

Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare Minutes of the 1st meeting of National Contact Points established under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009

Held on 26-27 May 2016, Parma

(Agreed on 27 July 2016)

Participants

- **Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):**

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Country	Name
Belgium	Ester Peeters
Cyprus	Yola Iacovou
Croatia	Branka Sosic, Tomislav Mikus
Denmark	Birte Broberg
Estonia	David Arney
Finland	Satu Raussi
Germany	Inga Schwarzlose
Greece	Katerina Marinou
Ireland	Niall O'Nuallain
Italy	Daniele Nalin, Claudia Grilli
Latvia	Iveta Kocina
Netherlands	Marien Gerritzen
Portugal	Maria de Conceicao Blasques de Oliveira
Slovenia	Tea Dronjic
Spain	Antonio Velarde
Sweden	Charlotte Berg
United Kingdom	Henry Buller
Iceland	Thora Johanna Jonasdottir
Switzerland	Peter Jakob

- **European Commission:**

Vasco Antunes, Stanislav Ralchev (DG SANTE)

- **EFSA:**

ALPHA Unit (Denise Candiani (chair), Andrea Gervelmeyer, Gabriele Zancanaro)
Risk Communication Unit (Francesca Matteucci): participated in agenda point 3.3
Planning, Transformation & Technology (Pascal Casier): participated in agenda point 3.6

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Liechtenstein, Norway.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Topics for discussion

3.1. Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 and expectations regarding scientific support

The European Commission (Stanislav Ralchev, DG SANTE G2) provided an overview of the EC's work to improve animal welfare at slaughter and highlighted the new rules to apply since 1 January 2013 following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing. A focus was given to the Commission's expectations regarding the scientific support under Art 20 of the Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009. The scientific support and National Contact Points network are expected to play an important role in assisting the competent authorities. He informed the meeting about the launching of a study on best practices for the protection of animals at the time of killing aiming to collect and provide more information on: slaughter of animals in small slaughterhouse (poultry and mammals) and relevant SOPs, slaughter of poultry using electrical waterbath, slaughter without stunning (ritual slaughter) and killing of animals on farm.

3.2. Past and current work of EFSA regarding welfare at slaughter

EFSA (Denise Candiani, Gabriele Zancanaro, ALPHA Unit) gave an overview of EFSA's work regarding welfare at slaughter. The EFSA scientific opinions on monitoring procedures at slaughter and the tool developed by EFSA for calculating the required sample size were explained. For the different species and slaughter methods the type of indicator that should be used in the monitoring, based on its sensitivity, specificity and feasibility, was indicated. It was explained how to determine the relevant sampling frequency, depending on the desired level of detection of non-stunned animals.

It was noted that problems with measuring the animal-based indicator proposed for the monitoring of the killing of bovines without stunning have been reported from slaughterhouses. Further, the need to develop similar tools for the monitoring of slaughter of rabbits for meat production, for fur animals, and for fish was highlighted.

EFSA (Denise Candiani, ALPHA Unit) presented the ongoing work on the slaughter of pregnant animals. The assessment focusses on establishing if and as of which gestational age foetuses can perceive pain. In addition, the prevalence of pregnant animals slaughtered in the critical stage of gestation and the reasons for this should be established. The assessment includes cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and horses. In case that it is concluded that foetuses are able to perceive pain as of a certain gestational age, methods for estimating the age of foetuses after the dam has been slaughtered and for stunning and killing of foetuses will be proposed.

3.3. Topic page “Animal welfare at slaughter” on EFSA’s webpage

EFSA (Francesca Matteucci, Risk Communication Unit) presented the topic page on animal welfare at slaughter of the EFSA webpage. She highlighted what type of information can be shared through the EFSA webpage and demonstrated the links to other relevant animal welfare and health pages.

3.4. Feedback on implementation of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 from audits

The European Commission (Vasco Antunes, DG SANTE F2) presented an overview report on FVO audits of welfare at slaughter that have been carried out in 13 EU countries between 2012 and 2015. The audits focussed on the effect of official controls on business operators to ensure that animals are spared any avoidable pain, distress, or suffering during slaughter. One of the main findings was that Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) need to be improved, particularly regarding the methods for monitoring the stunning efficiency and the key parameters from chapter I of Annex I. Another weak point identified were manufacturers’ instructions for stunning equipment and the monitoring of stunning, which in some cases was not carried out or done with insufficient sample size and timing. It was highlighted that the arrival of animals needs to be better planned and that fitness for transport remains an issue to be improved, particularly for cattle. F2 can support the NCP by providing the EU perspective of the organisation of official controls and the main difficulties faced by all MS.

3.5. Taking stock of what has been achieved already

EFSA (Andrea Gervelmeyer, ALPHA Unit) provided a summary of the information on existing scientific support that had been provided by NCP to EFSA prior to the meeting. Then several NCP presented their achievements and experience with scientific support under 1099/2009.

Switzerland (Peter Jakob) briefly described the Swiss legal framework for animal welfare at slaughter. Animal welfare at slaughter is the responsibility of the business operator (BO), and has been integrated into the quality management

systems of large slaughterhouses. Training of slaughterhouse staff has been improved through collaborative efforts of official veterinarians, the meat industry and NGOs, and stunning equipment is regularly monitored with deficient devices being exchanged. However, difficulties remain in the area of manufacturers' instructions for stunning equipment, overcoming language barriers during the training of slaughterhouse staff, and the monitoring of the quality of the training courses. The meeting was informed that a new method for mechanical stunning of water buffaloes and large cattle is currently being developed, and that problems with technical parameters for electrical stunning of sows/pigs have been encountered.

Germany (Inga Schwarzlose) gave an overview of guides to good practice that have been developed and on training of personnel involved in stunning, killing and related operations carried out in Germany. The guides provide methods and good practice for humane slaughter of pigs and cattle and form the basis for the development of company-specific SOPs. A manual for the monitoring of animal welfare during slaughter and killing focussing on cattle, pigs and poultry has been developed by a working group of German federal states. Training courses are organised by a range of organisations, in collaboration with the veterinary authorities. A definition of equivalent qualifications is provided on the website of the FLI. It was expressed that the networking between the NCP should encompass exchanges of information on proven methods and discussions on new technical developments, facilitate the formation of European project consortia and the confirmation of equivalence of certificates of competence.

Sweden (Lotta Berg) presented training material on animal welfare at slaughter and killing that has been produced as open educational resources (OER) by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in collaboration with slaughterhouses and NGOs. The OER is available in Swedish at <http://disa.slu.se> and is currently being translated to English. The tool contains illustrations and video clips in addition to text, including learning objectives, take-home messages and interactivities. A presentation of the tool was given.

Finland (Satu Raussi) gave a presentation of the scientific support provided under 1099/2009 provided by the Finnish NCP, which mainly concerned guides to good practice. Several of these have been prepared in Finnish, they are available online and used by the BO.

Slovenia (Tea Dronjić) presented the requirements for the training that needs to be taken to obtain the certificate of competence in Slovenia. As the number of Slovenian scientists that can provide the scientific support required under 1099/2009 is very limited, it was underlined that the networking among the NCP, specifically regarding SOP and scientific opinions on manufacturers' instructions for stunning equipment, is very important.

The UK (Henry Buller) explained that in the UK scientific support under 1099/2009 is provided by the Welfare at Killing Standing Committee (WAK), a sub-committee of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC). The WAK meets 3-4 times per year and regularly invites external experts to support its work. It has produced several opinions and advice documents, which are available online (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fawc-advice-to-government#advice-prepared-by-the-welfare-at-killing-standing-committee>).

3.6. Sharing of documents and information among NCP

It was noted by all meeting participants that sharing already existing resources, such as guides to good practice, opinions, training material, and information between NCP would be very useful. Different options for achieving this were discussed.

The Member States Animal Welfare Network (MSAWN) was briefly introduced. It is a database with newsgroup functions where information on animal welfare (farm, transport and slaughter) is available to Member States and Candidate Countries to share good practices regarding animal welfare. It runs on the EC's Communication and Information Resource Centre for Administrations platform (CIRCABC, <https://circabc.europa.eu>) which can be accessed on the web through the ECAS sign-in (contact: Jakub.Hrabak@ec.europa.eu). Users can up- and download information and can post and receive information on newsgroups. It was stated by several meeting attendants that the interface is not very user-friendly.

EFSA (Pascal Casier, Planning, Transformation & Technology Unit) presented an ongoing EFSA project under which Microsoft Office 365 is being evaluated. The features of the programme, e.g. real-time editing of documents and document storage were demonstrated. If EFSA approves this project, it could be used as of 2017 for document sharing between NCP.

3.7. Identification of support needed by NCP from EFSA, EC, and others

EFSA (Andrea Gervelmeyer, ALPHA Unit) provided a summary of the topics on which support is needed by NCP from EFSA, EC, and others that had been provided by NCP to EFSA prior to the meeting.

It was noted that in some countries the difference between NCP and CA is not clear cut, as in some countries the NCP is a governmental body, while in others the NCP is an academic body. The meeting participants agreed that a flexible, outcome-oriented approach to supporting provision of scientific support should be applied.

The meeting participants agreed that the main areas in which support is needed are certificates of competence, training, technical issues regarding stunning methodologies (approved and new methods), and issues identified with implementation of 1099/2009.

Checklists of elements should be developed for guidelines to good practice and for training courses. To this end, existing documents should be compiled, compared and discussed, with view to jointly developing an "ideal" template/a list of critical components to cover by a given guideline or training course. In addition, assessment criteria for trainers' competence should be developed and agreed.

The NCP network should be a forum for highlighting gaps of technical parameters for approved stunning methods and discussing new methodologies. Relevant scientific reports and publications should be shared and discussed, in addition, specific workshops with NCP and relevant scientists should be organised.

4. Conclusions

Animal welfare in the EU is based on three pillars, welfare during farming, transport, and slaughter. For each of these, platforms and frameworks exist, which should not be duplicated, but a good articulation between these should be achieved.

In addition to one general meeting per year, meetings on specific issues should be organised if and when needed, drawing in different participants (CA, scientists).

The EFSA webpage on animal welfare at slaughter should provide the link to NCP contact list and email addresses.

Email and other means should be used to consult other NCP on scientific questions whenever needed.

Sharing of documents could be done using Microsoft Office 365 or an improved MSAWN, where an inventory of (links to) existing guidelines for good practice, training courses should be established.

5. Date for next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting should take place in the first quarter of 2017.