), they were used in preparing Regulation 2012/456. On Swine Vesicular Disease and Vesicular Stomatitis (SVD VS) the opinion was used as a basis for discussion by an OIE ad hoc group on the list of diseases. On meat inspection, a proposal will soon be presented at the Standing Committee (SCoFCAH). Finally, Marina Marini informed that the opinion on casings will be followed up. The panel welcomed this very positive feedback on its previous work.

## **10. Any Other Business**

A brief feedback from the meeting of the Scientific Committee was given by Simon More. It was agreed that requests from the Scientific Committee to have AHAW Panel members joining SC working groups will be dealt with by email.

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